

As a Social Worker in Northern First Nations, am I also a Peacebuilder?

By

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Through this Peace and Conflict Studies autoethnography, I relate my stories in relationship to the First Nations lands and peoples of Northern Manitoba within the context of Child and Family Services. The stories identify relationships between social work interventions and peace-building interventions—when they are the same, and when and how they differ. My stories of my experiences provide examples of my potentially contributing to the structural violence of colonization through assimilation, and when my interventions are consistent with peace-building to reverse the assimilation of colonization. The theories of structural violence, colonization, assimilation and genocide as they relate to the author's experiences provide the framework to tell the anecdotal stories to identify the complex relationships. Even though I may have the best of intentions, as a social worker, am I also truly a peacebuilder? Or am I working in ways which contribute to the structural violence of colonization? How much agency do I really have? My stories describe my emotions of inner conflict and turmoil as I identify the day-to-day challenges ingrained within the system to build peace by reversing the tide of removing children from their families, communities, cultures and identities. The stories also identify some successes I have experienced at peace-building by strengthening and unifying families and communities in response to experiences of colonization.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to everyone whose lives have been affected by the structural violence and all who are working to build peace in response to the colonization that exists within Canada. In particular it is dedicated to those whose lives have been entwined within Child and Family Services in any role or experience, and all who are working to safely keep children within their families, communities, identities and lands.

Most specifically, this thesis is dedicated to my own family from where I came and my children and grandchildren, who are my future. My family also includes all those in my life who I have birthed, raised, or who have chosen me for their mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, daughter, cousin and friend. You are who make me whole.

And my deepest inspiration comes from my daughter who chose me. Rest in peace.

Legend

AJI – Aboriginal Justice Inquiry

AJIC – Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission

AJI-CWI – Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative

AMC – Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CFS – Child and Family Services

FNCFS – First Nations Child and Family Services

IRS – Indian Residential Schools

MKO – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak

NFN – Northern First Nations

NFNCFS – Northern First Nations Child and Family Services

PACS – Peace and Conflict Studies

RCAP – Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

SCO – Southern Chiefs Organization

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UN – United Nations

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INTRODUCTION

AS A SOCIAL WORKER IN NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS, AM I ALSO A PEACEBUILDER?

As a social worker, am I also a peace-builder? Or am I working in ways which contribute to the structural violence of colonization? Or both, and, if so, in what ways? Within the context of Manitoba's Northern First Nations and the current Aboriginal Justice Inquiry–Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI), are my social work interventions consistent with peace-building interventions? Are my own experiences in Manitoba's current AJI-CWI Child and Family Services (CFS) system, a healing, peace-building response to the structural violence of colonialism in Northern First Nations (NFNs) in Manitoba? Or am I continuing the violence of assimilationist colonization? When I work as a social worker, do my actions support the structural violence, colonization, genocide, and assimilation that has affected First Nations families, in part, through the removal of the children from their families, lands, cultures and identities? Or am I building peace by working with First Nations to counter the colonizing loss of children, supporting their own work to heal and strengthen their families, which are the cores of their nations?

As a practicing social worker and as a practicing peace-builder, my work is done through interventions. Merriam-Webster's (2014) definitions of interventions include:

- 1: to occur, fall, or come between points of time or events[...]
- 2: to enter or appear as an irrelevant or extraneous feature or circumstance[...]
- 3a: to come in or between by way of hindrance or modification[...]
- b: to interfere with the outcome or course especially of a condition or process (as to prevent harm or improve functioning)
- 4: to occur or lie between two things
- 5 a: to become a third party to a legal

proceeding begun by others for the protection of an alleged interest *b* : to interfere usually by force or threat of force in another nation's internal affairs especially to compel or prevent an action.

An intervention then is an event, an action, coming between two or more events or times that can be simple or complex, positive or negative, well-intentioned or malicious.

As a CFS social worker, in simple terms my interventions are in the name of child protection, and are intentional and even legally mandated actions (or the choice to not act) in order to try to ensure the safety of children. My interventions can include simply speaking with individuals to help assess risk, and, if required, to work together to find ways to alleviate or minimize the risk. When required, CFS interventions can extend to using the child protection system's legal authority to physically remove children from their very own parents, families, and/or communities through court-sanctioned apprehensions and provincial court orders. Obviously the courts would require that such extreme interventions of removing children from the families is necessary for their safety and wellbeing. In common social work terms, this is stated as "in the best interests of the child".

Peace-building interventions are actions that have the intent to stop, or minimize, or prevent violence—be it direct, manifest, structural, or latent, or any combination of these forms of violence (Galtung 1969). And, peace-building can range from the macro global examples that include the use of armies and international peace agreements, to the mezzo level of peace-building in response to structural violence within systems of all kinds (e.g., political, bureaucratic, social, economic), to the micro or personal perspectives of interpersonal relationships between two or more people. The micro level peace-building can occur between two people, families, communities, and also include the interpersonal relationships within mezzo and macro systems.

My peace-building efforts range from the interpersonal relationships within my social work practice to my work and relationships with the mezzo systems, bureaucracies, and governments that govern, manage, and oversee the mandated CFS system. And while I have no direct relationship with global macro peace-building, the fact that my work is with Indigenous peoples of Canada within what I will argue is a colonizing process, my actions are connected to the global history and current processes of colonization.

The key question that I ask myself—not only in this thesis, but everyday within my practice—is: Are my actions, my interventions as a social worker, which are in the name of the best interest of the child and his or her protection, consistent with peace-building interventions? It might seem logical that if my social work interventions prevent a child from being harmed or further harmed, that would be consistent with peace-building. However, as my narratives will exemplify, it is far more complicated than that. There are countless examples of children who have been apprehended due to poverty or neglect, only to then suffer extreme abuses of many kinds, and even death, under the ongoing social work interventions within the CFS systems. And even when my interventions prevent a child from immediate or short-term harm, what are the long-term consequences? Is it a peace-building response when a child is removed from his or her parents, and from family, clan, community, customs, culture, and lands? Are such removals—which will impact the child’s very identity—in the personal best interests of the child?

Within this auto-ethnographic examination, my experiences will provide anecdotal raw data of my lived realities within First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS). The AJI-CWI within the context of Manitoba’s NFNs will also be presented in order to provide the readers with an understanding of the social and political contexts so as to place my own position within their contexts, and at this time. In this study, I reflect, examine, and analyze my personal experiences

within social work through the interdisciplinary lens of a Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) perspective, including an analysis of structural violence and colonization (the conflict) and the correlating peace-building. This will provide for a PACS perspective of the AJI-CWI system instead of the usual social work perspective on the AJI-CWI in order to try to come to new information about and understandings of the system. How do I make sense of my micro actions, my interventions as a social worker, and the effect of these interventions within the micro, mezzo and macro levels of others? Are the effects of my social work interventions consistent with peace-building interventions by addressing the structural violence of colonization?

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 will set the scene for this study, beginning with the context of Northern First Nations in Manitoba geographically, historically, and culturally. The land, the people, and how life was and is, will be introduced. From there, the acts of colonization in Northern Manitoba will be introduced, with emphasis on the removals of the children through the IRSs and its replacement, child welfare. First Nations CFS and then implementation of the AJI-CWI will be introduced. My personal experiences in relation to the IRSs and within the CFS will be told through my personal narratives as per autoethnographic method.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of relevant Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) theories that includes the concept of structural or indirect violence as initially developed by Johan Galtung (1969; 1971; 1990). Colonization as a form of structural violence will then be examined as a theory and then as it relates to Canada and Manitoba. The pracademics perspective (as per Byrne and Senehi 2009) emphasizes the need for action as well as theorizing, and will be exemplified through Freire (1970) who refers to the need for actions based on conscientization in

response to oppression, and Mac Ginty's experiences with the use of traditional and Indigenous peace-building methods (2008, 2010, 2013).

Chapter 3 focuses on the primary research method, autoethnography, which will be examined in detail, including a mini-literature review, due to the fact that the use of autoethnography is not yet well-known within either PACS or social work. The primary reasons for choosing autoethnography are because it is an effective means of examining my own experiences and to speak on my own behalf in relation to Northern First Nation and the AJI-CWI system that is cloaked within so much confidential information. I cannot and do not want to speak on behalf of Northern First Nations nor other people within CFS, but through autoethnography my personal experiences will be expressed in relation to these exterior and public realities.

In Chapter 4, Self-Positioning: Where I Come From, Who I am and My Future, I look at where I came from and what motivated me to practice both social work and to study PACS. Even in my childhood I began to ask questions about my "white privilege". I then include an early public writing of my own (1983) to identify my motivations in life at that time. The statement that I presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2011) about my earlier life with a victim/survivor of the Indian Residential Schools is included in order to highlight critical experiences that helped to shape my worldview and that continue to deeply motivate me.

Chapter 5, Empirical Chapter: Narratives of My Motivations, and Chapter 6 Empirical Chapter: Narratives on My Personal and My Collective Responsibilities are my own anecdotal inputs from my experiences that try to answer the question that burns through me on a day-to-day basis: In practical terms, am I helping or hurting? My own personal life with my son (Chapter 5) and my daughter (Chapter 6) in relation to the CFS systems, are expressed in narrative form to provide the raw data to illustrate my personal experiences with the AJI-CWI systems. The

narratives also blend into my professional roles within CFS as evidenced through some of the anecdotal information, and this exemplifies the true blended nature of both working and living with CFS within Northern First Nations.

The data within the narratives provide a lot of information to help ask and potentially answer if through both my personal and my social work interventions within the AJI-CWI's current methods, am I contributing to the historical processes of colonialist assimilation in my life and work with children, their families, communities and identities, or am I working on structural peace-building to reverse the tide of colonization and work with people for healing from the structural violence?

This leads into Chapter 7 Peace-building In Relation to Child and Family Services in Manitoba's Northern First Nations, which relates my narratives back to the earlier descriptions of structural violence, assimilation, colonization and genocide in Northern First Nations in Manitoba. Are my experiences within the narratives continuing the violence of assimilation and colonization, and if so how, and what peacebuilding methods have I also been using? And, how do my own experiences fit within the public attempts to stop the assimilative colonization by such organizations as the Northern Chiefs, Manitoba Okimakanak Keewatinowi?

Self-examination such as this autoethnography is required within peace-building and healing in order to strive for accountability (Lederach et al 2007). Reflecting upon my narratives within the Conclusion gleaned four dominant themes: identity, and secrecy, denial and silencing, and the enormity of the pain, and finally my own personal sense for meaning. As these themes are explained in relation to my narrated experiences, most likely, my autoethnographic examination will raise more questions than it can possibly answer. However the goal is to simply open up

further discussion with others so that we can collectively reflect and together move forward in the larger peace-building work.

TERMINOLOGY AND ACRONYMS

Names and terms are critical because they declare identities, and are so important that throughout history violence and wars have erupted over differing opinions of names and terms. In evolving societies, names and terms continue to change in order to be more politically and socially correct. My only intention is to respectfully identify people in the clearest, most accurately descriptive way possible. The terms of the day to which I may be referencing, tell their own stories and for this reason I use terminology that is consistent with the time frame that is identified. Thus, for example, if I am referring to events in the 1960s, the term Indian may be used since it was the common term of the day and found within the texts of that time.

More than anything, I believe in the right of groups to self-identify and thus whenever possible, I use the terms that are accepted by the group itself. There are multiple terms to identify the original peoples of this land of North America that they call Turtle Island. Prior to colonization, each group of people or nation, had its own names for themselves, and also had other names for their neighbours. The names and identities of the original peoples on this Land of Turtle Island were self-declared within their own languages, and they also had external names in the languages of their neighbours. Thus, I opt for ethnonyms, internally selected names, rather than externally determined exonym names. For example, the internally named Ininew (The People) became known as the Cree of Northern Manitoba when a Danish explorer identified them in his language as being “Christ-like” people. And the Ininew used the term Eskimo to refer to their neighbours,

who self-identify as Inuit (The People). In the Ininew language, Eskimo described the Inuit as the Raw-Meat-Eaters in reference to their practices (oral teachings from multiple sources). While this may have started as a valueless statement of observation, it evolved into a derogatory statement due to cultural biases that looked down on eating raw meats. Thus distinctions between the original peoples of Turtle Island is complex, as evidenced by the complexities within the various names.

Yet when the British Crown came and created alliances with some of the original nations to fight the French, they recognized the sovereignty of the original nations (as per the Royal Proclamation of 1763) (Robinson and Quinney 1985) but referred to all of them by the homogeneous name of “Indian” nations. When the Indian Act was created in 1876, The Crown in Right of Canada defined certain original people as Indian according to the Crown’s interested criteria. Most simply, Indians were defined as follows:

3. The term “Indian” means

First. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band;

Secondly. Any child of such person;

Thirdly. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person [...] (1876).

The Indian Act further defined that women who married a non-status Indian were stripped of their status.

In Canada, the term “Indian” applied only to the people of the original nations that the Crown in Right of Canada recognized as such. There were still thousands of Métis and “Half-Breeds,” otherwise known as those of mixed Indian and European blood. So typically, Indian referred to the status and Treaty Indians who were recognized by the Crown in Ottawa and were on their list and registered with identification numbers (AJI 1991; AJIP 2001). The thousands of other Indigenous people such as the Métis, non-Status Indians, and Inuit were referred to as Native

and at times the generalized term Native also included Status Indians. By the early 1980s, the term Aboriginals also referred to the generalized term that applied to all Natives.

As the original peoples began to speak out about the imposition of foreign terms upon their identities, more and more they began to use their own language and terms to self-identify when communicating with external parties in English. Then in the 1990s, the Canadian government unilaterally decided that Status Indians should be referred to as First Nations. Not only is it an awkward term, but it was unilaterally imposed and applied to all reserves and peoples without any respect for people choosing their own terms of identity.

I dislike the term for these reasons but use it when required so that people can know who I am referring to. That is why this thesis includes terms such as First Nations Child and Family Services. However, when I speak of times or refer to people in the past, I am identifying them by the terms that were used at that time. When referring to experiences in my early adult years, I am referring to people as Indian or Native because that is consistent with the norms at the time. This approach to using terms is not to offend anyone, especially since it can be argued that the term First Nations is just as oppressive and colonialist as the term Indian. It is merely to help retain the sense at the time of my experiences in order to more accurate.

Whenever possible, I refer to an original nation by its self-determined name, which is usually within its own language. For example, in their own language, “Cree” people refer to themselves as Ininew, but in different communities people use different Anglicized spellings. Throughout this document, I use the spelling Ininew because this is how it is spelled in Shamattawa, which is the community of my late partner and our daughters.

When referring to the combined groups of Treaty/Status Indians, non-Status Indians, Métis and Inuit, then I use the term Aboriginal. This is the term that is recognized for this larger group

of Indigenous peoples within Canada's Constitution (1982) and other legal documents. When referring to issues that are of a global context, I use the term Indigenous Peoples, so that I can be consistent with the United Nations and current global terminology.

When I began working as a social worker, child protection organizations were often called Children's Aids Societies or by the acronym, CAS. Therefore when I am speaking of child protection prior to the 1990s, I use the names of the day—e.g., Child Protection, child welfare, or CAS. By the 1990s, most agencies across Canada were then called Child and Family Services, also known as CFS. Thus, First Nations Child and Family Services—including all First Nations CFS within Manitoba and Canada—are described by their acronym FNCFS.

Within Manitoba, the distinctions between the northern First Nations and the southern First Nations are also very distinct, as are their experiences within CFS. This thesis focuses on my personal histories, and thus it will focus on the areas and groups that I am most familiar with, those of the First Nations in Northern Manitoba. Within CFS, these nations are grouped together under the First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority, also referred to as the Northern Authority and I refer to their system as Northern First Nations Child and Family Services, or NFNCFS.

So to put it simply, when I write CFS, it refers to all forms of Child and Family Services across Canada, be it First Nations, Métis, and/or non-Aboriginal. When I write FNCFS, it refers to concepts that apply to any and all First Nations CFS in Manitoba and Canada. When I write NFNCFS, it refers to the Northern First Nations CFS within Manitoba. The lived realities are different for all groups within the larger group of "Aboriginal" and even First Nations, and this is why the distinctions are necessary. Again, I have no intention of showing any disrespect, and if

anyone is offended, perhaps it is an example of the importance of names and terms, how they evolve, and how emotionally connected we are to them. However, please know that I am attempting to show every respect to all people and peoples, and welcome any further discussions these terms and names may ignite.

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT:

THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS IN MANITOBA AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

The land and people of Northern Manitoba and their relationships with Child and Family Services is a complex web. The specific historical and geographical context of Northern First Nations in relation to colonization will be presented in the first section, which includes subsections which outline the historical roles that the Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) and child welfare systems have played in Canada's assimilation of First Nations peoples in Northern Manitoba. The second part of this Context Chapter focuses on the organizational context of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI), which is the system in which CFS in Manitoba has been operating under since 2005.

Throughout both sections my own stories from my own experiences are interwoven as per autoethnographic method. For example, in the first section, my own personal narrative includes my experiences within the residential schools as I told them to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2011, based primarily on my relationship with my partner who was a victim of the schools. In the second section, I present my personal perspective on the inner workings within the AJI-CWI system based on a letter that I submitted to the TRC in 2013 about my experiences of working and living within the CFS system.

Since these are stories purely of my own experiences and worldview, they are presented in italicized print to separate them from the theory-based writings, and to identify them as the raw data of my own narratives. These insertions are interwoven throughout the thesis and are

immediately identifiable by their different, italicized type. They are included to provide explanations of my perspectives and data from which to try to find answers to my question, as a social worker, am I also a peace-builder?

GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IN MANITOBA

Northern Manitoba within the First Nations context in the early 21st Century encompasses the lands and peoples of the twenty-six First Nations of Northern Manitoba (NFNs) that are represented politically by Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO). Twenty of the bands self-identify as Cree/Inineew, four as Oji-Cree, and two as Dene. Their territory is in the Northern half of Manitoba; and there are hundreds of kilometers between most of the communities (Freylejer 2012). The land is generally considered muskeg—lands that flow into and out of the waters—within the layers of the rocky Canadian Shield. Several of the communities have only frozen winter road access to drive and bring goods into the community for only a few months a year, and the rest of the time are dependent on costly air travel in and out of their communities.

The Land

Oral history and geological evidence indicate that the ancestors of these communities have been in these areas for thousands of years (Lithman 1992). During this time, highly developed political and social societies survived the seasonal extremes of frigid cold and hot summers filled with mosquitos and bull flies (Beardy and Coutts 1996; Dumas 2013). They made use of the thousands

of kilometers of waterways to travel by canoe and, when the water was frozen, on the ice by snow shoe and dog sleds (Newman and Princes 1985; Payne 1989; 1990; Ray 1998; 2005).

When the first documented Europeans arrived with Henry Hudson in the 1600s they found family-based communities whose lives were entwined with their environment since time began, a common Native term for identifying eras of time immemorial. The Europeans made good use of the original nations' pre-existing trade routes and knowledge, and developed partnerships with them (Newman 1985; Innis 1970; Ray 2005). The NFNs quickly became active key participants in the international fur trade and operated as equal partners with the Hudson Bay Company (HBC). They became the suppliers for the world's first multi-national conglomerate, the HBC (Beardy and Coutts 1996), which led to the creation of the nation-state of Canada (Newman 1985). Canada, North America, and Britain would not be the economic powers that they are without the NFN people who literally kept the Bay men alive and who supplied the raw resources for their profits (Newman 1985; Innis 1970; Ray 2005).

The relationships between the original Ininew, Oji-Cree, and Dene nations and Britain had aspects that were quite reciprocal and mutually beneficial. This is distinct from the relationships of rapid domination from the Europeans to the southern peoples (Innis 1970; Blackstock and Trocme 2005). This interdependent relationship continued into the 1800s, but weakened over time as the European influence gathered strength (RCAP 1996; Alfred 2009). While the NFNs were partners with the fur traders, the communities remained family-centered nations based on complex social systems within the extended families and their interdependence with their land (Ray 2005; Innis 1970; Hart 2002). Every member, regardless of age or abilities, had specific roles and responsibilities within the family as they lived within the natural environment and hunted, fished, and trapped (Beardy and Coutts 1996; Dumas 2013; Blackstock and Trocme 2005).

Children were sacred. Adults were to hold children sacred and “to learn from their relationship with them” (Hart 2002, 48). When the first European missionaries came to the area, they tried to learn the Cree language and even created a code of syllabics so they could translate the Bible into Cree. When the missionaries came to the word “sin” they turned to the Ininew to ask how to explain what it is in Cree that is a sin against God, but the Ininew did not know of one. The Elders met for four days and prayed and discussed amongst themselves as to how to explain “sin” in their language. The closest approximation that they could come to was to translate it as “when someone does not take care of their children” (Elder Frank Wesley, oral teachings to myself from 1982–2003). To not love and care for their children was the most heinous act that they could think of.

It was through these Christian missionaries and HBC men that the notion of physical “discipline” of children entered the communities. European patriarchal worldviews entered the lives of NFNs as some HBC men intermarried and joined into First Nations on the communities’ terms and stayed instead of returning to Europe when their term expired. Others, with no long-term commitment, forced themselves onto NFN women through their self-perceived right to dominate, or fluctuated within the spectrum of the cross-cultural relationships. The influx of European male domination meant that women and children were no longer held in balance within their societies, but became property of the men as per European thought at the time (Barbara Redhead-Skead oral teachings to myself, 1984–present).

The communities and their kinship systems also suffered devastatingly due to mass disease infections contracted from Europeans. In 1782, a four-year outbreak of small-pox resulted in the decimation of one-half to two-thirds of the area’s population, which according to Chief Factor

Marten left the region ‘dismally depopulated’ (Beardy and Coutts 1996), followed by continuing outbreaks of measles, scarlet fever, influenza, and whooping cough for the next two hundred years.

The effects of disease, combined with a depletion of fur-bearing animals in the lowlands surrounding Hudson Bay in the latter part of the eighteenth century, altered the population dynamics of the York region after 1790 (Beardy and Coutts 1996, xxv).

Cree populations reestablished themselves very slowly over time (Innis 1970), and further outbreaks of other diseases such as red measles continued until at least 1927 when York Factory and the surrounding communities were decimated once again by influenza (Beardy and Coutts, 1996).

The NFN communities faced major change in the early 1900s when the Crown of England in Right of Canada signed Treaty #5 with the various communities, to extend the treaty- signing processes that had started in the East and spread up from the South. While the First Nations believed that they were agreeing to share the land, the Government of Canada believed this gave them open access to further encroach into First Nations’ lives and lands (RCAP 1996). The European doctrine of *terra nullius*—the assumption that the lands of North America were empty and non-populated—“allowed” the Europeans to “justify” their expansion onto Indigenous lands (Alfred 2009). The Government of Canada chose to expand its colonial processes from other areas of Canada into Northern Manitoba, yet there were Indigenous communities living with the land in all of its aspects—for food through hunting, fishing, trapping; building homes from the trees’ logs; and using the waterways for transportation—and this posed a problem.

The Crown in Right of Canada determined that the most effective way of addressing the “Indian Problem”—meaning the fact that Indians were living on and using the land that Canada wanted—was to attack First Nations at their heart: their children (Blackstock et al. 2004; Fournier

and Crey 1997). The Crown could not dominate through physical aggression because there were no Indigenous warriors to combat and the people were so spread out in small family groups. So instead they focused on bringing the children, the future of the Indigenous communities, into Europeanized Canada. This can be considered to be consistent with Volkan's premise that in conflict, destruction of the warriors is not sufficient; only by destroying a culture's actual people (in this case the children) can one side "force the decision" of victory within the conflict (Volkan and Sinclair 1997, 74). Removing the children was deemed to be the most effective way of assimilating First Nations communities because Europeanized settlers could remove First Nations children from their land and re-educate and transform them into brown versions of themselves.

Indian Residential Schools

In Northern Manitoba, the children were removed from their families and communities, and transported by canoes, trains, and float planes for hundreds, even thousands of, kilometers away to be placed in foreign locked institutions known as Indian Residential Schools (IRSs). Children from northern communities were sent hundreds and often more than one thousand miles away to schools such as Isaac McKay School in Dauphin; Guy Hill School in The Pas; Yellowquill in Portage la Prairie; Assiniboia in Winnipeg; and Birtle and Brandon, respectively.

Remember that the italicized writing indicates narratives of the writer's own personal experiences which are inserted as raw data as per autoethnographical methods. Single names used in this paper are pseudonyms in order to protect the privacy of the individuals in my life as well as those they are in relationships with.

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It still astounds me that I had never heard that Indian Residential Schools even existed while I was young girl. The first time I remember hearing that they existed was when I was in high school in Vancouver. One of the Roman Catholic sisters who taught us got angry with us. She started lecturing us about how we should be grateful for everything we had because we had families and everything we needed, but that the Indian children that she and the other nuns taught at the Indian Residential Schools weren't so lucky and were often hungry. Her comments were in passing and they actually had no meaning for me at the time because I did not understand what she was referring to. Later when I learned about the schools, her comment came back to me, echoing within me. When I became close friends with a survivor of one of the same order of Sisters' residential schools, they took on even more meaning.

My friend Linda had been sent to the Indian Residential School, and she used to share with me her life of fear and terror there. Repeatedly she spoke of the children who would "disappear" and were never seen or heard from again. Some of them were sick and would be removed, usually at night, and were never seen again, and some just disappeared with no explanation. She also remembered hearing people digging at night, and all the children knew that there were many children buried in the grounds around the school. It was clear that this still haunted her, because her face would get that far away look when she spoke of it, and she would say that someone needs to check into those children, see where they are buried and let their families know.

My own experiences with the Sisters involved minor physical abuse and a lot of emotional abuse—but I went home every afternoon to a family who loved me. By the time I graduated I was fed up with the craziness of nuns who were more concerned about our wearing our uniforms with no visible make-up or jewelry than they were about our academic or true spiritual well-being. But there was one nun, an older nun, for whom I retained my respect—Sister Kathleen. When I

described her to my friend, her face lit up and she said, “I remember her! She was the only one who was nice to us. She was so nice that they moved her and took her away from us.”

Because I had had no actual awareness of the Indian Residential Schools, I had no idea what my partner Charles Redhead was talking about when he would first start to mention his experiences. Charlie was sent away from his home in Shamattawa when he was four years old. He said he remembers going with his grandfather by canoe for a few days to the rail line and then taking the train to Isaac McKay Residential School in Dauphin, a place that was completely foreign to him. His older brother and sister were there too, but he was not allowed to talk to them as his brother was older and his sisters and other girls were separated from the boys by a fence. And besides, he got hit and beaten when he spoke Ininew, the only language that he knew.

Later in life as a young man, he ended up in jail at Stony Mountain Federal Penitentiary. When he was speaking to the mandatory psychiatrists and mental health workers, at first he told them about his childhood, but they didn't believe him. They told him he was hallucinating because something like that could never have really happened. Not in Canada they said. They labelled him as being delusional. So he stopped talking. He said no one ever believed him or any of the others. In jail the ones who had been in the schools would talk, because they understood each other. But others, not even their own families, believed or understood even if they did try to tell them.

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The individual stories of many survivors and victims and of their families from across Canada of chronic physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as forced labour are finally being documented through individuals' stories and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC Chair, The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, has repeatedly said that while the individual abuses were horrifically traumatic to the individuals, their families, and communities,

that the actual action of legislated removal of generations of children from their communities and placement into forced indoctrination camps is the greatest crime (2012). He also states that that has been merely one phase within a 500-year history of colonial attempts at assimilation.

Initially, in their data-gathering stages, the TRC did not publicly use the “G” word of genocide in their final report. However, while the final report is not yet complete, when Justice Sinclair speaks publicly about the findings within the TRC he has increasingly used the term genocide and genocidal intent in relation to Canada’s use of IRSs (Puxley 2012; Sol Kanee Lecture 2014; Sinclair & Murray 2014). Even the TRC’s interim reports indicate that their findings can be considered consistent with at least the fifth definition (e) of genocide in the 1949 United Nations Convention on Genocide:

Article 2

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (1948)

Clearly, the residential schools forcibly removed and transferred children of one group (Indian and other Native communities) to another group (non-Natives), and thus were weapons of genocide as per the UN Convention. Tragically, as the schools were shut down, the CFS system stepped in to continue the forced removals of First Nations children to another group through placements in non-Aboriginal foster and residential care (Judge Sinclair, Sol Kanee Lecture 2014).

History of CFS in Manitoba and Northern First Nations

From a European-based perspective, child protective services as a formalized system began in the 1800s in Europe and quickly spread to Canada's urban centres. Europe's histories of feudalism (including serfdom), paternalism and poverty and then displacement from the Industrial Revolution lead to child labour, with many children used as literal or virtual slave labour, and many neglected and abused children which then led to the need for child protective services. European-based child protection services originated almost 200 years ago to save children from abuse and neglect. Native children however were rarely, if ever, in contact with child protection services until the mid-1900s due to the physical distances between the Europeanized cities and the Native communities in Manitoba and Canada, and the fact that most Native children were being interned into the residential schools (Fournier and Crey 1997).

So how is it possible that a system such as child protection that developed out of genuine concern for European children's wellbeing, led to such catastrophic results for Aboriginal families, including aspects of it being identified as committing genocide by Family Court judge Kimelman (1985)? Is it because all aspects of the European-based governments and society and their relationships with First Nations and other Aboriginal people were based in forms of oppression? There is little disagreement that the history of Child and Family Services (CFS) as it pertains to First Nations is enmeshed within the history of colonization that has been imposed across Canada. First Nations in Manitoba have had a colonial system of government and justice imposed by the colonizers "without due regard to ... treaty and Aboriginal rights" and child welfare services has been included in this oppressive relationship (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) Vol. 1 1991, 1).

The AJI paints a history of the child welfare system that is devastating:

The intrusion by child welfare authorities in the past has been paternalistic and colonial in nature, condescending and demeaning in fact, and often insensitive and brutal to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal children have been taken from their families, communities and societies, first by the residential school system and later by the child welfare system. Both systems have left Aboriginal people and their societies severely damaged. (AJI Vol. 1, 1991)

Even two provincial court judges, who presided over the AJI, identified first the IRSs and then the government department of child welfare as being intrusive, paternalistic and part of the overall colonization process.

After World War II, as Social Work began to develop into a recognized profession, countless survivors of the schools were returning to their communities completely unprepared for family life or parenting. They had no experience of any form of family or emotional attachment, and they were returned to their own cultures unable to even communicate with their own parents and families due to the loss of their language through a variety of reasons: being punished for speaking their language, never hearing their language, being isolated from their families sometimes for years. In addition, almost all were brutalized in the schools and returned as broken individuals filled with untreated and even denied trauma (Morissette 1994; Dussault 2007; TRC 2012; Sinha & Kozlowsky 2013). These victims became parents and their abilities to parent were often sorely lacking which led to children who could be found in need of child protective services (Fournier and Crey 1997; AMC 2014).

These factors worked together to shift the assimilation of Indian children from the IRSs to the child welfare system. Social services and child protective services were rapidly developing in general society, but there had been minimal contact between mainstream society and Aboriginal communities until some of the survivors of residential schools were so alienated from their own communities that they went to towns and cities instead of going home, albeit often losing their

Treaty rights and unprepared for gainful employment and not welcomed into mainstream social circles. It was also in the 1960 that the Indian Act was amended to “allow” Treaty Status Indians to live off-reserve, away from their communities. And the living conditions within the reserves was often so abysmal that in 1947 the new social work profession through both the Canadian Welfare Council and the Canadian Association of Social Workers, identified in a submission to a committee of both the Senate and the House of Commons who had been appointed to consider changes to the Indian Act the need to provide services on-reserve that were compatible with non-Native communities (Johnston 1983, 2-3; AJI 1991).

There was also an emerging awareness of some of the abuses and tragedies within the schools, and, in an effort to divert attention, the government began to place Indian children in the new social services placements instead of the schools. The social workers’ Council and Association’s 1947 submission to the federal joint committee also recommended that the residential schools be stopped and so the natural step was to route the children through child welfare instead. Sadly, Indian people of all ages were already wards of the government through the Indian Act, meaning that they were not citizens of Canada, but “wards,” such as prisoners and mentally incompetent people who cannot take care of themselves. So it was very simple for the government to assume further control of the children through apprehensions and even adoptions into non-Native families.

The social workers’ Council and Association’s submission to the joint federal committee that was looking into the Indian Act identified that Indian children were far more easily adopted than non-Indians because the government social workers did not have to prove to the courts that the children and families’ rights were being upheld in the same way as they did for non-Indian children and families. In other words, the Canadian government was the legally recognized

guardian of all status Indians from birth to death anyways, and so it was a simple step to assume even greater ward-ship over Indian children, and to make decisions for and over Indian parents without even taking the parents' wishes into account since they had no rights in the first place.

There were, however, some obstacles to child protective services being provided on-reserve. Generally, in Canada, social services were administered and predominantly paid for by the provincial governments. However s. 91(24) of *The British North America Act of 1867* had (unilaterally) assumed "exclusive constitutional authority over "Indians and lands reserved for Indians" and "the *Indian Act* reinforced this exclusive federal jurisdiction" (AJI 1991). The federal government had a higher level of authority than any provinces as they ruled the provinces, and therefore the provinces had no jurisdiction on-reserve. There were also no cost-sharing arrangements between the federal and provincial governments in social services which would have left the federal government covering the whole costs on-reserve (Bourassa 2010).

There was an overall federal strategy of assimilating Indian bands and reserves into the mainstream structures in Canada in areas such as education, policing and social services as evidenced by the federal government amendment of s. 88 "the *Indian Act* to allow "all laws of general application ... in force in any province" to apply as well to Indians both on- and off-reserve" (AJI 1991). Tragically, while the federal government tried to push responsibility for services on-reserve onto the provinces (with no input or agreement from the bands), they were not willing to provide the provinces with any financial support.

Thus, the federal and provincial governments tried to pass responsibilities back and forth between themselves, all the while leaving Indian status children and families usually without services (both on and off-reserve) unless it had reached a life and death situation (Bourassa 2010), at a time of great social upheaval and trauma due to the effects of the IRSs. Survivors had been

coming home and bringing their traumatic experiences with them as well as their deep alienation from their families, communities and cultures and completely unprepared to either parent or survive by traditional means (Bourassa 2010; Fournier and Crey 1997). They had been raised in institutions that had predominantly been abusive, and they were not trained to be parents or to provide for their families by the only means available on-reserve by living with the land.

“The need to institutionalize former pupils’ children, was in itself “a commentary on the effects of the residential schools, as these parents were now the second or third generation of former pupils (Armitage)” (Fournier and Crey 1997, p, 82). The Hawthorn Report of 1966 found that “the situation varies from unsatisfactory to appalling” (AJI 1991) and it also recommended that “Indians should be induced to accept” the child welfare services (Johnston 1983, 3) even though they had not even been consulted.

Again with absolutely no consultation with Indian bands, the federal government attempted to expand child protection services, by signing “an agreement with the provinces to share the costs of extending social services under the Canada Assistance Plan” (AJI 1991). The unilateral nature of the plan was evident in that there were no attempts to even consider the cultural and social realities of Indian people. For example, there was no understanding of the traditional methods of extended families working to care for children and too often children were apprehended simply for not residing with their parents. In fact, traditionally, grandparents and others had often *chosen* to raise certain children to provide them with intense training in the culture as an honour and way of preserving the culture and traditional ways. There were also no Indian workers hired which meant that outsiders with little if any knowledge of the communities came in and rapidly assessed situations by Euro-Canadian upper-class standards which advocated for the removal of children not only for protective reasons, but also punitively against un-wed mothers, or parents living in

poverty and considered to be failing to adequately provide for their children by non-Indian standards.

The IRSs lay the ground work for ongoing removal of Indian children by shattering the core of the social system, through the children's removal as a group from their heritage and identity. CFS not only continued this form of assimilationist colonization but increased its "effectiveness". IRSs often only had the children for ten months of the year, and the children were housed together with peers, and usually they at least knew who their parents, families and communities were and that eventually they might go home. Within CFS, the children were removed as individuals or sibling groups, often as infants from the hospital, and almost always placed as individuals in faraway homes of completely different cultures, with no information about who their parents are or even their birth names, or their siblings, and they often lost their Treaty status and any knowledge of where they came from (Fournier and Crey, 1997, 81).

For the children who were adopted out of their communities and cultures, their identity was completely voided from their lives. The number of adopted children who later reported extreme abuses is still being documented. But even those who did not suffer direct abuse at the hands of their adoptive or long-term foster care homes suffered the loss of their entire identity and culture (Fournier and Crey 1997, 89).

First Nations communities were fertile ground for the extension of social workers into their world and of course, the social workers were mainstream people from middle and upper classes who assessed Indian children according to their own privileged and European-rooted values. The numbers of children being removed escalated and continued to grow exponentially with so many children being removed that the era later became known as "the Sixties Scoop" by analyst Patrick

Johnston¹ (1983). According to nation-wide statistics, the proportion of Aboriginal children being in care went from less than 1 percent in 1960 to between 30-40 percent nationally by the end of the decade (Bourassa 2010, 15). Richard Vedan stated that “there is not a single First Nations family or community that has not been affected by the child welfare practices ... known as the Sixties Scoop (Sinclair et al 2009, 15)

The children were removed from their families and almost exclusively placed away from their people with non-Native families either as foster children or adopted into families of the foreign cultures. While the intentions may have been to protect children and “save them”, history has shown that more children were harmed than protected. Survivors of the foster care system reported abuses in large numbers and eighty-five to ninety percent of adoptions broke down (Sinclair 2007). In some communities, up to ninety percent of the children were placed “in care” (Fournier and Crey 1997).

By the 1970s and 1980s, the first generation of children removed through the child protection systems were now adults and beginning to tell their stories. Backlash started to grow against the system from the Aboriginal leadership, the public and some social workers as well as some courts. Associate Chief Judge Kimelman oversaw an inquiry into the child welfare system and concluded “that the Aboriginal leaders were right; the child welfare system was guilty of ‘cultural genocide’” due to so many First Nations children being adopted not only out of their

¹ Note: The term “sixties scoop” gained attention in Patrick Johnston’s 1983 iconic report *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*, however Johnston attributes the term to an anonymous social worker in BC’s Ministry of Human Resources (23). It is significant that it was a worker who was directly involved in working for one of the systems responsible for the gross number of removals of Aboriginal children in that it can be an example of professionals own personal awareness of the travesties that our own systems and actions may be or are perpetuating.

communities, but out of the province into the USA and all around the world (AJI Implementation Commission 2001; Bourassa 2010).

Even Patrick Johnston's 1983 report for the government funded Canadian Council on Social Development identified that there were those who believed that the loss of children in such great numbers was "a new wrinkle in the process of colonization that that has characterized the treatment of Native people since Europeans first arrived on this continent" (24) and as a further phase of the colonization that the IRSs enacted. "Those who hold to this view argue that the Sixties Scoop was not coincidental; it was a consequence of fewer Indian children being sent to residential schools and of the child welfare system emerging as the new method of colonization" (Johnston 1983, 24) which continued well into the 1970's and beyond. Johnston estimated that in 1980, 56 percent of children in care in Manitoba and 48.7 percent of children adopted were of Aboriginal descent (1983, 42), while comprising 12 percent of the population.

In March 1982, Manitoba Family Court Associate Chief Judge Edwin Kimelman had been appointed by the provincial government to chair a Review Committee on Indian and Métis Adoptions and Placements to "examine the Manitoba child welfare system particularly as that system related to the adoption and foster home placement of children of Aboriginal ancestry" (2). In his 1983-4 Interim Report, the province's own Justice identified an urgent need to maintain the government's 1982 moratorium on adoptions and also clearly supported the 1982 statements from Indian and Métis representatives that the placement of their children outside of Manitoba is cultural genocide (5).

Kimelman (1985) also identified that as recent as 1981 that 25 percent of children adopted were placed outside of the province, and over 86 percent of these were Aboriginal children. Also, 55 percent of all Treaty children placed were sent out of province with 40 percent Métis and 7

percent Caucasian. Fifty-four of the fifty-five children placed in the USA were Aboriginal. He even specifically attacked the province's repeated excuse that these were "special needs placements" and responded that the province needed to develop appropriate placements within Manitoba (6 – 7).

Public awareness of the growing problems, led to some First Nations clamouring for the opportunity to take care of their own children and protective services. Fort Alexander (Sagkeeng First Nation) was the first, and others followed within their tribal council groups. Tri-partite agreements were signed between the bands and the provincial government of Manitoba who like all provinces, had jurisdiction over child welfare, and Indian Affairs, who had jurisdiction over Treaty and Status Indians as per the Indian Act. Services on-reserve began to be provided by local workers with the assistance of regional workers and in Northern Manitoba, every community was serviced by the Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba. Services on-reserve were provided by Awasis Agency, with the funding from Indian Affairs Department in the federal government of Canada and the legislation and power to apprehend granted by the province of Manitoba. Off-reserve First Nations people continued to be under the jurisdiction of the provincial CFS system.

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry

It was at this time in the 1980s, when Indian Bands were beginning to resume care of their own children, that the groundbreaking endeavor Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) was created by the Province of Manitoba in response to Aboriginal and public outrage against too many 'justice' travesties. Its mandate was to examine the province's criminal justice system, and yet it wasted no time in identifying the devastating role that colonization had as the cause for the concerns, and its widespread effects beyond the justice system to all related areas including child welfare.

The Commissioners own first statement was ground-shaking: “The justice system has failed Manitoba’s Aboriginal people on a massive scale” (1991). The very first actual statement in Chapter One of the AJI is a quote from Chief Ovide Mecredi which directly refers to the imposition of a “colonial system of government and justice upon our people without due regard to our treaty and Aboriginal rights.” It speaks directly to the unfairness of the government’s actions towards Aboriginal people: “We respect law that is fair and just, but we cannot be faulted for denouncing those laws that degrade our humanity and rights as distinct peoples” (1991).

At the time that it was released in 1991, the fact that the AJI publicly identified colonialism within Canada was a first. The fact that it was stated by two provincial judges, appointed by and within a Canadian province’s justice system was even more dramatic and impactful. The fact that they clearly and unequivocally identified the travesties of justice within the so-called justice system to systemic oppression of colonization was also a first:

It is not merely that the justice system has failed Aboriginal people; justice also has been denied to them. For more than a century the rights of Aboriginal people have been ignored and eroded. The result of this denial has been injustice of the most profound kind. Poverty and powerlessness have been the Canadian legacy to a people who once governed their own affairs in full self-sufficiency. (AJI 1991, 1)

More than twenty years later, the statements within the AJI that identify the ravages of colonialism are still applicable, and very few of its radical recommendations have been brought into reality.

The History of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and its Process

The AJI was created by the Manitoba government in response to growing public pressure about the justice system’s treatment of Aboriginal people, in general, and two significant tragedies, in particular: The brutal rape, beating and murder of nineteen year old Helen Betty Osborne and the police shooting of an unarmed Tribal Council Director, J.J. Harper. The death in 1971 of Helen

Betty Osborne, a young Inineew student from Norway House who was living in The Pas to attend high school since there was no high school in her home community was devastating, but was all the more upsetting because it took over fifteen years to be actually investigated by the police.

One evening, while walking home to her student placement home, Betty was abducted, beaten, repeatedly sexually assaulted, and killed by screwdriver stabs. The AJI states that even though the identities of the four non-Native killers were “known widely in the local community shortly after the murder,” no charges were brought forward by the RCMP because the townspeople would not go on record to name the perpetrators in order to bring justice to Betty’s death (Priest 1990). After a vocal campaign from northern Native women, in the mid-1980s, the RCMP began to re-investigate. It was not until 1987, that the four men who were involved in the murder were officially identified, and only one was charged and convicted of murder, another was acquitted, a third was granted immunity for his testimony, and the fourth was never charged (AJI 1991).

In 1988, a second pivotal tragedy occurred, this time in the City of Winnipeg. On March 9th, a Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) constable shot and killed a middle-aged Aboriginal man walking down Logan Avenue while they were chasing after three much younger Aboriginal males with different clothing and different descriptions. The police constable was then exonerated less than twenty-four hours after the death (Sinclair 2000). While it was common for the WPS to not differentiate between Aboriginal people in their chases and arrests, this time their error became public because the victim, J.J. Harper who was shot by police, was also the Executive Director of Island Lake Tribal Council. His family and co-workers were very politically connected within Aboriginal circles and pressed for answers that were short in coming.

These two tragedies of brutal death at the hands of non-Natives with highly questionable responses from the justice systems, were not uncommon occurrences in Manitoba. However,

because of the resulting advocacy, these pivotal incidents—the killing of Helen Betty Osborne and J.J. Harper—became public tragedies that symbolized the relationships between Aboriginal people and society at-large and various aspects of the justice system, including police, the courts, the prisons, and the related child and family services. In 1988, the Manitoba government enacted a statute that resulted in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and Justices Alan Hamilton and Murray Sinclair were appointed as the Inquiry’s commissioners.

The justices broke new ground when they specifically decided to broaden the scope of the Inquiry to directly include Aboriginal people at the community level. They ensured that the very people whose lives were most affected by the injustices within the systems had clear opportunities to speak and be heard. They also held hearings in seven other communities and within five correctional institutions. Over 123 days, there were more than 1,200 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal presenters, including individuals and representatives of organizations and government. No time limit was imposed on the people who publicly spoke. These oral presentations generated 21,000 pages of transcripts, and additional written submissions were received as well.

The AJI commissioned research projects, such as surveys and specialized reports by experts, and they “wanted to utilize a process that would encourage frank and open expressions of opinion” (AJI 1991, 5). They also wanted to ensure that the results were easily accessible as evidenced by producing not only three volumes within the report, but a video presentation as well, with versions in English, Cree, Ojibway, Island Lake Oji-Cree dialect, Dakota, and Dene.

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry’s Relationship to Child and Family Services

CFS was directly related to the context of the AJI due to a vividly clear correlation between children who were raised within CFS who then ended up involved with the criminal justice system.

The Commission recognized that the destructiveness of the CFS led to so many Aboriginal people into the criminal justice system and even prior to the AJI, Aboriginal people spoke openly about the CFS replacing the residential schools, and how both systems institutionalized children so severely, that going to jail was the next logical phase of life. The AJI (1991) confirmed this when it reported that the presenters saw the inter-relatedness of the child welfare and justice systems;

Clients' of one system frequently become 'clients' of the other system. It would be impossible to present a complete picture of the criminal justice system, and the youth justice system, without also analyzing the field of child and family services. (AJI 1991, 510)

Many First Nations leaders had sarcastically commented that the IRSs and/or CFS have been the training ground for later jail time and involvement in the criminal justice system. While non-Natives go to public school and then university, Natives graduate from IRS or CFS into prison.

The Inquiry illustrated how it was the common factor of colonialist oppression that affected both the criminal justice system and the CFS system.

No analysis of the justice system can be complete without understanding the devastating effect these relations, guided by government policies, have had on Aboriginal families. For many Aboriginal societies, existing child welfare practices have ranked as a major destructive force to their families, communities and cultures. (AJI 1991)

The oppressive colonialist-based lack of control over all of their lives, families, destinies and even their very own children, was the crucial wedge that was constantly driven into the people.

The AJI described the development of general Canadian child protective services and also the fact that within Aboriginal communities it developed very differently. The commissioners identified that historically there was a wide chasm of misunderstanding between the colonizers and the Aboriginal people, firstly, over the European assumption that they were superior to Aboriginal people. It was the Christian religious assumption that they were superior that led the

Europeans to believe that they needed to “civilize” the Indians if they were to have any success at converting them to their Christian religions, and the commissioners showed how this belief impacted the development of CFS within Aboriginal communities.

Child-rearing was also an example of the chasm of misunderstanding that allowed the Europeans to declare the need to civilize Indians. They could not understand why or how Indian children were allowed to live with fewer restrictions than the Christian Europeans, and that the children were not beaten for “misbehaviours” as per Christian teachings of the time. As the AJI put it, “Eventually, the cause of ‘civilizing’ Aboriginal people to European cultures and values evolved into the government policy of ‘assimilation,’ and education became ‘the primary vehicle in the civilization and advancement of the Indian race’” (AJI 1991, 513). Thus, as part of a wider movement of assuming control over Indians’ lives, cultures, and governments; Europeans assumed an assimilationist and purely controlling relationship over Indians as wards under their control, and, in particular, over their children.

The AJI (1991) publicly and clearly emphasized the correlations between the IRSs and the child welfare system, a system which also uses the language of “protecting children” and “best interests of the child”:

The child welfare system was doing essentially the same thing with Aboriginal children that the residential schools had done. It removed Aboriginal children from their families, communities and cultures, and placed them in mainstream society. Child welfare workers removed Aboriginal children from their families and communities because they felt the best homes for the children were not Aboriginal homes. The ideal home would instil the values and lifestyles with which the child welfare workers themselves were familiar: white, middle-class homes in white, middle-class neighbourhoods. Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal parents and families were deemed to be “unfit.” As a result, between 1971 and 1981 alone, over 3,400 Aboriginal children were shipped away to adoptive parents in other societies, and sometimes in other countries.

Gradually, as education ceased to function as the institutional agent of colonization, the child welfare system took its place. It could continue to remove Native children from their parents, devalue Native custom and traditions in the process, but still act “in the best interests of the child.” Those who hold to this view argue that the Sixties Scoop was not coincidental; it was a consequence of fewer Indian children being sent to residential school and of the child welfare system emerging as the new method of colonization. (AJI 1991, 519-20)

It is critical to note that these statements in 1991 not only identified that CFS was continuing the IRSs’ intentional and systemic removal of Aboriginal children from their families, identities and lands, but also that these statements were made by two justices, who had been commissioned by the province of Manitoba. These were not “radical Aboriginal leaders” who were regularly discounted, but two university educated men, one Anishinaabe and one of European descent, actually appointed by the very government who was an agent of these assimilationist processes. Others have also supported the AJI’s findings. Fournier and Crey (1997) identified McKenzie and Hudson’s 1992 report which found that the CFS system was removing children not for individual protection needs of neglect or abuse, but rather more as “a ‘form of continuing colonization as a part of a deliberate assault on Native society designed to make changes in Native people.’ {...} The only hope for salvation of the Indian people lay in the removal of their children” (88).

In Manitoba, the results of all of these tragedies was very strongly felt because it had the highest proportion of Aboriginal people within its population (12 percent) and in Northern Manitoba, Aboriginals constituted at least 61 percent of the population (AJI 1991). All across the country and definitely within Manitoba, the almost exclusive form of child protection “services” was the apprehension of children from their families only after severe protection issues were believed to have occurred (Johnston 1983, 11), meaning no preventive services were provided,

and then automatic placement away from their communities, languages and cultures into non-Native places.

While some of these were foster placements (temporary or permanent), “permanency” planning was the goal, and therefore many children were legally adopted out to non-Native families. And hundreds were placed not only far away from home within Manitoba, but many were sent to other provinces, the United States, and even around the world. And Manitoba had the highest number of children adopted into the U.S. (Fournier and Crey 1997, 89).

There was no publicity for years and years about the brutalization of our families and children by the larger Canadian society. Kidnapping was called placement in foster homes. Exporting Aboriginal children to the U.S. was called preparing Indian children for the future. Parents who were heartbroken by the destruction of their families were written off as incompetent people. (Anthony Woods, AJI 1991, 519)

Anthony Wood of God’s River described to the AJI (1991) his experiences and viewed CFS as committing criminal acts of kidnapping. The AJI also identified a theme throughout Judge Kimelman’s 1985 report about

the cultural misconceptions held by child care workers about Aboriginal people and about the way they raised their children. “Cultural bias in the child welfare system,” Chief Judge Kimelman concluded, “is practiced at every level from the social worker who works directly with the family, through the lawyers who represent the various parties in a custody case, to the judges who make the final disposition in the case. (1991, 525)

Kimelman (1985) also reminded the province that Aboriginal families were actively coming forward to provide homes for these children through the newly forming Tri-Partite Indian CFS agencies and that this was an opportunity for the province to lead the way for the rest of the provinces to find placements within culturally appropriate homes on-reserve and within tribal communities (8–10), but history shows that not enough children were placed back in their communities.

Tri-Partite Child and Family Services Agreements

In 1966, a small tri-partite agreement was signed with fourteen reserves in east-central Manitoba, while the other forty-five bands were left with minimal services from the province. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were a few Indian bands that began to provide their own child welfare services on-reserve such as Fort Alexander/Sagkeeng in southern Manitoba and Spallumcheen Indian Band in BC whose Band By-Law slipped into existence because the Minister of Indian Affairs ignored their request, which led to its acceptance through the back door. Manitoba's Indian political organization, Four Nations Confederacy which represented all the bands in the province, signed a tri-partite agreement on February 22, 1982, so that reserve communities could start providing their own child protection services. Johnston identifies that it was fitting that this was the most "comprehensive and significant development" with regard to Indian child welfare, since it was in Manitoba that the child welfare services provided to Aboriginal people was the most traumatic (1983, 109).

This was especially true in northern Manitoba where the bands did not have anywhere near the quality or quantity of child welfare services that the bands in the south had. Even in 1982, the only services in most northern communities were reactive services after severe protection concerns came about (Johnston 1983, 110) and the normal response was apprehension of the children out of the community. There were no services of any kind of a preventive nature or to offer alternatives to removing the child from the family and community.

The Manitoba Indian Child Welfare Subcommittee was established in 1977 and developed the plans for an approach that included provincially funded forty-six local worker positions within the communities, and six positions at the Tribal Council level to complement the fifteen federally

funded positions. It was an agreement in principle that promoted the need for communities to assume control of their own children's protection work with funding from both the federal and provincial coffers.

However, due to the Northern Chiefs' deep distrust of the federal government's willingness to hand over so much responsibility to the provincial government, the province-wide Manitoba Indian Brotherhood divided into the northern Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) and the southern First Nations Confederacy. The two distinct political organizations signed separate tripartite agreements, with MKO signing theirs on February 22, 1982 (Awasis Agency Website 2013), with the southern bands further splitting politically in order to represent their people's more specific local needs. The twenty-four bands in northern Manitoba however, broke away to manage their own political needs in all areas and they developed their own tri-partite agreement-based child welfare services in the form of the Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba.

Even during the formation of the tri-partite agreements, there were many concerns about the process such as the fact that the ultimate authority remains with the province. The laws (legislation) that dictate the definitions of child protection and the processes of intervention (regulations and standards) are developed solely by the province (Bourassa 2010). The court that grants the orders that allow for children in need of protection to be moved to safety away from at-risk situations is a provincial court of a European format, philosophy and objectives.

The fact that the provincial government retains all of the power was of great concern for a number of reasons. First, Indian bands considered themselves to still be sovereign nations as recognized in the 1763 Royal Proclamation, and which were then recognized in the treaty, which by definition was a nation-to-nation process. Indian bands had signed the Treaties with the Crown of England, which was later transferred to the Crown in Right of Canada, but the nation-to-nation

process was to be maintained (Robinson and Quinney 1985; Bourassa 2010). The transfer agreements through the Canada Assistance Plan that the federal government enacted with the provinces in 1966 was completely without Indian input let alone any form of agreement. The Bands wanted to maintain this bi-lateral process as much as possible because otherwise they were becoming integrated into the federal-provincial-municipal structures which was the specific goal of the federal government's infamous 1969 White Paper (AJI 1991).

The federal government was more than happy to pass on the responsibility for CFS to the province at the expense of the historical nation-to-nation process. But the fact that the provincial government maintained authority and jurisdiction through the Child and Family Services Act as well as the provincial court system that manages child protection services was of immediate concern to Indian bands. The language of the laws and courts, the philosophy of the laws and courts, and the standards involved, are all European-initiated phenomenon. There are so many distinct differences that it is virtually impossible to simply "translate" child and family services into any Aboriginal concept, language or philosophy. Fortunately, there were many dedicated Local Workers who were able to begin some informal changes at the community levels, but challenges still remained.

Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission

The AJI (1991) reported that while there was significant progress in CFS on-reserve, that there was still a lot of work to be done on-reserve and especially off-reserve. As more and more reserve residents left their communities due to housing shortages, unemployment, lack of required medical services and education, the numbers of First Nations families receiving provincial services continued to grow, with over half of all First Nations people under CFS still completely within the

provincial system. Thousands of NFN children were still being placed in non-Native homes by the off-reserve non-Native agencies and even by the on-reserve Aboriginal agencies.

After its release in 1991, the AJI report was basically shelved by the provincial Conservative party who had assumed power. It took until the NDP were re-elected in 1999 that any of the recommendations were even considered. This took the form of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (AJIC) which in 1999 examined all areas of the AJI and updated its recommendations. It's focus however was on the provincial departments that were identified with the AJI as well as the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) and the Framework Agreements that called for the dismantling of the Department of Indian Affairs that were under discussion between the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the federal government. Thus while the mandate was to have the pertinent Manitoba departments provide their own progress updates as per the AJI recommendations, there was inevitably a large amount of overlap with the federal jurisdictions including many AJIC joint recommendations.

The Commissioners, Paul Chartrand, Wendy Whitecloud and the Elders Eva McKay and Doris Young, identified child welfare as one of ten priorities, and there were three themes found within the priorities: Aboriginal rights, reform of the justice system and the need for preventive measures. Reconciliation appears to be the key principle with Aboriginal rights that applies to child welfare. With regard to reform, all aspects apply such as greater Aboriginal participation within all aspects of the system, greater awareness of the government systems' impacts on Aboriginal people, improvement of economic and social conditions of Aboriginal people, with "a particular focus of services and programs" for children, youth and families (AJIC 2001).

The AJIC determined that the appalling conditions that the AJI illuminated, had not improved, and in many instances, had deteriorated, particularly with regard to the youth, and planning for the

future. “The young people in Manitoba's Aboriginal communities are at risk. The choices facing the people of Manitoba are stark: invest today in programs to strengthen families, young people, and communities; or make future investments in jails and courthouses” (2001). The AJIC (2001) gave tremendous emphasis on the needs of children, youth and families and directly said that they consider “families and Child Welfare to be a high priority”. The Implementation Commission also supported the AJI’s identification of the fact that colonization is very inter-related with a number of systems such as education, criminal justice and CFS.

In the AJIC’s recommendations specific to child welfare, it recognized that the Child Protector Office that the AJI had recommended was basically established, under the name of the Office of the Children’s Advocate and there was an increase in the number of First Nations mandated CFS agencies. It also noted that the recommendations for a Winnipeg Aboriginal agency and an agency for Métis had not been developed. Thus, the AJIC recommended that there be further development of political agreements for Aboriginal agencies and noted that the time was ripe as it was also consistent with the recommendations of the RCAP, the Framework Agreements, and internationally such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child (AJIC 2001).

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT:

THE ABORIGINAL JUSTICE INQUIRY – CHILD WELFARE INITIATIVE SYSTEM IN RELATION TO MANITOBA’S NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry–Child Welfare Initiative

In response to the recommendation of the AJIC, the Province of Manitoba developed a process to implement a new form of child protective services, called the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child

Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI). It was a joint initiative that had the province working with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) and the Manitoba Métis Federation to develop a plan to restructure the child welfare system in Manitoba. Its inclusion of the Métis was a first, and its other primary goal was to establish authority for First Nations agencies to expand their CFS services to their members who were off-reserve.

Each of the three Aboriginal governing organizations signed a Memoranda of Understanding with MKO, who represented the Northern First Nations, signing on July 20th, 2000. They then each signed the Child and Family Services Protocol to expand their off-reserve authority and to “restructure the existing child care system through legislative and other changes” (AJI-CWI Website 2013). All four parties united under the Joint Management Committee (JMC) to develop the planned changes and used sub-committees and working groups, and set terms of reference.

Its vision included developing a system that recognizes and supports the rights of children to develop within safe and healthy families and communities, and “recognizes that First Nation and Métis peoples have unique authority, rights and responsibilities to honour and care for their children” with a corresponding mission “to have a jointly coordinated child and family services system with three distinct mandates (First Nation, Métis and non-Aboriginal); that is community-based; and reflects and incorporates the cultures of First Nation, Métis, and non-Aboriginal peoples” (AJI-CWI Website 2013). It is important to note that it was evident within MKO’s and Grand Chief Francis Flett’s understanding that the AJI-CWI was viewed as one step in a greater overall process of full jurisdiction in CFS (MKO Letter, AJI-CWI Website 2013).

The JMC was intent on public input and this included twelve Town Hall Meetings and there were focus groups in some communities, and interested groups and individuals were able to send in written statements. It appears that the JMC attempted to receive a lot of feedback, but it

appears that in reality there was very little communication with the actual Northern First Nations (NFNs). When working within various NFNs even three to five years after the AJI-CWI was already operating, not only did the stakeholders such as foster parents, youth in care and parents have no idea that there was a new structure, but even some of the agency workers and political leadership on-reserve were completely unfamiliar with the new system.

A key aspect of the new system was the development of the four new CFS authorities which are commonly referred to as the General, Southern, Métis and Northern which came into force November 24, 2003 under the new legislation of The Child and Family Services Authorities Act. All of the authorities were created to not deliver CFS services directly, but rather to provide administration and support services to the agencies. (AJI-CWI Website 2013)

This is an example of mainstream-style good intentions that miss the boat completely when it comes to NFNs.

A rather unique feature of the AJI-CWI is the Authority Determination Process—that is, families who receive CFS services are slated under the authority that represents their culture rather than where they live. In most CFS systems the family's location determines which agency will respond as it is dependent solely on mapped out boundaries. With the AJI-CWI however, the family's identity generally takes priority over their physical location. For example, a family with membership in a NFN can receive services from the agency that their First Nation has agreed to use, even if the family lives in Thompson or Winnipeg.. And if they live in another rural area they can still opt for courtesy case management services from the local area's agency that are under the actual case management responsibility of their own First Nation's agency. This is unique in that the family's identity takes full priority over the family's location and is an attempt to honour people's cultural ties and rights that supersede geography.

It appears that hopes and aspirations were very high at the time that the AJI-CWI came into effect and the files were transferred from provincial agencies such as Winnipeg CFS to the First Nations and Métis authorities. There were a lot of hopes and plans for CFS services that were rooted in ways that were consistent with the unique ways of NFNs including kinship and customary care. There was a clear premise that “children are ‘a gift from the Creator and are our future’, the family, extended families and community are the first who can offer assistance when families need temporary help” (Letter from Northern Authority CEO Diane Kematch, AJI-CWI Website 2005). There was even the belief that in this new system that the authorities could effect change, meaning that they could determine “culturally appropriate changes to the existing provincial system that will strengthen and support our caregivers” (AJI-CWI Website 2005).

However, the results have been less than anticipated. Individual concerns, and systemic changes that have increased the role of the province, rather than the First Nations and their agencies, are beginning to surface. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has begun holding open forums for anyone to speak out, and in their hand out they say:

The Province of Manitoba has taken a different direction [than the intents of the AJI-CWI]. The unfortunate and tragic deaths of Phoenix Sinclair and other First Nations children in care, and the resultant backlash by the media and Opposition parties has made the Province appear to back away from the AJI-CWI model. Instead, the Province of Manitoba increasingly imposes its own child welfare system and procedures without engaging First Nations. This system is structured in apprehending children rather than supporting and rebuilding families as was envisioned by First Nations and Métis leadership. (AMC 2014)

The AMC is referring to the current system’s ongoing removal of children from their families and the weakening of community-based input and leadership and is so concerned that they have held open forums and meetings with the authorities and agencies, and appear determined to examine the current system’s strengths and shortcomings.

Social Work Perspective of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative

So what exactly are the results of these political, legal and social changes that the AJI-CWI brought to Manitoba? How has it impacted the lives of the children, families, workers, agencies and First Nations leadership? In order to answer this, there will be some personal examples identified within my experiences that will be included within the Findings Chapter. To understand the structural realities within the AJI-CWI, it is necessary to present my own experiences within a context perspective as well.

It is necessary to briefly explain how the CFS works. It is a legally mandated services through Manitoba's Child and Family Services Act (1985) intended to protect children from harm from others or themselves, and supposedly in culturally appropriate ways. The Manitoba government says that the primary purpose of the CFS system is to:

- protect children who are at risk of abuse or neglect
- support and strengthen the well-being of families throughout the province, particularly those having difficulty caring for their children
- provide safe, loving and nurturing care for children when their families are unable to provide care. (Changes for Children, 2010)

This statement is indicative of the nice-sounding terms in the CFS Act (1985) and the CFS Authorities Act (2005) that make it seem like everything can work nicely to keep children safe and to do so in a culturally compatible way that honours children's needs including cultural.

These intents to honour children, families and Aboriginal culture are even found right within the Declaration of Principles that introduce Manitoba's CFS Act (1985) (Appendix #1). It immediately focuses attention on the "safety, security and well-being of children and [that] their best interests are fundamental responsibilities of society". The family and its right to "least interference" is identified as paramount to not only the child but society as well. It is expressly

stated that families have the right to preventive and supportive services rather than automatic removal. It also identifies the importance of cultural and linguistic heritage (but does not identify them as rights). It also identified the responsibility (but not the right) of communities to be involved as an entity within themselves in the care of children and goes further by recognizing the distinct status that Indian bands have to provide services “which respects their unique status as aboriginal peoples” (Manitoba CFS Act 1985). (See Appendix #1).

While it does not use the word ‘rights’ which could translate into additional legal protections, the CFS Act (1985) clearly identifies the importance of family, community, culture and language, and the unique rights of Treaty and Status Indians. The later CFS Authorities Act (2005) which is the legal basis for the AJI-CWI outlines these same principles of the importance of children, families and communities to care for their own in greater administrative detail as it legislated the new AJI-CWI system that was supposedly created to reverse the assimilationist policies of the past. The CFS Authorities Act (2005) reiterated the tone of the CFS Act (1985)’s recognition of the importance of children and families, but went further to identify that services for Aboriginal people “must respect their values, beliefs, customs and traditional communities and recognize the traditional role of women in making decisions affecting family and community”.

There is direct recognition of the need for distinctions within services for Northern and Southern First Nations, Metis, and other cultures as well within the General Authority. It also recognized that Aboriginal rights are to be protected as per section 35 of the *Constitution Act 1982* and that this Act in now interferes with them. It identifies the need for services that are consistent with family and cultural standards, and where possible to even have the services provided for in the languages of the children and families. These culturally inclusive principles

within the Acts sound very appropriate. They recognize that there are political, social, cultural, and linguistic differences between people. On paper, these sentiments of acknowledging rights and distinct Aboriginal statuses are clearly outlined. They also strive to reverse the assimilationist results of the past child protection services. However, are the current practices within the province's AJI-CWI system living up to these nice sounding principles? Are the current service delivery methods for Northern First Nations children and families consistent with these principles? Do my experiences as a social worker, family member and parent within the CFS system indicate that the current system is supporting these positive principles, or do my experiences indicate that there are still too many ongoing experiences of assimilation, lack of effective services, and abuse of basic human and Indigenous rights?

Introduction to Service Delivery within Manitoba's Child and Family Services System

CFS is a provincially mandated protection service, meaning a legally enforceable service that is to prevent child abuse or neglect, and/or to respond to it if it is believed to be occurring. According to Section 17 of the Manitoba's CFS Act (1985), "a child is in need of protection where the life, health or emotional well-being of the child is endangered by the act or omission of a person." This includes neglect of various forms, intentional and unintentional, as well as abuse, physical and sexual, as well as children who suffer harm or injury due to exposure to emotional abuse.

The 1985 CFS Act's definitions of a child in need or at-risk are broad and far-reaching. This is to try to ensure that there is protective legislation that can be used to keep children safe from the wide number of possible options, and include new or unforeseen possible forms of abuse or neglect. These legislated definitions of abuse and neglect are further defined by internal

documents such as the regulations, standards and policies and these internal documents also prescribe how CFS workers are to respond to children at risk.

Currently, CFS involvement begins with someone contacting a CFS agency to report that they are concerned that a child is or may be at risk of being hurt or neglected or of harming him or herself. This is the screening and intake process. The social worker who takes in the information determines if there is or may be any validity to the concerns, and, if so, then classifies the information as an Intake and assigns it to a CFS worker. Dependent on the immediacy and severity of the risk, a worker or workers are then dispatched to meet with the child and the caregivers in a timely manner² to gather more information and determine if the concerns are unfounded (and the file is closed on intake) or if the file remains open because they require further assessment or if immediate action such as an emergency apprehension needs to be taken.

Once it is determined that the file remains open, there are two sets of simultaneous options to proceed. The first is if the services are “voluntary” or “protection”. If the parents are willing and able to begin a working relationship with the agency then the services can be “voluntary” (meaning that the family is requesting assistance and services can prevent further risk). If the services are “protection” it means that the child(ren) has been determined to be harmed or significantly “at risk” and the agency remains involved with the family whether they like it or not. In protection cases the agency makes use of its legislated right to continue working with the family even if it is against the family’s will.

² A “timely manner” can range from immediate response, to up to five working days depending upon the nature of the reported concerns and the potential risk factors.

Both voluntary and protection services also have the option of providing either family services where the child(ren) remain in the home with their parent/guardian, or be removed from their home for their safety. The following description outlines the different options of services.

Types of CFS Statuses

Family Services (in-home):

Family Enhancement	Voluntary
Family Services	Voluntary
Under-age Parents	Protection
Supervisory Order	Protection

In-care (placed out of home):

Voluntary Placement Agreement	Voluntary
Voluntary Surrender of Guardianship	Voluntary
Apprehension	Protection
Temporary Order	Protection
Permanent Order	Protection

Agencies and workers are required to follow the legislation (law) of the CFS Act (1985) and the Authorities Act (2005), and these are considered non-negotiable. They were created by and can only be changed by the Manitoba Legislature. They also provide the agencies and the “delegated” workers the authority to remove a child from his/her parent or guardian. That is an incredible amount of power. Not even the police in Manitoba have the authority to remove a child from his/her parent or guardian. Violations of the laws within the CFS Act can also result in criminal charges.

Like every law however, the CFS Act is open to interpretations, and this is where the CFS Regulations, CFS Standards, and policies come into play. CFS Regulations exist to guide

agencies and workers in how to carry out the mandate of the CFS Act. The Regulations are written by the Family Services Department within the Manitoba Government. It is not a simple process to change them, but the power to do so lies internally within the department rather than through the elected Legislative Assembly. CFS Standards are similar to Regulations but not as enforceable (Changes for Children 2010).

However, there is also an ambiguity in the system in that the Standards are promoted by the provincial Family Services department to be applied to all agencies across the province, but the province does not have to provide the funding or resources to carry out these Standards. This often leaves agencies in a dilemma of being expected to meet provincial standards without the resources to do so. The province can and does hold agencies accountable when the standards are not met, and even on-reserve when the funding is from the federal government and at lower rates than the province provides for off-reserve services.

Like all of Canada's laws, the CFS Act is a legal document written from Canada's Eurocentric worldview, but thanks primarily to the eleven Principles at its beginning, the spirit of the law does attempt to recognize First Nations and to counter the mass removals of Native children that began in the 1950s (see Appendix 1). However, there are countless examples within the Regulations and Standards that prevent First Nations involvement that would be in keeping with the Act's Principles.

For example, the Standards promote the option of using parenting classes to prevent apprehensions, but in many northern communities these do not exist. The Regulations and Standards require that foster children have specific square footage within their bedrooms, but on most reserves no children have that option due to the severe overcrowding and housing shortages

which means that too often children have to be placed off-reserve away from family, community, and culture. The bureaucratic system blocks and sabotages it often at every step of the way

My Personal Experiences within the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative

Through the autoethnographic method of including and referring to one's own past writings, I am drawing from the text of a letter that I submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2014) (Appendix #4). I submitted my own thoughts and my own feelings through a weaving of my professional social work experiences and reflections because I could not help but question if my work within the current CFS system is continuing at least some of the travesties of the Indian Residential Schools.

I have struggled virtually every day within my social work practice to determine if I am doing anything different from the assimilationist practices of the IRSs and early child welfare, or if I am part of the needed healing and reversal of the decades of assimilating First Nations children out of their own families, communities and identities. This is the heart of my questions that I asked in my 2014 letter to the TRC. I wanted to share with them the day-to-day challenges that I as a social worker face, and to also ask the question of if under the current structures if I am even able to provide social work services that reverse or even address the assimilation of the IRSs and early CFS.

In an attempt to try to address these questions, I wrote the letter to the TRC solely from my own opinions, albeit based on over thirty years of experiences. I am including my quotes from the letter and my summary of the letter as autoethnographic narrative. It is in italicized type to differentiate it from statements that are substantiated through citations. These are purely my own observations and statements, and as per autoethnographic form, readers can then determine for themselves if they have any meaning or shared understanding (Haynes 2011, 142; and Blenkinsopp

2007, 256; Plummer, 2001, 401; Ellis 2004; Bochner 2002; Ellis, Adams and Bochner. 2011, 282; Ellis and Bochner 2000; Dyson 2007; Denzin 2014). If readers disagree with my personal statements, then again as per autoethnographic method, at least a conversation is started.

• • • •

Judge Murray Sinclair, the Chief Commissioner of the TRC, was kind enough to spend an afternoon with myself and the students from Shamattawa First Nation that I was working with at the time. He invited us to meet with him in the stunningly beautiful TRC office in the top of one of the landmark skyscrapers at Winnipeg’s famously windy intersection of Portage and Main.

When Judge Sinclair joined us in the boardroom as relaxed and warm as if we had entered his home’s kitchen and we were sitting around talking, even though we were in a large business office at the top of a skyscraper. He shared a bit of what the residential schools were, but he also wanted to know about the students—what their lives are like both in Shamattawa and in their schools here in the city. Did they have family who went to the schools? How do their own experiences as currently displaced students compare to their families? As is common in many communities, most of the students had not heard any stories directly from the grandparents who had attended IRSs.

Towards the end of our visit, one of the students asked the Judge, “Do you see any similarities between the residential schools and the CFS system today?” Judge Sinclair took a deep breath and then responded by saying that that was a very good question, and one that needs to be looked at. He identified some of the differences such as the stated intent of assimilation within the structures of the schools, and that in most cases it was comprehensive across generations and not select children like within CFS. He also noted how in the schools however, that the children

were able to stay with their siblings, cousins and fellow community members, even if it was only those of the same gender. In CFS, children who are removed from their communities are often isolated from everyone from their communities which makes it even more lonely and traumatic.

Judge Sinclair also said that he has tried to find written resources that can examine this question and had found very little, especially as it relates to the internal systemic issues within the working system. He said he hasn't found anything that actually spoke to the meat of the matter, the inside workings of the systems that could provide a systemic analysis. This comment from Judge Sinclair haunted me, as these were the very questions that also haunted me (and other workers) every single day. What are we doing this morning, this afternoon and every day that is continuing the assimilationist effects of the IRSs? What are we doing that is different, and/or healing or reversing the decades or even centuries of assimilation?

April 29, 2103

Dear Chief Commissioner,

As the stories and tragedies about the assimilationist genocide of the Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) unfold, there are many questions about the role that child welfare may be playing in continuing the same assimilationist genocide {...} While individuals, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, working in the system may not want assimilation, is that in fact what we are doing in some ways, or all ways? There are more children receiving CFS services in Manitoba now than at the times of the IRS schools (Blackstock et al 2004; Blackstock et al 2011; Trocme et al 2004).

Enacting assimilation is not always the conscious intent of the people working within the system. Sometimes decisions are made at the micro/individual level to "be in the best interests of the child." However, the macro/community/political impact is rarely considered. Even one child removed from his/her family system, community, cultural roots and land base has far reaching devastating macro effects within his or own community and society at large. Multiple this by the high numbers of Aboriginal children in care with far too many still living away from family, community, culture and land base, and it is clear that the macro effects of Aboriginal children being removed and assimilated into mainstream cultures is still continuing and at a greater rate, even though it is camouflaged within rhetoric promoting Aboriginal control of CFS.

The intake and assessment stages of social work interventions are the most critical. And yet, under the AJI-CWI system, the opportunity to perform these critical services that begin the relationships between the families and the CFS, are done overwhelming by non-Aboriginal agencies and staff. As well, the intakes and assessments are now to be conducted according to the standardized risk assessment tool, the “Wisconsin-based Children’s Research Centre, which is the copyright holder of the tools (Structured Decision Making®)” (Changes for Children 2012). This is in spite of the fact that Aboriginal agencies clearly rejected it on the grounds that it is culturally biased and ineffective in assessing Aboriginal families. And yet, this tool now carries more weight and authority than any First Nations worker or agency because it not only dictates the risk assessment but the resulting actions and interventions.

With regard to in-home services, the gist of my letter was that there is completely inadequate funding which then results in no other option than for children to come into care of the agencies. And while preventive services are underfunded across all four authorities and all agencies, there is even far greater lack of prevention funds within the Aboriginal agencies. And, on-reserve, there is a dearth of basic non-CFS preventive services. There are limited or even non-existent medical and mental health services, inadequately funded schools. “Children with developmental challenges have virtually no access to services on-reserve [and] it is unknown as to how many children from reserves have had to enter into the provincial government’s CFS care in order to receive survival services that do not exist in their communities”.

When First Nations children come into the care of CFS, even if they are fortunate enough to be placed with extended family within their own community, like all children in care, they become wards of the provincial government. Not only do the families then have no legal say over the children, but the First Nations leaders are now unable to exercise their traditional role as

overseeing caregivers of their own children. Thus, even the children residing within their own communities are legally and de facto assimilated into the provincial government's guardianship.

As well, for most Northern First Nations children, abuse investigations are now performed by non-Native agencies and investigators, and the ones conducted on-reserve by their own agency workers, are completely dictated by adherence to the provincial criminal justice system. There is a strict non-Aboriginal process for abuse investigations, and all instances of even probable abuse are automatically referred to the police. "It literally takes everyone's and the community's power away from them, and places it within the government, criminal justice systems and court systems that have a history of centuries of colonization and oppression" (as per the AJI 1991, 516).

There are virtually no opportunities for community based healing from abuse even though the AJI promoted this as a productive alternative. And currently, many victims of abuse and their families are claiming even further abuse when they are subjected to the current processes for abuse investigations. "Perhaps we need to reconsider the definitions of "safety" and "risk". What is a greater risk: potential further abuse (that can be prevented through effective monitoring and community-based healing) or removal of children from the only world they know to be left with strangers with a sense of emptiness?"

In addition to the complexities of obtaining court orders to have children be in care, the challenges in placing children are completely overwhelming. Not only are multiple forms and multiple levels of approvals required for any child in care, but to have culturally appropriate placements for Northern First Nations children is almost impossible. My letter to the TRC (Appendix #4) outlines the myriad of challenges at every level and with every form of placement. And adding salt to the wounds of First Nations, is the fact that the provincially legislated foster

parent appeal process (CFS Act Sec. 51) provides foster parents with de facto greater rights than the agencies, authorities and even the children themselves.

And while there are challenges for placements and services for all children, the children who are the “highest risk children and youth” are the ones who end up suffering even more. These are youth whose needs are complex, and can include any combination of trauma, violent behaviours of their own, histories of severe abuse, substance abuse, sexual exploitation, involvement with the justice system, gang risk or entrenchment, suicide risk and attempts, severe mental health issues, homelessness, lack of family and supports etc. Since the tragic death of Tina Fontaine, highest risk youth have received more attention from the media and the government, but there are still far too many high risk youth whose needs are not being met. One possible reason is that as my letter to the TRC indicates, the AJI-CWI initially sounded like the Aboriginal influence would spread outward from the home communities and leadership into the lives of their off-reserve children as well but in fact the opposite has occurred. However, since the AJI-CWI the provincial control has spread onto the reserves in every aspect within CFS along with disregard for direction from First Nations leadership

For these and all of the other reasons that I included within my letter, I asked the TRC Commission to consider what is currently occurring within the AJI-CWI CFS system that in my opinion is continuing the assimilationist and structural violence of the IRSs and early CFS systems. Many people claimed ignorance of what was happening within the residential schools, and by sharing what I know is occurring within the current systems, ignorance can no longer be an excuse.

Whether or not my analysis of the CFS system within my narrative from my letter is consistent with others or not, my discouragement is not only real, but I know is shared with very many others. And some days, that is all we face, discouragement, even though it is within a system

that theoretically was developed to help, protect and heal. How do I reconcile within myself the realities of removing the children from their families and then placing them with strangers of another language and culture? When I check on them the next day and look in their eyes, what do I see? How do I sleep at night when I know that a youth whom I have grown close to, is somewhere out there, maybe sleeping outside again, maybe finding a couch in someone's home where there are drugs, weapons and violence? I don't sleep very well these nights.

Tossing and turning in the middle of the night became normal to me. The anger that seeps and burns through me like bile will never become normal to me. The anger that a child is living in horrendous conditions, in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, fuels my journey to make a difference. There will always be parents in this world who struggle with raising their children appropriately, whether it be from their own traumas or their own inherent inabilities due to mental illness, developmental challenges, or having children whose needs are far too great for any one family to raise. But what is the system's excuse for so many Northern First Nations children coming in care? Does it have an excuse?

• • • •

Conclusion

The context of CFS within Northern First Nations is as immense as the vast lands of muskeg and barrens that make up Northern Manitoba. The land and the general history, as well as the introduction of Europeans and the resulting colonization is a deep multi-dimensional background to today's experiences with the AJI-CWI CFS system. As this chapter outlines, there are multiple forms of colonization and CFS is one aspect of the larger process of colonization.

General colonization lead to the removal of the hearts of the people when the children were first removed from their homes, people and lands by the residential schools, and then continued

when the system simply transferred into child welfare. The Sixties Scoop led to more generations being removed, many whom never returned. The advent of the Tri-Partite CFS agreements which led to First Nations communities being given some funds to provide care of their own child welfare services was supposed to stop the flow of children being removed. And while more stayed within the communities than before, scores of children continued to gush out of the communities.

And then the AJI-CWI was politically promoted as the answer to stop the ongoing loss of children, but my own personal experiences do not indicate this to be so. As my narratives will indicate, my own personal experiences within the AJI-CWI are that the process of removing children and having them assimilated out to other cultures is in fact growing in many ways as I attempted to outline in my 2014 letter to the TRC.

My personal experiences lead me to continue asking myself how my actions as a social worker can possibly be consistent with peace-building. If I am continuing the mass removal of children and their assimilation, am I not contributing to the direct and structural violence of assimilation and colonization? The following chapter is on the theories of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) and may shed some light on potential answers. What is the relationship between violence and peace to my experiences within Northern First Nations and CFS? When viewed with a PACS perspective, my narrative of my daily challenges within CFS can provide a greater understanding about why I believe that too many children continue to suffer within and at the hands of the very system that was created to protect them.

CHAPTER 2

**PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES THEORIES IN RELATION TO
THE ABORIGINAL JUSTICE INQUIRY–CHILD WELFARE INITIATIVE
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
IN MANITOBA’S NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS**

As a social worker, am I also a peacebuilder? Or am I working in ways that contribute to the direct and structural violence of colonization? Or both, and if so in which ways? Are my social work interventions – which are primarily within the context of Manitoba’s Northern First Nations and the current Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative (AJI), consistent with peace-building interventions? In order to find answers for these questions, an examination of relevant Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) theories is needed, including explanations of violence, structural violence (invisible, systemic injustice), oppression, ethnic conflict, colonization (colonialism), assimilation, genocide and cultural genocide. In order to know if I am peace-building within my work with Child and Family Services (CFS), I need to understand the various concepts and forms of violence, so that I can then determine if I am building peace in response to these types of violence.

To understand the above-named theories of violence, definitions of each is presented. The intertwined relationships among the theories and forms of violence, especially as they pertain to the general experiences within Northern First Nations (NFN) in Manitoba is explained. This self-examination of my work through autoethnography sheds light on how my actions relate to the various types of violence and the correlating peace-building methods. I seek to understand how in my own experience I have witnessed, been victimized by, and/or contributed to the perpetration of

violence in its various forms. And then in true PACS spirit I try to promote the positive of peace (social justice) rather than simply pointing out the negative violence, with examples of peace-building both within my own experiences and proposed opportunities within NFNCFS are discussed.

Violence

The Quaker Peace and Social Witness Program sums up violence as any physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual behaviour, attitude, policy or condition that diminishes, dominates or destroys ourselves and others. (Turning the Tide 2014). Some people believe that violence is ingrained in human nature, and some estimate that 95 percent of all peoples have made war (Ferguson 2005). However, William T. Hathaway states that “This view ignores anthropological evidence about societies that have lived in relative peace, and it also contradicts our knowledge of ourselves as human beings. In certain situations we may feel violent impulses, but we can control them; we know they are only a small part of our make-up” (2013, 1). Most of us, as individuals and as social groups, do not choose to act violently, or if we do, it is not a major part of our lives, individually or socially. It exists, but it does not necessarily define us as a person or a people.

The understandings of violence are vast. Different academic fields, languages, cultures and circumstances use different definitions of violence. In the World Report on Violence and Health (WRVH), the World Health Organization (WHO) provides an overarching definition of violence: “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (Rutherford et al. 2007,

686). This definition states that the perpetrator of violence (person or group) must intend to use force or power, meaning non-accidental or intended. It also identifies that violence can be threatened or actual power “against oneself, against an individual or against a group or community, as in gang violence or repression of ethnic groups” (Rutherford et al. 2007, 686).

Violence also includes actions beyond physical and happens “where psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation occurs; acts of omission or neglect, and not only of commission, can therefore be categorised as violent” (Rutherford et al. 2007, 686). Violence can be self-directed, interpersonal or collective. The WRVH breaks down each of these categories into the nature of the violence, and uses four types: physical, sexual, psychological or involving deprivation or neglect. All of these types of violence can occur simultaneously and move back and forth between the different types. This is an extremely large and wide definition, and thus we will define the forms of violence in this study in more specific terms.

Structural Violence

The WHO’s WRVH definition of violence includes structural violence: “the physical and psychological harm that result from exploitative and unjust social, political and economic systems” (Rutherford et al. 2007, 678). An example is the apartheid system in South Africa and its multiple forms of human rights violations. Critically, the invisibility of structural violence is key to its pervasiveness. It is ““embedded in ubiquitous social structures (and) normalized by stable institutions and regular experience...structural inequities usually seem ordinary”” (Winter Dunan 2001, as quoted in Rutherford et al. 2007, 678). Structural violence can both underlie and cause or be an effect of modern armed conflicts (Rutherford et al. 2007, 678).

Johan Galtung, an original and eminent PACS scholar, developed the definition of structural violence to extend beyond the common assumption of physical harm to other people, to include many forms and many contexts and extended it beyond purely overt intentional physical actions (Galtung 1969, 2; 1971; 1990; Galtung and Hoivik 1971; Grewal 2003). Galtung identified the deficit that if violence and conflict are limited to purely physical, intended acts of harm, then other forms of violence that can have a series of steps involved in their processes or that are perhaps less blatant and invisible, are not addressed.

Galtung (1969) breaks down additional forms of violence: *manifest violence* (e.g. shooting someone through the head) can be either *intentional* by direct choice or *unintentional* through collateral damage. *Latent violence* (e.g. someone dying because they were deprived of food) can be *intentional* through withholding food and nourishment or *unintentional* withholding due to a lack of sufficient food sources due to a government choosing to only minimally respond to a food shortage with supplies. Whether it is manifest (intentional or unintentional) through collateral damage, or latent (intentional or unintentional) through structural collateral damage, they are all forms of violence.

All of these types of violence can also be found personally, culturally and structurally. There can be conflict specifically between the actor of violence and its victim, or camouflaged through various structures, systems, governments, organizations and collective bodies. For example, one human can choose *manifest* (direct) violence by choosing to punch out another human (personal); or (structurally) a government can choose to wage physical harm against any specified people (indirect). Persons can (personally) cause *latent* violence by freely and without any form of obstructions, consciously choosing (directly) to ignore a starving person, or a government

(structure) can consciously withhold the required medical services that are required which then leads to deaths and illness or injury that could have been prevented (indirect) (Galtung 1969, 170).

Galtung identifies multiple forms of violence with their corollaries being the corresponding different forms of peace. Negative peace (absence of war) identifies a lack of overt violence or conflict, but does not address the need for dealing with the systemic processes of violence and conflict. Galtung calls for a need for positive peace (social justice) which not only eliminates overt violence but addresses the structural inequalities and resulting oppressions, which led to countless losses of life and harm to individuals and groups. Negative peace is only the absence of direct violence and the absence of war while positive peace is the integration of human society, which later became identified as contrary to structural violence (Galtung 1969; Grewal 2003).

More specifically, Galtung (1990) proposes that violence is not in human nature or inevitable, but based on three interacting forces: structural, cultural, and direct. Structural violence is injustice and exploitation built into a social system that generates wealth for the few and poverty for the many, stunting everyone's ability to develop their full humanity." (Hathaway 2014, 1). Cultural violence is the attitudes, beliefs and assumptions that shape our sense of self and worldview. Direct violence is the physical kind that we feel and see such as assaults (including verbal), rape, murder and war that develop out of structural and cultural violence. Direct violence cannot be eliminated until the other two types are as well since it is rooted in them. Galtung emphasizes that direct violence is both a product of structural and cultural violence and a cause of further structural and cultural violence. Clearly it is a reciprocal and interwoven relationship between the types of violence. The three forms act as an inter-relational triad, a vicious cycle that is now threatening to destroy life on earth. (Hathaway 2014,1). Structural, cultural and direct violence can be found in most societies in various forms, and Canada and Northern Manitoba are

no exceptions. General examples are found in this chapter and specific examples within my own autoethnographic experiences are examined in the Findings Chapter. And clearly, these forms of violence are in complex relationships with each other that both cause and effect each other as well within fluid, dynamic exchanges. These interweaving and fluid relationships are also identified.

Colonization

To introduce violence and its various forms within Canada and Northern Manitoba, it is essential to look at colonialism, also stated as colonization. These terms are often used interchangeably, but in fact often are different grammatical concepts. Colonization relates with migration, the movement of people from one part of the world to another to establish a settlement, often agrarian. Colonialism has come to be used “to characterize the condition of colonies and habits of colonials” (Parcelle 2014, 1).

The original name of the state of Canada was the Dominion of Canada, and “Dominion” is defined by Webster-Merriam (2014) as “a country that was part of the British Empire but had its own government”. The word *dominion* comes from the root word *dominate*, which Webster-Merriam (2014) defines as “to have control of or power over (someone or something) ... to be much more powerful or successful than others... the power to rule: control of a country, region, etc.: the land that a ruler or government controls.” Clearly, by Canada’s own name and therefore definition, the ‘creation’ of the nation-state of Canada is based on colonization from European nations who overtook the lands and Indigenous peoples and nations of this land (Chrisjohn 1997; Alfred 1999; 2009; AJI 1991; RCAP 1996).

Colonization is a specific form of violence that includes structural, cultural and direct violence as per Galtung’s definition above. Colonization has and is still occurring around the

world, and according to some, it has occurred since human societies began (Moses 2008) and thus has profound global implications. A general description of colonization or “colonialism is that it is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another” (Kohn 2014, 1). Colonialism is “the occupation of societies on terms that robs them of their ‘historical line of development’ and that transforms them ‘according to the needs and interests of the colonial rulers.’ Colonial rule can radically alter the structure of, even dismember, an indigenous society” (Moses 2008, 22).

The general definition of colonization is complex due to the vastly different experiences around the world amongst the colonizers and the colonized, and thus there might never be a homogenous definition. However, one of the first recognized internationally recognized anti-colonialists, from Martinique, Frantz Fanon (1965) identified a number of global themes. He saw the colonial world as a world “cut into two compartmental zones: the zone of the native or colonized, and the zone of the settler or colonizer” (Fanon 1965 cited in Roberts 2003, 139). This distancing, leads to differencing between the colonizers and colonized.

And Fanon included how colonists demonize the colonized into “pure evil” (Fanon 1965, 6). The colonizer objectifies the colonized through dehumanization in order to “justify” the usurpation of and control over Indigenous peoples’ lands for their raw resources (Fanon 1965, 23). Fanon asserts that when colonists believe that there is something inherently wrong with colonized Indigenous peoples this gives colonists the “paternalistic and maternalistic” right and need to “protect” the colonized from themselves, from their own defects. (Fanon 1965). It develops a complete dependency of Indigenous peoples on the colonists and imbeds dependency onto the processed products of their lands. Fanon also states that colonialism tries to convince Indigenous

peoples that they are being “saved” by the colonists spiritually, politically, socially and in every way (Fanon 1965, 149).

Roberts (2003) states that Fanon believed that the colonized then have no other option than intrinsic violence to counter colonialism. Roberts points out that unlike instrumental violence, which is wanton and seen as a means to an end, intrinsic violence is seen as necessary and inevitable. It is man recreating himself (146). “For Fanon, violence is a necessary process for colonial subjects to achieve their own state of self-determination, decolonization, agency, and freedom in order to make this absence from colonial domination a reality” (Roberts 2003, 154) Roberts and others state that Fanon believed that violence is an inevitable outcome within a colonized state, as they contend that it is the only way for the colonized to achieve freedom from the dominance of the colonialist. Fanon knows of no other alternative than to fight the violence of colonization with violence.

Three factors typify the colonizer: profit, privilege, and usurpation (White 1996). No matter how noble colonizers may present their actions (e.g. theological conversion from paganism, ‘saving’ Indigenous people from barbaric tribal lifestyles, and even ‘saving’ them from themselves and their own deficiencies), colonialism is based on economic privilege and “its key tools are racism and terror” (White 1996, 1). In other words, colonization is based on the agenda of the colonizers and not the needs or rights of the colonized, no matter how poetically the colonizers may paint their actions in attempts to appear altruistic. And, violence that is based in racism and terror is the means by which the colonizers achieve their own self-defined agenda.

Moses (2008) quotes Sartre, “Colonialism creates the patriotism of the colonized,” (32). Moses also explains Albert Memmi and his famous book *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957) and says that his basic message was also that “being considered and treated apart by colonialist

racism, the colonized ends up accepting this Manichaeian division of the colony and, by extension, of the whole world.” [Consequently,] “in the eyes of the colonized, all Europeans in the colonies are *de facto* colonizers” (32).

While all colonization is direct, cultural, and structural violence that privileges one group of people at the expense of another group, it is also important to realize that colonization takes on a vast number of forms, which then affects different real-life definitions and understandings. For example, in South Africa, the number of colonizers compared to Indigenous peoples was minute: the Indigenous peoples vastly outnumber the colonizers and their ongoing descendants. In Canada, there were initially more Indigenous nations of course, but in relatively short periods of time the demographic proportions flipped, primarily due to colonial diseases that left communities decimated, and in some cases even prior to the actual arrival of the Europeans due to the diseases spreading amongst the Indigenous communities after initial contact (Churchill 1998; Diamond 1997; Innis 1970; Beardy and Coutts 1996; Ray 1998; 2005.). It did not take long for colonists to begin to outnumber Indigenous peoples at different times throughout southern Canada, according to the flow of contact and resulting migration of primarily Europeans. Thus in many areas of Canada, the colonists and descendants have vastly outnumbered the Indigenous peoples which is a reversal of the ratios in South Africa.

Time is another element that affects the nature of the colonization process: that is, the time when contact occurs, and the time line of the colonization. For example, the Caribbean Islands and Newfoundland were among the first areas in the Americas to have sustained European colonization, and as a result, the Carib Indigenous peoples have been virtually assimilated and are now non-existent while the Beotuk in Newfoundland were annihilated (Armitage 1995). The influence of timing is also evident in Canada in the process of the Treaties (a pivotal outcome of

and contributing factor to colonization in Canada) which started in Eastern Canada beginning in 1664 between the British Crown and members of the Iroquois Confederacy with the Wampum Belt, and spread westward and northward around the late 1800s and early 1900s, and are still in process in BC and the north (Armitage 1995).

The type of land that is being colonized is also another key factor. If the land provides easily accessible, direct raw resources to the colonizing nation, then the process of colonization inevitably occurs at a quick pace, due to the ‘need’ of the colonizers to gather the raw resources. When certain areas of land are not seen as worth anything economically to the colonizers, then the colonization process can slow down. In Northern Manitoba, once the fur trade ebbed away, there was little need for the colonists to lay claim to most of the lands, and Indigenous communities were left alone to a large degree, particularly in comparison to Southern Manitoba where the lands were wanted by the colonists for farming. As mineral development began to provide economic opportunity to the colonists, then the land of Northern First Nations became targets for colonization. Water-ways also became open targets for economic development as evidenced with the Keeyask, Wuskwatim and Conawapa hydroelectric projects. Currently, additional resources such as natural gas, diamonds and other minerals are also being scoped out by the multinational companies in partnership with the Canadian and Manitoba governments (Elder Frank Wesley, oral teachings to myself within the time frame of 1982 to 2003).

Due to the global differences of colonization, it is important to also examine the definition of colonization from a North American perspective. Canadian Métis Native Studies scholar Emma Laroque defines colonization as

some form of invasion, dispossession and subjugation of a peoples. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of

agricultural, urban or industrial encroachments. The result of such incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants ... The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. (LaRoque 2014 Website)

American Indian scholars Michael Yellow Bird and Waziyatawin (2005) offer this definition: Colonization refers to both the formal and informal methods (behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands and resources. The creation of the states of the USA and Canada were and are at the expense of the Indigenous peoples. Not only is colonization the historical basis for the creation of these nation states but ongoing colonization continues to keep these states developing: “Every non-Indigenous person in the country continues to benefit from Indigenous loss” (Waziyatawin 2005 Website).

Cree Social Work Scholar Michael Hart explains colonialism in Canada by stating that it is driven by a worldview and processes that embrace dominion, self-righteousness and greed, and affects all levels of Indigenous peoples’ lives – the national, communal, familial and individual – and insidiously interferes with all aspects of Indigenous peoples’ lives, including their spiritual practices, emotional wellbeing, physical health and knowledge (2009, 27). Colonialism permeates every aspect of everyone’s lives, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Noted Cree-Métis author Maria Campbell (2008) wrote that highly respected Elder Peter O’Chiese described colonization as akin to dropping “a complex and snugly fitting puzzle, causing it to shatter into a million pieces” (as quoted in Anderson and Ball 2011, 55). O’Chiese furthered the analogy to identify that people can pick up those pieces of culture, worldviews, families and communities, and put them back together in to their original patterns of *Wahkotowin*,

a Cree word meaning kinship relatives and relations, “or the act of being related to each other and all things in creation” (as quoted in Anderson and Ball 2011, 55).

There is no question that the experiences of European expansions into the Americas was colonization, for “North America was a model of settler colonialism” and Hitler even drew on the tactics employed in the Americas to aid his expansions in Europe. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler writes: “The settlement of the north American continent succeeded just as little from some democratic or international conception of legal claims, but out of a sense of justice that is rooted only in the conviction of superiority and with that the right of the white race” (Cited in Moses 2008, 36). Based on these definitions of global and North American colonization, clearly, there can be no justifiable argument that colonization was not used to create the Dominion and nation-state of Canada. But what about the related concept of imperialism?

Imperialism

Colonialism and colonization are often used interchangeably as a synonym for imperialism. Within the European overtake of North and South America, Africa, Asia and Australia of the last 500-plus years, Both colonialism and imperialism were forms of conquest that were expected to benefit Europe economically and strategically through controlling these areas by a large population of permanent European residents (Parcelle 2014). According to Moses (2008) Edward Said thought the differences between the terms was that “imperialism was the theory, colonialism the practice of changing the uselessly unoccupied territories of the world into useful new versions of the European metropolitan society,” others simply equated the two (22).

According to Jones (2006), imperialism is “a policy undertaken by a state to directly control foreign economic, physical, and cultural resources. Conquered territories and peoples may

be incorporated into the state, as with the United Kingdom, United States, China, and the former Soviet Union; or they may be held within the economic and/or political orbit of the imperial power, while remaining nominally independent” (39). Jones also differentiates between imperialism and colonialism with colonialism being a form of imperialism that establishes and maintains a presence, for an extended period of time (2006). Canada and other British colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and India, are settler colonies where Britain had sent colonists including troops to “‘settle’ the territory... which often implies displacement and occupation of the land, and is often linked to genocide against indigenous peoples (and genocidally tinged rebellions against colonialism)” (Jones 2006, 40). “The difference between imperialism and colonialism for many however is that in imperialist domination there is no significant settlement from the overtaking nation. The ‘foreign government administers a territory without significant settlement’” (Young 2001, cited in Kohn 2012, 1).

The terms however are often used interchangeably, but the primary distinction is often that imperialism connotes a more indirect form of domination compared to colonialism/ization and is often backed by military force (Moses 2008). Historically, the domination of colonial powers has over the years “shifted from the British Empire of ‘military domination and sovereignty over territories’ to Lenin’s orientation of economic exploitation which he viewed as inevitable within capitalism to American imperialism which “usually means American economic hegemony, regardless of whether such power is exercised directly or indirectly” (Kohn 2012, 3).

Whether it be by annexation or less formal means, empire/imperialism refers to “the domination of one society by another” (Moses 2008, 22). Thus for example, America’s economic control over other areas of the world such as some Latin American countries, where U.S.-based multi-national companies are the primary players in extracting resources and then selling their wares (e.g. Coca

Cola, McDonalds) without sending large numbers of Americans to live there, are forms of imperialism that is distinct from colonization which includes large amounts of migration.

Moses (2008) offers that generally the words empire and colony refer to European domination in the 18th and 19th centuries, while imperialism and colonialism are more of the 20th century. And most importantly, that it was not until the 20th century that the word and concept of colonialism took on any form of negative connotation. Prior to that it was value-less and simply assumed to be a part of life. This is evident in both Britain and Canada's choice of the word "Dominion" within the name of the state of Canada. There was no shame, no reason to hide or even disguise the role of colonization in the inception of the state of Canada. Britain still "affectionately" refers to areas such as Canada as "the colonies", again not even acknowledging the deeply embedded violence within the processes of colonization.

Oppression

Colonization and imperialism are both forms of the general understanding of oppression which is traditionally defined as "the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group" (Young 2004, 1) but it can extend beyond the strict understanding of political tyranny into social and interpersonal relationships. In brief it is when people are denied language, education or anything that denies people the opportunity to become fully human in both mind and body (Freire 1970). When people make other people less than human, then that is oppression (Young 2004, 1).

Clearly colonization and imperialism fall within the broader definition of oppression. The term oppression can be used in situations that are less politically or macro-socially based, for example within a family, employment or an educational system. Micro and interpersonal relationships can be based on oppression or include oppressive elements. Colonization and

imperialism are of a more political understanding, but it is not uncommon for the terms to be used interchangeably. For example, much of what Freire (1970) refers to as oppression, specifically includes and refers to colonization and imperialism.

Young (2004) identifies five forms of oppression, which then by definition includes colonization: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness (and its culture of silence), cultural imperialism and violence, all of which can be found within the colonization experiences within Manitoba Northern First Nations. Young (2004) defines exploitation as using other people's labour for profit without fair compensation and according to many historians (Newman and Princes 1985; Innis 1970; Ray 1998; 2005), this has been an historical reality within the fur trade which was the economic basis of colonization from England through the Hudson Bay Company in what is now Northern Manitoba.

Over the 400-plus years of contact with Europeans, the First Nations of Northern Manitoba have faced marginalization through various forms of exclusion. This is obvious in the Indian Act's forceful acts of moving hunters and trappers onto specified reserve lands, politically and legally prohibiting them from free access to every aspect of mainstream society until the early 1960s, followed by continuing marginalization today with significantly less access to schools (CBC News Website 2013), health care, and employment (Freylejer 2012) etc. Young (2004) even identifies the role that marginalization plays internationally within the relationships between Indigenous peoples and colonizers:

Most commonly, people are marginalized based upon race. One prominent example is the Aboriginal communities of Australia that were excluded from society and pushed farther and farther away from their homelands as cities grew. The marginalization of Aborigines happened when society met the needs of white people and not the needs of the marginalized themselves. Thus, marginalization is closely linked to the idea of whiteness. (2004, p.2)

Clearly these experiences in Australia mirror the experiences in Northern Manitoba particularly within the notion of powerlessness that Young includes within marginalization. Legally, Northern Manitoba First Nations have had the right to vote in the Canadian electoral process since 1961 (Friesen 1992), but there are still many social and cultural forces of marginalization that create the sense of continued powerlessness. Continued control of all aspects of self-governance (e.g. political, economic, legal, education, health and social infrastructures), on reserves through the Indian Act process is just one formal example of both marginalization and assimilation (Armitage 2009).

Freire (1970) believes that powerlessness is the most severe form of oppression to the point of even preventing people from having the opportunity to become consciously aware that they are being oppressed. It has become so normalized, because there is no awareness for some people of any other options. Freire identifies this as the “culture of silence”, because the oppression is so ingrained within typical, ‘normal’ life that there is no reason to even speak about it. “If they reach this stage of oppression, it creates a culture wherein it is forbidden to even mention the injustices that are being committed. The oppressed are silenced. They have no voice and no will” (Young 2004, 3).

This silencing and resulting lack of self-awareness leads into indoctrination of negative images of themselves, which Young (2004) refers to as cultural imperialism where the culture of the ruling class is expected to, and then becomes the norm. This is also consistent with the teachings of the leading intellectuals Freire (1970), Fanon (195) and Memmi (1991). Racism is also inherent in colonial oppression according to Albert Memmi (White 1996) and thus when colonization is based on racial distinctions, it is even easier to differentiate from the Other, and

develop stereotypes. These stereotypes that the people with power create and dictate, "...turn these people into a mass of *Others* that lack separate identities" (White 1996, 4).

Osajima (1979) echoes Freire's belief that the dehumanization of oppressed people is from the loss of their ability to see themselves as individual human beings (153). He correlates it to Memmi's assertion of internalized oppression that "people come to accept the myths and stereotypes about their group of whom they naturally are" (Osajima 1979, 153). In addition, Pyke (2010), refers to DuBois' 1903 statement that the oppression of White domination affects a "double consciousness" for the Black-American whose "'world ... yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world'" (551-52).

Many colonized "accept the mantle of the oppressed (Fanon 1965; Memmi 1975)" (Byrne and Senehi 2009, 5) and internalize the negative portrayal which is consistent with Cook-Huffman's position that "Accepting definitions of a group created by dominant group members often silences alternative voices (2011, 26). The silencing of their own voices leads to the internalized violence, by "justifying" it as characteristic according to the incorrect external portrayal. Alfred (2009) quotes Sto:lo writer Lee Maracle who has called it "a cover for systemic rage common among colonized peoples" (4). Moreover, White (1996) quotes Memmi when he says "The colonized become 'divorced from reality' (106). Because they are excluded from government, they become less interested in government. They are conditioned that their inadequacy is what makes them unable to 'assume a role in history'" (94).

Identity and Assimilation

Identity "is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or

her as a unique person” (Burke and Stets 2009, 3). Our identities include our roles, our membership in certain groups and our personal characteristics. And because we possess multiple roles, memberships and characteristics, we have multiple identities (Burke and Stets 2009). Identity-based conflicts throughout the world have received increased attention. According to Rothman and Olson (2013), Miall argued that “most involved the rights of ethnic groups to maintain their identity, to gain equal recognition, and to have equal status with other groups” (289) and that when groups of different ethnic identities are involved, that the differences re-surface even after other issues have been addressed, in part at least because of the deep-rooted nature of identity-based conflict. Thus identity is a very powerful factor within understanding conflict.

And one of the greatest threats to identity is assimilation which is directly related to all of the concepts above such as colonization, powerlessness, culture of silence, double consciousness. For example, the Webster-Merriam Dictionary (2014) defines assimilation as “... to cause (a person or group) to become part of a different society, country etc.: to adopt the ways of another culture: to fully become part of a different society, country, etc.” Thus assimilation is an attack on identity and according to the RCAP, assimilation is “a denial of the principles of peace, harmony and justice” (1996). And according to Galtung (1969) and Jeong (2000) the denial of peace and justice is structural violence, which then unequivocally identifies this assimilation of Indigenous peoples as a form of structural violence.

With regard to colonization in Canada, assimilation, is a key instrument (weapon?) that has been used by the colonizing forces. Briefly it can be defined within the context of the British colonization process as “the Aboriginal people of Australia, Canada and New Zealand became minorities in their own countries in the 19th century. The expanding British Empire had its own vision for the futures of these peoples. They were to become civilized, Christians and civilized –

in a word, assimilated” (Armitage 1995, iii). Armitage captures the intent of the British colonists to assimilate the Indigenous peoples of their colonies as a means of turning them into people who are just like British people, in all but physical features, and then controlling all aspects of their lives and to access their lands. Individually, collectively, theologically, socially, linguistically, culturally, economically and politically, their lives would become the same as the colonialists. The experiences in Canada are also consistent with Britain’s global model which originated in their conquest over Ireland (Byrne 2014).

PACS recognizes the role that identity and therefore assimilation as well plays as a critical component of any conflict as it delineates “who is ‘us’ and who is ‘them,’ mobilizing individuals and collectives” (Cook-Huffman 2011, 19). If there were no Others, no people distinct from the colonizers, i.e. the people indigenous to the lands, then it would be easy for the colonizers to expand onto the lands of the Indigenous peoples to claim those spaces for themselves including the resources within them. The resources could then be sent to the mother-land, i.e. England, to add to their coffers and economy, or in modern times, to the foreign multi-national companies that require the resources and/or the governing federal government of Canada.

A complex process of first identifying who was indigenous to the lands that now make up Canada was imposed by the British Crown, and Canada continued the process. Armitage identifies six periods of policy that have been used to define who is indigenous. These include (1) the period of early contact 1534 – 1763; (2) the period of the Royal Proclamation 1763 – 1830; (3) the transitional period from the Royal Proclamation to Canadian social policy 1839 – 1867; (4) the period of assimilation 1867 – 1950; (5) the period of integration 1951 - ; and (6) the period of the assertion of self-government 1970 - (1995, 70). Note however that the term “integration came

from the minds of the Canadian government, but the process of assimilation continued, albeit under the new subterfuge of integration” (Armitage 1995, 70).

Initially there was little need to define who was and who wasn't Indian because it was self-evident through physical characteristics, language and social communities, and there were fewer colonialists to compare with. The Royal Proclamation ingrained the term Indian with reference to the original peoples of this land, and the social policies that originated in Britain and Canada assumed, all identified the otherness of Indians in comparison to the colonialists. This otherness became evident in the need to sign treaties in some areas in order to access the lands (Osajima 1979; RCAP 1996; Chrisjohn 2002).

According to Chrisjohn (2002), the colonizing Crown decreed the Indian Act of 1876 which arbitrarily defined who among Indigenous people were to be designated as an Indian, and the colonial powers “justified” their domination over them including their de facto role as guardians over Indians of all ages (Tobias 2002; RCAP 1996). The governing forces needed the lands of the remaining Indigenous people for the expansion of their assumed jurisdiction (RCAP 1996) so that they could continue their colonialist growth of wealth. So the colonists began to attack the identities of the peoples as Indigenous peoples: if they assimilated into the colonial society then they would not need or be able to lay claim to their lands³ (Fournier and Crey 1997; Tobias 2002; Alfred 2009; RCAP 1996; TRC 2012).

³ The more assimilated that Aboriginal people are into mainstream society, the less need to remain on-reserve and use their traditional lands in their traditional ways. And according to leadership in NFNs, when people do not use their traditional lands for trapping, hunting, harvesting and fishing, then the Canadian government is able to sell or lease these “Crown lands” and/or the rights to the minerals, water, and other resources in that land.

First Nations people are almost powerless when it comes to having any say in Northern resource use or development (Newbury 1992). And noted author Thomas King identifies the fact the land itself has always been the goal of the colonizing forces: “What do Whites want? The answer is quite simple, and it’s been in plain sight all along. Land. Whites want land” (King 2012, 216). Felix Cohen is quoted by Paul Chartrand (1992), “One of the most insidious of these is the doctrine that the only good Indian is a dead Indian, whence it follows, by frontier logic, that the only good Indian title is one that has been extinguished, through transfer to a white man or a white man’s government (1947)” (120-21). The attacks on the people and their identities as First Nations is integrally entwined with Northern First Nations’ rights to title of incredibly resource-filled lands. With the people out of the way or simply being unable to protect their lands, then it becomes a wide open target for non-Aboriginal governments and multinational companies to do whatever they please with the land. Because “Aboriginal title is based on occupancy or possession of land” (Chartrand 1992, 121).

Part of this process of obtaining lands from First Nations was the implementation of treaties which may have been claimed to be between sovereign nations as per the usual definition (Robinson and Quinney 1985), but the Indian nations had little if any option at the time due to their continuing decline in numbers and health. Commissioner J, Provencher 1873 expressed the Crown’s actual intent when he said:

There are two modes wherein the Government may treat the Indian nations who inhabit this territory. Treaties may be made with them simply with a view to the extinctions of their rights, by agreeing to pay them a sum, and afterwards abandon them to themselves. On the other side they may be instructed, civilised and led to a mode of life more in conformity with the new position of the country and accordingly made good industrious and useful citizens. (Armitage 1995, 95)

Clearly, the intent of the treaties from the Crown's point of view was extinction of their rights or assimilation into British ways, which also then extinguishes their rights both as the people they had been and wanted to continue to be (TRC 2012). Volkan (1997) recognizes that conflict between groups can lead to one or more group holding steadfast to their own uniqueness in response to ongoing ethnic conflict. Yet in Canada, the distinctiveness of the Indigenous peoples became extremely confusing and conflictual⁴. Through their social policies from 1867 onward, the colonialists isolated and prevented them from free access to colonial society, and at the same time they used every available means to assimilate Indians into colonial society (Armitage 1995; Tobias 2002; Fortier and Crey 1997; Alfred 2009; Chrisjohn 2002; 2009).

Structural violence through assimilation is arguably the strongest weapon that Canada has used on First Nations people and the RCAP (1996) identifies the dehumanizing aspects of assimilation in Canada as being based on the false assumption that the original peoples were less than or inferior to the colonizers and that they had to be "taken care of" and governed by Europeans. This is consistent with Fanon's theories on colonization that colonists paternalistically "take care of" the very people who they are trying take the land and resources out from under (1965).

Colonization through Canada's efforts to assimilate, attacked the identities of the Indigenous peoples and arguably their most effective weapon was the IRSs. They "were set up to assimilate Aboriginal people forcibly into the Canadian mainstream by eliminating parental and community involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children" (TRC 2012) and more than 150,000 Aboriginal children were victims. It was determined

⁴ For clarification on the challenges in naming and defining who the Indigenous peoples of Canada are, see the section at the end of the Introduction in this study for details about names and identities.

that the most ‘effective’ way to assimilate Indian children was to remove them from their families and communities (Fournier and Crey 1997, 56) and the TRC has identified that the IRSs were part of larger plans of attacks on identity and to assimilate them (TRC 2012). Through the stories of my own experiences within CFS, this autoethnography will examine if my actions within the current child protection services are continuing the assimilationist colonialism of the IRSs through the removal of children within social work methods and practices, and/or the ways that I may be effectively countering the colonialism of assimilation of NFNs.

Genocide

If the above areas of violence – structural violence, colonization, imperialism, oppression and forced assimilation – are enacted out in their most extreme forms, then the result can sometimes be identified as genocide (Jones 2006). Genocide is a new term for an ancient concept that refers to the killing off of group of people and/or culture (Jones 2006; Moses 2008). “This history of genocide is the history of human society since antiquity” (Moses 2008, Preface). According to Leo Kruger (1981), “The word is new, the concept is ancient,” (as quoted in Adam Jones 2006, 3).

Methods and techniques of genocide can include physical (massacre and mutilation), deprivation of livelihood (starvation, exposure, etc. often by deportation), slavery (exposure to death), biological (separation of families, sterilization, destruction of foetus), cultural desecration and destruction of cultural symbols (books, objects of art, loot, religious relics, etc.), destruction of cultural leadership, and destruction of cultural centers (cities, churches, monasteries, schools, libraries) (Short 2010, 837).

There are examples of decimations of peoples and their cultures that go back to ancient times, but the term was first coined by Raphael Lemkin in his work, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*

(1944) which included his perspective as a Polish Jew of what was happening in Eastern Europe under Nazi rule. It is critical to note however, that Lemkin began his studies into mass destruction prior to the Nazi regime (Van Krieken 2004), and at no time did he limit his understanding of genocide to the Nazis in general or the Holocaust of the Jews or Armenians (Moses 2008).

In order to define what he studied and also witnessed, he coined the term from the Greek root “genos”, meaning race or tribe. And the Latin “cide”, meaning killing. He stated, Genocide “was the intentional destruction of national groups on the basis of their collective identity” (as quoted in Adam Jones 2006, 10). And while intent is necessary to determine genocide, it is not just intention but a complex series of processes (Moses 2008, 7; McDonnell and Moses 2006).

Moses (2006) explains though that Lemkin believed that there does not need to be an “official policy” for genocide to occur. An unofficial policy is sufficient and collateral damages such as the deaths of people in concentration camps not from the gas chambers, but from malnutrition or unattended health needs, can also constitute genocide. There is also a growing belief that collateral destruction from structural violence within governments and institutions can also cause genocide. When masses of people die or are devastated by malnutrition that could have been prevented, this is increasingly viewed as genocide (Jones 2006).

The term genocide was publicly used in Nuremberg indictments against Nazi war criminals, and then became internationally accepted when the United Nations’ General Assembly adopted the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Jones 2006). This was a first of its kind to internationally recognize that mass killings and cultural annihilation is identified and then even more so to be deemed as a criminal act according to the law of nations. The United Nations’ legal definition within the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is:

Article 2. In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Thus the definition of genocide ranges from direct physical violence to intentional structural violence as per Galtung. And, while genocide includes loss of physical life it also includes serious harm both physical and mental, and the destruction of family systems as well.

The Convention made tremendous progress in asserting that mass killings and assaults against groups of people are to be recognized for the abomination that it is to most of humanity, however the definition of genocide (like any definition) also opened the door to even further debate and even confusion over what this means (Woolford 2009; Jones 2006; Moses 2008; Short 2010; van Krieken 2004). Raphael Lemkin introduced the term and the UN sanctified it within international law, but there has been ongoing debate over the definition that continues to be studied, discussed and argued over not only by academics and politicians but also by victims and potential victims as well such as today's Indigenous Peoples (Moses 2008; Jones 2006; Short 2010).

Clarity over its definition and methods and some form of consensus is critical however so that it does not become a catch-all phrase for violent acts. Every abomination against human beings is not necessarily genocide, even when the acts are atrocious. An accepted definition is necessary for legal reasons in order to effectively prevent and prosecute and hold perpetrators accountable. A common understanding is also necessary in order to continue to develop the growing knowledge

bases of various forms of violence and carnage in order to respond accordingly and hopefully preventively.

And in fact, the confusion and debate started before the Convention was even issued. Lemkin worked exhaustively to try to ensure that people understood genocide as an intentional atrocity against a group of people, usually of one culture, and that it did not have to mean the physical annihilation of the group (Woolford 2009), nor through objectively violent means (Abed as referenced in Short 2010, 844) although attempts at cultural destruction often preceded or followed the decimation of the culture of a people (Moses 2008). According to Jones (2006),

One does not need to exterminate or seek to exterminate every last member of a designated group. In fact, *one does not need to kill anyone at all to commit genocide!* Inflicting “serious bodily or mental harm” qualifies, as does preventing births or transferring children between groups. It is fair to say, however, that from a legal perspective, genocide unaccompanied by mass killing is rare, and has stood little chance of being prosecuted. (2006, 13)

Jones also purports that while physical killing is an important part of understanding genocide that it actually goes far beyond this as per Lemkin’s own words:

By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group.... Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation.... It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. (As quoted in Jones 2006, 3)

There is a growing understanding within the developing field of academic genocide studies that Lemkin intended for genocide to include the destruction of a people’s way of life against their will, and especially when it is not a mutually agreed upon or an inevitable social evolution (Short 2010).

When a people's culture is annihilated, so too is the collective people irreversibly gone. In his later writings, he directly viewed even the destruction of cultural symbols as genocide (Moses 2008, 12; McDonnell and Moses 2006). According to Lemkin, this loss is equal to the physical loss of the individual members. Lemkin wanted cultural genocide included in the Convention because he viewed it as "the most important part of the Convention. He only reluctantly acceded to its eventual exclusion on tactical grounds" (Moses 2008, 14). Right from the start, based on his earlier explanations of genocide that he had been working on, Lemkin advocated tirelessly to have the cultural understanding of genocide explicitly included in the UN Convention, but in the end he coalesced to the dominant international powers (Short 2010). Lemkin also never lost his conviction on the importance of the cultural dimensions of genocide to be understood as evidenced in his unpublished works that he did not complete before his death (Short 2010).

Lemkin's focus was also beyond the confines of the Jewish Holocaust (Short 2010), for he continued to speak out about Gypsies, the disabled and other victims of the Nazis. Further, he argued that the concept of genocide was intrinsically colonial and gave several examples from within the Americas (Moses 2008; McDonnell and Moses 2006). The Convention drafters however never did define what is national, ethnical, racial or religious which has then led to continuing debate. "The position of the Rwanda tribunal (ICTR), that 'any stable and permanent group' is in fact to be accorded protection under the Convention, is [however] likely to become the norm in future judgments" (Jones 2006, 13). According to Short (2010), Abed suggests that the members of the targeted group "must consent to a life in common, its culture must be comprehensive and its membership should not be easily renounced" (841). Woolford (2009) also argues that Indigenous peoples fit within these frameworks in several ways, but that non-Indigenous people

should be careful not to try to squeeze First Nations people into group categories that are European-based in concepts.

Genocide has to be purposeful and physically destructive according to Fein in Short (2010) but there is debate about how to define and measure both intent and exactly when enough physical destruction is enough to qualify as genocide. How do we quantify violence and devastation, and more importantly, should we quantify tragedies? How many bodies need to be found to qualify as genocide? How many children need to be removed from their parents, families, cultures and languages for it to be commonly believed to be genocide?

Lemkin never stopped adding to knowledge of how to define genocide, and ongoing examination of his writings continues to flesh out our knowledge of it. As time goes on, we are also able to see how his own ethnocentric, history-centric and geographic-centeredness affected his theories, both positively and perhaps negatively by limiting his understandings of genocide. Cesaire for example believed that “no one colonizes innocently,” of genocide (Moses 2008, 11). Lemkin however, did not view all forms of imperialism as genocidal. He attempted to differentiate “inevitable diffusion” between groups which he saw as a natural strengthening of the greater society, which is “gradual and relatively spontaneous” in contrast to inflicted self-interested usurpation of power, culture and lands (Moses 2008, 11).

In some ways Lemkin viewed some potential acts of genocide within the “norm” of European imperialism and compliant with international law that the UN was developing. Some theorists believe that Lemkin would only see actions that fall within criminal definitions on a micro basis to qualify as genocide (van Krieken 2004). However, having the world powers define assimilation as genocide or not is like on a micro level having the criminals themselves define what is or is not a crime. “Arguing that measures like forced assimilation, are only genocidal if

considered illegal by civilized nations begs the question, because civilized nations were the states who engaged in such forced assimilation” (Moses 2008, 20). Many of the so-called ‘civilized nations’ are actually nation states that exist because of their own roles in enforcing assimilation within their roles as colonizers.

Should genocide only be defined by the perpetrating states and forces? Historically the definition and its development has been approved by the very world powers and their academics, who are the primary perpetrators of genocide, who have inflicted the worst genocide within the last century (Jones 2006; Hinton 2012). Limiting the defining of genocide to the perpetrators means that genocide is understood only from the perpetrator’s perspective which can mean that the definition is formed to protect their own self-interests rather than that of the victims (Short 2010; Woolford 2009). The people of the less powerful Third World, and the Fourth World (Manuel and Posluns 1974), the Indigenous peoples of powerful states such as the U.S. and Canada, have significant experiences of recent or even contemporary genocide, but to date have not had the same opportunity to participate in the development of the definition (Short 2010). While a universal definition is required, are we as a globe looking too narrowly at the definition because of our historical perspectives that sanctioned colonialism?

Growing consensus that while the Convention was groundbreaking for its time and is still a critical tool in addressing and preventing genocide, there is an increased call for a definition that is less ethnocentric, based more in peoples’ experiences, and that reflects more historical and geographical experiences. There is also increased study of genocide from that of a purely legal perspective to sociological, PACS, and countless other fields of study which will inevitably widen the concept of genocide. Hinton writes that “scholars have begun to consider what were largely forgotten genocides by increasingly focusing on issues such as colonialism, conquest, settler

societies, and modernity” (2012, 11). The definition(s) of genocide are expanding through the different fields’ perspectives and criteria.

Genocide and Indigenous Peoples

It is clear from this brief introduction above, that genocide is inter-related with structural violence, colonization, imperialism, and also assimilation and identity. In effect, genocide is the worst case scenarios of these forms of violence. We cannot look at any of these forms of violence in relation to my work within Northern Manitoba First Nations without then considering if or how genocide relates to Indigenous peoples. As stated above the concept of Indigenous peoples was born out of colonialism. Prior to the coming of foreigners, the people were simply the people – the Ininew, the Anishinaabe, the Dene, and the Nikoodi, etc. All of these self-identities and many others refer to themselves as simply the people. Indigenous peoples can only exist as ‘indigenous’ in relation to newcomers.

In the vast colonization across the world in the last five-hundred-plus years, the newcomers (primarily from western European nations) did not come with invitations, nor in any form of sustained peaceful co-existence. The history of colonialism provides infinite examples of violence of every conceivable and even inconceivable methods that overpowered Indigenous peoples, and in order to inevitably take control of the lands. Lemkin stated that “genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group: the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor” (as quoted in McDonnell and Moses 2006, 514).

Colonialism assumes many forms of violence and Horvath (1972) identifies the main types of relationships between colonists and Indigenous peoples as extermination, assimilation and then relative equilibrium. Extermination is intended, direct, both structural, cultural and personal

violence with and without weapons. It then results in the worst of violence, genocide (Horvath 1972). And assimilation includes structural intent that can be both manifest and latent. It can be hidden within governing policies intended to at the very least, strip Indigenous peoples of their unique identity (Horvath 1972).

Lemkin wrote about genocide not just within the European or the Holocaust context, but within the colonial context as well (McDonnell and Moses 2006). He even defined the concept as intrinsically colonial. In *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, he wrote the “genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the *colonization* of the area by the oppressor’s own nationals” (Moses 2010, 9).

Thus Lemkin’s two phases of genocide correspond to Horvath’s forms of colonialism, extermination and assimilation. Obviously extermination would result in the destruction of the oppressed group in its entirety. But the assimilation of both Horvath’s colonialism and Lemkin’s genocide are the imposition of one group’s national pattern onto another through destruction of the colonized’s ways of life to be replaced by the colonizers’. Whether the colonized are ‘allowed’ to live on and remain on their lands or are re-located, their ways of life are overpowered by the colonizers. Horvath defined this as colonial assimilation and Lemkin defined this as genocide.

Many students of genocide including Moses (2008), Jones (2006), Woolford (2008) and Short (2010) have identified colonization as a process that has usually begun with extermination or near-extermination, followed by assimilation. The processes however differed in all locales but the underlying belief within Indigenous communities appears to have a common perception of a 'logic of elimination' as per Patrick Wolfe (Short 2010). This historical perspective is in keeping

with Volkan's (1997) theories of the role of trans-generational "chosen trauma" that forms a collective memory. People of the same bloodline, that is, a distinct cultural group (a definition that is consistent within the understandings of who qualifies as potential victims of genocide), share collective memory based on their forebearers' memories that have storied themselves into the current consciousness (Volkan 1997).

It is critical to note the importance of this fact that historical physical slaughter, decimation, and near extermination, still resonates clearly within the worldview of Indigenous peoples of today, even if the direct physical killings from colonizers may have stopped. It remains a real, viable and active threat that underlies in significant ways all of the continuing relationships that Indigenous peoples have with the colonizers and their descendants (Short 2010). Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (2009) refers to this phenomenon in relation to the trauma that First Nations people in Canada experienced psychologically, socially and culturally from the loss of 90 to 95 percent of their people within 100 years after contact. "The intensive trauma from such massive death and destruction not only contributed a great deal to the inability of indigenous people to effectively protect their cosmological beliefs and social systems, it also rendered reconstruction of their devastated social and economic systems impossible" (Wesley-Esquimaux 2009, 15).

Colonization is a process that started centuries ago, but is still continuing *at least*, within the mindset of the 'victims'. Yellow Horse Brave Heart describes the trauma being continuing through the generations and not only identify with the past but re-experience it within the present (as quoted in Wesley-Esquimaux 2009, 22). They even "continuously recreate trauma experiences in an effort to connect with their feelings and with the past" (Wesley-Esquimaux 2009, 22). When one's people and families, have suffered greatly, or been decimated at the hands of the colonizers,

then the threat of continuing colonization and potential genocide continue to exist. Short (2010) describes:

The genocidal ‘logic of elimination’ that informed frontier massacres in places like Australia and North America, and the assimilationist agendas that emerged once it was clear that the natives would not ‘die out’, can in more recent times be found underpinning settler colonial expansionist land grabs driven by global capitalism. Indeed, as Davis and, Zannis note, after 1945 traditional colonial terror was transformed into a ‘genocide machine’ as the nature of capitalist domination became less overtly racist and more attuned to American corporate imperatives’. Driven by corporate agendas governments frequently dispossess indigenous groups through industrial mining and farming, but also through military operations and even national park schemes – all of which routinely take no account of core indigenous rights. 839-40

Originally the goal of the colonizers was to have unfettered access to Indigenous lands and their resources, and this goal is still clearly evident today. Much of the nation state of Canada has either recent treaties or are still un-Treated land (AANDC Website 2014), and these are also the lands of the north that can still offer the most resources. As well, the Indigenous peoples of First Nations peoples whose people signed treaties, also have their lands being scoped out, developed and overtaken by ongoing expansion. Indigenous peoples including Canada’s First Nations thus have every reason to believe that their land is being targeted. This is self-evident when one considers the tar sands in northern Alberta (Short 2010), the mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows (Woolford 2009), the proposed pipelines that would cross over First Nations lands, the hydro-electric projects that continue to be developed in Northern Manitoba (Lithman 1992) and all of the other economic take overs on First Nations lands.

The infiltration is also both direct and in-direct. For example, the industries closer to urban areas have significantly affected the waters and lands on which subsistence hunters, trappers and fishers still rely. These polluting and disrupting effects are equally destroying not only the lands of First Nations peoples, but their related ways of life (Newbury 1992). “But of all such activities

it is industrial extractive industries which pose perhaps the biggest threat to indigenous peoples' survival, for it is not just the accompanying dispossession which they bring but also the 'externalities' of pollution and environmental degradation" (Short 2010, 840). It is not just the loss of actual lands, but the effects of the usurpation of the lands with which they are connected with that affects them. For example, even if a hydroelectric project is hundreds of miles away from a community and its traditional territories, the effects of the project directly impact their lands and way of life negatively.

Their cultures and their very lives as Inineu and Dene etc., rely directly on their lands. Indigenous peoples by definition most commonly are defined within the context of their lands. According to MKO's Natural Resources Secretariat Michael Anderson (1992), "The land and the people have always been one" (171). It is their presence with, and usually involving millennia of relationships with their lands that defines Indigenous peoples as such.

For George Poitras, a Mikisew Cree First Nation member affected by tar sands mining in Fort Chipewyan Alberta, the battle with industrial mining over land and resources comes down to the fundamental right to exist: . . . if we don't have land and we don't have anywhere to carry out our traditional lifestyle, we lose who we are as a people. So if there's no land, then it's equivalent in our estimation to genocide of a people. (Short 2010, 840)

Poitras identifies the intrinsic co-dependence of Indigenous peoples with their lands.

Thus there can be no argument over the fact that the land is critical and inseparable from the people when looking at Indigenous peoples' experiences.

So far as Indigenous peoples are concerned, where they are IS [*sic*] who they are, and... to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home. Whatever settlers may say - and they generally have a lot to say -- the primary motivation for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element. For those Indigenous peoples, who continue to define themselves principally through their relationship to land 'land is life -- or at least, land is necessary for life. Thus contests for land can be -- indeed often are -- contests for life. (Short 2010, 836)

Thus, Indigenous peoples' current wariness and fear and distrust of colonialism and genocide is legitimate: it is fact-based, both historically and currently.

And currently, even while direct killings have stopped for the most part in Canada, it is critical to note that

physical destruction need not be direct but can of course be achieved indirectly through inflicting on the group 'conditions of life' (such as dispossession and environmental destruction) which lead to that end. (Galtung's structural violence) Those indigenous peoples who are currently invoking the term genocide to describe their current experiences, such as the Mikisew Cree above, are invariably referring to both physical (albeit indirect and latent) and cultural destruction. (Short 2010, 840)

The Mikisew Cree, the First Nations opposing the Northern Gateway pipeline and others such as Grassy Narrows have identified how these acts of dispossession and destruction are affecting their lives through the health related concerns from the effects on their lands, and also how their ways of life that are entwined with the lands are forced to change irrevocably since the lands cannot support their lives in traditional ways.

Short recognizes that Lemkin's and other accepted definitions of genocide include the concept that the genos in genocide is a social figuration of fluid networks of social relations that one is imbedded in, and it is genocide to attack this body of networks that suppress "language, religion, law, kinship systems, and other cultural practices through which the people maintain the relations among themselves, or through the imposition of severe conditions of life that break down social solidarities" (Short 2010, 842). It is "ethnic cleansing" to ensure that people are no longer connected to each other" (Short 2010, 842). It is far easier to invade a broken body of people than a strong intact body of people.

There is always argument that there was no intention of assimilation or genocide by the individuals who carried out the assimilationist policies including the Indian Residential Schools

(IRSs) in places such as Canada and Australia. Some argue that because so many of Canada's and Australia's actions were based in "well-intentioned" humanitarian and welfare-oriented policies to "help" (at least in the minds of some enactors) that there was no intent to commit genocide (Woolford 2009; van Krieken 2004). However Van Krieken states that removing children is not simply "a mistake" (1999, 304). And Moses states that "Lemkin held individuals responsible for acts of genocide" even if they were not agents of the state (2008, 18) and acting independently.

Also, "Lemkin's work on Aboriginal genocides suggests that centrally coordinated planning is not required for an event to be categorized as genocide" (Woolford 2009, 91). According to Woolford (2009), genocide can result from collateral actions or systems and not from agents who consciously choose to enact genocide. For example, governmental bureaucrats can follow departmental policies for their own reasons, but in effect participate with genocide. The Indian Agents in the mid-20th Century were following policies and in their minds were simply providing children with an education, however, the mass removal of Indian children is increasingly considered to be acts of genocide, or are genocidal in nature.

Lemkin shows great awareness of the complexities within Aboriginal genocides and "acknowledge[es] that various 'genocidists' possessing different motives might each play a role in the wider process of aboriginal destruction." (Woolford 2009, 91). Moreover, Jones states that "specific intent is easy enough to adduce in the consistent tendency towards massacre and physical extermination, evident from the earliest days of European conquest of the Americas, Africa, Australasia, and other parts of the world" (2006, 21). In other words, when the effects of current actions are consistent with histories of mass destruction, it is easy to infer that the original intent of extermination is continuing.

The TRC Commission has already stated that the IRSs did not operate in isolation, that in fact there was a previous history of extermination, dispossession and assimilation, and that the IRSs simply continued this process (2012). “The residential school system was intended to assimilate Aboriginal children into broader Canadian society. With assimilation would come the breaking up of the reserves and the end of treaty obligations. In this way the schools were part of a broader Canadian policy to undermine Aboriginal leaders and Aboriginal self-government” (TRC Interim Report 2012, 26). The breakdown of Indigenous historical, cultural, linguistic, spiritual and social relationships can clearly be found in Canada’s imposition of IRSs, which were created to assimilate Indian people into mainstream society as part of an ongoing colonial process.

The Canadian government itself acknowledged this fact that the intent was assimilation in Prime Minister Harper’s 2008 Apology on behalf of all Canadians. “His statement recognized that the primary purpose of the schools had been to remove children from their homes and families in order to assimilate them into the dominant culture” (TRC 2012, 2). Even the head of the nation-state that committed these acts of assimilation, acknowledged that the IRSs were created and intended specifically to continue this process of assimilationist colonization.

With the findings of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission due to be released within the next two years, there is one question that many people are wondering if it will be answered: Did the actions that took place through the imposition of the Indian Residential Schools fit within the definitions of genocide? And then of course, which definitions – the UNCG’s? Lemkin’s original or later definitions? Genocide as per the Convention or Lemkin’s cultural genocide? Or definitions as defined by Canadian or other Indigenous peoples themselves?

It can be controversial within Canada to term our existence as a nation as due to genocide. It flies in the face of our self-claimed international reputation as a global champion of human rights

The definitions of and debate around genocide have been introduced however, because this is a term that is being said on a daily basis within First Nations circles in reference to many aspects of life, and to date there have been few real opportunities for First Nations academics, politicians, Elders and regular folk to engage in a meaningful discussion about their interpretations of their experiences within the possible realm of any of the various forms of genocide. And, in 2014, when Justice Sinclair was the Sol Kanee Lecturer at the University of Manitoba, he did state that the IRSs was a form of genocide, and also identified the close overlap between the residential schools and child welfare. Thus, it is evident that genocide is a concept that needs to be included in any honest discussion of the effects of CFS within Canada at this time.

The Pracademics of Paulo Freire, John Paul Lederach, and Roger Mac Ginty within Peace and Conflict Studies

“Pracademics” is the relationship between theory or academia, and that of practice or actual peace-building (Byrne and Senehi 2008). In other words, it is not enough for me to simply think and theorize about peace and conflict, but I also need to then put forth potential actions as responses. Thus this chapter briefly introduces two theories within PACS that are further developed in the analysis below. The first theory is Paulo Freire’s teachings that oppression requires a response from people who come from the social group of the oppressors, and it is destructive to the oppressors as well as the oppressed albeit in different ways. Thus, the “oppressors” have responsibilities of actions. The second in Roger Mac Ginty’s writings on the significance and importance of indigenous methods of peace-building to help effective lasting positive change.

Freire's approach identified with the oppressed, identifying the systemic injustices and the belief that charity is not enough and that structural change is required, even at the cost of rejection from one's own group of oppressors (Freire 1970, 26-27). Freire learned how the poorest in his country of Brazil, when as a child his family also suffered hunger due to the overpowering social and political structures (Macedo 2014). Even though his family started out as middle-class, he experienced enough hunger to see the world from the oppressed perspective and this led to him seeing Brazil (and then the world) as one divided into imposed classes and his resulting work to transform this constant reality that appears in different forms.

Freire wrote from a Third-World perspective having been born and raised in Brazil and worked at educating the illiterate. The divides between the haves and the have-nots was obvious and irrefutable in that place and time, and Freire recognized the social and oppressive political imbalances. Freire also knew that what was obvious to him as an educated person, was not always apparent to others. The oppressed may not even know that they are oppressed, because it is the only life they know. They may not have even imagined a different reality.

Freire (1970) aligned himself with the peasants in Brazil, and loudly identified the injustices and imbalances of power in society. This led to his students coming to see that their own reality was not just fate, but the result of colonial oppression that existed due to the impoverishment of the Indigenous peoples, the peasantry and at times the middle classes as well (Macedo 2014). Charity, providing just enough to keep people alive without changing the roots causes, was not an answer (Freire 1970). Freire's solidarity with the most oppressed and his encouragement of them all working together to change the structures that were hurting and killing them, led Freire personally experiencing rejection from his own people through his resulting imprisonments and resulting exile from his homeland.

Freire defines oppression as “Any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression” (1970, 37). Freire valued such terms as ‘humanity’, ‘liberation’, ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment’ and Freire’s central concern was the problem of humanization (Narayan 2000) in response to oppression. Freire defines conscientization as “learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1970, 17) and “the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence” (1970, 90). This can be explained as the wakening to the realities of the oppressions within our society and world.

Freire’s teachings were people-centered teachings (Narayan 2000) that identified the class-based fluidity of societies and the need to participate in creating structural class change (Macedo 2014). For example, Freire recognized that aspects such as racial identities can flow between the different classes: individuals can ascend to higher classes while the oppressive structures remain (Macedo 2014). An example is when an Indigenous person is able to achieve an academic education and then participate in more opportunities than his or her former peers who are not educated and thus do not have the same opportunities. While their identities are the same, their classes are different and this creates significant distinctions in their realities.

Freire (1970) describes the pedagogy of the oppressed as having two distinct stages: the first is the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of liberation as the oppressors liberate themselves through their solidarity with the oppressed (1970, 36).

Conscientization, the awakening to the realities of structural oppression is the required first step, and both the oppressed and the oppressors need this awakening. Freire was also adamant that the oppressors must also go through their own conscientization process of recognizing the imposed structural class oppression. However, Freire was adamant that change must come from the impetus of the oppressed themselves. All people have a responsibility to participate in transforming the oppressive systems, but the directions and movement needs to come from the needs and perspectives of the ones who are oppressed by the systems. This is for the simple reason that to apply change “for” them or “to” them, is just another form of control and/or oppression, no matter how benevolent the intentions may be.

Conscientization is the awakening to the facts that there are social powers (the haves) that are in control and also that we as individuals do have agency to counter the unjust order which dehumanizes people. Together we can shift the balances of power with a ‘cultural revolution’ which is the revolutionary maximum effort at *conscientizacao*. It should reach everyone, regardless of their personal path” (Freire 1970, 139). Conscientization is a force at work in movements for empowerment and social change (Hegar 2010, 162).

Usually the oppressors think that it is in their best interest for the status quo to continue and thus silence about the realities of injustice are encouraged and even enforced. Enforced silencing is a major weapon within structural violence (Memmi, 1965; Smith, 1999; Lederach 2005; Senehi 2009) and is so ingrained that it has resulted in many oppressed peoples throughout history to not necessarily be initially aware of their own oppression. This is why Freire’s conscientization process begins with the people self-identifying their/our own experiences either without fear of reprisal or with the courage to face reprisal. “Freire (1998) stresses that correct

pedagogy involves self-awareness, autonomy, common sense, ability to perceive reality accurately, conviction that change is possible, and curiosity” (Hegar 2010, 162-23).

The oppressors as well may not see the injustices because they too may not know any different. The fact that they “have” and others “have-not” can seem and often feel justified because that it is just the way it is. This is unlike previous beliefs that it is the people with the political, economic and social power who are the only ones who can make the changes (Hegar 2010). Freire asserted that the change must come from the oppressed themselves and from those who are truly in “solidarity with them [because] who suffers the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation?” (1970, 27).

Freire (1970) also identifies the cyclical nature of the violence of oppression when he identifies that the oppressors themselves (i.e. colonizers) are also oppressed by their need to hold onto that power through every means possible. When a person of the oppressors wakes to their realities that they too are being dehumanized through the process by basing their lives on dehumanizing power, they must turn to the oppressed to learn about it from their perspectives. Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is in solidarity; it is a radical posture that usually requires turning away from one’s own people.

Oppressed people who start to recognize the dehumanizing injustices, sometimes want what the oppressors have, thinking this will balance things out. The oppressed discover that they are hosts of the oppressor; they (subconsciously) want to be like the oppressor (Fanon 1965) as long as they want to be like the oppressor they cannot liberate, only imitate. And therefore, when oppressed people try to enter the power role of oppressor they do not achieve the fictitious freedom that they seek. They remain within the cycle of oppression. It becomes a never-ending struggle or

conflict to retain the ill-gotten power, whether it is the oppressors or the oppressed who are sucked into that vortex of violence.

The power imbalances can also replicate into horizontal violence within the oppressed groups by striking at the fellow oppressed to get at their oppressor (Freire 1970, 44). The colonized enact direct lateral violence against their peers because they do not have access to the oppressors, and they try to emulate the power-based identities of the oppressors against their peers, which keeps the violence going. Emulating the oppressors changes nothing for the oppressed and simply keeps the oppression going.

As someone born into “white privilege” (McIntosh 1988) who has also witnessed firsthand through my own blood children the effects of racial oppression as the Indigenous people that they are, I have a unique perspective on many of the aspects of oppression i.e. the oppressors and the oppressed, and the lateral violence that occurs within groups. Both the oppressors and the oppressed and those aspects within me, must undergo transformative conscientization through open and ongoing dialogue. The roles that my varied identities play within the violence of colonization will be shown in the Findings Chapter in order to identify the lived realities and challenges of peace-building with examples of successes, errors, and the frustrations of limited options for trying to work anti-colonially within the current system.

My efforts, both social work and peace-building, have primarily been at the micro, social work front-line level. However within PACS, there can be an assumption that at the macro level, formally developed liberal peace responses within the larger political arena are the most important or even the only responses that are significantly valid. Irish PACS scholar Roger Mac Ginty defines liberal peace as “the dominant form of internationally supported peacemaking and peace-building that is promoted by leading states, leading international organizations and international financial

institutions. These peace interventions and peace-building strategies are justified using liberal rhetoric ... According to its critics, it reflects the practical and ideological interests of the global north” (2010, 393).

In other words, liberal peace-building believes that it is only at political peace talks and/or through elected officials or academics that “real” peace-building can occur. However, Mac Ginty identifies responses to colonialism through Indigenous peace-building methods that respond to the violence that are developed by the “victims” themselves. Mac Ginty honours peace-building practices that are often rooted within the peoples’ own practices and traditions that are often participatory and relationship focused (Mac Ginty 2008).

It is especially interesting that Mac Ginty focuses on the importance of this “bottom-up” method of peace-building (2010), when he himself has had and continues to have access to the higher realms of peace-building in political hotspots such as Northern Ireland, Lebanon and South Africa. The fact that he has insider opportunities and inside perspectives on macro peace-building options and yet pays homage to the importance of grassroots people taking self-determining steps reinforces the importance of Indigenous efforts.

Mac Ginty explains a hybrid method of peace that includes four aspects. The first is the power of compliance, meaning using potentially coercive tactics to enforce compliance with peace initiatives such as the use of force or the threat of the use of force. Second, there is the option of incentives, which are often used in conjunction with compliance tactics. Third, there is the ability of local actors to resist, ignore or adapt liberal peace interventions (2010, 403). This is where the local players’ agency is recognized and they can impart their own responses to the externally based liberal peace processes that can include resistance, ignoring, subversion or to adapt the liberal peace processes.

The fourth aspect is the ability of local actors, structures and networks to present and maintain alternative forms of peace and peacemaking (Mac Ginty 2010, 404). Because liberal peace often thwarts efforts at local peace-building methods, the local methods are often ignored, when in fact there are often effective “local forms of dispute resolution and reconciliation that draw on traditional, indigenous or customary norms and practices [that] exist in many societies” (Mac Ginty 2010, 403). Often these are most apparent at the local level, or on the margins, perhaps in geographically isolated areas of a large state where the reach of liberal peace agents is weak, or among constituencies deemed marginal (Mac Ginty 2008).

Indigenous and locally-based peace-building practices are also consistent with Freire’s emphasis on not imposing externally. If it is external and from the oppressors then by definition it is not indigenous. Mac Ginty’s belief that peace can be created by “the extraordinary skills held by so-called ‘ordinary’ people” (2013) is consistent with the teachings I have received, that it is in the day-to-day skills of the every-day First Nations people that the answers and methods for child care/protection can be found, rather than Western-based social work theories, or by Indigenous workers who may be simply “Indigenizing” external colonialist methods (Hart 2009).

Conclusion

The most consistent theme throughout the forms of conflict listed above, are that they are all inter-related. Structural violence includes colonialism and oppression which also overlap with each other. The potential of genocide then lies within the degree of the violence and also if there is any form of intent, a choice, to attack a specific group as a whole. The structural violence within the colonization of Canada began with various types of direct and formal violence such as some (albeit minimal) battles as the number of colonizers increased.

The spread of disease is the greatest cause of death and decimation (Jones 2006, Churchill 1998; AJI 1991, RCAP 1996) within what is now Canada. Some claim this was unintentional, with only some incidents of possible intentional infestation such as the introduction of pox-infested blankets in southern Alberta (as cited by Hugh Dempsey in Robinson and Quinney 1985). However, it became common knowledge that the imperial power Europeans carried diseases that decimated entire Indigenous populations in Canada and around the world, and the imperial power Europeans did not stop or even slow down their expansion of themselves and their diseases. They knew that their contact with First Nations would bring disease, and their diseases even arrived before them through First Nations' own regular travels, as they went the further west. (Woolford 2011).

“Disease was ‘without doubt ... the single most important factor in American Indian population decline,’ which in five centuries reduced the Indian population of present-day Canada and the United States from seven to ten million (though estimates range as high as eighteen million) to 237,000 by the 1890s” (Jones 2006, 72, italics in original). “The fact is that disease most likely accounted for the vast majority of indigenous deaths as much as immigration issued in the growth of European populations around the world” (Moses 2008, 24). Clearly the expansions of colonialists while knowing that their diseases were obliterating communities and peoples, was direct as well as structural violence that then also fit into the definitions of genocide.

Once the populations were decimated and decreased to bare survival rates, then the violence shifted to colonial structural violence that included systemic efforts to displace and then assimilate the First Nations right out of existence as the Indigenous peoples they are. Displacement happened through the Treaty processes and the resulting placements into reserve lands which was easy to enforce due to the decimation of the populations from disease (Armitage 1995).

Assimilation occurred through the Indian Residential Schools (TRC 2012; Armitage 1995), and arguably through their replacement, the child welfare systems.

Structural violence, colonialism, oppression, genocide and how they relate to Indigenous peoples, are concepts of conflict that all relate to my experiences as a social worker, particularly within the AJI-CWI context with Northern First Nations of Manitoba. These concepts are further explored in the Empirical Chapters as I examine my own actions through autoethnographical methods to see if my social work interventions are continuing the violence of assimilation, structural violence and possibly genocide, or if my actions are consistent with peace-building interventions. Am I carrying out the policies and instructions of governments that have years of policy and actual history of assimilating First Nations peoples contributing to the structural violence? Or am I countering the structural violence through peace-building efforts by participating in the conscientization of the oppressive realities, and developing interventions that break the cycles of assimilation within First Nations experiences? How do my social work interventions correspond and/or relate to these aspects of hybrid peace? Is there a correlation between the impositions of outside colonialist methods of social work with indigenous methods of caring for children and families, and Mac Ginty's (2011) explanations of "hybrid peace" between liberal and indigenous peace-building methods? These and other questions are discussed in relation to my work as described autoethnographically with CFS in Northern First Nations in Manitoba.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Introduction to Autoethnography

In order to understand if my social work interventions are also peace-building interventions, I need to look at myself, interiorly and exteriorly, and self-examine my actions in order to see if there are answers. The question is about me, and the answers lie within me in my motivations and can be observed through my actions. For these reasons, autoethnography is the research method of choice. However, because it is still uncommon within both Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) and social work an explanation of autoethnography within the context of this study is provided. In the first part of this chapter, the reasons that I chose autoethnography are presented in true autoethnographic style, through a narrative. My story of how and why this method was chosen is presented. The second part focuses on the theoretical perspectives, the definition of autoethnography, how it relates to my relationship with CFS, my use of organizational autoethnographic methods and then my concluding remarks.

This thesis is a very personal and individualized research project, as evidenced by the primary questions: As a social worker, am *I* also a peacebuilder? Or am *I* working in ways that contribute to the structural violence of colonization? Or, both and, if so, in what ways am *I*? Primarily within the context of Manitoba's Northern First Nations and the current Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative (AJI), are *my* social work interventions consistent with peace-building interventions?

These questions focus on *my* experiences, *my* stories and *my* resulting reflections about the ethnographic subject of *me*. This is why autoethnography is an obvious choice of research method. Autoethnography by definition is the life experiences of the writer (Denizen 2014) and studies the

researcher, and this is what I am trying to examine within the context of Northern First Nations Child and Family Services (NFNCFS). I do not have the right to speak for or on behalf of such a complex group(s) that constitute NFNCFS, but I can and need to speak for myself. I need to examine my own actions as a social worker, to see if my Child and Family Services (CFS interventions) are consistent with peace-building interventions. Therefore examining my own actions as they are expressed in my writings (autoethnography) is the most direct way of examining myself within the larger social context, which is what autoethnography is (Chang 2008; Denzin 2014).

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While in the midst of ardently explaining to my thesis advisor my passion for addressing the colonialism with First Nations Child and Family Services, she turned her eyes and face upwards, which told me that she was in thought, so I stopped talking. Jessica (Senehi) looked at me yet was still looking at the thoughts floating across her mind and said, “What about autoethnography?” While I had never heard of it in any detail, the name seemed pretty self-explanatory, and of course the word that hit me like a volt was “auto” meaning “self.” Self? Me? Why on earth would I want to think about myself, let alone write about me and share it with the world?

Okay, sure, I spend an inordinate amount of time self-examining myself, but that’s because it’s good practice to be continually assessing myself. Professionally as a social worker I have learned to constantly turn and look at my practice—my motives, my actions, and what the results are. As a human who wishes to do right in this world, I have also constantly looked inward to check my motives, actions and where I am headed. And I have been known to write about myself as a way of getting that necessary perspective so that the thoughts don’t just keep swirling inside

of me, gaining momentum into a storm of emotions. But those writings are either torn up or stored away hidden deep in my boxes and boxes of files.

But to write about it for others to read? No. I hold too much inside. I can't risk it. And besides, the whole reason I ever began to work in "Indian Child Welfare," and went into the Peace and Conflict Studies field to find and use opportunities to provide voice for the people most affected, which in my life are First Nations children, families, and communities. It is their story, not mine. And besides, who cares what I think? How boring that would be.

All this went rushing through my mind while Jessica went on to explain a bit more about autoethnography and then say that she would Dropbox me some articles about it. I remember mumbling my agreement to read them and then got back to the matter at hand—how to write a thesis about First Nations Child and Family Services to question and find out if it is continuing the assimilationist genocide of the residential schools. See, that is not "my" story, because I am not "First Nations" (oh, how I hate that term!). I am Celtic. My ancestors came from Ireland and Scotland to escape their own inevitable death and destruction at the hands of the English who colonized their homelands. The story of FNCFS belongs to First Nations people.

So I went home and continued to struggle with how to write about First Nations Child and Family Services when there are so many barriers to getting the stories out. First, there are the legal barriers. Child and Family Services is based on the notion of confidentiality in order to protect the rights of the children involved. I get that, and support it wholeheartedly. The children within the Child and Family Services systems are by definition the most vulnerable members of society. As children they are completely dependent on caregivers and the fact that they are involved in the Child and Family Services system necessarily means that there is something interfering with their care that places them at risk.

It could be as 'mild' as a parent-teen conflict that needs some counseling, or it could be as serious as beatings that could kill them. It could be at the hands of sick or evil caregivers, or it could be due to the caregivers' own unavoidable challenges and limitations, or it could even be due to society's own inability to keep them safe anywhere other than through the Child and Family Services system, such as children with severe medical needs or disabilities that require residential care. No matter what the cause of their 'risk,' they are in need of protective services or otherwise they would not be involved with the system. And so their need for confidentiality is sacred, for to exploit their situations through publicizing it would only add to their victimization, and I want no part of exploitation.

Legally, it is a challenge to report on a system in which so much of the information is utterly and justifiably confidential. As a medical patient I would not want my doctor to publicly disclose all of my medical history even inadvertently even though it would be pretty boring information. But what if I was a patient whose right to adequate care and services was not happening? Would I want my doctor to stay quiet or would I want him or her to speak up on my behalf when I am too sick to do so? If I was the tenth patient that week who could not have access to the specialized services that were required, would I want him or her to simply shrug their shoulders and say, "All I can do is watch you suffer and possibly die due to a lack of adequate services"? Or would I want them to speak up on behalf of the large numbers of people in the same or similar situations?

This is the position I found myself in as I tried to formulate a plan for my research on First Nations Child and Family Services. What motivated me was my own experiences of the inadequacies within the system in all my various roles, but also the stories that people gave to me about their own situations of sorrow, despair, and anger to the point of rage. Whenever someone

shares something with me, I try to treat it sacredly, meaning that I believe that I was chosen to receive this information to honour it and the giver. It is a gift when people share their feelings and stories and I am then obligated to honour this information. When people share requests for help in desperate situations, I am then obligated to do whatever I can to respond in the most healing and productive way that I can, even if it is only to walk beside them.

For quite some time I had been feeling like my hands and head were throbbing from hitting the walls trying to get people's attention to try to find solutions and healing. For over thirty years I have received stories that included requests, pleas, and begging for help and recently I had had another deluge of stories. Every day there were more people who were hurting within the CFS system, either because of what it does or because of its inability to meet their needs. The stories come to me from children in care, from parents and family members, from foster parents, and from social workers, all of whom are in a lot of pain. I, too, was one of them. As the mother of a seventeen-year-old son in care due to his high needs from autism and other disorders, I was struggling to get the services that he needed to survive. One of my nieces who had 'adopted' me for her mother, and had turned to me time and again for help, had recently died of suicide while in the care of the system. My heart was also broken, and others similar stories were fueling my grief. So what am I to do with this grief? This sorrow, rage, despair, and what was left of my meager sense of hope?

How do I research a system that is necessarily cloaked in confidentiality, but seemed at times to hide behind it to protect itself as a system rather than the children? While the individual children's situations must remain private for obvious reasons, what about the patterns and themes that I have experienced for over thirty years in three provinces and working with seven agencies, and directly with eleven First Nations communities, and working as a collateral with countless

others, and as a mother within one, as a foster mother within another, and as an advocate with all of them?

What about how the legislations, policies and standards—are they at least in theory honouring the Treaties and working to reverse the history of colonial assimilation? And the ‘neutral’ or potentially helpful laws and policies that are being put into practice—are they effective, and if so effective at what? Is what’s written as “politically correct” government policy really happening in everyday life? How can I write about the commonalities within my experiences that are so sharply evident, in ways that won’t violate the children’s confidentiality, and will not lead to me facing criminal charges for speaking?

Another equally critical concern was how to report on my experiences while maintaining the sacred trust that I had been given by the agencies and communities that I worked with. Within the teachings that I received over the years, it was assumed that when I worked for a First Nations community that I was entering into a sacred relationship with them. They were literally entrusting me with the future of their community through their children. The children are also the heart of the families and communities. It is not only an honour to work with them, but a heart-felt covenantal obligation to hold their children sacred in every way so that the lifelines of the communities can continue to beat strongly.

It is from this heart-felt contractual obligation that I have this overwhelming need to speak out about what the children and families are going through within the current FNCFS systems. But how do I do so in ways that promote honouring of the trust and not abuse it in any way? Even if my intentions are good, how do I find a method that is also honourable? Even with good intentions I run the risk of abusing that trust when I speak out by accidentally disrespecting them or using it

more for my personal motives rather than theirs. So how do I present it in ways that are healing and productive and will not place the children and families at any further risk?

It is always a quandary to know when I am acting to assist the common good, or when I am acting more on self-motivation, even when it can appear to be for the good of others. And ethically I also have to be accountable to academic, professional and personal ethics. Even if I find a way that is within the law, how do I share information that is in keeping with the required ethics of academia, the social work associations, and most importantly my own highly developed sense of ethical responsibility? All of these questions and more kept rushing through me. In order to simply follow up on my commitment to my advisor, and also out of a niggling curiosity, I read the articles she sent me.

The first one I read—“Qualitative Research,” by Nancy Taber (2010)—struck a resounding chord with me. Taber’s reason for choosing to use autoethnography to research her experiences while working as a female within the Canadian military services struck me loud and clear: she could not have access to the confidential information within the military, nor could she report on others’ experiences in the name of national security, but she needed to tell her story nonetheless. While she respected the need to enforce national security, it was evident that, like me, she felt that her system was hiding a large number of public concerns behind the cloak of confidentiality. Hmm...this sounded completely familiar! I could have easily replaced her words of “military” with “Child and Family Services,” and it would be completely consistent with my situation!

I was still not convinced, however, as I continued to plow ahead on my action research thesis proposal that would involve interviewing seven First Nations Child and Family Services workers to tell their stories. After all, it was their stories as Child and Family Services workers who are First Nations that really count, right? Sure, I could get my own story in there through the

underlying research, and make sure to include the stories about my experiences with the highest risk youth, and my stories about the challenges of the limitations for children who are in care due to medical needs, and not to forget about how the current tri-partite Child and Family Services agreements compare to my own experiences when working at the only First Nation that has complete control of its own child protection services. Hey, wait...this is more and more about me!

Am I 'using' these First Nations workers to get my own story out? Am I hiding behind them so that my voice can be heard too? There is no doubt that their stories are valid and need to be heard, that is a given. But am I in a place emotionally right now where I can step back and keep my own thoughts, experiences, and history out of it enough for their stories to be heard? My own experiences (negative and positive) with the First Nations Child and Family Services system right now are so emotionally raw and burning, would I be honouring their stories or imposing my own? This nagging guilt started to grow within me, so I finally asked, what if I told my stories? What if I wrote about my own experiences within First Nations Child and Family Services? But how can I do that as a non-First Nations woman? I have no right to speak to First Nations Child and Family Services experiences! But I do have a right to speak to my own, and so many of my stories are centered within FNCFS. But what are my stories? For that matter, who am I—sure I am Celtic, Caucasian, but most of my life has been lived within First Nations, mostly Ininew worlds.

I started working in Indian Child Welfare, as it was called in the early 1980s, right at the start of the Tri-partite Agreement agencies. I have lived my life within First Nations communities both on and off-reserve through my children and their relations and my close friends. I had followed the teachings I had been given that if I wanted my children to learn Ininew ways, that I was to live the ways with them, and so I have learned some of the language, ate the foods, participated in all types of cultural events, both formal like ceremonies, and informal on a daily

basis. And even though the future of First Nations is now my future since my children and grandchildren are Ininew, Ojibway and Nikoodi/Nakoda, and even though I was honoured with an Indian name and the clear direction (unsolicited) from the Elder that I was now part of his family and the family of First Nations and was given the right to speak on their behalf, I am who I am: a very white-looking woman with Celtic heritage and a citizen of Canada.

That will never change, for it is where I come from and whom I carry with me everywhere. Through my lived relationships with others, I have added many Ininew, Ojibway and Nakoda teachings, experiences, language and worldviews into my actual identity, but they, in fact, also lead me to discover my own heritage. In true circular fashion I learned more about who I am as a Celtic person indigenous to Ireland and Scotland through my life among Ininew and other First Nations. My First Nations teachers were not surprised by this and have always encouraged me to continue with my Celtic identity search while also continuing to learn their ways.

Who I am is a unique individual with multiple perspectives, but the question still needed to be answered: Whose story will be researched and told? The stories of the First Nations workers still need to be told, and will be one day soon, but perhaps now is the time for me to ‘position’ myself—as Ellis (2009) would put it—by going public about what my motives are and have been, what my actions have been, and assess all this as a means to position myself within society. Hey, that sounds like autoethnography!

It can be my opportunity to go on the public record about my own views based on my unique experiences. I have written many mini-manifestos that outline my discontent with current practices within Child and Family Services such as reports and letters of concern to the Manitoba Ombudsman’s Office, the Manitoba Minister of Family Services, the Manitoba Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities, the Manitoba Minister of Education, Manitoba’s Children’s

Advocate, the Manitoba Director of Child Protective Services, the Chief Executive Officer of the First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority (Northern Authority), the Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and various agency executive directors and Chief and Councils. But nowhere in these writings do I ever delve into my own motivations for what has kept me going. What are the reasons for my crying out into the wildernesses in the hopes of being heard?

My close friends know my stories, and they understand my motivations. But perhaps publicizing a little background into why I have done what I have and how I have done it could help people understand the message that I am trying to impart. Indigenous research methods are strong on the need for positioning one's self within the research at the start of any research project, because in the Indigenous world, relationships are key. Positioning one's self in relation to people, places, time and all of one's world and environment, is critical so that others can understand who the researcher is and why the research topic has been chosen. It is also a form of identifying one's own potential credibility, and it is a way of entering into a relationship of ethical contractual obligation to honour all of one's relationships within the research. It builds in accountability within Indigenous teachings because it shows one's connections to people, places and everything, and thus if I speak, I speak not only for myself, but in direct relationship to everyone and everything in my life (Smith 1999; Chisila 2011; Wilson 2008; Kovach 2009).

If I plan to continue my studies and writings in the coming years, then this research project can act as an instrument of positioning myself within my overall research and work. And, it is only fair. If I ask others to speak out about their own experiences, such as the First Nations social workers I had asked, then it is only fair that I too take the same type of risk. To operate solely as a detached researcher would only continue the oppression and colonialism within "objective"

research that First Nations have been overly subjected to. Without investing myself, I would be continuing to objectify my research “subjects” even if I called them co-participants because the relationship would be unbalanced. Their interior feelings, experiences and values would be exposed, while I would remain unexposed, private and safe from public scrutiny.

It can also be an opportunity to expose my own challenges and shortcomings. One of the biggest weaknesses within my work of advocating within the First Nations Child and Family Services system has been that some individuals and agencies seem to have assumed that they as individuals were under direct targeted aim in the concerns that I brought forward. And it is true that some official complaints revolved around specific acts of abuse or omission by certain individuals, but these were minimal as my primary focus was on the systemic shortcomings or abuses. The reality for me is that I have so consistently felt just as mad at and as frustrated at myself as I have with others within the system for my own inadequacies, whether intentional, unintentional or due to the oppression of the limited options within the bureaucratic system.

When for example I have raised concern after concern about the highest risk youth, I know from my own experiences as a mother, as a foster parent, as a worker and as a supervisor and as an administrator, that there are countless challenges and obstacles in trying to keep the highest risk youth safe. For example, the task of simply finding a bed for a highest risk youth who is released from incarceration is usually an overwhelming challenge of jumping through countless bureaucratic hoops with multiple professionals involved in different offices, countless forms to be filled out in triplicate-times-ten to be submitted to infinite offices, and trying to tear down the brick walls between the silos of different government departments (Justice, Family Services, Education, Health, provincial services, federal services, and the First Nations community leadership), and

finding in the end that there is absolutely nowhere for this youth to lay his or her head down that evening.

Obviously the other professionals in all of the other offices, agencies and departments face the same obstacles that I do, so there is no need to personally blame them or me for the systemic failings. Rather than blame others individually and organizationally for real or perceived shortcomings as happens regularly, we all need to work together to identify the deficits so that we can together build resources that actually work for the youth, the families, the communities and all who they are connected to. Thus through my stories within an autoethnography I would be able to self-identify my own challenges within the system in relation to the overall organizational issues.

From a personal point of view, it is also an opportunity for me to reflect on my experiences and choices and to identify the ways in which I have contributed to the oppression of First Nations children, families and communities, in the face of the Child and Family Services system's colonial assimilationist policies. Sure, I followed the Child and Family Services laws and policies to "protect" the child at risk, but was I also contributing to the overall assimilation of First Nations children? What are the ways that I let children down by allowing them to be assimilated rather than in their own communities? Was this intentional on my part? Was it because I was so busy that I had no time but to respond as quickly as I could to one situation so that I could find beds for another large sibling group before I could go home in the evening to my own babies?

Was it because there were no resource options within the child's community? If so, what did I do to try to create resources for that youth and all the others? Or did I exhaust myself trying to find any kind of option for this child to receive services without having to be removed (physically or emotionally or culturally) from his own community, leaving myself to be too physically and emotionally damaged to be of use to any other children and families? Did I damage myself or

others in the process of hopelessly trying to do right by this child? Did I err out of malice, or with good intentions and bad results, or did I err out of the inadequacies of the oppressive system or a combination of these? If so, how?

Was my work as a social worker consistent with my work and intentions as a Peacebuilder? Were my Child and Family Services interventions consistent with peace-building interventions? Or have there been times when I was following Child and Family Services legislation, standards and protocols and not building peace – meaning was I enacting structural violence? Were good intentions, good enough? Is it good enough that I “meant well”? Or do I/we need to examine our actions and take responsibility for our own actions?

And did I have any successes – were there times when children were kept safe within their own home or community because of my work? Was it my work or was it from the team approach of strong support from the community and/or agency? How can I even define success? In the number of children who are alive compared to the number we have lost? By the numbers of children whose abuse or neglect stopped through our interventions? By the number of children and adults who still seek me out as a friend, mentor or associate? Were there times when my Child and Family Services interventions were in fact consistent with peace-building interventions to address the structural violence of ongoing colonization?

As I ask these questions of myself with regard to First Nations Child and Family Services, I also then have the opportunity to participate in the self-reflection that is required for the true conscientization that is required of all us who are working to transform oppressive realities. And according to Freire (1972) the people among the oppressors have just as much need to respond to the injustices as the oppressed albeit in different ways. For example, it is not for me to develop my own ‘solutions’ and impose them on others no matter how sweetly I try to do so. Conscientization

requires that I self-reflect and examine myself to my core to determine the ways that I have benefited from my white privilege and how I have assumed oppressive characteristics without even knowing it, and to then most importantly take the required actions. To simply reflect without acts of change is useless.

And the actions that are required are profound and can shake me to my core. Can I continue to live within the worldview and milieu of the oppressors without changing the aspects of my life that have contributed to oppression? Can I separate the inner and personal from the social and the political? Can I “preach” one way and live another? What steps in my life have I taken to live in solidarity with people who have been identified as oppressed? Can I work non-oppressively and then still live within the milieu of the Haves and White privilege in socially oppressive ways without being or feeling like a hypocrite?

And how has my life among the ones identified as oppressed and/or colonized lead to changes within me and into my own experiences of oppression? Who am I as a worker/professional in relation to my simply being a human being— are there boundaries and if so what are they and where? What are the ways that my own people rejected me and continue to reject me? Who has supported me? Where do I find reciprocity, give and take that is in balance and not charity or giving-to or taking-from? Where do I find my strength in this amalgamated identity that I now have after so many years among Ininew and other First Nations people? So many questions, and this would all be if the study is just from my own individual experiences and perspectives! Maybe there is something to this autoethnography after all.....

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Autoethnographic Research Methods

Autoethnography is a research method that can effectively address the big challenge in writing about CFS, despite the systems' confidentiality, which is in place to protect the rights of the children and families involved. Because CFS is necessarily cloaked in confidentiality and, at times, hides behind it to protect itself as a system rather than protect the children, we cannot report on individual children's situations as they must legally and ethically remain private. But I can write about the patterns and themes that I have witnessed and experienced in my various roles within CFS in ways that will not violate children's confidentiality and will not lead to me facing criminal charges (professionally) and academic sanctions (as a student).

My personal stories are also told in relation to specific public documents to provide a context within which I tell my stories. I use documents such as the Manitoba CFS Act (1985), Manitoba's Authorities Act (2005), and various policies and government reports as references in order to provide the context within which my experiences occurred and/or are to be understood. Reference to these laws and policies provide the framework within which my own stories provide raw data to exemplify my public interpretations as per Chang's belief that one's personal (internal) narrative can and often should be examined in relation to public (external) documents, and that multiple documents can provide triangulation to assist with accuracy and veracity (2008b, 16). Correlating my personal experiences with the public contexts found in the documents, can show where my experiences come from, and how I interrelate with the world around me.

The references to public documents can be seen as the charcoal sketch that outline shape and contours, while my stories provide the colour, tones, and shading to bring the sketch outlines to greater detail and life. Stories of my own experiences (Schwandt 2007) and my various roles and relationships within CFS (through autoethnography) can be a way of safely unclocking the

highly confidential goings-on within my own experiences. I cannot write about Client A's experiences, but I can write about my experiences in relation to Client A, particularly when I do so in ways that do not identify Client A in any way. Autoethnography allows for me to tell my own story and blur the identities of others, either with aliases, and/or changing peripheral identifying information about them, and/or by creating composites based on groupings of my similar experiences (Ellis 1995; 2009; Denzin 2014; Chang 2008; 2008b).

My own individual experiences are the data to provide examples from which to develop a wider systemic perspective (Chang 2008b), in relation to the documents that describe the AJI-CWI. Instead of seeing each experience in isolation, they can be pixelated together to form a mosaic of the wider picture.

The storied performances of life experiences move outward from the selves of the person and inward to the persons and groups that give them meaning and structure. Persons are arbitrators of their own presence in the world, and they should have the last word on the problem. (Denzin 2014, 4)

Thus I write not only about my interior experiences and personal actions, I also write about myself in relation to the world of CFS through my experiences with the policies, standards, and current ways of operating within the AJI-CWI. How have these external forces affected me, and how have I attempted to affect them? What do they do to me, and what do I do to them?

And, as my own examiner, it will allow me the opportunity to expand my analysis from my usual social work perspective of these policies and procedures to an examination from a Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) understanding of structural violence as the student of PACS that I am.

After thirty plus years of seeing the system and my relationships within it from a social work perspective, I will now look at my own experiences to see if my individualized social work interventions, Individually and when pieced together, are my social work interventions providing

social healing for the legacy of colonization, or continuing assimilationist colonization. Autoethnography allows and even encourages this self-examination that is required to begin dialogue on issues that are traumatic (Denzin 2014) and also to address political challenges (Reed-Danahay 1997). This in fact is the purpose of this study.

Definition of Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a three pronged process: auto, ethno and graphy. “Auto,” the self, critically reflects on my own role as an active agent in a situation. The “ethno” component places the individual reflections within social and cultural environments. The “graphy” is the process of writing the story, which incorporates the personal experiences within the social and cultural realms (Ellis 2009; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2010; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011; Bright et al. 2008, p. 998; Doloriert and Sambrook 2012; Chang 2008a; Chang 2008b).

By definition, autoethnography is one of many forms of qualitative social science research which is a field of inquiry that started within sociology and was established as a way to study human group life within the “Chicago School” in the 1920s and 1930s. There was resistance from quantitative methods scholars (positivists) who labeled it ‘soft’ and ‘journalistic’. The word qualitative implies processes and meanings with minimal emphasis on measuring. Instead it stresses that “reality” is socially constructed, and that within the relationships between the researcher and the subject matter that there are many constraints such as history, place and bias, that shape inquiry. Therefore, research is inevitably “value-laden” and not free of the researchers’ relationship within any subject matter. And for these reasons qualitative research tries to find answer “stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denizen & Lincoln 2000, 1-4).

Ethnography realizes the role that the researcher or self plays within the research process (Reeves 2008) while autoethnography goes internally further by focusing on one individual to find knowledge of a culture (Buzzard 2003, 61). It is defined as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, 273).

After identifying five “moments,” Denizen and Lincoln (2000) later define seven moments or phases of the development of social science inquiry which all exist still today, as: the traditional (1900–1950); the modernist (1950–1970); blurred genres (1970–1986); the crisis of representation (1986–1990); postmodern, or experimental (1990–1995); post-experimental (1995–2000); and the future (2000–), the seventh moment” (Denizen 2003, p. 259). In the seventh moment of qualitative research the dividing line between [auto]ethnography and ethnography disappears. The reflexive ethnographer becomes the guiding presence in the ethnographic text. In the seventh moment critical social science comes of age and becomes a force to be reckoned with in political and cultural arenas (Denizen 2003, 260).

Autoethnography and My Relationships with Northern First Nations Child and Family Services

Ethnography in general is a mode of inquiry (Lockford 2002) about “the study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities” (Reeves 2008, 512) and “into a matrix of relationships” (Gergen and Gergen 2002, 12). Yet autoethnography peers through another lens, that of the researcher (Doloriert & Sambrook 2012). My research of my experiences within NFNCFS is that of my internal personal knowledge (Haynes 2011), and in relation to the larger societal culture (Buzzard 2003; Dyson 2007; Vickers

2007). I use myself as a basis for exploring broader socio-cultural issues (Bright et al. 2008, 998; Haynes 2011). The process is me, the researcher self-storying on paper about my own experiences which the readers receive, and this process is in itself the research product (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011), which encourages connection, empathy and solidarity (Sparkes 2002, 221).

Chang (2008b) refers to the need for the triadic balance between the three aspects: She argues that “autoethnography should be ethnographical in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation. This implies that self-reflective writings deficient in any one of these ingredients would fall short of; auto-ethnography; (pp. 3-4). My content orientation and methodology is the narration of my lived details within NFNCFS and how they correspond within my relations with others within the NFNCFS system, and culturally based through my interpretations in the context of the public documents that form the structure of NFNCFS (Chang 2008a and 2008b). My autoethnographic voice will be heard and represented through my biographical personal experiences within the NFNCFS system in the thesis as raw data for analysis (Denzin 2014; Chang 2008b).

In this study, my narratives are “both a method and a text (Reed-Danahay 1997, 6)[...]and ‘both the author and the focus of the story’” (from Denzin 2014, 19). My narratives need to be able to be self-explanatory because it is focused on my own personal experiences and my own interpretations of my lived realities. Statistics and even narratives of the critical challenges within CFS either do not exist or are not provided through the government reports. The public does not have access to critical empirical information such as actual numbers of all children involved in the CFS system compared to the numbers of children who should or could be assisted by appropriate CFS interventions, the numbers of former CFS children in care who commit suicide or homicide within 10 years of their discharge, the numbers of NFN children in care solely due to medical or

developmental needs, the numbers of high-risk youth who are in inadequate or even no placement, the numbers of extended families who have requested to care for their family members and been turned down, etc.

These are the challenges that I and other social workers face every single day on the job, but that are not being made public, even though they are critical social issues. Thus, through autoethnography I explain my personal daily experiences in relation to the larger social realm, (Schwandt 2007). I use the researcher, myself, as both subject and object (Haynes 2011; Aitken 2006; Gerger and Gerger 2002); Reed-Danahay 1997a; Taber 2013, 80; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 274; Ellis 2009) and in simultaneous view (Schwandt 2007) within the stories of NFNCFS.

Autoethnography does not pretend to be value-free, nor a measure of truth (Denzin 2014; Ellis 2009), and thus I directly use my values and personal experiences as a basis to start conversations and consciously influence the research process (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011; Haynes 2011; Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 31; Aitken 2006, 5; Dyson 2007; Hayano 1997, 101). Autoethnography does not espouse neutrality (Gerger and Gerger 2002) and like other autoethnographies, I choose to approach research with predetermined agendas unlike other research methods which claim neutrality and objectivity, yet still have many examples of subjective elements (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 274).

My experiences are one ray of insight into the lived realities within NFNCFS. Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis (2013a) as paraphrased by Denzin (2014) state that “autoethnography is the use of personal experience and personal writing to (1) purposefully comment on/critique cultural practices; (2) make contributions to existing research; (3) embrace vulnerability with purpose; and (4) create a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response” (19). These are exactly my intentions with this study. By using my personal writings I am providing

research by comparing my personal experiences to the general cultural practices, by baring my own life with the intent for others to assist me with my self-examination, so that we can then together make plans to develop a response that better meets the needs of Northern First Nations and the needs of their children and families.

This study is the beginning of a relationship with its readers, as autoethnography is based on relationships (Ellis 2009): the simple act of sharing the story turns into a relational phenomenon, and the reader's responses then follow. The relational flow is key since autoethnography is not just a research product, or project to be accomplished (Ellis 2009), but a process as well (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 273; Gerger and Gerger 2002; Sparkes 2002; Roth 2005; Taber 2013; Barthes 1977; Derrida 1978; Radway 1984; Ellis 1997. 2009).

I make use of my own experienced relationships as a CFS worker to internally examine them in detail to present to the outside world (Hayano 1997; Chang 2008b), in keeping with Taber (2013) who says that autoethnography's purpose can also be to start with the self in order to critique the social (82). My experiences become examples of the challenges and successes in relating social work interventions with peace-building interventions. Autoethnography is about getting to the truth as the researcher/ed experience it, as researcher/ed see it and as researcher/ed feel it (Ellis 2009, 113). "Truth, in the present context, refers to statements that are in agreement with facts and facticities as they are known and understood 'within a community of minds' (Pierce, 1959, 18; 1958, p. 4)" (Denzin 2014, 12). And, I will challenge myself to brutal honesty about my effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness as I relate examples of my interventions.

Autoethnography is a process rather than a product: it does not focus on a "snapshot in time" of experience like most qualitative research methods, but becomes an ongoing process. The relationship develops first within the researcher/ed as I self-examine my experiences, and on to the

reader receiving the emotion-fused teachings which creates a dialectic that is ongoing, and thus is a process that evolves over time rather than as a set of immutable date (Roth 2005; Ellis 2009; Haynes 2011; Vickers 2007; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 117; Johnson and Strong 2008).

The introspection within my autoethnography has become accepted as a viable academic method of gaining knowledge (Ellis 2009; Jones 2002; Taber 2010a, 10). The individual/persona relates back and forth with the collective public. My internal stories as a CFS worker are a product of my collective social experiences in relation to and with other CFS workers and people involved in all roles within the system (Hayano 1997). My own work experiences automatically include others of some form (Chang 2008b) as the work is relational by definition, i.e. “social” work. It is even automatically social simply through the use of language: shared communication is by definition social (Ellis 2009; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011; Denzin 2014). My emotions are not discouraged or denied, yet rather acknowledged, accepted, made use of and even required (Ellis 2009; Haynes 2011).

The most fundamental dilemma raised by most autoethnographers concerns research bias and the objective/subjective polarity in collecting, interpreting, and reporting information (Uchendu 1965; Srinivas 1966, 155; Milner and Milner 1972, 21; Yang 1972, 72; Spradley and Mann 1975, 12; Hayano 1997, 101). And, standard research methods strive for reliability, validity and generalizability, and so too does autoethnography, yet only in different context, meaning and utility. Autoethnography creates a different perspective that does not contain the limitations within standard qualitative methods, albeit it under specific guidelines (Ellis 1997, 2009; Denzin 2014; Chang 2008a, Chang 2008b).

Reliability with autoethnography refers to the credibility of the writer (Bochner, 2002, 86; Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, p. 282; Bright et al. 2008 p. 1000). This is consistent with

Indigenous research methods as well which rely on relationship-based credibility (Smith 1999; Wilson 2008; Chilisa 2011; Kovacs 2009). Some (e.g. Anderson 2006a) require autoethnography to retain a basis in empirical data (Taber 2010a) while others such as Ellis (2004; 2009) state the need to not be restricted by accountability to research methods that run counter to the values of narratives. My findings cannot be verified as per other qualitative methods; rather the data within the stories are there to be absorbed by the readers for consideration (Boyd 2008). Readers can consider my stories in relation to their own experiences either within CFS or similar experiences.

Validity is a significant issue for autoethnography and is closely related to reliability. “Rather than relying on questions of truth and validity, autoethnographical researchers are responsible for selecting, representing and interpreting experiences to inform meanings and shared understandings” (Haynes 2011, 142; Blenkinsopp 2007, 256; Plummer 2001, 401; Ellis 2004; Bochner 2002; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 282; Ellis and Bochner 2000; Dyson 2007; Denzin 2014). When readers learn of my experiences, it is then their opportunity to compare them to their own experiences and/or worldview to see if my experiences and my resulting reactions are consistent with their own, or different or both. Readers can determine if my experiences correlate with their broader experiences (Chang 2008b). For example, if I relate my own experiences of removing children from their families and communities, what I did, why I had to do it, how I did it, and how I felt during and afterwards, then readers can see for themselves if my experiences make sense to them. Even if they have never had any experiences with any CFS system, they can see for themselves if they have other experiences that have elicited similar responses or feelings (Ellis 1997, 2009).

Readers may find that my experiences within NFNCFS can be generalized to their own experiences, but in autoethnography, generalizability is not determined by the quantity. There is

no “N” that is found in more empirical research methods. But if my story is compatible with their own experiences or that of others within their world (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Ellis and Ellingson 2000; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 283) or if others find similar emotional responses in other scenarios of their own experiences, (Ellis 1997; 2009), then the readers themselves can decide if my experiences are generalizable to them or not by reliving their own experiences in relation to what they read (Schwandt 2007).

In contrast to standard social science research methodologies, autoethnography makes no claim of neutrality, and states that there is no need to do so (Ellis 2009; Gerger and Gerger 2002). My choice of topic is also clearly not neutral, and I do not claim otherwise. I have a pre-conceived agenda of examining my personal experiences in order to bring social and political illumination to my experiences that are directly entwined with others. My agenda of self-examination within the social and political contexts however is not limited to this study. It is in fact, part of a lifelong process of self-examination within my attempts to effect positive change in the world. Thus with a history of attempts to examine myself and the world around me within CFS and its relationships to everything and everyone else, I do not even pretend to be neutral, as my decades of experiences and introspection have already helped me form some opinions and theories. This is evident in my historical writings found in the Findings Chapter.

Lack of neutrality is also evident within Indigenous research methods which by definition identify the role that colonization and its efforts at anti-colonization plays within their research (Smith 1999; Wilson 2008; Chilisa 2011; Kovacs 2009). The term Indigenous automatically requires acknowledgement of colonization since prior to conquest, they were simply The People (Alfred 1999, 2009a; Chrisjohn 1997). And, Indigenous research methods are steps in responding to colonization in its various forms (Smith 2009; Wilson 2008; Chilisa 2011; Kovacs 2009). While

I am not Indigenous to Canada/Turtle Island, I am attempting anti-colonization practice within both my social work and peace-building and am writing this thesis to further develop my practice in both fields. Thus, I do not espouse neutrality and my choice of topic belies any opportunity to even pretend neutrality. This is one reason why autoethnography is an appropriate research method for my topic.

My identity is complex and plays many roles within the various scenarios within my work and personal life. I am Celtic by origin, and thus non-Indigenous, non-First Nations to this land. My past is what created me. My life has further developed me, and every sphere of my life has been entwined within Inineew and other First Nations. My present and future, through my biological and additional children and grandchildren, is directly entwined with Inineew and other First Nations realities and futures. Everything I say, do, feel, believe, directly impacts myself and my family, and our future. Thus I am an outsider, with insider connections.

I have also been given the right and even responsibility to speak on behalf of my own experiences within the First Nations realm, through the Elder who chose to give me my Indian/Spirit name. The late Frank Wesley was an Ojibway Elder who worked with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and he worked closely with Alberta's Cree Elder Raven Mackinaw. Frank, or Dad as I called him, offered to give me my name and formalize my family relationship with him. In his words, "You are one of us. You are our daughter. You can tell anyone you need to, that we have given you this name and right and responsibility to speak on our behalf. Do not be afraid to say whatever is in your heart. You will be speaking for us." He said that if anyone ever questioned my right to speak, to tell them that he and those he worked under have given me this right.

So clearly my identity is both from inside and outside perspectives. This duality is complex and even multi-layered and plays an integral role within both my work and the research. My

identity of both the insider and the outsider as practitioner (Lederach 1996) and researcher allows for access to more information and different perspectives within (Dyson 2007). Vickers (2007), sees identity (internal and external) as shifting and multiple, particularly when viewed within sensemaking. My various roles and identities, personally and professionally within both social work and peace-building provide an interconnected crystalized perspective (Roth 2005).

Organizational Autoethnography

Organizational autoethnography is autoethnography that has often been about peoples' places of work and have been commonly used in macro systems such as education (Roth 2005), governments structures, such as the military (Taber 2010a, 2013), and can also apply to virtually any micro form of group such as volunteer organizations and family structures (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012). Boyle and Parry (2007) argue that "the prime focus of an organizational autoethnographic study is to illuminate the relationship between the individual and the organization in a way that crystallises the key conceptual and theoretical contributions to understanding the relationship between culture and organization" (186). The focus of this thesis begins with my everyday experiences and then investigates policies and practices in institutional contexts of NFNCFS (Boyle and Parry 2007; Taber 2010a). The self, (this writer) is examined in depth as the culture of the social context of the organization is examined in order to embrace the dialectic between self and theory (Haynes 2011, 139; Taber 2010a).

Autoethnography opens many doors to additional areas of research that had previously been closed, including organizations that are seen as quite closed with regard to their internal information (Taber 2010a). Gerger and Gerger (2002) support autoethnography's consistency with the "politics of representation" (13) and autoethnographies focus on topics that cannot be

researched through more standard social science research methods (Aitken 2006). It also allows one person to open a discussion that will involve the others who are also involved in the topic(s), as it encourages them to consider and respond (Denzin 2014).

The organization that my stories relate to is the AJI-CWI within the Northern First Nations of Manitoba, and the resulting NFNCFS system exists as a legal entity under both the Manitoba CFS Act (1985) and the Manitoba CFS Authorities Act (2005). These laws allow for and in fact mandate the need for child protective services in Manitoba. Based on these laws, there have been provincial regulations, standards and policies created to describe how the services are provided. As well, there are policies within each of the four CFS Authorities and their agencies that are specific to them. All of the current legislation and policies are deeply connected to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI 1991) and the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (AJIC 2001). And to understand my stories in relation to the AJI-CWI, i.e. the current structure of Manitoba's CFS system, these systems were included within the Context Chapter. Thus the presentation of these documents and others that lead to the creation and formation of the AJI-CWI system is required. These documents are found primarily and are held up to the focus of my questions within the Context Chapter, but are also interspersed throughout the study in order to provide a structural framework of NFNCFS, that can show the relationships between the governing structure and the daily life of those of us human beings within the NFNCFS system as per organizational autoethnography,

Organizational autoethnography is an academically recognized form of ethnographic research (Ellis 2004, 2009; Ellis and Bochner 2002; Gergen and Gergen 2002; Taber 2010; Roth 2007) despite its detractors. The use of my own stories based on my lived experiences within NFNCFS provides authenticity (Ellis 2004, 2009; Ellis and Bochner 2002; Gergen and Gergen

2002; Taber 2010; Roth 2007) by providing lived experience within studies of systemic information. It is perhaps the only ethical and legal way for any details within the NFNCFS system to be brought forward to the public (Taber 2010) since the stories of the 'clients' and other stakeholders within the system are justifiably bound by confidence legally and ethically. I cannot speak for others, but through autoethnography I can speak for and about myself within the requirements of my profession and beliefs.

The public documents can also be found within the inclusion of my own personally written (private) documents that I have submitted to various government bodies such as my letter to the Manitoba Ombudsman (December 7, 2009), my letter to the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (May 19, 2013) (Appendix 5), my letter to Northern First Nations CFS Authority (June 18, 2013) (Appendix 6), and my letter to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (April 29, 2014) (Appendix 7). These privately written documents are in fact previously undertaken analyses of the public documents and systems.. By using these (recent) historical documents, I am using my own writings that were situated in their own time which is in keeping with autoethnography's recommendation for including writings that are contemporary to the situation at hand, and not from a more historical and thus additionally biased perspective (Ellis 1997, 2009; Ellis, Adam and Bochner 2010, 2011; Chang 2008, Chang 2008b) which can lead to greater authenticity. There is less chance of historical re-writing to fit into the present.

My method of examining, analyzing and interpreting the data within both these public and private documents is consistent with autoethnography's need for checks and balances as per Chang (2008). My data is not from a single source (me) but from the experiences of both others in relation to me through these documents. This balances the autoethnographic method and prevents over-reliance on self which Chang's (2008) says can be one of the pitfalls of autoethnography. If I were

to only speak of my own personal experiences within NFNCFS without providing reference to both the public and private documents, then my story would be purely an autobiography with little if any connection to the other parties within NFNCFS. But in order to situate myself accurately within NFNCFS (albeit from my perspective), I need to describe my relationship to that structure by stating the relationships between these personal and public documents.

It is also necessary to point out, that as a practicing social worker that our requirements to adhere to the laws and regulations within the public documents, is often one of the key points of conflict both within our practice and within our inner consciences. Attempts to reconcile the written statements within the public documents to the realities within front-line activities is in fact the crux of the questions that guide this study. In my experiences, am I able to be a peacebuilder practitioner, while I am practicing social work with NFNCFS under the current structures? Are my relationships between my perceived assessments of the interventions that I am required to do as a social worker, and my perceived assessments of what I need to do provide peace-building interventions consistent? If so how? And if not, in what way and how?

This study's emphasis on a personal and internal examination of the NFNCFS provides depth and context that quantitative and non-personalized studies by definition cannot. Autoethnography has a non-prescriptive nature and this freedom of response is critical for anti-oppressive research for it cannot impose power over others in any manner, even unintentionally (Roth 2005; Buzzard 2003; Adams and Jones 2008; Spry 2001; McLelland 2012). And anti-oppressive methods are consistent with peace-building methods in response to structural violence through this requirement to not decide for or impose onto others, no matter how well intentioned.

This thesis about NFNCFS exemplifies the hazards within autoethnography of bringing out information that is politically sensitive, confidential and can even raise safety concerns (Hayano

1997, 101). It can have challenges of confidentiality and expressing issues that are often kept secret and internal to the organizations especially while trying to achieve deeply textured stories. The crux of the ethical questions centre on the protection of all individuals involved – the researched, the researchers and collaterals with various degrees of self/other combinations (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012) as per the confidentiality requirements within CFS that are protected by law. However some writings require the identity to be known, or would be considered suspect if the author did not self-identify (Ellis 2007, 25; Trahar 2009) and thus this study includes the identities of some collaterals with their permission.

It is also critical from an ethical standpoint to examine any research method to determine the effect that its process has on those affected by it (Buzzard 2003) and this thesis is no exception. Within CFS, it is legally, ethically and morally essential that the identities of the children and families remain completely confidential for the reasons stated above. Fortunately, within autoethnography, I can protect the others by speaking only for myself, through relating my experiences from my own perspective without identifying others either directly or indirectly. I can also protect the others, the characters in my stories, by keeping their names confidential through pseudonyms. I can also not identify people through omitting otherwise irrelevant information by changing details that are not pertinent to the crux of the story such as the location and/or the secondary characters. I can create conglomerate identities by describing a common event such as apprehensions, and include common details from various apprehension experiences in order to protect individuals' identities. All of these techniques are common practice within autoethnography as espoused by Ellis (2009), Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2010, 2011), Denzin (2014), Chang (2008a, 2008b).

Critics claim that this then presents untrue information, because the subjects of the stories are either hidden, camouflaged, or created supposedly within the autoethnographer's "imagination." But as Denzin (2014) puts it, every time a person writes about a "real" person (self or others), that it is not the real or actual person, but the writer's interpretation of the person. Denzin also further writes that the truth of the identities and facts other aspects within the stories "can be altered by a storyteller in order to make them interesting and more significant" (2014, 12). On truth, he writes:

Truth, in the present context, refers to statements that are in agreement with facts and facticities as they are known and understood 'within a community of minds' (Pierce, 1959, vol. 8, p. 18; 1958, p. 4). Reality consists of the 'objects, qualities or events to which true ideas are' directed (Pierce, 1958, p. 74). [...] true and false fictions [...] A truthful fiction (narrative) is faithful to factitudes and facts. It creates verisimilitude, or what are for the reader believable experiences. (Denizen 2014, 12)

It is interesting that even within literature, the belief is that truth can be found within fiction. Canada's literary giant Farley Mowat has a famous, albeit very sarcastic quote, "F--k the facts. The truth is what is important" (1999).

While I personally believe in the truth and the importance of the facts, I also believe that how the facts are presented is critical especially as facts can be presented in very narrow and self-serving ways, especially when limited to the confines of pre-determined agendas. Perhaps this is because the truth can be clearer within stories than in statistics or pre-approved theories. Even these "empirical" forms of research are inherently biased by the researcher. Right from the start through choice of topic, the researcher's bias is evident. His or her history, present and ideas for the future influence the choice of topic, the research methods and the resulting analysis. And throughout the rest of the research process, every choice made by the researcher comes from their pre-conceived inherent biases (Ellis 1997, 2004, 2009).

These inherent biases are evident even in the data within Manitoba's CFS data and reports, which are among the documents that my stories relate to. One example is the type of statistics that Manitoba's Family Services Department chooses to include in its annual reports. In 2012-13, it includes staffing costs, the numbers of centralized services such as placement abuse investigations, adoptions. Within the authorities and agencies, the numbers and general types of cases are listed and then further broken down by identities of Inuit, Métis, Non-Status, Treaty Status and Not Aboriginal, followed by a breakdown of general placement information for children in care, legal statuses and agency breakdown of days in care.

While all of this information is important, it is extremely limited. There is nothing to identify the different types of services within a "case", the numbers of children in care (CIC) who died that year nor their causes of death, the case loads for workers with a comparison between First Nation and Métis agencies with the general agencies, the numbers of suicide attempts from CICs, the numbers of CICs who faced criminal charges, the numbers of foster parents who faced criminal charges, etc. Nor does it even begin to explain why the cases are broken down between "Non-Aboriginal" and the four sub-groups of "types" of Aboriginal, as defined by purely colonialist criteria – i.e. if they meet the Canadian Indian Act's definition of Status, or Métis, Inuit or other. Why not also define the numbers relating to recent immigrants? Why not include information about the numbers of complaints that agencies, authorities, the Branch and the Minister's Office have received?

Clearly the Annual Report attempted to provide only a very broad presentation of statistics and information about their services, most presumably for political reasons, which is to be expected within a government department. The less information that there is, then the less there is to argue about. Also, their slant or bias is kept to a general wide open perspective that leaves out

countless details. This is an obvious example of inherent bias within research, even when using academically approved methods of quantitative and qualitative study for legal reporting purposes. If bias can be so self-evident within this legally mandated research, then perhaps it shows that quantitative research and empirically-based qualitative research is not value-free, nor unbiased, nor does it always actually present the wider and deeper truth.

The skimpy details within the Annual Report may be true and therefore valid, but is the story that it tells actually true? Is the story complete? I argue that it is in fact so incomplete that it is misleading. It does not present any of the inherent challenges that I and countless others experience within the system. In my opinion the challenges are so extensive that the media tries to publicize them, and political bodies such as the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Liberal Party of Manitoba have continued to hold public forums to bring attention to the challenges. Yet the government does not present these challenges within its legally required Annual Report.

Statistics and cursory reports show merely a small sliver of the picture. It is akin to us covering our eyes with a mask to see out only through narrowly lined slats. While we may see some light and parts of objects in front of us, the mask denies us a vision of all that is within the 180 degree radius in front of us, to say nothing of what is behind, above, below or even within us. Many autoethnographers argue that our stories can provide more degrees of vision, more depth and more dimensions to the truth. The inclusion of our own emotions for examples provides a further dimension to understanding the truth that is non-existent within numbers and empirical theories. Statistics of death can cause emotional reactions as we read them, but without knowing anything about the deaths or the people involved, there is limited meaning to the numbers. Seeing and feeling the humanity of those included in the statistics and affected by the numbers brings them to life as our emotions allow us to connect, relate to and perhaps even empathize with the

others. As our awareness grows through the inclusion of emotional and social facets, we can develop connections with other experiences and other areas of interest and study. This is why autoethnography provides invaluable opportunities within research.

Conclusion

The opportunities within autoethnography are endless— the opportunity for human empathy between the reader and the characters within the stories (the writer(s) and the others) allows for exchanges of information across different groups, across different histories, even across factions within violent situations. It has the opportunity to not only share information through the stories of experiences, but also to have this sharing allow for transformation of our understandings of situations in ways that other research rarely can (Chang 2008a and 2008b).

For example, I can read that x number of CICs died in 2012–13 and this can cause sadness within me that any of these children died. However, if I receive the story of how one (or more) human children lived and then died within the CFS system, then I understand a whole lot more. Not only do I get some more details of the events, but I may begin to feel what the child felt, feel what the others within that story felt (Chang 2008). The stronger the written “graphy,” the stronger the sharing of information which is the whole underlying point of research for as the reader my emotions are elicited and pulled forth which then leads to mental responses. How? Why? Who is this person/character? ... I want to learn more.

My stories have the potential to illustrate the struggles for other practitioners attempting anti-colonialist practice, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and also the successes that have been achieved, even if the successes seem small and insufficient. It also occurred to me recently that not everyone who I work with know the reasons for what I do, and this has possibly caused

some friction in some of my relationships when I advocate for people. Perhaps telling my own story can help clear up potential misunderstandings as I identify my own self-awareness of my own shortcomings in anti-colonialist/anti-oppressive practice. I am not pointing fingers at others alone, I am also pointing fingers at myself inclusively.

It can also allow for others to begin dialogue of challenging for even more anti-oppressive practice, by allowing others to see things that I have overlooked. Even sincerely-intended anti-oppressive social workers at times contribute to colonization for any number of reasons, even unintentionally. This can be an opportunity for discussion about what I do that contributes to colonialism and/or supports anti-oppressive practice. As I describe the ways that I have contributed to colonization through my social work practice, or ways that I have built peace through the NFNCFS system, my experiences can spark reactions, questions and further discussions, especially as I operate from my Non-Native background within my Ininev lived-reality of today and tomorrow. None of us fit into the tidy boxes of identities and roles (e.g. oppressors/oppressed) that society names. My own experiences with fluid shifting between roles and identities has a viable potential to be a story of identifying attempts at peace-building within CFS.

My own “best-of-intentions” requires examination in order to see if I am acting to colonize or to develop peace through anti-colonization through anti-oppressive social work, and autoethnography allows me to do that in a socially and academically responsible way since my thesis will be subject to external examination and standards. Autoethnography is also consistent with the Indigenous research methods (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011; Smith 1999; Kovachs 2009; Wilson 2008)). The use of storytelling and narrative is traditional within Indigenous methods (Hart 2002; Wilson 2008) and thus a natural extension into autoethnography with its basis in stories and narration.

Autoethnography's emphasis of self-positioning and acknowledging my relationships with others within NFNCFS can imbed validity with ongoing commitment to those relationships which is also inherent within indigenous research (Smith 1999; Kovachs 2009; Wilson 2008). In my experience within Ininev life, a person's life either validates or invalidates what the person says. If our words are consistent with our actions then we can have credibility. If our words do not ring true with our actions then we are discredited and our message is ignored. Therefore I present my actions, my inner motivations, my own regrets, gratitude and every other emotion that I experience in my role as a social worker as I examine myself to see if my social work interventions are consistent with peace-building interventions.

CHAPTER 4

SELF-POSITIONING:

WHERE I COME FROM, WHO I AM AND MY FUTURE

Introduction of Self (Positioning)

To answer the question, if my social work interventions are consistent with peace-building interventions, I need to self-examine myself and my actions. I start with self-positioning myself within the contexts of this thesis. Thus my own personal stories are the data within this Findings Chapter as per autoethnography. Positioning one's self within the research process is required in autoethnographic research in order to be able to understand the researcher's context and also to provide accountability since it identifies the researchers' relationships that he or she is committed to respecting and maintaining (Ellis 1997, Ellis 2009; Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010). This Findings chapter provides a brief personal introduction followed by a professional and academic introduction so that readers may know where I come from, and who my relationships are with.

Some of my data are submissions to government offices and others are my self-reflections. When it is in single-spaced italics, the quotes are from my own previous writings that had been submitted to government offices. My own stories are written in double-spaced italics, so that you know when I am speaking purely personally. When I am writing academically as a student of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS), it is in regular print. Names were changed or are not identified in order to protect peoples' identities as I have no intention of inflicting public blame on others. Some people do not have a name in these writings, referred to as "my son or daughter" or "my niece" out of respect for them and the old Cree tradition of not referring to people by their actual

name. Others have to have fictitious names in order to provide clarity of who is who, but without publicly identifying them. But all of them, and I, are real people, and the events did happen.

My origins are introduced, and then I insert a letter that I wrote to the editor of the Vancouver Sun which was published on February 26, 1983. It identifies my baseline perspective about anti-colonialism at that time and is used as a basis for my autoethnography, to explain my purposes behind my commitment to anti-colonization and my professional choices. It is raw data in that it identifies my position then (written in contemporary time), which I now use currently to examine my past position from today's perspectives (Ellis 1997, 2009; Roth 2005). From these introductions of self, I hope to explain why I have committed my life and career to living and working among First Nations and in particular with Shamattawa First Nation and its related communities in Northern Manitoba.

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How Maire Aoine O'Cleary/Mary Anne Clarke Became Wabogoon-Esqu:

How did I find myself in my current life-position? I am a woman, of Celtic descent born and raised meters from the Pacific Ocean in Vancouver British Colombia, who is a mother to two daughters and one son by birth, with three grandsons, and also several other young people who have chosen to have me in their lives as Mom, Ma, and Granny, Mama and Kokum. I live in Manitoba thousands of kilometers inland from my coastal birthplace, and am currently employed as a Child and Family Services (CFS) worker and am completing my Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba.

My home is in the North End of Winnipeg, which since its inception has been identified as a neighbourhood of poverty and is currently referred to locally as "The 'Hood". All of my

biological and other children are Cree/Ininew, and some with additional Indigenous cultures such as Nikoodi and Anishinaabe. How did I, this Celtic-rooted woman end up here in this place when I was raised in Point Grey in Vancouver BC, which is now the most affluent area in Canada (Kitsilano Live, 2012)? I grew up four blocks from the beaches along the Pacific Ocean, and the ocean was my physical, emotional and spiritual anchor. So the question is even more poignant, how did I, end up in The 'Hood in the prairie-land of Winnipeg Manitoba?

My family of Irish and Scottish heritage was firmly entrenched in the Roman Catholic Church. All of my family for generations were fervent practicing Catholics throughout their lives, as evidenced by weekly and daily Mass, the baptisms, marriages, burials, and the ordinations of priests and vows of nuns, and attendance and graduation from Catholic schools. My Dad's family, the Clarkes⁵, had settled in the early 1930s in Point Grey along with other Irish Catholic families such as my mother's family who soon followed since there was a church being built, and the land was stunningly beautiful on a hill overlooking Burrard Inlet and the Coastal Mountains.

We grew up one block down the hill from the church, the same church where my parents and other relatives including my brother were married. We all went to the parochial school and all of the men on both sides of my family attended high school at the Christian Brothers of Ireland's Vancouver College and my nephews recently graduated from there as well with most of the men remaining very active in the Alumni Association, the School Board, and my father received an award about ten years ago for his outstanding contributions through his lifelong work for The College. My late Uncle who grew up there became a priest and my father had also joined the Redemptorist Seminary for seven years before opting to leave for lay life, and he became a lawyer

⁵ According to both my Grandpa Clarke and historical research, our family name was originally O'Cleary which the English changed to Clarke as part of their Anglicization of all things Irish.

who worked for over 50 years for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver and its Catholic Children's Aid Society. My mother and all of my aunts attended various Catholic high schools such as St. Patrick's High, and my sisters and I, and all of my female cousins attended a girls' private parochial school. We got relentlessly teased by non-Catholics for the matching kilts and V-neck sweaters with white blouses and navy blue knee-high socks that we wore as uniforms.

Does it seem obvious yet that my family has been entrenched within Irish and Scottish Catholicism? It had seemed expected that I too would follow within my family's ethnic, religious and social history. So there was little surprise and in fact a lot of pride when I attended the Jesuit school of Gonzaga University in Spokane Washington. Even though the Church by this time had gone through Vatican II and the Lay People were assuming new and further roles within the Church, there was however some surprise that as a woman that my major was in Religious Studies with a Philosophy Minor for where would that lead a young woman in the male-dominated RC Church?

It was assumed that I would use my education to work as Lay Minister of some kind within the Church, such as religious education or youth minister. While I knew that these were options, I also never felt any real inclination to work within the institution of the Church, particularly by the time I graduated. For these were the times of Vatican II's new Church and most of the professors and Jesuits I knew were very enthusiastic about Liberation Theology that preached systemic social justice for the oppressed (Berryman 1987). I ached to stretch beyond that from which I came, to see the world in a new light. I knew I was from the oppressing "Haves" class, and I was questioning how I could stop contributing to the destruction and oppression of others.

In a spiritual perspective, I knew that we, my family and all the other Roman Catholics I went to school with, had "too much". We had at least enough if not excessive money, we had solid

educations, and we had the world-as-we-knew-it at our finger-tips. We had it all. But how did this fit in with the Gospels of social justice that we heard in Mass, and the teachings of liberation theologians? How did all of this fit in with the teachings of Catholic layman Jean Vanier who was becoming globally renowned for his practice of simple theology while living in community with developmentally disabled people and others who society had rejected and institutionalized?

I spent time with Jesuits who had lived in Vanier's L'Arche communities and started their own communities, and I joined them whenever I could. Here everything was turned upside down for me, but everything started to make sense. Living among people who cannot think like we are taught, or cannot physically move, showed me other ways of living. Ways of living that do not rely on intellectual theories, or ways that have to be justified within society. It meant other understandings of what Life is. And we are all disabled/weak in some way, and strong in others: what is socially viewed as weakness is in fact strength when viewed within this new understanding of Life, and vice versa. When a woman is mute and confined to a wheelchair and completely dependent on others for her entire life, but still smiles and sends piercing messages only with her eyes, the words and thoughts and actions that we take for granted as defining our lives, suddenly seems redundant. When joy flows through her face, I had to ask how? Why? What does this mean that she finds real joy when she has nothing of what I have?

What was rich was poor and again vice versa. The time I spent in a street drop-in centre in Tacoma began to show me true generosity when men with nothing shared what little they had. Me, and my people, only gave from our surplus while they gave from their own poverty. None of the wonderful academic teachings of social justice and theology that I was learning, mattered to the people I was spending time with. None of my talents that were being very recognized through honours at the university meant anything to the people I met who needed help with the basics of

living, or were on the street and were too poor to have shoes even in winter. For me though I could start to understand the systemic social justice teachings of Liberation Theology as they started to make more sense when seen from the personal lives of society's neglected and ignored that I met through L'Arche. No longer were they ideas or words, as they took on human forms in the others I came to know. The notions of injustice and sanctioned deprivation started to make sense within my relationships with people. Human to human with those whose lives were directly impacted and devastated by systemic injustice, my life too became impacted.

At school we learned of the global challenges and efforts at working for social justice, and some students chose to travel outward to learn more and try to contribute to peace and social justice away from home. But I felt a need to come home, to leave the U.S. and come back to Canada. I just know that as a young adult I felt a pull to return to Canada to start learning. Other students went outward around the world to practice what we had learned about social justice, while I turned inward and went home to learn. My opportunity to do so actually came through the Jesuits of Canada who had begun a new program called the Jesuit Companions. In 1981, straight after my graduation, I was the first ever of 13 Companions. I started at their headquarters in Guelph Ontario at the Farm Community which was based in the L'Arche communities. This seemed like a natural place to start for I was already familiar with L'Arche from my associations with communities that I had met while at Gonzaga University.

But shortly after, the opportunity presented itself to go to the Core Area of Winnipeg to help get a new school program going for children who did not attend school. Such an oxymoron appealed to me—a school for non-attenders! And since it was 1981, most of the little children who were wandering around the streets, were Indian and Native children. It was less than twenty years since Indian people were “allowed” to leave the reserves and move to the city, and Winnipeg was

(and is) the largest community of Aboriginal people in all of North America. And sadly, the city was not ready for them nor very welcoming at that time.

I visited the children and their families in their homes which were sometimes in rooming houses, rat-infested apartments, and we had children who had no home and were living in shelters. I would find some missing students hiding between buildings on Main Street and at soup lines. I would ask them about their families, like “How many brothers and sisters do you have?” and be told, “I don’t know” because they truly didn’t. Some siblings had died, others had siblings who had been removed, and others had relatives living with them as siblings while others had never met their siblings. This was a foreign concept to me to not know one’s own family.

I met children who were adorable and perplexing and knew no boundaries – they crawled all over my lap, would look into my eyes and ask me why my eyes were blue and why I had pimples on my face. I loved the children, but decided by mid-winter that it would be time to move on once the school year was over to continue my academic education, so I could “get ahead.” But my plans changed when my good friend, a Jesuit Scholastic then, David, simply asked me why I was leaving. I burst out crying and we started talking for hours. I realized that emotionally I had connected with them, human to human, building relationships. They became part of my life, and I became part of theirs and their families. I didn’t want to leave them, because I sensed that I still needed them.

I left the school but moved to volunteer with another organization in the same neighbourhood where I could work with older girls, and really loved everything about it. The leader of this organization, a non-Native religious person, gave me more responsibility, but then she started pulling back. Tensions grew between us as I felt more and more at home in the neighbourhood. Eventually we agreed to disagree as I quit at the same time she fired me. She

lectured me about getting too close to “these people” and said that in all the years that she had lived and worked in the neighbourhood that she had never gone into any of their houses except on two occasions at times of condolences. She believed that they had their lives, and we had ours, and our role was to take care of and serve them.

She did provide a lot of good services for the children in the community but it was clear from her words and her actions that she considered herself separate from people, and also that they needed her and her services, but it appeared that she didn't need them. I could not understand this—it flew in the face of all I had learned through L'Arche, and most importantly from my own heart. Were we all not people, here to live with and reach out to each other? I did not deny my white privilege, but I also did not see it as something to hold over others. In fact I saw it as an opportunity to share what I had and to also receive what I could from others. Receiving is a truly humbling experience for any of us, but essential in developing balanced relationships.

When I was simply sharing life with Ininew, Anishinaabe and other native people, I felt relaxed, calm and real. Life was real when we were all sharing what we had with each other even if it was barely enough food, supporting each other, arguing and fighting, crying and laughing. I had never felt more real than when I was with the very people who society alienated and suppressed. While there were no written rules, everyone knew which stores, restaurants, hotels and services were open to native people and which were not. Housing and employment was hard to come by the darker one's skin was or the more native one's name was. Many areas of the city had no native people living there simply because they were not welcome. I consciously chose to be only in places that accepted my friends. I did not choose to go against White, but to simply choose for Native.

I was still white, and still had the white privilege of having the choice to opt out and return to my own family and social world. I had the option to return to security and opportunities. But I could not leave. I tried going to my own family's home, but I no longer fit in there. Some non-Natives said I was trying to be native but I never felt like I was. I was still me, only I was more than I used to be. I could not see life the same way as my family, for I had a small taste of what had always been stirring underneath my childhood world's deceptive serene waters.

Through the bond of love I felt something like a small volt received from a live wire. I knew I could never fully experience the life of others, but at the same time, just like one who receives a volt, we know what we are feeling, but are fortunate enough to have the option to let go and survive. Others were (and are) not so fortunate to survive from the injustices in our world. I really, really struggled during this time as I saw so many hypocrisies start to unravel. The world as I had known it was a fraud to me. I had been raised to believe that we are to follow the teachings of the Church, to live a good, productive life. Then we would be a success on earth and with the ultimate reward of everlasting life in heaven. It was that simple. Everything we did on this earth was to earn our reward in heaven.

But I believed that they had created objectifying relationships, not mutual or balanced relationships. As soon as that religious woman said the term, "these people," I cringed inside and felt like vomiting. "These people" were objectified in that term, and a means to her end, eternal salvation. Where was the revolution within social justice to empower people that I had learned about? The conscientization? Sure, there were other church people who were not as obvious as she had been, but wasn't that still the goal of the priests and others in Latin America, and even within L'Arche, to give their lives over to the other people for their own eternal salvation?

I could not put words to it then, and I still struggle to find the words, but all I knew was that life among native people felt different. It felt balanced. I felt balanced. Sure, I was getting a lot out of it all. I was getting friends, love, a sense of acceptance and belonging. I lived with families in abject poverty but no one stayed hungry because everything was shared. Everyone watched out for the kids as best we could. And I was giving love and commitment too. And there was something I couldn't understand then and still don't understand: non-native people in my life would tell me, "You can't go native, you'll always be white." Duh. But why have I never to this very day, ever heard that or sensed it from my friends and family who are native?

And why did all of my non-native people continue to work to turn native people into white people, even if their skin remained brown? There was always talk of helping them get up on their feet, economic opportunities, and education within a racist non-native system. The focus was always on "them" learning from "us". I rarely remember hearing about "us" learning from "them" although I would like to think someone said it. They were very worried about me turning native, but assumed that natives would, could, and should turn white or at least white-like. Ironically, today, people (Ininew, Anishinaabe etc.) tell me, "You're not white, you're one of us." My skin is still pale, my DNA is still Celtic, but they accept me as one of 'them' while allowing, supporting and encouraging me to be myself at the same time. It is a natural concept, one that does not need explanation except to most non-Native people.

Going Public:

*There was so much that seemed to be separating me from my "own people", or at least from the worldview that I had been raised with. This became evident when I was back in Vancouver for a while, and read a letter to the Editor of *The Vancouver Sun* "Poorest of the poor in own land denied*

rights to their resources” (January 25, 1983) written by Rose Charlie, of the Indian Homemakers Association, that I could completely understand and support. She wrote about the peoples’ struggles to be able to continue their traditional salmon fishing:

The large-scale sting operation carried out by the federal department of fisheries against my people who are the poorest of the poor in our own land will create more backbreaking hardships than can be borne by an impoverished people.

Since your forefathers invaded our country you have stolen our land, resources, and children. You denied to us our rights, which should be inalienable, to our language, culture, government, religion, and traditional subsistence activities, and in doing so you stripped us of our pride...

Your economic and property rights are protected by the force of your law, but there is no mention of our aboriginal rights to hunt and fish, and no laws to protect those rights. Now my people who have lived from the fruits of this land and its waters for countless thousands of generations are being called ‘poachers’ by courts and press alike! ...

Here in Canada the whole weight of the justice system and the federal government is geared to stop our people from even getting a minute share of our own salmon resource.

It ill behooves Canada as a nation to stoop to using desperately needed money as bait to lure an impoverished people into a trap. As well, it dishonours the Canadian government, currently slated to discuss the constitutional guarantees of our aboriginal rights, to use devious means to gain unethical advantage at the upcoming constitutional discussions.

In response, a man named Clive Cornish responded with his own letter, “Ethnic minorities can last a long time, but not forever” The Vancouver Sun, Letters to the Editor Tuesday February 15, 1983. In it he spoke of his own ancestor’s experiences of colonization, and his people’s acceptance of their fate as being conquered:

My forebears in Cornwall probably felt the same way. Their country was invaded, their lands stolen, and their livelihood taken away from them. I doubt if any of them ever talked about ‘aboriginal rights,’ and if they had it would have been at the risk of their own lives.

But they survived. They survived because they recognized a basic evolutionary law: if you can’t beat ‘em, you have to join ‘em.

Ethnic minorities can last a long time, but not forever. Despite all the agitation over the rights of native peoples and the preservation of their cultures, the forces of assimilation are relentless. Eventually the Indian people will be no more a separate group than the Celts of Cornwall or the Picts of Scotland are today.

The Indian reserves are a classic example of the road to hell being paved with good intentions. Conceived by idealists and welcomed by the military, they resulted in rural ghettos that have battered the initiative and destroyed the self-reliance of those they were designed to protect.

From the reserve system has risen the concept that native peoples can have the best of two worlds. It envisions the existence of an idealized, primitive hunting and fishing society, accompanied by all the life-sustaining comforts and technological conveniences of the Western world.

The sad truth is it just can't be done.

Perhaps it is time the Indian people looked down the long road ahead and started to think less of themselves as Indians and more about becoming Canadians like the rest of us.

*Mr. Cornish's perspective was the same as most of my family and childhood associates, but it seemed so cruel, so mean—so wrong!⁶ It did not jibe with my personal experiences, or my burgeoning political awareness that I was honoured to be receiving from some of the strongest Indian leaders of the time including Former Council of B.C. Indian Chief's Grand Chief George Manuel, and their technologist Roslie Tyzia. I could not stay quiet and took a chance at speaking out publicly with my own response, "Indians behind bars of prejudice, ostracism" *The Vancouver Sun, Letters to the Editor Saturday February 26, 1983:**

It was discouraging to read Clive C. Cornish's letter (Ethnic Minorities Can Last a Long Time, But Not Forever, Sun letters Feb 15) in response to Rose Charlie's letter on the plight of Indian people (Poorest of the Poor in Own Land Denied

⁶ It is also interesting to note that in 2013 a quick internet search about Cornish history indicates that Mr. Cornish was incorrect in his assertion that his ancestors even agreed to assimilation. According to Professor Mark Stoye (2011) in an article in the BBC, the Cornish did not passively agree to assimilation, but only acquiesced after many centuries of war. And most importantly, Stoye says that Cornwall's identity as the somewhat independent fifth nation within Britain has not yet been assimilated as evidenced by a resurgence of their unique Cornish language. Retrieved September 7, 2013: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/cornish_nation_01.shtml.

Rights to Their Resources, Sun letters, Jan 25). It is unfortunately a fair account of the dominant but unfair attitude to Native Indians.

Mr. Cornish and others believe that there is a problem because Indians have not adopted the non-Indian and predominantly white Anglo-Saxon way of life. The problem is not, as he suggests that they will not conform to our ways. That would mean that it is simply an “Indian” problem when in fact it is a problem of non-Indians holding the key to the jail into which we have locked Indians behind bars of prejudice and ostracism.

We continue to exclude Indians from participating in Canadian society unless they act a little less Indian and a lot more like us. Some non-Indians can at least see the cage around the native people. What most do not see as clearly is the cage we have boxed ourselves into by our racist way of life. By limiting our concept of what it is to be human, we have robbed ourselves of a society that could be richer in values, customs, and people. It is we in the controlling group who continue to destroy our land with our excessive technology, not the people living on reserves. It is we who put a greater value on the dollar than on human life.

It is truly only a deep value and respect for life that has allowed and encouraged native people to survive our domination for the past century. Who are we to give the final stab, to commit cultural genocide? I have greater hope in native resistance than I have in non-native assistance, especially when I read letters like Mr. Cornish’s.

I, as a white, would never force a native to remain in the rural ghettos we call reserves against his or her will. But nor would I ever force a native to join our white ghetto of narrow-minded values and limited notion of what it is to be human.

Mr. Cornish suggests that ‘it is time the Indian people started to think less about themselves as Indians and more about becoming Canadians like the rest of us.’ I suggest that it is time that we non-Indians start to think less of ourselves as the only or best type of Canadian. If we just close our mouths more and open our ears and hearts, I know from experience that we will hear what Indians have to say about it is to be more human and more Canadian.

I believe that this letter shows that I felt lost and alienated from my ‘own’ people, of whom Mr. Cornish could have been a part of, and even within my own family.

I was virtually the only one at that time who gave a rat’s ass or even acknowledged that there were (are) reserves within walking distances from our homes that were built on unceded Salish lands. The only exceptions at that time were my Uncle and my (step)Grandma who was also

my biological grandmother's close relation which meant we were closely blood related as well. My Grandma was not only politically astute but had a strong bond with the people of Capilano Reserve through her father John Foley's commitment to the community⁷. I had never known this about my great-great-uncle John, until I was an adult and my Grandma told me. She was well into her late 80's at the time and always asked me about how current politics was affecting Indian people. Her awareness and love were inspiring and kept me going.

*I struggled and I could not find intellectual answers, but I found many emotional and spiritual answers as I journeyed onward. I learned to accept what was happening within me as my perceptions changed, and what I chose and how I saw the world was simply my own way. To force my worldview onto others would have been the same as what that religious woman was trying to do to me. But I learned that by living **with** people, and not **for** people, we can all be human and live in balance. The best compliment I have ever received is when First Nations people have told me, "You are a Human Being". Or, "You are a real human." This is the ultimate honour, to be equal to, and in balance with the rest of the human beings.*

My "Professional" Beginnings

*It is this humanness and human-to-human relations that I have always strived for within my working and academic life as well. I have tried to see "clients" as fellow people, and professional policies and academic theories as simple tools for the wellbeing of us all. I am here to work **with** people, not **for** the policies, theories or governments. My perspective led me in March*

⁷ My great-great-uncle John Foley was honoured by Capilano Chief Joe Matthias by being designated an Honorary Chief and then called "Chief Grandfather". This was learned from family lore and further documented in the Slocan City website, retrieved May 19, 2014: <http://www.slocancity.com/history/>.

1984 to my first opportunity within child protection services with a brand new Indian Child Welfare agency in Manitoba that was attempting to work completely outside the provincial standards, ways and limitations, to reverse the tides of losing thousands of children to the system. The whole focus in this agency was on listening to the people in the communities, and simply being there to help the community people express their own power, abilities and ways of taking care of children. I later asked why I was hired since I was non-Native, and I was told that it was because I did not work or think like typical social workers. They believed that I was willing to learn from the people rather than impose outside knowledge onto them.

This was most evident in the agency's requirement that we spend time listening to community people to teach us and everyone about how children used to be raised, before the interference of the Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) and child welfare. I had the honour to learn from the experts and also to see how it actually does work and succeed in its goals of allowing communities to retain control and responsibility for their own children and families. I learned also how European-oppressive it is to think of a child in isolation or separate from his/her family: no one person can be understood or even contemplated separately from his/her people. What is good for one is good for all, and what is good for all is good for the individual. This is in stark contrast to the CFS standard rule of working for what is "in the best interests of the child".

It was also emphatically stated in this agency at that time, that the whole reason that we existed was to work in reaction to the oppression of mainstream child welfare. Our mission was to strengthen the children, families and communities from the inner ground outward in order to stop the removal of children from the communities and to instead heal the communities from within. We were not to simply transplant the provincial child welfare system into the reserves; we existed to strengthen traditional child rearing, decision making processes and community

responsibility for children. I could not and would not have worked for anything less, and it is this philosophy and these goals that I have continued to try to achieve even in the face of backlash not only from the mainstream governments systems but also at times from some current First Nations agencies and social workers.

It has been an ongoing challenge, and this autoethnography will highlight some of those challenges through my anecdotal stories of my experiences. These experiences will provide the examples of the inherent challenges in working to thwart and prevent ongoing colonial assimilation of First Nations through both the removal of the children and also through the imposition of European-based methodologies, standards and policies, even when imposed by First Nations people and organizations.

• • • •

Charles William Redhead

My deepest inspiration came while I was working in this agency, when my life dramatically changed, through meeting a man who became my partner, the father of my daughters, and my soul-mate. Through his cousins in Winnipeg, I met Charles Redhead who was from Shamattawa. We could have seemed as opposites—he was very dark and I am very light, he came from a background of extreme trauma and oppression while I came from white privilege. But we had so much in common—we could and did talk for hours and hours about everything and found we viewed life and the world very similarly. One of the things about him that I loved, was that in spite of (or because of) the horrific abuses he suffered, he never stopped thinking of the needs of others. He would give until he (and we!) had nothing left, and he viewed life from within the deep layers of humanity.

He also carried infinite pain within himself, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. He had been sent to McKay Indian Residential School in Dauphin at the age of four, and the trauma remained within him in every way, especially because at that time, the 1980s, the stories were still not heard about what had gone on. The stories were usually only told while in drunken grief or rage, and others who had not been there still did not believe them anyways. He died tragically in 1993 before his story could be told publicly, and so it was for him that I gave testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on January 12, 2011. He shared enough of what he had experienced with me in a variety of ways, and I felt compelled to share his story not only for his sake, but for that of all of his children and grandchildren and the future generations.

It is my story actually, as it is not his own voice, but his story and mine became entwined and it is from this union that I spoke. I include it now in this thesis because it explains so much of why I try to be a peacebuilder. No one or thing has affected me as deeply as my soul-mate and my testimony provides the reasons for what I am trying to do with my life, personally and professionally. It is unedited other than some of the names have been changed to protect anonymity and the text of the legal disclaimer at the beginning, and I included most of the “uhs” and “ums” because they were uttered sincerely. My fear and nervousness were also sincere. My tears and sobs are not written in, but the audio recording is available through the TRC.

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Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission January 12, 2011:

January 12, 2011

Julia: ...Informed you and signed consent....If criminal offense revealed...

Mary Anne: I'm grateful for this opportunity but I am also nervous. This is something that I'm sure my late husband never thought would ever come. He was

able to teach me a lot about a lot of things, and um, I know his experiences in residential school were so profound that it left him extremely broken.

And back in those days, there was nowhere to go to even talk about it or even to be believed. And I had trouble believing him at first when he started talking about it.

He um, was born in Shamattawa and he, one of the things that I was hesitant to come here for but decided to come, is that because of the fact that he is no longer here and with us, and as far as I know, he hadn't shared as much with anybody else as he has with me, and it's a way to speak for him. And so I ask him to take care of me right now, to honour him, and so I honour him and his experiences. And to be as accurate as I can.

He was born in Shamattawa and when he was four, he remembers going by canoe for about three days to the rail-line and then going on the train and being sent down to school. His older brother and his older sister were also going and he talked about not understanding anything what was happening, and one of the things that bothered him was seeing his sister on the other side of the fence and crying for her because she'd always taken care of him and he couldn't touch her or talk to her.

He was confused because he could not understand English and he had a lot of beatings of course for speaking [Cree].

One of the things that I think is important to say is the majority of the times that he talked about residential school was when he was drunk. He very, very rarely even referred to it or spoke of it when he was sober. But when he was drunk is when some of the tears and the crying would start, and then the stories would start to come. And sometimes it's when he would start to act out the abuse he went through.

He talked about how when he was about eight years old he tried, he ran away. And he got about five miles or so up the railway line and it was winter and he passed out on the rail track and they, somebody must of found him cuz he woke up back at the school. He said a lot of kids ran away and tied to run away.

He also spoke of how when he was about 10 years old the federal government came and took over the school that had been run by the Anglicans. And after that the federal government took over it was better because they were hungry all the time, and I guess he made mention of the way people in Dauphin starting lodging complaints about the kids running away from the school and eating out of their garbage pails and he thinks that that's why the government stepped in because there were too many complaints from townspeople because the kids were bothering them by stealing food and stuff from the garden and wherever they could.

He spoke of other Indian kids older that were put in charge of them too. He said that some of them of them were nice and some of them weren't.

He talked a lot about one year that was the best year of his whole life – and that was, they'd go home in summer, most of the summers they'd go home. And

one year he waited and he waited for about the time that the plane would come and get them [to go back to the school] and as soon as he heard the plane coming he took off into the bush and he hid in the bush for a long time He waited. The plane stayed for a few days looking for the kids that were missing and he was one of them. And finally they gave up looking for him and they left but he stayed in the bush for a few more days. Finally his dad came found him. But he just kept going and brought him with him to the trap line, he didn't bring him back into the community and he stayed there with his dad in the trap-line for a whole winter and he said that was the best year of his life. And he never wanted to leave the trap line and go back to the community.

One of the things I remember him saying when he was drunk is, "You'll never understand. You'll never believe what I could tell you." He would cry and rock back and forth when he would say that. He um, he ended up getting kicked out of residential school for being too much of a trouble maker when he was a teenager and he ended up in foster homes in the Dauphin area and the way he described one of them was really bad. There was one of the other foster boys ended up killing one of the foster parents and many years later I heard about it and read about it, and they are calling themselves the Lost Boys. But he used to joke about it say he must be pretty bad if he got kicked out of residential school. But they considered him too much of a disruptive influence on the little ones.

So he stayed down south until he was 18 and then when he turned 18 they flew him or sent him back to Shamattawa and by the time he got back there, he said he lasted 2 days and he left again. Because he had forgotten how to talk to his mom and dad because he couldn't communicate with them. He said he felt like an outsider in his own community. So he came down to the city and got himself some jobs, made a living by selling drugs, but got some honest jobs too, and within a few years he ended up committing an armed robbery where somebody died and he was sentenced to jail in Stony [Mountain Penitentiary].

And he used to talk a lot about what life was like in Stony – the good, the bad, the everything. The riots. The torture, the abuses. But he never went into that much detail with the residential schools, but I remember one day, and this one of the only days he ever talked about school sober, he told me "I would do those nine years in Stony over again in an instant before I'd ever set foot back in that school."

And I didn't believe him. I went "yeah right!"

And he said "No, I am serious."

I said "It was that bad?"

And he said "Yes." And we just left it at that.

But another way that I got a glimpse of what life was like was, when he was drunk he would hallucinate, and he would start to act out a lot of the abuse that he went through on me. And I know it was coming from the school because of the things that he would say. He would talk to me like I was a child. He would talk to

me like I was a savage. And as he hit me and raped me, and used weapons on me, he would tell me I deserve it.

He'd tell me "You're nothing".

And then sometimes he would get into "all you white people are the same".

And there was times when he was trying to kill me. Because I deserved to die. The only thing that stopped him one time was when I just told I love him. And he was swinging an axe when he said that and he stopped and he put the axe down. And he continued to abuse me but he didn't try to chop me up anymore.

I felt like I had a glimpse of what he went through. Only a glimpse. But it was enough to know that I didn't want to know any more than that.

When he'd sober up he wouldn't remember what happened and I would tell him. And he believed me, he never didn't believe me. And he knew he was out of control, and he didn't want to hurt us, the kids and me. And he got to the point where he would phone me, if we had a phone he'd phone me and he would say "I just want you to know that I ran into so-and-so. I've had a couple beers".

"Oh."

"So, ah, you know eh?"

And I said, "Yeah, ok...", and that was all we would say and it was my message to leave so that uh, he wouldn't have to hurt me.

And I got uh, that's how I knew that ... when he was thinking right that he wasn't trying to do those things to us I think it was his way of letting and telling the story that he couldn't say with words because he never hurt people, like strangers that he didn't know. He'd never go and beat them up for nothing or anything like that. And he, he adored our girls. He um, he um, he always wanted to spoil them. Like when they were babies he would say, "Give them candy..."

"It's not good for them."

"Give them candy. They're kids they deserve it. They need what I never had".

He um, I know he can be referred to as a survivor of the residential schools but I don't know if he really survived. He died young. From being murdered while he was drinking and I know he wouldn't be drinking still if it weren't for the schools. He would try to stop, he'd go to programs, he would try to do all the right things, but he'd always go back to drinking. So that's why I say I don't think he did survive.

I can't even begin to express how it is, how the schools have affected Shamattawa and our family, our children and my, our, grandchildren. I got a taste of it and I left Manitoba and I went to BC for a while before Alberta and his niece came and stayed with me. She was having a hard time, getting used to school there even though it was a reserve school. She was having a hard time, it was different. She had never lived away from the community. And I put my arm around her and said "Well, at least it's better than the residential school."

She was about 14, and she looked at me and said “What are residential schools? What are you talking about?”

“You know, the residential schools, the ones your mom and dad went to in Dauphin and Brandon”, where her mom and her dad had gone.

She says, “What the hell are you talking about?”

And uh, so I explained a little bit and she started to get mad. “You’re lying, they never went away to school. You’re lying.”

*And I said, “Carrie, they went. Your uncle told me stories about seeing your mom on the side of the fence. And that your dad was there with them” and she still didn’t understand. And then I went and got, I had taped-recorded that movie on TV, *Where the Spirit Lives*. And I said “Watch this, maybe then you’ll know what I am talking about.” And she sat there and she watched that movie straight through three times in a row without saying anything. And uh, finally I sat down beside and said “So, what do you think?”*

She was just staring off. She says “Now I understand.”

“What do you understand?”

She said “Now I understand why my parents are the way they are. Now I understand why things are back home the way they are.”

And I blame the schools for the suicides that are continuing today. Because these are the children and now the grandchildren of the people who were there. 1984 is the first recorded suicide in Shamattawa. There was none there before then. And that was after the people who had gone to the schools had got back. CFS had never been there until the people came back from the schools. People like my husband loved the kids but had no idea how to take care of them.

He sexually assaulted our daughter when she was a baby. That’s why I had to leave him when I did. It was the hardest thing I ever did was to take, take his kids away from him. A lot of me died when I had to do that. And we were living in the community. And his Mom knew I wasn’t coming back but she didn’t say anything. She knew I was leaving. I couldn’t tell him I wasn’t coming back or he wouldn’t have let us go.

So my girls grew up without a father. My grandchildren without a grandfather. And it’s affected them. My oldest daughter started drinking when she was 14. She couldn’t go to school, she couldn’t leave the house unless she was drunk, and she didn’t know why. She would talk of suicide when she was a teenager. And things got really, really bad for her. She got beaten up by a guy in a gang in Alberta. And because she tried to fight back, they put a mark on her. So she had to leave and so I said “That’s it, you’re going back to Winnipeg. At least there your Dad’s family can take care of you.”

And she came here and she started to find the healing that had been missing. She’s doing really well. She’s, she and her partner, a guy she met here, have come a long way and they’re raising their boys. And they both went back to school. And

they're doing good. And the other girl is uh, she never went down the alcohol path, but she carries still today a lot of pain and lot of anger.

She expressed her anger when the TRC, when the apology came through and then TRC. I think she said something like, "Fuckin' late now. A lot of fucking good it's going to do me and my sister" and then the TRC. She carries a lot of anger. But she's trying. She and her partner. Both were raised without fathers because of residential school. But they're trying. And they're wanting to make things better for their children.

When the apology came through I really wondered what my husband's reaction would have been, to be alive that day. I know he would have been very quiet. I know he would have felt intense pain. Overwhelming pain. I'd like to think that after the apology sunk in, that he would have started to feel a little bit, a little bit stronger in that finally he might be believed. Cuz when he was at Stony, and you know how they get psycho-analyzed in there, and when people would start to hear his stories, they didn't believe him. They accused him of lying and making it up. So he stopped talking. There was no point in telling people the details of what happened. But knowing by what he did to me physically and sexually, I know what he went through. He told me through his words then, and his actions.

And one of my daughters, we came back, when we were living in Alberta and we came back here because his uncle died, for the funeral and uh, I purposely stopped in Dauphin, came through Dauphin so she could see the school. And uh, we went in, it's being used as a Christian college, or something now. And uh, asked them if they could show us around. And they did. And other than being ugly there wasn't anything too remarkable about it. But then he brought us to the boy's, where the boys had been housed. He said, the guy taking us on the tour, he said they were getting more and more people. This was a number of years back, they were getting more and more people coming to see it again and so he knew where the boys had been housed. And uh, when we went down to the basement I just got this overwhelming sick feeling in my stomach and started shivering. And uh, as we got to the bottom of the stairs I just felt sick. He pointed to a door and said that's where the proctor or something would have, that was the proctor's room and this was where the boys slept over here. And I never said anything until we got out, and my daughter felt that same horrible feeling when we went down there.

I went through a lot of depression. I had to get help. In every way. Anti-depressants, therapy and cultural help. To survive the glimpse that he showed me. I think that the Creator spared me more anymore so that I could stay strong enough. If I'd seen anymore I wouldn't have.

My heart goes out to the homeless every time I see homeless, Native homeless people on the street, especially the ones that are my age because I can pretty much guarantee that they are victims or survivors of the schools. Those are the ones that we have forgotten.

And I worry for Shamattawa because they're people who are starting to talk about it but not very much. Most of the kids still don't understand. That it was their own grandparents that went through this. A lot of things are happening in the city but they're not reaching the communities yet, especially the far away communities. The communities that are far away from the city. I say that because I know that there's people there who are survivors who have never even bothered to make application for their money. Their attitude is leave the past in the past, and that's their right, that's their choice. But I worry about the kids. And I wonder what the story is and what their suicides are telling us. In 2009 there was nine completed suicides of youth.

I also worry about the CFS carrying on some of the same, some of the same tragedies that came through the residential schools. I'm a CFS worker myself. And I know what it's like to be in a position to apprehend children. But there's gotta be a better way. Than having the community decimated by it. Gotta be a way to keep kids in the community. Put in the supports and the services that they need so that kids don't have to leave the community.

Right now I'm starting my Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies. We're studying the atrocities that happened around the world. And another student and I will look at each other when they're talking about it because we know what's happened here and is happening here. And that we need to change the approach instead of putting in band aid solutions like CFS. I need to do actual peace-building, holistic peace-building and that's where I see the TRC as playing a role. People understand the need for the TRC in South Africa. But there are some Canadians who don't still understand that there's a need for one here in Canada.

I guess that all that I have left to say is how much I love my husband. I'll never stop loving him. On the hardest days all I could do was to do my best by our kids. That maybe I could break the cycle. And that I know he never meant to hurt us. And that is why I was wanting to come here today. To say what I could on his behalf. And for our grandchildren.

I just offer my words as a prayer for everybody who's been affected. And in the generations to come. And that we try to work together. Children don't have to keep suffering. So that places like Shamattawa can take their rightful place as leaders in this place, in Canada, because they have the resources, and they have the teachings and they have the wherewithal. They just need the healing.

Ehkosi.

Julia: Thank you Mary Anne for giving us your statement today... I have a couple more questions if you don't mind... You've already answered one of them which is given the history of Indian Residential schools, how can we make Canada a better place for everyone. I believe you answered that in your statement.

The other one is, what does reconciliation mean to you?

Mary Anne: Well further to your first question... can you read the first question again?

Julia: Given the history of Indian Residential schools, how can we make Canada a better place for everyone?

Mary Anne: Well, in the view of what happened at the schools I think we start by listening to people. And believing them. Even when we don't want to hear their stories, we listen. I know that every individual is the expert in their own history, their own life. To be disbelieved about abuse is only continuing the abuse. And if anything that the school situation's taught us it's to listen. And I think we need to do the same for the ones who are victims of CFS. And I say victims, I know CFS has helped some people, but I know that there are a lot of victims out there too.

And the system is not adequate. And if we listen to the people who have been affected, I do believe that we find our answers.

And in terms of reconciliation, I think that's one of the strongest forms of reconciliation, is to actually listen and to believe what we hear. I know it's not easy to hear things we don't wanna believe. But ... if we want this way of hurting people to stop, it's the only way I know how, is to listen to them. And honour them.

And understand that there has to be structural changes so that these things don't happen again. Changes where, when communities say, like Shamattawa, what they need, that they actually be listened to and honoured and believed so that they don't be told that they don't know what they are talking about. When they are speaking out of their own experience, their own reality. And nobody knows better than them.

We need to listen at all levels. Individually, socially, politically, and honour the fact that according to the teachings that it's going to take seven generations to heal. And that this isn't something that's going to go away overnight as much as we would love it to. The victims themselves would love it to go away overnight but it's not going to. And yes, it is a long process. I hear a lot of non-Native people say "Get over it. It's in the past." Well it's not in the past. It's alive today. The effects are still alive and that's where the reconciliation has to happen, where people are still hurting from it, or affected by it.

Julia: Mary Anne, one more question. Do you wish to tell us your husband's name?

Mary Anne: Yes. His name is Charles William Redhead.

Julia: Meegwetch.

Mary Anne: Ehkosi

It took three years and this thesis for me to be able to listen to my own testimony. It woke up emotions that I had buried. I would not have listened if it weren't for this thesis, because why go there again to those places I put deep inside me? Yet I carry it all with me every single day. For it

is who I now am. My history and his history came together to create amazing children and grandchildren, a true blend of us both. This is who I am and how I came from white privilege on the West Coast to Ininew life in Northern Manitoba.

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Conclusion

My childhood was in one sphere of society, and yet today I live in another. I went from a world of white privilege that was (is?) blind to the realities of Canada's colonizing actions, their impacts, and that are continuing today. I include my personal stories for a few reasons. One is as an action of self-positioning, publicly identifying who I am and where I come from. Also, my life is living proof that people can evolve, and that we can open our eyes, ears and hearts to the underlying realities that exist within Canadian society. It is not an easy journey, but one that I would not change, and one that is critical if we are to practice true conscientization as per Freire (1970).

As someone born into the oppressing group within Canadian society, it is my responsibility and honour to open myself to the realities of those who have not been born into the same privilege. If I am to change from actively oppressing, then I need to become one with those oppressed in thought, word and deed. I cannot participate in structural change while remaining within the 'safety' of my privilege. This understanding is what led to my decisions within my early adult life that began my journey to Winnipeg and the world of Ininew and Anishinaabe and other peoples.

And my greatest teachers, my greatest motivators for shifting myself and my understanding of my inner identity, were my partner Charles, Elders who shared their time, love and patience with me, my children, and everyone whose paths joined with mine, be it for a short or a long time. I believe it is clear however, that my love and life with Charles was a deeply impacting influence

that has been grafted into my very soul. Not only because of the children and grandchildren we share, but because of the impact of all the experiences we shared together. And for this I am truly grateful, for he and our family continue to be my greatest motivators in all aspects of my life.

CHAPTER 5
EMPIRICAL CHAPTER:
NARRATIVES OF MY MOTIVATIONS

Introduction

My personal life as explained above through my writings, provides the roots or contexts for my professional life. My work springs from my personal convictions, which come from my life experiences. I am unable to fully distinguish my personal motivations and emotions from professional motivations and actions. My stories of my personal side and the following stories that include my professional life, help me to come to see if and/or how my interventions in my work in social work are consistent with the interventions that I have attempted throughout my life to build peace. These personal and professional stories have meaning and direct implication within my studies of whether my life as a Child and Family Services (CFS) social worker is consistent with my studies and work as a peacebuilder. As a woman and a social worker, have I and am I working in ways that are consistent with peace-building? Or am I continuing the colonialist practices of other social workers and governments? My stories are a way for me to look at myself and reflect on if my actions are that of continuing assimilation and possibly cultural genocide, or am I constructing peaceful responses.

The stories of my personal and professional experiences provide the data for me to examine my own actions and choices, to see if and/or how I am operating either in a peace-building fashion, or contributing to colonization, even unwittingly or against my will. And due to the very personal and intimate nature of both my work and this autoethnographic method of study, my contemporary personal life outside of my working hours needs to also be incorporated. This is because my

personal life has also involved CFS in a number of ways including taking care of “foster” children, and having my own son going into the care of the CFS system. In my experiences and even within the teachings I initially received within Indian Child Welfare, it is typical within First Nations social work, that the boundaries are usually blurred between professional/work and personal/life. Working within small communities means many overlap of boundaries and within this cultural context it transcends into the city as well. Blood relationships, marriage relationships and friendships and shared life experiences within First Nations extend throughout communities. And my life is no exception as is evidenced below. One example of the overlap between professional and personal within First Nations communities makes me laugh now, but was very challenging at the time.

Mary Anne: Human Being or Worker?

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I was living in a rural community and a CFS worker at a Cree First Nation, and I was also in labour with my third baby. I was two weeks overdue, and was walking up and down the hallways of the maternity ward in the closest hospital, pushing the IV drip on its rickety wheels to help the labour come along, when I saw a community member, Susie, who came down the hospital hall on her way to see her daughter who was also having a baby. She greeted me and said “So you’re finally going to have your baby... that’s good!” and we chatted about her daughter’s progress too. She went to see her girl and I kept walking up and down, and up and down the hallways until my water final broke.

Within a short time, I was back in my bed in hard labour. The pains kept coming rapidly, and I was at the point of doing the breathing techniques, the “hee hee hoe... hee hee hoes,” to relieve the pain and keep from pushing quite yet. In between the waves of pain I lay my head back and zoned out to prepare for the next surge of pain. Over and over this pattern continued, with my legs wide open and up in the air, my face sweating, and my supports standing beside me. All of a sudden, the door opened and Susie came walking in. “Hey Mary Anne, I’ve been meaning to ask you about Bobby, [her son who was in care] I wanted to ask you about him coming home soon....”

As the pain started surging again, and my breathing kicked in, I very carefully and deliberately said, “Su...sie....hee hee hoe....hee hee.... Su...sie... hoe...I’m... kinda busy.... Hee hee hoe....”

Susie seemed to notice what I was doing for the first time, and said “Oh, but I just wanted to ask you....”

“Su...sie... hee hee hoe.... Hee hee hoe.... NOT... NOW!”

“Oh! Ok! I’ll come talk to you after you have the baby!”

“How ‘bout... hee hee... you talk to someone at the office... hoe... since I’ll be off work for a while?”

“Oh yeah, yeah, ok!”

Susie left and the door closed, and I turned and asked my supports, “Did that really happen or am I hallucinating from the pain?” They started laughing and said that it really did happen!

So who I am as a person cannot be separated from the professional me, even when I want it to be. There is no straight 9 to 5, and our friends and associates, and even our families, are also our clients. It’s not like the unionized workers in the cities who have set hours, after-hours

resources, and keep their personal lives completely separate from their life on the job. I've apprehended relatives of my child, even under threat of being shot at the time, and then the next week been invited by that same mother to her child's birthday party. Once I was sent home from the reserve's Health Centre because hepatitis was not only spreading throughout the community, but the first victim had first got sick while playing with my daughters at my house, vomiting all over my place. A couple weeks later when I was not feeling well and went to the Health Centre, they noticed my skin seem jaundiced, and they knew I had been at ground zero of the hepatitis outbreak, so they took blood and told me to go home and stay in quarantine at least until we knew for sure if I had it. I was directed to not let anyone even into my house at this stage.

So I let work know, collected my kids from the school and day care and went home, happy to have a chance for some peace and quiet. Later that evening after dark, a vehicle pulls up in my gravel driveway and I heard the footsteps up the stairs and a knock at the door. Anna, a short middle aged woman, was standing there in the cold. I opened the door to start to tell her I couldn't invite her in, but she stepped right in anyways. "Hey Mary Anne, you weren't answering your phone at the office today, so I came to ask you...."

"Anna, I can't let you in right now. Wendy [the nurse] told me to stay in quarantine because I probably have that hepatitis that's going around...."

"Oh that's ok, I won't stay long, I'll just have one cup of tea and I wanna ask you about...."

So I poured her a cup of tea and we talked about whatever it was that she had wanted to see me about.

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There are few if any boundaries when one works within First Nations CFS, particularly on-reserve, but even within cities like Winnipeg. The Aboriginal communities within Winnipeg are close-knit and inter-related, and there is no way to divide one's self from one's work world. Everywhere I go I see people I know from my work, and even sitting on my front porch I see people walking by that are or were my 'clients'. And now, with cell phones, texting and even Facebook, the communications networks amongst workers-clients is even more blurred. Texts come through at all hours, because within First Nations agencies workers usually use our own cell phones for work, and because it is simply expected amongst the people. Life carries on 24-7, so CFS should too.

And as a person and a worker, I carry all of my experiences and emotions with me through the whole day and nights. There aren't always any clear distinctions within my emotions of what I feel for my 'clients', my family and myself. I have been a client, a foster mother, and a worker. The boundaries are so hazy that at times they don't exist. And, after building relationships with the people I work with, they often become like an extended family within my heart. Perhaps this is why my professional failings affect me personally, and my personal failings affect me professionally.

Failure—Professional

Trina:

One afternoon I was called to a school because a young girl who I knew well was refusing to do anything in her classroom and said she did not want to go home. She had multiple challenges in life, and so CFS was called. We sat and talked alone in a small school office, and Trina alternated between smiling, laughing, and putting her head down and looking in despair. Her ADHD prevented her from sitting still and she would stand up, lean across the table, spin around, and yet keep looking at me straight in the eye. After opening conversation, I asked her what she had told the teacher. She repeated that she didn't want to go home. I asked her why and she would just go quiet, and change the topic. We kept chatting and I would throw in subtle questions, to try to find out why she didn't want to go home, but she shut down every time.

As the conversation went on, she got more and more emotional, and kept saying "I can't go home, I can't go home....." She started sobbing and I reached for her and she fell into my arms. Her thin little body was racked in sobs, and her skinny arms were wrapped tight around me in a knot. "Trina, I need to know why you don't want to go home..... I can't take you with me unless there are some reasons why you can't go home. She clung tighter and kept sobbing. When she lifted her face and looked in my eyes with her piercing overflowing eyes, she said "But you know why Mary Anne, you know why. I can't go home"

It was true that I knew that there were many problems in her home. Her parents' possible mental illnesses, possible pill addictions and a lot of emotional abuse were well known throughout the community, and I had suspicions and fears that there was also physical and possible sexual abuse as well. But there were no disclosures, or visible signs of anything to warrant an immediate

apprehension into care. And now here was Trina looking me in my eyes, burning her way into my heart. And nothing I said or did could get her to say anything specific. Without that, I knew she would simply be returned home within hours or a day, and then potentially face worse problems at home.

Eventually she calmed down, and she pulled herself together, and agreed to go home because I promised to come see her at school again the next morning. And when I saw her the next morning, it was like nothing had happened – she was her usually peppy, smiley self. She had shoved it all inside again.

So her life went on, but my life was changed forever. There was absolutely nothing unique in this event, because every day I talked with children, some who would disclose and some who would not. But something in her eyes had penetrated my soul, and I could not get her out of my thoughts, my worries, and my nightmares. I would wake up in the middle of the night trying to reach for her as she faded away with her arms outstretched, and me feeling so utterly helpless and completely void of any ability to accomplish anything.

Why her and not the hundreds of others? I do not know for sure, other than I knew her family quite well, and knew that it was very probable that something traumatic was happening to Trina, but that she was the latest in many generations to cover horrible secrets in shame and fear. The adults like her parents, could start to disclose their childhoods, but she was still not able. Was it her long waif-like arms clinging to me that I can still feel today years later? Or was it because it all just happened at a time and place where my experiences and emotions culminated in this reaction?

I do not know. But I know that the feeling of utter impotence that I felt that day continued to surface on a regular basis, especially when it was the system itself that was preventing me from

acting. The times children begged to come into care, but there was nowhere to place them. The times that youth were trying to kill themselves and there was nowhere to keep them supervised and safe. The times young girls would walk away and I knew that they were walking away to be sold for sex because the system had nowhere else for them to go. Sure there are a few beds for youth like these, but there are so many hoops to jump through, walls to climb or go around or to have to literally blow up before the placement can happen, that too often they slipped away back to the danger that we are supposed to protect them from.

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It is so hard for me to try to remember any good things I have done, but the bad things, come flowing out immediately. The times I could not do enough. The times things didn't go as planned – like when children disclosed abuse within the foster homes that they were placed in to protect them. My head knows that no one (especially me) can be all things for all people, or even all things for one person. But my heart wants to be able to do that. If I could I would not only kiss away every child's pain and sorrow, but I would also change the entire system, right down to its very roots.

Failure – Personal

I carry my professional failings into my personal life and my personal into my professional. Thus I include my personal challenges that are connected to the CFS system, and start with who I am and how I happen to be feeling while writing this chapter, followed by the story of my biological son entering into care, and then the loss through suicide of my daughter who adopted me. These are the most emotionally charged situations that I carry with me every day into my work

from my personal life. They play a fundamental role within who I am as a woman today, as a social worker and as a peacebuilder. So today at this time, this is how I see and feel myself.

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Failure. That is what I feel like this morning and many mornings. I am alone in my house, been off work for two days because of severe dental pain and so I haven't accomplished a bloody thing. Not work-wise, not family-wise, nothing, nada. I even turned away a young woman from my door who wanted to talk and borrow money – a young woman with many, many needs, but I just couldn't listen to her that night. And I was already feeling used, sorry for myself and just wanted to be alone. So I stayed alone. Ok, I went to a wake for a friend's son who was stabbed to death. That was my evening out. But that is it – what else do I have to show for my existence in the last few days? I had tickets to Adam Beach's movie event and couldn't even go there. I feel so alone, so useless. Such a failure.

My house is empty by both circumstance and choice. I had children in my home, my own and others, for almost 30 years without a break. And as a single parent, it meant intense, hands-on care of children. Even my own kids posed no shortage of challenges – my son with his autism, my daughters with their own issues, and then the nieces and nephew with theirs. Between them all, let's just say that I can't count the number of trips to the hospital ERs, schools, medical and other appointments, and calls to police for assistance, not to mention years and years of sleepless nights.

My son has multiple challenges which include autism. Tourette's, OCD, ADHD, Seasonal Affective Disorder, sleep disorders and in his early years severe reactions against gluten, dairy and eggs which meant special foods for him like gluten-free breads, pizza dough, that I had to make myself. The sleep disorder was one of the most challenging things about life with my son.

Even as a little guy he could go up to 72 hours without sleeping, or go the opposite where that's all he ever wanted was to sleep 24/7. When he was a little guy I learned to "sleep" with one eye and ear open at all times, because I never knew when he would get up and get into things around the house that could hurt him. Simple things like trying to climb a chair, trying to get a drink of water, or worse, trying to go outside. At first we lived on a highway across from a lake, so getting out of the house could simply not happen! He had a compulsion for a while to walk down the middle of the highway and follow the yellow line. Sometimes he wanted to sweep it as he would walk. He loved and was drawn to water the same as if he was a fish. But he could not survive in water, especially as a little guy. He thought nothing of yelling like Tarzan and jumping into the water any season that the ice was gone.

He also learned how to cross over on ice floes and one spring morning while camping, after being gone only five minutes we found him sitting on a floe watching the creek waters rush by. Of course my heart pounded, and I couldn't breathe until we got him back to the land. And my heart rate shot up many times thanks to my little guy. The many times he would "dart" and run off, and often into incoming traffic.... The time he climbed to the top of the three story City Hall, and stood on top of the ledge with his arms up and a look of glee on his face. While I did everything I could to keep calm and talk him down.... The time he swallowed a Toonie and we had to go to the ER – all he was concerned about was getting to see it in the x-ray! And then thinking he could spend it at Walmart while it was still in his digestive system.... The time as a toddler when he put his hand on top of the stove's red hot burner and just stayed there. I could smell flesh burning and turned to see him just looking at me without moving his hand.... The time he got salmonella food poisoning from compulsively eating mud and pebbles and lost over 1/4 of his body weight within a week as his stomach lining started to come out with his constant diarrhea....

Then there were all the teens that came through my life and house – my own by birth and the others. There was alcohol, drugs, boyfriends, suicide talk and attempts, crimes and arrests, temper tantrums, dance recitals, medical appointments, meetings at schools to find out why they were not performing as expected, finding used condoms and wrappers, money and belongings going missing, coming home to messes while they spent all day sleeping or watching movies, and then being up all night (especially in the long, long summer holidays) while they watched movies, came and went out the front door or the back door to have a smoke or steal my car to run to 7-11 and sneak back in from late curfew, and phone calls – “Mom can you come get me from my friend’s house? I have no way home....” All the while I was trying to catch some sleep. Losing sleep was one of the hardest things about my life with my kids. Because throughout most of all this I was working full time, having to get up and go to work to – SURPRISE – work with teens and families who had issues!!!

Little by little, the kids started to grow up, and would start to leave. Some happily for positive reasons, some for sad reasons. But the house started to empty out. I’ve never had a large house, but this one is large by Northern First Nations standards for it has three bedrooms. That’s enough for 10 or more people on many reserves. And as word got out that I had an empty room or bed, I would get requests on a constant basis – “Can I stay with you?” “Can my daughter stay with you while she goes to school?” It was so hard to begin to say no. I felt like I was betraying them, betraying myself. After all, I wanted to be there for people, wanted to do all that I could for others. And saying no was new to me, and going against my own desires. I wanted to do what I could, I wanted to at least try my best. But my house was also in need of a lot of repairs from all the kids – holes in walls, the carpets were ripped up because they just couldn’t be clean anymore, doors unhinged, and I had no money to provide for more kids, or to fix my home

And something had changed over the last couple of years.... I became useless, or at least a failure. It started when I had to let some teens go... I could always “rationalize” it when it was not my own birth children because there was either an agency or their own parents involved. And sometimes it was exactly because the agency did not put in the supports like youth workers that they had agreed to, and that the teens so desperately needed since I was busy at work to keep the household going. For their own safety and wellbeing they had to go and live elsewhere. But when it came to me having to allow my own 17 year old son to go, that was the beginning of my descent into uselessness. The day he left was one of the hardest in my life.

My Son

The TV was on, but I have no idea what the show was. My foot was tapping, and my stomach churning and I kept my ears open for the phone to ring and my eyes darting outside the window to look for her car.

My son sat across from me with his eyes glued to the cartoons on the TV, and every few minutes I heard him “Uh hah h hah...” in various volumes, and sometimes ending in his high pitched “Eeeee.....!” He was happy, that much I knew. For him it was any other afternoon, after coming home from school across the city on his hour-plus bus ride. He could now relax, do what he wants, when he wants and be himself. No one telling him he has to perform, to achieve, to accomplish. No one telling him to be quiet and not let out his joy.

His face had a slight smile on it, and he was sitting calmly without moving other than his eyes that followed the cartoons, and an occasional knee slap when he laughed. He had no idea what was coming.

My baby had just turned 17, but it would be hard to guess his age if you didn't know him. He had a dark beard starting to grow encircling his chin. He completely filled the very large leather chair that could easily hold two smaller adults. When standing, he stood at least six foot nine inches and at least 350 pounds. His size went beyond the height scale at the doctor! But he was also still my baby. Beside his chair were his Yu-Gi-Oh cards neatly stacked, which went with him everywhere he went. Sometimes other toys too – Bakugan, B-daman [sic], and mementos that he cherished that had no meaning to others, but held great meaning and long stories for him.

My son lived with me from the moment we came home from the maternity ward. My days and nights focused on him. Get him up in the morning, use all kinds of prompting tricks to get him up and ready for school. Patiently yet proddingly help him get through his rituals where seeing the school bus meant going to the bathroom followed by getting on his boots and then his jacket and then gather up his bag where his treasures were packed earlier. Pushing him to hurry could upset the pattern and get him so upset that he would not know what to do and have to start all over again or even worse, outright refuse to do anything. But I needed to prod him because otherwise the bus driver would have to leave to stay on schedule.

When he was little, if worse came to worse, I could pick him up, throw him over my shoulder and bring him to where he needed to be, and this did happen several times. But now this obviously wasn't an option!

When he'd get to school, the teachers would run into the same problem. Even in junior high, when he would refuse to do his work or join the class, he would lay down in the middle of the hallway and spread eagle and go to sleep. He would refuse to move or wake up. When he started this, one well-meaning student got concerned for him and called for medical help! The

teachers knew they could not physically move him, and so prevented others from getting concerned by placing a hand-written note on top of him that said "I am just sleeping."

He had a very patient teacher at this time, and through dogged determination and a whole lot of patience, he was able to nudge my son's behaviours into being a whole lot more compliant. He knew how to not sweat the small stuff and not get into power struggles with him, because no one, and I mean no one, has ever won a power struggle with him!

His aunt and I bust a gut laughing one time when we were at his cousin's graduation from the armed service's Bold Eagle cadet program. We had arrived early and our boy who was about 8 at the time, was running around the huge armory hall and checking things out. He settled into a chair at the front where the dignitaries were going to sit, and sat there checking out the view and swinging his legs back and forth. As the time drew near for the ceremony to begin, one of the army men walked over to him. He was dressed in full army uniform with a rifle strapped over his shoulder and ammunition loaded around his waist. He went close and very politely told my son that he needed to move and find a seat over to the left. My son sat swinging his legs and looked at the officer in the eye and did not flinch. Back and forth his legs kept pumping as his eyes stared deep into the officer. The officer tried different techniques of getting him to move, and we could see his frustration mount as he started flushing red up from his collar up higher and higher. His aunt and I were too busy laughing to help him until I saw the officer finally get so frustrated he started looking for reinforcements. I went and assured him that I would get him out of the chair before the ceremony began, and sure enough in short time he got up on his own and went further exploring.

I knew then that if an armed man in uniform couldn't get my son to do something he didn't want to do, that I sure couldn't. I learned to cajole him into doing what needed to be done a lot of

the time, but there were times he flat out did what he wanted. Like getting up in the middle of night and going downtown to see the sunrise there. Like setting his brand new winter jacket on fire below the basement stairs so he wouldn't have to wear it again because too many people complimented him on it. Like me having to make sure that everyone in the house live by his rules and his routines so that he didn't get upset. Like trying to teach him that using his size to intimidate people to get what he wanted wasn't right, but nonetheless seeing that it worked for him, because I had no way to stop him.

He learned to use his size with passive-aggression and simply refusing to budge, and then he learned to intimidate with his growls and when need be, throwing objects and damaging walls. At the beginning of his Grade 12, the school had decided that they had no way to get him to do his school work and so they let me know that they "no longer had a program that could meet his needs". And the whole school division also "had no program [in the largest school division in Manitoba] that could meet his needs". And I could not leave him home alone to go to work so..... That left only one option. To have him placed in a staffed home.

This was the day I knew would come, but I had hoped it would be after he was 18, when he was an adult. So I could tell myself that I hung in and took care of my son for his whole childhood, and that like other adults, he moved out and on with his life. But it came early. And I did not know how he would react. Would he get mad and lash out? Would he take off and get lost, or worse, walk into the traffic like he was prone to do?

Winnipeg CFS was very aware of what could go wrong when we told him he would be placed somewhere, and they knew they didn't know him, but asked me all about him and went to meet with him to learn more. At my suggestion, we didn't tell him ahead of time because then he

would have time for his anxiety and probable negative reaction to get bigger and bigger before the time came.

So he was sitting back enjoying his cartoons, not knowing that his life was about to change in a big way and forever. I was the one constant in his life. The one thing or person who was always there for him. You know how babies can't tell that they're still not separated from their mothers and until they're toddlers they think that they are one and the same with us moms? That Mommy should know right away how they feel, that Mommy's body is there for them and them alone? Well, my son never really outgrew that. He assumes I know what he's thinking and feeling, especially when he has trouble finding words to express himself. When others ask him a question he automatically looks to me and I have to nod and encourage him to try to speak freely. He assumes I have his back at all times. When I tell him I love him, his response is "Of course you do", straight up and matter of fact.

And now I am sending him away. Cutting the cord irrevocably. He will hate me. He will never forgive me. He will never survive. What kind of mother am I? How can I do this? My breathing was quick and rapid and my foot tapped. How could he not see the shape I was in? How could he not know? But then, that was part of his challenges, understanding and reading people and situations.

This is the boy who knew so much about ancient Egypt that at a special display he corrected a world renowned Egyptologist about one of the pharaohs. This is the boy who connected the Egyptian mythology with the Greek and Roman, and then how the planets' names correlate in their relationships amongst each other to the mythological kinship ties.

This is the boy who told me at the age of sixteen all about how embryos are formed scientifically between the sperm and egg, and then asked, "I just have one question – how does

the sperm get to the egg?” Fortunately before I could answer we were interrupted, but later at the age of sixteen I did have to explain. At seventeen I also had to tell him the truth. He was asking for all kinds of things for Christmas like an iPhone, iPad, and piles of Yu-gi-oh cards etc., etc. When I said that these were all very expensive things and hard to afford he responded with “But Santa’s magic – Santa can do anything!” So I had to burst his bubble with that, take his innocence. He was a six foot nine inch little boy.

Who will make sure he showers and brushes his teeth? Who will know how to cook meals that he will actually eat? Who will understand his convoluted stories that only make sense between him and me? Who will kiss him good night?

My breathing got even shorter when I saw the social worker’s car pull up and she came to the door. She was a grandmotherly type, even older than me, and this helped both him and me. He remembered her from when she visited him at his school, and he remembered telling her all about how he and I are descended from the only King of Ireland, Brian Boru, and how he won the Battle of Clontarf on April 23, 1014, and was then slain by a Viking called Bruder the next day. He was a bit surprised but kind of happy to see her and started telling her (the same) stories again. I then cut in and asked him if he knew why Betty was here and in all childlike innocence said “No, I don’t”. So I explained the best I could.

“Well, you know how you are getting older, and how you want to have more independence.....”

“Hm hmm....”

“And, well, you know how everyone has to leave home when they grow up, and begin to have their own life.....”

“Hm hmm....”

“Well Betty is here because it is time for you to move to your own place, to help you get ready to be an adult.”

“Oh, I see.”

“You will be staying at a place for now, and they will help us find a place for you to live when you are an adult since you will be eighteen at your next birthday.”

“I see.”

“I am still your Mom, and I will see you lots, but just like your sisters left home, it’s your turn to go to your own place now.”

“Oh. Okay.”

Betty and I were quiet. Stunned. I wanted to ask if he was okay with this, but if he said no then I don’t know what I would do, and it would make it harder for me to get him there. So instead I asked, “Ok, so do you want me or Betty to drive you there, and of course I would then meet you there?”

“Um, you. I want you to.”

“Okay, I have a bag packed with a change of clothes, and you can bring your Yu-gi-oh cards, and of course I have Max packed because Max goes everywhere with you, right?”

“Yup!” Max is a well-worn, well-loved little stuffed dog that has been attached to my boy since he was six.

So it was seamless – with Nikoda cheerily getting up and we got our coats and boots on and left into our cars. I wanted to keep him from thinking too much about what was happening, in order to minimize the chance of him reacting. The police were on standby in case we needed their help, but I really didn’t want it to get to that. So I chattered as much as I could, but ran out of

things to say. When it was quiet he said, “You know Mom, I’m glad you’re bringing me to this place.”

“You are?” I was shocked but apprehensive.... “Why?”

“Because if I lived any longer with you, then I’d be as crazy as you are!” I couldn’t stop laughing, and I laughed so hard I almost cried. I was relieved. I knew he would be okay.

And he has been. He waited patiently for a year and a half for his adult placement even though he was already over eighteen, but it all worked out. He has never asked to move back, even though he was very disappointed to find out that his adult placement would not be a private loft in Old Market Square or the penthouse of the Fort Garry Towers. He accepted his placement as part of the logical step of maturing, and I’m still Mom. I’m the one who he phones (the only one) and I’m the one who comes and brings him home for visits (the only one).

This would not have been the success that it has been if weren’t for Winnipeg Child and Family Services (WCFS). They have provided nothing but support and advocated when they had to. I had the option of choosing a First Nations agency since my son is Treaty through his father, but I opted for WCFS solely because I knew that they had more resources to choose from, and some staff who are more experienced with special needs. And they were able to wrangle with the administrative bumps in the road that leads to adult services.

First, when they knew he was coming into care, they had to contact the Emergency Placement Desk, and were able to get not only a bed in a shelter, but an entire shelter just for him. Three staff around the clock, for only him. They understood that he could pose a serious risk for other children if he were to get upset. Even unintentionally, if he got upset and swung his arms or charged into his room, people could easily be injured.

And when they applied for the required Level Five funding, the top of the scale, they were not turned down! They had to provide a bit more information, but they weren't turned down! This really surprised me since every single time I was involved in Level Five applications with First Nations agencies, there was refusal except for the ones where we successfully went political. So I am truly grateful for the services that have been provided to my son. Words cannot express the depths of my gratitude.

I include my own story as a mother, because my identity as a mother is pivotal to my humanness and my identity and role as a social worker. If I as a mother, can't take care of my own son, then what the heck am I doing working with other parents and families? This question has nagged at me and comes shooting forth into my consciousness every day since he left my home. A mother raises her children, with or without the father. And he was legally still a child at 17 when I had him leave my home. What kind of mother am I? A failure.

That is the first emotion that shoots forth when I think about it. Failure. But then I think of all the times that I sat and counselled other parents whose children needed to come into care "for their own wellbeing and/or protection". Was I lying to them? Did their children really need to come into care temporarily and/or permanently in order to keep their children alive? Their children were highly suicidal, and/or being sexually exploited, and/or under threat from gangs, and/or requiring far more physical care than any parent would reasonably be expected to provide.

Ok, so my son too needed to have 24/7 supervision that I could not provide, so ok, I can see that maybe he did need to be in care. He was unsafe to himself and others if left alone and unsupervised. Ok, maybe I am actually doing the responsible thing by having him cared for by people who are trained and equipped to care for him. After all, they determined that they needed three staff at all times and for him to be the only child in a house licensed for four children. So it

was not my imagination that his needs were great. So maybe it really was the loving and responsible thing to do, to place him in this care?

Rationally and in my mind I understand. I can “justify” it because he needed these services in order to stay alive safely. And my greatest underlying fears were that he would die young, or that he would end up living on the streets, or end up in a bad altercation with police who may interpret his actions as resistive rather than autistic. There was every reason to believe that if his needs were left unmet that he would end up either dead, on the street, or in jail or a mental health institution for the rest of his life. Even now, he is only one step away from being on the street as Adult Services cannot usually contain someone against their will. Pretty much every day I drive past Siloam Mission and I see the long lines of people with nowhere to call home and I say a prayer for my son and all of them. One step out the door of his placement and his life would very quickly spiral down just as the people lining up at the shelter have.

Every day my heart still has pangs of pain when I think of my son. Pains of missing him, pains of worries if he is ok, pains of wondering if he hates me for putting him there. And every day I also have feelings of gratitude, happy that I have time in my life to relax, to breathe, since I don't have to be completely focused on his needs. Am I a hypocrite? Do I say I love him out of one side of my life, and then say I am glad for my own quiet time out of the other? Is one feeling stronger than the other, and does that tipping of the scale determine if I am a good mother or a bad mother?

When I come out of my slumps and forge ahead to do what I have to do in life, I know that I am both – grateful for my times to myself, and also grateful that they have resources for my son that he needs. But why did he have to leave home and go into CFS care? Could the system have not provided me with in-home support workers to provide the supervision that he required? It would have cost a lot less for sure. And some day if I become Premier or Prime Minister, then

maybe I can arrange the budget to provide these services for families who need them. Sadly though, the realist in me knew that there were no other options for my son than to place him in care at that time, regardless of my own emotions.

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My Son in Relation to Children in Care with Special Needs

But why did I turn to Winnipeg CFS, through the General Authority, when my son is Treaty—Ininew and Nikoodi? Why did he have to lose his right to culturally appropriate services? He could have received services from Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency (KSMA) under the Northern First Nations CFS Authority since they provide services to families in Winnipeg who are registered with First Nations west of Manitoba, which my son is. And KSMA has the well-deserved reputation of having the most extensive services for children with disabilities over any other First Nations agency in Manitoba and probably Canada. This is evident in their work to create and promote Jordan’s Principle to allow for services for Treaty Status children regardless of where they live and whether they are funded federally or provincially, and the use of their hydroelectric compensation payments to fund Children’s Special Services on their home reserve of Norway House.

Unfortunately, knowing the system as well as I did, I could not see how even KSMA could still provide what my son needed under the current system. Not for lack of desire – KSMA has earned their international reputation as being an advocate for children with special needs. But because of the overall system itself, it is excruciatingly challenging to get approval for high needs children in care, especially when they are in First Nations agencies, and in particular Northern First Nations. This had been my experience as a social worker within the agencies and the Northern

Authority on a daily basis. Day after day I saw youth with multi-high-risk needs not having their needs met, due primarily to refusals to fund or provide services from the higher level funders. Other workers and I were often driven to tears of frustration and anger after providing reams of documentation to support a placement request to be told there weren't any, or that we had to re-do it, or we had to wait until medical assessments were complete, even though the child needed the placement that very night and had nowhere safe to be if the application were rejected.

Knowing all of the challenges that agencies face in placing high needs children and youth, I felt I had no option but to turn to the non-Native General Authority agency of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. I knew that they had more resources at their disposal than any Aboriginal agency, and were also not as constrained with their funding requirements. For example, after the AJI-CWI came into existence in 2005, all of the Aboriginal agencies, (but *not* the General agencies like Winnipeg CFS) were forced within the Special Rate Freeze which meant that our children in care could not have their special rates increased from whatever they were when they were transferred to Aboriginal agencies from Winnipeg CFS and the other mainstream agencies.

This was extremely difficult for some of our children in care came to our agencies without any special rates, and others were significantly low, and others were children whose needs greatly increased as they grew up. I personally know of countless children who had significant challenges who were basically not receiving any special rates because of the Special Rate Freeze. And what really bothered us, was the fact that Winnipeg CFS and the other General CFS agencies were not held to the Rate Freeze and could provide whatever rates they chose to.

My own professional frustrations in finding resources for First Nations youth with multi-high-risks, led to my writing brief after brief while at the Northern Authority, followed by further briefs while working with agencies again. I even wrote reports as an individual citizen to the

Minister of Family Services and the Ministers of Children and Youth Opportunities. In all of my communications, my sole purpose was to bring forth the struggles and barriers that frontline workers and agencies face on a daily basis in order to fulfill our mandates and responsibilities of trying to keep children safe.

In the letter I wrote on May 19, 2013 to Kevin Chief, the Minister of Child and Youth Opportunities (see Appendix 5 for the applicable texts from that letter), I wanted to make sure that someone in the government was aware of the day-to-day challenges and even outright barriers that we the people face in trying to keep our children safe. I wanted to make sure that the government could not honestly say, “We did not know this was happening” like so many later said about the tragedies within the residential schools. I wanted to make sure it was on record that children and youth’s very lives were and are at dire risk, primarily through suicide, because of bureaucratic barriers, oversights, and compartmentalizing responsibilities. Again, I wrote this letter about high risk youth as a regular person, and spoke solely from my own perspective based solely on my own experiences and worldview, and thus this information is considered to be part of my narrative within autoethnographic style and is identified as thus through italicized type.

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I chose Kevin Chief because prior to his life as an elected politician he had worked hard to try to address some of the causes of suicide and other high risk behaviours in youth, so it seemed natural that he would be open to receiving the information. Even though he was well aware of what highest risk youth means, I defined it for him as “those with significantly higher than average chances of death from suicide, and too often these youth also have corresponding significantly higher than average experiences and risk of death from substance addiction, incarceration, sexual

exploitation, homelessness, untreated mental health issues, and socially isolated lives without the supports that they need in order to live safe, healthy lives.”

I emphasized that the goal of the letter was to not only identify the challenges but to share information so that different departments, organizations and provincial vs. federal jurisdictions could work together for the wellbeing of all children and youth, particularly since in my experience it was often a breakdown in communication and/or compartmentalizing between silos that lead to children falling through the cracks and too often to their deaths. The youth with highest risk usually have multiple needs that cross over all of these artificial divisions and I reminded Minister Chief that the province and the federal governments and their various departments are all signatories to Jordan’s Principle “which serves to address the need to provide critical services first and then work out jurisdiction and financial wrangling after.”

I provided multiple examples of youth and their families and even front-line workers who are herded between one service provider to another within CFS, health, mental health, education, and justice, etc. etc. I provided examples of standardized and rote assessments within all of these departments that attempt to assess suicide risk that fail to recognize the child’s actual situations and risks. And even though the services in Winnipeg are insufficient, at least there are services which too often do not exist in Northern communities.

My suggestions for how to improve the current high risk for youth falling through the cracks and not receiving the services that they need included developing awareness of the gaps and working together to close those gaps, to educate all departments on more of the intricacies of suicide assessment, and also, to encourage the development of a will to address suicide, as too often professionals seem so unaware about suicide that they don’t even seem to care about it. I also provided an example of a treatment that actually works, and that is Alberta’s Secure

Treatment Model that requires court orders for youth to be truly secured for their own protection and for them and their families to then receive intensive wrap-around services while the child is safe within the facilities.

Another factor that was not really addressed in the letter to Minister Chief, was that of funding. Government funding define a society's priorities, and unfortunately, the minimalist approach used in funding programs for the highest risk youth gives a clear picture to me, that the highest risk youth are not among society's priorities. There are multiple and extreme challenges that front-line agencies and workers face every single day in trying to provide services to highest needs children. And while these examples are from a few years ago, the process has continued to be cumbersome and still leaves children at risk.

In addition to the funding challenges that Northern First Nations agencies face with the children in care, there is also the issue of the challenges of developing new placements and training for the foster parents. For example, in the provincially funded office of the Northern First Nations agencies, we receive zero, no dollars, for foster parent training nor for the development of resources. How can a First Nations agency then provide an adequate placement for those like my son? How can they have the resources at hand to spend all that time developing a placement that would meet his needs, and then adequately monitor it when they have far fewer resources monetarily and resource-wise than the General Authority agencies?

How sad that even as an employee within various levels of the NFNCFS system, that I had to turn to Winnipeg CFS for adequate services for my son? And don't get me wrong – I am nothing but grateful for the quality of great services that he received from WCFS prior to his move into adult services, but why did it have to be through a non-Aboriginal agency? Does this not beg the question of why the AJI-CWI came into existence? And does it not deprive my son of his Aboriginal

and Treaty rights to culturally appropriate services where his Ininew worldview can be understood (At times, teachers and workers have mistaken his Ininew ways for symptoms of autism! This indicates the need for cultural understandings.) And were he to have gone home to his reserve in Alberta, he would have received even less, for there is absolutely no federal funding for people with his needs unless the Band chooses to use funds from other sources, and usually that is not even remotely possible.

When my son left our home, I did two things – fell into a funk and worked my tail off to keep busy. Which was ok since my work at that time was overwhelming anyways. I had stepped out of CFS and was working with students from Shamattawa who were here in the city to go to high school. The school back home goes only to grade 10, and so those who want to complete high school have no choice but to pack up and come live a thousand kilometers away and usually live with strangers and go to schools that have more students than the entire community of Shamattawa. Their needs were large, and I had a lot of time in my life that needed to be filled.

For years I had focused my life on my children, and out of necessity, on my son's safety and wellbeing. And without him in the house, for the first time in many, many years I could let down, relax and sleep at night. For the first time in so many years I also did not need to get up and put anyone on a school bus at the crack of dawn. The first night I went to bed knowing this, I did not know what to do, how to feel, and felt jittery. In the morning I woke up without the alarm clock and felt empty. Do I get up now? And do what? I didn't have any work to do until later in the morning.

My life felt completely dizzy and disoriented – I did not know where or how to put my feet down on the ground. Where am I to be rooted? What am I to do? And, who am I? I had so many sleepless nights – after all those years of wishing I could go to sleep when the kids kept me up, and now was

my chance. But my internal engine was still running and had nowhere to go. I was stalled and burning up energy doing nothing.

I spent as much time with my son as I could, but also wanted to make sure he learned how to settle in. So we settled into a pattern of visiting on weekends, me picking him up and either going out to eat or coming home for a few hours. It worked for him, and gradually it worked for me. I became a little used to sleeping in peace and quiet. And I had all my other kids to think about and take care of – all of the high school students from Shamattawa who were studying in Winnipeg, that I was responsible for. There was no shortage of drama there – drinking, squabbles between them, kids missing home, not going to class.... My mother instincts had plenty to focus on.

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My Girl

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And then of course there were my girls – my bio daughters who had their own families now, but who come in and out of my house and life pretty much every day, thankfully. And then there was my girl who adopted me. She too was in and out of my life but in different ways. She lived with me off and on depending on what was happening in her life. She had been a child in care since she was a little girl, and come and gone not only from my house but countless others. The last time that she officially lived with me was the year before, when she was at such serious risk that I had to ask for her to be placed somewhere where they could keep a very close eye on her and help her face her challenges.

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My knowledge of my girl comes from my personal relationship with her as well as the times she was officially placed with me through foster care. Because of the confidentiality clauses within CFS, I cannot directly speak of my experiences with her during those times. While I could write of my experiences with her and teachings from her when she was not a foster child with me, and we were just family, so much of what I know of her is enmeshed between the times I was her foster mother, and the times I was the mother she chose and adopted, to supplement her relationship with her birth mother who she was separated from.

Since I cannot write about my girl herself, I write about her as a conglomerate of what I learned from her and other young girls in similar circumstances. Her story is one of many, of too many. It is ironic that she felt so alone, and yet there were and are so many others who are going through exactly the same traumas. So my girl's story is camouflaged within this fictional version of too many biographies as per Ellis 1995; 2009; Denzin 2014 and Chang 2008, 2008b. I call her Meadow, because that is a name that she loved, and butterflies have become the symbol of her in my life.

The Dream that Turned into a Nightmare

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I'd been having trouble focusing all day. I couldn't shake something. When earlier that day someone asked a polite "how are you?" I blurted everything out to him about my worries for my girl.... Then the call from her worker, and I was driving and tried to pull over and talk to the worker and listen to my son going on and on, oblivious to what was happening around him. My

underlying fears were starting to boil up to the surface along with the bile in my stomach. My baby girl was in the hospital, had hung herself. And, “Mary Anne, it doesn’t look good.”

I pulled a U-turn and dropped my son back off and high tailed it to the hospital while calling her special Auntie and calling my other girls. I went running into the Children’s ER and was told to go upstairs. She was still there! She was in PICU! My prayers were answered, she was not gone! But then they let me in through the locked doors and into her room. She was so tiny. She was so skinny. One measly thin blanket covered her in the hospital gown, and lots of little tubes were hooked up with needles and electric attachments, and a large hose was covering her mouth. That hose gushed the air, and then her chest would go up. Then the machine would make the air leave her body, and her chest would go down. I knew it was not good.

I did not cry. I just held her hand and talked with her. And I asked the nurse to get some more blankets—“She must be cold! There’s only one blanket and it’s cold in here.” The nurse gave me a look that said I must be stupid, but then softened and said, “Sure, I’ll warm one up for her.”

Two days later, after her mother and siblings all came to the city and spent time with her, the machines were turned off. The sobs from everyone around her were like a roar in my ears. The only comfort was the prayers her Granny the Elder was offering in her language and through song. I felt nothing, but the tears still came. My arms reached out to the kids, the sisters and only brother. And they went around my own daughters. And everyone else. And my life was changed forever.

Meadow had come to my home as a young girl because she was having so many problems where she had been. I had brought it up to the agency, and their response was to place her with me, even though that had not been my intention. I wanted her with family she was closer related

to, but no one in the city could meet the standards. I don't know how many placements this knobby-kneed little girl had been to already – was it 10? Or 15? Or 20? She had scars on her as souvenirs of some her agency placements.

Meadow slipped into our family very easily, and I grew to love her deeply. Unfortunately I was going through some very serious challenges with my son who was one year older than Meadow and I was involved in having to deal with some serious challenges with his schooling and his behaviours. My son and Meadow developed a closeness but were also like oil and water and had troubles living in the same home. His communication challenges combined with Meadow's FASD symptoms lead to some extreme behavioural and relationship challenges. There were a lot of fun times as well, and one I will never forget: they put their fighting aside and my son wore a Jason hockey mask and had a pretend toy chain saw that made the real noise, and he started chasing her around the house while she squealed and laughed in delight. This went on for over 20 minutes before they stopped to catch their breath, and my son lowered his mask and said to her, "Meadow, we have a weird, but wonderful relationship!" My oldest daughter and I burst out laughing and had to hide our laughter from them!

Unfortunately I was being pulled in two directions between these two children, especially because every time I had to leave work (at another CFS agency) for one of them, the other intentionally acted up at school the next day so that I would have to come to their school to deal with their behaviour. I was literally told by my agency I worked for that if this continued that I would [be] let go because of missing work. I also felt that I was not meeting Meadow's needs. I deeply regret ever letting her go in May 2006, but I had no choice at the time.

Meadow kept moving around, in the city and on the rez, and yet she always called me, and still called me Mom.

I received a call (February 2010) from Meadow who said “Mom? Can you come see me?” I said “Where are you?” because it did not sound long distance. She said she was in an ambulance coming from the medevac plane from up north to the Children’s Hospital ER and said that she had tried to hang herself. Of course I immediately went there with my daughter and when she saw us she jumped into my lap like she used to do when she was little.

They had found her hanging on a tree and she was medevaced down. Meadow spoke to us about the sexual abuse she had been going through, and that she felt humiliated and not listened to. She was refusing to return to the rez and of course we agreed for her to come back to my home and the Agency agreed as well. I did however ask for supports to be put into place because I knew that it would be difficult to care for Meadow as wounded as she was. But there were never any support workers put into place.

Somehow we muddled through for over a year, even with two other additional youth living with me as well. And, during this time I was also working for the Northern Authority yet even with me in a position of supposed power within the CFS system, there were no supports in place for the children placed in my home, even though I repeatedly requested youth and respite workers to assist at the times I was away at work, and to provide the support and supervision that they required with their extra needs.. I was a single parent working full time and had not asked for the kids, but been asked by the agency to take them in. With no supports.

As time went by, with me being busy outside the house at work, and struggling with my son and older girls, Meadow joined other youth and became increasingly addicted to alcohol and some drugs, and had gotten used to living life on her terms, flitting from one place to another with other youth in the city that were supposed to be in CFS placements or had left their own home. They always found a way to get together and live life their own ways, these kids, usually in the basements

of adults who were too high to care less what their own kids and the others who were there were doing. Even when she was placed at different homes, she and I would inbox each other on Facebook, or she would call me to tell me she was “okay”. I didn’t ask where she was because she wouldn’t tell me. I just kept telling her I love her and she can always come to eat or shower and change etc. Because her room in my house was still her room. I was still Mom. So she officially moved back in and it worked for a while. She would leave but always report in and she even started giving me the addresses of where she was so that I could come and get her. So it worked for a while.

But then there were the ones who would lock her in their house and not let her leave. I knew what they were trying to do, and that is sexually exploit her, for that was what those ones did with young girls. She never said directly what was happening, but we came to talk about it in an understanding kind of way. And that was the last straw. When they would come up on my roof in the middle of the night and climb in through her window and take her away, and not let her leave their house for days. I could not keep her safe. I let the agency know over and over, and kept getting told that they were working on a safer placement for her. And this went on for weeks and months. And I believe her actual social worker had been working on it, and had filled out the paper work. It just took so bloody long...

Throughout the years of my girl coming and going from my home, I continued to try to be a source of safety and support to Meadow and she continued to always call me “Mom”. I felt very comfortable with her choosing to call me Mom because I also did everything I could to strengthen her relationship with her Mom. We talked about how she has two moms. I would encourage her to phone her mom, and I always advocated for her to go home for visits when Meadow wanted them, and went out of my way to help Meadow see her mom when she was in the city. There was one day

in 2011 I believe, when her mom came to the city for a visit with her kids in Winnipeg and Meadow and I had not been told. It just happened that Meadow was giving a dance performance that evening at her high school and she had asked me and my daughters to come see her in it. So I told her mom about it and even though she was nervous to come I strongly encouraged her to come and surprise Meadow.

We arrived into the darkened auditorium and watch her jazz performance, but she could not see us. When her routines were over I went to the back stage area and she called me “Mom” with a big smile and we had a huge hug. I then said, Meadow I have a surprise for you and of course she wanted to know right away. So I brought her out to the hallway, and I will never forget the look on her face when she saw her mom – she beamed like a little girl and went running into her arms and they both started crying. Meadow talked about that day for a long time, and much later even wrote that it was the best day of her life!

Meadow’s life would go up and down, and all around. She’d have successes like her dance recital, and her participation as an actress and technician within a film, and she’d have tragedies such as more sexual abuse, and losing more cousins to suicide and homicide. As strongly as I could, I let Meadow know that she would always have a place to come home to, that her room was still her room, and I would always be Mom #2. But she needed treatment at a place where they could help her stop running from all of the things that she was trying to run from.

So they finally placed her in a residential treatment program and I tried to see her as much as I could. But with my work and my time committed to my son who had no one else in his life visiting with him, time started to slip by.... She’d see the other youth in my life as coming between us, and whenever she came to see me, Meadow would walk and in a big loud voice say, “HI MOM!” And then she’d come for a big hug and ask for money for a pop, and basically stand in

between the others and me. One time when I was talking with some other youth, she said that “you guys are the reason I never get to see my Mom much anymore! You’re taking all her time!”

I vowed to start spending more time with her and I tried. But life started to take over, and the students with their high needs had no one else, while Meadow had her residence, her special auntie and a few others. Her worker invited me to a meeting at her residence to discuss her progress, and I will never forgive myself for missing the meeting. I felt bad when it happened, and I feel even worse now.

Then her residence asked if Meadow could come and spend Christmas at home with me. My first reaction was to say yes. Of course! This is her home! But it is also my son’s home, and it would be his first time staying back at home with me since he left three months earlier and I was very nervous about him being home. He takes over anywhere he is because of his needs, and still requires constant supervision. And I was exhausted and counting down the days until my students went home for Christmas and I could finally have some peace and quiet from worrying about them.

So we agreed that she could come and go from my place, but stay at her special Auntie’s which seemed to work for all of us. And that’s what happened. She came and dropped in and out, and joined us on Christmas Day with her Special Auntie and others. Meadow got everything on her Christmas List that she gave me in November – a cell phone, Proactive and a Polo Park gift card -- and we took a lot of pictures. Including the last picture I ever took of her before that day.....

I stayed in closer touch with her after that, but again, I chose my son over her. She wanted smokes and so after picking up my son we went to her residence to drop them off. She looked horrible. She explained that she had just come out of CSU (Crisis Stabilization Unit) which meant that she must have been feeling down and wanted to be protected from herself trying anything, and that something had happened now and she wanted to talk. It was freezing outside while we chatted,

a typical Saturday in January in Winnipeg, and my son started honking the horn and getting very impatient. So we agreed that she would call me shortly at my place.

I waited, and the call never came. So I called there, and it turned out that they let her go to an auntie's, and I was immediately concerned. She usually went to that house to get drunk or high. And then I really got scared when I went on Facebook and found out that a very close friend of hers from the city had killed herself the day before. That must have been what she wanted to talk about! She didn't return to her placement and instead got picked up by police for being too drunk and sent to MYC for the night. Meadow ran from her worker's car after her release, and again went underground, not leaving any traces other than pictures on Facebook of being drunk. Her worker and I stayed in close contact, and then finally Meadow called me, asking if I could bring her smokes.

I told her I could get her smokes if she came back to the facility with me. She said she wouldn't go back. She concerned me because she was slurring her words and sounded sick as well. As I drove to her aunt's where she was, I called the facility and filled them in and the worker thanked me for going to look for her. I was able to get to her aunt's by 8, and she was sleeping on a mattress upstairs. She was quite sick with a cough and cold and fevered up. She also was very dopey and slurred words and I wasn't able to understand her much other than she wanted smokes and to not go back. Her aunt said she gave her some pills, but I do not know which kind or how many. I could feel fever on her and I told her I was bringing her to the ER and at that point she got up and quickly ran out of the house. I could not even see her when I followed her outside. I drove around the neighbourhood for about half an hour. While driving I called the facility and told them that she was outside, fevered, and had taken an unknown number of some kind of pills

and I could not find her. The worker there said she'd call the police and I continued to look for her.

The next day my dream turned into a never ending nightmare.

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We did everything we could...

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I swung the minivan door open and slammed it loud. And swore. "Fucken shit...." My sister-in-law in the passenger seat turned to look at me from her kerchief-framed face, because I usually hold those kind of statements in when she is around, because she is older, an Anglican Priest and an Elder within the community. But she didn't respond. She just looked forward.

Behind us the 7-seater van was full of eight kids and their two mothers. Every seat was more than full and the back was jammed with flowers, photos and bags. We were squished into the van with our thickest winter coats, hats and mitts cuz the wind was piercingly cold, well into the minus 40s. We were packed in and all together but there was something missing. Someone missing. And the cold blew straight through our emptiness.

I smacked the steering wheel, and grimaced my mouth, and no asked what was wrong. They knew when I came out of the printers without any bundles that the cards were not with me. My eyes stung from the cold air, but didn't weep.

I drove us fast while sliding on the snowy roads, knowing I let them down. The printers never received my email order for the memorial cards. Or so they said. I didn't trust anyone. It was my contribution. It was my opportunity to tell the world of my love. To show her beauty. And

now that was gone. It wasn't right. It just wasn't right. Nothing was going right today. None of our plans were working out. It's like someone didn't want this to happen. Someone is trying to stop this.

*Of course she is. **She** doesn't want it to happen. I knew then and there that she didn't really want **it** to happen. She just wanted us to hear her silent screams. She wanted us to see into her smile and really see inside her. No one came. No one came for 20 minutes while she struggled. While she writhed in the scarf. No one looked into the window on the door to see her. Everyone walked right past her again, like they (we) always did every day.*

It was then I knew, that of course nothing was going right today. It shouldn't go right today, because today shouldn't be happening. Today should never be here. We all should never be here all together – we should all be still separated by the hundreds of miles that have become our bond through forced separation. We shouldn't be in this van and driving where we were going.

She didn't want this to happen. She only wanted us to hear and see.

My eyes got warm but nothing more.

We pulled up to the funeral home, and went into the quiet. We were among the first there, because it could not start without us. We talked just as if we were going into the bingo hall, taking our coats off, helping the kids find the bathroom and finding seats.

My older daughters were there already and we stared at each across the rows of chairs and said volumes in our silence.

I kept my eyes on the kids running up and down the aisles and between the chairs. I could not look at the end of the room. I stayed on the kids who were moving and breathing.

Slowly people trickled in. I sat at the front but to the side. Any more centered and I wouldn't be able to avert my gaze.

People started lining up to pay respects, starting with the people at the centre of my row. It came closer and closer and I had to stand up. Breathe deep. "Up.... Stand..... C'mon body, stand dammit." I floated closer and closer but not seeing. Then she was there and I could not look away. She was hard, plastic-looking. At least at the hospital I could see the blood coursing through her still body. At least at the hospital the wires and cords kept her chest moving up and down. Now she was empty. She was cold. My knees wobbled. The floor came closer and arms grabbed my elbows, my lovely daughters were holding my arms and kept me from falling. I heard something I never heard before. Guttural. Echoing. Loud. Louder. What was it? It was me.

Her coldness stabbed me. I died inside.

I had not cried. Now I could not stop. My body shook. I could not stop. My gut hurt. My gut was coming out of me. My life was coming out of me.

No. No. No.

No to the ages. No to the universe. No to the world. No to everything. Just no.

No.

Emptiness.

Nothing was left in me so it was easy to be led back to my seat.

The rows behind came forward. One by one. Making the circle to see her and then come to our row. Handshakes. Words I did not hear. Hugs I felt.

No. No I don't accept this. No this should not be.

Then she came. The professional woman who I had known for a long time. I knew she should be here. She should see this. She needs to see this.

When she got to me she hugged me and I graciously allowed it. But she held on for too long so I started to pull back.

“We did everything we could Mary Anne. We did everything we could.”

The shaking started again, rumbling from within. My right arm was trembling as I fought it from coming up. It wanted to strike her, to make her hurt. To make her hurt the way my girl had hurt when she didn't listen to her.

Was this woman fucking stupid? Who was she trying to kid? Where does she think those scars on my girl's face came from? The scars that even the funeral makeup couldn't hide. The scars from strikes against her from all those years ago.

They came from your ignorance, your arrogance, your selfishness, your stupidity. Your fucking refusal to listen, to believe. You branded her. You seared her soul and mine when you didn't believe when she told you about the abuse and you left her in it.

We did everything we could? If we, did everything we could, we, all of us, then she wouldn't be lying in that fucking coffin! She wouldn't be cold and empty. She wouldn't be going away. She would be beside me. My arm would still be around her. If we, did everything we could.

We failed her. We let her down. Whether we intended it or not, we all let her down. We did not and maybe could not give her what she needed. But for you of all people to say we did everything we could is a bold-faced lie. You told her she was lying. You told her that violent adults are more important than she was. You told her she didn't count, she didn't matter. You told her that you didn't care if she got hurt again. And you get paid to do it. You earn your salary to not listen. To not respond. To not care. To not give a crap about the ones you're supposed to.

“We did everything we could.” Well if you/we did, then it wasn't good enough. It wasn't enough. That is the system. Not good enough. Not enough.

If the system works, then why is my girl now forever in the dirt of the ground, under the snow and sun forever?

“Keam” It is what it is....

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Meadow’s Message to Me

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“Hi Mom, it’s me Meadow. Don’t worry about me, I’m ok here. I can’t tell you what it’s like, because that’s against the rules. But I’m ok, and I’m not alone. Nokum is here and as beautiful as ever! I’d forgotten how sparkly her eyes are. She is soooo pretty – I never understood why people said I was beautiful like her, because I never saw beauty when I looked into the mirror. But now I see that her eyes are my eyes. And I finally seen Mooshum too.

“Your Charlie is here, and my chapons (great-grandparents) too. Charlie said to say hi and not to worry because he’s taking care of me. So are all the other mooshums and kookums who I had never met before – Henry, Norman, Bernice, Martina, Sandra, Zack, and so many people who I’d heard about but who I’d never met because they came here before I was born. And then there’s Peter, Dawn, Annabelle, Derek, Patti, Henrietta, Theresa, Jeremy, Louis, Danica, Rosie, David, Maggie, Portia..... You know, my cousins who also came here by hanging ourselves. These cousins are with me right now, we’re all waiting, together, cuz we have to wait until our real time to go to a better place.

“God said we were too fast – he wasn’t ready for us yet, so we have to wait. But that’s ok. At least I’m not alone.

“I’m sorry Mom. I didn’t want to hurt you. Or my (other) Mom. Or my sisters or my brothers, or my Dad, or Auntie Annie, Linda, Granny, Mooshum, Granny Brenda, Grannie Marie, or Jayda, Trina, Jolene, Ricki, Sierra, Tasha, ...

“You can’t understand. You cannot understand how I was feeling...

“I’d been alone for so long. I know that there were lots of people around me, even all the staff and the other girls at my residence. They were there, but they didn’t see me. Nobody saw me when I was drunk. They didn’t see me when I ran away. Nobody saw me when I was crying into my pillow at night. The staff didn’t see me when I walked by them, and they didn’t see me while I moved the TV stand over to the wall. They didn’t hear me lifting the chair, putting it on the stand.

“I climbed up on the stand, and then on the chair and almost fell off! I grabbed the wall, holding onto the bricks, to keep from falling. That would’ve sucked, cuz then I would have fallen over and maybe even gotten hurt lol. That would’ve sucked.

“They didn’t see me when I threw the scarf up over the pipe that was so high up, in the old ceiling. I threw it and it missed the pipe completely. I had to jump down and pick up that ugly old scarf from the floor again. I threw it again, and it hit the pipe but was so high up I had to jump and reach to grab it, and it came down again. Dust came down with it, and I coughed and fanned it all away. This time I threw it while I looked straight at the pipe and it went over. I grabbed both ends of the scarf before it could fall again and pulled.

“It was pretty stretchy, too stretchy. It would never work, cuz I would hit the floor. So I tied some knots in it – two, three – maybe five knots. This way it could hold me way up high.

“I pulled it. Pulled hard. Wanted to make sure the pipe didn’t break, and to make sure it didn’t stretch too far down. I twisted the scarf, so that it wrapped around my neck. It felt right. It wrapped me, held me together. I could smell my perfume in the scarf.

“Should I? Should I let go and kick the chair?”

“Should I let go and see what happens?”

“What happens if I don’t? What happens if I don’t – then what?”

“If I don’t, then I go back to my room, go back to the blackness. I can’t do that. I can’t go into that tunnel, that pain anymore. Why does nothingness hurt so much? Why do I feel so much nothingness? How can “nothing”, hurt so much? Why does emptiness feel like its smothering?”

“Why does the blast of silence inside me hurt my ears so much? Why does it deafen out everything else? “There is nothing, no one.”

“I wanna get drunk again, but I can’t in here. I wanna feel warm inside and laugh again. I want that booze to burn down my throat again. I wanna start feeling dizzy, start feeling high, start feeling like I’m walking on air again. If I take those T3’s that auntie gave me, then I’ll feel even warmer and feel even higher, and way, up in the world!”

“I wanna say “fuck the world!” I wanna walk and stumble down Portage Avenue again and beat the fuck outta those bitches who stare me down. I wanna spin around and dance the steps of drunkenness to the music that plays in my head.”

“I wanna go there again, go where I don’t give a fuck and no one can find me. But I can’t. The doors are locked, and it’ll be days before they’ll let me out again. I can’t do that. I can’t sit and feel my bones melting in pain of the memories.”

“I see his face. And his face, and her face. And his, and his, and his.....”

“I see him with his eyes all wide, and feel his sweat drip on me. It hurts, he’s pushing inside me, and it hurts. “Don’t! Stop!” I can hear myself screaming, but no sound is coming out, so he keeps pushing and pushing. No one’s around except the other kids. Who would I tell? Who would I yell to?”

“It hurts, my stomach feels like its collapsing. I puke but the puke doesn’t go anywhere, just back down, and then back up again. Over and over. Every time he pushes, the puke comes.

“Finally he gives one gigantic push, and he stops. He slides out and rolls over. “Don’t say a fucking word, don’t fucking say anything or I’ll do it again. Or I’ll do it to your little sister...”

“And then there’s “her” hands, her fucking fingers reaching up inside me. Who the fuck does she think I am? A dyke? Why is she doing this to me? Why did she choose me to shove her hand up my cunt? Does she think I want this?

“Why does she say she loves me? She said she loved Jolene, and Marie, and Sandra, and now she said that to me. Is that why she’s got her hand inside me?

“I lay there sobbing when she leaves. What am I going to do? I can’t tell anyone. They won’t believe me. Or they’ll think I’m a lez. What’ll they say?

“I ran off into the bush, went to the hanging tree. Where Jasmine, Trevor, Laurie and Dennis hung themselves. I threw my jacket over the branch and wrapped it around my neck, but the branch kept sagging, lower and lower. I was such a little girl to think that this would work...

“But I know what I’m doing now.

“This time it has to work. This time I know how to do it.

“I checked the knots again, and twisted the scarf over my head and pulled it against my neck again. I can’t go there into nothingness. I want it all to stop....

“Where is everyone? Didn’t they hear the chair when I moved it across the floor? Didn’t they hear me when I grabbed the wall? Where are they?

“They’ll see me now that the scarf is around my neck. They’ll come and get me.....

“Jenny’s’s yelling at Nicole to get ready for school. Marty’s answering the phone. Nancy’s opening the door to let the cook bring the dishes back to the kitchen.

“Where are they? Can’t they see me?”

“But then, why should they see me now? No one saw me when I was drunk walking down Portage Avenue. No one saw me when Geri pulled me into the house and gave me all that booze and then wouldn’t let me leave. No one saw me when Joe made me go with him and give those guys blow jobs.

“Why should they see me now?”

“I kicked the chair out from under me, and it rattled down onto the wood floor. Now they’ll hear me and see me!”

“It hurt – my neck got small... the light in my eyes got small.... Darker... darker.... Black.

“I’m sorry Mom. But I’m not sorry I did it.

“I’m just sorry no one stopped me.”

This pivotal point in my life is still transforming me. Every day I am still trying to reconcile what happened with my life before, what happened then, and, what it means for my future? I am different than before, and it is taking some getting used to, to be this person. I have and am going through all the stages of grief – shock, disbelief, sadness, anger, hope, peace, and I swirl through them all everyday inside myself while I go about my days and nights. As I drive, I go by places that have meaning to us – Selkirk and Salter has many memories, and the Shell station where I’d buy her smokes for her, the schools she went to as a little girl, the house where I last saw her alive. And songs – oh how that girl loved her music! She would sing out loud, even with ear phones and then ear buds in, so I got to know lots of her favourite songs. If one comes on the radio, sometimes tears still start to pour out. Every time a season changes I wonder how I’m going to make it through this

new season without her? How can it be that another season has come and gone and a new one is coming, and yet she's not here to be with me and us for it all?

In addition to my own guilt and anger at myself for not being there when she needed me most, I struggled with a system that also let her down. Over and over and over again. All my anger at the system from before was now tenfold. But even stronger were my concerns for her siblings, cousins, friends and all the others who were also suffering and now trying to kill themselves as well within their own grief. And again, anger and frustration over the system and some of its people's inability to keep our babies safe.

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Conclusion

The rawness of our loss continues on within me, and in some ways will never leave, and never should. The lessons I have learned from my girl's life and death, are too valuable to ever forget. The lessons that I learned and continue to learn from my son our experiences with the CFS system are also teachings that I should not and will not forget. The grief and pain that I carry over the premature departure of my son from his home, and the loss of my girl from suicide continue to mold me into who I am today and tomorrow.

These personal experiences continue to enter my core, my heart, and I continue to turn to these teachings for direction on how to respond to the seemingly overwhelming forces of colonization that appear to determine the structure of the current CFS system. What have I learned from my son about what it is to be a parent within the CFS system? About what it is to have a son with special needs and then have him (and me) to enter a system that had been designed to protect children, but then had no option but to remove him from his parent who loved him? What have I

learned and what do I continue to learn about my girl and her experiences within the CFS system? How would her life have been if she and her parents and family had been provided services that supported her family as they came to terms with the effects of colonization rather than continued the assimilationist process of simply removing the child? What would her life have been like, and more importantly, would she still be alive if the structurally violent assimilation had not removed her and instead worked to support and heal her birth family, community and land?

Living everyday with the painful effects of the structural violence of colonization through the CFS system, it is not surprising that I also carry anger, both at myself for my perceived deficiencies in my love for my boy and my girl, but also anger at the system for all of the reasons that I have explained. The next chapter explains what role this anger can have as I try to take personal responsibility for my own actions, effective and ineffective, and also look at it collectively within the system. By taking my own personal responsibility and assessing my understanding of the collective societal responsibility as it pertains to CFS is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

NARRATIVES ON PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction

As angry as I was and am at the system, I am also angry at myself. In a spirit of trying to take honest ownership of my own shortfalls and mistakes, and to take an honest look at how the system failed my girl, I submitted a letter to the Northern Authority (see Appendix #6 for text from the Letter to the Northern Authority June 18, 2013). Some of the contents of the original letter and the names have been changed in the attached text in order to protect my girl and others' confidentiality. However I identified my own failings and it says everything I needed to say about losing my girl in relation to the CFS system. It was not to name names or point fingers, but to try to be honest so that more children don't go through what she has. And again, as the contents of the letter are my own feelings, experiences and perspectives, they are narratives and not theories, and are written in italicized print.

My Personal and Collective Responsibility with Regard to My Girl

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The primary points that I wanted to get across as a way of honouring my girl is that "No 'one' is responsible and yet we are ALL responsible, and that this is not about blame, but about responsibility. It was also an attempt to identify what happened that "allowed" the suicide to occur so that it would not and could not happen to her siblings, cousins, and any other youth in similar situations. I also identified my own experiences where I felt that I had been blamed by the agency

for “over-reacting” when I brought forward the signs of risk for her and other youth. Instead of then focusing on the needs of the youth, I was often criticized for bringing reports forward, or even worse, completely ignored which meant that the children were then also ignored. Every single family has lost children to suicide and/or other preventable deaths, so it is not perplexing as to why the community has a deeply ingrained distrust towards the agency. I explained how I found it hard to believe that reports of suicide would be denied, minimized, deflected or ignored by the agency when in our community there are unfathomable attempts of suicide on a regular and ongoing basis and also scores of youth who have already died from suicide. It is a constant option for the youth in our community that is real and viable.

I concluded the letter by reiterating that I had no intention of offending anyone, and that I wanted to give my girl’s life and death some meaning, but using our loss of her as an opportunity to improve communication and:

cooperatively develop more effective ways of preventing tragedies and responding most lovingly if they do occur.

I pray that our girl’s death provides an opportunity for meaningful discussion and working together because I know that this is what she was asking for. She could never understand when people could not live and work in harmony and cooperation and this caused her great distress. She had a strong understanding of justice and fairness and I believe that her constant experiences of not feeling heard by all of us led to her final act of desperation. Thus I sincerely pray that we all listen to her and begin to work all together with honesty and the goal of keeping the children alive and the families stronger.

Submitted in Hope and Peace,

It’s been just over a year since I wrote this report, and even with the hind sight of 20-20 vision, I don’t think I would change much of it. However, I may go into further details that outline even more of the ways so many of us dropped the ball in being there for the girl that I and so many others loved and love so much.

I was scared when I wrote it—I had been threatened with criminal charges by an agency for “interfering with children in care” and even though I know I was actually only doing my duty, I also know the system well enough to know that a lot of damage can happen to people based on lies and suppositions. I have seen everyone, the children, parents, family members and even workers at all levels suffer in various ways due to malicious and ignorant reports. That’s how much power the CFS system has.

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Speaking Out for Those Who Can’t, or Whom are Not Heard

“I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

- Elie Wiesel, *Night*. (Holocaust Survivor and Peace Activist)

“But then what is the alternative to trying to tell the truth about the Holocaust, the Famine, the Armenian genocide, the injustice of dispossession in the Americas and Australia? That everyone should be reduced to silence? To pretend that the Holocaust was the work merely of a well-armed minority who didn’t do as much harm as is claimed-and likewise, to argue that the Irish Famine was either an inevitability or the fault of the Irish-is to say that both were mere unreliable rumors, and not the great motors of history they so obviously proved to be. It suited me to think so at the time, but still I believe it to be true, that if there are going to be areas of history which are off-bounds, then in principle we are reduced to fudging, to cosmetic narrative.”

- Thomas Keneally, *Searching for Schindler: A Memoir*

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Speaking out is required, but also carries risks. Knowing the reality that CFS has and exerts a tremendous amount of power, I was reluctant to speak out too directly after the loss of my girl. I also knew that I was still within the emotional depths of grief and wanted to make sure that I was reporting accurately and not solely out of anger. I believe that we all have a right and even a

responsibility to be angry when we see injustices or situations that place people at risk when they don't have to be, and so I do not apologize for my angry grief. But I know that there is more than anger that has to be expressed. There is also pure sorrow, and even more importantly there is love. And my love for my girl and her siblings is what I wanted to focus on.

But her voice was silenced, first when she was alive by those of us who did not hear her, and then with her death. But within the vacuum of her loss, echoes of her pain are still thundering within those of us who love her. And I continued to see her siblings' and cousins' and others' voices silenced, so I attempted to speak out.

However, rightly or wrongly, I also knew that the CFS system had the ability to react against me in some very damaging ways. They threatened criminal charges against me to my employer, and even that weakly-based threat had the potential to be very damaging to me. Had my employer believed the agency, or even been afraid of the agency and its actions, they could have responded harshly to me. As it was, there were some individuals within my employment at that time who told me that they were afraid that the agency would lay charges against me and that they did not want to lose me as their worker, and to therefore stop communicating with children in care. Fortunately, the management as well as the Chief and Council knew that I was not violating CFS policy, and they were simply more concerned about the life and death safety of their community's children and thus directed me to continue reporting any disclosures from or risks for children that I came across.

But my confidence and balance were shaken. I knew that I was vulnerable, as we all are, to the over-riding power of a system that at times abuses its own power for its own privilege. I had spoken out in the past and was severely sanctioned and my professional reputation was maligned. For example, when I was employed with the Northern Authority (2008 – 09), and it is public record

that I was the Senior Resource Coordinator, but I was also working in a full-time position as the Coordinator for Crisis Response Services for a community that has been devastated by suicide. I believe that while I was employed there under the then-management of NA (who were much later removed from their positions) that I too suffered personally and professionally for speaking out. First, in the name of restructuring my Senior Resource Coordinator was eliminated, and I was basically demoted. Months later, I was told that in six months my position would be moved to Thompson to help develop services for children with special needs. The salty irony was that management knew that I could not move to Thompson because of my son and his special needs!

According to a lawyer I consulted, I was “constructively dismissed” supposedly as part of an authority re-structuring, and before the identified time of the restructuring I resigned out of sheer frustration. I was so concerned about the literal lives and deaths of children and families in Northern First Nations, that I resigned on a Friday and submitted a letter to the Ombudsman of Manitoba on the following Monday. The internal contents of the letter need to remain confidential for ethical reasons, even though my “whistleblower” complaint became an open public one.

What happened at this time still affects me because I know the extent to which people who speak out (at any level—children, parents, employees, and management) can be retaliated against. For single parents such as myself, the loss of employment has dire consequences for my own children, and management is well aware of this fact. My only goal was to try and stop the children dying from suicide and homicide, or being abused and neglected, but instead I learned how politics works within bureaucracies.

In general, my concerns centered on what I perceived as a grossly insufficient response from Northern Authority to the youth suicides and attempts within Northern First Nations, and the Northern Authority’s lack of response to MKO’s requests for services through their 2008

Resolutions both within the communities and in their working relationship. In reading my submission, it is clear that I was very angry, not only for the treatment I received but what I saw as bureaucrats simply not caring that children were dying, and that there were and are things we can do to try to prevent deaths and harm to children.

So was my anger justified? Or was it simply the ranting of a woman who felt silenced and threatened? Is there any benefit to expressing my anger? Was there any benefit in continuing my advocating for children and families even when it meant losing my employment and therefore losing my professional power and ability to do anything at all for the children and families? Was it worth it, to speak my mind when it left me with no job, and left the families with one less advocate, whether I was right or wrong? Do others have the right or need to be angry? What role does anger and blame play within CFS?

Blame

• • • •

“CFS took my kids away.... You (CFS) won’t let me see my kidsYou robbed me of being a mother...”

“They (CFS) won’t let me see my Mom...”

“My worker won’t even return my phone calls, so why the hell should I care what s/he tells me to do...”

“I have no way to get to my programs because my worker won’t give me bus tickets...”

“If you had only done what we told you to do, then we wouldn’t have had to apprehend your children....”

“I have so many clients on my caseload that I can only do so much....”

“I spend so much time on paper work, that I don’t have the opportunity to get to know my children and families, know what they need and provide it, to prevent apprehensions....”

“The governments (federal and provincial) don’t fund us enough to meet the children’s needs...”

“I put in the paper work for your special rates, someone in Finance didn’t do their job...”

“We at Finance never received the special rates request....”

“That agency has spent too much of their administration budget on funding the needs of the children and families – that is irresponsible and now we the funders have to put the agency under the control of the Authority....”

“The Authority takes away our power, our ability to do what we need to do for our children and families...”

“The governments continue to not fund us enough to meet the needs of our children and families...”

Blame – sometimes it seems like that is how our days within CFS revolve – around the axis of blame. Too often the parents blame the workers, the children blame their parents and then the workers and the system, and the workers blame the parents, or the foster parents, or the collaterals, or the system. Workers are even known to blame the parents for their own deficiencies that lead them to the CFS system in the first place! And the management blames the supervisors who blame the workers who blame the admin staff who blame the janitors etc..... And the agencies blame the funders and the funders blame the agencies.....

I have heard every one of these statements of blame, and I have said most of them myself. And I have meant them. Felt them. Ached them. Sobbed them. Gone to bed with the blame

statements echoing in my head and dreams. But those ones at night are usually the self-blame ones. They echo and turn in my head so violently that they propel me into tossing and turning, twisting up within my bed sheets. The Ones in my dreams scream the blames statements at me where I wish I could awaken, but can't. And when I do awaken, I wish I could roll over and go back to sleep rather than face more phone calls, emails, texts, statements of blame directed towards me. When I'm at work I get the blame from others, and when I'm alone I continue the beating, taking the whip from them and self-inflict the blame with stinging rage.

Blame is a noun and a verb. As a noun it is "responsibility for a fault or wrong" (Oxford Dictionaries 2014). As a verb, it is the action of feeling or blaming responsibility for a fault or wrong. Noun synonyms include: hold responsible, hold accountable, hold liable, place/lay the blame on; censure, criticize, condemn, accuse of, find/consider guilty of; assign fault/liability/guilt to responsibility, guilt, accountability, liability, onus, blameworthiness, culpability, fault; censure, criticism, condemnation, recrimination, rap. Verb synonyms include: ascribe to, attribute to, impute to, lay at the door of, put down to, set down to, pin, stick (Oxford Dictionaries 2014).

I have heard, experienced and uttered, every one of these forms of the concept of blame. Blame swirls within the CFS like an eddy, a vortex which sucks away the onus of responsibility. When held to accountability, we, within every sphere of the CFS system, raise our arms as victims and point to whoever is most available, laying blame, criticism, condemnation, fault, liability. Whether is it be a minor point like not filling out a simple form correctly, or whether it be major when reviewing the death of a child-in-care with legal, moral, professional and life and death ramifications, we all tend to jump into the victim role and point fingers. I know, because I have done it. And still do it. And I hear blame after blame every single day on the job.

Within CFS today, we live under constant threat of attacks of blame – from the families, from each other, from the management, from the Authority, from the province, from the feds, from the Children’s Advocate, from collaterals (justice, health, education etc.). Now more than ever, I work with the constant awareness that my actions will be held up to a piercing light that will look at all I do and don’t do with the clarity of hindsight and also from the luxury of seeing things in isolation, case by case. The criticisms are towards individual actions and “files”, which can paint a look in detail at this one event, when in reality we as social workers are carrying layers of “cases”, with phones constantly ringing, emails constantly coming, with requests after requests after demand after demand. Criticisms are on individual actions, while our work is that of multiple simultaneous needs and actions.

But when we look at the statements above, it is still important to examine each of them to learn more about them. Some of them show signs of us abdicating our own responsibility, our own ‘agency’ and placing all responsibility on others without any acknowledgement of self:

“These family members keep calling so often and telling me what to do that now I can’t do my job properly ...”

“The worker I supervise apprehended your children, not me....”

“I had to apprehend your children because my supervisor told me to....”

These statements thus appear to me to be acts of deflection, ways of us not taking responsibility for our own actions or inactions. This is blame that is assigning fault or culpability away from ourselves, onto other people or systems. It is to rid ourselves not only of responsibility but also to rid ourselves of guilt or a sense of guilt. We deny our own ‘agency’, our ability or inability to act, our own potential for some sort of way to make things better. Too often, we choose to be victims of the system ourselves.

“I listened to the foster parent more than I listened to the parent....” The system is set up for us workers to be able to access services for children in care and their caregivers, so we hear a lot from foster parents about what the children need, and often we can provide it. There are so many limits on what we as CFS can financially provide for our families that it seems we don’t spend as much time communicating with them. This means that we don’t always get to know them, and instead focus on the foster parents rather than the actual parents.

“I can’t do anything for families who have their kids with them because the funding for services is so little...” I share the frustration when we cannot fund services into the homes of the families that we work with, and I have lobbied to try to get funding for the families whose children are at home with them. But I also believe that we can still do something. We can go to the home, we can get to know our families, we can provide that human interaction, and we can share stories and learn from each other. We can find out what or how it is that this family has survived challenges and managed to continue taking care of their children. We can ask the family what they need and together work to find any available resources that may exist.

Blaming the system and then ignoring the actual families is something that I in turn then blame other workers for. When I see workers appear to give up or to not care, I feel so much rage within me. I try my very best to not show my anger towards workers and agencies, but I am sure it comes through at times. I get so tired of hearing excuses rather than reasons as to why a worker thinks that they cannot or did not respond adequately. I have seen children hurt, abused, live in misery for years, and even die because of what I perceive to be self-victimization within social workers themselves. Countless times I have heard social workers give excuses that they have no agency, no options, and give up.

Sadly however, some of the statements of blame are honest assessments of others' responsibility such as:

"I have so many clients on my caseload that I can truly only do so much...."

"I spend so much time on paper work, that I don't have the opportunity to get to know my children and families, know what they need and provide it to prevent apprehensions...."

While these statements also project away from the speaker, there are times when it is an honest, and legitimate response. How and why we say it is the issue – do I say it just to vent and express my anger? Or do I then take it a step further and try to help the worker? And, when need be, when there are no other options, do then I bring my concerns higher up the chain of command to make sure that the child/ren are not be neglected due to incompetence? When I have had to report on incompetence it has never been due to a personal vendetta, but simply to try to keep children alive and safe.

I am also personally, painfully aware of the challenges that social workers have, and that all of our attention cannot go on one child or family. When a worker has a caseload of thirty (or sixty) "files", which then means delegated and legal responsibility for up to fifty to over 100 or more at-risk human beings, we have to ask if it is reasonable to expect the worker to actually be able to get to know their "clients". When there are over twenty in-depth forms required each time a single child comes into care, where do we find hours in the day or night to actually sit down and communicate with the children who are confused over the removal, or the parents who are also confused and needing to be pointed into a path that can lead to the return of their children? When workers fill out all of the required forms (properly) to access the services that a child or family needs, only to be told that it is outside of the narrow budget definitions that the province has

unilaterally decided upon, then is it the responsibility of the worker, or is it the responsibility of the system that services are not made available?

In my experience, the CFS system in Manitoba is an expert at the Blame Game. This is crystal clear with the tragedy of Phoenix Sinclair which led to so many unilateral provincially imposed directives that the system is now more restrictive on First Nations agencies than ever. All of these directives are being imposed not through legislation or the elected officials, but through bureaucrats, who are now imposing these restrictions even without input from the authorities let alone approval from them, or the Leadership Council. In other words, the CPB is exerting more direction and imposing more centralized services than First Nations agencies have ever had to adhere to in the past. George Muswaggon said at the 2014 NFNCFS Summit that the current bureaucracy is even more conservative now than ever in the past, even though there is an elected NDP government who is overseeing them.

As long-time Northern First Nations CFS manager David Monias also stated at the same Summit, when First Nations agencies lose a child, the review is just on the agency, and all of the blame is placed in that agency, and changes are recommended only for that agency. Yet when a child dies within Winnipeg CFS such as Phoenix Sinclair, the examination is on the whole system, over 75% of which is Aboriginal. It is an opportunity for the provincial government to tighten its hold over all agencies, even taking priority over the intent and mandate of the AJI-CWI. So some of the statements of blame I hear are legitimate statements against the oppressive actions of the bureaucratic systems. Thus, sometimes it is an honest assessment of oppressive conditions that remove our own sense of 'agency', or ability to self-determine.

And the same concepts of either actual or self-deflecting blame also apply to the blame statements towards one's self. Some are deflection into self-pity: "If only he would listen to me...."

And some of our blame statements are honest self-appraisal and we need to be reasonable with ourselves, have fair expectations of ourselves and our own abilities. If we are out of the office on business, then we cannot be in two places at one time to receive every phone call or read every email. We need a normal night's sleep even when we are behind on our paper work. We can state ourselves to others, but if they are unable to understand us even with multiple creative attempts to help others understand, or choose not to respond, then there is only so much we truly can do.. They are the ones who choose to not listen.

The blame from the top of the organization flows right down the streams of the organizations, and also laterally. Blame amongst peers in the agencies is something I hear every single day. "I did my job, but the Intake worker didn't give me the right information...." "I filled out the forms, but Finance didn't send the cheque...." Then, cycles of revenge go round and round, sabotaging other's work, having smear campaigns, feuding and anti-social behaviours in response to perceived injustices (Aquino, Tripp & Bies 2001). Blame rages around the system and those of us within it, but it begs the question of if I have the 'agency', the power to do anything about it, and/or if so, how much ability I may have to be effective.

'Agency' is the ability to do what I self-determine needs to be done. "It is part of human nature and personhood to 'have' agency. Agency requires consciousness, free will, and reflexivity. Persons can relate to themselves, to the external world, and to other persons" (Fuchs 2001, 26). Yet work within systems of any kind automatically limit our personal agency, so that the system can continue to survive according to its own needs. The system takes priority over the need for workers' agency, and without a doubt it takes over the need for the stakeholder's, the clients', need for agency, to self-determine. "Persons make their microworlds but not their macroworlds. Actors do act, but they do so under circumstances not of their own choosing. Actors do define, and

redefine, situations, but there are structural limits on what can be accomplished and changed in this way” (Fuchs 2001, 25).

On a personal basis, I have then had to focus my attention elsewhere rather than bang my head on the thick brick walls of the system, again and again and again. I have the bruises to have finally learned that when the powers-that-be won't listen or respond, that I then need to re-focus my attention towards people who will, and often these are the families themselves who are affected by the system. I will never accept the injustices from the system, but I will accept that at this time I have done all I can and the responsibility now rests solely with them. I am beginning to stop beating myself up for the system's ignorance.

Others of my self-blame statements are not hollow self-deprecation, but can actually be very honest and helpful to me: “It was all my fault.... I dropped the ball right when she needed me the most...I had no idea that she was suicidal...” If I did drop the ball, then it is my responsibility to pick it up again. I am human, I make mistakes. I have to acknowledge these mistakes in order to make good change. This is a way to enact my sense of ‘agency’ even within the overwhelming bureaucratic oppression. Was I too busy to pay attention? Was I too tired to absorb anyone else's pain at that moment? If there is something I can do to make things better, then it is my responsibility to make those changes. I can figure it out on my own or I can ask for help. Even if I can't undo a tragedy, I can learn to try to prevent the same thing happening again. This is exerting my ‘agency’, my ability to make some form of positive change, even when it is not enough.

I cannot bring back my girl to this Earth, nor can I force the system to provide services for those like my son within their own homes, or to respond in the ways I would choose to prevent other children and youth from dying or being abused or neglected. These things happened because of things beyond my control. However, I can take responsibility for my own actions and continue

to help identify what changes are needed, both the problems and potential solutions, and maybe, just maybe, prevent some others from the same suffering.

*I know in my brain that I am not responsible for so many of the system's deficits and self-accepted oppressive ignorance. But you see, I **want** to be able to do what needs doing for my son, my late girl, my other children, all my children and families whose lives intersect with mine. I **want** to do right by them all. But how can I when the system and so many of the people within it won't listen, or be willing to respond? How much agency do I really have?*

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Conclusion

This question of how much 'agency' I really may have at any given time in any given situation, is key to my question of whether my social work interventions are consistent with peace-building interventions. When have I acted for the wellbeing of people in response to the oppressive systems that inflict structural violence? And when have I acted in accordance with the oppressive dictates of the system, even if it has been against my choice? And what other options may I have had?

There are many examples within my life and career of when I have bent the rules to try to honour the rights and wellbeing of the children and families when the system and its dictates have gone against them. There are times when I have risked my employment and livelihood to speak out for what I perceived to be right for the sake of the children and families. There are also even examples of when I have been able to work with the system to effectively meet the needs of the children and families. It's the times I haven't been able to keep a child at home, or been able to place the child with extended family, or been able to prevent tragedies that I could see coming,

that haunt me, for these are the times when my adherence to the CFS system has over-ruled my peace-building interventions. Even though giving in to the system has gone directly against my original intents of working in ways of anti-colonization, as evidenced in my 1983 Letter to the Editor which I have continued to try to implement.

Honestly stating my own shortcomings, my own inabilities to be a peacebuilder through my social work interventions, is necessary to reverse this trend. Taking personal accountability is the key. And when I take accountability for my own actions, there is less chance of misguided or negative blame against others, thus stepping out of the overwhelming Blame Game within CFS.

When I continue to try to exert my own agency whenever possible and to take responsibility for my own actions, then at least I am honestly attempting peace-building, even if my efforts are not achieving what I intended. I believe, that as long as I continue non-stop to try to take responsibility for my own actions individually, and collectively as a group, profession, or society, that then at least I am still striving for peace in response to the colonizing aspects of the CFS system. It is taking that personal initiative and recognizing the collective ownership that is key.

Over the Christmas holidays of 2009, there was a young boy in care whose whereabouts within his community were not known for a few days. What brought this to the public's attention was that his body was then found in the remains of a house that had been intentionally set on fire two days earlier. And it also came to light that the RCMP blamed the volunteer fire department for not responding, but at least one of the fire fighters said he was never contacted by the RCMP. Very easily this could and did turn into a blame game: accusations flowed against the front-line of the agency, to and from the management of the agency, to and from the Northern Authority, to and from the RCMP, to and from the volunteer fire department, to and from the Chief and Council of the community, and to and from the federal funders of the very small scale fire services on-reserve.

What boiled me at the time was when the Northern CFS Authority leaders of the time, went on the air to state that the agency had followed protocol and thus the CFS system was not to blame. Firstly, I believed that this was not true – there had always been lapses in the organizing of the Christmas visits for the children in care, and there was only a minimal protocol to begin with. And if protocol had been followed, it obviously didn't work or that little boy would not have been burned to death. That bile in my gut was spewing.

And then I found some hope. When one of the Band Councilors went on air to state directly, “We are all to blame and we all have to take responsibility” (Winnipeg Free Press 2010 and CBC 2010). When I heard Roy Miles say this on the TV screen, and then read more of what he said in the newspaper, I felt calm. I was still sad and grieving over the loss. But I knew that there could be hope, simply by this man stating publicly what needed to be said: that we are all to blame. And while he may have been referring to his own community, I believe that as a member of the larger CFS system, and as a member of the larger society, that we too are all to blame. All of us share in the collective responsibility, even if we never met this boy. For to stand by and do nothing is to give our agreement to what is happening.

A perfect example of this process of the need to assume collective responsibility, is clearly and simply identified in Barbara Coloroso's definitive work, *the bully, the bullied and the bystander* (2002). While she is focusing on small group conflict, the theory and dynamics easily apply to large group, societal and even political realms. Coloroso defines bullying “as [a] life-and-death issue that we ignore at our children's peril” (2002, xv). She details the dynamics of the inter-relatedness of the bully, the bullied (victim) and the bystander. The bystanders “are the supporting cast who aid and abet the bully through acts of omission and commission” (2002, 62). The

bystanders are those who support the bully through active actions of support or by passive lack of response. Either way, the bystander is also responsible for the bullying.

The only alternative is for the third party to be an active witness, i.e., someone who sees what is happening and speaks out or testifies against the violence and works to stop it. So I as an individual, have a choice – to be a destructive bystander (actively or passively), or a positively responding witness to what both others and I are doing within the CFS system. So if I go with the flow and allow things to continue the way they are, then I am a passive bystander allowing the structural violence of colonization and genocide to continue. However, whenever I take any steps to try to address the structural violence, then I am an active witness or peacebuilder attempting to assume both individual and collective responsibility.

This understanding of collective responsibility was summed up by Martin Niemöller (1892-1984) who was a prominent Protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps where he was executed.

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me--and there was no one left to speak for me.*

It is this understanding of collective responsibility that starts from our own individual declarations of our personal responsibilities that begins the processes of effecting positive change. When one voice acknowledges our own shortcomings, albeit intentional, unintentional, or structurally inevitable, then individual responsibility is achieved. When that one voice joins with another individual voice of responsibility, then the volume and strength increases, and steps are taken

towards collective responsibility. These individual and collective movements of identifying when we are contributing to structural violence or when we are actively opposing it by attempting to create a peaceful alternative, can be known as peace-building.

CHAPTER 7

PEACE-BUILDING IN RELATION TO

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IN MANITOBA'S NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS

Introduction

This chapter explores my own actions and if the interventions I have done in the name of social work are consistent with peacebuilding interventions. How do my actions, experiences and interventions within Northern First Nations Child and Family Services (CFS) relate to the definitions of violence, structural violence, assimilation, colonization and genocide? And, how much agency or choice have I had in my actions and interventions?

This chapter relates how my own experiences relate to the theories of both conflict and peace, and what are the community responses within Northern First Nations to build peace in the face of the forms of violence that are identified in this thesis.

I Have Committed Structural Violence

I have never chosen to physically harm a person since I was a child and fought with my siblings. Yet I have contributed to the structural violence of Canadian colonization. Every time that I have removed a child from their identity, or not been able to provide interventions of healing for the child, family or community, I have participated within the Manitoba's Northern First Nations CFS system's assimilation of identity and structural violence of colonization and even genocide. Regardless of my well-meaning intentions, or even the fact it was legally sanctioned and

even mandated by the government, I have participated in the structural violence that is ingrained within the CFS system.

As per Johan Galtung (1969) I have not committed manifest violence, either intentionally or unintentionally because I have not committed physical aggression either intentionally or unintentionally. I do believe however that I have participated in latent violence through acting as a social worker and carrying out government policies and legislation that removed children from their identities, themselves, and whose removals have left First Nations communities broken, in pain and at times decimated. Whether this structural violence is intentional or unintentional, it is still violence. Latent structural violence even without intent, through the perpetration of systems that allow for deaths and disruptions of life to continue is indirect violence, but violence nonetheless (Galtung 1969).

It is common for us to participate in structural violence even unknowingly or unwittingly.. We may not be conscious that our actions are structurally violent (i.e. without conscious intent), however they still are violent. And yet once we have been informed and/or then become aware that our actions are structurally violent, then we are acting with conscious intent. We then have a choice: to try to stop the violence, or to allow it to continue.

As my personal earlier writings indicate, even before I began working within any child protection system, I had absolutely no intention of committing any form of violence or harm towards anyone. I had attempted to commit my life to stopping the structural violence of colonization. My effectiveness is open to debate and judgement, but my intentions were and are sincere. However, by working within a system with a continuing track record of generations of removing children from their identities, lands and peoples, I have committed latent, structural violence. Whenever I have carried out actions that removed children and people from their

identities, land and peoples, I was a contributing factor to systemic actions which continues colonization. For the system is only a collection of individual people. Without the individual people such as myself within any system, it would not exist.

Identity and Assimilation, Colonization and Genocide

In Northern First Nations in Manitoba

Identity and assimilation can refer to the micro, mezzo and the macro spheres. Children's identities as Inineew, Dene, or Oji-Cree are permanently maimed or completely lost when they are placed by CFS into homes of other cultures, and especially when they are removed from their home communities. This acknowledgement that children have been removed from their homes and cultures has been repeatedly established and recognized by the Canadian and Manitoba governments through their adoption of the AJI-CWI and the resulting CFS Authorities Act (2005) which begins with statements that acknowledge the need for children to be raised within their own homes and cultures that are found within the CFS Authorities Act (2005).

Each time a child is removed, he or she loses their identity and relationships with their own people. This form of individual identity loss and assimilation is then multiplied exponentially through the loss of tens of thousands of children and is consistent with the Article 2's fifth definition of genocide within the UN's 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, "(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group".

One question though is whether this is the system's intent or not. While the Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) had an explicit mandate to remove children for the purpose of assimilating them (TRC Interim Report 2012, 26), a key question is if the CFS in general and the AJI-CWI in particular are *intentionally* trying to assimilate First Nations children. This question

is pivotal, as many social workers and government officials and bureaucrats today say that CFS is here to protect children, and that without it there would be more deaths, abuse and neglect. However, as the TRC's Chief Justice Murray Sinclair stated at the 2014 University of Manitoba Mauro Centre Sol Kanee Lecture, when the IRSs were being dismantled, (due to growing societal criticisms), the children were then automatically transferred to the child welfare system.

The TRC and others have proven that there was an intent to assimilate Indian children through the creation of the IRS system, and when they were being phased out, the children were simply transferred to the child welfare systems. There was no assessment of whether the children might be able to be returned to their families, or to provide what was needed to return the children home, they were simply transferred to child welfare. Clearly, the CFS system at least at this time continued the IRS's mandated assimilation and resulting structural violence right into the CFS system.

Justice Sinclair also stated at the Sol Kanee Lecture that he believes that the IRS system was never actually about education, but that it was in fact a social work child welfare system. He said that the assumption was that Indian families were unable to raise their children according to the colonialist mainstream practices, and that thus the children needed to be removed for their own "protection" and educated (i.e. assimilated) into European-based ways.

This is completely consistent with social work and CFS today which removes children for their own "protection" (as defined by the colonial courts and policies), and then educates not only the children but the parents as well to raise their children according to provincially mandated standards. Yes, some children have to be physically removed from harmful caregivers, but do they have to be removed from their communities, extended families, languages, cultures and lands? And must the parents then care for their children by mainstream standards in order for their

children to be returned to their care? Sadly, in my experience, too often this is exactly what the CFS system both before and after the AJI-CWI is continuing to do.

In the mezzo and macro political spheres, assimilation is also occurring through the subjugation of First Nations governance systems into the federal and provincial governance systems, and this also applies to the CFS system. For example, the Manitoba Director of Child and Family Services, is the legal guardian of children who are in care under Temporary and Permanent Orders, with that guardianship then delegated down through the provincial system to the agencies and assigned case managers. This means that a Non-First Nations government department and workers are the actual guardians of tens of thousands of their own children, and not the First Nations leadership.

This usurps the power away from not only the children's parents and families, but also from their First Nations governing leaders, who traditionally have always maintained care of their communities' children (Chief Wayne Christian, Spallumcheen/Splatsin, at the Northern Authority Summit, 2014). The CFS system has historically inflicted and the AJI-CWI system continues to inflict latent violence of assimilation through the removals of children as well as the usurpation of the rights of First Nations leaders to govern their own people (AMC 2014; MKO 2007-14).

First Nations Leadership in Relation to the Structural Violence within Child and Family Services

The AJI-CWI had initially self-identified as being an answer to the structurally assimilationist policies of CFS in the past that were identified by the AJI (1991) within the IRSs and earlier child protection services. As the 2000 joint media release attests, "The Assembly of

Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and the province have signed a historic memorandum of understanding which will expand delivery of child and family services to First Nations people living off-reserve in Manitoba, in keeping with a recommendation put forward by the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (AJIC)” (AJI-CWI Website 2014).

The Northern First Nations leadership (MKO)’s 2002 statement of intent within the AJI-CWI website indicates that they “are pleased that the Province of Manitoba supports our position respecting our inherent right to care for our children wherever they reside. Also, we are pleased that the Province of Manitoba has agreed to participate in discussions to address the MKO First Nations' aspiration for full jurisdiction in child and family services which is reflected in the MOU”. Clearly, it was believed at the time that the stated intent of the AJI-CWI was to provide a solution to the past CFS systems’ overpowering presence that had taken away First Nations’ children and their rights to care for their own children through the massive removals of children and the fact that First Nations’ leadership had been excluded from the process entirely.

The AJI-CWI initially attempted to shift the power structures of non-Native dominance within CFS by incorporating First Nations leadership into the structure of the AJI-CWI system through including the leadership of the First Nations and the Métis into the Leadership Council which was to be recognized as a key player within Manitoba’s CFS Authorities Act (2005). However, it is evident that Aboriginal leadership has not been able to play a truly significant role and there is little if any indication that the Leadership Council has any power. And in fact, there are self-evident indicators that the exact opposite has occurred.

In the South, in 2011 the Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO) through the AMC have actually taken the Southern Network of Care (Southern Authority) to court with legal action against the Southern CFS Authority for its refusal to accept their appointees to the Authority’s

Board of Directors as per Manitoba's CFS Authorities Act (2005) (Winnipeg Free Press March 5, 2013). The Southern Chiefs believed that their ability to have any significant input into the system was being denied, as evidenced by the Southern Authority's aggressive steps to prevent certain Chiefs from being on the Southern Authority Board, and a complete breakdown in working relationships.

It was also exasperated by the SCO's requests for the removal of the original CEO of Southern CFS Authority due to her actions that excluded First Nations leadership. It was obvious through both personal and public statements that the people and Chiefs did not believe that they were being represented in ways that were consistent with Southern First Nations culture and protocols. The Authority's response was to claim that the Chiefs' legal and political actions were interfering with their ability to provide their mandated services, and so in conjunction with the province, had a provincially appointed administrator take over the Authority (Winnipeg Free Press November 24, 2012). This effectively handed the Southern Authority into the complete control of the province, and effectively eliminated direct input from First Nations leadership.

Over time, SCO has managed to have slightly increased voice within the CFS system, and when in early 2014 the new CEO Bobbi Pompana took over her role, she publicly stated through the Winnipeg Free Press that "one of her first tasks will be to help heal rifts between the Southern Authority, which supervises 10 CFS agencies, and Aboriginal leadership in Manitoba. 'I think there needs to be kind of a restoration of the relationship. I think that there hasn't been a good relationship for a while, and I think it's something that needs to be built up again,' she said (May 29, 2014). Clearly even by the statement of the new Southern Authority's CEO, there had been a severe breakdown the Southern Chief's abilities to assume their roles that were legislated, albeit unclearly, within Manitoba's CFS Authorities Act (2005).

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak's Peace-building

The Northern First Nations leadership through Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) have also had their challenges in having their rights to care for their own children recognized. It appears that they had been optimistic at the time that the AJI-CWI was in discussion, was being developed and when it officially started in June 2005. As the 2000 joint media release attests, the First Nations “and the province have signed a historic memorandum of understanding which will expand delivery of child and family services to First Nations people living off-reserve in Manitoba, in keeping with a recommendation put forward by the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (AJIC)” (AJI-CWI Website 2014).

MKO's own 2002 statement of intent within the AJI-CWI website indicates that they “are pleased that the Province of Manitoba supports our position respecting our inherent right to care for our children wherever they reside. Also, we are pleased that the Province of Manitoba has agreed to participate in discussions to address the MKO First Nations' aspiration for full jurisdiction in child and family services which is reflected in the MOU”. Clearly, it was believed at the time that the intent of the AJI-CWI was to provide a solution to the past CFS systems' overpowering presence that lead to the massive removals of children, but also the fact that First Nations' leadership had been excluded from the process entirely.

The governing body of the Northern First Nations MKO, has enacted several resolutions that paint a picture of their evolving relationship with the AJI-CWI system. Their 2002 Statement of Intent with the AJI-CWI, indicates that they were clearly optimistic that this was an opportunity to have their inherent right to care for their children respected, and they believed that their “aspiration for full jurisdiction in child and family services which is reflected in the MOU” was

recognized and could begin to be actualized through the AJI-CWI (AJI-CWI Website). A year later, MKO's Resolution #2003-05-#1 states their consensual agreement with the Detailed Implementation Plan to Reconstruct the Child and Family Services System in Manitoba, and then through Resolution #2003-05-#02 they set up the process for MKO to select its interim Board of Directors for the newly forming Northern First Nations CFS Authority.

By 2008, three years after the implementation of the AJI-CWI in 2005, the tone changes from one of MKO asserting their jurisdiction, processes and self-initiated ways, to that of responding to the concerns that were quickly becoming evident within the AJI-CWI system. Resolution: 2008-05-09 was a call for an MKO Chief's Assembly on CFS devolution to reexamine the effectiveness of the system which led six months later to Resolution #2008-11-07 which called for the "Restoration of First Nation Jurisdiction over Child and Family Matters". Resolution #2008-11-08 directed that the MKO Chiefs in Assembly direct the Northern Authority Board of Directors to immediately begin the recruitment process of a new Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Authority in order to change the direction of the Authority. This was further exemplified in Resolution #2010-03-05 (Rev. 1.0) which also expressed concern about actions of the NA Board at that time and they stated that they viewed these actions as potentially contrary to the aims and objectives of the AJI-CWI and customary practice.

Resolution #2010-03-06 was even more critical of the direction that NA and the AJI-CWI had gone, and went so far as to say that,

WHEREAS, Under the current regime there is a lack of communication with MKO with regard to official reviews of our child care agencies and mutually agreed upon protocols are required....

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The Chiefs in Assembly request for a total review on the AJI-CWI process and a preliminary report be tabled at the next Annual MKO General Assembly. (MKO 2010)

The strongest wording can be found in Resolution #2010-08-08 Re: Exercising Inherent Authority over Child and Family Services in the MKO Region (see Appendix #7). In this resolution, MKO invoked their inherent rights, and framed them within the Treaties, the Canadian Constitution and even within the global sphere through the UN, and gave examples of assimilation within Manitoba and clearly stated their dissatisfaction with the leadership of the Northern Authority and the violations against Manitoba's own CFS Act and CFS Authorities Act.

MKO continued to voice their dissatisfaction with the Northern Authority and its inability to work in ways that represented their interests, and their concerns that Northern Authority at that time was working in ways which increased the influence of the provincial CFS system with its history of ignoring First Nations rights, and contributing to ongoing colonization. Resolution #2010-09-04 called upon MKO's inherent right to exercise authority over child and family matters. In 2011, MKO declared resolutions on specific front line issues such as the development of Group 2 placements in the north, the ineffectiveness of the current abuse investigations process, CFSIS, the provincial computerized data base, and the Standing Committee making decisions and trying to take actions contravening the roles of Northern First Nations leadership.

Of immediate critical concern as well, was the fact that the province and the feds were withholding monies that were required to meet the basic needs of the children and family through unilaterally imposing new funding formulas (#2011-08-08 New Funding Formula). And Resolution #2012-03-02 directed for the funders to release funds "without compliance measures" i.e. adherence to the CFSIS and for the Children's Special Allowance to stay within the agencies and not the provincial treasury. In 2012, MKO continued to express their deep concerns by calling an MKO Chiefs Summit on CFS (Resolution #2003-05-#1) to recognize each of the MKO First

Nations as governments and for the federal and provincial governments to engage and communicate with the MKO First Nations as governments.

In MKO's 2011-12 Annual Report, Grand Chief David Harper stated that "Child Welfare has again been addressed as one of MKO's highest priorities." Grand Chief Harper also stated the ways in which Northern First Nations children need to be raised and cared for:

Who can relate better to us than our own brother or sister that shared so many experiences with us? Who can love us more selflessly than our own mother or father who sacrificed daily for so many years to raise us? The better we understand our parents and siblings, the better we understand ourselves.

MKO has continued to emphasize the importance of achieving this understanding by looking to our family's heritage with the help of our oldest living relatives, our elders.

By rediscovering the customs, practices and traditions of our ancestors we uncover truths about our parents and ourselves. We find out how our grandparents treated our parents and so on from generation to generation. We discover the ambitions and fears of our forefathers along with their failures and triumphs.

In the process of learning our family history we uncover our past, understand our present and shape our future. This was the way of our people from time immemorial. (3)

MKO clearly exerted their inherent role as leaders of their own children and families and their abilities to raise their children in ways that ensured their futures.

And politically, MKO exerted its jurisdiction pass stating their support at a Chief's Special Assembly in March, 2012 "that the Northern Authority will once again report directly to the MKO Chiefs during this year's Annual General Assembly" (MKO Annual Report 2012). The simple act of the Northern CFS Authority under their new leadership of reporting directly to the Northern Chiefs, was a strong step toward regaining that respect for leadership that was so severely assaulted through the early AJI-CWI.

It is necessary to show the position of MKO to show that my concerns are not my own, but also that of the people and the leadership. I do not state my own positions within isolation, but in union with the people and leaders of the Northern First Nations who are painfully aware of the

effects of the structural violence of colonization within CFS at the micro personal/familial realm and the mezzo administrative and the macro political realms and also know the direction in which to counter the colonization and heal from within. Including MKO's statements and actions in this paper also clearly indicates its proven abilities to assess the concerns, injustices and ongoing assimilative practices that are critically affecting its own families and communities. Supporting MKO's work at addressing the structural violence of colonization is a form of peace-building.

My Role in Assimilation, Colonization and Genocide In Northern First Nations in Manitoba

These public examples combined with my own personal experiences within my anecdotal stories give some clear examples of my personal belief that assimilation, and the structural violence of colonization against Northern First Nations is continuing, even nine years after the AJI-CWI's implementation, and in some ways even increasing. The fact that MKO needs to continue to state through its many resolutions, its defense of its own children and families from the ongoing loss of them to the non-Native colonial governments, even in the 21st Century, is proof positive that colonization is continuing.

And, as a participatory member of the system that is continuing to impose non-First Nations methods of child protection and child care, I share in the collective responsibility of the system's actions, even though my inner intent is the opposite. While I have and continue to attempt to reverse colonization within child care processes, I fully recognize that I have participated within the CFS's mandate which too often requires the removal of children. I am obligated to state my individual role within the collective process. This then holds me collectively responsible. Even though my intentions were to reverse colonization, my actions at times were in conjunction with the system's processes of assimilation, colonization and genocide.

I have made many attempts to prevent or reverse the micro level assimilation and have given some examples above of the efforts to keep children at home or returned to home as soon as possible, or at least have them raised within their own cultures. And on a structural level, this paper is in itself my attempt to not be a bystander and actively witness by publicly speaking out about what is occurring. While I as one individual cannot stop a 500 year process of colonization, I can and must yell out my resistance against colonization and its effects of identity assimilation and genocide. This is the purpose of this thesis.

Thus, while I am writing *about* Peace and Conflict Studies and resulting peacebuilding, this act of writing is also an actual *act* of peacebuilding as it allows my voice to be heard in condemnation of the ongoing colonization through the attacks on the children and families of First Nations in Manitoba and elsewhere. This thesis is me, saying **NO**, to ongoing assimilation, structural violence, colonization and genocide. This thesis is me, saying **YES**, to any and all peacebuilding methods that are and need to be developed within First Nations in Manitoba and elsewhere.

Peace-building Methods in Northern First Nations in Manitoba

While it is one thing to identify problems, it is quite another thing to try to identify solutions or even alternatives. Historically, while there are far too many examples of losses, it is critical to acknowledge the resistance and resiliency that began centuries ago and continues today within Northern First Nations. In spite of the near annihilation of communities through the spread of disease, a portion survived. In spite of the forced relocation to reserve lands, people survived and many in the North continued and still continue to live traditionally with the land and environment as best they can with the environmental destruction that continues to disrupt their ways. In spite of

the removal of children by the plane and boat and train loads, many families were reunited and have continued to flourish on the land.

Resistance such as these examples are the root of all peace-building responses, and come internally from the people themselves as per Mac Ginty (2008). Some of the targets of the conflict are also victors, through surviving and being able to maintain as much of their identities and connections to the land as possible. They tried to take the Indian out of the child, but enough have been able to survive those attacks to keep First Nations going and in many ways thrive.

Mediation is also a very common form of intervention in peace-building. And “Mediation is the most common form of intra-state conflict management (Bercovitch et al.,1997), and many accounts emphasize mediation as the most successful way for third parties to influence conflict (Dixon 1996; Rauchhaus 2006; Walter 1997)” (Clayton & Gleditsch 2014 265-6). While many mediation processes within conflict rely on the use of professional outsiders to come and resolve conflicts, many believe that this is not appropriate. External interventions that have no connection to the communities have a history of many failures (Lederach 1991; Mac Ginty 2008).

In Northern First Nations, there always has been and always will be a determined belief in their own people building peaceful responses to the ongoing conflict of colonization, by mediation or other forms. There have been many examples of effective partnerships with non-Northern First Nations people but always with a constant belief in Northern First Nations that the impetus for initiative and healing must come from within the communities themselves, with the welcoming of others who are able to simply walk beside and not dictate. It can be difficult for non-Natives who are used to being in charge, to instead stand back, observe and listen, rather than simply take over. Yet it is only by supporting opportunities for Northern First Nations voices to be heard, that a truly Northern First Nations worldview can be the basis of peace-building interventions.

This Northern First Nations belief in the necessary inclusion of the people who are living in the midst of the conflict, is consistent with Paul Wehr and John Paul Lederach's (1991) writings about the use of trust or *confianza*-based mediation and the use of "insider-partial" mediators as part of the mediation process. They say that mediation teams that are solely external to the conflict, lack the intimate knowledge of the conflict, do not have the trust of the people affected by the conflict, and do not have a vested interest in the outcomes. Internal people however, have intimate knowledge of the nuances within the cultures, have the trust of the people due to a shared history with them and also a shared stake in outcomes.

Wehr and Lederach's insider-partial is consistent in many ways with Northern First Nations but does not fully fit with them, in part because of the fact that the nature of the conflict in Northern Manitoba and Canada is very different from that of the Esquipulas Indigenous people in Nicaragua about whom their article is directed. The conflict between the Indigenous people of Nicaragua and the Sandinistas is a very visible conflict that included a lot of direct, physical violence between the two "sides". In Northern Manitoba however, the conflict is of a more structural nature, with the use of government departments and society at large to simply discredit First Nations' right to autonomy and to instead assimilate within the colonial government structures, such as through CFS. So there is not one specific, nor a number of limited mediation processes like there was in Nicaragua. It appears that due to the use of structural violence that there is greater camouflage and there are greater subtleties in the conflict between the Indigenous peoples in Northern Manitoba and the colonizers.

As well, there is a big difference between mediation and peace-building. Mediation by definition, includes shorter-term processes with external parties and usually with distinct parameters. Mediation is "assistance to two or more interacting parties (Kressela nd Pruitt 1989)

by third parties who (usually) have no authority to impose an outcome” (Wall, Stark and Standifor, 2001, 370-1). It is an ancient practice that is widely used and in a variety of ways including “international relations (e.g., Bercovitch 1996), labor-management negotiations (e.g., Mumpower and Rohrbaugh 1996), community disputes (e.g., Pruitt et al. 1993), school conflicts (e.g., Johnson et al. 1995), and legal disputes (e.g., Riskin 1996)” (Wall, Stark and Standifor, 2001, 370-1). Unlike mediation which is defined within various parameters, peace-building is a more open concept that allows for wider, creative and unique responses.

Peace-building is the term that I use to describe the development of positive peace which is the construction of a just and safe, and basically egalitarian society. Positive peace is more than negative violence which is simply the absence of direct violence (Galtung 1969, 1971, 1990; Jeong 2000, 2005). Positive peace is the removal of hierarchal relationships based on the development of just and equitable conditions associated with the elimination of inegalitarian social structures (Galtung, 1969). Jeong 2000, 25.

To create a just and safe society, requires far more than simple mediation processes that focus on specific issues, although mediation can be an effective tool at times within the larger peace-building process. Peace-building includes the deep-rooted, radical restructuring that is required to shift the current power imbalances that result in structural violence (Freire 1970; Lederach 1997). In other words, peace-building is not just band-aiding and instead requires the development of a society that is not only free from direct violence, but also free from the indirect violence of unjust social structures, government policies, and laws. And the only way to be free from these unjust structures is to participate in the development of just structures.

Within Northern First Nations as it is related to CFS, this means not just providing piecemeal policy changes to address one concern by replacing it with another policy that does

nothing to eradicate the power imbalances that exist within the current colonial relationships between First Nations and the federal and provincial governments. Peace-building within Northern First Nations as it relates to CFS means that there needs to be a new relationship between the parties, one which recognizes and supports First Nations' right to care for their own children by their own standards, as opposed to continuing the current system which is crippling First Nations with the loss of their children to outsiders.

To be anti-oppressive in practice, non-First Nations people need to recognize and accept that the answers for the development of an anti-colonial relationship needs to come from within First Nations themselves. This includes the current and future responses regarding children and families needing to be truly rooted within the communities and their lands, and come from within. This is consistent with Roger Mac Ginty's (2012) proposed peace-building methods that are not top-down such as usually happens in the international arena, and instead have actually been developed through the "local turn" (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013) and Indigenous methods (Mac Ginty 2008).

The importance of building peace based on the initiatives of local actors in hybrid with larger cosmopolitan actors and initiatives applies to Northern First Nations in its recognition of the need for community impetus and control. Mac Ginty also identifies the need for locally defined indicators of peace development and one of his that is directly consistent with Northern First Nations is "The resumption of cultural practices that declined during conflict" (2012, 56). Within CFS, cultural practices can include factors such as the numbers of children being raised within their own families and communities, the use of one's own language, the options to continue living with the land through hunting, trapping and fishing, etc.

Using locally defined indicators of peace as per Mac Ginty (2012) such as cultural practices and the retention of children within their identities and peoples, is an example of a deeper and more textured understanding due to the intimate knowledge of the peace developers. Local people can also self-identify additional indicators of peace-building successes or challenges by stating what their own needs and goals are, rather than externals determining and defining this for them. For example, one of the challenges with external indicators may be with the analysis of a project: externals may not be able to identify if the project is actually having a positive outcome or any impact. Everyday within CFS there are examples of the government determining a service's effectiveness by its own limited criteria with little or no acceptance of its impacts at the community level.

It is also critical to remember, as Mac Ginty states (2012), to recognize the unique distinctions between communities – what works in one, does not necessarily work in others. This is a sentiment that is voiced every day within front line Northern First Nations social workers. We know all too well that there are extreme differences between communities, even those that neighbour each other, and that universal dictates such as the province-wide CFS standards do not work in most northern First Nations communities. This fact is self-evident to those who have lived within the communities, yet the imposition of technocratic and bureaucratic approaches of using only recognized professionals within peace-building (as per Mac Ginty 2012) is akin to only using social workers who have their Bachelor of Social Worker and who are recognized by external authorities. Most may have something to offer, but there is nothing in place to support the need for workers who are familiar with the individual communities, languages, family systems, and aspirations.

One of Mac Ginty's key criticisms of technocratic indicators is their choice of existing peace indicators. Mac Ginty (2008) uses the example of the human health index, which while useful, is not always reflective of peace or stability within an area. In CFS, an equivalent could be the statistics that the province maintains about intakes, numbers of child in care and under the various statuses, and the numbers of children returned home. While these are the most common of a very limited data base of statistics within CFS, these statistics are grossly insufficient if we want to know if CFS is actually keeping children safe. Even if the numbers of abuse investigations are recorded and their outcomes, there are no statistics about abuse disclosures that indicate if the interventions are effective, whether it be by CFS or peace-building definitions.

For example, I can say that there are far more instances of abuse and neglect than what is reported to authorities or recorded in their statistics, because I at times have been the reporter and saw no response or official documentation of the incident. I have also seen workers go in and ask a few questions, without addressing the concerns that I have personally witnessed, and simply closed the investigation as unfounded. The real question then becomes, are the children and families any better off for this process of investigations? And if abuse is deemed founded and interventions are put in, there are no real indicators as to if or how the interventions may have or have not addressed the effects of the abuse. Has there been any positive outcome from these social work interventions, either by social work or peace-building criteria?

However in terms of developing locally based peace-building initiatives, even within Northern First Nations CFS, when the initiatives come from the communities, then there is a greater chance of relevance and also speedy responses. By the time a concern reaches the upper levels of bureaucracy, the situation at the ground level has often changed already. Local initiatives that are not dependent on outside authority have the ability to be flexible in a timely manner and

have less chance of “elite capture” where the externals assume credit for successes, and/or bastardize the process when they try to transfer it to another community. Thus peace-building and CFS responses that come from the local people has a much better chance of being relevant. And very importantly, local peace-building initiatives are non-prescriptive in nature meaning that they are not enforced externally, but chosen internally. Within CFS, this means that solutions that come from the communities could be backed by the communities rather than typical hierarchical CFS policies that are viewed as just another oppressive dictate from the colonizing government forces.

Fortunately there are some excellent examples of Northern First Nations developing their own anti-oppressive, a.k.a. peace-building interventions. There are some communities who make use of every opportunity to have their children and youth participate in land-based camps where they live in ways that are consistent with the traditions. These can range from community initiatives that provide for the resources for community members to bring their own families back to their traditional hunting grounds from which they were removed, at the key geese, caribou or other migration times of the year, to actually setting up camps in which the highest risk youth are living for extended lengths of time with Elders and teachers so that the youth are both away from their negative influences and given the skills to live both on the land and within traditional ways.

There is however the challenge of ensuring that children, especially children under the guardianship of the CFS system, are in situations that meet the “placement standards” that the province has dictated. Yet in the land-based opportunities, there are no plumbing facilities, nor even walls in most circumstances! However, even though the provincial standards are not met, land-based initiatives are consistent and critical within the traditional teachings and worldviews.

The number one challenge with initiatives such as these however is funding. There is minimal if any funding available to provide for the costs of these initiatives either within CFS or

elsewhere. One could argue that previously the people of these lands were able to subsist without government or external funding, but the facts are that the effects of colonization have made it even more difficult or impossible. For example, there is often now greater distances to travel to find game and fish due to the forced relocations of the people as well as the effects of the land-changes from the hydro-electric projects where waterways have been permanently altered, and also the effects of pollution in certain areas that are now rendered unacceptable for the consumption of food and game and fish. It is not a simple canoe ride or snowshoe trek in most cases now, as it involves having to travel great distances to access the foods. Thus seemingly simple initiatives such as these now require funds and resources.

Other community based initiatives in some communities include the local CFS workers using very simple, common-sense responses to child protection issues that may not however meet provincial standards. For example, if there are troubles within a home one night, the worker may simply place the children with a nearby relative for the night and then return the children to the parents when the home situation is calm again the next day. However, this often violates the provincial standards: for example, it is unlikely that all of the occupants in the relatives' home have clear criminal and child abuse checks on file, because when housing is in short supply there are so many adults in every home that statistically virtually every home has adults who may not be able to have clear background checks.

This example of communities using simple interventions continues as long as it is not identified at the bureaucratic levels. But once it is, even by the simple need to access some funds for food, baby formula or diapers for the children, then the agency is held to task for not following standards. There are many instances of community-based interventions that are successful in both

protecting children and not removing them from their cultures and identities, but they often have to be done covertly due to the external interference and oppression from the provincial dictates.

The First Nations leadership is clearly aware of these challenges as shown through MKO's resolutions and its work with AMC on the CFS open forums and resulting "Bringing our Children Home Report" (2014). Politically, MKO has shown a history of not only resistance to the provincial imposition of its own agenda, but also the wherewithal to have the communities develop according to their own goals, interests and self-determination. This is evident as well through the current Northern First Nations CFS Authority's work at developing culturally appropriate standards that is coming forth as evidenced at their 2014 Summit and meetings.

Personally, I had never felt such hope and encouragement for the children of the Northern First Nations as I experienced those three days at the Summit, seeing people working together with respect of traditions. This experience once again affirmed for me, my own long-term belief in the abilities of Northern First Nations to be able to care for their own children in far more capable ways than is currently being imposed by the provincial federal CFS systems. In my opinion, as expressed in my narratives, not only is the CFS system ineffective generally and in particular within Northern First Nations, but it is one key weapon within the federal and provincial governments' overall policy of the colonizing structural violence of assimilation.

My Own Role in Peace-building in Northern First Nations

My own role in all this? My own role is to try to continue my anti-colonial work that I started over thirty years ago. It is to continue to acknowledge my individual and collective responsibilities within the continuing structural violence within CFS. And, as a non-Native, it is to continue to try to work in solidarity with others, as per Paulo Freire, which means remaining

focused on my own conscientization, my own roles in oppressing simply by being a member of the oppressive spheres within Canadian society. By coming from people who participated in the overtaking of Aboriginal lands and people, I have personally benefitted from colonization. My family came as refugees, and either knowingly or not knowingly, participated within the genocidal processes that have occurred on this land. This then allowed for me and my generation to have the opportunities of sufficiency, education and careers. I never forget that I share in the collective responsibility for genocide on this land, even though I have never, ever, consciously intended to harm anyone.

It is this sense of collective responsibility that lead me to personally decide to work against the continuing colonization and structural violence, for to not work against it is to passively agree and assent to the violence continuing. And this has continued to be my motivation in my actions. My motivations have deepened as well, in that while my past is European, my future is deeply rooted in the Ininew future through my children and grandchildren. I never forget where I come from, and I also never forget where my future will be. This has strengthened my resolve, and provided me with additional opportunities to participate within various peace-building efforts such as this paper.

As well, as was repeatedly stated at the 2014 Summit, there is an awareness that the current CFS system is not able to provide a healthy or cohesive future, and that in fact separate, alternative answers are required. Like so many others, I believe in my heart that the communities require the necessary resources and infrastructures to provide the preventive measures to eliminate the need for CFS and child protective services for virtually all members of the future generations. Poverty and lack of the necessary infrastructures on reserves is well documented (Blackstock 2009; Blackstock, Clarke, Cullen, D'Hondt, & Formsma 2004; Blackstock & Trocmé 2005; Mandell,

Clouston, Fine, and Blackstock 2007; Trocme, Knoke, & Cindy Blackstock 2004; Wien, Blackstock, Loxley, & Trocmè 2007) as a major continuing force that creates the need for social work interventions.

Simply ensuring that each community has the basics would greatly eliminate many child protection concerns: have: running water, safe drinking water, access to medical services comparable to other rural areas in Manitoba, enough houses so that there is not overcrowding in every single household, have (dis)abilities services on reserve so that children do not have to come into CFS simply for medical and developmental challenges, schools that are free from asbestos and mold and that have funds, facilities and resources that are comparable to other rural areas, and have on-reserve community healing services to deal with the multi-generational traumas from generations of genocide, colonization, residential schools and the loss of children to child welfare. If the federal government honoured the Treaties, then these services could be in place in every community.

Providing these resources could also virtually eliminate the need for a deficit-based system such as CFS. By definition, CFS exists to respond to child *protection* concerns that have been identified. This means that there needs to already be a problem of some sort that places the child *at risk*. Technically, there is no mandate within CFS to provide preventive services, but rather to respond to problems that already exist. If preventive services such as basic infrastructures and asset-based pro-active healing options within the communities were funded, CFS could become virtually obsolete. This is why I have always said that instead of funding long-term programs and developing institutions within the CFS, to instead set the goal of eliminating the need for extensive child protective services within two generations, and keep this as the focus with the development of community based infrastructure and prevention programs.

Conclusion

In practical term, it appears that I have been building peace throughout my life and work, and I have been adding to the structural violence that is colonization. Within my career and interventions as a social worker, I have acted in many ways that have built peace by strengthening families both through the services of the systems, and also by assisting in preventing families from being sucked into the vortex of the Child and Family Services system. I have also let down some children and parents, which lead to further colonization. I succeeded within my own life by keeping my son with me until he was seventeen. But I feel so much failure by him leaving into CFS as a minor, and of course by burying our baby girl from her death in a CFS placement.

I have provided innovative social work interventions that included having the parents leave and kept the children in their own home with support workers in order to protect the children from the trauma of sibling separation and relocation. I have worked extensively to try to support families so that their children do not have to come into care by being available 24/7 and developing close relationships with the family members. I have chosen to place children in extended family placements in order to prevent the trauma of living with strangers and often of a completely different language and ways of life, which then required me to provide extensive supports into the extended family placement in order to keep it functioning. I have secretly brought a young mother and baby into my own home as the only option to having the baby be put in care. I have had teenagers camp-out on my couch rather than to have them sit in CFS offices in the middle of the night to await placements with strangers. I have gone into homes with guns, knives, and hostile people under the influence to try to protect babies and children by removing them, and provided respect to every member of the household while doing it.

On a personal basis, I devoted my life to all my children, and most challengingly to my son, to keep him home and out of the system for as long as possible. My sleepless nights and never-ending days were completely focused on keeping him alive and safe. I gave as much of my life as I could to my baby girl, to try to take away her pain, to ease her sorrow, and simply try to let her know that she is loved and lovable. I gave her a place to call home, a place to come to at any time where food and a hug, and her bed and belongings awaited her. I tried to make up for all of her losses and trauma that life and the CFS system gave her. I tried to fill her infinite void, her bottomless need for love and healing, and failed.

Professionally, I exhausted myself to the point of physical exhaustion, searing neurological pain from the tips of my toes to the roots of my hair, mental and physical numbness and emotional anguish, replaying over and over in my head the children I couldn't place with family and had to place in institutions or with foreign people. The ones who ended up removed from their people because there were simply no other physical options. The ones I could not take away from their sources of abuse, pain or trauma. These are the times when I contributed to colonization, even when it was against my will.

I have personally and professionally experienced and enacted many forms of violence, assimilation, colonization and genocide. I have also personally and professionally experienced and helped build peaceful alternatives to all of these forms of conflict. And, my own experiences are also consistent with many correlating experiences that others have experienced as indicated within my narratives and references to MKO. Clearly there are multiple examples of answers, but with no simple or direct actions to my primary question of if my social work interventions are consistent with peacebuilding interventions.

CONCLUSION

AS A SOCIAL WORKER IN NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS, AM I ALSO A PEACEBUILDER?

Introduction

As a social worker in Northern First Nations, am I also a peacebuilder? My search within this question has led to many answers and has also brought forward even more questions. True to form with this method, my autoethnography does not provide any specific answers, because my stories are a qualitative description rather than a direct response (Roth 2005; Ellis 2009; Haynes 2011; Vickers 2007; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 117; Johnson and Strong 2008; Denizen and Lincoln 2000). However, in reviewing my writings I do observe some general themes that stand out in my stories.

Identity

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Maire Aoine O’Cleary, my name and identity within my Celtic heritage that I carry within my DNA and within my rooted identity. Mary Anne Clarke, is the name I am known by, that was needed outside of Ireland and Scotland to be understood in English, that I answer to and that I sign with my pen. This name got me through school and jobs, and is the name I turn to when I hear it called. Wabigoon-Esqua (Flower Woman) is the name that was freely given to me, to bring my identity into that of my adopted Ininew family and culture. It is the name I use when I pray with smudge,

in ceremonies, and in my quiet prayers to the Creator. This is the name that connects me to my children's Ancestors who chose me to enter their bloodline, and share in their futures. I imagine that my Celtic ancestors and my children's Inineu ancestors plotted our children's births, perhaps as living, breathing examples of what can happen when "us" and "them" in conflict come together. If the beauty of my children and grandchildren is any indication of this inter-relatedness, then bringing the "us" and the "them" together is too beautiful for words.

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My identities are not divided between the three names, my identity is the culmination of the three. I carry all of these identities within me, every day and every night. They describe who I am, not only internally, but externally, for they denote my relationships with others. Maire Aione comes from the people and lands of my own ancestry, and describes my history. Mary Anne, my Canadian name, tells the story of my own people's oppression and colonization that led to them fleeing to Turtle Island, where over time we shifted into the oppressors, the colonizers. Wabigoon-Esqua is my emancipatory name, the name of acceptance into the peoples of this land, through my efforts at living and working in solidarity with the Original Peoples of Turtle Island.

Wabigoon-Esqua is the name that came from my own efforts at conscientization, awareness of my own personal and collective role in the ongoing structural violence of colonization. As long as colonization continues, my efforts at transforming the power imbalances must continue, or I would be passively 'allowing' colonization to continue.

Ever since I began acting as a social worker, I have and still constantly make choices about which identity I use. With every action that I take, I make a choice: Do I continue colonization by using the power within my white privilege, or within my role and mandate as a delegated social

worker, or within my abilities as an educated person, to use my powers *over* other people? Or do I make choices within these opportunities to block the powers of oppression and *share* my power *with* and *from* others by encouraging and nurturing the life within other people? My identities give me the choices, and they give me the impetus to act, to exert my ‘agency’.

There were non-Natives in my life who criticized me for not being “white enough” or in their eyes, turning my back on my own people. They do not understand that I cannot turn my back on my own people any more than I can turn my back on myself. I am who I am, including the identities of the past who created the “me” of today. Yet when I began to see and feel the structural violence of colonization within Canada that had been camouflaged and ignored throughout my childhood, my world view began to turn upside down.

The shock of coming to this realization within a process of my original worldview being stripped away from me, left me bare and confused. Yet I found answers very quickly within the humanity of the Ininew and other Indian people in my life. For the most part, there were no big political discussions, just a simple acceptance of human being with human being. It was that simple. My Ininew friends became my family as well, even before my meeting the late Charles, and so it did not seem odd to me or them when Charles and I became a couple. It was that simple. Human being with human being.

As the years have gone by, I have lived within the Ininew world a lot longer than I have within my family of origin, and thus I have assumed an identity that is all my own – Maire Aoine O’Cleary-Mary Anne Clarke-Wabigoon Esqua. I am who I am. This appears to be confusing for some people however, when this middle-aged, tall white woman is advocating for Ininew and other First Nations children and families, both professionally and within my personal life. When I have

listened and heard from the stories of the people, the children and families, I have no option but to respond to their requests to add my voice to theirs in trying to have the children's rights recognized.

The times when I have been in conflict with Inineu people over the rights of children and families, and identifying that those particular Inineu people are operating within a colonialist mentality at that time could be seen as confusing when they have chosen the structural violence of the dominant system. I have no doubt that I have been called various names behind my back by First Nations people who must think that I am trying to be something I'm not. But they are the ones who do not know me, who do not realize that I am not only "Mary Anne Clarke", but that I have been given the right and responsibility to speak as Wabigoon-Esqua.

And equally important, is that I have a right and responsibility to speak as colonist – there is no denying my ancestry, and there is no denying that colonization continues today, with the ultimate goal of assimilating First Nations into mainstream society. Assimilation continues within every political department within the federal and provincial governments, and the primary goal of assimilation is for easy access to the lands that are rich in resources as the ultimate goal of all colonization is the land and resources of the others (Short 2010; Jones 2006; Moses 2008; Chrisjohn et al 2002).

Therefore, as a racial member of the colonizers, I also have not only a right but an inherent responsibility to acknowledge, state and speak out, act out and live in ways to stop the structural violence of colonization and assimilation. As I wrote in 1983 in my Letter to the Editor of The Vancouver Sun, it is not an "Indian problem" but a "non-Indian problem" since it is us colonizers who created the violence. So no matter which aspect of my identity motivates me, I have a right and responsibility to live and work to counter the structural violence colonization in Canada.

It appears that my life and my own identity exemplify so many of the dynamics of identity-based conflict, having personally witnessed and experienced the “us-them” dichotomies within identity-based conflict. We can also use identity to exert power over others, but with the right knowledge we can use our power in positive rather than in destructive ways. With the knowledge I have gained from my life, studies and work, I can use my identity(ies) for positive peace-building responses to violence. Wabigoon-Esqua has been given the right to join in with the voices of Inineew, and Mary Anne Clarke has the right and responsibility to mirror for other non-Natives the realities of our actions which continue the structural violence of colonization.

Secrecy and Denial and Silencing

Living as an amalgamation of my three identities, does bring loneliness. While it often provides me a sense of unity and connectedness with others there are also so many times when I have experienced the pain of being misunderstood, denied and silenced. Personally, within my family of origin, I cannot share most of my current life, for there is limited understanding, and there is limited interest. Their lives of white privilege continue, and reminders of what the church that they devote themselves to did to other people, must be painful when they see me and my children. Reminders that the land they “own” is on unceded Aboriginal land in B.C. and in some cases on sacred land. Why would they want to start questioning the roots of their lives, the ways in which their lives were able to become economically and socially comfortable within a colonialist state?

How can they begin to understand my day to day life which revolves professionally and even personally around the devastating effects of colonization that includes the systemic neglect of children, the deaths of so many loved ones within my life to suicide, homicide, and

environmentally-based illness from colonization of their lands, the loss of children to the streets, sexual exploitation, gangs and the prison systems, and sharing through the stories of the people in my life of their own pain from the generational traumas they are still trying to deal with? When my family of origin members ask me how I am doing, I respond with “Fine!” or “Good!” without mentioning the events of my day.

Yet in the interest of maintaining my family relationships, I usually do not share my life with them beyond superficial conversations for the most part. There is a chasm between us, and I came to accept this. I cannot undo it. But I do accept their hands that reach across it and we hold on tight, to retain what we can in our relationships as a family. Their blood is my blood, and they are the roots of who I am today, as well as my children, and for that I am also truly grateful.

The silence and denial within my relationships with my own family, is nothing compared to the silencing and denials that others in my life have been forced to endure. The vacuum of disbelief that the late Charlie (and other victims) experienced when he tried to tell of his experiences within the residential schools was actually the *coup de grace*, the final blow within the violence of his experiences. When he wasn’t believed, it was another attack on his being, his life. The TRC is finally providing a voice for those whose stories were silenced for so many years and generations. However, the same violent tactic of silencing continues today within my experiences within CFS.

My son’s pleas were silenced, which led to him coming into care. At school, even in a highly specialized program, he did not feel heard, and this led to his removal from the school system entirely which then led to him having to go into CFS care. His experiences still haunt him, as evidenced by this post on his Facebook site two years after he left school.

The majority of staff @ [my] high school are evil, my 8th grade teacher had me regularly restrained, they have a rule against headwear (people R gonna wear something on their head), my 11th & 12th grade teacher ... would yell @ the students if she felt they did something wrong, she would treat the students poorly, clearly she has no idea what it takes 2 B a good teacher. I tried 2 tell her what it takes through logic, but she wouldn't listen. Then U have [the Director of the Special Ed program] who is just as bad. One [of] the bus staff ... would sit on top of me like a chair, another bus staff ... once grabbed me by the collar outta frustration. A student ... wanted 2 B my friend, but I think he was trying 2 hard, hence my regular declination, he really got on my nerves, I tried telling him 'no', but he would still annoyingly tried, even after up 2 the point I tried giving him an allergic reaction. I will not B satisfied until a lawsuit is filed against the aforementioned people. Pass all of this on 2 everyone U know if possible and tell them to pass it on, so and so forth and hopefully we can put an end 2 the abuse. The only thing that would make all this better is if the staff would acknowledge that the students R the ones with the REAL school spirit.

Clearly my son did not feel heard and he felt objectified when he felt like he was treated as a chair. And he is not alone, as so many parents and children within the CFS system are there because they were silenced, and then continue to be silenced.

My late girl Meadow, was silenced. Her stories of abuse were ignored. Her pleas for help were not responded to. Her final statement was her death by suicidal hanging. And some finally started to hear, to listen. But many are still choosing not to listen, both of her own experiences, and the others within the CFS system who are not heard, listened to or believed. The deaths by suicide and neglect within the CFS system are continuing. And in the formal and official death reviews of every one, there are clear examples of the children and their families not being heard.

Not a day goes by that someone doesn't tell me that they have not been listened to or believed, or responded to. So I know it is continuing. As my narrations show, even within my own role as a professional I too have many examples of not being heard, or of being told to "stay quiet, or else." Directly and indirectly I have been told I will lose my job if I keep adding my voice to those who have been silenced. Directly and indirectly I have experienced attempts from others to

discredit me, and credibility within the field of social work is what we need to continue employment and to get hired.

Attacking someone's professional credibility is the number one way to silence social workers, for they will not get work, or at least be relegated to "lower" positions. Which is why I went from management at the authority level to that of a simple front-line case manager. While I know that was their effective intent of discrediting me, I also know that the front line of CFS where we work directly with children and families, is actually the most powerful position within the system. For no matter what policies, standards, and bureaucratic steps that management may or may not take, when we work human-to-human with the children and families we have unlimited opportunity to be involved in real change, real healing, and real social work. By listening to our "clients" and believing them, we are supporting them and affirming for them that their experiences are real, and that they are worthy of being believed. At the very least we can validate their humanity by believing them and by standing with them in their experiences.

And when the CFS and social work system did not want to hear what I have to say, I then turned outside of the social work box to Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). Social work by definition continues the social work-based CFS system and so too often there is only an internal social work perspective. But by looking at the CFS system and my own experiences within it through the PACS lens, we can all see things from a different perspective. We will need the internal perspective in order to make the necessary changes, but we do not need to and in my opinion cannot build sufficient peace solely within the confines of the system. In my experience, the CFS system became another weapon within the arsenal of the structural violence of colonization within Canada, and we need peace-building tools instead of (structurally) violent weapons.

Enormity of the Pain

There are many examples within my stories of pain, both my own and others'. The depths of the pain is truly life-threatening for so many. There are so many suicides like that of my girl that are due to their overwhelming pain, and there are the indirect, slower suicides within the lives of those who have given up and slide into addictions, lives of violence, going into the jails, life on the streets, and lives of violence-induced ennui.

For myself, the pain has at times also been overwhelming, emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. Every day I still encounter pain, even if it is within my relationships with others and hearing their own pain. I have felt loss, grief, anger, confusion, rage, sorrow, and torment to point where my physical body collapsed and took almost three years to heal to the point of basic functioning. The structural violence within CFS is not just numbers and statistics, and they are not just stories of others. The structural violence within CFS festers within my own pain and that of others. It continues to try to overpower me and others. It is real and in my opinion is nothing short of evil, however one chooses to define that.

Many of us live every day with the throbbing cavity ache of loss from those who have been taken from us through the structural violence and its effects. Their removal from this earth has left deep nothingness, where their bodies and spirits were intended to be. We can choose to ignore this emptiness, pretend it does not exist. But it comes back and haunts us, reminding us of the emptiness that they have left behind.

Recognizing our losses is the first step in trying to heal. Ignoring our losses only lets the pain fester inside causing more wounds. One of the teachings that I heard over and over again from Inineu and other First Nations people, is that the only real way to heal is to face the pain head on. By facing the pain and accepting its reality, we then allow it to burn into us like a kiln burns

pottery, to transform us into a new person. Our experiences become seared into our spirits and in turn, when we pray or ask that we respond within our own sense of goodness, then it can provide us with the strengths that we need to not only carry on, but to keep moving ahead in creating healing for ourselves and others. .

My Personal Sense for Meaning

The act of writing this autoethnographical has been part of my efforts at facing my pain and finding personal meaning. The simple act of writing onto paper has helped me in understanding new ways of seeing myself and my life, and of reshaping my understandings so that I can use my experiences for positive healing instead of letting my pain fester within me. Even if no one reads it, the act of putting my internal emotions, experiences and ideas onto paper has allowed me to then view things from outside, and not just navel-gazing into my own consciousness. Finding words to describe what goes on inside me helps me understand even for myself, and if others choose to read these words then there is the opportunity for them to come to know me and learn whatever they choose to learn from my words. I am no longer silent or silenced. Whether others choose to react with action or passivity, the simple act of sharing then helps transform my experiences into a further form, that of relationship. The process of sharing my inner realities externally with others through the written word automatically creates a relationship(s).

This relational outcome from my words provides me with a deep sense of meaning that allows for healing within me. It is no longer mine, it is now ours. I am no longer alone in carrying all of my experiences and emotions. This is my way of beginning peace-building, within myself to extend to others. This is consistent with the peace-building teachings of Freire, Mac Ginty and others who identify the need for the personal to become political, social, and vice versa. This symbiotic relationship between the personal and public, between the micro and the macro, is a part

of life, and if I offer myself within intentions of hope, love and peace, then the option is there for others to choose to respond in kind.

I also have the option of working within the mezzo and macro levels, supporting the Northern First Nations leadership through MKO as well as so many talented, creative, inspirational, determined and committed people within the communities who are actively peace-building every single day and night. Those who listen, and work to effect change that is based on justice, fairness and an understanding of the common wellbeing within their own people(s), are true peacebuilders. They can be found not only within official leadership roles but within every walk of life within the communities and in the towns and cities. The question is if society and governments are willing and/or able to listen to them, to truly hear.

There are even such people working within Northern First Nations CFS agencies – the ones who do choose to listen, who choose to bring the children home whenever even remotely possible, who bring the children back to their families and land, who are living the life of a peacebuilder even within the confines of the system, by trying to burst beyond the system's limitations. Recognizing that even though we are wanting to end the colonization, that like me, that all within the CFS system are forced too often to choose the lesser of evils due to the bureaucratic oppression. Together however, our voices will be too strong to be ignored.

Conclusion

By working together in ways to learn about the realities of what is really occurring within Northern First Nations CFS, we can identify when we are working as a social worker within the limited, oppressive confines of the CFS system, and when we are peace-building in response to the system's ongoing colonization. Recognizing that we all have various and fluid identities – racial,

cultural, political, professional, and personal can help blur the divisions within this identity-based conflict. By listening to each other's stories and hearing each other, all voices will be heard. The voices of the children and families are critical to keep our voice honest. Then, and only then, I am and we are, building peace in response to the structural violence and genocide of the colonization of Canada through the CFS system. This is my prayer.

Siochan/Ehkosi.

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APPENDIX 1

Manitoba Child and Family Services Act (1985) Declaration of Principles

C.C.S.M. c. C80

The Child and Family Services Act

Assented to July 11, 1985

Declaration of Principles

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba hereby declares that the fundamental principles guiding the provision of services to children and families are:

1. The safety, security and well-being of children and their best interests are fundamental responsibilities of society.
2. The family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved.
3. The family is the basic source of care, nurture and acculturation of children and parents have the primary responsibility to ensure the well-being of their children.
4. Families and children have the right to the least interference with their affairs to the extent compatible with the best interests of children and the responsibilities of society.
5. Children have a right to a continuous family environment in which they can flourish.
6. Families and children are entitled to be informed of their rights and to participate in the decisions affecting those rights.
7. Families are entitled to receive preventive and supportive services directed to preserving the family unit.
8. Families are entitled to services which respect their cultural and linguistic heritage.
9. Decisions to place children should be based on the best interests of the child and not on the basis of the family's financial status.
10. Communities have a responsibility to promote the best interests of their children and families and have the right to participate in services to their families and children.
11. Indian bands are entitled to the provision of child and family services in a manner which respects their unique status as aboriginal peoples.

APPENDIX 2

The Child and Family Services Authorities Act - Introduction

(Assented to August 9, 2002)

This version is current as of November 20, 2014.
It has been in effect since June 12, 2008.

WHEREAS the safety, security and well-being of children and families is of paramount concern to the people of Manitoba;

WHEREAS parents, families, extended families and communities have a right and a responsibility to care for their children and a right to receive preventive and supportive services directed to preserving the family unit;

WHEREAS the development and delivery of programs and services to First Nations, Metis and other Aboriginal people must respect their values, beliefs, customs and traditional communities and recognize the traditional role of women in making decisions affecting family and community;

WHEREAS it is important to recognize peoples' needs and preferences in all aspects of the management and delivery of child and family services, including preferences based on ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, familial and cultural factors;

WHEREAS the Government of Manitoba has an ongoing responsibility to ensure and oversee the provision of statutory programs and services to children and families;

THEREFORE HER MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, enacts as follows:

APPENDIX 3

Manitoba Child and Family Services Act (1985) Section 17

The Child and Family Services Act

Assented to July 11, 1985

Child in need of protection

17(1) For purposes of this Act, a child is in need of protection where the life, health or emotional well-being of the child is endangered by the act or omission of a person.

Illustrations of child in need

17(2) Without restricting the generality of subsection (1), a child is in need of protection where the child

- (a) is without adequate care, supervision or control;
- (b) is in the care, custody, control or charge of a person
 - (i) who is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care, supervision or control of the child, or
 - (ii) whose conduct endangers or might endanger the life, health or emotional well-being of the child, or
 - (iii) who neglects or refuses to provide or obtain proper medical or other remedial care or treatment necessary for the health or well-being of the child or who refuses to permit such care or treatment to be provided to the child when the care or treatment is recommended by a duly qualified medical practitioner;
- (c) is abused or is in danger of being abused, including where the child is likely to suffer harm or injury due to child pornography;
- (d) is beyond the control of a person who has the care, custody, control or charge of the child;
- (e) is likely to suffer harm or injury due to the behaviour, condition, domestic environment or associations of the child or of a person having care, custody, control or charge of the child;
- (f) is subjected to aggression or sexual harassment that endangers the life, health or emotional well-being of the child;
- (g) being under the age of 12 years, is left unattended and without reasonable provision being made for the supervision and safety of the child; or
- (h) is the subject, or is about to become the subject, of an unlawful adoption under *The Adoption Act* or of a sale under section 84. (2013)

APPENDIX 4

Letter to Chief Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair Truth and Reconciliation Commission

April 29, 2013

Dear Chief Commissioner,

As the stories and tragedies about the assimilationist genocide of the Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) unfold, there are many questions about the role that child welfare may be playing in continuing the same assimilationist genocide. The following questions are brought forth in order to add to the dialogue in the spirit of striving for truth and reconstruction of a new reality for Canada. We all need to honestly know what is really happening, and learn about how to not repeat tragedies, and work for peaceful existence free from structural violence of colonization.

This letter is to raise questions, based on my own personal experiences working in the CFS system as well as fostering, being a parent of a child in care due to disability, and an advocate. My opinions are purely my own and have developed over many years working in various offices. My statements are not officially representative of any place I have been or currently am employed. My intention is to open discussion to see if assimilationist practice continues, even if it is disguised within a system that claims to honour Aboriginal peoples.

The AJI documented the role that the original child welfare systems played in picking up where the IRSs left off in removing children from their families, communities, cultures and land-bases, and supported the development of Aboriginal⁸ child welfare services, and for these to extend beyond on-reserve services to include off-reserve as well as Métis and Non-Status people. Ten years later the AJIC furthered these recommendations and the provincial government of Manitoba responded with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI).

Many of the statements put forth within the AJI-CWI by the provincial government and Aboriginal leadership sounded optimistically promising, that child and family services (CFS) within the AJI-CWI would effectively reverse the tide of government-funded assimilation within child welfare legislations, policies and practices. However, almost nine years after its implementation, there are still many questions. Some include specific concerns of ongoing assimilation and thus also ask if the new system is actually effective at reversing the tide and providing the healing that people had hoped for and the government had advertised. And is it even worse in some ways than before?

While individuals, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, working in the system may not want assimilation, is that in fact what we are doing in some ways, or all ways? There are more children receiving CFS services in Manitoba now than at the times of the IRS schools.⁹ It can be said that

⁸ Aboriginal defined as First Nations, Métis, Non-Status and Inuit.

⁹ Blackstock et al 2004; Blackstock et al 2011; Trocme et al 2004.

many of the placements today are “culturally compatible” which means that it is not assimilation. However, this question requires a great deal of further examination with questions such as:

What is the definition of culturally compatible, and is it truly compatible or appropriate? Is placing a child of one First Nations culture with other First Nations people of a different language, customs, and traditions truly compatible? Is placing a northern Inineu child with a family with a bit of Métis heritage truly compatible? Would sending a Winnipeg Métis child of distant Ojibway heritage be culturally compatible in Lac Brochet? According to the government’s classifications, these scenarios and other questionable ones, can and often are considered “culturally compatible.”

If a child is moved away from their community, even to live with extended family, is this truly culturally compatible when it removes the child from their own land-base and physical community, since Indigenous people by definition are tied to a land-base? Is it not a right as per the UN’s Declaration on Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous people to live on their own land?

And while there are now more children-in-care (CICs) currently placed with extended family within their own communities, there are also many CICs who are not that fortunate, arguably more than at any other time within Canada’s history, even within Manitoba’s AJI-CWI system¹⁰...

It is also important to note that not only are the numbers of Aboriginal children and families in the CFS system far greater than the numbers of children and families who suffered in the IRSs, but there are increasingly high numbers of Aboriginal workers employed at all levels of the CFS system from front line up to the (theoretically) governing authorities. Is this an example of widespread internalized colonization as per Fanon (1965), Freire (1970), Chrisjohn (2002), Alfred (2009), Hart (2002, 2009), Chrisjohn 2002?

The AJI-CWI states in its purpose:

Aboriginal rights protected (Emphasis included in original text)

3 This Act must not be interpreted as abrogating or derogating from

(a) the pursuit of self-government by aboriginal peoples in Manitoba through present or future negotiations or agreements; and

(b) the aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. ... (2005).

On paper the AJI-CWI’s intentions can appear to be “protecting” Aboriginal rights, families, agencies and leadership. However, according to widespread statements from clients, agency workers, agency managements and even the authorities’ level, there is still de facto assimilation of children and families throughout the CFS system. And it is critical to point out that assimilation is considered a form of the structural violence of colonization and depending on the dynamics, can also be a form of genocide according to the United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948).

Enacting assimilation is not always the conscious intent of the people working within the system. Sometimes decisions are made at the micro/individual level to “be in the best interests of the child.” However, the macro/community/political impact is rarely considered. Even one child

¹⁰ It appears based on research and requests for information under FIPPA to the Government of Manitoba that statistics of this nature are not currently available, but my assertion is based on professional experiences and consultation with other social workers and First Nations leaders.

removed from his/her family system, community, cultural roots and land base has far reaching devastating macro effects within his or own community and society at large. Multiple this by the high numbers of Aboriginal children in care¹¹, with far too many still living away from family, community, culture and land base, and it is clear that the macro effects of aboriginal children being removed and assimilated into mainstream cultures is still continuing and at a greater rate, even though it is camouflaged within rhetoric promoting Aboriginal control of CFS.

Some workers within CFS are desperately trying to reverse the tide of loss and assimilation of children and families, and this letter is by no means directed against the well-intentioned efforts of truly selfless heroes. Note that I, myself, have been and currently am employed within Manitoba's CFS system, and thus this letter is not intended to attack workers and individuals within the system, but rather to bring forth the questions that so many of us discuss when we reflect upon the frustrations that we face working in the system. We can also remember that some people who worked in the IRSs (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) also had no conscious intention of assimilation and were trying to assist individual children, but hindsight has begun to crystalize the horrible injustices of that system's actions.

Thus it appears that those of us in the CFS system today would benefit by asking ourselves questions with regard to CFS to see if assimilation is in fact one of the outcomes of our work and if so in which ways, whether we individually choose to assimilate or not. Those of us working within the system are required to ask these questions because ignorance and denial are not excuses for educated, trained professionals. (Emphasis included in original text)

Ignorance or denial is also not an excuse for assimilation and genocide and so it is also important to remember that every other non-child welfare aspect of the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the various non-Aboriginal governments¹², has been or included one form or another of assimilation and other forms of genocide. So it begs the question, why would CFS be any different?

Is it enough to have First Nations and Métis workers and agencies doing the work of the provincial government through the AJI-CWI (with the blessing and full support of the federal government)? Are the assimilationist policies of the IRSs and early child welfare services continuing and even increasing ten-fold under the mask of Aboriginalization? (Emphasis included in original text)

A brief outline of how the AJI-CWI system works in Manitoba can shed light on if it is providing the healing from the assimilationist practices of the IRSs and original child protective services, or if it is continuing assimilation under the façade of "Aboriginal" child care services.

Intake and Assessment

The first point of contact between child welfare and potential clients is the most critical. It is at this time that a relationship begins, and that potential risk is assessed and if CFS intervention is required and if so in which way.

¹¹ Blackstock et al 2004; Blackstock et al 2011; Trocme et al 2004.

¹² These include the original colonizing forces of the British Crown, the French Crown, the Government of Canada and all of its various departments, as well as the provincial governments and their various departments as documented in many writings and research including the AJI and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

The Intake worker, is the first face and/or voice of contact, and thus sets the tone for any resulting relationship¹³. In Manitoba there are fourteen Designated Intake Agencies. Of these seven, or 50 percent are overseen by Aboriginal agencies. In Manitoba, for 2012-13 there was a total of 5960 Intakes, 53 percent of the provincial total coming through the DIA of All Nations Coordinated Response Unit (ANCR) in Winnipeg. While ANCR is an agency of the Southern First Nations CFS Authority, it is not an Aboriginal agency¹⁴ and is still deeply embedded within the mainstream provincial system. The staff are all unionized through the provincial government¹⁵, 67 percent of the workers are non-Aboriginal¹⁶, the primary emergency placements resources¹⁷ that they utilize are non-Native (and also run by unionized provincial employees), and they follow the provincial legislation, regulations and policies to a T. They are also not connected to any First Nations or Métis leadership and thus are not directly accountable to any Aboriginal government¹⁸.

The Intake stage sets the stage for any ongoing relationship between the families and the CFS system and since 2009 the worker begins the relationships with a risk assessment using the standardized “Wisconsin-based Children’s Research Centre, which is the copyright holder of the tools (Structured Decision Making®)” (Changes for Children 2012). Even though many Aboriginal agencies voiced their concerns and rejection of the tool’s validity for their families, the provincial government pushed it through. The provincial government states in its Standards that there is not a universal tool for assessing risk within CFS intakes, but, within the CFS computerized database system, it is required to input the results of the standardized assessment tool, and compliance within the computerized database system is required for funding to be provided.

The Standardized Risk Assessment tool was externally designed by non-Aboriginals with a criteria that was determined by mainstream American statistics, needs and values. This is extremely concerning because it does not reflect Aboriginal families structures, history or needs. For example, large families are defined in the tool to be a risk factor, and yet within Aboriginal culture, large families are still the norm compared to mainstream families. It also does not describe how large families within an Aboriginal culture is a risk, when in fact there are indicators that it is often a strength. A history of alcohol and drug abuse within the family as well as involvement with

¹³ Hon. Ted Hughes supports this need for Intake to be culturally compatible and provide continuity for families with consistent workers in his highly awaited report, “The Legacy of Phoenix Sinclair, Achieving the Best for All Our Children” 2013.

¹⁴ An example of its distinct status with the Southern Authority, is the way that the SA did not include ANCR’s Intakes stats in their 2012-13 Annual Report.

¹⁵ With unionized staff, it is very difficult to include many Aboriginal aspects such as hiring Elders and having cultural workers not able to work after 4:30. It also holds ANCR accountable to the union over and above other stakeholders such as Aboriginal leadership.

¹⁶ 2013 Annual Report Southern First Nations Network of Care.

¹⁷ Emergency placements are usually the first placement of children brought into care. Statistically within ANCR most children are usually placed in EPR Shelters or hotel placements.

¹⁸ This is contrary to First Nations and Métis agencies who at least on paper have a working relationship with governing bodies such as Chiefs and Councils and Métis governments.

the justice system are automatically “risk factors” without taking into consideration the role that colonization has played in increasing these rates in Aboriginal families.

The Structured Decision-Making Risk Assessment Tool ends up having more power than any First Nations worker or agency because it not only dictates the risk assessment but the resulting actions. When a family scores a certain level, then apprehensions can be dictated by the Tool. And even though supervisors may try to over-ride the resulting decision, should a tragedy occur within the family, it is highly probable that the supervisor’s decision will be deemed unacceptable. Thus, a non-culturally appropriate standardized tool is the bottom-line decision maker for Aboriginal families receiving CFS services of any kind.

The DIAs remain involved with families for up to 3 months. They also provide the directions for actions for the receiving Aboriginal agencies through the case plan, and when children have come into care, it is often entered into court orders. For example, if children have been apprehended into care by a DIA, then the expectations for the parents can already be encoded into the court order and are thus required to be completed by the parents prior to the children being returned to them even if the file is transferred to an Aboriginal agency. While this may sound reasonable at first, it does not address the concerns of:

The needs and history of the parents have not been fully documented due to cultural chasms within the assessment, and there is little opportunity to include their assets and strengths.

The parents may not be able to complete the requirements if they normally live on-reserve and the required services are not available there or adequate (e.g. substance abuse treatment, mental health, parenting classes etc.).

Even if the parents normally reside in the community of the DIA, the expectations that the DIA places on them may not be reasonable or culturally appropriate and thus this greatly decreases the chances of the parents having their children returned to them.

If an Aboriginal agency veers from the DIA’s recommendations and a tragedy occurs, it would be the Aboriginal agency that would then be criticized for not following the recommendations. If the Aboriginal agency develops its own case plan and all goes well, there is no recognition that it met the family’s needs.

It is clear that Intake, the first point of contact, is pivotal, and that this critical step within the CFS process is still not in the hands of the majority of Aboriginal service providers. The majority of Aboriginal families are still beginning their relationships with the CFS with non-Aboriginal workers, agencies and standards, and the Aboriginal agencies have very limited opportunity to rectify any shortcomings or problems that their families thus face.

In-Home Services and its Gaps Which Leads to the Provincial Government Assuming Non-Aboriginal Guardianship and Care

In-home services (when the children remain with their parents) can range from services and assessments at the time of Intake, to voluntary preventive services, to involuntary services through protection files, and to enforced services through provincial court-ordered Supervisory Orders.

The greatest challenge for all agencies in providing In-Home Services is the lack of sufficient funding. The funding arrangements both on and off-reserve are completely insufficient and too often leave coming-into-care the only option to keep children safe. Too many reserves do not have the social infrastructure to provide the necessary supports to prevent apprehension. It is ironic since

it ends up costing the government far more money to provide for a child in care than to provide for the same child's needs within his or her family. It is simply a matter of one pocket of the budget (in-home services) being so shallow and empty, while the other pocket (in care) is far deeper. Simple services such as parent-aides, or youth workers for children whose behaviours place themselves at risk, have shallow limits of opportunity to be provided to children in home, and usually for very limited amounts of time. If the same child or family's children are in care, there is a much greater opportunity for these services and they can continue if need be until the children ages out of care. Too many children come into care for these very reasons.

When a culturally appropriate agency is providing the voluntary preventive services (e.g. Family Enhancement (FE)), there is a greater opportunity for effective intervention which means that there is a greater chance that the children will remain with their parents/families. However, in Winnipeg, it is ANCR who determines if and when a family may be eligible for FE services. Intakes must start at ANCR, even if a family directly calls their home-based agency. The agency must automatically refer the request to ANCR who then assesses the needs of the family. If ANCR, the SDM and the family reach the conclusion that they are eligible for FE services, then the family actually stays with ANCR for up to 6 months. And then it is only if the family continues to want FE services that the family is referred out of the Intake agency of ANCR to another agency. And, First Nations and Métis agencies' funding for such FE programs is based solely on a per-case basis¹⁹ meaning that the funding is based on the numbers of referrals from ANCR. A dip in numbers can and will mean that the FE worker positions will be removed, meaning that there could soon be no FE services in the Winnipeg Aboriginal offices. As well, the province and AANDC expect the agencies to rectify the FE families' challenges within six months and no longer, even though most of the families are dealing with intergenerational trauma from colonization. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation acknowledged that it takes up to 36 months for families to reach the point of beginning to deal with the underlying trauma and challenges.²⁰

In urban areas such as Winnipeg, there are also still far too few culturally appropriate in-home services available both within the CFS agencies and in collateral city-based services. While there are a lot more "Aboriginal" services it is important to note that most of these services are run by urbanized Aboriginal people, and many families from more distant communities are not immediately comfortable with urban ways even when there are Aboriginal staff. It is critical to remember that there are extreme differences in languages, cultures, histories and life-experiences within Aboriginal communities across the province and Aboriginalized services do not always take this into consideration. In my direct experience, when a family chooses to not participate in these urban services, ANCR (and others) have stated it as "client resistance to interventions" rather than recognizing the family's rights to practice their culture and ways according to their community's teachings.

¹⁹ Funding for provincially funded families (i.e. off-reserve) for FE, Services to Families and Protection categories is based on \$1300/year per entire family, and this also includes the funds to cover the costs of the FE workers and supervisors within the agencies.

²⁰ According to Myrna Gamblin, Director KSMA Norway House Family Enhancement Program.

For example, it is common for urban services to attempt to “teach culture” to Northern First Nations or Métis people, and by culture they mean ceremonies that originated in southern communities of different languages, customs, governing systems and land-bases. And ironically, it is often urbanized Aboriginal people trying to “teach culture” when they themselves do not know their own languages, or have any strong connections to their communities of origin. While their intentions are good, it can then become confusing for Northern and other land-based aboriginals as to why they need to learn these cultures when they are already proficient in their own languages, have a strong connection to their communities of origin and have a strong base in their own land territories and knowledge of their relationships to their lands.

Thus the issue of culturally compatible services for off-reserve families is still not adequately addressed even though on paper the family is receiving “culturally compatible services” since their file is simply open within an Aboriginal agency or they are accessing “Aboriginal” collateral services, which makes CFS appear effective when it is not. It is my conclusion that sadly and not even intentionally, assimilation continues, even when it is at the hands of other Aboriginal agencies, people and resources.

On-reserve, there is still a critical deficit across the province and the country of available and sufficient resources in general to assist children to remain with their families due to insufficient funding from the federal government. One example, is education.²¹ An AANDC internal departmental evaluation confirmed that “there is no evidence that funding allocations from regional offices to First Nations were based on any rationale that takes the current structure of educational responsibilities into account.”

Many youth are still forced to leave their communities to complete high school, and also students with special needs do not receive adequate education funding or services on reserve which often leads to the child having to come into care due to resulting challenging behaviours. There are extremely limited resources for children with extra needs as evidenced by the lack of educational resources for them and even more importantly by the lack of special needs services in general. Children with developmental challenges have virtually no access to services on-reserve as found in the evidence of the Human Rights court case that Cindy Blackstock is undertaking.

It is unknown as to how many children from reserves have had to enter into the provincial government’s CFS care in order to receive survival services that do not exist in their communities due to the lack of federal funding for such services and infrastructures and an unwillingness to provide these on-reserve services. These include not only developmental challenges but basic medical as well. Children with serious and chronic medical needs are required to live in reasonable proximity to medical services, but when these services do not exist in their area they are forced to be placed in care in placements close to the services. And, virtually all of these placements are with people of cultures other than their own.

Accurate statistics are not available for these types of placements, in part due to the province’s definition of culturally appropriate placements. For example, when a child from a

²¹ Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Formative Evaluation of the Elementary/Secondary Education Program On Reserve, 24 February 2010.

northern reserve is placed in care in Winnipeg through their mandated First Nation agency, it is often assumed that this means that the placement is culturally compatible since their own agency accessed the placement.

Tragically, the Winnipeg offices of Aboriginal agencies rarely have the ability to place children, especially high needs children, in placements of their own, actual cultures, due to lack of availability. And, most of the time they are placed in well-intentioned foster parents of a “third culture” meaning, a family of recent immigrants who still speak their own languages, eat their own traditional foods and live by their own cultures. Thus the foster children are not only removed from their own identities, and are not even in “mainstream” Canadian placements, but placements that are still culturally rooted overseas. If these homes are licensed by Aboriginal agencies, then in some circumstances the system considers them to be appropriate since the agency “chose” them. Even Aboriginal agencies are continuing to place the majority of their children in non-Aboriginal placements (emphasis included in original text) because there are not enough Aboriginal families meeting the rigid qualifications to be licensed, and no funds being provided to off-reserve offices of Aboriginal agencies to hire placement workers,

Aboriginal CFS offices that are off-reserve are almost exclusively provincially funded, and the province does not provide any monies at all to hire placement workers. Winnipeg CFS receives funds to hire foster care and other placement workers, and AANDC provides some monies for on-reserve placement workers, but off-reserve the agencies have zero funding provided. Thus it becomes extremely hard and at times impossible to locate and then access culturally appropriate homes for any Aboriginal CICs off-reserve as agencies end up having to use existing services rather than create culturally appropriate ones.

Thus while the goal is to keep all children, including high-needs children in their families and communities of origin, in hundreds of cases, children, and especially high-needs children, have no option but to come into care and be placed away from their families, communities, languages, cultures, and land-base which is an Indigenous right as per the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). Thus at best, the image of cultural correctness within the AJI-CWI’s own image, is actually very blurred and skewed.

Children-in-Care

If a child is deemed to be in need of coming into care for any reason, there are a number of options for both types of child-in-care statuses and different placements.

In-care (placed out of home):

Voluntary Placement Agreement	Voluntary
Voluntary Surrender of Guardianship	Voluntary
Apprehension	Protection
Temporary Order	Protection
Permanent Order	Protection

VPAs are intended for when children need to come into care for a short time with the full consent of the parents who remain the legal guardians and with no known “protection” concerns that could interfere. For example, if parents want/need to attend residential treatment for substance abuse and need a place for their children to be cared for until the parents have returned to their

home they can choose to place their children in care. They can also be used for children who need to come into care due to medical or developmental challenges and are unable to have their needs met while living at home. The keys are that the parents need to be able and fit to come to the decision willingly, that the parents and agencies are able to work cooperatively together, that there is a specific care plan in place to facilitate the return of the child in less than 12 to 18 months (unless it is due to long-term medical needs) and that there are no protection concerns per se. For example if a child needs to come into care due to risk or history of abuse from his/her parents then VPAs are not supposed to be used for the simple reason that with VPA the parents are still the guardians and by law have the right to full access to their children at any time.

Unfortunately, there are First Nations agencies (particularly on-reserve) who have [had to use] VPAs as a simpler option to the complex and costly court-ordered forms of being in care. In communities where there are no CFS court sittings, the parents are unable to attend the court proceedings for their children anyway due to prohibitive costs and challenges in dealing with a foreign and overwhelming court system. Thus even the parents have preferred to sign VPAs.

However, rarely have they been told that under VPAs that they, the parents are still the legal guardian and that they have every right (and in fact every responsibility) to continue to be the decisions makers for their children over both simple and important things such as school registration, medical treatments, and where the child is placed or at least the type of placement, and even when they can come home.

The agencies too often have a history of assuming the role of de facto guardian under VPAs and making all of these decisions and even deciding when or if the children will be returned, without the parents knowing or understanding that they have the right to assist in choosing services and to request the return of their children at any time. If the parents used this right to return their child, then the agency could enact an apprehension to keep the child in care, but the agency then needs to present their reasons and plans to the court for approval through either a Temporary or Permanent Order. The parents however would then have the opportunity to have their own case and plans presented to the third party of the courts and thus have (at least in theory) an impartial decision made.

Sadly, there are too many occasions when agencies have simply assumed the role of guardian and taken over all care of the children in VPAs without giving the families the opportunities to retain their role as parents and/or have the opportunity for an impartial decision to be made by the courts. It is an example of agencies assuming provincially-granted power over the families and at times not always using it fairly or appropriately. I personally know of hundreds of examples of children's, parents and communities' rights being abused or ignored due to agency workers illegally assuming the guardianship role over CICS in care under VPAs. And within the VPA process there is basically no avenue of recourse, arbitration or appeal for the parents or the Aboriginal leadership within the VPA process. Aboriginal agencies have then assumed the role of judge, guardian and caregiver, with little if any accountability. Is this an example of internalized colonization?

And with regard to court-ordered Temporary and Permanent Orders, it is critical to remember, that even if the agency involved is Aboriginal, and/or if all steps within the process occur on-reserve, that once the child comes into care through a court order, that the Province of

Manitoba is in fact the legal guardian of the child. Even if there is a good working relationship with local agency workers and the child remains in his/her extended family and/or own community, the legal reality is that the child is a ward of the province. Thus when a child comes into care there is inevitably an automatic effect of assimilation into provincial guardianship even if all of the parties are working together in the best ways possible.

Abuse Investigations

Prior to the AJI-CWI, First Nations agencies had more control over their responses to disclosure of abuse and how they chose to intervene. While there are many examples of insufficient and/or inappropriate responses, there are also many examples of effective responses in the past. Now however, the abuse responses are 100 percent dictated by provincially-developed “experts” in conjunction with the criminal justice system. There is currently a large overlap between child protection and the criminal justice system, and in my opinion we need to question the overall effectiveness of this current approach.

The system requires that all potential abuse investigations be referred to the police and then when deemed potentially true and provable, also sent to the criminal courts. This removes all opportunities for community input, traditional intervention, and polarizes individuals within the families and communities. It also prevents the community leadership from having any role which had always been their responsibility. It literally takes everyone’s and the community’s power away from them, and places it within the government and criminal justice systems and court systems that have a history of centuries of colonization and oppression (AJI 1991).

Aboriginal families are still directly affected by the generations of colonization (and particularly the residential schools) and physical and sexual abuse has infiltrated too many communities to horrifying degrees. This has been highly documented already through the AJI (1991), the RCAP (1996), and the TRC (2012). Stop and think: if one person in an Aboriginal community is an abuser (which can almost always be traced back to residential school experiences or other colonial experiences), the numbers of “victims” can be very large, and these “victims” can then affect others and possibly act out the abuse to more “victims”. The effects are numerically and socially exponential. Thus it has vast community effects.

However, responding with criminal justice reactions does not usually resolve the problems. When an abuser is sent to jail, yes, he or she cannot abuse others in their community while they are in jail. But they come back without any healing and often worse off than before. This also divides families as some support the “abuser” and too often the “victim” is shunned and even forced to leave the community. The shortcomings and abuses within these systems is well documented (AJI 1991; RCAP 1996). Yet the AJI-CWI has furthered the provincial government and criminal justice’s influence within First Nations and Métis communities through the CFS and criminal justice systems automatic and over-riding authority, rather than empowering Aboriginal communities. The people are left with less power now than before.

Where, is there any opportunity for community based healing when the decisions and power and control are all externally based within the provincial government systems? And, removing children from their families at the time of disclosure, and then if charges are laid the “abusers” from their families and communities (as per the current mode of operation) could potentially leave communities decimated. Some communities have an underground knowledge of the extent of

physical and sexual abuse that is occurring, but people are choosing to not report it because the consequences and effects can be even more destructive. There are some communities where if the letter of the law and policies were upheld, that very large proportions of the communities could theoretically be charged, and/or directed by CFS to not have access to children. And how could this happen within a small community other than to remove these vast numbers of people from their own communities? The effect on the community would be utter decimation.

Even youth who are victims are painfully, excruciatingly painfully, aware of the consequences if they speak out. To speak out could (and usually would) mean that they themselves, and their own family and community members would be sent away and too often to prison. And while the abuse is wrong and destructive, often these same abusers contribute to the community in other positive ways as well, and all this would then also be removed. When we read the child death reports of many of the Aboriginal youth who commit suicide, and as I remember personal statements and stories from some who have suicided, it becomes apparent to me that many of them choose to die to either keep their pain secret or because when they did tell, their community and/or the system was helpless to respond. They do not believe that they have a safe way to express their experiences, as when they have tried to tell their stories in the past they were removed from their loving, albeit broken people, who had had been caring for them. They were left with nothing, or at least a sense of nothingness. No matter how hard it tries, the CFS system cannot possibly replace the strength, the reality of connectedness and identity that a self-managing tribal family system can.

Perhaps we need to reconsider the definitions of “safety” and “risk”. What is a greater risk: potential further abuse (that can be prevented through effective monitoring and community-based healing) or removal of children from the only world they know to be left with strangers with a sense of emptiness? (Emphasis included in original text)

Right now, far too often the only options that CFS have is to remove children, at least until abuse investigations are complete. And when abuse is deemed “founded” either through the CFS system or the criminal justice system, then there are doors in the child’s life that are irrevocably locked. Doors to their families and identities and worldviews. And it appears (based on my personal experiences and that of countless other CFS workers) that the AJI-CWI has increased the necessity to remove children, rather than to develop any forms of effective community interventions to bring true healing through prevention of future abuse and community health. Within the AJI-CWI system, all workers, even on-reserve, are now required to adhere to the rigid dictates of the provincial regulations, standards and policies. Failure to do so can and does result in firings, and the withholding of basic funds for the agencies to operate, and potentially criminal charges against workers. When an agency repeatedly attempts to operate in ways that do not follow the provincial dictates, for whatever reason, the province, AANDC and the authorities step in with Section Four Reviews, and/or inserting co-directors into the agency to be the final decision maker. As workers, we know we are not accomplishing what needs to be done to protect the communities, but our options are severely and at time completely limited to the provincial dictates. Where is there Aboriginal control within this process?

Court-Ordered Statuses

When a child comes into care under apprehension, there are unfortunately times when out of necessity for immediate safety it results in a Temporary or Permanent Order for reasons that are necessary to protect the child at that time. For example, if parents are severely abusive to their child and show no indication of being able to recognize their behaviours or of the need to change their behaviours, there is little or no option but to place the child in care through the courts. This is even more critical if the parents are attempting to retrieve the child on their own or are interfering with any of the required interventions that are in place to protect the child.

Sadly, there are significant numbers of examples of these kinds within Aboriginal families, at least during the initial times of CFS involvement and/or apprehension. Usually these situations are deeply motivated by alcohol and drug addictions which are messing up the parents' abilities to think and function. Sadder still is the fact that once the courts enter into the lives of the families, the courts by definition take on more responsibility and role than not only the families, but the agencies themselves and also the Aboriginal leadership which historically had a the role of being the arbitrator and final decision maker in matters relating to children and families. Is this not the ultimate in assimilation when Aboriginal children become the wards of provincial courts? Is this not akin to the federal government's Indian Act's role of assuming guardianship over Indians/First Nations?

Is this not assimilation in its purest form, even if the workers' and agencies intentions are simply the protection of children? Can there not be other ways to "protect" children that do not require (even under the best of scenarios) the assimilation of children into other ways of life and under the control of non-Aboriginal governments? And the literal loss of children to other families and cultures? And at worst, the total loss of identity, family and culture which has been identified as a factor in so many suicides of children who were wards of CFS? And that same loss of identity, family, culture and land is a right that the UN recognizes within its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

Can there not be a way to respect the traditional roles within Aboriginal communities of their own leadership stepping in to protect their communities' children? Cannot BCRs or traditional forms of decrees be enacted so that the community can enact its own responsibility and right to take care of its own children? Spallumcheen Indian Band in BC has this option, and so there is a legal precedent within the Canadian government and courts systems. So what is stopping us from supporting Aboriginal communities to enact their own rights and responsibilities rather than only mandating adherence to provincial laws, regulations and authority?

Regulations, standards and policies

Many Aboriginal workers and agencies are the first to understand that the current system means that they are enacting assimilationist structural violence even though their intent is to simply protect children from harm or neglect at the hands of their parents who have been through the cycles of violence from the residential schools. But too often there is no other option for some children than to come into care. Many workers have literally saved countless lives through apprehensions, and we must not overlook this critical service. Yet, once children are in care, even the workers and agencies are at the complete and utter control of the provincial system.

Once in care (through the courts or also through VPAs) the workers and agencies are limited in their placement and service options, and forced to adhere to regulations and standards that have

been created by mainstream systems and their employees. Once a child comes into care, the agency is required to ensure that the child's placement meets certain criteria that are outlined in detail in the regulations and standards whether they be in licensed residential facilities (group homes, treatment centres, ANCR's EPR shelters etc.), licensed foster homes, places of safety, or even parental care while under apprehension or court orders.

The licensed residential facilities must meet volumes of specifications that meet civic as well as CFS regulations²². They are staffed placements, which means that their staff are hired by managers who are accountable usually to boards and or government appointees. While there are often efforts made "to incorporate aboriginal culture", again it a generic pan-Indian culture which can be an introduction for children and youth who for whatever reason were raised away from their people, land and ways. However it is sometimes superficial and often has little connection to the lived realities of those who were raised within their people, land and ways. Winnipeg, most emergency placements are within ANCR's EPR system or hotel placements which are not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal children, and like the intake's importance as the first point of contact between clients and the system, a child's first placement in the system sets the tone and relationship for that child with the system.

Foster homes and places of safety, even those on-reserve which is technically federal jurisdiction, are required to meet the volumes of regulations and standards that the provincial government has developed. They are not suited to most on-reserve situations. Simple examples such as a separate bed for each foster child, the amount of bedroom space per foster child, the diameters of windows, the furniture required, the need for no adults in the home to have criminal records or child protection histories, the need for the adults to not have any medical conditions that may interfere, the need for all visitors and guests into the home to be "approvable", can prevent a child from being placed either with extended family or even remain within their own community.

It is not even known how many Aboriginal children could remain in the communities if there were placements available for them. And as long as the standards of living on-reserve and in Métis communities are significantly less than mainstream society, there will not be enough placements within their own communities. As long as provincial regulations and policies take priority over the rights of children to remain with their people, their languages, their land, then their rights outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) will not be upheld, and they will continue to be assimilated.

Further compounding the challenges within foster care is the provincially legislated foster parent appeal process (CFS Act Sec. 51) which commonly prevents Aboriginal agencies from removing children from foster placements for any reason, including protection reasons which are supposed to trump all other needs. Through this act, foster parents have de facto greater rights than the agencies, the authorities, and even the children themselves who have requested their right to move placements. It enforces that the children remain in the questionable foster home throughout a lengthy process that can take years, and by then, appeal and court decisions have proven that

²² With so many standards and regulations to be met, it makes it extremely challenging at best, and too often impossible for reserves and northern communities to meet these rigid criteria for residential facilities due to lack of available resources and/or the high costs of meeting these rigorous standards.

“the stability of the child” (according to non-Aboriginal criteria) trumps all other issues in almost all situations in order to provide “consistency” for the child and they remain in that foster home.

As well, there are increasing numbers of foster parents who are so determined to prevent their foster children being returned to their communities and at times even having contact with their families, that they are applying for Private Guardianship through the courts and there is basically nothing that the agencies, authorities or the First Nations themselves can do to stop this loss of their children. In the name of “consistency in care” (according to non-Aboriginal criteria), the courts are granting private guardianship orders to the non-Aboriginal applicants in increasing numbers. Once again the ability of Aboriginal communities to care for their own children and to even retain any connection with them is being thwarted.

How is it then that the AJI-CWI claims to have returned powers to Aboriginal agencies and people, when efforts to return children in care to their communities of origin have consistently been prevented by the provincial government’s own legislation and courts?

To develop more placements within Aboriginal communities would be of benefit, but currently there are nowhere near enough financial and actual resources to create enough placements. There is no funding within Aboriginal communities for the development of more placements as they do not receive even equivalent funding for the hiring of placement workers, nor any provincial training dollars for caregivers even though agencies within the General Authority receive foster care training dollars. On-reserve there are usually not even any available buildings in which to develop residential placements.

And again, the standards and regulations are not compatible with Aboriginal lifestyles. So to develop a placement that meets provincial expectations would mean that most likely it would not be compatible with the lifestyle of the community. One example is the way some communities attempt to have land-based treatment placements for youth, and yet these are completely outside the realm of CFS standards. Thus, at best they exist hidden in subterfuge. The youth’s internationally recognized right to live on their own land and in their own ways must be hidden if it is to exist at all. Has the AJI-CWI done anything to support Aboriginal children’s connections to their own land, and if so, in what way? (Emphasis included in original text)

High-Risk Youth

As stated above, an increasing number of Aboriginal children and youth have no option but to come into the care of CFS due to a lack of services available to them due to their special needs. This can occur both in urban areas and on-reserve and in rural Aboriginal communities.

For example, when a child’s medical or developmental needs are greater than a family’s ability to provide for in their home, there is no option but to come into care through CFS. Other provinces offer placements through disabilities services, but in Manitoba it has to be through CFS, even when the parents have no child protection-related concerns. It is simply because the needs of the child exceed that of any parents to provide for on their own. This is in violation of the rights of children with disabilities²³ and is a travesty for children of all cultures in Manitoba, but it is even more poignant for Aboriginal children and youth.

²³ See the United Nation Declarations on the Rights of the Child (1959) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975).

... On-reserve, there are no comparable services to the Manitoba's provincial Children's (dis)Abilities services which provide supports, respites, medical equipment etc. so that children can remain with their families. Even in [northern communities] which [are] larger in population than many other rural communities with medical services, there is a dearth of such services, and thus well over a [hundreds of children from the North] are placed through the AJI-CWI system far away in Winnipeg and area, with non-[First Nations] placements. Thus, how is assimilation being prevented for these children and families?

Jordan's Principle was created to both provide services on-reserve and also to ensure that children's needs are provided for immediately rather than having financial and jurisdictional disputes prevent services. And even though both the provincial and federal governments solemnly declared their support, in practice it does not exist. Children are commonly bounced around various systems off-reserve as they argue between themselves over who is responsible and who has to pay.

This is especially apparent with youth who have multi-high-risk needs. These are youth whose needs are complex, and not necessarily medically related. These needs can include any combination of violent behaviours of their own, histories of severe abuse, substance abuse, sexual exploitation, involvement with the justice system, gang risk or entrenchment, suicide risk and attempts, severe mental health issues, homelessness, lack of family and supports etc.

Youth with multi-high-risk needs rarely if ever are in culturally-compatible placements because they rarely if ever exist. And when Aboriginal agencies have attempted to develop placements for such youth, they meet resistance every step of the way. Even when there are caregivers and support workers available, obtaining the funding is a challenge at best and now is effectively impossible. It is hard enough to fund special rates for pre-existing specialized placements, let alone develop new placements that are culturally based.

All children in care with any form of special needs can receive additional supports through the provincially developed and administered special rates process. While Aboriginal agencies have their own special rates committees to approve and administer these rates and services, ever since June 2012 when the province mandated the Individual Rate Adjustment Protocol with no advance notice, they then need to be approved as well at the Authority level, and any rates for Level 3 – 5 then also need to be approved by the province's Child Protection Branch. In all agencies' experiences, once it reaches the CPB level, there are additional hurdles and often barriers hurled at the case plan. Rarely are the agencies' case plans requested rates approved as they initially developed them even when a child's life depends on the placement services.

And, this lengthy process of up to 20 or 30 or more approval steps and signatures, delays the funding being provided to the caregivers. This has resulted in large numbers of placements either collapsing or not even starting due to waiting too long for funding, or the denial of funding. The amount of bureaucratic time that workers and agencies have to spend in order to get even the most obvious and minimal of special rates is also highly prohibitive and distracts workers and agencies from the time that is required for crisis intervention and/or to develop relationships with their clients. Multiple forms are to be completed, often repeating the same information in different formats, including complex financial breakdowns, and only to be repeated in six months or sooner if the child's needs worsen and the placement breaks down.

And this is when the placements and services are achievable but does not address the thousands of children in less than acceptable placements, or whose requests for funding have been denied or postponed long-term, and/or are homeless due to extended awols. On any given night there are hundreds of CICs and other youth in hotel placements or awol by choice, or in less than safe placements due to insufficient placements combined with utterly oppressive methods of developing placements and having the funding approved. Which then begs the question of how this special rates process within the AJI-CWI system prevents assimilation and/or assists Aboriginal communities in strengthening their own resources and services?

Governing and Administrative Issues

The AJI-CWI initially sounded like the Aboriginal influence would spread outward from the home communities and leadership. It was believed by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals that the Aboriginal influence and authority would increase beyond the confines of only on-reserve. This is evident in the Aboriginal leadership's statements of support and optimism for the perceived increase in their role within CFS. It was also apparent in the non-Aboriginal foster parents' preemptive move with successful lobbying efforts to add in the Foster Parent Appeal clause into the CFS Act to "protect" their Aboriginal foster children from being removed.

But as the AJI-CWI unfolded beginning in 2005, it quickly became apparent that instead of strengthening on-reserve CFS and increased Aboriginal influence off-reserve, that in fact the opposite happened. There was quickly an increased presence of provincial dictates and control on-reserve and the new Aboriginal offices off-reserve were expected and increasingly directed to simply act like standard mainstream CFS. (Emphasis included in original text)

Prior to the AJI-CWI there was minimal expectation that the services on-reserve needed to meet provincial standards and regulations, and even if it was expected, there was minimal ability to enforce the provincial system on-reserve. Now however, the provincial policies, standards and regulations are being enforced on-reserve through both the provincial and federal governments as evidenced through their willingness to release or not release funds dependent on meeting provincial requirements. Is this not further assimilation into the federal-provincial-municipal structure that the federal government attempted in the 1969 White Paper and so many later policies including the 1983 Penner Report and the dissolution of the Joint Framework Agreement etc.?

The loss of Phoenix Sinclair and the resulting in-depth investigations and the highly funded 2006 Changes for Children Initiative gave 200 enforceable recommendations that were often contrary to the written spirit and intent of the AJI-CWI. There were eight themes from the Final Report (2010) that on paper appear to be potentially helpful. For example, increased funding for Primary Prevention Programs is good, but as usual most if not all of the funding went to non-Aboriginal organizations. They have Aboriginal clients, but they are not Aboriginal-led or overseen.

One theme identified the need for the provincial CFS computer system CFSIS to extend across the province even on-reserve to provide a common database so that information could easily be shared both within agencies, between agencies and through afterhours and Designated Intake Agencies (DIA) so that children and families' needs and risks could be immediately available to responders (Changes for Children 2010). In theory this sounds like a logical and practical way to improve communication and therefore services. However, not only is this impractical in some

areas of the province that have limited internet access, it is also biased in that Aboriginal agencies have very limited access to the data in the system compared to the non-Aboriginal agencies and authorities. There is limited access to the information in the computerized data base to the Aboriginal agencies and even at the Authorities level compared to ANCR, and the General Authority and its agencies. And all provincial funding for Aboriginal agencies is based on the input of all required information of cases into CFSIS. In other words, even if an agency is providing any kind of service to a family, the province will not recognize nor compensate the agency for the services if the family's information is not updated consistently on a computer system that is antiquated²⁴ and not even accessible in all agency offices.

And, the Northern First Nations leadership (MKO) has consistently refused to agree to the inclusion of federally funded children and families into the data base. They base this on their historical relationship that is directly with the Crown (federal government) and they are concerned that their communities' private information would be used and abused within the provincial CFS system²⁵. And now the provincial government refuses to release basic funds to agencies unless the CFSIS information is up to date on both provincially and federally funded families, which in other words means the province is using CFSIS to enforce its own control on its own terms.

Changes for Children correctly identified the need for the federal government to increase its funding to on-reserve CFS services in order to bring the rates up to that of the province. This is an obvious need, but a large part of the province's intent is so that it can then hold the reserve communities accountable to provincial standards, even though many of them are simply not practical on-reserve and not financially attainable under current or even improved federal funding amounts. While the province is correct in its assessment for a need to equalize the CFS funding, it can also then have the adverse effect of assuming even greater direct control over on-reserve service provision through provincial legislation, regulations and policies.

Role of Aboriginal Leadership within the AJI-CWI

What is the role of Aboriginal leadership? What are the roles within the Leadership Council? Why is it that even in the province's own diagram of the AJI-CWI structure, that the Leadership Council is set apart from the rest of the pyramid and connected only by a dotted line? Why are Chiefs prevented from using their traditionally recognized power? Why are there too many examples of First Nations agencies and authorities fighting against their own political leadership? Why do they claim that when First Nations leadership wants to be aware of what is happening with their own children and people, even statistically, that it is deemed as "interference"? Why is it that when Northern First Nations leadership has asked for accountability they are accused of interference? Why is it that when the Southern Chiefs Organization asked for accountability from its own Southern CFS Authority, that they were slapped with a law suit by their own authority for interference? The provincial legislature can ask for mainstream accountability, so why not Aboriginal leadership?

²⁴ The dismal shortcomings of the CFSIS system are well documented in Hon. Ted Hughes' "The Legacy of Phoenix Sinclair, Achieving the Best for All Our Children" 2013 as well as Changes for Children and other reports.

²⁵ This distrust of sharing private information is entirely based on historical experiences of having that information turned and used against them individually and as communities.

Where is the respect for the role that Chiefs and Councils and Métis leaders have always had in overseeing the care of their own children and families? There are too many examples of the leadership being silenced or ignored when they voice their opinions, directions or concerns. How then can the AJI-CWI system be considered culturally compatible when it ignores and denies the traditional roles that the leadership have and continue to try to have in the care of their own children? If there is no place for Aboriginal leadership and governance within the AJI-CWI, then how can it be considered to be “Aboriginal”? (Emphasis included in original text)

Why can we not look into developing processes that are based on communities’ traditional child care and leadership/governance ways? If Aboriginal leadership exerted their right and responsibility to oversee and care for their own children, would not the need for CFS and child protective services decrease significantly?

Can we not work for the eradication of the need for European-based child protection services, rather than further entrench its influence within Aboriginal communities which is appears is currently happening under the AJI-CWI? Can we do this by strengthening the role that Aboriginal leadership has traditionally held and that is recognized within with United Nations?

Benefits of AJI-CWI

The greatest benefit of the AJI-CWI is that it recognized the fact that “Aboriginality” is not limited to location. The identity of being Ininew, Anishinaabe, Dakota, Dene, Métis, etc. goes with people regardless of current residence or geography. In other words, even when a family leaves their homelands of their reserves or Métis lands, their identity is recognized within the AJI-CWI. Even if a family moves from a Northern community to Winnipeg, they are still entitled (in theory) to services in the city that meet their needs and rights within their own identity.

This is a very positive and influential fact. However, as the questions in this letter and reports and comments from other people clearly bring forth, the question is whether the Aboriginal rights of the families are actually being upheld within this new system, regardless of location. Are the family’s rights being upheld away from their land base, or is it actually the reverse where the non-Aboriginal influence is flowing in the opposite direction where the province and its authority is spreading into Aboriginal communities?

Positives of AJI-CWI also include that some workers and placements have been able to forge good relationships with their youth, children and families. Some workers and placements have been able to work their magic within the confines of the system. However, there are many others who abuse their power either intentionally or unintentionally and there are few if any appeal or advocacy processes within the system since the system itself retains full and absolute power, even over Aboriginal governments.

In my own experience, there have been several times when elected members of the Manitoba Government have appeared to sincerely attempt to support the AJI-CWI’s intention of honouring Aboriginal rights to control of their own children through the CFS system. For example, at least twice, Minister Gordon Mackintosh publicly and directly supported the self-development of CFS standards that would be unique to Northern First Nations’ situations and needs, and even provided thought-out examples of how this could be done. However the non-elected management level of the system took all of the power out of the then-Minister’s intent by claiming that even if the communities developed their own standards, that they would still have to be developed within the

accountability to the pre-existing provincial standards. Thus it appears that while elected officials have (at least to some degree) listened to their constituents with understanding, that the career-bureaucrats who oversee the day-to-day operations of the CFS system are still operating from within an ethnocentric perspective of the supremacy of provincial authority and solely from within mainstream social work perspectives.

Another example of elected officials and some bureaucrats trying to work for justice, is Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Eric Robinson and the others who initiated and held a Roundtable Discussion with and about the victims of the Sixties Scoop, which is a truly commendable step. But it also highlights the need to take an honest, clear look at today's CFS to examine if and how we are repeating similar or even different miscarriages of justice that lead to the travesties of the Sixties Scoop and the IRSs.

Conclusion

The bottom line is, let's not kid ourselves and believe the rhetoric of the AJI-CWI system without openly assessing its impacts. Let's open our eyes and ears and minds to the possibility that assimilation is continuing regardless of the nice sounding written "Aboriginalized" statements. Is it a case of sheep-like CFS workers blindly following non-Aboriginal assimilationist policies? And are these not actually bureaucratic wolves in sheep's clothing? Would we not benefit from open, honest examination of what is really occurring?

So rather than waiting for the next generation to enter adulthood and start telling their tragic stories and then have resulting court cases and calls for commissions and compensation, let's open ourselves right now to the realities around us so that we can make any changes that may be required.

Truth – if we want the truth about the AJI-CWI then we need to start by listening. Understandings can only be true when they include the whole story. (Emphasis included in original text). Listening to everyone whose lives are impacted (and some devastated) by the CFS system. The children themselves, the youth, the parents, the families, the communities and Aboriginal leadership. Sadly, even within Aboriginal agencies, there are too many examples of parents, children and family members who are harassed and threatened by the agency when they speak out as best they can for the safety and wellbeing of our children. I myself was threatened with criminal charges (under Section 52 of the CFS Act) for simply reporting concerns of children attempting to kill themselves, no more, no less. Others have their children removed with at least part of the parents' protection concerns being identified as "hard to work with". Youth who speak out for their own rights are labeled as "challenging" and "oppositional". Foster parents who advocate for the children in their care and their rights too often have the children removed from their care.

And, those who work within the system. Right now, workers within the system can and do face serious employment/livelihood repercussions if or when we speak out. Some have been blacklisted from further employment within the system. Others are harassed and bullied within the system when they try to raise the questions of how the current system is affecting their own people. Some others, even Aboriginal workers, agencies and authorities blindly operate like the emperor with no clothes who want the world to believe the world as he sees it, and the ones who question the AJI-CFS's perception of reality are trounced upon and silenced.

Is this not the same state of denial and repression that allowed the residential schools to continue unabated for over a century? How long are we going to allow the inadequacies and/or travesties within the current CFS continue unabated due to silencing and unwillingness to hear from those most affected by the system?

Society and the government may not want to hear what we say. And it appears that we as a society do not want to hear, let alone respond to what people have to say. But if we want to have the Truth that the TRC is striving for, then we have to listen wholly without interruption and without challenging people's perceptions about today's realities. Everyone's understandings are real and to be respected, and when everyone's voice has been heard, then together new realities can be developed together.

These new realities are necessary, rather than "reconciliation" which is defined as "The reestablishment of friendly relations; conciliation or rapprochement." (Definitions.net 2014) (Emphasis added). Historically there has been minimal if any times of balanced, fair relations between Aboriginal peoples and colonizers, settlers and newcomers. Thus we need to question if it is possible for a model of balance and friendly relationships in which to "reestablish".

Instead, new options need to be developed and only with the inclusion of all, and especially those whose lives have been most affected by the past injustices. Perhaps a concept for the future that is more accurate and effective than "reconciliation" can be developed through a term within First Nations languages that can describe the concept that is needed. Perhaps we need to look beyond the limitations of Europeanized concepts within European worldviews. Simply using Indigenous language to describe our future can also be a milestone in basing our society's future within Indigenous worldviews.

And the greatest potential to begin the sharing and then creative development of new ways of relating, can lie within the children and families of Aboriginal communities. For their lives have [been] most affected, and their experiences can teach all of us not only what does not work, but to listen to what is needed to be done. Instead of listening to them after the travesties like the TRC is forced to do, why can we not begin to really listen to them now to prevent ongoing travesties and problems?

It is my personal belief, based on over thirty years working within social work, that the future lies in in-home and community-based services that are completely separate from CFS because CFS is a deficit-responding system by definition (i.e. legislated protection needs). As Dr. Cindy Blackstock has amply researched, Aboriginal children significantly lack both the governmental and voluntary sector social services infrastructures that keep other children within their homes and families. Building and strengthening the infrastructures and services that support children at home and promote healing that is community based (rather than divisive criminal justice interventions) is the only option. And it needs to be separate from the provincially legislated reactionary child protection systems. By definition, child protection services are responses to pre-existing problems and deficits. In too many Aboriginal communities child protection services are the only or strongest resource, but it is a negative concept with negative impact and with negative consequences. Positive proactive services are required to prevent the need for any form of child protection services.

Building healthy children, families and communities are the only option. If Canada is willing to restructure [its] Treaty and historical relationships with First Nations and Métis (as they claim through their apologies and the establishment of the TRC and its inclusion of “reconciliation”) then there needs to be a willingness to listen to Aboriginal peoples. And they are saying at every level, “no more CFS”. They are asking for simple things like an ice arena for recreation (Shamattawa First Nation), or land-based treatment programs, and in-home supports rather than in-care to keep children safe and healthy – and it costs significantly less!!!

So I ask that the TRC extend its analysis to the current government structures that are continuing to try to assimilate Aboriginal children into the mainstream systems and identities, (emphasis included in original text) even if it is nominally, in name only, an “Aboriginal” system. The realities belie the stated intent of the AJI-CWI of promoting Aboriginal controlled child care (emphasis included in original text). Whether it be from assimilationists and policies, or from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers who are trying desperately to the best of our abilities to reverse the tide of assimilationist colonization, the assimilation and devastation is unfortunately continuing. We have to honestly, truthfully examine the realities of the AJI-CWI system, by listening to those who know the best, those affected by the system as clients, leadership, and agency workers, to create a just, healthy future for Aboriginal communities and all of Canada. Canada will not be healthy as long as assimilationist colonization continues.

"Those who deny the truth, may simply need help.

Those who hide the truth, deserve condemnation."

~ Justice Murray Sinclair.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Clarke

APPENDIX 5

Report to Hon. Kevin Chief, Minister of Child and Youth Opportunities Re: High Risk Youth

May 19, 2013

High risk youth for the purposes of this report are defined as those with significantly higher than average chances of death from suicide, and too often these youth also have corresponding significantly higher than average experiences and risk of death from substance addiction, incarceration, sexual exploitation, homelessness, untreated mental health issues, and socially isolated lives without the supports that they need in order to live safe, healthy lives.

The concerns brought forward in this report address prevention, the primary purpose of the Ministry for Opportunities for Children and Youth, by identifying the highest risk factors for suicide. Once identified, then it could be possible to work to decrease these risk factors with the goal of preventing young deaths and improving the lives of youth who live lived in the margins of society without the required supports.

It is believed that the best way to prevent youth suicide is to provide constant supervision to youth who are identified as at risk, and a safe environment that does not provide the opportunity for youth to harm themselves.

It is the thesis of this report, that while there are some valuable programs in place in Manitoba that attempt to prevent the high risk factors and to protect the highest risk youth, that there are still far too many gaps both within particular systems and between systems, that the youth continue to fall through, and too often to their deaths. It is the goal of this report to begin to identify these gaps so that work can begin to bridge these gaps through open, honest and cooperative working together.

There are four main provincial government systems that are involved in protecting the highest risk youth and they include:

Family Services – primarily but not limited to Child and Family Services (CFS)

Health – primarily but not limited to the Mental Health services

Justice – prevention and responses to crimes as both victims and perpetrators

Education – standard forms and alternative forms of education.

These four areas are also included within the federal government in their mandate to provide corresponding services to First Nations individuals, primarily on-reserve, but in many situations off-reserve as well.

Within these four areas there are also countless programs, mandates and purposes, that often unintentionally end up working at cross purposes. Far too often there are conflicting goals, and there are disputes over jurisdiction and funding sources between the various “silos”, even though both the provincial and federal governments signed their agreements with Jordan’s Principle which serves to address the need to provide critical services first and then work out jurisdiction and financial wrangling after.

Volumes could be written that discuss these various services and the working relationships between them, but the goal here is to highlight just how serious the gaps are so that this awareness can then lead to cooperation between silos with the common goal of preventing deaths and preventing ongoing high risk for today's youth and their future generations.

The vast majority of high risk youth have needs and risks that cross over all of the jurisdictions. For example, rarely is there a suicidal youth who does not also have alcohol and drug problems. There is often dispute over whether the youth should be clean and sober before treatment for suicide, or if they even can be treated effectively for suicide while they are under the influence. Almost always a youth with any form of mental health problems including depression also has problems with aggression and violence. Yet youth with aggression are not eligible for many mental health programs or placements. The correlation between youth criminal activity and FASD is well documented and both of these factors overlap with suicide risk as well. And CFS is a system that attempts to provide services for youth with all of these factors, even though there is minimal training for workers or resources for children with these multiple, complex needs. In reality there are few if any children and youth with only one identified need, and yet the separate systems are not always working together effectively.

One of the greatest tragedies is the fact that the different silos do not work together to prevent suicide. It is evident through my repeated experiences that the services define risk too differently, are not willing to listen to each other, and are more concerned with following outdated policies than working together to prevent suicides. Far too often, when a youth is identified as "at risk" for suicide by voicing clear intent and/or having just attempted suicide, they are shuffled between silos and end up getting dropped. At best, they and their care givers sit through assessments from various departments and services, only to be sent back to wherever they came from.

Examples:

A youth states to a concerned person that they are wanting to kill themselves, and identifies how they would do it. It comes to light that this individual has a history of multiple attempts of hanging, and in fact has been identified by CFS and they are currently in a CFS placement. A call is made by the caregiver and/or CFS to Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) who then says that the child needs to be cleared by medical before they can assist. The first challenge is how to get the youth to the ER. Experienced and street smart youth bolt before anyone can get them there. Others come in, and then sit in the ER for hours and hours, first being seen by a nurse, and then a Resident physician. I had one Resident speak with a 10 year old boy and asked him all of the standard questions – Do you like where you live? ("Yes", because it was the first place where he was not being abused by adults, but was being abused in every way by other youth). How's school? ("Good" – but did not mention that he was functioning at a grade one level, going half days because of his aggression and violence to others even with a one-on-one that CFS provided for him). The resident asked standard questions without checking on the context of the answers, or to see the world from the boy's perspective and never asked questions that would explain that

this child had years of recently documented emotional, sexual and physical abuse including his thirteen year old sister recently attempting to slit his throat and then kill all the siblings and herself, as well as ongoing suicide attempts by this boy, his siblings and other family members. Yet even when this information was provided in person and in writing by myself as the CFS Supervisor, he was discharged a few hours later without a treatment plan.

If it is deemed that the youth is not at immediate risk, meaning grabbing something to stab themselves on the spot, or if they are not presenting with signs of other mental illnesses such as psychosis, then they are almost always discharged because their risk is deemed as behavioural. This occurs even when the child has just been cut down from a hanging. It also occurs when a youth has self-identified for days or weeks on end that they are at risk and requesting help.

Then MCT might see them, but if the youth is calm then they do not assess it as a crisis and do not respond. The scary part is that the experienced youth and the ones with sincere intent to die will present as calm and say whatever they have to, to get away.

If the youth continues to state their intent then the youth may be seen by a psychiatrist, hopefully within 12 hours after arrival. However... there was a 17 year old female with countless attempts at hanging, who had just hung herself the night before and then ran from the ER and was brought back the following day by police. She has an older sister in jail for attempted murder, a brother that was dead from suicide, she had just buried her father the week before, and it was the four year anniversary of her mother being stabbed to death ... while she and her mom were sleeping in bed. She was seen by a resident doctor, but not even seen by a psychiatrist, and discharged to ANCR who placed her at Mayfair Shelter which is a drop-in shelter with no supervision. She left there in a car with "an uncle" who is not her uncle, and was provided drugs etc. She was returned to the shelter by police the following evening, and she left again about 2 hours later before MCT responded to see her. She is currently still awol and associating with known drug addicts.

MCT is the only way for youth to be placed in a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU), and as the literal gatekeepers they control the fate of our youth. In all my years of experience of contacting and communicating with MCT, there are only two times that MCT actually placed a youth in either the male or female CSU, and one of these is because the female was part of the Sexual Exploitation program meaning that the provincial governing Child Protection Branch had her under their wing and also the specialized services of Winnipeg Police Services. A maximum of three days is all that CSU can provide, and the youth have found that there are ways to escape from them. Others are not as fortunate and rarely seen by MCT since they either pose a risk through a history of violence even if it is not a current risk, or the youth does fit their narrow mandate of "mental health".

When MCT says that the youth requires medical clearance before they will meet with the youth, then the challenge remains of how the adults will actually get the youth to the ER. Even calling 911 does not usually work because the youth leaves, or the youth denies everything to the police, and the police believe the child even when the adult who the youth has disclosed to provides verbatim statements and/or written proof.

If a youth is one of the fortunate few who is hospitalized, then they are far too often released before there is any treatment. For example, my own son was 15, and he suffers from autism, mental disability, Tourette's syndrome, ADHD, Conduct Disorder, and psychosis was developing in him. At his request to me for help, I brought him to the ER on a Thursday evening because "the devil was invading his body" and wanted him to kill himself. Because of signs of psychosis they admitted him to hospital with the plan that his long-term psychiatrist would join the treatment team on Monday when he returned to work. Yet on that Sunday, I received a call from the hospital inquiring why I was not picking up my son, as he was discharged that afternoon. Turns out the psychiatrist from PY1 met with him and my son told him that he wanted to come home and that he had an appointment with his regular psychiatrist the next morning. The psychiatrist took the word of my mentally challenged and delusional 15 year old son and discharged him because my son wanted to come home! Even though in fact, there was no appointment set for my son! Because the PY1 psychiatrist had left for the day, there was no option but to discharge him.

Countless other times there are youth in PY1 who have "planning meetings" within two or three days of admissions which in fact are discharge meetings. The team of professionals involved with the youth come to the meeting to discuss treatment only to be told that the psychiatrist has deemed the youth ready for immediate discharge. [The psychiatrist discharged him saying that he was not 'at risk' even though there were still rope burn marks on his neck and he had just been discharged from PICU. The doctor believed that he had not wanted to harm himself even though he had written that he would, and the doctor denied that he was in a gang even though he was sitting there in full gang colours...]

Even with this information presented to him, the psychiatrist was adamant that he was not at risk and was discharged [and he is now incarcerated for a very long time].

Additional concerns re: breakdowns between the silos in communication and services:

I have had youth call to request to turn themselves in or to get help, but when there are warrants out for their arrest they are not eligible for MCT or CSU.

WPS are called when an AWOL youth at risk of suicide surfaces and has a warrant and yet it can take hours and even days for them to respond, and this has often left the youth and everyone around them at risk. And they usually AWOL again prior to the police arriving.

Some youth may qualify for the Youth Drug Stabilization Unit (YDSU), but it is an extremely narrow admission criteria. After hours of work to get the court order for admittance, then the youth is often discharged within 48 hours instead of the allowable seven days, if they simply say that they are willing to obtain alcohol or drug treatment. Of course the smart ones say this just to get out. The ones who actually are willing to go to treatment face weeks or even months to be accepted into treatment, and are discharged back in their old situation where they were using while they wait for treatment.

At present, YDSU and correctional facilities such as Manitoba Youth Centre are the only secure options for youth in Manitoba. Justice has often said that they do not want

to be used as a dumping ground for youth at risk, and they also have a legal mandate to follow the criminal courts directions. There are occasions where a team approach has ensured that extremely high risk children stay incarcerated until suitable treatment is available, but these are few and far between and often only for higher profile situations or from situations where their caregivers are able to politically advocate.

These examples address only the issues that exist within Winnipeg. In other areas, particularly First Nations, there are even more challenges due to there being far fewer services available on-reserve. In remote areas, the only final option is a medevac via air which costs over \$10,000 per flight. And increasingly, the youth who have been deemed at high enough risk at their home community to be medically transported at very high cost to be assessed at Winnipeg's Children's Hospital, are more often than not discharged at the ER. Even when youth still have bruises and burn marks around their necks from hanging attempts they are discharged with only a phone number to call for follow up weeks later.

Suggestions for addressing these concerns:

- 1) Develop multi-faceted awareness of the gaps of services and responses for all parties that is based on the vast knowledge and experiences of the service recipients and their families including the family survivors of those we have lost. If we only look at the written policies of the various silos it can appear that there are a lot of options available for suicide response. However, if we listen to the youth, their families and the front line service providers, then it is very evident that there are a multitude of life-threatening gaps both within systems and between systems. A campaign to identify the challenges as experienced by the youth, families and front line workers could both provide voice to their experiences and educate the bureaucracies that make decisions and policies.
- 2) The awareness campaign would benefit from comprehensive multi-dimensional training programs as well. Even highly educated professionals in the health, social, justice and education systems seem to have little understanding of the various components to suicide. For example, mental health looks only at depression as a causal and treatment factor while in fact there are a multitude of causes such as fear of gangs, being overwhelmed by sexual exploitation, anger at families, and lack of mental and emotional abilities to cope due to FASD and other disabilities. As well, the internationally recognized aspect of Indigenous peoples dying from suicide in response to colonization cannot be minimized in importance.
- 3) A campaign to promote awareness of the severity of the risk of suicide can also help to instill the ability to **develop the will to try to prevent suicide** (emphasis included.) We cannot legislate to make people care, but the more information that is there about the severity and what can be done to prevent it has the potential to transform people's denial about the matter. The success of the sexual exploitation program that developed from Tracia's Trust is a prime example of how education can change people's attitudes about the importance of a risk and the ways that we can all respond.
- 4) As the awareness and willingness to respond develops across the silos, there is the potential to develop a **multi-party team approach that spans the bureaucracies**, perhaps similar to the cross-jurisdictional approach that was developed for Tracia's Trust for the girls deemed at risk for sexual exploitation. There are tens times tens more times as many youth

dead from suicide as there are young girls who have been killed from sexual exploitation and thus the will to address this problem could easily be supported and nurtured.

- 5) **Have Manitoba consider implementing Secure Treatment programs** into the possible answers. There are absolutely no truly secure treatment options other than possibly YDSU and too many of the youth do not meet their narrow admissions criteria, and when they do, the longest they can stay is seven days. Alberta has a court-ordered, very effective secure treatment option that has kept thousands of people alive while protecting their rights. There the youth can stay for up to thirty days in facilities that are as secure as MYC and have highly trained staff who work with the youth and their families and all of the youth's support services. **Further exploration into this option is critical if Manitoba wants to keep our youth alive.** While I was employed with Northern First Nations CFS Authority I began consultation with Alberta to open up this possibility for Manitoba, but to my knowledge there has been no follow up in the last four years.

I submit this Report with the hope of receiving governmental support for developing strategies to address the concerns that are outlined here. There are many more concerns from other people, and there are many more options from other people as well. Suicide is a tragedy that crosses programs, cultures and jurisdictions, and the knowledge and potential for responses needs to come from all concerned as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information, or to begin ways to bring about the changes that are required so that our youth may have the opportunity to live.

Ehkosi.

APPENDIX 6

Letter to Northern Authority, June 18, 2013

June 18, 2013

CEO, First Nations of Northern Manitoba CFS Authority
Winnipeg MB

There are several themes that I want to bring forward for your consideration in your investigation into Meadow's death.

- **No "one" is responsible and we are ALL responsible.** (Emphasis in the original).
- **This is not about blame, but about responsibility.** This is not to seek out an individual's "error" that led to this tragedy, but rather to add my voice to examine how it happened – the whole history and the shortcomings within our own actions and within the Agency and the entire CFS system as well as the role of colonialism. I have had long term relationships – family, personal and professional – with many of the individuals who work for the Agency, Northern Authority and it is not my aim to cause further pain.
- **My personal objective is that we be honest and forthcoming in order to honour our girl.** My objective is that we openly examine how we do things: personally, professionally, agency-based, placement-based, Authority-based, funder-based, socially and politically. **What are we doing and not doing that lead to the loss of our girl and so many others?**
- Another objective is to also try to ensure that her siblings, cousins, fellow youth ... all over Manitoba do not suffer the same systemic neglect that Meadow did so we can prevent even more suicides...
- This story is being presented to help identify my own self-examination and also the historical and current pattern of the Agency's questionable effectiveness at responding to concerns. **There appears to be an established pattern of either ignoring or blaming the reporter, and thus deflecting from the matter at hand: the life and wellbeing of children.** While there are some indicators of improvement under the new management, there are still too many current examples of non-response, inadequate response and blame against the reporters rather than focusing on the child and family and their wellbeing. There are many people who have shared their own frustrations with the Agency with me, and there is a definite pattern of the same types of responses or lack of response...
- There [had] been ... poor or non-existent communication within the agency and also their external communications with parents, foster parents and others, even though there are some slight signs of recent improvement in some areas. Even in the areas where there is improvement, it must be remembered that the changes are only very recent and that the problems are so old and so ingrained, that positive changes have not yet become realized. There has been a long history of workers making decisions about and for children and families when they don't even really know them, or even know them at all. Hopefully we can further develop true relationships between the children and families and the Agency workers.

- **It is also critical for the Agency to remember that at this time in history, there is absolutely no reason for anyone ... to have any trust in the Agency. I realize that there are some new workers and also some old workers who are doing their best, but considering that EVERY single family in [the community] has lost multiple relatives under the care of the Agency, or who should have been under the care of the Agency, that there is no logical way to expect people to actually trust the Agency. If trust comes, then it will not be for a very long time and only after it has been legitimately earned.**

I am well aware that new workers do not want to be painted with the same brush as their predecessors, but they need to be aware of the way that the Agency is perceived by others from the start, aware of what they are really walking into. This is the same as when I worked for [a different, southern agency] in the early 1980s and the communities were still raw from the massive losses from the provincial system: we did not expect trust, we knew that we would have to earn it. Stating this openly helped to open communication and partnership work together instead of being at odds and working separately and against each other. Working together to effect positive change would be much more productive than having an agency spending so much time trying to justify their actions, both historical and current.

- It is my belief based on personal and professional experiences as well as in-depth academic study that **there is a need to understand that suicide is risk for ALL children and youth from [the community] and is constantly a risk factor**, if only due to the extreme number of deaths and attempts that every person ... has been continuously exposed to since birth. Sometimes workers seem to express frustration or “minimizing-attitudes” towards reports of suicide risk and perhaps this is because suicide risk is so rampant. But rather than ignoring it out of frustration, denial-response, or feeling helpless, if we all worked together as best we can, then at least we would know we are all trying our best instead of spending time denying or pointing fingers.
- Meadow’s journal indicates an ongoing pre-occupation with suicide. **This is one example of how suicide is a constant option for youth from [the community]**. As well, other youth speak so openly and matter-of-factly about it, that it is obvious that it is a constant option for them. Meadow is a perfect example of a youth who kept trying, and trying, and trying [in life], and always trying to smile while inside she was in such deep-rooted pain from traumas in her life that [to my knowledge] had never been addressed...
- As an experienced First Nations CFS worker I am painfully aware of the myriad of systemic challenges that FNCFS workers face while trying to provide services to children and youth. However, it has sadly been my experience and that of so many others, that when we try to work with the agency to provide and/or access services for children that usually there is either no response, or an extremely delayed response only after repeated advocating, and people who do advocate are often labelled or harassed by the Agency. **Would it not be more productive for the Agency to work with the people who are advocating for children rather than against them? ...**

These are [some of] the unanswered questions that continue to haunt me. I have to say that my own failures in keeping Meadow alive continue to haunt me as well. This is why I say that it is not to place individual blame on anyone, for I know that I did my best, **even though it was obviously not enough.** I got distracted by my son and his needs, my jobs, and my own fears of being identified by the Agency as “trouble-making” for responding to Meadow and others’ requests for help. I also believe that some Agency workers did their best, but that obviously it was not enough. Rather than pointing fingers to try to blame, I believe we all need to reflect and identify our own shortcomings, whether they were intentional, or through ineptness, or through just not being able to do everything that we believe we needed to. It is time for all of us to examine our actions, inactions and challenges solely to try to ensure that we do not keep making the same mistakes and so preventable deaths of children do not continue, particularly Meadow’s siblings.

It also continues to perplex me when an Agency attacks the people who try to report concerns about children’s safety. Over the years and even recently I have experienced very negative reactions from some workers when I have reported concerns to the Agency. The responses have ranged from direct denial (being told that I am making the information up!) to denying that even if it occurred that it is not a “problem” ... to having case managers recognize the problems and being told by management that they do not need to respond, or to not respond...

It is common sense within Northern First Nations and especially within CFS that when one youth commits suicide, that there is a high risk for other youths to then attempt or commit suicide. The pattern has unfortunately been firmly established and identified over the years. Even the youth themselves are painfully aware of this pattern. Thus it was little surprise to me when Meadow’s ... fellow band members began to actually attempt suicide, state publicly that they intended to kill themselves, or that they were threatening to commit suicide, particularly because they felt so alone and unheard...

In keeping with my past actions, after Meadow left us, I tried to continue to act with social work ethics, professional responsibility and my own heartfelt commitment with the youth. I forwarded information about children being at risk to the Agency. Often these reports were at the expressed request of the children themselves. Without exception, when I would ask them to talk to their own worker as well, they all said that they did not know who their worker was, or that they could not get ahold of their worker or that their worker never called back. With the one exception of requesting information about if/how the Agency was going to respond to Meadow’s siblings about their request to leave their placement (so I could respond to the girls), and to let me know if they were responding to the sister’s high risk behaviour, I did not ask the Agency to provide me with details of if/how they were going to respond.

However, I was told ... that several members of **the Agency had a meeting ... to bring forward their concerns that I was “interfering” with the Agency’s work.... They went so far as to inform Chief and Council ... that they would “charge her [me] under Section 52 of the CFS Act if she continued to communicate with children in care.” ...**

I was shocked, taken aback and extremely hurt. They presented their allegations in a way that made it appear that I was going out of my way to “interfere” with the Agency’s work, when in fact I had been strongly trying to not involve myself. It was the youth themselves who asked me to forward their questions and/or concerns to the Agency since they could not contact their workers (because they did not know who their workers were or if they did were unable to phone them) or disclosed to me directly about their intent to kill themselves, or they publicly stated their intention to kill themselves on Facebook. All of the youth who I contacted the Agency about in 2013 are under Permanent Orders with the Agency. Thus, I contacted their only legal guardian, the Agency.

I explained to ... Chief and Council that I have a legal obligation, as do all of us, but especially as a trained social worker, to report all potential child protection concerns to the Agency. Every youth who I reported with suicide concerns had a history of multiple attempts and/or threats, and this also increased the risk significantly...I was simply forwarding the concerns of the youth to their workers which is the right of the child. I was in fact no more than a conduit. The ... Council stated that they understood this need, and for me to continue reporting a child who is at risk as we are all concerned about further suicides and protection concerns... Since then I have still had to contact either the Agency or ANCR with further Intakes when immediate life-threatening information has been given to me, and I will continue to do so out of conscience, even if my job has been put on the line by the Agency’s report to the Board and Chief and Council.

I do not seek out children and interfere – these are children who come to me for whatever reason it is that they choose to. Personally I think that it is very sad that I am the one that they come to. This means that they either do not have anyone else who they can trust or speak with, nor have someone else who will listen to them. And saddest of all is when the adults in their lives ignore, minimize or deny what the children are saying. My experiences with a girl named “Heaven” are a good example of this when she directly expressed to me via Facebook of her plan to harm or kill herself again. She and I have not seen each other for over a year and we are not closely related. But she chose me to say how she felt, and that in itself saddens me.

I have written records of all reports that I have given to the Agency and these are available if you would like to review them. I am also attaching copies of the emails that I have sent in 2013 regarding children in care and at risk so that you can assess for yourself if I was interfering. I make no apologies for being emotional because I am speaking only as a human being and family member and love for children and loss of children is very emotional. I believe we are given our emotions so they can teach us what we need to know.

Concluding Remarks:

I submit this letter with the sole intention of trying to effect positive change for all children and families ... I have the deepest respect for the efforts of the individual workers who have had to do things far and beyond the call of duty. For example I have nothing but the deepest respect and admiration for my sister-in-law, who has worked [as a social worker] for thirty years. No one has ever walked in her shoes or had to do the extreme work that she has had to do for so long. However, it often appears to me that her and the community

members' voices are seldom heard or responded to. I have consistently been concerned for the wellbeing of workers such as her and the others who have been exposed on a constant basis to some of the most horrific circumstances, and have received little if any healing options. There was an RCMP member who committed suicide in 2012 and he and his wife publicly cited his unresolved experiences in [a northern community], especially the constant suicides and attempts, as one of the factors that lead to his own suicide. Perhaps this unresolved vicarious traumatization could be one reason for some of the internal deficits that have been seen within the agency.

I have always believed that a CFS agency or system is as strong as its "weakest" link. It is a team who provides the services and if one link in the chain does not carry out its responsibilities adequately or in a productive manner, then it leaves our children and families highly vulnerable. There can be a myriad of reasons why one or more links is not able to do what it is designed for, and this needs to be examined in productive ways. And the children, families and community members are in the best position to identify the vulnerable spots because they/we are on the receiving end of the services. I have always believed that as a team we need to work together to identify the weak links so that we can successfully lift ourselves, our children and families out of risk.

If I offend anyone I apologize in advance, because that is not my intent. My hope is that this letter starts discussion about openly identifying the challenges of all kinds, not to attack individuals, but to creatively and cooperatively develop more effective ways of preventing tragedies and responding most lovingly if they do occur. I pray that our girl's death provides an opportunity for meaningful discussion and working together because I know that this is what she was asking for. She could never understand when people could not live and work in harmony and cooperation and this caused her great distress. She had a strong understanding of justice and fairness and I believe that her constant experiences of not feeling heard by all of us lead to her final act of desperation. Thus I sincerely pray that we all listen to her and begin to work all together with honesty and the goal of keeping the children alive and the families stronger.

Submitted in Hope and Peace.

CC: Office of the Children's Advocate
Meadow's Mother
Meadow's Father

APPENDIX 7

Resolution #2010-08-08

Exercising Inherent Authority Over CFS in the MKO Region

WHEREAS: in accordance with our Creator-granted Customary Laws and practices, the MKO First Nations exercise inherent and aboriginal rights and title and Treaty rights over our traditional territories and homelands and our inherent right to govern all matters affecting our children youth, citizens and Elders, which rights transcend all boundaries; and

WHEREAS: our customary laws and practices regarding governance rely upon and value the distinctive involvement and contributions of all First Nations citizens, whether they be Elders, Chiefs, Youth and or Women, particularly in the shaping of First Nation governance and decision-making affecting our children and families; and

WHEREAS: section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act 1982* recognizes and affirms the existing aboriginal and Treaty rights of the MKO First Nations, which rights include the right to self-determination and our Customary Laws and practices regarding governance; and

WHEREAS: the First Nations of MKO are an indigenous people who possess the inherent right to self-determination as recognized by International Law and more specifically as set out in the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and

WHEREAS: the First Nations of MKO entered into negotiations on a Nation-to-Nation basis with Canada and Manitoba regarding a governance framework for the protection of the children and families of the MKO First Nations that would be consistent with our Customary Laws and practices and with the *Constitution Act 1982*; and

WHEREAS: further to these Nation-to-Nation negotiations, MKO, on behalf of the MKO First Nations, entered into a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) with the Minister of Family Services and Housing and the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and into a *Child and Family Services Protocol* with the Minister of Family Services and Housing and the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; and

WHEREAS: the principles set out in the MOU and Protocol are reflected in the principles of the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act and recognize that “*communities have a responsibility to promote the best interests of their children and families and have the right to participate in their services to families and children*” and that “*Indian Bands are entitled to the provision of child and family services in a manner which respects their unique status as aboriginal peoples*”; and

WHEREAS: the purpose of the *Child and Family Services Act* is set out in section 3 of the Act, *This Act must not be interpreted as abrogating or derogating from*

- (a) *The pursuit of self-government by aboriginal peoples in Manitoba through present or future negotiations or agreements; and*
- (b) *The aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.*

WHEREAS: under the *Child and Family Services Authorities Act*, a Northern Authority was established to be responsible for administering and providing for the delivery of child and family services for the northern First Nations and to oversee the delivery of services by First Nations Child and Family Caring agencies of northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS: contrary to the rights of the MKO First Nations and to the principles of the MOU and Protocol, the regulations under the *Child and Family Services Authorities Act* purport to exclude the leadership of the MKO First Nations from appointment to the Board of Directors of the Northern Authority and

WHEREAS: in the past two years, Manitoba and Canada have progressively influenced the inherent aboriginal, Treaty and constitutional rights of the MO First Nations, regarding the governance of matters affecting our children and families with the result that the leadership of the MKO First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Services agencies have been disengaged and disempowered; and

WHEREAS: *the Northern Authority has refused to accept the appointments to the Board of Directors of the Northern Authority made by the MKO Chiefs in Assembly in March, 2010; and*

WHEREAS: the media, government departments and authority offices have reported a significant increase in the number of First Nations child come into care, the deaths of children and First Nations children moving off-reserve and who may be in need of protection without the media having first conducting a critical analysis of the information being reported or providing additional information that places this information in context; and,

WHEREAS: the MKO First Nations are concerned that the Northern Authority has taken control over two of the largest northern First Nation CFS agencies and that 75% of First Nations leaders have been removed from any involvement in child and family matters and the MKO First Nations are concerned regarding the safety of our children; and

WHEREAS: MKO has consistently tried to rectify and resolve the CFS issues regarding governance, administration and improving the working relationship with the province to restore the direction and activities of the Northern Authority to those consistent with the spirit and intent of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI); and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the MKO First Nations issue a notice of Demand for the Conduct of a Crown First Nations Consultation regarding the infringement of the right to self- determination arising from the *Child and Family Services Authorities Act* and its regulations.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: The MKO Chiefs in Assembly call on the Premier of Manitoba to direct the Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs to uphold the intent and spirit of the AJI-CWI and enter into a joint review of the AJI-CWI and the First Nations CFS Authorities and to reinstate the governance of the Authorities and Agencies to MKO First Nations.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: the Chiefs in Assembly have lost confidence in the CEO and Board of Directors of the CEO and call on the Premier of Manitoba to work in partnership with MKO Grand Chief to remove the CEO and board of directors and implement a joint plan to restore the working relations between the Province and MKO First Nations.

Moved By: Chief Phillip Buck, Mosakahiken Cree Nation

Seconded By: Chief Jim Moore, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation

CARRIED: YES

Votes: For: 17 Opposed: 0 Abstentions: 0

Certified copy of a Resolution adopted at the MKO 29th Annual General Assembly August 31, September 1 &2, 2010

MKO Grand Chief David Harper

7677100

Attachment #1

General Consent Form

Date: _____

Re: As a Social Worker in Northern First Nations, am I also a Peacebuilder?

I, _____, (printed name), state my free and informed consent to participate in Mary Anne Clarke's research project that is a Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of MASTER OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba called:

As a Social Worker in Northern First Nations, am I also a Peacebuilder?

I have already verbally agreed to Mary Anne Clarke including stories about me without using my name within her autoethnographic narratives and now provide my signed consent.

I have been informed that every effort will be made to protect the anonymity of my name within this project.

I have been informed that if I say anything that identifies that a child may be at risk and in need of protection, that the researcher is required under Manitoba's Child and Family Services Act 1985, to report the concerns to the appropriate Child and Family Services agency.

I have been informed that if I say anything that identifies that I am at risk of self-harm that the researcher may need to contact authorities to assist in protecting me from self-harm.

I have been informed that all of the Researcher's notes, transcripts and compilations will be kept in locked storage at all times that she is not actively working with them. The raw data will be destroyed and/or remain under lock by the researcher when the project is complete.

I understand that final Thesis will be submitted to the University of Manitoba for completion of Mary Anne Clarke's Master's Thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies, and that copies will be provided to various Child and Family Services agencies and offices. As well, the Thesis may be submitted for publication.

Participant's Name

Date

Researcher: Mary Anne Clarke

Date

7677100

Attachment #2

Reviewer Consent Form

Date: _____

Re: As a Social Worker in Northern First Nations, am I also a Peacebuilder?

I, _____, (printed name), state my free and informed consent to participate in Mary Anne Clarke’s research project that is a Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of MASTER OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba called:

As a Social Worker in Northern First Nations, am I also a Peacebuilder?

I have already verbally agreed to Mary Anne Clarke to provide peer-review services for her Thesis.

I have been informed that every effort will be made to protect the anonymity of my name within this project.

As someone working within the Child and Family Services system, I am fully aware of the legal and ethical need for confidentiality to protect those accessing CFS services, and if I find that I am able to identify an individual or agency within my review of her materials, I will inform Mary Anne Clarke in writing, and maintain the confidentiality that is required of me in my position.

I have been informed that all of the Researcher’s notes, transcripts and compilations will be kept in locked storage at all times that she is not actively working with them. The raw data will be destroyed and/or remain under lock by the researcher when the project is complete.

I understand that final Thesis will be submitted to the University of Manitoba for completion of Mary Anne Clarke’s Master’s Thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies, and that copies will be provided to various Child and Family Services agencies and offices. As well, the Thesis may be submitted for publication.

Participant’s Name

Date

—

Researcher: Mary Anne Clarke

Date



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

**Research Ethics
and Compliance**

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APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

November 17, 2014

TO: Mary Anne Clarke (Advisor J. Senehi)
Principal Investigator

FROM: Susan Frohlick, Chair
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: Protocol #J2014:152
"As a Social Worker in Northern First Nations, am I also a Peacebuilder?"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). **This approval is valid for one year only.**

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, please mail/e-mail/fax (261-0325) a copy of this Approval (identifying the related UM Project Number) to the Research Grants Officer in ORS in order to initiate fund setup. (How to find your UM Project Number: <http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/mrt-faq.html#pr0>)
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

umanitoba.ca/research