Digital Storytelling with First Nations Emerging Adults in Extensions of Care and Transitioning from Care in Manitoba

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Abstract

This study investigated the experiences of emerging First Nations adults in extensions of care and transitioning out of care in Manitoba. Four research questions were explored in this study: 1) What do you remember about your time in care and what was your transitioning experience out of care or upon reaching 18 years of age? 2) What challenges, barriers or opportunities have you experienced since leaving care or turning 18? 3) How have you maintained the connection to family, community and culture since transitioning out of care? 4) Do you think you have reached adulthood? These questions were discussed through two digital storytelling workshops where over the course of five days participants developed and embedded individual responses to these questions into their own digital video. Follow up interviews were conducted with the participants to get feedback on their perspectives and evaluation about the digital storytelling workshops. Digital storytelling, through the art of combining oral tradition with digital technology, is a participatory, arts-based, learner-centered approach to generating knowledge. It involves using computer software to create a three to five minute video to illustrate a personal history. The findings suggest that Indigenous emerging adults in extensions of care and transitioning from care in Manitoba continue to experience difficulties on their journeys toward adulthood. However, the findings also suggest that the participants in this study are resilient despite the fact that they are dealing simultaneously with memories of being in care, negative peer pressures and problems in getting their basic needs met as they navigate life beyond their child welfare experiences. This study enhances the understanding of First Nations young peoples' experiences in extensions of care and as they transition out of foster care, and contributes to the growing body of knowledge that utilizes digital storytelling as a contemporary method conducive to working with Indigenous emerging adult populations.

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This thesis is dedicated to the 12 amazingly strong and courageous emerging adult women and men who courageously shared and set their stories into digital videos showcasing their knowledge, strength, and resilience as it relates to each of their respective truths and their Debwewin journeys.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

> I am close to aging out. My birthday is coming soon and I will have to leave the group home I am living in. I don't know where I am going next and I am scared. I can't get any definitive answers from anyone. Everyone keeps telling me that time is running out and that overwhelms me even more. Once I am of age, I have nowhere to go and that scares me. I find it sad that once kids in care turn a certain age they are left to fend for themselves. In a family, even once you leave home, you still have a place to return to. You still have support. So why is it that kids like me will no longer have anyone in their life and nowhere to go? It's just wrong.
>
> Anonymous, foster youth
> (As quoted in Liebmann & Maddin, 2010, p. 257)

The quote above sadly reflects the reality of many youth who have been in the care of government through the child welfare systems in Canada, the United States and globally. It highlights some of the unique factors that are faced particularly by young adults moving towards emancipation from government care. While the literature on the lived experiences of Aboriginal persons transitioning from government care is scant, the available sources do provide evidence of what young Aboriginal persons leaving government care might similarly encounter prior to, upon, and after reaching the legal age of majority. This chapter sets the stage for understanding the background issues related to the topic of youth transitioning out of substitute care. It touches on the overall approach to doing research about the adulthood experiences of First Nations youth who have left government care. The problem statements identified in this introductory chapter focus on conducting research into the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors of the child welfare system. The statements are five-fold and include: 1) understanding the experiences of First Nations young people transitioning out of care, specifically in the Manitoba context; 2) understanding the post-care and long-term outcomes among First Nations young people with prior substitute care experiences; 3) understanding the post-care connectivity issues First Nations young people may have had with their families, communities, and cultures; 4) understanding from the

perspective of First Nations young people when they have reached adulthood; and lastly, 5) understanding the role of narrative and arts-based approaches like digital storytelling as a way that encompasses the experiences outlined in the previous four areas focusing on the Manitoba context. This research uses arts-based research; more specifically, visual narrative inquiry through digital storytelling to expand upon the lived experiences, stories and narratives of emerging First Nations youth from the child welfare system with extended and transition care histories. Included in this approach is an exploration of the research objectives, an understanding of the questions this study seeks to answer, along with an understanding of the rationale and significance behind conducting research of this nature. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion on the potential limitations associated with this kind of research along with a review of the specialized definitions utilized throughout this dissertation.

1.1 Background

There is a growing interest in research on the importance of recognizing long-term impacts as well as measuring outcomes for children/youth that have been in long term care of Canadian child welfare systems (Trocmé, Nutter, MacLaurin, & Fallon, 1999). Of particular concern is the research which suggests that outcomes for children and young people involved in long term in child welfare systems within Canada and in other international jurisdictions has been quite poor (Crichlow, 2002; Maunders, Liddell, Liddell, & Green, 1999; Tweddle, 2005;). Former youth in care are generally characterized as more likely to be undereducated, unemployed or underemployed, and if employed, experience lower earnings with many living below the poverty line. As well, young people with in care experiences become parents younger; experience homelessness; live in unstable housing arrangements; become incarcerated or involved in the criminal justice system; dependent on social assistance; have mental health issues; and generally are at a higher risk for substance abuse (Reid,

2007; Tweddle, 2005) and sexual exploitation (Blackstock, 2009b; Blackstock, Clarke, Cullen, D'Hondt, & Formsma, 2003).

In addition, there is a significant relationship that exists between disadvantaged families and the child protection system, which is frequently maintained across generations (Hurley, Chiodo, Leschied, & Whitehead, 2003). For instance, many former First Nations young people also continue to be involved with child welfare if they become parents at a young age (Brown, Knol, Prevost-Derbecker, & Andrushko, 2007; National Youth in Care Network, 2004; Rutman, Strega, Callahan, & Dominelli, 2001). Research further indicates that youth who have been in long term care and who are now aging out of the child welfare system are ill prepared for independence (Dunne, 2004; McEwan-Morris, 2006; Maunders et al., 1999) and few have the independence skills necessary to live productively in the world on their own (The Children's Aid Society, 2006). In particular it has been noted that youth leaving care are already burdened by their childhood experiences of abuse, neglect or abandonment and few have had the benefit of parental role models to transmit the expertise needed to negotiate the trials of living on one's own (The Children's Aid Society, 2006). Young adults also report limited opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making processes affecting them as they move toward independence from the child welfare system (Freundlich, Avery & Padgett, 2006; McEwan-Morris, 2006). The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (2007) states that the long term costs of not supporting youth as they age out of the child welfare system are far greater than the immediate costs of supporting them to transition out of care successfully. Research indicates that when we allow youth to leave the child welfare system unprepared for independence and without ongoing support, the indirect costs are felt through other government departments such as health care, education, justice, and social services (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 2007).

A study by Mann-Feder and White (2000) imparts that the transition from placement to independent living has been made more difficult by the nature and length of youths' relationships

with service providers, other youth in care, and family members. In-depth research is lacking in several critical areas regarding youth preparedness for adulthood: the involvement of youth in case planning and assessment; education, employment and career development for youth in foster care; life skills acquisition; and transitional housing services. In addition, critical questions remain regarding the philosophical approach that is most beneficial for youth. Questions arise as to whether preparation for adulthood should be focused, as it has traditionally been, on *independence* and self-sufficiency as opposed to *interdependence*, in which youth are supported to make connections with others who can provide lifelong help and support when needed (Freundlich, Avery, & Padgett, 2006).

There is a stark difference in monetary outcomes for children at home and children in care. When children live at home with their families, it is currently considered a challenge to navigate the maze of child-based programs that exist within Canada. However for children who live in care, there is a different set of income programs available, making the maze all the more difficult to navigate, especially at a time when the family is destabilized. Recent research out of the Province of Ontario says children not living with their parents are denied financial benefits that other Canadian children have access to (Stapleton & Tweddle, 2010). This would include, for example, Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs). Stapleton and Tweddle note that a little over 20% of youth in permanent care eventually access post-secondary education. Most youth who graduate from government care do not access post-secondary education simply because they have not been socialized to follow this route and largely because they cannot afford it. Most Aboriginal families, those living in poverty, and newcomers may also not be literate about the array of financial benefits that currently exist nor would they be able, given their financial situation, to contribute extra funds toward RESPs for their children's future educational endeavours (Brascoupé, Weatherdon & Tremblay, 2013). Children who live with their natural families can benefit from additional federal funds if parents are putting money,

such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, into an RESP for them. However, this does not happen when children are in care and, as suggested by Brascoupé et al. (2013) the economic disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal, those living in poverty, and newcomer populations likely are not aware, nor can they afford to set aside funds to save for educational purposes. The benefit, called the Children's Special Allowance, often becomes part of the child welfare agency's operating budget and is used for the care of child (Trocmé, Knoke, Shangreaux, Fallon, & MacLaurin, 2005). In hindsight, Stapleton and Tweddle note that had Ontario chosen to claw back the Children's Special Allowance, it could have used the funds to establish RESPs for children in care. The RESPs would in turn have generated additional federal contributions. Since Ontario did not choose that course, the need remains to put children and youth in care on the same footing as middle-class and elite children who grow up in a family context.

Recent studies indicate that the transition to adulthood for most young people is being delayed and stretched out. In other words, it is taking young adults longer to achieve their independence. They are leaving school later, staying longer in their parents' home, entering the labour market later, and postponing conjugal unions and childbearing (Clark, 2007). For young people aging out of care, they risk poverty, social isolation and a range of poor outcomes. Young people leaving care experience homelessness, early parenthood, loneliness, depression, poverty, and involvement with the juvenile justice system (Mendes, 2005; Tweddle, 2005; White, O'Brien, Pecora, English, Williams, & Phillips, 2008), including having mental health and substance abuse issues, suicidal impulses, and are at high risk of exploitation, especially in the sex trade (Blackstock, 2009b; McEwan-Morris, 2006; Tweddle, 2005). When youth leave the child welfare system unprepared for independence and without ongoing support, indirect costs are felt in other government areas such as health care, education, housing, justice and social services (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 2007). Poverty is very much endemic among youth who have aged

out of the child welfare system. Even when employed, youth formerly in care are more likely to have lower earnings, with many living below the poverty line (Tweddle, 2005).

Policy makers have begun to turn their attention toward providing support and services to ensure improved outcomes for care leavers. These include the provision of stable and supportive placements with a positive attitude to education, maintenance of links with either family members or community supports, a flexible and functional process for graduating from dependence to interdependence, the active involvement of young people in the leaving care planning and decision-making process, ensuring the availability of a range of accommodation options, and ongoing support as required (McEwan-Morris, 2006; Mendes, 2005; Stapleton & Tweddle, 2010). Extending child welfare related services beyond 18 years of age until at least 21 or 24 years have been recommended and/or contemplated in several jurisdictions across Canada and the United States (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2010; Tweddle, 2005). Nova Scotia, for instance, provides supports until age 24; Alberta provides support to 22 years; British Columbia provides support to 24 years; and New Brunswick provides support post age of majority (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2010). Extending foster care beyond 18 years of age has been found to promote post-secondary educational attainment in the United States (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010a).

Other jurisdictions are recognizing the importance of ensuring service provision to young people in government care to help them transition toward independence. For instance in the United Kingdom, the *Children (Leaving Care) Act* was introduced in 2000 to assist youth leaving government care. This legislation extends the maximum age for government responsibility for children in care from 16 to 18 years, and it provides for greater mandatory supports for youth aged 18-21. The Act focuses on education, training, and financial needs. It also provides for personal advisors for youth up to age 21, needs assessments, and the development of pathway plans to assist in transitional

planning. Further, educational support, in some instances may be extended to age 24 (Tweddle, 2005). In the United States, similar legislation (the *Foster Care Independence Act*) was also passed in 1999. This legislation saw the doubling of available federal funds for transitional assistance for children between the ages of 18-21 who are preparing to age out or who have aged out of the foster care system. The Act created the *John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*, which emphasizes independent living services with a focus on education, employment and life skills training. The Act provides for room and board for foster children out of care but who are less than 21 years of age. It also encourages states to provide former youth in care aged 18-21 with Medicaid coverage (Tweddle, 2005). As these were changes implemented a number of years ago, there are no current resources that speak to the success of these initiatives nor have evaluations been undertaken which would take into account some of the challenges and weaknesses of these initiatives in supporting youth transitioning out of care.

Research suggests that the outlook for teens exiting or "aging out" of foster care without a permanent home or a meaningful adult relationship is bleak (Freundlich, 2003). Given the bleak statistics among young people in state care, more and more states within the US are beginning to recognize the importance of the biological family to youth in care. Youth who age out of care naturally gravitate to their biological family once they reach adulthood even after spending years in foster care (Barth, 1990). O'Donnell (2010) notes that there is a growing trend in child welfare within the United States toward recognizing the importance of facilitating and maintaining connections between children in foster care and their biological parents even where parents have had their parental rights terminated. Additionally, O'Donnell (2010) pointed to several studies conducted by Jensen (2004) and Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor and Nesmith (2001) which have shown that youth who have ongoing contact with their birth parents while in care have better outcomes than youth who do not maintain these connections. The longitudinal study conducted by

Courtney and colleagues note that 52% of former foster youth in their survey reported feeling close or somewhat close to their biological mother, while 46% reported that their biological families provided them with emotional support. In this same study, the process of reconnecting with a family or a significant other represents an important step toward emancipation and healthy functioning in the community, solidifying the adolescents' identity, affirming family connections, clarifying personal history, and reintegrating past trauma (Courtney et al., 2001). Regardless of the strained parent-child relationship, foster care youth are drawn to contact with their biological families and even limited family support has been shown to ease their depression (O'Donnell, 2010). Other policy objectives within the United States have reflected this trend toward maintaining family connections as a "culture shift" and sometimes ensuring continuing contact with the biological parent is the best permanency resource for a young person aging out of care.

1.1.1 Implications for First Nations Youth Emerging from Care

First Nations families and communities have a long history of child welfare involvement (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). First Nations leaders have long argued that First Nations people are better situated to provide child and family related services to their own families because they have provided for their children's care for thousands of years (Blackstock, 2007a).

First Nations peoples in Manitoba have even greater responsibility over the placement of children in the child welfare system now since the implementation of the *Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative* in 2000 wherein the scope of the First Nations child welfare mandate was extended off reserve within the province of Manitoba (Bennett, 2004b). The delivery of child and family services in Manitoba changed considerably between 2000 and 2005 with a restructuring of the child and family services system through legislative changes to restore to First Nations and Métis peoples primary control of child welfare services for their children and families throughout the province. Accordingly, responsibility for services to children and families was transferred from the

provincial Director of Child and Family Services to four Authorities: the First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority, the First Nations of Southern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority, the Métis Child and Family Services Authority, and the General Child and Family Services Authority (MacEwan-Morris, 2006).[1] The Child Welfare system has had great impact on the First Nations children and youth entrusted into government care but very little research exists that can comment on the long term implications of this impact.

First Nations children and young people have been overrepresented in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child welfare systems for more than five decades (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004; Trocmé, MacLaurin, Fallon, Knoke, Pittman, & McCormack, 2006). When compared to non-Aboriginal children there are significant differences in reasons for reporting Aboriginal children to welfare authorities. For example, according to the findings of the 2003 Canadian Incidence Study on Child Abuse, neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment for Aboriginal children who are reported to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child protection agencies across Canada (Blackstock, Trocmé, & Bennett, 2004; Trocmé et al., 2004). In 2007, Manitoba's Children's Advocate released a report on the struggles facing youth leaving the child welfare system. This report indicates that over the next three years, almost 1,600 youth will be "aging out of care" in Manitoba. As indicated, the majority of the youth (70%) aging out of the child welfare system will be Aboriginal youth, with a significant number (28%) having a diagnosed disability (Fuchs, Burnside, Marchenski, & Mudry, 2005; McEwan-Morris, 2006).

[1] Each Authority has a Board of Directors and the duties and powers to mandate, fund and direct agencies responsible for delivering child and family services in a culturally appropriate manner across the province. Authorities are also responsible for setting culturally appropriate standards for service and practice, reviewing the operations of agencies, setting compliance standards and quality assurance reviews, monitoring and tracking children in care and jointly managing intake services. Mandated through The Child and Family Authorities Act to administer, provide and deliver the services of The Child and Family Services Act, the Authorities are responsible for 24 agencies and regional departments located throughout the province providing child and family services to a geographically based and culturally specific client population. The Child Protection and Support Branch of the Department of Family Services and Housing provides statutory and policy direction and funding to Authorities and ensures compliance with the provincial mandate and standards.

There is a dearth of information and in-depth research on children aging out of foster care (Dunne, 2004) across the globe (Osborn & Bromfield, 2007). Reid and Dudding (2006) note that in Canada there is limited research on Canadian youth and their success in our child welfare systems. There are a number of Canadian longitudinal studies underway in Canada but they do not provide a complete context for understanding the issues faced by First Nations youth specifically (see for instance the research from British Columbia on youth leaving government care (Rutman, Hubberstey, Feduniw, & Brown, 2005) and Mann-Feder & White's (2000) study on the impact of organizational factors on youth exiting the care system). In Canada there are a number of other national surveys that track specific elements relating to issues around the transition to adulthood. Two that readily come to mind are the *Youth in Transition Survey* (YITS) and the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY), although there may be other surveys tracking youth trajectories towards adulthood in each of the provinces and territories in Canada. YITS is a longitudinal survey undertaken jointly by Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The YITS is designed to examine the major transitions in the lives of youth, particularly between education, training and work. The goal of the YITS is intended to provide longitudinal data to study the school to work transitioning of young people (adolescents and young adults) and the factors influencing such transitions (Lui & Gauthier, 2004). The NLSCY on the other hand is the first Canada-wide survey of children and youth. Starting in 1994, it began gathering information on a sample of children and youth and their life experiences. It follows these children over time, collecting information on the children and their families, education, health, development, behavior, friends, activities, etc. (Lui & Gauthier, 2004). While these are two valuable sources of data that look at transition issues for youth, neither one of them tracks data on Aboriginal youth specifically although they may very well involve Aboriginal children. The Aboriginal Children's Survey is another national survey that specifically targets First Nations, Inuit and Métis children as well as

children living in the territories. It provides valuable data on the development and well-being of Aboriginal and Northern children however this specific survey only collects data on children under the age of six and consequently was not instrumental in my pursuit of understanding transitioning issues for adolescents to adulthood among First Nations youth in care. Another database called the *General Social Survey* has a very low percentage of Aboriginal participants. The *General Social Survey* is a database that gives recognition to youth who self-identify as being of Aboriginal descent but it does not track information on whether the youth reported in this study are in government care.

So given the resources available, little is known about the outcomes for the transition of First Nations young people who have been in long term care specifically with First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) agencies, especially in Manitoba. This gap in knowledge is largely due to the underfunding by the Federal Government for FNCFS agencies, which restricts and/or limits research in this area (Blackstock, Loxlely, Prakash, & Wien, 2005). The knowledge gap on youth in care transitioning issues is further hampered by the need to build research capacity among personnel within FNCFS agencies. The need for information technology and sophisticated software within FNCFS agencies to conduct thorough analyses on this particular concern (among others) also contributes significantly to this gap in knowledge (Loo, 2005). The ability to conduct in-depth research on First Nations young people aging out of care also competes with the service delivery mandate of agencies (in that the needs of children and families in crisis come first while research understandably comes second) (Bennett & Shangreaux, 2005) and is therefore a significant reason why research on this particular issue has not being conducted by FNCFS agencies.

1.2 Problem Statements

The problem statements identified for conducting research into the lived experiences of emerging First Nations adult survivors of the child welfare system center upon five crucial areas

where further information is needed: 1) Understanding the experiences of First Nations young people transitioning out of First Nations care, specifically in the Manitoba context; 2) Understanding the post-care and long-term outcomes among First Nations young people with prior substitute care experiences; 3) Understanding the post-care connectivity issues that emerging First Nations young people may have with their families, communities and cultures; 4) Understanding from the perspective of First Nations young people when they have reached adulthood; and 5) Understanding the role of arts-based approaches like digital storytelling in a way that encompasses the experiences outlined in the previous four areas from a Manitoba context.

1.2.1 The Indigenous Experience Transitioning out of First Nations Care

What is known about the long-term outcomes and post-care experiences of young people who have transitioning out of government care? In particular, what is known about the long-term outcomes and post-care experiences of Indigenous youth who have since aged out of First Nations child welfare? The Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Maltreatment provides evidence that First Nations children in the child welfare system are overrepresented in government care in almost every province within Canada (Sinha, Trocmé, Fallon, MacLaurin, Fast, & Thomas-Prokop, et al., 2011; Trocmé et al., 2005). In contrast to the lived experience of other middle-class Canadian children and youth, First Nations children are more likely to be born into poverty, to suffer health problems, maltreatment, incarceration, and placement in the child welfare system (Sinha et al., 2011). Although provincial data collection systems vary, best estimates are that there are currently over 25,000 Aboriginal children in the child welfare system – three times the highest enrollment figures of residential school in the 1940s (Blackstock, 2009b). In terms of First Nations children on reserve, the numbers of children entering into care are tragically rising. Department of Indian and Northern

Affairs[2] data confirms that between the years of 1995 and 2001 the number of Status Indian children who entered into substitute care rose an astonishing 71.5% nationally (McKenzie, 2002). In particular, the research has also established that First Nations children in Canada remain in care longer than most other children who have contact with child protection systems (Blackstock et al., 2004; Trocmé et al., 2006) and further, that a substantial number of First Nations young people stay in care right up until they reach the legal age of majority (McEwan-Morris, 2006). So it is no wonder that many First Nations young people in care will experience the transition to adulthood from government care rather than experience this change in life from a natural family centered situation. Despite the overrepresentation of First Nations children in child welfare care, little research to date has focused on the transition that this specific group of young people will have to eventually make when leaving care. In particular, the focus of the research has not been on the distinct transitioning experiences of First Nations young people who have been in the specific care of a First Nations child welfare agency, despite the fact that First Nations child welfare agencies have been in operation for well over thirty years (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). This research highlights the transitioning experiences specifically of First Nations young people from the Manitoba context.

1.2.2 Post-care and Outcome Experiences

Specifically, with respect to outcomes, what are the social factors and determinants of health that have had an impact on the physical, spiritual, emotional and physical health and wellbeing of emerging First Nations adults who have had prior child welfare experience? Little is known about the long-term impacts of child welfare on the outcomes experienced later in life by those who have had this experience. Furthermore, little research has focused on the post-care outcomes experienced

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[2] The department dealing with Indigenous peoples in Canada has gone through numerous changes with each new government. It has been known as the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Development (DIAND), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and was changed to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) by the Conservative government, but since the election in October 2015, the acronym of the department has now returned to INAC, which stands for "Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada."

by emerging First Nations young adults who have had prior childhood and adolescent experiences in substitute care (McAuley, 2006). The research has primarily focused on the child welfare to prison experiences of First Nations young people generally (Trevethan, Auger, Moore, MacDonald, & Sinclair, 2001), on the economic dependency of young people leaving care, as well as on the etiology and trajectory towards homelessness after leaving care (Karabanow & Kidd, 2014). Once young people leave the system, governments are no longer responsible for their wellbeing. Child welfare plays a significant role in the lives and health outcomes of young people in care particularly because adolescence is a unique and critical period which influences future health outcomes (Tait, Henry, & Walker, 2013). The Assembly of First Nations has identified the need to conduct extensive and methodologically sound research to determine the outcomes of the current child welfare system (Assembly of First Nations, 2012) while Brownell, Roos, and Fransoo (2006) have indicated that better information systems are needed to track educational outcomes and socioeconomic status (post-care outcomes) among those who have had prior child welfare involvement. This research focuses on coping narratives from emerging First Nations adults and reflects on select social factors, which provide us with a glimpse into the level of well-being among a select number former First Nations young people and how they might be progressing in their early adulthood years after having left substitute care. For example, the responses shed light on how former youth in care are faring with respect to their health, whether they are gainfully employed or pursuing an education, whether they are married/or and starting families of their own and the socioeconomic impacts they are experiencing as a result of their post-care choices. Looking at the social determinants of health can provide an understanding of the long-term impacts, among other childhood experiences, that might have resulted because of prior child welfare experience. Hearing from emerging First Nations adults sheds light on their post-care experiences.

1.2.3 Connections with Family, Community and Culture, Post-Care

Do we know and understand how or whether First Nations young people have worked to rebuild and sustain connections with their families, communities and cultures of origin since leaving care? What is the connection to culture when it comes to adulthood? Do their lives start over or do their lives continue to feel fragmented upon leaving care? Youth who age out of care naturally gravitate to their biological families once they reach adulthood even after spending years in foster care (Barth, 1990) and research has begun to recognize the importance of biological family to youth in care (Courtney et al., 2001). As demonstrated in research conducted by Tweddle (2005) and van der Woerd et al. (2005), youth have better outcomes when they have strong social supports and feel connected to their family, school and community. In addition, through the leadership of First Nations women, First Nations child welfare agencies in the Province of Manitoba were developed primarily to stem the loss of First Nations children from the community because of the mass adoptions that resulted from the era related to the sixties scoop (Heinrichs & Hiebert, 2009). This research reflects on the family, community and cultural connections maintained by First Nations young people after leaving care. Furthermore, this research reflects on narratives of resilience regarding how former First Nations youth in care have personally reconnected with family members and their communities since becoming adults and have transitioned into the community. The stories and narratives speak to the role that First Nations child welfare agencies have played in assisting former youth in care with reunification efforts post-care.

1.2.4 Attaining and Self-Determining Adulthood from a First Nations Perspective

Do First Nations young people know when they have reached and attained adulthood? How do they define adulthood from their perspectives? Do First Nations young people today fit and identify with the new theoretical concept of emerging adulthood as one of the stages along the continuum of the life development stages? What are the markers that tell young First Nations people

that they have achieved adulthood? Are these markers similar to the theoretical body of knowledge on emerging adulthood? Are they different given the context of their experiences having been in care? Is it based on something else that might be related to their cultural identities, values, traditions and customs? "Emerging adulthood" is defined as a developmental life stage between adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2000). It is defined as a stage wherein young people feel they are neither adolescent nor quite adults either. Arnett (1998) describes this new human stage as characterized by (1) identity exploration, (2) instability, (3) self-focus, (4) a feeling of 'being in between', and (5) the perception of a range of possibilities. As this is a fairly new theoretical concept it remains to be seen whether First Nations youth today would subscribe to and/or identify with the concept of this new theoretical stage of life development. Currently, as it stands, it is the law, through the child welfare and other legislation (e.g., the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*), that determines when young people who have been in care, will have attained adulthood (Government of Manitoba, *Child & Family Services Act*, 1985). Young people in care have rarely been involved in the decisions that impact their lives (Blackstock & Bennett, 2003) and normally young persons in care don't get to determine when they have reached adulthood (Beaujot & Kerr, 2007). Leaving care and becoming an adult is the end of one kind of consciousness and the beginning of another and through this research we learn from a select number of First Nations young people what represents their consciousness around when they have determined for themselves that they have reached adulthood. Through their voices, stories and the narratives as well as visuals of survival, the research highlights the unique markers that emerging First Nations adults have employed, including the means through which they have self-determined when they have reached adulthood.

1.2.5 Digital Stories About Child Welfare Experiences by First Nations Survivors

What resources exist that currently give voice to the resilience and narratives of survival by former First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba? Specifically do digital stories

exist about the First Nations experience of being in care, emerging toward adulthood and do we know whether these resources hold perspectives about when First Nations youth have attained adulthood? Digital storytelling has been recognized as a powerful and potential tool for social work practitioners (Lennette, Cox, & Brough, 2013) and furthermore, it has been used as emerging narrative method for preserving and promoting Indigenous oral wisdom (Willox, Harper, & Edge, 2012). Furthermore, digital storytelling has been used as a way of witnessing the stories in Indigenous communities and what is happening in the lives and work of Indigenous peoples (Iseke, 2011). Indigenous digital storytelling and research about the process of community relationships between Elders and youth has also been conducted (Iseke & Moore, 2011). Digital storytelling has also been used for promoting positive youth development among Indigenous youth living in Northwest Alaska as a suicide prevention approach emphasizing young people's reasons for living (Wexler, Gubrium, Griffin, & DiFulvio, 2013). There are a number of videos that have been created where youth have been interviewed about mental health, wellbeing and suicide. There have also been numerous videos conducted with other groups of youth; however, these videos lack a First Nations emerging adulthood experiential focus. Some of these resources are noted below:

- http://findyouthinfo.gov/feature-article/digital-stories-voices-foster-care-youth
- https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/2011/pdstories.cfm#page=dStoriesBlurbs
- http://www.nclrights.org/legal-help-resources/resource/breaking-the-silence-lgbtq-foster-youth-tell-their-stories-dvd-and-resource-cd/
- http://www.seminar.net/index.php/home/75-current-issue/150-understanding-digital-storytelling-individual-voice-and-community-building-in-youth-media-programs
- http://storycentre.wordpress.com/
- http://www.naho.ca/wellnessTV/youth.php

A positive video recently released by Diane Parris, in partnership with Red River Community College, focused on young people who had been involved in child and family services within Manitoba (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3NQCe_fZAw). However, this video and those highlighted above do not encourage participatory arts-based approaches by First Nations

peoples nor is it based on the co-development of videos that allow for the sharing of experiences from the voice and perspectives that come directly from First Nations young people. Researchers and communities are increasingly recognizing the healing properties for individuals and groups that start from storytelling and arts-based approaches to research (Acoose, Blunderfield, Dell, & Desjarlais, 2009). Acoose et al. (2009) and Anderson (2004) talk about how sharing experiences is part of the healing journey and increases self-esteem. The videos and interviews highlighted in this research contribute to an understanding of emerging adulthood experiences and attest to the resiliencies among young First Nations emerging adults who have previously been in care of the child welfare systems in Manitoba. Furthermore, this research showcases the unique Manitoba experiences and stories of young First Nations individuals who have transitioned out of foster care.

1.3 My Story

I start this section with a reflection on a very personal chapter in my life when I was most vulnerable and powerless to change my circumstances. This approach is based on what Carriere (2008) noted as being the soul work of her research in that as Indigenous scholars, our personal location determines much of our research and scholarly work. It is an approach also acknowledged by Absolon and Willet (2004) who state that the location of self in writing and research is integral to the location from which we study, write and participate in knowledge creation. They further state, "as Aboriginal researchers, we write about ourselves and position ourselves first because the only thing we can write about is ourselves" (p. 5) and "locating self in research brings forward one's reality" (p. 12). It is from this position from which I start in trying to understand my own personal experiences in how early adversity led to resilience not just in my own situation but in how the process of resilience has contributed to the continuing strength of Aboriginal children, youth,

families and communities despite the adversity that emanated from the adversarial colonial history that Indigenous people have inherited in Canada.

I come from a family of five siblings. We originate from the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nations community, located within Manitoba. My siblings and I grew up in care, within youth detention facilities, in foster and group homes, and in adoption placements outside of Canada. We were in care and/or adopted not because our family was abusive or neglectful although my mother suffered through alcohol addiction as a result of her experiences in residential school and because of the racism she experienced upon marrying out of her culture and community. My mother's marriage to a non-Aboriginal man (not my paternal father) dissolved within a year of their union. Having moved to the city of Winnipeg from her community, with no education beyond grade eight and no employable skills, my mother had no other choice but resort to raising five children on social assistance. I suspect that the isolation, poverty, racism and the rejection she experienced within Winnipeg in the mid-60s would have driven her and many others to drink as a way to suppress their isolation, disconnection and hurts. My mother's alcoholism unfortunately put her children at risk many times over. I remember those tumultuous years as my siblings and I bounced in and out of care and/or youth detention facilities. Despite her addiction, my mother always managed to somehow deal with her issues just in the nick of time, resulting in her getting most of her children back within a relatively short period of time, except for the one instance in which we would never see the smiling face of our youngest brother again. He was a baby the last time we saw him. The Children's Aid Society (as it was then called in Manitoba) had put up our baby brother for adoption. That reduced our family size of six down to five. Our family was further reduced to four when our mother died of leukemia in 1976. My mother's diagnosis to death took a short 9 months and it changed our lives forever. She was only 32 years of age. Shortly after her death, the Children's Aid Society offered up the next youngest member of our family for adoption to a Pennsylvanian family

in the United States. Our family, like many other Aboriginal families, was caught up in what has since been identified by child welfare researchers as the "Sixties Scoop" (Johnston, 1983).

While I came from a family of five children, I was placed in care and grew up with only one of my siblings. For the most part, my one sibling and I were placed and moved in and out of the same foster and group homes for most of our adolescent years. Eventually, I aged out of care when I reached 18 years. Subsequently, my other younger sister's adoption placement broke down when she turned 15 years old. The only solution to her adoptive family's inability to deal with her at adolescence was to abandon her by shipping her back to Canada where she landed on my doorstep. No prior arrangements were made with me and her adoptive parents certainly did not warn me that they were going to do this to her. Like many other Aboriginal children who were adopted, she was already an extremely troubled youth with identity issues, substance addictions and behavioural issues (Bennett & Cyr, 2000; Carriere, 2008) and as a young woman at 19, I was ill equipped to deal with, let alone, understand her issues. My younger brother, whom I last saw when he was less than a year old, would be around 45 years of age today. Last year I finally learned, despite having registered with Province of Manitoba's Post-Adoption Registry over sixteen years ago, that my younger brother is not interested in connecting with either me or anyone associated with his birth family at this time.

I spent six years in government care from 1976 to 1981. Upon aging out of care, I experienced a great deal of uncertainty and adversity. I married and divorced rather young, struggled through work and university, lived with an abusive man and found myself involved in numerous short-lived, failed relationships. My own aspirations on pursuing and completing a law degree were dashed when I gave birth to my daughter in my second year of law school back in 1993. Since my family was dealing with their own subsistence and addiction issues and the fact that my daughter's father lived in Australia, I had very little support in raising her and consequently had to drop out of law school. The decision to drop out had a significant impact on my self-esteem and self-worth.

Despite the adversity of my youth, and my own post-care experiences, I am strong and resilient today but where did I get this ability to bounce back and succeed? Where does my resilience stem from? I have a number of theories as to the source of my own resiliency. My personal theory is that my resilience is born of my connection to my mother, my grandmother, my family, my culture, my community and my connection to the land. They are my connections to ancient reaffirming values that have sustained my families and ancestors for millennia. The tender years of zero to five are crucial to the development of children (Zero to Three, 2008). They are the years that serve as a foundation for determining who children will be when they emerge into adults (Berrick, Needell, Barth, & Jonson-Reid, 1998). I believe that my social capital and environment (which includes family, community, culture, social networks, social norms, values, trust and shared resources) (Mignone & O'Neil, 2005) were very much intact during the decade into which I was born. Child welfare was just beginning to make a presence in First Nations communities around the time I was born and while my family did not escape getting caught up in this system, at least a strong foundation was set for my future which contributes significantly to my current identity, strength and resilience as an adult today. I owe my very existence and resiliency to my family, community, culture, and the land upon which I still live.

Although I do not live in my community of origin anymore or out on the land, my identity as an First Nations person is as mobile as I am and is also strongly imbued with what some have theorized as having "genetic memory" (Hurley, 2013). I believe it is the genetic memories of my ancestors that reside within and sustain me, and which contributes greatly to my resilience and identity as an Indigenous person. While my mother did not directly and consciously teach First Nations values to my siblings and/or me, once we moved to the city, the intergenerational passing of essential cultural values happened regardless of where we eventually ended up (in greater non-Aboriginal society). Support for this notion comes from the work of Jean-Paul Restoule (2008), an

urban-based Aboriginal man who believes that Aboriginal values continue to thrive in each of us in spite of the pressures to assimilate. These Aboriginal values, he notes, are crucial to identity more than the material signs of identity. Restoule (2008) believes it is the internal values that inform and underlie the visible expressions of culture. I believe in this too because for me, these values continue to persist in the present context. Among these values are the principles of non-interference, autonomy, as well as the related traits of adaptability and ingenuity. Respect and love are also key values that are esteemed by all and practiced within urban spaces by many who identify as Indigenous. All these values are passed on from one generation to the other in the family unit even though the older generation remained silent about their backgrounds because of the learned guilt that resulted from residential school. Restoule (2008) notes that these values are "conveyed and subtly incorporated by the younger generation because the traits are well engrained. Despite separation from an Indigenous land base, Indigenous values continue to be stressed, lived, enhanced, and transformed in urban areas" (pp. 31-32). I am also mindful of what my grandfather told me many years ago: "I am at home wherever I walk on Turtle Island." I am reminded that geographically the values and the culture that sustained generations of my people permeate up from the ground upon which my ancestors previously lived, walked and loved. These values speak deeply to my theory of where my resilience comes from. However the way in which the child welfare system earlier operated and intervened in my life had, for a time, effectively cut me off from these ancient reaffirming values.

My experience in care is over, but it will live forever in the chambers of my brain that contain my memories. My prior experience of being in and leaving care contributed to the creation of this area as a research topic. This prior experience is largely why I have chosen to focus my attention and "look twice" at why this time in my life was significant to me, but also why it has become significant for me today. In putting forward my story I draw from the framework of self-

location, as articulated by Indigenous scholars Absolon and Willet (2004), to understand the positioning of myself in this research as someone with prior experience and knowledge. This positioning requires me to be reflexive and share honestly what drives my interest in this type of research. Due to the relational ontology of Indigenous epistemologies (Wilson, 2007) and the history of unethical and exploitative research with Indigenous peoples (Baker, 1996; Menzies, 2001; Smith, 2006), an aspect of the use of Indigenous methodologies requires that researchers expose the motivation and purpose of research (Kovach, 2009). Kovach (2009) explained that this relational ontology could be satisfied through honestly articulated understandings and expressions of self—our histories, relations, motivations, and limitations. Self-location as a research method brings perspective to what is sought, how data are analyzed, and what results are deemed important for advancing individual and community interests and goals (Wilson, 2008). Foregrounding Absolon and Willett's (2004) self-locating framework of 'looking twice,' I believe the processes and challenges of using self-location is necessary in order to conduct ethical research with and for Indigenous young people as this study proposed. As Wilson (2007) explained, "We cannot be separated from our work and nor should our writing be separated from ourselves" (p.194). Self-location begins with understanding who we are and from where we come, admitting what we do and do not know, and committing to an ongoing relational learning process. Conceptualizing and actualizing self-location may be a complex, personal, and cyclical method that requires time and space not always made available in academia but is absolutely necessary (Gillies, Burleigh, Snowshoe, & Werner, 2014). As a researcher, regardless of my similar experiences, I am implicated in the cycle of colonial violence navigated by Indigenous young people. I believe I can be more effectively counter this violence by sharing my positioning and my role behind proposing and conducting this kind of research.

1.4 Purpose

This study used an arts-based, participatory-based approach to research using visual narrative inquiry through digital storytelling to expand upon the lived experiences and narrative stories of emerging Indigenous adults and their post-care lives. In particular, the arts-based, participatory-based research approach investigated the outcomes, impacts, experiences and stories of a select number of emerging Indigenous adults who have transitioned particularly out of First Nations child welfare care. The objective of this research is promote an understanding of the narratives of survival that emerge from the stories told by young Indigenous adults regarding their experiences transitioning out of substitute care and emerging toward adulthood.

My study is guided by what Maxwell (2005) describes as intellectual, practical, and personal goals. These goals directed the development of my research questions and conceptual framework. I reflect more on these under each of the headings below.

1.4.1 Intellectual

In particular, I had an intellectual goal of generating insight into the individual and collective transitioning perspectives and experiences of emerging First Nations adults with prior child welfare histories, in order to promote and offer opportunities for better understanding for subsequent generations of Indigenous adults emerging from care toward adulthood. Very little exists about emerging First Nations adults transitioning, after-care and human development experiences in particular as these experiences relate to the new concept of "emerging adulthood." Therefore, my first intellectual goal is to apply to the knowledge related to child welfare transitioning to the new human development stage that might inform the child welfare and the research community of these experiences.

1.4.2 Practical

Second, my research had a practical goal of helping participants reflect on their "substitute," "in care," and "post-care" life stage experiences using a participatory but creative approach that incorporated current technology appealing to today's emerging adults. As part of the practical aspects of this research, participants created digital stories based on their experiences of having been in care, transitioning out of care, their experiences after-care and their understanding of whether adulthood has been reached. Once they have left care there is little that is known about the post-care experiences of First Nations children who formerly grew up in care. These voices need to be heard and we need to learn from them. In particular, First Nations Child and Family Service agencies need to understand how effective they have been in the collective effort to maintain the familial, community and cultural connections between the children and youth and their families and communities.

1.4.3 Personal

Third, my research fulfills a personal goal, which was to produce knowledge that reflects on the outcome experiences of emerging Indigenous adults who have previously been in the care of First Nations child welfare systems. Although I grew up in care myself my experiences have been through the non-First Nations child welfare system. I believe that I learned from them as much as they learned from each other and me through a collaborative learning process. In taking a participatory, arts-based approach, I believe that I promoted a process that allowed for the co-construction of knowledge with the emerging Indigenous adults who participated in this study. The research methodologies were constructed as a way to ensure that I was not exploiting or gaining a degree at the expense of the individuals who shared their personal stories. Furthermore the research methodologies enhanced capacity building through oral storytelling that supported healing and reconciliatory practices for each of the participants. As a survivor of the child welfare system myself,

I have undertaken training to facilitate a digital storytelling workshop and produced my own digital story to ensure I could effectively pass on my understanding and knowledge of this process (Bennett, 2013). I can attest to the powerful experience of learning to create, develop and share my own story using digital storytelling as a medium to express my lived experiences.

1.5 Research Objectives

The scope of the activities for this research is based on qualitative methodologies that utilize narrative inquiry (oral history), participatory, arts-based approaches for examining and understanding issues of survival regarding the transitioning, post-care and human development experiences of emerging adult First Nations individuals with prior child welfare experience. Specifically, this research sought:

1. To advance an understanding of the transitioning out of care, post-care experiences and human development stages among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba;
2. To enable emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors who have experienced being in care and transitioning out of care to retrospectively and contemporarily express their stories, ideas and experiences through oral history and video storytelling;
3. To provide a safe, comfortable forum for emerging adult First Nations men, women and gay, lesbian, transgendered, queer (LGBT) individuals to discuss with each other and with the principal researcher their transitioning experiences out of care;
4. To support and foster holistic healing among emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors through the process of storytelling;
5. To promote reconciliation and healing among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system using participatory, arts-based and Indigenous approaches;
6. To support wider opportunities for knowledge exchange and understanding of the social determinants of health as well as highlight the outcomes and impacts on the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system post-care;
7. To showcase narratives of survival and the resiliency of emerging adult First Nations survivors of the child Manitoba welfare system; and
8. To enhance capacity building among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system through digital storytelling that supports healing practices that might be useful when disseminated to First Nations communities and child welfare agencies across the country.

1.6 Research Questions

Given the problem statements and the purposes of the study, as briefly mentioned above, the following overarching research questions that have guided this study were:

1. What were the transitioning experiences of emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system upon leaving care at 18 years of age?
2. What challenges, barriers and opportunities have emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system experienced post-care?
3. How have emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system maintained their connection to family, community and your culture?
4. How and when do emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system personally know they have reached adulthood?

1.7 Rationale and Significance of the Research

1.7.1 Rationale

Do hearing stories and listening to the interpretations of people who have experienced "care" contribute to a decolonizing of experience, or do they constitute an anti-colonial approach? Is it important to decolonize the child welfare experience of First Nations emerging adults from the child welfare system by listening to them and learning from their narratives? I believe that it is. First Nations child welfare agencies are still colonial bodies wherein colonial powers, through legislation, regulations, standards, and policies still operate and dictate to First Nations families, communities and agencies how and when to protect and service their populations (Hudson & McKenzie, 2003) as well as how to practice social work (Hart, 2003). I have chosen to pursue the stories of young people who have had personal experience growing up in First Nations child welfare care because their stories have not been adequately heard. These stories evidence narratives of survival from those who have been oppressed by the experience of being in care, regardless of the fact that they were the responsibility of a First Nations or non-Aboriginal child welfare agency. Few young First Nations adults have been asked once they leave care, to reflectively look back on their experiences in and

upon leaving care and few First Nations child welfare agencies have the interest, energy or resources to engage in understanding the post-care experiences of former wards. Few of these stories have been heard because there are very few resources and research to draw upon that reflect upon these experiences, especially from a First Nations perspective. To provide a venue for young people to share their stories and narratives is a way of helping them work toward decolonizing their experiences and is an anti-colonial approach. Decolonization starts with the mind (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2012) and anti-colonial approaches seek to help those who have been oppressed to confront the oppression that they have experienced (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013). Undoing the effects of colonialism and working toward decolonization requires each of us to consciously consider to what degree we have been affected by not only the physical aspects of colonization, but also the psychological, mental, and spiritual aspects as well. Creative, consistent, decolonized thinking shapes and empowers the brain, which in turn provides a prime reason for positive change and contributes to individual healing and strength (Gray, et al., 2013). I would submit that digital storytelling is an anti-colonial tool and activity that works against colonization and post-colonial legacies that have maintained the social injustices that First Nations peoples have continued to experience through the conventional child welfare and First Nations child welfare systems. I have chosen to conduct research using digital storytelling methods as a way to support the recovery endeavours of emerging First Nations young people from the effects of colonization by allowing them to offer up their own personal narratives and visuals of survival as it pertains to their child welfare experiences they reflect upon being in care, leaving care and how this experience has impacted their lives post-care.

1.7.2 Significance

This study aims to make a substantial and original contribution to knowledge about the post-care and outcome experiences of First Nations individuals who identify as emerging adult survivors

of the First Nations child welfare system within Manitoba. This research will add a fresh and alternative examination of after care experiences by First Nations survivors of the FNCFS system in Manitoba, and may contribute significantly to a virtually non-existent body of knowledge that is Manitoba specific and First Nations centered. Hearing the stories and the interpretation of young people who have experienced and have transitioned out of substitute care can lead to a decolonized or an anti-colonial approach to understanding these particular experiences. It is important to decolonize child welfare experiences by listening and learning from and allowing young people to voice their stories of survival and resilience and to learn about their previous identity and the emergence of something altogether new and unknown. It is hoped that the knowledge that springs forward will support wider opportunities for knowledge exchange and understanding about the social determinants of health as well as highlight the long-term outcomes and impacts on the lived experiences of emerging adult First Nations survivors touched by the Manitoba child welfare systems.

In particular this research reflects and contributes to an understanding of the role that culture might have in the lives of emerging adult First Nations survivors post-care. This knowledge can possibly help future generations of First Nations young people with similar life experiences. It can also serve as a future blueprint to assist First Nations child welfare agencies develop ways they can help maintain cultural connectivity between emerging First Nations adults with their families and communities, and the possibilities around the role that culture may play in the lives of child welfare alumni post-care.

This research has the potential to add significantly to the body of knowledge relating to child welfare, gender and human development and as it relates to the Indigenous child welfare survivor populations in Canada. In addition, this research explores the production of digital stories as a co-creative process and therefore the methodology chosen for carrying out this research will also

conceivably add to the literature about Indigenous arts-based research methodologies as an empowering, decolonizing and anti-colonial tool and activity.

1.8 Limitations

Digital storytelling has a number of limitations. Obviously the biggest is that both trainers and students need access to computers and the necessary software, though it is often possible to use cellphones to audio record, photograph and videotape. Access to computers and related software is something to consider for researchers with limited resources. I was originally concerned that I would not have enough computers to undertake this initiative but was able to obtain laptops that were lent to me by a child welfare agency. I had my own digital audio and video recording equipment that was able to be used by the participants. Another related problem is the level of technical expertise of trainers and the students. As a graphic artist and the owner of a creative graphic production company (EB^2 Image Design Research), I brought a great deal of creativity and knowledge about the methodological approach that I proposed for this research, including having produced my own digital story about my understanding of how I have been impacted as a second generation survivor of my mother's residential school experience (see my video: "My Mother's Love was in a Bowl of Porridge," which can be viewed at http://nindibaajimomin.com/stories/marlyn-bennett/). I learned about digital storytelling when I participated in *Nindibaajimomin: The Intergenerational Digital Storytelling on the Legacy of Residential Schools*. *Nindibaajimomin*, which was a week-long summer institute hosted in August 2013 by the Oral History Centre in collaboration with Indigenous Studies at the University of Winnipeg (see http://nindibaajimomin.com) and funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Together with nine other First Nations women from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, we gathered to discuss the legacy of residential schools and developed personal digital stories about how we believe we have been impacted by our parents' experiences in

residential school. At the same time, we were specifically trained in the digital storytelling process so that we could use this research method upon returning to our respective communities.

There are some general limitations to this research that should be acknowledged at the outset. First, the number of individuals in this study is small and the findings make it highly problematic to draw generalizations to the wider population. I deliberately chose to keep the numbers small, as the methodological approaches require working closely with a smaller number of people. In addition, given the costs of equipment and potential wear and tear on this equipment, it was important to limit the number of participants.

Lastly, the eventual analysis of the narrative content within the resulting transcripts involves interpretative judgments on the part of me as researcher and therefore caution must be emphasized that outside researchers and/or readers looking at the same data might arrive at different interpretations (Polkinghorne, 2007).

1.9 Definition of Terms

1.9.1 Aboriginal, First Nations and Indigenous

As part of understanding the outcome and post-care experiences of First Nations emerging adults who have transitioned out of government care, it is important to be aware of the definitions behind use of the terms reflected in this dissertation. In this dissertation I use the terms "Aboriginal", "First Nations" and "Indigenous" interchangeably throughout. The use of terms to describe the Indigenous populations within Canada is somewhat contested. The term 'Indian' is used in the *Indian Act* but has largely been replaced by the term 'First Nations' to refer both to those who have 'status' under the Indian Act and those who do not. "First Nation" is a term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s and '80s and generally replaced the term "Indian," although unlike

"Indian," the term "First Nation" does not have a legal definition (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Development Canada, n.d.). While "First Nations" refers to the ethnicity of First Nations peoples, the singular "First Nation" can also refer to a band, a reserved-based community, or a larger tribal grouping and the status Indians who live in them (Indigenous Foundations, n.d.). This term also does not convey the degree of diversity that exists among the Indigenous populations who call themselves First Nation. The term Aboriginal has largely replaced the term Native. The term Aboriginal includes three broad groups identified in the Canadian Constitution: First Nations, Métis and Inuit (Frideres & Gadacz, 2012). Métis people are a people from mixed European and Indian ancestry. Inuit are Aboriginal peoples of far northern Canada. These Aboriginal groups of peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs, as well as unique current and historical relationships with Canada (Bartlett, Iwasaki, Gottlieb, Hall, & Mannell, 2007). It has become more common recently to use the term *Indigenous*, which is also a preferred term in the international context (Indigenous Foundations, n.d.). This term is also referenced in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* to recognize the sovereignty characteristics that distinguish Indigenous people from other racial or ethnic minority groups, a factor that imposes particular obligations on government (Rae, 2006). In addition, it hints at the shared oppression caused by colonization. However, it is acknowledged that some (e.g., Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) object to the term Aboriginal because it identifies people solely by their political-legal relationship to the state rather than by their own self-identified cultural and/or social ties to their communities.

1.9.2 Exclusion of Certain Aboriginal populations in this Study

This study focuses primarily on the First Nations experience of youth in extensions of care and those who have transitioned out of care. As of March 31, 2015, there were 10,295 children in care in Manitoba (Government of Manitoba, 2015). Of this total, 7,484 (72%) were First Nations and 1,111 (10.79%) were of Métis ancestry (Government of Manitoba, 2015, p. 93). Although Métis

and Inuit youth may experience similar circumstances exiting care, the higher population of the First Nations peoples coupled with the overrepresentation of First Nations children within the Manitoba child welfare system justified exclusion of other Aboriginal populations in this study. In Manitoba, unlike most other provinces and territories, Métis and Inuit child welfare services are offered through a separate and distinct child and family services authority from those that provide the majority of services to First Nations children and families[3]. Métis and First Nations populations are serviced specifically by culturally appropriate agencies and authorities consistent with *The Child and Family Services Authorities Act (2003), The Child and Family Services Act* (1985) and *The Adoption Act* (1999). Similar approaches for excluding Métis and Inuit data have been taken in national research examining the overrepresentation of First Nations children in the child welfare systems across Canada (see *Mesnmimk Wasatek: Catching a Drop of Light. Understanding the Overrepresentation of First Nations Children in Canada's Child Welfare System: An Analysis of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS-2003),* Trocmé et al., 2006*).*

1.9.3 Reflecting on the Use of the Term "Survivor"

When I initially took on this topic as my research focus, I identified those who had been a part of, and have since left the child welfare systems, as "graduates" of these systems. However, much like the residential school era, researchers have pointed to the fact that child welfare has been used as a tool to continue the colonization of Aboriginal peoples (McKenzie & Hudson, 1985; Blackstock, 2007b). Calling individuals who were part of child welfare systems "graduates" somehow made it sound more benign than it really was, when in fact, the child welfare system and its various legislations, policies and standards, has been incredibly hurtful and continues to be just as

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3 *The Child and Family Services Authorities Act* (2003) created four authorities: First Nations Authority of Northern Manitoba, First Nations Authority of Southern Manitoba, Métis Authority and General Authority. These authorities together have mandated 23 legally distinct agencies, of which 17 are First Nations child welfare agencies; three are non-Aboriginal, private child welfare agencies; two are Métis child welfare agencies; and one is the Department of Family Services (of which there are multiple offices in five areas of the province) (Milne, Kozlowski & Sinha, 2014).

detrimental to First Nations families and communities as were the policies of residential schools historically and the resulting sixties scoop. While there was a sixties scoop, there was also a seventies, eighties, nineties and millennium scoops (Sinclair, 2007). In fact, many have argued that the scoop of children from First Nations communities has not stopped (Sinclair, 2007). The number of children in care continues to rise even though they may be serviced by Aboriginal agencies. The best estimate is that there are over twenty-seven thousand First Nations children in care on-and off-reserves in Canada (Blackstock, 2007b). Today in Manitoba alone, we now have over 10,295 children in care, the majority (approximately 85%) of which represent the First Nations populations (Government of Manitoba, 2015, p. 93). As a result, I have chosen to call the participants in this study, who have previously been involved with child welfare agencies "survivors," just as they have been similarly identified in the literature pertaining to the experiences of adults who have reflected on their time in residential schools (Grant, 1996; Miller, 1996; Regan, 2010).

Like many survivors in the Indian Residential School System, many adoptees and foster care survivor's endured tremendous violence, abuse and racism in their households as they shared a common experience of loss of language, ceremony, familiarity of extended family, and connection to their identity through family, culture, and the land. While undertaken in the name of protection and/or acculturation, these policies and programs resulted in trauma to the children, their families, and their cultures, as well as in abuses that were in violation of children's rights (Engel, Phillips, & DellaCava, 2012). Many adoptees and foster care survivors contend that instead of protecting children, the child welfare systems in this country have exposed First Nations children to much more "abuse, neglect and harm" than they believe they would have ever suffered at home (Bagley, 1985; Woolley, 2013). It's possible, however that many Indigenous youth also harbor deep antipathies toward their biological parents for abuses suffered in these homes. It's also possible that the romanticizing of a past home life is similar to romanticizing any sort of past or to the

romanticizing of a future, which is one of the reasons why many disaffected youths seek to create their own families at very young ages (Pryce & Samuels, 2010).

The recognition of Aboriginal individuals as "survivors" of the child welfare systems has been recognized by the Canadian Museum of Human Rights and is reflected in the May 2013 call for photos and stories on Aboriginal child welfare (https://humanrights.ca/about-museum/news/cmhr-issues-call-photos-stories-aboriginal-child-welfare). Further, the terminology reflected in two lawsuits filed in Canada (one in Ontario in 2010 and another in British Columbia in 2011), also describes applicants in both lawsuits as "survivors" of the Sixties Scoop (see *Brown* v. *Canada* [Att*orney General*], 2010 and *Skogamhallait* v. *The Attorney General of Canada*, 2011). An Indigenous Adoptee Gathering Committee also describes Indigenous adoptees and those who have experienced foster care as "survivors." At a recent gathering in Ottawa (September 20, 2014), this group recognized the need for creating a forum for survivors, at a national level, so that they could express their stories, to learn from other sixties scoop/child welfare survivors, and develop a longer term healing strategy (http://indigenousadoptee.com). Identifying and focusing on participants as "survivors" has certain implications. These implications will have to be taken into account when working with First Nations adults who identify as having survived childhood and adolescent involvement with child welfare. For some, there may be trauma associated with recalling childhood and adolescent experiences associated with remembering why they were in care and/or experiences of rejection the might surface if they have had difficulty reconnecting with their family of origin upon reaching adulthood. Extra care and precaution was necessary and taken into consideration given the young person's family history of trauma and/or other experiences of oppression and marginalization, the type of events they shared and reflected upon, including the types of supports they bring to their experiences and may or may not currently have, including their ability to cope.

1.10 Organization of the Dissertation

The central focus of Chapter Two is on the literature related to two primary bodies of knowledge. It starts with the literature on the history of colonization and child welfare and the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the system including the importance of Aboriginal-developed child welfare agencies. The second part of the literature review highlights literature on the emerging adulthood issues among young people generally and for those aging out of Canada's child welfare systems along with a short review of the literature on resiliency among those with child welfare histories. This chapter includes a focus on cultural initiatives that inform adulthood by looking at Indigenous stages of human development that mark the transmission from one stage of human development to the next through the use of the Medicine Wheel and other practices such as the rites of passage for males and females.

Chapter Three is organized into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the underlying research methodologies employed to address my research questions. The research approach for this study is qualitative, participatory, arts-based, Indigenized, and incorporates narrative inquiry through digital storytelling techniques. The second section of the chapter focuses on the methods undertaken for conducting the digital storytelling workshops related to this research. It provides a discussion on how the workshop locations were chosen and how the participants were recruited for the workshops. The discussion of methods also outlines the approach I took to obtain informed consent. In the third section, I provide an overview of the approaches taken in addressing the data analysis of the information collected and reflexivity, reactivity and researcher bias, including descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validities. I finish this chapter with an examination of the ethical considerations undertaken in conducing the digital storytelling workshops.

Chapter Four provides background information on the twelve participants involved in the two workshops connected to this research. It includes an overview of the process for conducting the

digital storytelling workshops. This chapter and the digital storytelling process explained is based on the researcher's notes and memos written during the workshops and from information learned from the participants through talking circles and from general conversations the researcher had with each participant or had observed throughout the course of conducting both workshops.

Chapter Five focuses on the narrative findings from eight talking circles, twelve individual videos, and interviews held with some of the participants after the workshops ended. The first section focuses on the collective results of the discussions from the talking circles and videos, while the second section addresses the collective results of the follow-up interviews.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, I compare the findings with other research on emerging adulthood and reflect on the use of digital storytelling as a methodology in doing research with young Indigenous adults with child welfare histories in light of the particular contributions this study has made. The second part of the chapter considered how digital storytelling became a healing and transformative experience for the participants involved in this study. Reflecting on Anishinaabe epistemology the third section looked at the Debwewin Journey as a metaphor of the experiences describing the journey out of care among the First Nations emerging adults involved in this study. This final chapter discusses the implications of the research findings for child welfare and concludes with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The central focus of this chapter is on the literature related to two primary bodies of knowledge. It starts with the literature on the history of colonization and child welfare and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the system including the importance of Aboriginal-developed child welfare agencies. The second part of the literature review is on the emerging adulthood issues among young people generally and for those aging out of Canada's child welfare systems along with a short review of the literature on resiliency among those with child welfare histories. It includes a focus on cultural initiatives that inform adulthood by looking at Indigenous stages of human development that mark the transmission from one stage of human development to the next through the use of the Medicine Wheel and other practices such as the rites of passage for males and females.

Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples has often been described as cruel, barbaric, and horrendous (Miller, 2004). Often much attention has been given to the residential schools and the unfulfilled Treaty promises. Yet, there is another issue that has often been neglected, that being child welfare services, particularly as it applied and still applies today to First Nations children living both on and off reserves. Blackstock (2009a) notes that very little was done to disrupt residential schools and the colonial polices of government. Indeed, some have argued that child welfare services served to replace the residential schools that so often brought much pain and suffering to the child and their families and communities (Hudson & McKenzie, 2003). With a significant number of Aboriginal children in child welfare services, it is important to understand why Aboriginal agencies are important in the delivery of child welfare services (Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission [AJIC], n.d.). The next section discusses three reasons why FNCFS agencies are important in the delivery of child welfare services, the first being the historical maltreatment and

neglect of First Nations children and their families, which has demonstrated the unreliability and ineffectiveness of various levels of government and non-Aboriginal agencies in the delivery of social welfare services. Secondly, Aboriginal agencies have proven to be highly effective in resolving child welfare issues in the family and community, both on and off reserves. Lastly, Aboriginal child welfare agencies affirm the self-determination and self-governance that many Aboriginal communities desire. This self-determination and self-governance not only positively affect the community, but they also affect the well-being of the child and subsequent generations of children and young people.

2.1 Colonization and Assimilation

Colonization has had a devastating effect on the lives of Indigenous people in Canada. Attempts to assimilate Indigenous people started shortly after European contact as "colonists viewed Indigenous people as impediments to the cultivation of land and to civilization generally (Frideres & Gadacz, 2012, p. 4). By assuming control over all aspect of their lives and assimilating Indigenous people into the new European (British) Canadian culture, the government hoped to get rid of "the Indian problem" – which threatened the Crown's aspirations of expanding control over the vast area of land that Canada now encompasses (Fleras, 2010, p. 178). The *Indian Act* (which consolidated various pieces of legislation from around the country) was passed in 1876 and came to control every aspect of Indigenous life (Miller, 2004). The Act defined who was an Indian and how they could either gain or lose this status; where they could live; the activities that they could partake in (religious and cultural ceremonies were banned); and how they governed themselves (Frideres & Gadacz, 2012). Indigenous people could not own land and were not able to participate in certain economic activities to sustain themselves and their families. It also regulated the consumption of alcohol, prohibited Indigenous rights to vote in federal, provincial and municipal elections and

prohibited the sale of agricultural products without permission, as well as consolidated the creation of reserve lands (Walmsley, 2005). The *Indian Act* also greatly disadvantaged Aboriginal women, as it was based on Western patriarchal beliefs (Anderson, 2000). Thus, Aboriginal women who were once considered at the centre of the family were greatly respected within the community, and who lived in a matrilineal society and had political power, were now disempowered and devalued as a result of colonization (Anderson, 2000). Patriarchal beliefs and the *Indian Act* had stripped women away from their honored and valued position in Aboriginal societies, as the Act had disadvantaged women with respect to land surrender, wills, band elections, Indian status, band membership, and enfranchisement (Anderson, 2000; Walmsley, 2005). On the other hand, the *Indian Act* has also protected Indigenous women and nations. One protection the act afforded was that it prohibited White men from taking over the reserve (and selling it off) through marriage to Aboriginal women (Moss, 1990). The protections that it affords were hard won victories of Aboriginal activists, especially those who challenged the government in the release of the White Paper, which proposed elimination of the unique legal position of Indians, the *Indian Act* and reserves (Coates, 2008). Today many Indigenous nations are concerned about getting rid of the Act entirely while others feel that to do so would absolve the government from maintaining its historical and fiduciary responsibilities to Indigenous peoples (Coates, 2008).

2.1.1 Residential Schools

The residential schools can be considered one of colonial Canada's first child welfare institutions geared towards Aboriginal persons (Mandell, Clouston, Fine, & Blackstock, 2003). The residential school system was first implemented in the 1880's as an institution to assimilate Aboriginal children into mainstream Euro-Canadian society (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Usually church-owned and government-funded, these residential schools were designed to eradicate Aboriginal culture and promote Christian and Euro-Canadian values instead (Miller, 1996).

A total of 130 residential schools were constructed across Canada, whereby over 150,000 children were removed from their homes and forced to attend these schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Children were often exploited and in many instances were physically and sexually abused by the residential school staff (Milloy, 1999). The last of these residential schools closed in the 1996 (Blackstock, 2007a, 2007b). However, even with the dismantling of residential schools, there has been a long lasting legacy of social, psychological and economic problems amongst the Aboriginal people as a direct result of their forced attendance at these schools (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski. 2004; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

2.1.2 The Sixties Scoop

In 1951, when residential schools were still operational, revisions were made to the *Indian Act*, which called for the Provincial government to provide Aboriginal people living on reserves with programs such as health, education and social welfare services (Heinrichs & Hiebert, 2009). However, even with these laws passed, there was minimal action taken on behalf of the provinces to improve the welfare of Aboriginal children and their families. For example, according to Heinrichs and Hiebert, the provincial "approach for child welfare for Indian people in Manitoba was to apprehend kids" (2009, p. 113). There was no attempt to try alternative solutions or address the root cause of the problem (i.e., poverty, mental health issues, untreated traumas, domestic violence, and other factors, which together form the ongoing effects of colonial projects). Basically, the provincial child welfare authority cited jurisdictional issues as a reason for providing limited social services to Aboriginal peoples living on reserves. That being said, child and family services began to expand in the late 1960's. These services were largely carried out by non-Aboriginal social workers with little to no understanding of the various cultures of Aboriginal people. This gave rise to ethnocentric, culturally insensitive practices, often reminiscent of those found in residential schools. During this time, many Aboriginal children were taken from their homes and communities and placed in off

reserve, non-Aboriginal homes as adopted or fostered children (Heinrichs & Hiebert, 2009). Overall, child welfare agencies engaged in many of the same practices encountered through the residential schools, as they often isolated children from their communities and families (Heinrichs & Hiebert, 2009; Blackstock, 2009a). This practice became ubiquitous throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and was thus famously labeled the 60s Scoop (Sinclair, 2007). Because these children were removed from their families, they often suffered from psychological and social problems. Many of these children were placed into foster homes where they were unable to "assimilate" because of the racism they experienced, the loneliness they felt due to the knowledge that they did not belong and grappling with internalized racism adopted from mainstream stereotypes of Aboriginal people (Heinrichs & Hiebert, 2009, p. 126). Of course, underlying mental health issue might also figure prominently, including untreated traumas, the spectrum of effects evident in child and youth who may have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and other issues that might also have interfered with some of the youths' inabilities to find acceptance (Streissguth, Barr, Kogan, & Bookstein, 1996; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Essentially, this new form of child welfare supplanted the residential schools as a means of colonizing Aboriginal children. Additionally, in all of these cases, no Aboriginal people were consulted or asked for any feedback or to make recommendations to improve the child welfare system (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Commission [AJIC], n.d.).

Because of this history of abuse and neglect on the part of these child welfare institutions, the inability of the government to enact any meaningful changes, one can easily understand why many Aboriginal peoples then as well as today are still fearful and distrustful of non-Aboriginal agencies that attempt to provide child welfare services to their communities (Region of Waterloo Social Services, 2010). These non-Aboriginal agencies are a painful reminder of the past, where Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their homes, which left both families and communities devastated.

2.2 Importance of Aboriginal Child Welfare Agencies

Today Aboriginal agencies are important in the delivery of child welfare services because they are highly effective in resolving Aboriginal child welfare issues, especially when compared with the services provided by non-Aboriginal agencies (Aboriginal Justice Implementation Committee [AJIC], n.d.). Before discussing the effectiveness of Aboriginal agencies, however, it is first important to focus on the cultures of Aboriginal people to provide some context. Many Aboriginal cultures place a great deal of importance on relationships and the interconnectedness of life, which Aboriginal people believe forms the basis of respect and learning (Mandell et al., 2003). In many traditional Aboriginal cultures, children are considered "gifts from the spirit world and must be treated very gently" (Mandell et al., 2003, p. 5). Furthermore, both immediate and extended family members are considered responsible for providing care to the children. It is important to note that this extended family may include the entire community (AJIC, n.d.). In contrast, mainstream Western cultures emphasize the importance of individuality, power, and the nuclear family (Aboriginal Human Resource Council, 2011). Many of these values are antithetical to the values held by many Indigenous families and communities.

With that said, these cultural and philosophical differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies produce rather divergent results for Aboriginal clients. Because Aboriginal agencies incorporate a more holistic worldview when working with the children, they are often able to see a fuller picture, whereas the non-Aboriginal models only look at a few aspects, which result, oftentimes, in an incomplete picture. So, for example, a non-Aboriginal child and family services worker who apprehends an Aboriginal child from his or her home because of perceived abuse or neglect, may think that she is doing the right thing (Blackstock, 2009a). However, a culturally competent Aboriginal worker would understand that "removing a child from one family in the community can have negative impact on other children in that family, as well on the wider

community", and would therefore attempt to resolve the issue through working with the immediate family, extended family, and the entire community (AJIC, n.d.). This is considered to be a preventative approach that looks at a family's strengths as opposed to its weaknesses. The non-Aboriginal system, on the other hand, often looked at situations from a "protective" standpoint that often saw large numbers of Aboriginal children apprehended for structural issues that their families had no power to change (i.e. poverty, poor housing, etc.) and further, Aboriginal families were often deprived "of the same access to services as other Canadians to redress risk to children" (Blackstock, 2009a, p. 33).

Furthermore, when children are apprehended by Aboriginal agencies, it is done with the belief that they are removing a child from a particular situation, not from the family itself. Additionally, apprehension is done as a last resort if all else fails and even then, attempts are made to place the child in the hands of the extended family until they are able to resolve the issues with the immediate family (AJIC, n.d.). Many non-Aboriginal agencies on the other hand, use apprehension as a first resort and often these children are permanently removed from both their immediate and extended family (AJIC, n.d.; Shangreaux, 2004). This method becomes problematic because the evidence indicates that when children are apprehended and kept away from their families, they are likely to be placed in multiple foster homes which in turn "leads the children into young offender institutions and, ultimately, to 'graduate' to the adult correctional system (AJIC, n.d.)."

Other additional advantages of Aboriginal welfare agencies include the fact that these agencies are able to deal with some of the most difficult child welfare cases in a relatively short amount of time (AJIC, n.d.). Furthermore, Aboriginal agencies have also been able to garner a tremendous amount of community support and involvement that surpasses what non-Aboriginal agencies have been able to attain (AJIC, n.d.). Moreover, Aboriginal child welfare agencies have been able to successfully repatriate many Aboriginal children who were adopted into other families

outside of their communities, and they have also been able to reduce the number of Aboriginal children who have been removed from their family and communities in some cases (AJIC, n.d.). For these reasons and more, it becomes clear that Aboriginal child welfare agencies are a necessity due to the fact that they are culturally appropriate and that they are highly effective in resolving child welfare issues in Aboriginal communities. Further, they operate ethically from Indigenous worldviews, which may be more conducive to the way in which Aboriginal families operate.

Lastly, having Aboriginal agencies, both mandated and non-mandated, deliver child welfare services is extremely important in that it puts power back into the hands of Aboriginal people, which in turn positively affects the well-being of Aboriginal children. Prior to the European colonization of North America, Aboriginal peoples were self-governing people. They were able to successfully take care of their children, their families, and their communities without any help from outsiders. However, with the arrival of the European colonizers, several methods were employed to systematically breakdown the traditional way of life for Aboriginal peoples in the hopes of assimilating them into so called civilized productive members of society (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). This resulted in numerous problems, as Aboriginal peoples were stripped of their culture and identity, the very essence of their being. According to Article 3 of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they should be able to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (United Nations, 2008). This is extremely important when speaking about Aboriginal child welfare, particularly when we consider that a child is a product of their surroundings. That is, if the community is empowered and in control of their lives, then it is more likely to be the case for the child who is born to such a community.

In essence, the way to achieve this self-determination is through decolonization, which, according to McKenzie and Hudson (2010), involves transferring "autonomy and control of mandated child welfare services for native people to native people" (p. 134). Not doing so will result in an "ongoing process of removing children from community and culture" which in turn will systematically contribute "to the internalization of perceptions among the colonized which emphasize the inferiority and inadequacy of their own community and culture" (McKenzie & Hudson, 2010, p. 134). In other words, a child born in a community where children are repeatedly taken from their parents will begin to internalize certain values (e.g., feelings of inferiority and hence reduced self-esteem). This then becomes antithetical to the purpose of child welfare services. However, with the increased involvement of mandated Aboriginal agencies in the child welfare system, there is a greater likelihood that they will be able to reduce the number of children apprehended from the community. Also, these Aboriginal agencies will be able to create their own rules and regulations in accordance with the Aboriginal culture. In essence, self-determination is inextricably linked to Aboriginal child welfare services.

In conclusion, the historical treatment of Aboriginal children has been nothing less than inhumane (Miller, 2004). From the residential schools to the current mainstream child welfare system, the effects these child welfare institutions had, and continue to have, on Aboriginal people have no doubt been tragic (Walmsley, 2005); however, things do seem to be changing for the better. Aboriginal child welfare services have attempted to do what non-Aboriginal agencies have failed to do and that is to incorporate elements of Aboriginal culture into their practice (Ferris, Simard, Simard, & Ramdatt, 2005). This has resulted in some degrees of success in improving child, family and community relationships.

Aboriginal people in Canada have a very different reality than Canadian citizens of mainstream society. Their experiences as a result of colonization, the *Indian Act* and residential

schools have sought to destroy their culture and imposed European values and beliefs that continue to this day (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). In regards to child welfare, government systems have played a huge part in damaging the family unit, but have been unsuccessful in repairing it. This damage continues with each successive generation (Bennett, Blackstock, & De La Ronde, 2005). As evidenced in the next section, despite the positive development of Aboriginal agencies, Aboriginal children continue to be overrepresented in the child protections systems and are placed in out-of-home placements more often than other children and tend to be in care longer and largely because of funding and structural factors beyond the control of Aboriginal agencies and populations (Shangreaux, 2004; Blackstock, 2010). Neglect continues to be the most common form of child maltreatment for First Nations children reported to First Nations and non-Aboriginal child protection agencies in Canada (Blackstock et al., 2004). The research on neglect in particular verifies why there are higher numbers of Aboriginal children in the child welfare systems across Canada and subsequently why there are higher numbers of child welfare survival rates among Aboriginal young people.

2.3 Over-Representation of First Nations Children in Child Protection Services

First Nations children have been highly over-represented in child protection services[4] for over four decades. Tragically, this over-representation has increased to the point that the number of First Nations children placed in state care today is more than three times the height of residential school operations (Blackstock, 2007a and 2007b). First Nations children enter the child protection system mainly due to neglect (Blackstock et al., 2004). Neglect is defined as a type of maltreatment that refers to a caregiver's failure to provide, or inability to provide, a minimal standard of age-

[4] A disproportionate number of African Canadian children are also over-represented in the child welfare system in Canada (Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011;Teklu, 2012).

appropriate care (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). The *First Nations Component of the Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* (FNCIS-2008) shows that neglect falls into eight categories, which also serve as a definition for neglect of children in the context of child welfare:

- Failure to supervise resulting in physical harm to a child;
- Failure to supervise a child resulting in sexual harm to a child;
- Physical neglect;
- Medical neglect;
- Failure to provide psychological treatment;
- Permitting criminal behaviour;
- Abandonment; and
- Educational neglect. (Sinha et al., 2011, p. 109)

Although the absence of a national child welfare data system makes it impossible to precisely quantify the over-representation of First Nations children receiving child protection services, available information from the three Canadian Incidence studies (CIS) conducted to date (1998, 2003 and 2008) suggests that over-representation has increased at every stage of intervention by the child welfare system. The CIS-1998 found that although only five percent of children in Canada were of Aboriginal descent. Aboriginal children comprised 17% of children reported to child welfare, 22% of substantiated reports of maltreatment, and 25% of the children admitted to care (Blackstock et al., 2004). The CIS-2003 looked at First Nations children specifically and found that they were 2.5 times as likely to have a "substantiated" report of maltreatment in the child welfare system, with an overall population rate of 49 per 1,000 children in comparison to 19.8 per 1,000 for non-Aboriginal children (Trocmé et al., 2005). The FNCIS-2008 found that First Nations children were 8 times as likely to have a "substantiated" investigation of maltreatment, with an overall incidence rate of 59.8 per 1,000 children in comparison to 11.8 per 1,000 for non-Aboriginal children (Sinha et al., 2011, p. xix). Most alarming is that large numbers of First Nations children receive the most intensive child welfare intervention: removal from the home and placement in care

(Shangreaux, 2004). Consequently, the number of First Nations children going into the care of child welfare appears to be increasing as evidenced by the following studies:

- A study of the federal government's own data found a 71.5% increase in out-of- home placements for First Nations children on reserve between 1995 and 2001 (McKenzie, 2002).
- A study of three sample provinces found 10.23% of status First Nations children were in out-of-home care in Canada (Farris-Manning & Zandstra, 2003).
- Another study found that Aboriginal children represented 40% of the children in out-of-home care in Canada (Farris-Manning & Zandstra, 2003).
- Statistics Canada's National Household Survey (2013) reported that 48% of 30,000 children in foster care were Aboriginal children.

The proportion of First Nations children placed in out-of-home care as a result of finding maltreatment or neglect during the investigation and substantiation stages continues to be much higher than the proportion of non-Aboriginal children in out-of-home care (Sinha et al., 2011).

2.3.1 Different Types of Child Maltreatment: First Nations Children and Neglect

The FNCIS-2008 collected data on the characteristics of First Nations children and families coming to the attention of the child welfare system during a six-week investigation period in 2008 due to reports of child abuse or neglect. First Nations children in Canada were eight times more likely to be substantiated for neglect than non-Aboriginal children and the primary categories of maltreatment in substantiated investigations involving First Nations children included neglect, exposure to intimate partner violence, emotional maltreatment, and physical and sexual abuse (Sinha et al., 2011, p. xvii). FNCIS-2008 results found that 30.6 out of 1,000 First Nations children in the child welfare system were investigated due to neglect compared to 3.7 out of 1,000 of non-Aboriginal children.

Research highlights that the risk factors for maltreatment can reflect the situation of the child, the situation of the parents, or broader social factors, and that these risk factors vary according to the type of maltreatment (Sinha et al., 2011, Trocmé et al., 2004). These risk factors, which

include low socio-economic status, parental illness, spousal violence, social isolation, and many others, are associated with a greater likelihood of maltreatment, but they do not necessarily cause the maltreatment. When researchers examine the definition of neglect for First Nations children, they find that poverty, substance misuse, and poor housing are some of the key factors contributing to the over-representation of First Nations children among substantiated child welfare cases (Sinha et al., 2011). For instance, the FNCIS-2008 data revealed that First Nations families are more often lone caregivers (47% vs. 38%), reliant upon social assistance/Employment Insurance/ other benefits, and/or have limited income (49% vs. 26%). The FNCIS-2008 study also disclosed that in comparison with non-Aboriginal investigations, a greater proportion of First Nations investigations involved families with multiple children. The study noted that 29% of First Nations homes had four or more children compared to only 15% of investigations of non-Aboriginal families with four or more children; First Nations families were almost five times more likely to live in crowded housing conditions than non-Aboriginal people (14.7% vs. 2.9%). In the twelve months prior to being investigated, the FNCIS-2008 study noted that First Nations families are also more likely to have moved multiple times in the year (13% vs. 7%). Substance abuse is also a significant risk factor for maltreatment. Alcohol abuse is noted as a concern for 40% of First Nations female caregivers and 47% of First Nations male caregivers, compared to only 8% of female and 17% of male non-Aboriginal caregivers (Sinha et al., 2011). Drug abuse, criminal activity, cognitive impairment, and lack of social support have previously been found to be statistically more common among Aboriginal parents (Trocmé et al., 2004). The over-representation of First Nations children in substantiated child investigations and referrals to child welfare placement is clearly related to the level of caregiver, household, and community risk factors. The intervention needed to deal with neglectful situations is a multifaceted developmental process. It may require teaching parents how to meet their needs and that of their children, but it will also require the provision of culturally-based

services targeted at poverty and substance misuse. In cases of neglect, intervention is more challenging to solve in the short-term (Crosson-Tower, 2013). Complex cases require culturally sensitive assessments, responses, community-based services, treatment approaches, and resources (Wien, Blackstock, Loxley, & Trocmé, 2007). A full solution to the neglect experienced by First Nations children in Canada demands a reorientation of child welfare research, policies, and practices to develop culturally sensitive and effective responses. Meaningful change also requires a much greater focus by child protection authorities on the structural factors contributing to child maltreatment amongst First Nations children, in order to effectively deal with poverty, poor housing, spousal violence, social isolation, and parental substance misuse (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005a).

2.3.2 Understanding Neglect of First Nations Children

Researchers associated with the FNCIS-2008 who have examined neglect in First Nations families have found that the over-representation of First Nations children is driven primarily by a number of risk factors, including poverty, substance misuse, domestic violence, and social isolation (Sinha et al., 2011). Compared to non-Aboriginal families in the child protection system, First Nations families were:

- Twice as likely to survive on social assistance, employment insurance, or other benefits, or have access to a limited income;
- Far less likely to have full time employment;
- Several times more likely to have substance misuse issues in the family;
- Dealing with increased levels of domestic violence; and
- Facing social isolation with fewer social supports.

These factors are intimately connected to the overall socio-economic situation of First Nations people, and are largely outside the parents' direct control. The child welfare system supports only marginal efforts to address structural risks, and this has frustrated efforts to redress the

overrepresentation of First Nations children in care (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005a). This is an important point, which should be emphasized. Proper access to basic medical care - for example, including family planning information and resources, is wholly absent for many First Nations peoples, especially in the north and others living in more isolated and remote communities. For example, in a poor family living in an unsafe or overcrowded house with a caregiver who has addictions issues, there is a high probability that neglect will manifest. Child protection agencies operate at the individual and family level first and foremost and may only be able to provide minimal assistance with structural risks like poverty, poor housing and caregiver substance misuse (Shangreaux, 2004). Child welfare authorities will typically respond to this risk by making a referral to addictions programs, which often have long waiting lists, and suggest parenting skills interventions (Bennett, 2008). Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada provides for FNCFS on reserves (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2008). Although the most recent funding formula (the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach) provides funding for prevention activities, many FNCFS agencies still lack funding or the capacity to engage in structural interventions for First Nations children and families (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2008; Blackstock, 2010). Therefore, investments in equitable, culturally-based child welfare programs targeting structural risk coupled with sustainable, First Nations driven socio-economic development holds the most promise for addressing the problems of neglect in First Nations communities (Bennett & Auger, 2013; Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005a).

The FNCIS-2008 research on neglect suggests that it is more likely than other forms of maltreatment to be chronic which indicates that structural challenges such as poverty, poor housing and caregiver substance misuse in First Nations communities can be cyclic in nature and not sustainably addressed (Blackstock, 2007b). Research also shows that neglect is closely linked with the household/family structural factors and caregiver risk concerns like those identified in a large

proportion of First Nations investigations (Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2010; Sinha et al., 2011). Factors such as poverty, caregiver substance abuse, social isolation, and domestic violence can impede caregivers' abilities to meet children's basic physical and psychosocial needs (Sinha et al., 2011). The difficulties facing many of these families may require programs offering longer term, comprehensive, culturally based services designed to help them address multiple factors – such as poverty, substance abuse, mental health issues, FASD, domestic violence, and social isolation – which pose chronic challenges to ensuring the well-being of First Nations children (Bennett & Auger, 2013; Burnside & Fuchs, 2013).

The next section moves away from neglect factors toward transitioning issues for those who have been in care. The focus is on the theory of emerging adulthood and what it means for young people today.

2.3 Emerging Adulthood[5]

There are a number of ways to look at transitioning issues among young people. There is the transitioning toward adulthood that all adolescents eventually move toward as part of their life course experiences. There is the school to work transition as well as the transition from living with parents to learning to live on one's own. Leaving care or leaving institutional and/or residential care is another transitioning experience among a select group of young people. The review of the literature for this dissertation focuses primarily on emerging adulthood issues and emerging adulthood among those aging out of child welfare systems. The term "emerging adulthood" is a theory of development on the late teens through the twenties of young people in industrialized societies (Arnett, 2000), and what it means and the implications of this time period for youth in

[5] Portions of this review were previously captured in M. Bennett's (2012) unpublished candidacy exam paper entitled *Social Determinants of health, risk and resilience and emerging adulthood: First Nations youth and cultural rights of passage*.

general and for youth emerging from care is more fully discussed below. This section ends with a brief review of resilience as it pertains to former youth in care. It also looks specifically at cultural initiatives that mark some of the various ways that Indigenous people have addressed human development from adolescence to adulthood through visions quests and full moon ceremonies.

There is a recently developed theory that proposes there is now a new stage of human development between the adolescent and young adulthood life stages. This new theory suggests that young people who have attained adulthood at the legal age of majority, which in most jurisdictions is 18 years, do not necessarily see themselves as adolescents but they don't see themselves as adults either – they feel somewhere in between – this in between stage is characterized by what Jeffrey Arnett (2000) coined the "emerging adult" stage of human development. Arnett (2000) described this stage as a new life stage in the human development cycle that extends beyond adolescence, but within which the young person is not yet considered an adult because they are in a phase of transition only. This phase overlaps part of the period of adolescence and extends into what was once called youth or young adulthood. It includes young people in their late teens through to the mid-twenties (18 to 25 years but increasingly it can also extend into the early thirties) who have "left the dependence of childhood and adolescence, but have not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469). Arnett indicates that the emerging adulthood stage is a unique developmental period that is particularly prolonged and occurs primarily in Western cultures and other highly industrialized countries where there have been economic changes (Arnett, 2004). Arnett notes that it no longer makes sense to refer to the age period that starts at puberty (approximately age 10) and ends when adulthood has been attained (at age 25) as "youth." Arnett believes this age span is too long, and too much has changed during this period for it to adequately describe what young people go through today. Instead, he suggests it makes more sense to describe the years from 10-25 as two periods, with adolescence being between 10-17 years

of age and emerging adulthood as being roughly the ages of 18-25 (Arnett, 2006a). Furthermore, emerging adults are less likely to be monitored by parents than adolescents, and less constrained by roles than most adults. Young people in this stage enjoy a level of freedom, for a period of time, independent from adult roles and social expectations, which allow them to explore various possibilities in the domains of love, work, and future directions. On the other hand, Arnett is of the opinion that "'young adulthood' is better applied to those in their thirties, who are still young but are definitely adult in ways those in the late teens through the mid-twenties are not" (Arnett, 2004, p. 19).

Emerging adulthood is described as having five prominent features:

1. *Identity exploration occurs* – While it has been recognized that identity development typically begins in adolescence, it is within the emerging adulthood period where identity explorations intensify and become more prominent and serious (Arnett, 2007). It is the period of life that offers the most opportunity for identity explorations in the areas of love, work, ideology and worldviews (Arnett, 2000).
2. *Instability is felt* – Emerging adults do not have a set plan but rather their life plans are subject to numerous revisions during this period. The emerging adulthood years are characterized by high rates of residential change, frequently job changes, and mobility with respect to familial arrangements and lifestyles (Arnett, 2000);
3. *Self-focus begins to take shape* – Essentially this is a time when young people have the most opportunity to focus on their self-development, including educational and occupational preparation for adult life. Many take the time to travel and obtain experiences that they might not have the opportunity to obtain when they commit to a structured adult life (Arnett, 2007);
4. *Emerging adults feel in-between adolescence and adulthood* – They neither feel like adolescents or like an adult but instead view themselves as being somewhere in between, on the way to adulthood but not there yet (Arnett, 2000 & 2007); and
5. *A range of possibilities is conceivable* – This is a period of high hopes and expectations but also is a period where young people have unparalleled opportunities to transform their lives (Arnett, 2004).

Arnett (1998) noted that the transition to adulthood today is distinctively subjective and individualistic, in that the life course of individuals has become less standardized and is the least structured period in the life course (2000, 2004). Young people now have a greater range of

individual choice about when they make transitions with respect to finishing their education, marriage, employment, etc.

The available research indicates that there are a number of factors that have contributed to the extension of the emerging adulthood stage (Brynner, 2007). There have been shifts in the dominant framework regarding the traditional markers of adulthood across the last 50 years. There are at least five events that have played a part in the changing nature of young adulthood in North America. First is the dramatic growth of higher education. There has been a dramatic rise in Canadian youth pursuing either a college or university education after graduating from high school. With the onset of a "knowledge economy" there is also more of a push to add additional years of graduate school on top of a bachelor's degree (Adamuti-Trache & Hawkey, 2009). As a result some Canadian youth are no longer finished with school once they have graduated, but instead are extending their formal education well into their twenties and sometimes into their early thirties and beyond. Participating in higher education has changed such that individuals are enrolling in school later in life than was previously the norm (Arnett, 2006b).

A second but crucial change is the delay in marriage by youth in the last decade. Smith, Christoffersen, Davidson, and Snell Herzog (2011) note that fifty to sixty years ago, young people were anxious to get out of high school, get married, have children, and start a long-term career and raise their children. Now unprecedented levels of young people spend up to a decade after high school graduation exploring their options.

Third, young Canadians now frequently change jobs because of variation in economies that undermine the ability to enjoy stable, lifelong careers. Young people today need to have a variety of skills and be flexible enough to change direction as the economy and technology dictate. They are expected to be mobile and embrace risk (Blatter, 2010). Factory jobs are declining (Carnevale &

Desrochers, 2002) and many youth spend anywhere from five to ten years experimenting with different job and career options before they finally settle down in a long-term career.

Fourth, because of changes in the economy and technology, parents are now extending financial support to subsidize young adult children well into their twenties and perhaps early thirties. Financial assistance from parents gives young adults the freedom to explore their early adult years before settling down into full adulthood. For instance, according to the 2011 census statistics in Canada, some 42.3% of young adults aged 20-29 are still living with their parents (Rennie, 2012). While some do leave home, many young people eventually find themselves having to return to their parents' home because of divorce, financial or employment difficulties, or for the purpose of re-enrolling in school (Mortimer & Larson, 2002). In fact, across the world there is a growing phenomenon of young adults in their twenties and thirties that have never lived away from home or who "boomerang" back to their parents' homes (Newman, 2012)[6].

Fifth, birth control has helped control fertility and the cultural effect of this has been the disconnection between sexual intercourse and procreation in the minds of many young people (Fincham, 2012). As a result, many young people, despite becoming sexually active, are putting off marriage and having children in order to pursue their education or simply because they wish to find meaningful employment before taking on parental roles. Many young people in the emerging adulthood stage are now having children in their late twenties and early thirties and most often opt for smaller families (Roberts, Metalfe, Jack, & Tough, 2011).

These five transformations, among others, have dramatically altered the societal experiences of Canadian youth between the ages of 18 and 30 (Smith et al., 2011). Currently, individuals are settling into long-term adult roles later in their development compared to young people two decades

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[6] There is even a movie that explains this "failure to launch" phenomenon, where the main character refuses to take on adult responsibilities until his parents hire a young woman to lure him out of their home and into a responsible adult life (Arnett, 2007).

earlier (Newman, 2012). Young people are noted for frequently changing jobs, housing, familial arrangements, social milieus, and lifestyles. During this period of liminality, many young people's connections to social institutions are weak, ambiguous, and shifting (Mortimer & Larson, 2002), and as a result it is an age period in which many risk behaviours peak (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is the peak period for several risk behaviours including unprotected sex, substance use, binge drinking, and driving while intoxicated or driving at high speeds (Cheah & Nelson, 2004). Particularly Arnett (2006) notes, "the social and institutional structures that once both supported and restricted people in the course of coming of age have weakened, leaving people with greater freedom but less support as they make their way to adulthood" (p. 4).

2.3.1 Implications for Today's Society

As indicated earlier, the transition to adulthood has become increasingly prolonged as a result of social and economic changes, with a high number of young people staying in school longer, living with their parents longer, marrying later, and having their first child later than in the past (Clark, 2007; Fussell, 2002; Ravanera, Rajulton, & Burch, 2004). Trends worldwide and within Canada indicate that more women now than a decade ago are giving birth later than their mothers did (in Canada, many first-time mothers are now in their thirties) (Franke, 2010). This delayed fertility is generally linked to women's increased education and labour force participation (Tyden, Svanberg, Karlstrom, Lihoff, & Lampic, 2006). Clark (2007) also notes that the high cost of a post-secondary education in many cases involves a continued reliance on parents such that young adults, both male and female, do not feel sufficiently ready for marriage and/or cohabitation and the prospects of raising a family once they reach adulthood.

There are other structural factors and conditions that explain why young adults are remaining at home longer, including changes occurring at the economic level, which reflect recent social changes (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Molgat, 2007). Recent social challenges include competing

with older Canadians for jobs, employment situations where higher education and/or post-secondary credentials are both necessary and required, and an economic climate where the cost of living, including educational tuition fees, is increasing, making it necessary for youth to pursue higher educational opportunities to ensure higher paying occupational positions upon graduation (Côté & Bynner 2008; Franke, 2010). Generally, the research has established that young persons who come from higher socioeconomic family backgrounds tend to gravitate towards higher post-secondary education (Finnie, Mueller, Sweetman, & Usher, 2008). Furthermore, youth who have at least one parent with a university education stand a greater chance of succeeding at obtaining post-secondary credentials in comparison to young adults from families who have lower socio-economic standing and where neither parents have post-secondary education (Andres & Adamuti-Trache, 2008; Andres, Adamuti-Trache, Yoon, Pidgeon, & Thomsen, 2007).

Young women tend to make the transition to adulthood earlier than young men (Ravanera et al., 2004). Young men on the other hand tend to leave school earlier and obtain full-time employment at a younger age than women. Also, more women tend to pursue a university education than young men do, and within many university campuses across Canada females now outnumber males in the post-secondary environment (Clark, 2007). Specifically, young women from higher socioeconomic families tend to be free to make informed and selective life choices simply because they have more access to social and material capital to accumulate educational and other resources that allow for different life choices, compared to the "default" positions women had in the past (Sanders & Munford, 2008). Sanders and Munford note specifically that the young women in a study they conducted among young adolescent girls see employment occupation as central to their identity and future as adults, although that does not mean they do not aspire to be wives/partners or mothers at some point later in their adult lives. Because of their socialization, young girls understand parenthood to be hard work and that motherhood can be especially hard when combined with paid

labour force participation. Being employed and having a central occupation were viewed by the girls in this study as promoting more favourable outcomes for their futures. Other research indicates that young men also want to become a parent at some point in their lives and their reasons are very similar to those given by young women. That is, they would prefer to mitigate the financial risks of having children by obtaining a certain level of financial security before starting a family (Roberts et al., 2011). However, the research is also clear that neither young women nor men generally understand the risks of waiting to have children (Roberts et al., 2011) and generally lack knowledge about the steep decline in fertility as women age (Bretherick, Fairbrother, Avila, Harbord, & Robinson, 2010; Cooke, Mills, & Lavender, 2012). In sum, young people are having fewer children later in life, and in doing so they contribute to lower fertility rates and a higher median age of the population (Fussell, 2002; Beaujot & Ravanera, 2008).

On the positive side, Beaujot and Ravanera (2008) posit that leaving home later can be seen as an indicator of family cohesion. While difficult economic situations are part of the reason for the delay in leaving home, it may also be a sign of a smaller generation gap with more agreement between parents and young people, which allows for young people to feel comfortable at home. It also can be interpreted as an opportunity for young people to take the time to invest in themselves. Parents in many respects are subsidizing the entry of young people into the labour market but at the same time they are reducing the dependency, particularly, of women on men.

The undeniable reality is that emerging adult problems are ultimately problems of our entire culture and society. Smith and his colleagues state that the experiences of emerging youth are barometers of the condition of the adult world that is socializing them. Their experiences, as Smith et al. (2011) state, "reflect like a mirror onto the larger society the true nature of its own controlling values, practices, self-understandings, and commitments" (p. 12).

Arnett's theory on emerging adulthood has been hailed by some as one of the most important theoretical contributions to developmental psychology in the past 10 years (Gibbons & Ashdown, 2006). However this theory of development is not without its critics. For instance, Hendry and Kloep (2007) argue that the concept is culturally specific to North America and is not nearly as universal as Arnett purports it to be. Cheah and Nelson (2004) also note that the concept varies widely according to a culture's values and beliefs. Hendry and Kloep (2007) in particular argue that in most developing countries, in areas where the culture is collectivistic in nature, or where there are more disadvantaged groups such as women in rural areas, emerging adulthood simply does not exist. They note that with the rapid development of technology, individuals' lifestyles and socialization processes are continuously changing. Hendry and his colleague are of the opinion that the term may soon be outdated as there could be new developmental characteristics emerging all the time. The theory, they say, is more "a description limited to a certain age cohort in certain societies at a certain historical time with particular socioeconomic conditions" (p. 76). Furthermore, Kimmel (2008) notes that there does not appear to be a delineation of gender differences with respect to the features of emerging adulthood. Blatter (2010) also surmises that the extension of youth into what was previously considered adulthood is indicative of society's continued fascination with youthfulness but it also represents society's continued refusal to accept that a young person has reached "full personhood." Similarly, Bynner (2005) in critiquing the theory notes that the term "youth" had long been used to describe this specific age group, which faced the same developmental tasks. Youth transition, until recently, had been used to indicate the prolonged transition into adulthood and a process of individuation. Thus, he argues, there is no need for a new term like emerging adulthood. Bynner also critiqued the stage theories of human development, which he says places emphasis on developmental changes associated with chronological age. Instead he believes

that the experience and trajectories of human development should be closely studied as they represent a broader conception and area.

Côté and Bynner (2008) were also concerned with Arnett's perspective on emerging adulthood as they felt he mistakenly narrowed the cause of the prolonged journey to adulthood. It is true that some privileged young people from affluent economic backgrounds may choose to delay their commitments purposefully because they hesitate making various available choices. However, Côté and Bynner argue that for many disadvantaged groups and groups in developing countries or other cultures (even from within North America), the extended transition to adulthood is not an active or deliberate selection by young persons. It is more of a coping mechanism in response to widespread identity confusion caused by changing socioeconomic conditions. Kloep and Henry (2010) note that prolonged mutual dependency between parents and their adult children, in addition to parental reluctance to allow adult children to achieve maturity, might play some role in creating the phenomenon of 'emerging adults.' They further noted that dependency could engender increased risks for maladjustment among young adults, noting that young people who continue to remain at home with their parents tend to experience more depression and are less likely to achieve independence and become self-determining citizens.

Despite the existence of criticisms of this theory, the concept of emerging adulthood has been widely used by a number of theorists and researchers to represent the worldwide phenomenon of a prolonged transition to adulthood, and it has received considerable empirical support from an international research community (Aria & Hernández, 2007; Cheah & Nelson, 2004; Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007; Nelson, Badger, & Wu, 2004). Côté and Bynner (2008) note that since 2000 Arnett has organized regular conferences devoted to the concept. In addition, several books have been written or edited specifically about this proposed period (i.e. *Lost in Transition* by Smith, et al. (2011) and *Transitions in Context* by Holdsworth & Morgan, 2005). As well, there are a large number of

journal articles and book chapters that have since been published, and numerous academic associations have been organized that focus primarily on this particular stage of human development (i.e., www.ssea.org). In my own research of this topic, PsycINFO listed well over 6915 entries with the term in the title, and well over 9600 articles with the term as a keyword. In addition, there is now also a journal dedicated to the topic of emerging adulthood published by Sage for the *Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood*.

The concept of young people emerging toward adulthood has been explored in a variety of major cultures such as China (Nelson et al., 2004; Nelson & Chen, 2007), Argentina (Facio & Micocci, 2003), as well as with ethnic (Arnett, 2003) and religious (Nelson, 2003; Barry & Nelson, 2005) subgroups in the United States. In addition, research has been conducted specifically in Italy (Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007), Israel (Mayseless & Scharf, 2003), the UK (Côté & Bynner, 2008), Canada (Cheah & Nelson, 2004) and Europe (Douglass, 2007). Many of these researchers have been interested in how specific values and cultural standards impact emerging adulthood. The perceived markers of entry into adulthood in different cultural settings, the different pathways to mature adulthood, as well as different characteristics of emerging adulthood in different countries have all been investigated to understand the role culture plays in this particular phase of human development. While these studies provide insight into the broad differences between cultures, Cheah and Nelson (2004) note that these studies do not capture the differences between cultures or bring to light the variability that exists within and across cultures.

2.3.1 Extended Age Definitions in Canada

An examination of the current literature has revealed that definitions of youth, adolescence, young adulthood, and even emerging adulthood appear to be at odds. The lack of consensus stems from disagreements on whether to define youth in terms of an age criterion, social and economic determinants, degree of autonomy, or other factors (see Franke, 2010). The tacit reality of the

extension of young adulthood, however, is evident in Canada. Age ranges vary across the country but typically encompass youth aged 15 to 24. More recently however, this has increased to include those beginning at 13 years all the way up to the age 35 in some cases. Statistics Canada defines youth as being between the ages of 15 to 24. In Canada, several government programs have now extended the age definitions of youth in response to the implications highlighted in several studies commissioned through The Policy Research Initiative (Beaujot, 2004; Beaujot & Kerr, 2007; Gaudet, 2007; and Franke, 2010). These studies examined the youth transitioning trends within Canada.

Various Aboriginal organizations have their own definitions of youth and young adulthood. For example, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, The Métis National Council, and the National Association of Friendship Centres use the 15 to 24 age definition. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the Native Women's Association of Canada, and the Assembly of First Nations define youth as those between the ages of 18 and 24. The Inuit organization Tapiriit Kanatami defines youth within a broader range, inclusive of those aged 13 to 29. The Empowering Indigenous Youth in Governance and Leadership (EIYGL), a youth-led Aboriginal initiative encompasses those aged 15 to 35. The National Aboriginal Role Model Program encompasses youth aged 13 to 30. The Aboriginal Peoples Survey defines adults as those 15 years of age and over, while the Regional Health Survey considers adults to be 18 years of age and over (Reading & Wien, 2009).

2.3.2 Emerging Adulthood among the Aboriginal population

The Aboriginal population is the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population and is considerably younger than the non-Aboriginal population (Preston, 2008). Currently, Aboriginal people account for approximately 2.8% of Canada's total population. Aboriginal youth under the age of 25 represent more than half of the Aboriginal population in Canada today (Townsend & Wernick, 2008). It is expected that by 2016, over 1.1 million people will be identified as having Aboriginal identity (MacMillan, Wieman, Jamieson, MacMillan, & Walsh, 2009). These numbers, however, are

underestimated because of the limitations in the census process where there has been incomplete enumeration in some communities as well changing patterns of self-identification and legislated changes to the *Indian Act* (i.e. Bills C-31 and C-3) (Canadian Bar Association, 2010; Wilson & Cardwell, 2012).

While there is very little research that speaks directly to the various transitioning issues among Aboriginal youth in Canada, Beaujot and Kerr (2007) note that Aboriginal young people consider themselves to have reached adulthood earlier and are not likely to delay their transition toward adulthood as evidenced by the current trends within the general Canadian population. Emerging adulthood research conducted by Cheah and Nelson (2004) also supports this premise. Cheah and Nelson explored the acculturation levels of Aboriginal young people navigating into, through, and toward the emerging adulthood years while attending university. The Aboriginal students perceive themselves to have reached adulthood much earlier than most other Canadian students in the study.

Aboriginal youth are much more likely to move out of their parents' home at a relatively young age compared to immigrants and other Canadian youth. According to Beaujot and Kerr (2007) one in five Aboriginal youth aged 18 had already moved out of their parent's home compared to one in 14 among immigrants. Relative to earlier decades, the proportion of young Canadian adults continuing to live with parents has continued to climb, and this shift toward older ages has been equally true for both men and women. By the age of 29, one in five men still live with their parent(s), while roughly one in ten women are in the same situation Beaujot and Kerr (2007). The research indicates that early departure from home is linked with lower educational attainment and less successful career patterns (Beaujot & Ravenera, 2008). In terms of education, by age 18 less than half of Aboriginal youth report studying full time (49.4%), as compared with 67.5% of Canadians overall and 78.9 per cent of immigrant youth. High school completion is noted in the literature as a

particular problem among registered First Nations and Inuit youth (Townsend & Wernick, 2008; Clement, 2008). Guimond and Cooke (2008) suggest that up to one half of all youth who are registered Indians in Canada failed to obtain their high school certificate. They note that "this does not bode well for First Nations youth in the context of a highly competitive labour market as lower and later educational attainment suggests that as these young cohorts age, they will continue to lag behind other Canadians in employment and income, and be at greater risk of low income and dependency" (p. 28).

Beaujot and Kerr (2007) note that since Aboriginal youth leave home and school earlier than immigrants and other Canadians, they are also more likely to work full time as adolescents. However as they move into their 20s they become significantly less likely to be employed full time. This is largely because Aboriginal youth are considerably more likely to have children much earlier than either the Canadian or immigrant populations. Aboriginal women, in particular, have a higher fertility rate but at an age structure that is considerably younger than that experienced by other Canadian and immigrant populations (Beaujot & Kerr, 2007).

Statistics from the 2006 Census indicate that almost half of the Aboriginal population is made up of children and youth aged 24 and under (Townsend, 2008). Aboriginal women are more likely to raise children alone, live in poverty, and more often, are unemployed or underemployed (Hull, 2004). Among Aboriginal women, early parenting leads to a reduction in educational outcomes, delays in entering the labour market, and subsequently lower earning potential (Hull, 2004; Hango & Le Bourdais, 2009). Beaujot and Ravanera (2008) note that there are many challenges that disadvantage young first-time parents. They note that the wages of women who have children later did not differ from women who had no children, but women who have children earlier than the average for their level of education had lower average wages.

Among Aboriginal populations there are markedly different perspectives about what is required in order to become an adult. Cheah and Nelson (2004) highlight emerging adulthood research done in countries that lean toward collectivism, like China, where the criteria for becoming an adult tends to reflect their cultural values. For instance, comments like "learn always to have good control of your emotions", "become less self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others", and "become capable of supporting parents financially" (p. 496) offer up evidence that Chinese students' criteria for adulthood are more culturally based than typically seen in Western cultures. Despite the diversity of Aboriginal people in Canada, Cheah and Nelson (2004) argue that there are "threads of unity" (p. 496) that may shed light on the development of Aboriginal emerging adults. They suggest that generally, mainstream Canadian youth lean toward the ideology of individualism, which they define as an "emotional independence from groups, and relatively less concern for the family and relatives" (p. 496). Like youth in China, Aboriginal youth lean toward the ideology of collectivism, around which there are significant childrearing responsibilities across Indigenous families and communities. However Indigenous cultures within Canada are significantly different from other collectivistic cultures in that parents encourage autonomy of children (McCormick, 1997), and a sense of responsibility develops at earlier ages than is typical of other cultures in middle-class western Euro-Canadian or Chinese societies. In Aboriginal communities autonomy for children generally starts early (Rae, 2006). There is the added belief that no person has the right to speak or control the actions of another person, including a child. Ross (1992) called this is the ethic of non-interference. This ethic promotes positive interpersonal relationships by discouraging coercion of any kind, be it physical, verbal or psychological. It stems from a high degree of respect for every individual's independence and regards interference or restriction of a person's personal freedom as "undesirable behaviour" (Brant, 1990). Children in Aboriginal cultures are held in high esteem and having them is considered important (Cheah & Nelson, 2004; Fearn, 2010). Long,

Downs, Gillette, Kills in Sight, and Iron-Cloud Konen (2006) looked at the cultural skills that would be needed among Native American youth leaving foster care that would assist them in successfully transitioning into adulthood. They note that while American society emphasizes independence and emancipation from parents and families as appropriate transition tasks for adolescents leaving care, interdependence and maintaining connections with family and community are key cultural skills that will assist Aboriginal youth in their development toward adulthood. The following section draws attention to initiatives that were once important cultural events, but are making a comeback, in marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Cultural revival across many Aboriginal communities is beginning to see a return of these ancient customs (Borrows, 2002; Clark, 2012).

2.3.3 Cultural Initiatives Marking Adulthood

Colonial projects, which are an embedded part of the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, outlawed and eroded many Aboriginal cultural practices (Pettipas, 1994; McCormick, 1997; Anderson, 2011). Many prior cultural customs, traditional ceremonies and practices, such as those connected to transitioning among Indigenous youth went into a state of dormancy due to the settlers' earlier legal establishments that prohibited and obscured them from practice (Borrows, 2002). These practices, however, are not gone, and they are slowly coming back as Indigenous nations become stronger (Borrows, 2002). Indigenous peoples have lost much over the years since these laws have been repealed (Pettipas, 1994). Many of the old people who knew the importance of why, when, and how to share these practices have passed without having imparted this knowledge to subsequent generations (Anderson, 2011; Ohmagari & Berkes, 1997). However, there are many Indigenous Elders, who remember these early traditions. Elders are trying to revive these ancient, but living traditions, as a way of helping young generations see contemporary meaning in traditional customs. Reviving time-honoured traditions is essential for imparting Indigenous knowledge about human development. It's one process of modernizing Indigenous knowledge about human

development and the sacredness of relationality as these are practices that rely heavily on relationships (Mandell et al., 2003; Wilson, 2008). But relationships are also considered by others to be significant ways in which Indigenous families engage in attachment behaviour (McCormick, 1997). The interconnectedness of individuals, family, community and culture are important aspects of these practices (Carriere & Richardson, 2009). The following sections highlight two practices, among many Indigenous practices that marked the coming of age for young people. These living traditions are still relevant because they hold meaning in that they connect young people to past, present and future generations (Hart, 2002) and participation is rooted not only in the development of the individual but also for the healing of the community (Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). Among Indigenous groups, it should be noted that there are multiple and different practices among Indigenous peoples for recognizing when one has reached adulthood and these will often be just as diverse as the Indigenous populations that exist within Canada. It should also be noted that not all Aboriginal peoples participate in or accept the validity of Indigenous traditions and practices (Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). Poonwassie and Charter (2005) further state that "respect is afforded to those who do not choose a traditional path" and that participation in any traditional practice is a personal choice that is "not to be influenced by coercion of any form" (p. 20). "Traditional ceremonies may include attendance or participation in sun dances, medicine lodges, fasts, sweats, sharing circles, talking circles, pipe ceremonies, moon ceremonies, giveaways, or potlatches. Participation is at the level and degree with which the participant is comfortable" (Poonwassie & Charter, 2005, p. 20).

2.4 The Medicine Wheel and Human Development

Aboriginal cultures represented the passage from adolescence to adulthood using a circle, often depicted through a Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel has long been celebrated as a

powerful cultural symbol and has been used by Indigenous people to explain the natural cycle of human life and development from an Indigenous perspective (Hart, 2002; Fearn, 2010; Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). The natural cycle of life is represented as a circle divided into four quadrants. Each quadrant represents a direction as well as specific teachings for that direction that guide one through the stages of life (Fearn, 2010; Graham & Leeseberg Stamler, 2010; Hart, 2002;). Medicine Wheel philosophy includes all stages of human development, from birth to death, and rebirth (Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). The Medicine Wheel represents interconnectedness of all people with all living beings, and with all life in the universe, thus providing a place of centering for each person in the cosmos (Lane, Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Elders, 2004). An underlying principle of the Medicine Wheel is that each person travels around the circle of life at his or her own pace (Hart, 2002). Personal levels of understanding are gained by individuals as a result of their experiences (Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). Each stage of human life from the child to the youth, to the adult, to the Elder, has responsibilities learned through traditions. These life stages are framed within a spiritual circle. These stages may relate to natural aging cycles, cycles of relationship roles, or periods of deeper awareness and learning, leading to wisdom required at each stage of human development (Sanderson, 2010). The Elders encouraged respect for these cycles so that we, in turn, recognize our connection to them and to the cyclical nature of relationships, learning, and human development (Fiddler & Sanderson, 1990). Roberts et al. (1998) refer to the Medicine Wheel as a framework for growth and direction in one's life.

Within the teachings of the Medicine Wheel are seven stages (Fearn, 2010) or seven fires according to the Saulteaux teachings by Elder Danny Musqua (Relland, 1998; Knight, 1999, 2001). These stages represent the journey through the life cycle by which individuals grow, learn, and begin to understand more about themselves and the connections to their life's purpose. These life cycles, it is said, were given by the Creator to Indigenous people before birth (Fearn, 2010; Manitoba First

Nations Education Resource Centre Inc., 2008). The seven stages of life as shared by Elder Danny Musqua are:

1. The good life (conception, birth, and infancy) (birth to age 7).
2. The fast life (childhood) (ages 7 to 14).
3. The wandering and wondering life (adolescence) (ages 15 to 21).
4. The truth life (married life, little men, and little women) (ages 21 to 28).
5. The planting and planning life (the deciding life, young adults) (28 to 35 years).
6. The doing life (the busy life, adult development) (35 to 42 years).
7. The Elder life (giving back/teaching life, old age to death) (age 49 and onwards).

Fearn (2010) indicates that it takes approximately seven years to journey through each of these stages. According to Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua, each of the seven stages of life is celebrated as a major event in life (Relland, 1998; Knight, 1999, 2001; Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2012). A person lights a fire seven times in their life span to assist in the transition from one stage to the next stage (Elder Thelma Musqua, Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2012). Figure 1 depicts these stages on the Medicine Wheel.

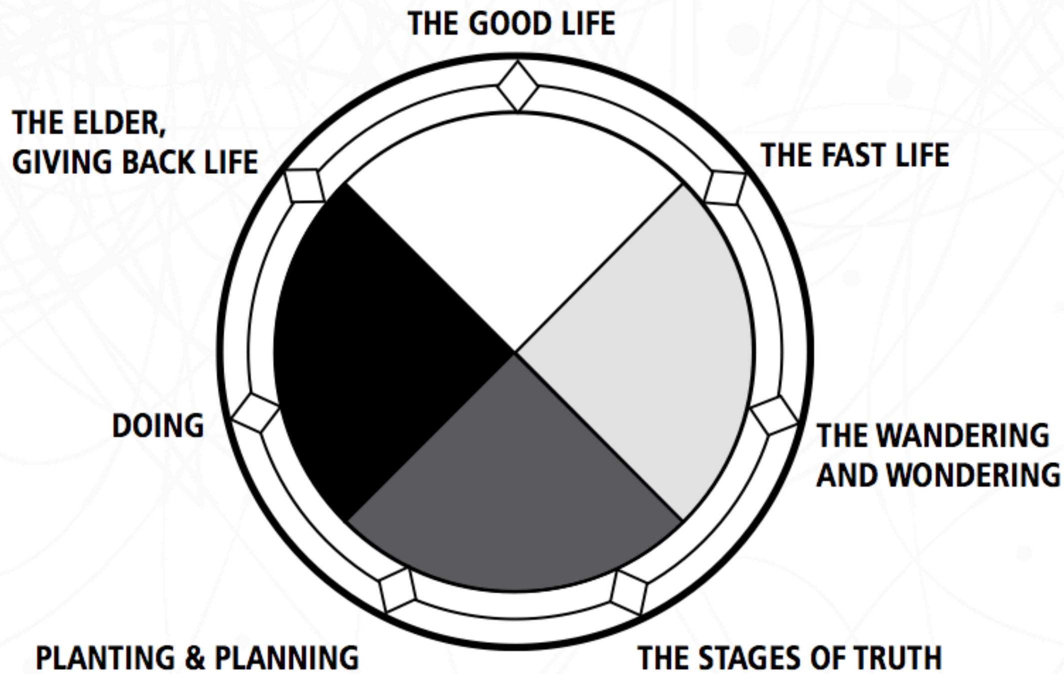

Figure 1: The Seven Stages (Fires) of Human Development

The wandering/wondering years (15-21), the truth years (21-28), and part of the planning years (28-35) encompass the years that have been considered the "emerging adulthood" years. The wandering years are the third stage of life when individuals begin to question the meaning and purpose of life, and there is a strong desire to become independent. At this stage, young people are considered to be fully-fledged adults moving towards independence. They are capable of creating their visions for themselves and cared ones. The truth years are the fourth stage of life where the person has to be faithful to themselves and willing to share what they have learned. This understanding reflected in the teachings of sharing, kindness, and honesty shown by grandparents, elders, parents, teachers and others. Women recognize and appreciate their womanhood and men appreciate their manhood. Men and women are said to be ready to face the truth. During the planning stage, couples are planning for parenthood (Fearn, 2010; The Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc., 2008).

Associated with the seven stages and fires of life is the life cycle. The life cycle explains life through the passage of stages for babies and children, youth and young adults, and adults and elders. These stages of life celebrated, correspond with the four directions of the Medicine Wheel, the four seasons, and the four parts of self. Within the life cycle the energy changes with each stage of life as the roles and responsibilities of people in that life stage change (Hart, 2002). Change is considered a natural process. These steps follow a natural flow, generation after generation, from birth to death. The steps are part of the sacred journey in the "Circle of Life" or the "Web of Life." They illustrate the interrelationship of all living beings (Garrett, 1996, p. 14). These teachings also reflect the fact that children are the center of life (Rae, 2006). Raising a child is considered one of the most important responsibilities that can bless a person. Children are sacred gifts from the Creator (Hart, 2002) and considered the main purpose of life. The following commentary reflects this purpose while reflecting on the cyclical nature of life.

> In a conversation with his aging grandfather, a young Indian man asked, "Grandfather, what is the purpose of life?" After a long time in thought, the old man looked up and said, "Grandson, children are the purpose of life. We were once children and someone cared for us, and now it is our time to care." (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 45 as cited in Garrett, 1996, p. 17)

Traditionally, children were respected by family and extended community members as young people who come into their potential on their own time but who are of no less status or importance in the community than adults (Brant, 1990). Garrett (1996) notes that children and young peoples' "ideas and opinions were valued in the same way as those of any adult. In this way they were accorded the status of an adult at a much younger age compared to young people in other cultures" (p. 22). Children were deliberately taught skills and valuable life lessons both in the natural surroundings and in the home environment at an earlier age in comparison to children of other cultures. While children and youth were engaged in many adult interactions, they were considered silent but attentive observers whose responsibility was to absorb everything going on. Long periods

of observation, time for reflection and practicing skills were necessary parts in the process of becoming an adult (Garrett, 1996).

2.5 Indigenous Cultural Rites of Passage

There are cultural rites of passage associated with the transition of youth to young adults. There are vast differences in teachings among Indigenous nations within Canada about the transition from youth to adulthood. There is an obvious cultural diversity in the patterns of initiation, ceremony, ritual, and celebration that attend rites of passage (Lertzman, 2002). The examples identified in this section are only some of what is known about Indigenous ways of coming of age. These rights include fasting, seclusion, feasts, sweat lodges, drumming, and other teachings (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012; Lertzman, 2002; Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). These rites provide opportunities for youth to receive teachings about their bodies, sexuality, their roles and responsibilities in adulthood and relationships, as well as obtain spiritual grounding and experience other consciousness-altering techniques (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012; Lertzman, 2002). Traditionally, youth transition practices were marked by rites of passage that were gender specific (Blanchet-Cohen, McMillan, & Greenwood, 2011). For Indigenous peoples, puberty marks the end of childhood and is seen as a time of rapid transition when the preparation is necessary for entering into the world of adult responsibilities (Anderson, 2011). Elders are important for teaching about the transitioning stage from a young child to young adulthood. Storytelling is the way in which they engage young people to help them understand how to move from one stage to the next in their individual lives (Anderson, 2011; Poonwassie & Charter, 2005; Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2012). There are ceremonies that prepare children to move from childhood, to adolescence to adulthood and from adult to Elderhood (Anderson, 2011; Lertzman, 2002). It is through stories, teachings, and ceremonies that young people come to learn about living in harmony and a balanced

life (Garrett, 1996; Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2012). The oral traditions imparted from the Elders help individuals become culturally attached to family, community and culture (McCormick, 1997; Relland, 1998). Cultural rites of passage focus primarily on gendered puberty rights. Puberty rights provide a window on human adolescence that helps to elucidate the fundamental nature of these life stages. Wiesfeld (1997) states that puberty rights are considered a "widespread cultural training or testing period and ceremony for inducting adolescents into adulthood" (p. 28). The main purpose of puberty rights is to help prepare the adolescent for social maturity and to perform adult tasks. It is like a "crash course in adulthood" (Wiesfeld, 1997, p. 30). These ceremonies are thought to help young people initiate the break from childhood and take on the responsibilities of a young adult. These rituals also provide individuals with a sense of purpose as well as an understanding of one's place in the collective. Rituals link the individual to the collective and the collective to the individual. Rituals ensure group participation in the events of the individual's life. They can heighten his/her consciousness of the transformation s/he is about to go through, as well as giving him/her the courage to move on to the next stage of his life cycle (Martin, 1987). Grof (1996) also asserts that rites of passage are a necessary step toward wholeness. When one undergoes a rite of passage, death and re-birth are experienced. Grof (1996) indicates that one "dies" from a certain phase in life, along with the roles and persona associated with it, while entering a new stage with a new identity.

In some traditional cultures, different skills were required of men and women. The training received from puberty rights was usually age gender-segregated where contact with the opposite sex was limited or completely taboo (Anderson, 2011). An Elder of the same sex would usually provide instructions. The adolescent received guidance about being a husband and a father, or wife and mother. Wiesfeld (1997) also notes that puberty rites foster identification with the culture as a whole where customs, ceremonial duties, legends, secrets, and values are imparted resulting in allegiance to the culture. These rites also signal to the community that the young man or woman is eligible for

marriage. Van Gennep (1960) describes all ceremonial rites – including those at birth, marriage, parenthood, and death, as well as puberty – as encompassing three steps: separation, transition, and incorporation. Others (Lertzman, 2002) have referred to these three steps as separation, transformation and integration. In separation, an individual is removed, at times dramatically, from daily life. During this time and prior to this time, training and preparation take place. Transformation refers to the core experiences of rites of passage. Integration is where the whole experience is put together, on an individual level and within the community (Lertzman, 2002).

There are numerous techniques associated with different ritualistic events. These can include practices such as isolation, fasting, drumming and dancing, ritual breathing, use of medicinal plants (such as sage, tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass), confronting fears, and other consciousness-altering techniques (Lertzman, 2002). However, the reality is that many aspects of puberty rites practiced by Indigenous cultures remain mysterious (Weisfeld, 1997). The following sections focus on two of many cultural rites of passage that have been exercised by Indigenous peoples to assist youth in transitioning from the adolescence stage to the young adulthood stage. This transition is a part of the sacred journey that marks the circle of life. These teachings serve to help young people begin to learn about their changing bodies, their sexuality, and their roles and responsibilities as young adults. These rites help young people to understand their sacred place in the universe (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012) and to develop their identity (Anderson, 2011).

We are all on a learning journey. In traditional First Nations cultures, learning starts from the moment of conception. Teaching comes from all of those around us and in many ways, through stories, humour, and guidance (Garrett, 1996). Sometimes the lessons Elders teach are not understood at the moment but in time the purpose is revealed through experience and growth (Lertzman, 2002). This type of learning requires reflection and patience (Garrett, 1996; Best Start

Resource Centre, 2012). The following gendered practices promote and showcases two of the Indigenous ways of coming of age that have survived cultural destruction.

2.5.1 Vision Quests – Males

The vision quest is one universal element that is common to many Indigenous cultures in North America (Constantine, Myers, Kindaichi, & More III, 2004; McCormick, 1997) although it is important to recognize Indigenous groups practice the vision quest in many variations across North America (Dahl, 2013). Although the vision question has been practiced less frequently, it is still considered a rite of passage for adolescent boys and girls in some Indigenous societies, especially among those who are continuing traditional, shamanistic forms of spirituality (Dahl, 2013). The vision quest served as a test or "threshold" that had to be crossed successfully to become an adult and a functioning member of the community. It is considered to be an exercise of communal solidarity (McCormick, 1997). Its cultural function was to provide youth with a guardian spirit, which would guide his decision-making during the course of his life. The guardian spirit would assist him in times of need, protect him in times of trouble, and provide him with solutions to problems in times of difficulty. It has been said that if he had learned his lessons well, he would have all the knowledge that he needed to life comfortably (Manuel & Posluns, 1974). Most often this related to hunting, fishing, and protecting his family from danger. It could also involve other forms of problem solving, such as mediation in disputes between individuals in the group (Lippsett, 1990). This idea is also found in other tribal cultures, such as the Aboriginal tribes of Australia, Central and South American Indians, and among African tribes (Martin, 1987). The vision quest is a ritual that promoted the psychic health and healing of the individual, as well as the community (Martin, 1987; Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). The quest also gave the individual the ability to demonstrate newfound knowledge, skills, and awareness for the benefit of his or her community (Manuel & Posluns, 1974; Garrett, 1996). The vision quest builds self-awareness and produces self-

transcendence in the individual that often signaled his entry into adulthood (McCormik, 1997). Sleep deprivation during the vision quest is also a means of spiritual empowerment and how it is practiced will inevitably differ in ways and means that reflect the local ontologies and social relations among the different nations who practice it (Dahl, 2013).

Young boys prepared for the vision quest, which entailed living alone for four days and nights without water or food on a sacred mountain. In some cases it was not unusual for young men to stay there by themselves for several months (Dahl, 2013) and some young men were known to stay for as long as two years (Manuel & Posluns, 1974). A respected older man (perhaps an uncle) would sponsor and teach the young man how to prepare. An important aspect of this experience often involved identification with an animal spirit, which acted as a guide to greater illumination. On the designated day, the young boy would leave his parents and go to the sacred location of the vision quest. There he would remain to face his childhood fears, loneliness, boredom, hunger and thirst, to seek a vision for himself and the people of his community. At the end of his quest, the young man would return to the community and meet with the Council of Elders. He would share the story of his vision quest, and the council members would interpret the meaning of his experience. He would receive a new name based on his vision. Afterwards, he would no longer live at home. After that he could hunt and ride with the men of the community and was considered eligible for marriage (Foster & Little, 1987).

In many cultures, both boys and girls were put out for periods of isolation and sent on a vision quest as part of their coming of age and traditional training (McCormick, 1997; Letzman, 2002; Merkur, 2002; Anderson, 2011). The ceremony has more recently been practiced by Aboriginal people of all ages and by both sexes (Dahl, 2013). Today the vision quest ceremony can be used as a means of helping First Nations people reconstruct attachment to their identity and culture in a way that is positive and healing (McCormick, 1997; Lertzman, 2002).

2.5.2 Full Moon Ceremonies – Females

In many Indigenous cultures, the onset of menstruation in young women was considered a rite of passage into womanhood (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012). Young women prepared for the onset of their first period since they were little girls (Anderson, 2011). The girl's relatives, her mother, aunts, sisters, and the grandmothers of the village, would have instructed them in their roles, responsibilities, required skills, and privileges of motherhood. At the first sign of a young girl's period, she would be taken from the village to a sacred fasting lodge by the medicine grandmother (Clark, 2012). For four to ten days, without eating, girls would remain in a dark lodge specifically constructed for this purpose (Anderson, 2011). On the last day, the medicine grandmother would summon the girl from within the lodge and have her light a fire at a sacred mountain site. The straighter the smoke rose toward the sky, the better their lives would be and the more blessings they would bring to their people. Everyone welcomed this young woman back into the community and celebrated her graduation from a girl to a woman (Foster & Little, 1987). With this new status, she was invited into the women's circle and with this came new responsibilities (Anderson, 2011). For many Indigenous people, becoming a woman was an honor, something sacred, a privilege and something to truly cherish and commemorate. Anderson (2011) highlighted the significance of puberty ceremonies for girls in her book, *Life Stages of Native Women*. Anderson noted that these ancient ceremonies were complex and not just about acknowledging fertility and reproduction but grounded in Indigenous understandings of menstruation as "an extension of the same power responsible for all creation and annual rejuvenation of the Earth" (p. 88). Today many Aboriginal women still engage in full moon ceremonies as a way of giving thanks for the responsibility of looking after the waters of birth and being the "carriers of water" (Anderson, Clow, & Haworth-Brockman, 2013). The full moon ceremonies that are still conducted by some Indigenous women every 28 days are a way of celebrating the grandmother moon showing her full face and reminding

women of their roles and responsibilities as women. The full moon ceremony is about giving thanks for the renewal of life and the life force connected to water and women's cycles (Anderson et al., 2013).

Cultural assimilation and institutionalization have disrupted the transmission of these roles and rites (Pettipas, 1994). Some families curtailed these customs and as a result they disappeared with the passing of the Elders (Anderson, 2011). Aboriginal youth, especially those residing in urban localities, are often disconnected from their communities and home cultures and consequently learn and borrow from other Indigenous cultures (Restoule, 2008). For instance, the Internet is now used as a primary resource for young people seeking information about Aboriginal culture and history. This resource influences the formation of identity but also plays an important role in cultural retention among urban Aboriginal youth today (Belanger, Barron, McKay-Turnbull, & Mills, 2003). Some youth are returning to participate alongside other community members, especially Elders, who facilitate the transmission of teachings and recreate a sense of belonging and community (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011). Bringing back these ancient practices creates an environment that supports young First Nations people in feeling valued, cared for and safe. These practices can assist youth in making healthier choices for themselves and for those who follow (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012).

Indeed these ancient and powerful practices are re-emerging where cultural teachings and practices take precedent in charting the way forward for young Aboriginal adults. Teachings based on ancient rites of passages are being offered to assist young people entering into the adulthood stage. Today some communities (e.g., Sagkeeng First Nations, in Manitoba) are birthing new generations of young men and woman. Through the re-enactment of cultural practices, young men, through a vision quest, will experience an opportunity to be initiated into manhood. This initiation is facilitated by spending time alone on the land seeking a vision and creating alliances with the

natural world. On the other hand, young women who have reached their moon time (first menses) are participating in teaching lodges where they learn how to honour and carry themselves forward as Indigenous women and life givers (Clark, 2012).

Contemporary rites of passage have the potential to reconnect young Aboriginal men and women with a sense of belonging and reintroduce or reinforce Indigenous cultural teachings that will provide young people with the opportunity to explore their experiences and challenges as well as their strengths and daily life realities in a safe and non-threatening environment (Clark, 2012). These ancient rites are being offered so that young people today can once again find meaning and vision in defining the purpose of their lives as they prepare to enter adulthood. These cultural initiatives are designed to help young people discover their individual gifts. At the same time, these initiatives teach valuable lessons about the interdependence and sacredness of life. These ancient rites are teaching young people how they might guide humankind and carry forward the teachings to future generations as a way to sustain cultural practices and guide Indigenous leadership (Cajete, 2015).

2.6 Emerging Adulthood Among Youth Leaving Child Welfare

As previously noted, there are structural and social factors and conditions that explain why young people are generally living longer with their parents. However, some youth are forced to transition to adulthood much earlier than others (Ravanera et al., 2004) especially when they are required to leave care because of their age. Adolescents in foster care are particularly vulnerable as they rarely have access to the sustained supports provided to other youth by their families of origin. In some Canadian jurisdictions they must leave care upon turning 18, which consequently forces them to transition into adulthood more abruptly than they might otherwise (Collins, 2001). Young people aging out of care risk underemployment, poverty, social isolation, and a range of poor outcomes. When they leave the child welfare system unprepared for independence and without

ongoing support and access to continued education, the indirect costs are felt in other government areas such as health care, child welfare, social services, and justice (Trevethan et al., 2001; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 2007).

Overall, research acknowledges that the transition to independence is a difficult time for youth leaving the child welfare system (Courtney et al., 2001). This section focuses on the experiences of youth in care during the transition into adulthood and on the issues they face as they mature towards emancipation and prepare to be discharged from care to live on their own. There is a growing interest in research on the importance of recognizing long-term impacts on, and measuring outcomes for, children/youth who have been in long-term care within Canadian child welfare systems (Trocmé et al., 1999). Of particular concern is the research that suggests that outcomes for children and young people with long-term involvement in child welfare systems within Canada and in other international jurisdictions have been quite poor (Crichlow, 2002; Maunders et al., 1999; Tweddle, 2005). Former youth in care are generally characterized as more likely to be undereducated, unemployed or underemployed, and if employed, experiencing lower earnings with many living below the poverty line. In addition, they become parents younger, experience homelessness, live in unstable housing arrangements (Baskin, 2007; Biehal & Wade, 1999), become incarcerated or involved in the criminal justice system, as well as depend on social assistance, have mental health issues, and generally are at higher risk for substance abuse (Reid, 2007; Tweddle, 2005) and sexual exploitation (Blackstock et al., 2003). In addition, there is a significant relationship between disadvantaged families and the child protection system, which is frequently maintained across generations (Hurley et al., 2003). For instance, many former First Nations young people also continue to be involved with child welfare as their own children are likely to be removed from their care and placed in foster care (Brown et al., 2007; National Youth in Care Network, 2004; Rutman et

al., 2001). This continued involvement with the child welfare system during parenthood maintains an intergenerational contact (de Leeuw, Greenwood, & Cameron, 2009).

Many young people have valued the experience of being looked after and felt that it helped them, but for some it has tended to compound their difficulties (Biehal & Wade, 1999). Research further indicates that youth who have been in long-term care and who are now aging out of the child welfare system are ill prepared for independence (McEwan-Morris, 2006; Maunders et al., 1999; Dunne, 2004), and few have the skills necessary to live productively in the world on their own (The Children's Aid Society, 2006). In particular it has been noted that some youth leaving care may already be burdened by childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, or abandonment and few have had the benefit of parental role models to transmit the expertise needed to negotiate the trials of living on one's own (The Children's Aid Society, 2006). Young adults also report limited opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making processes affecting them as they move toward independence from the child welfare system (McEwan-Morris, 2006; Freundlich et al., 2006). In-depth Canadian research is lacking in several critical areas regarding youth preparedness for adulthood. More research is needed on understanding the involvement of youth in case planning and assessment; education, employment and career development for youth in foster care; life skills acquisition; and transitional housing services (Mann-Feder & White, 2000). Flynn and Vincent (2008) note that more prospective studies that are based on large and representative samples are needed as are high quality evaluations that reflect on the effects of specific evidence-based transition efforts currently being conducted across various territories and provinces in Canada. In addition, critical questions remain regarding the philosophical approach that is most beneficial for youth. Questions arise as to whether preparation for adulthood should be the focus, as it has traditionally been, on independence and self-sufficiency as opposed to interdependence, in which youth are

supported to make connections with others who can provide lifelong help and support when needed (Freundlich et al., 2006).

Information gaps exist about where young people end up after they transition out of Manitoba's child welfare system (Courtney, Nino, & Peters, 2014). The transition to adult life for young people who have been in out-of-home care is a complex process and one that is full of risks, given that the incorporation into the adult world for these young people tends to be more abrupt and with fewer resources than young people who are transitioning from their own families (del Valle, Lázaro-visa, López, et al., 2011). As earlier noted, outcomes are typically grim (Reid & Dudding, 2006). The existing research highlights that young people aging out of care face significant challenges, which include lower educational levels (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2010), unemployment or underemployment (Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth [Ontario], 2012b), economic hardship (Rutman et al., 2007), elevated rates of poverty (Barker, Kerr, Alfred, et al., 2014), reliance on social assistance (Rutman, Hubberstey, Barlow, et al., 2005; Reid & Dudding, 2006), involvement with the criminal justice system (Rutman et al., 2007), homelessness (Gaetz, 2014a; Gaetz, 2014b; Gaetz & Scott, 2012; Dworsky & Courtney, 2009; Serge, Eberle, Goldberg, Sullivan, & Dudding, 2002), mental health issues (Burge, 2007; Harris, Jackson, O'Brien, Pecora, 2010; Zlotnick, Tam, & Soman, 2012) and early or unplanned pregnancies (Courtney & Dworsky, 2005; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010b; Goldstein, Leslie, Wekerle, et al., 2010). In addition, young people transitioning out of child welfare systems struggle in almost all areas in realizing the social determinants of health (Tait, Henry & Walker, 2013). Former youth in care also faced subsequent government involvement with parenting, mental health, physical health and substance use issues (Barker, Kerr, Alfred, et al., 2014). Data indicates that many youth continue to struggle emotionally, physically, academically, and behaviourally long after care (British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth, 2014a; Marquis, Leshied, & O'Neill, 2008). Given this

profile, youth with a history of being in government care may be at greater risk for substance misuse and street-involvement (Barker, Kerr, Alfred, et al., 2014; Goldstein et al., 2010). Recent research indicates that those with a history of foster care can lead to earlier, more severe and more frequent substance use, multiple mental disorder diagnoses, discontinuous work history, and longer durations of homelessness (Patterson, Moniruzzaman, & Somers, 2015). Young people who have aged out of care are a highly vulnerable population. When young people are left on their own to make their way as adults, they are more vulnerable to social ills when legal guardianship over their lives, by the child welfare system, ends (British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth, 2014a, 2014b).

2.6.1 Extending Services to Emerging Adults with Child Welfare Histories

The implications of the trend behind the theory of development regarding emerging adulthood as a new life stage have been recognized by the child welfare systems within Canada. Policy makers have begun to turn their attention toward providing extended support and services to ensure improved outcomes for youth leaving care. These include the provision of stable and supportive placements with a positive attitude toward education, maintenance of links with either family members or community supports, a flexible and functional process for graduating from dependence to interdependence, the active involvement of young people in the planning and decision-making processes around leaving care, the availability of a range of accommodation options, and ongoing support as required (Mendes, 2005; McEwan-Morris, 2006; Stapleton & Tweddle, 2010). Extending child welfare-related services beyond 18 years of age, until at least 21 or 25 years, has been recommended and/or contemplated in several jurisdictions across Canada and the United States (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Tweddle, 2005; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2010). Nova Scotia and British Columbia, for instance, provide support until age 24; Alberta provides support to 22 years; and New Brunswick provides support past the age of majority (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2010). Extending

foster care beyond 18 years of age has been found to promote post-secondary educational attainment in the United States (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010a). In Manitoba a number of youth have also delayed their exit from care. Services to young adults who would otherwise age out of care can be extended through a maintenance agreement, so long as they are still in high school or attending post-secondary education. Recognition of the need for continued supports to these young people demonstrates a responsibility to helping them reach their full potential (McEwan-Morris, 2006; Burnside & Fuchs, 2013).

Other jurisdictions are recognizing the importance of ensuring service provision to young people in government care to help them transition toward independence. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the *Children (Leaving Care) Act* (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents) was introduced in 2000 to assist youth leaving government care. This legislation extends the maximum age for government responsibility for children in care from 16 to 18 years, and it provides for greater mandatory support for youth aged 18-21. The Act focuses on education, training, and financial needs. It also provides for personal advisors for youth up to age 21, and requires needs assessments and pathway plans to assist in transitional planning. Further, educational support in some instances may be extended to age 24 (Tweddle, 2005) or 25 (Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth, 2012a). In the United States, similar legislation (the *Foster Care Independence Act*) was passed in 1999. This legislation saw the doubling of available federal funds for transitional assistance for children between the ages of 18-21 who are either preparing to age out of the foster care system or have already. The Act created the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, which emphasizes independent living services with a focus on education, employment, and life skills training. The Act provides for room and board for foster children out of care but who are less than 21 years of age. It also encourages states to provide former youth in care aged 18-21 with Medicaid coverage (Tweddle, 2005). As these were changes implemented a number of years ago,

there are no current resources that speak to the success of these initiatives, nor have evaluations been undertaken that would take into account some of the challenges and weaknesses of these initiatives in supporting youth transitioning out of care. Research suggests that the outlook for teens exiting or "aging out" of foster care without a permanent home or a meaningful adult relationship is bleak (Freundlich, 2003).

2.6.2 Maintaining Family Connections

Research has begun to recognize the importance of the biological family to youth in care. Youth who age out of care naturally gravitate to their biological family once they reach adulthood even after spending years in foster care (Barth, 1990). O'Donnell (2010) highlights a growing trend in child welfare in recognizing the importance of facilitating and maintaining connections between children in foster care and their biological parents even when parents have had their parental rights terminated. Several studies conducted by Jensen (2004) and Courtney et al., (2001) have shown that youth who have ongoing contact with their birth parents while in care have better outcomes compared to youth who do not maintain these connections. The longitudinal study conducted by Courtney and colleagues (2001) notes that 52% of former foster youth in their survey reported feeling close or somewhat close to their biological mother, while 46% reported that their biological families provided them with emotional support. In this same study, the process of reconnecting with a family or a significant other represents an important step toward emancipation and contributes to healthy functioning in the community, solidifying the adolescents' identity, affirming family connections, clarifying personal history, and reintegrating past trauma (Courtney et al., 2001). Regardless of the strained parent-child relationship, foster care youth are drawn to contact with their biological families, and even limited family support has been shown to ease their depression (O'Donnell, 2010). Other policy objectives within the United States have reflected this trend toward maintaining family connections as a "culture shift", and sometimes ensuring continuing contact with

the biological parent is the best permanency resource for a young person aging out of care. Richard and Nelson (2007) noted many of the Aboriginal youth involved with the child welfare system tend to return back to their birth families pending potential barriers created by authorities.

2.6.3 Resilience and Young People Leaving Care

As research indicates, many young people leaving care have very poor life chances compared to their peers, but not all do. Research studies completed since the 1980s suggest that in broad terms young people leaving care fall into one of three groups: young people "moving on" — who are very resilient and able to manage well after care; "survivors" — who are just about coping but whose resilience is closely linked to the professional and personal support they received; and "victims" — who are very disadvantaged and need sustained support (Biehal, Clayden, Stein, & Wade, 1995; Dixon & Stein, 2005; Pecora et al., 2004; Sinclair, Baker, Wilson, & Gibbs, 2005; Stein, 1990, 2006, 2008; Stein & Carey, 1986).

Young people who experience stable placements providing good quality care are more likely to have positive outcomes than those who have experienced further movement and disruption during their time in care. Stability has the potential to promote resilience in two respects. First, by providing the young person with a warm and redeeming relationship with a carer – a compensatory secure attachment that may in itself reduce the likelihood of placement breakdown (Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998). Secondly, stability may provide continuity of care in young people's lives, which may give them security and contribute to positive educational and future career outcomes (Jackson, 2002, 2003; Jackson & Thomas, 2001).

Another way to promote resilience is to help young people develop a positive sense of identity, self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Gilligan, 2001). Although not explicitly recognized as a variable in the research literature on resilience, identity could be seen as connected to, as well as a component of, key associations: feeling able to plan and be in control; the capacity to

re-frame adversities so that the beneficial as well as the damaging effects are recognized; personality—or lower rates of temperamental risk (Newman & Blackburn, 2002; Rutter et al., 1998). Helping youth leaving care develop a positive identity is linked to first, the quality of care and attachments experienced by looked-after young people – a significant resilience promoting factor discussed above; second, to their knowledge and understanding of their background and personal history; third, to their experience of how other people perceive and respond to them; and finally, how they see themselves and the opportunities they have to influence and shape their own biography (Kirk & Day, 2011).

Having a positive experience of school, including achieving educational success is associated with resilience among young people from disadvantaged family backgrounds and young people living in care (Newman & Blackburn, 2002; Rutter et al., 1998; Sinclair et al., 2005). Research completed on young people leaving care since the beginning of the 1970s show low levels of educational attainment and participation beyond the minimum school leaving age. However, good outcomes are associated with placement stability, gender (young women do better than young men, as reflected in national data), a caregiver committed to helping the young person and a supportive and encouraging environment for study. This may also include the foster family's own children providing help and acting as role models (Biehal et al., 1995; Jackson, Ajayi, & Quigley, 2003).

There is also evidence that young people who have had several placements can achieve educational success if they remain in the same school—and this also meant that they were able to maintain friendships and contacts with helpful teachers. Also, late-placed young people who may have experienced a lot of earlier placement disruption can succeed in foster care, although young people and their foster parents saw this as more of a service relationship than a substitute family (Jackson et al., 2003).

School or care itself may also provide turning points (Rutter et al., 1998), open the door for participation in a range of leisure or extra-curricular activities that may lead to new friends and opportunities, including the learning of competencies and the development of emotional maturity—and thus promote their resilience (Newman & Blackburn, 2002). Indeed, resilient young people had often been able to turn their negative experiences at home, or in care, into opportunities, with the help of others.

Preparation for leaving care may also provide young people with opportunities for planning, problem solving and the learning of new competencies — all resilience-promoting factors (Newman & Blackburn, 2002; Rutter et al., 1998). This may include the development of self-care skills — personal hygiene, diet and health, including sexual health; practical skills — budgeting, shopping, cooking and cleaning; and interpersonal skills — managing a range of formal and informal relationships. Preparation should be holistic in approach, attaching equal importance to practical, emotional and interpersonal skills—not just, as in the past, domestic combat courses for young people to manage on their own at 16 (Stein & Carey, 1986; Stein & Wade, 2000).

As the discussion of focal theory and transitions suggests, many young people leaving care have compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood, which represents a barrier to promoting their resilience. They are denied the psychological opportunity to focus to deal with changes over time — which is how most young people are able to deal with problems and challenges. They may often be lacking the range and depth of family support of their peers and they may be denied the opportunity to "space out" as Arnett (2001) noted which is a part of "emerging adulthood" — a period of risk taking, reflection and identity search.

The resilience of young people after leaving care is closely associated with their care experience and the support they may receive. As suggested, there are three "outcome groups" identified in the research. First the "moving on" groups are likely to have had stability and continuity

in their lives. They have welcomed the challenge of independent living and gaining more control over their lives — often contrasting this with the restrictions imposed while living in care, including the lack of opportunities to make or participate in decisions, which affected their lives. They have seen this as improving their confidence and self-esteem. In general, their resilience has been enhanced by their experiences after care and they have been able to make good use of the help they have been offered, often maintaining contact and support from former caregivers (Schofield, 2001; Sinclair et al., 2005: Stein, 2008). Youth in the second group, the "survivors", have experienced more instability, movement and disruption while living in care than the "moving on" groups. What made the difference to their lives was the personal and professional support they received after leaving care. Specialist leaving care workers, key workers, as well as mentors—the latter identified in the international review as a resilience promoting factor (Newman & Blackburn, 2002; Stein, 2008) and different family members, or some combination of support networks, have likely helped them overcome their poor starting points at the time of leaving care and thus promoted their resilience (Biehal et al., 1995; Clayden & Stein, 2002; Dixon & Stein, 2003; Marsh & Peel, 1999). The third group, the "victims", was the most disadvantaged group. They had the most damaging pre-care family experiences and, in the main, care was unable to compensate them, to help them overcome their past difficulties. After leaving care they were likely to be unemployed, become homeless and have great difficulties in maintaining their accommodation. They were also highly likely to be lonely, isolated and have mental health problems. Aftercare support was unlikely to be able to help them overcome their very poor starting points and they also lacked or alienated personal support. But it was important to these young people that somebody was there for them (Stein, 2008).

Despite severe and chronic adversities, some foster care youth over-come challenges related to pursuing higher education and therefore show resilience (Kirk & Day, 2011). Resilience is a positive adaptation where difficulties – personal, familial, or environmental – are so extreme that

society would expect a person's cognitive or functional abilities to be impaired (Day, 2006). Research has shown that individual, family, and neighborhood components interact to help make young people resilient (Condly, 2006). Protective characteristics such as strong parenting and stable care are generally not available to youth in foster care. Most children raised by their birth families have built-in, lifelong support networks of parents, siblings, extended family, and family friends—networks that are not ensured for youth who have spent time in the foster care system (Kirk & Day, 2011). Other relevant protective factors have been identified, including having external support systems that reinforce competence, positive values and enhance self-esteem. Social support is itself a complex and multidimensional construct that is defined by Dunst, Trivette, and Deal (1988) as "the emotional, psychological, physical, informational, instrumental and material assistance provided by others to either maintain well-being or promote adaptations to difficult life events" (p. 3). It has specific and distinct effects on the coping and well-being of individuals as the events of their lives unfold, particularly on how stressful life events like transitions are managed (Cohen & Syme, 1985; Kirk, 2003). The relevance of social support for transitioning foster youth was highlighted by Metzger (2008) who described the value of various types of support in the development of resilience among foster youth. Other things that have been associated with more positive adjustments include training, services, positive supportive networks, networks, and job experience while in care (Reilly, 2003). Personal skills such as problem solving in addition to planning abilities also manifest in competence and perceived efficacy, as does identification with competent role models, and having aspirations (Day, 2006; Garmezy, 1994; Kirk & Day, 2011; Masten, 2001; Werner, 1989, 2000).

2.6.4 First Nations Youth Leaving Care

Despite the fact that First Nations children and youth are overrepresented in the child welfare systems across the country (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013), there is a dearth of information and in-depth research on young people aging out of foster care (Dunne, 2004) and across the globe

(Osborn & Bromfield, 2007). Reid and Dudding (2006) note that in Canada there is limited research on Canadian youth and their success in our child welfare systems. Flynn and Vincent (2008) further note that the lack of national data means that it is not known how many young people leave public care each year in Canada. The research on adolescent transitions into adulthood is even more non-existent or silent about the experiences of First Nations youth. Further, the literature does not provide a complete contextual understanding of the issues faced by First Nations youth while in care, leaving care or what their life is like post care. Even less is known about the outcomes for First Nations young people with child welfare histories beyond 18 years (Mann-Feder & White, 2000), despite the fact that they are overrepresented in the child welfare system and especially if they have aged out of First Nations and Aboriginal specific child welfare care. What little that is known about the outcomes for First Nations youth who graduate from care is reflected in the literature regarding gang involvement (Totten, 2009), and overrepresentation in both the child welfare field (Trocmé et al., 2005) and the criminal justice systems (Trevethan et al., 2001), to name a few.

Child welfare and its attending structures and placements are colonial constructs to Indigenous peoples (de Leeuw et al., 2009). While in care Aboriginal youth and those emerging to adulthood are often separated from their communities, families, languages and cultures and by extension, they are also separated from attaining their identities. The racism that exists and which they experience and confront on a daily basis oftentimes distorts their reality and is detrimental to positive Aboriginal identity development. Attaining an identity that fits them as Aboriginal persons often occurs in contexts where youth are deprived of social, cultural and familial connections that are vitally important to identity development. These connections are important sources of cultural validation that would reduce cross-cultural distortions and would be extremely important to Indigenous emerging adults who are beginning to solidify their identities as they move toward autonomy (Wexler, DiFluvio, & Burke, 2009). Many Aboriginal youth in care who are separated

from the collective meaning making opportunities that stem from family and community, lose out on the opportunity to experience the transition into adulthood with others of the same culture and age (Clark, 2012). Too many Aboriginal youth transitioning toward adulthood must undergo this fundamental process and period of change alone. First Nations emerging adults transitioning out of care miss out on what it means to become an adult from a cultural standpoint and furthermore, they lack the opportunities to experience and celebrate these changes from within their own cultural locations.

2.7 Summary and Conclusion

This literature review has considered the role of colonization, residential schools, the sixties scoop, child welfare and the development of Aboriginal child welfare agencies in relation to the transitioning of Indigenous emerging adults. There is a burgeoning body of literature that reflects upon the new developmental life stage called "emerging adulthood." The theory of this new developmental stage is being identified primarily in Western countries like the United States and Canada but it is also a phenomena recognized worldwide. Aboriginal young people and young people leaving care generally transition to adulthood faster than most other Canadian young people. While Canadian society emphasizes independence and emancipation from parents and families as appropriate transition tasks for adolescents leaving care, interdependence and maintaining connections with family and community are key cultural skills that assist Aboriginal youth in their development toward adulthood. Cultural revival in many Aboriginal communities is beginning to see the return to customs and rites of passage that were once important cultural events marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The transition to adulthood has become increasingly prolonged not just for Canadian young people overall but for youth in the child welfare systems in that youth transitioning out of care need

extended supports to ensure that they have the same level of support that youth transitioning from their parents' homes have. This can mean extending services to former youth in care up to the age of 21 or 25 years. Youth leaving care often have dire life experiences after leaving care but the literature also speaks to the situations where young people also exhibit resilience. Resilience has been tied to the development of positive identity development, the quality of care, if they've had stability and continuity in their lives, educational success, preparing for leaving care, among others. Despite the overrepresentation of First Nations children in care the literature on the resilience of First Nations youth leaving care is sparse, nor does literature exist with respect to whether the phenomenon of the emerging adulthood stage is reflected among the perspectives of First Nations survivors. A number of digital videos have been produced that have highlighted various experiences of First Nations young people (i.e. suicide and involvement with child and family services) however none focus on their stories and narratives and furthermore, very few of these resources are based on the Manitoba context and experience. Despite the wealth of research on emerging adulthood and on the resilience of young people leaving care, there is a huge gap in our understanding about the emerging adulthood, post care, and resilience issues and realities among former Indigenous adults who have left the child welfare system within Manitoba. This alone provides a compelling rationale for the research I undertook in this study. This is an exploratory initiative in that it is the first time that digital storytelling method will be used in answering research questions like what I have proposed. The following chapter focuses on the qualitative methodologies, methods and approaches used in planning and preparing to conduct digital storytelling workshops with emerging Indigenous adults in answering the research questions posed in Chapter One.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the underlying research methodologies employed to address my research questions. The research approach for this study is qualitative, participatory, arts-based, Indigenized, and incorporates narrative inquiry through digital storytelling techniques. The second section of the chapter focuses on the methods undertaken for conducting the digital storytelling workshops related to this research. It provides a discussion on how the workshop locations were chosen and how the participants were recruited for the workshops. Included is a recap of the research questions that were the focus of the talking circles and incorporated into the videos produced by the participants. The discussion of methods also outlines the approach the research took to obtain informed consent. The third section provides an overview of the approaches taken in addressing the data analysis of the information collected and how I addressed reflexivity, reactivity and researcher bias, including descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validities. The fourth section of this chapter is an examination of the ethical considerations I undertook in conducing the digital storytelling workshops. Finally the chapter concludes with a summary and foreshadows the content to be covered in the following chapter.

3.1 Research Methodologies

3.1.1 Narrative Inquiry through Digital Storytelling

What use is a book without pictures and conversations,
what use is research without image and story?

Hedy Bach (2007)

According to Glesne (2006), many modes of qualitative research exist (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, narrative inquiry, etc.). Narrative inquiry has become a popular methodology in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Narrative inquiry or narrative analysis emerged as a discipline from within the broader field of qualitative research in the early 20th century. Narrative inquiry uses field texts, such as stories, autobiography, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos (and other artifacts), and life experience, as the units of analysis to research and understand the way people create meaning in their lives as narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).

Narrative inquiry does not seek to generalize knowledge, but rather it seeks to understand and explore the particular (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Research that focuses on narrative inquiry is also about studying experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2006) observed that arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry are inspired by a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375)

Narrative inquiry provides a strong potential theoretical framework for the use of digital narrative and digital storytelling for and as research. Digital storytelling is an approach to narrating stories that draws upon the power of digitized images to support the content of the story (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Narrative is also the heart of storytelling (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010). Along with the narrative, the visual becomes important to the process because through visual techniques researchers and participants explore and make meaning of experience both visually and narratively

(Bach, 2007). Digital storytelling is an adaptation of storytelling and utilizes multimedia tools to engage individuals in "authentic learning experiences that provide real world relevance and personal value within a situated context" (Walters, Green, Wang, & Walters, 2010, p. 42). Digital storytelling uses computer-based tools to tell stories (Yuskel, Robin, & McNeil, 2011) and is described as merging "a personal story with video, still-frame imagery, music, and voice to create a personal multimedia story" (Jakes, 2005, p. 1). Digital stories combine narrative, still images and using sound (Jenkins & Lonsdale, 2007) and have the capability of integrating technology with content, facilitating an emotional connection to that content, and allowing for the sharing of that content with others (Kieler, 2010; Rossiter & Garcia, 2010).

3.1.1.1 What is Digital Storytelling?

Digital storytelling is a collaborative visual methodology akin to Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), in which participants create 3-5 minute videos using their own photos, video recordings, voice-overs and music. Digital storytelling, the art of combining oral tradition with digital technology, is a community-based, learner-centered approach to generating knowledge. It involves using computer software to create a 3-5 minute video to illustrate a personal story (Oral History Centre, 2014a). It emerged as a grassroots movement in the early 1990s, when digital video and editing technology started to become less expensive (Lambert, 2009). It allows ordinary people to tell their stories and is therefore empowering and emancipatory because it encourages people to give voice, image, and sound to their life experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). New information and communication technologies today provide the opportunity to explore storytelling through multimedia, including video/filmmaking, in what has been described as digital ethnography. Stories and storytelling are part of a post-positivist paradigm of inquiry influenced by phenomenology, ethnography and narrative analysis, along with the evolution of visual methods in social research (Sandercock & Attili, 2010). It uses new digital tools to help people create personal narratives that

are powerful, compelling and emotionally engaging, at the same time generating knowledge in ways that exceed standard research methods. Digitized elements, like photos, videos, illustrations, music or narratives may come from the storyteller's own archives or could be taken from the Internet as publicly available. Blending the storyline with these other elements represents the craft and art of digital storytelling (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). They have been called "short, multimedia tales told from the heart" (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010, p. 37).

Digital storytelling is gaining popularity for research and education purposes and has been used by community organizations, universities in the US and Europe, public schools, by journalists and others.[7] It has been used in the context of education and is seen as a narrative method for facilitating learning (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010). Rossiter and Garcia (2010) state that any application of digital storytelling that "recognizes, honours, and encourages the narrative meaning-making process as central to learning" (p. 38).

Digital storytelling has been used for social research and advocacy (Sandercock & Attili, 2010), to engage and stimulate reflection for reflective learning in a variety of contexts (Sandars & Murray, 2009), for promoting positive youth development (Wexler et al., 2012), for preserving and promoting Indigenous oral wisdom (Willox et al., 2012), with elders and youth (Iseke & Moore, 2011), and to create awareness around HIV, sexual health, and decolonization in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities(Danforth et al., 2014). However, to date there has been relatively little attention paid to the topic of Indigenous emerging adults transitioning from the child welfare systems either within Manitoba or the Canadian context. Digital storytelling has been used to give survivors of domestic violence a voice to explore lived experiences dealing with violence; particularly sexual and intimate partner violence (Hong, 2014). It allows participants to magnify their own voices

[7] United Nations University digital storytelling research http://onlinelearning.unu.edu/en/ayuquila; Digital Storytelling at the University of Houston http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu; BBC Wales digital storytelling http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/galleries/pages/digitalstorytelling.shtml.

using a method that lends to creativity and narrative meaning making (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010). Digital storytelling focuses on everyday stories told by ordinary people where the accounts are short and autobiographical. It includes the "combination of oral storytelling with images and music to create an aesthetic product and meaningful, often sentimental, narrative (Adelson & Olding, 2013). These stories represent "digital epistemologies" and allow for different genres that offer multiple messages and meanings (Lotherington, 2008). These digital epistemologies gives voice to marginalized peoples (MacLeod, 2004) and have been known to be instrumental in the development of multimodal literacy (Lotherington, 2008). Since the stories tend to be autobiographical in form, focusing on the life experiences of a particular person, they are multi-modal in that "they layer various levels of audio and visual signifiers to create a particular aesthetic and symbolic meaning" (Adelson & Olding, 2013).

3.1.1.2 Elements of Digital Storytelling

Lambert (2009) who founded the *Centre of Digital Storytelling in California*, documented the seven steps to digital storytelling: owning your insights; owning your emotions; finding the moment; seeing your story; hearing your story; assembling your story; and sharing your story (p. 29- 47). These elements are identified as necessary for effective storytelling. The following components, paraphrased from Lambert (2009) are part of a digital story:

1. *Point of view:* The point of view element focuses on both the story's purpose and perspective of the author. The purpose of a story or narrative can be to inform the listener about a specific idea or phenomena, or it could inspire the listener to action. These stories can be first person and reflective or third-person historical and analytical.

2. *A dramatic question:* The dramatic question is the key inquiry that holds the listener's attention. It involves the inner conflict or problem the protagonist (as the reflective author) is trying

to overcome. By the end of the story, this question should either be resolved or the listeners should have been provided enough information to resolve it themselves.

3. *Emotional content:* Each story, or narrative, should include an aspect of emotional content that connects to its listeners' feelings and evokes a response, whether visceral or subliminal. These written narratives should effectively convey emotions of humor, empathy, fear, anxiety, and solitude, amongst many others. This element can be challenging, as it requires authors to deeply consider the perspectives of their listeners because what may be interpreted as humorous to one person, may be offensive to someone else.

4. *The gift of your voice:* The narrator's voice is a gift that must not be taken for granted, but rather recognized and nurtured as it is the vehicle that delivers the story's message. It carries varying degrees of richness, context, character, and personality that can strengthen a story. Distractions such as an ambient background noise, repeating statements, and a low tone of voice can affect the interpretation of the story, no matter how well written. If an author has a thick accent or mild speech impediment this can also affect and enhance how the story's message is interpreted. Successful mastery of the "Your Voice" element suggests the student has practiced the art of oration and can effectively deliver a clear presentation.

5. *Economy:* A digital story should be no longer than three minutes. With this in mind, a written narrative should not be any longer than one and half pages double spaced and less than 400 words. If the narrative is any longer than three minutes, the author takes the risk of losing the listener's attention. The art and craft of editing and revision are needed to economize the salience of a narrative.

6. *Pacing:* Pacing is connected to the inflection, cadence and clarity of an author's voice. The best practice is to record the entire narrative in one take, without any interruptions or digital edits. Authors should pause for each comma, semi-colon and period that they read while seeking adequate

breath control when recording narratives. They should infer inquiry when reading a sentence with a question mark and project excitement when reading a statement with an exclamation mark. To master the pace of a digital story requires both patience and practice, yet, most importantly; it requires authors to listen to, and feel comfortable with, their own voice.

7. *The power of a soundtrack:* A digital story's soundtrack can include music or other sound effects that amplify the emotionality of subject matter or support the story line. However, this element should be approached cautiously as musical soundtracks add an additional layer of information that can be distracting as it competes with the audio of the author's voice. Moreover, issues concerning copyright and attribution affect the use and appropriation of a soundtrack. It is advisable that authors, especially those with limited digital storytelling experience, ensure that their "Gift of Your Voice" element is flawless before proceeding to add an additional soundtrack.

The resources that can be incorporated into a digital story are virtually limitless, and digital storytelling can be applied effectively to any subject. Constructing a digital story and communicating it efficiently requires hard work, thinking and preparation on behalf of the storyteller. Participants have to choose the images, sounds, and words carefully and appropriately, taking into consideration the audience's perspective and certain requirements as well. However, a strong point of digital storytelling is the fact that users with little or no technical background can easily create digital stories, using free or limited trial based applications that are available online (Adelson & Olding, 2013).

Although Lambert's (2009) process to producing digital videos is fairly rigid and structured, I believe it is not necessary that participants' stories be "dramatic" or that their music be "emotional" in order for them to share their stories faithfully. With all of these performance values, it appears as if the format's aesthetics are valued over the storyteller's accuracy and authenticity. In this research the stories the First Nations emerging adults chose to tell were privileged over the production values espoused by Lambert. During the workshops I emphasized to participants there were no rules about

how they could write or express their stories. The recording of stories also did not need to take place in one recording session. Participants were encouraged to record parts of their stories in pieces so that they could be stitched together within the video as they wished. Furthermore, I assured participants that correct grammar and syntax would not be given priority and the choice in music composition was left entirely up to them.

3.1.1.3 The Importance of Storytelling

Everyone has a story to tell. Since the earliest days of humanity we have been hooked on stories whether they were painted on cave walls, carved into stone, or etched onto stained glass. Storytelling is a basic human function. Storytelling is important at a cognitive level. As it turns out, stories aren't merely important for how we understand the world. They are how we understand the world. We weave and seek stories everywhere. Human minds yield helplessly to the suction of story. Gottschall (2012) notes that no matter how hard we concentrate, no matter how deep we dig in our heels, we can't resist a story. The 'powerfulness' of a story is often thought of in terms of its emotional affect. By adding emotion to facts we can tap into the power of stories.

> Digital Storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Throughout history, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, wisdom, and values. Stories have taken many different forms. Stories have been adapted to each successive medium that has emerged, from the circle around the campfire to the silver screen, and now the computer screen. (Digital Storytelling Association, 2011)

Narrative inquiry and storytelling, both as a research method and a way to relate to others, have been marginalized by more powerful knowledge systems (Cruikshank, 1998). Yet it is personal stories that enable us to offer a unique critique of society, such as that presented by systems such as child welfare, justice and other institutions. Stories allow us to maintain a powerful subjectivity in the face of objectifying systems, which have been dominated by Western philosophical principles (Caine, 2002; Adelson & Olding, 2013).

Dion (2004) notes that Indigenous people have always been social agents in using storytelling to resist ongoing conditions of injustice. She further notes that telling stories has been an important teaching and learning tool in First Nations cultures. Stories provide one with a sense of belonging, purpose, and connection. Stories inform and reflect who we are. Stories communicate aspects of culture, and socialize people into cultural traditions. Stories also educate and can help the teller develop relationships with the listener and vice versa. Stories teach us about who we are and about the importance of respect and responsibility to our ancestors, our families, all living things, and ourselves. As Dion states, stories are not just entertainment but power as they "reflect the deepest, most intimate perception, relationship, and attitudes of a people and can be used to bring harmony and balance to all beings that inhabit the nation's universe" (p. 61). More specifically, stories can be told to remember and reclaim our past, the present, and our future. Stories are also born out of the need to survive and stories affirm and reaffirm our connection to family, community, and culture. Lastly, stories can be a source of healing in acknowledging the pains of the past and a hope for things to be different presently and in the future (Dion, 2004). She notes that Indigenous stories have disrupted colonial narratives of Canadian history, and Indigenous stories recognize injustices and celebrate Indigenous resilience and resistance.

3.1.1.4 Digital Storytelling and Intergenerational Healing and Reconciliation

Adelson and Olding (2013) note that narrative sharing through digital storytelling is, for many of its Indigenous producers and users, a powerful and explicit means of not only engaging in a healing process but it's also engaging in a process of decolonization. Digital stories provide space for "truth-telling" and opportunities for reconciliation in which the audience is invited to participate in a process that contributes to narrative healing among those who have been hurt by historical and ongoing colonial processes. Adelson and Olding (2013) recognize that more and more digital stories are beginning to emerge during a period in which truth-telling and testimony have become key to

Aboriginal healing strategies, which can influence and contribute to acts of reconciliation. An example of where digital storytelling has been used to explore intergenerational effects of residential school experience on second-generation survivors, for instance, was noted in the publication, *Kiskino mâto tapanâsk: Intergenerational Effects on Professional First Nations Women Whose Mothers are Residential School Survivors* by Stout and Peters (2011). In this particular publication Stout and Peters shared the stories and videos of First Nations women affected by the legacy of residential schools. The resulting stories that emerged from the women's digital stories spoke to complex family relationships, mothering, identity, resilience and ultimately healing among second generation survivors of residential school. Researchers and communities are also increasingly recognizing the healing properties, for individuals and groups that start from digital storytelling approaches to research. Acoose et al. (2009) and Anderson (2004) identify how sharing experiences is part of the healing journey and increases self-esteem. For instance, one participant in the study by Acoose and colleagues notes that sharing stories with others is not only about sharing what they have learned, but also about sharing hope. In addition, research approaches that are visual and narrative in nature, such as digital storytelling, are useful because they allow for different channels of distribution than written research and reports. Video has the potential to reach broader audiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, many of whom do not have access to written research (Perley, 2009). But in the age of the "disappearing book" and the emergence of newer and newer technologies, digital storytelling is an appropriate way to communicate "what we do, who we are and what we care about or are interested in" (Bran, 2010, p. 1791).

3.1.2 Participatory Research

The approach I took in conducting this research was also participatory in several ways. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an approach to research that emphasizes participation and action and it is an alternative approach that is most conducive to doing research with Indigenous

peoples (Bennett, 2004a). PAR approaches seek to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following reflection. PAR emphasizes collective inquiry and experimentation grounded in experience and social history. Within a PAR process, communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Typically, a pure PAR approach would have seen the participants assist in creating the questions and participating in the design the research itself (Schinke, McGannon, Watson, & Busanich, 2013). In this research however, the PAR process was partially pursued in that I initially created the research questions that the participants responded to in developing their digital stories rather than let them have free reign over telling any story they wished. While their stories had to fit into the scope of my research they had the freedom to express how they wished to respond to the questions that I posed and they were also free to add to their stories.

As part of the PAR approach to this research, emerging adult First Nations participants, who took part in the workshop, with my assistance, were taught how to generate their own stories guided by my questions and through instruction on how to create digital video stories. Digital storytelling is not a passive activity. It is a creative and collaborative, participatory process (Gray, de Boehm, Farnsworth & Wolf, 2010) where participants took on many roles beyond storytelling such as scriptwriting, directing, producing, photographing, acting, editing, etc. (Bran, 2010). By attending the workshops, participants learned how to use the technology and in the process they became responsible for editing their own personal films, rather than having the technical aspects and editing done for them by someone else. In this way, if participants choose, with the knowledge gained they can later produce more digital stories. With new skills gained participants could then choose to teach others, including family members, friends, colleagues, or other First Nations emerging adults transitioning out of care, how to develop and produce digital stories.

3.1.3 Arts-Based Approach in Working with Emerging Indigenous Adults

Arts-based research is defined as the systemic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involved in their studies (McNiff, 2008). Arts-based research is an emerging approach to qualitative research that brings together scholarly inquiry and creative processes (Knowles & Cole, 2008). It is suited to human inquiry where human experience and interaction are valued. It allows for personal, emotional, experiential and embodied expressions of knowledge. Art is seen as a way of knowing and the creative process is seen as a way of making meaning. Arts-based qualitative inquiry is an innovative approach that uses qualitative research extended through the use of arts-based or informed methods such as visual arts, photography, stories, poetry, video biographies, drama, movies, theatre, music, sculpture or through other creative processes such as digital storytelling (Butler-Kisber, 2010; de Mello, 2007). This form of research values alternative ways of knowing, Indigenous knowledge and the participatory creation of knowledge, which makes it an approach that is conducive to working with Indigenous youth as an emerging narrative method that preserves and promotes the oral wisdom of Indigenous youth (Willox, et al., 2012). Arts-based approaches like digital storytelling holds significant transformative power because digital technologies are themselves reshaping the social institutions and practices surrounding storytelling, including the power relations that govern who can speak, what they can say, and how they can say it. Digital storytelling is a new mode of communicating authenticity and involves truths and methods that rely on image-based testimony (Adelson & Olding, 2013).

3.1.4 Situating the Research – Starting from Indigenous Principles and Ethics

Digital storytelling research in this study is an arts-based qualitative approach that starts from the retrospective stories and oral wisdom of First Nations emerging adults with child welfare histories in Manitoba. These stories were shared in talking circles and included individual responses

to the main research questions that were then developed into stories and embedded into the participants' videos. "Talking or learning circles" differ from "focus groups" in that they begin from Indigenous ideas about knowledge and uses of generating knowledge. Talking circles generate information, but they also encourage sharing, connections, building capacity, balancing and healing. Furthermore in a circle, everyone can see one another and participate equally (Lavallée, 2009). As Absolon and Willett (2004) aptly put it, a talking circle or a "learning circle also facilitates the remembering process and 're-membering' of individual experiences into a collective knowing and consciousness." They continued by stating, "The idea of 're-membering' as a research method and process facilitates a full reconnection …[of] stories, experiences, teachings, tradition and connection" (p. 13). Learning circles are what Kovach (2010) terms an Indigenous "conversational method," a method that gathers knowledge on an Indigenous paradigm based in oral storytelling, involving relational and dialogic participation, sharing a story to help others.

The digital storytelling methodology for this research adapted an approach used by the Toronto and American Centers for Digital Storytelling[8] to work between Western and Indigenous methodologies and to be responsive to the needs of the First Nations participants in the workshop. *nDigiDreams,* a Diné digital storytelling organization in the United States, indigenized their digital storytelling based on a Diné philosophy of learning in accordance with their traditional living system called Sa'ah Naghaí Bik'e Hozhóón[9]. I indigenized my digital storytelling methodology based on an Anishinaabe centered philosophy of learning and worldview, which I had the fortune of learning while attending facilitator training through the *Summer Institute: Nindibaajimomin – Digital Storytelling on the Intergenerational Experiences of Residential Schools*, offered through the University of Winnipeg's Oral History Centre (2014b).

8 Toronto Centre for Digital Storytelling: http://storycentre.wordpress.com; (American) Centre for Digital Storytelling: www.storycentre.org and Manuelito (2015).

9 nDigiDreams. Accessed June 14, 2015. http://ndigidreams.com/ds.html.

This research also recognizes the importance of Indigenous ownership, control, access, and possession of research (OCAP™)[10] (Schnarch, 2004) as integral to self-determination in research. Therefore, the workshops for this research sought to implement OCAP™ principles. This research was guided by the principle of respect, including the commitment to ensure that the voices of First Nations emerging adult participants were foregrounded in the research so that the end result reflected on their individual and collective truths. Another guiding principle central to this methodology is the importance of relationship building with people. Good relations are built on trust, communication and shared responsibility for decision-making (Wilson, 2008). The sharing of food facilitated these relationships.

3.1.5 Rationale for Research Approaches

Despite the wealth of research on youth leaving care, and despite the number of Aboriginal children who are placed in the child welfare system very little literature exists specifically about the First Nations experiences among Indigenous emerging adults who have transitioned out of the child welfare system in Manitoba and hence the reason this research has been proposed. Given the large number of First Nations people who have had child welfare experience I thought it important to attend to doing research with an understudied demographic population that would bring forth reflective narrative stories about the transitioning and post-care experiences among this group. It is with this in mind that I thought producing digital stories would be useful in understanding the outcomes and impacts on First Nations emerging adults who had transitioned or were in the processing of transitioning out of the child welfare system. I chose a narrative, arts-based, and participatory approach (Chilton & Leavy, 2014) in conducting my research using digital storytelling. My purpose for choosing these methodological approaches was the value of these as ways to

[10] OCAP™ is a registered trademark of the First Nations Information Governance Centre (2010). While this research respects OCAP™ principles, it doesn't necessarily mean that the videos as stories are owned by OCAP™. It just means that it is respected that the stories embedded in the videos are owned, controlled, and accessed and in the possession of the participants, however, they have also given me permission to share their stories and videos.

understand, analyze, and interpret the narrative stories from emerging Indigenous adults regarding the impacts of their child welfare experiences, the process of transitioning out of care, their lives post-care and whether adulthood has been attained. This included a means for understanding their thoughts on the experience of producing digital stories about their experiences. In particular, these qualitative research approaches were chosen for this study primarily because they created an opportunity for the researcher to creatively engage, alongside participants, in exploring the narrative and visual perceptions about the lived experiences reflected in the stories resulting from this study (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Chilton & Leavy, 2014; de Mello, 2007). This research springs from needs identified by Indigenous communities for understanding outcomes resulting from child welfare intervention and engaging in ways that promote reconciliation and healing among survivors of the child welfare system. The research methodologies attempt to help participants in remembering, giving testimony, storytelling, reclaiming, celebrating survival, discovering, envisioning, gendering, connecting generations and healing (Smith, 2006). This research respects Aboriginal stories as the principle source of knowledge in understanding transitioning, post-care experiences (Acoose et al., 2009), adulthood, resiliency, healing and reconciliation. Each workshop participant was regarded as having his or her own unique story to tell.

3.2 Research Methods

3.2.1 Ethics Approval, Workshop Recruitment, and Sample Selection

Prior to my recruitment process, in formulating my research proposal for the University of Manitoba's Ethics Review Board, I created my research tools (see Appendix A to K), which included the following:

- Recruitment poster
- Recruitment script outlining information to be shared with prospective participants
- Registration form
- Data management tracking form

- Sample certificate of completion and appreciation
- What participants needed to know about trauma
- Research questions guiding the story circles and digital storytelling videos
- Workshop agenda for the five days
- Participant reminder letter regarding post-interviews
- Post-digital storytelling workshop interview questions
- Consent forms (grouped under one appendix):
  - Research and workshop participant consent form
  - Photographed/video-recorded image permission form
  - Digital storytelling video release form
  - Consent form for post-workshop interview

After incorporating feedback from the Ethics Review Board, I received my ethics approval certificate as of May 1, 2015 (see Appendix L), which allowed me to proceed with recruiting participants for my workshops.

Originally my plans were to hold one workshop in the south and another workshop in the north. In an effort to recruit participants from the north, I travelled to Thompson, Manitoba to give an information session about my research to various organizations and individuals who worked with Indigenous adults who had former child welfare histories. One individual expressed an interest in participating in a digital storytelling workshop, but unfortunately no other participants volunteered and so I decided to cancel the northern workshop in Thompson.

As I was unable to host a workshop in the north, I made the decision to instead host two workshops in Winnipeg, one during daytime hours and the other during evening hours. I checked with the University of Manitoba's Ethics Review Board to see if my original ethics proposal needed to be amended and was informed that, since I was not changing the number of participants required for my study, it was not necessary to submit a revised ethics application. Based on that advice, I amended my recruitment poster and created two different posters reflecting the dates and the new times for the two different workshop events.

In order to attract interested First Nations individuals to participant in my research, I dropped off recruitment posters to various locations in the north end of Winnipeg. I distributed

posters to social service organizations, businesses and educational institutions in and around the north end of Winnipeg. Also, posters were circulated among the various Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child welfare agencies both in person and by email. I also emailed my recruitment poster to all the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child welfare agencies within the Province of Manitoba. I emailed my poster to various social workers whom I had a connection and who worked within the city of Winnipeg to see if they knew of former youth who had previously been in care and who might be interested in participating. Digital jpeg images of the poster were also posted online through my Facebook account where friends forwarded and shared copies of the poster with the contacts in and among their Facebook communities, friends, and families.

Unfortunately, only one participant initially expressed an interest and registered for the first workshop. I was able to contact a social worker I knew who worked extensively with many former Aboriginal youth who are now out of care. He was able to approach and later confirmed that seven individuals who identified as First Nations expressed an interest in participating in the first workshop. I initially had two individuals who had seen the poster and called me to register for the second workshop. The same social worker that helped me recruit participants for the first workshop was again able to recruit another four participants for the second workshop. The first workshop had a total of eight participants. Workshop two had a total of six participants, however, two participants did not complete the workshop. One participant attended the first day of the workshop and dropped out after one day. The other participant initially agreed to attend the workshop but did not show up on either the first or second day as promised. In the end, with the assistance of the social worker noted above, in the end I was able to recruit and retain a total of 12 participants for the two workshops, which was the maximum number I had originally identified in my research and ethics proposals. All 12 participants produced digital videos about their experience in care, transitioning

out of care, about their lives post-care and about their family, community and cultural connections along with whether they had attained adulthood.

3.2.2 Post-Workshop Interviews

Before the conclusion of the workshop, participants were asked if they wished to participate in a post-workshop interview about their experience in the workshop. These interviews took place shortly after the workshops ended. The purpose of the post-workshop interview was to find out about the participants' experience in participating in the workshop and in developing digital storytelling videos. Participants were asked to share personal perspectives and provide feedback on the digital storytelling process and any in-depth learning that emerged from the videos they produced or those produced by other participants involved in this research. The date and time of these interviews were mutually negotiated between the researcher/facilitator before the workshop ended. The participants were provided with a letter reminding them of the date, time and location of the interview and a copy of the post-workshop questions (see Appendices I and J). All post-workshop interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission.

3.2.3 Description of Participants

The 12 participants in this study represented considerable diversity. Three young women and nine young men participate in the workshops and all identified as First Nations persons with current and former experiences of having been in care. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 32 years of age. One participant identified as being homeless and indicated she couch surfed between friends and family. Four of the participants stated that they have had children since leaving care. All four of the participants who indicated that they were still in extensions of care placements were in the process of completing high school. One participant indicated that he was entering his first year of university while another indicated that she had completed some university education. Six

participants had completed grade 12 before leaving care while two participants were still in the process of completing high school even though they had transitioned out of care. All participants have lived experiences with the child welfare system within Manitoba. A more complete description of all the participants is discussed in the following chapter that details how both workshops were conducted.

3.2.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

Criteria set for the 12 individuals who participated in the workshops were:

- Identified as being a First Nations individual;
- Identified as having prior childhood and adolescent experiences (with 5+ years experience) of being under the care of a First Nations child and family services agency in Manitoba;
- Had transitioned out of care upon reaching the legal age of majority (18 years);
- Identified as being a male, female, Two-Spirited[11] or LGBTQ[12] individual; and
- Agreed with the possibility of being "emerging adult" (that is they identified as being 18 or older and considered themselves to be in between the life stages of adolescence and young adulthood but not quite yet an adult).

Four of the 12 participants were still in extension of care placements and therefore had not yet transitioned out of care at the time of participating in this study. I chose to include them in the study as they were adults and met most of the inclusion criteria I had set for participants. One of the participants was also older than most of the other participants. I also included this person in the study as he was able to bring to the group the ability to reflect back on his struggle out of care, moreover he brought an in-depth perspective on the trials and tribulations of becoming an adult. He was also a good mentor to many of the other participants. Although the study was open to the Two-spirit, LGBTQ community, none of the participants identified as being a Two-Spirit or LGBTQ individual. Métis and Inuit participants were not the focus of this research as the majority of children

[11] Two-Spirit refers to all sexual and gender variance among people of Indigenous descent – in other words it includes lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer identities (Ristock, Zoccole & Passant, 2010).

[12] LGBTQ is the acronym for the "lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered and queer" community (Ristock, Zoccole, & Passante, 2010).

and youth who pass through and eventually transition out of the child welfare system in Manitoba are of First Nations ancestry. Furthermore, none of the participants identified as being either Métis or Inuit and therefore, these particular Indigenous groups were not reflected in the data collected for this study.

3.2.4 Role of the Principal Researcher as Workshop Facilitator

Throughout this study, I had dual roles: one was as the principal researcher of this study and the other was as the facilitator of the digital storytelling workshops. Throughout this document, I identify as being the "author," "researcher," the "workshop facilitator" or simply as the "researcher/facilitator." As the researcher, I was responsible for recruiting and registering participants, arranging all workshop details as well as facilitating the workshops, identifying and approaching a workshop Elder, and conducting post-workshop interviews after the workshops concluded. In my role as the workshop facilitator, I facilitated both digital storytelling workshops. Throughout the five-day workshop I led and engaged participants in talking circle discussions and dialogue around their transitioning and post-care experiences. As the facilitator, I also taught the participants how to prepare, write and record a storyline, incorporate images and music. With the help of a research assistant I also taught participant how to use and understand the audio and video editing software used in the workshops. Participants also received training on the ethical practices of taking pictures and videos. Through my facilitation participants constructed stories, using narratives and videos, about their emerging adulthood experiences transitioning out of the Manitoba child welfare system.

3.2.5 Role of Elder

Central to this research was the involvement of an Elder. Elders or Knowledge Keepers are recognized as one of the greatest cultural resources and voices within Aboriginal communities

(Martin-Hill & Soucy, n.d.). They carry traditional teachings, the ceremonies, and the stories of all our relations (Lavallée, 2009, p. 27). Elders are important to the transmission of knowledge between the generations and their participation in research that engages youth is critically important as it ensures the continuation of knowledge transfer between Elders and youth (Martin-Hill & Soucy, n.d.). An Elder should be widely recognized if not appointed by the community for the research project (Martin-Hill & Soucy, n.d.).

In keeping with these widely held views about knowledge keepers, the author of this study sought out a female Elder/Knowledge Keeper who is widely recognized and respected by the Indigenous community within Winnipeg. I knew just the Elder who could this work. After the researcher presented and gifted tobacco, the Elder agreed to participate in both workshops. She opened and closed with prayers, prepared the smudging and incorporated traditional activities and teachings on the first and last days at each of the workshops. In addition the Elder was responsible for blessing the food prepared for the feast on the final day of each workshop. Although she did not attend every day, she remained available to provide support, cultural guidance and traditional counselling to the participants in case they experienced difficult memories recalling events from the past. The Elder also participated in the dialogue and discussions that occurred during the first and last talking circles. By so doing, she contributed both intellectually and spiritually to this research. Recognizing the important contributions the Elder made to this research, the Elder was provided with an honorarium for participating in both workshops. The researcher/facilitator made sure that the Elder was transported to and from the workshop locations.

3.2.6 Selection of the Workshop Sites

Two workshops were held for this research. Both digital storytelling workshops were held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. One workshop was held in early July during the day while the other workshop was held during the evening hours in August. Workshop One was held July 6-10 at the offices of the

Sandy Bay Child & Family Services Winnipeg outreach office on Main Street in Winnipeg. Workshop Two was held August 10-14 at the researcher's home in the Crestview area of Winnipeg. The opportunity to hold the first workshop came about after I was invited earlier in the spring to present my research approach to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the Staff of Sandy Bay Child & Family Services. The Executive Director was very receptive to this research and offered to host the first workshop at the Winnipeg location. In addition to offering to host the workshops, the Executive Director also committed to lending the researcher enough laptops for use by each participant who was registered to attend the two workshops.

3.2.7 Research Questions

Four questions were discussed during the talking circles and the responses to these questions were then also incorporated into participants' videos. The four key research questions (as reflected in Chapter 1) were:

1. What do you remember and understand about why you were in care? And what was your transitioning experience out of care once you reached 18 years of age?
2. Where are you now on your life path? What challenges, barriers and opportunities have you experienced since leaving care?
3. How have you maintained connection to family, community, and/or culture since turning 18 and transitioning out of care?
4. Have you reached adulthood? How and when do you know you have reached adulthood?

3.2.8 Informed Consent

For this research there were four levels of informed consent: 1) consent to participate in the research and workshop; 2) consent from individuals who are being photographed or videotaped by the workshop participants; 3) consent to video release at different levels; and 4) consent to participate in the post-workshop interview. All levels of consent were secured through written consent forms that were presented and discussed with workshop participants. The importance of gaining people's permission to be photographed or videotaped was discussed with the participants

of both workshops on the first day of the workshop. Forms were provided to all participants in order to obtain informed consent from anyone they chose to photograph or videotape as well as consent to include their photos and any pictures taken of them in the final report. The final level of consent gave participants the option of deciding whether they wished the video and/or images generated from the digital storytelling workshops to be used for other subsequent purposes (e.g., presentations, journal articles resulting from the dissertation related to this research, public showings, conferences, or posted to a website showcasing the videos). Only the videos that participants consent to be included were used for these subsequent purposes. The consent forms for this research are located at Appendix K.

3.3 Data Collection Sources, Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

This section provides an overview of the approaches to be taken with respect to data analysis and the techniques I utilized to address reflexivity, reactivity and researcher bias, including descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validities. I conclude this section with an overview of the ethical considerations I undertook in doing this kind of research.

3.3.1 Data Collection Sources

Any qualitative researcher must describe the research setting, the participants, and the themes in depth. Unlike quantitative research, the qualitative researcher cannot just report the statistics. The qualitative researcher must present the entire picture, thus transporting the reader into the environment, setting, and situation. The researcher also must capture the reader's imagination by not only detailing the physical appearance of the participants, but also by capturing their emotions, feelings, and experiences (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The selected techniques for gathering in-depth, thick and rich data for this research were undertaken through four means. My data collection for this study included:

1. Taking brief *observational notes* during the day and weekly summaries of the workshop events through the preparation of *analytical memos*;
2. Audio recording and transcribing the conversations from eight *talking circles* obtained from each of the two workshops held;
3. Transcribing the *videos* produced by the 12 participants from each of the two workshops; and
4. Audio recording and transcribing the conversations from the *post-workshop interviews* conducted with each of the workshop participants.

The above sources of data were recorded using two recording devices to ensure that all conversations and sounds bites from the talking circles, videos and post-workshop interviews were captured. The recording 'app', called the HT professional recorder on an iPhone, and a professional digital recorder were used for recording. The digital recordings were then imported into the Express Scribe for the Mac software program, which allows for rewinding and speeding up of digital recordings for ease in transcribing. Through continuous playback of the recordings, I was able to capture the nuances of the conversation in the talking circles and the post-workshop interviews including some of the individual narratives in the videos. I transcribed all of the talking circle discussions and the post-workshop interviews and a few of the narratives from the videos myself; however, most of the textual information from the videos had been previously typed out by each of the participants when they initially wrote the storyline for their videos. The data drawn from the sources above were individually transcribed and resulted in over 110 pages of textual information. The data collected from each of these activities yielded in-depth, thick, rich data.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

For this study, the transcripts from the talking circles, videos and narratives from the post-workshop interviews were coded using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) in conjunction with the software program NVivo to analyze the data in finding common themes in the various narratives. NVivo is a qualitative based software program. It was used to manage, organize, triangulate, explore, code, create memos and describe the discoveries and interpretations emerging

from the data collected (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). It can also assist in developing a database of codes, which allowed me to query the data to help me in formulating and determining relevant triangulation of data themes, categories, and responses to the research questions related to this research. While NVivo helped me manage, explore and find patterns in the data that I collected for this research, it did not replace my analytical expertise. Although there are many qualitative data analysis computer programs available on the market today, they are, including NVivo, essentially aids to sorting and organizing sets of qualitative data. In and of themselves, none is capable of the intellectual and conceptualizing processes required to transform data into meaningful findings (Thorne, 2000).

NVivo allowed me to select blocks of text and name them based on what was described by the participants. These blocks of text are set out in units of meaning called, "nodes." This form of coding begins with the naming of blocks of texts and is an inductive way of analyzing the data and is "grounded" in what participants have said (Lavallée, 2009, p. 34). I coded the narratives from all the data sources (the talking circles, videos and the post-interview workshops) according to the four research questions and the ten post-workshop questions. The coding of the data yielded over 90 nodes, which were then reorganized and categorized according to the research questions.

In coding the responses to research question one, the narratives revealed 26 nodes. The 26 nodes were then reorganized and categorized into two major nodes: Time in Care and Transitioning Experiences. The node on Time in Care had seven sub-nodes that were categorized into the following themes: reflections on age of involvement with CFS; participants' understanding about why they were in care; memories of time in care; multiple placements; emotional thoughts tied to placement experiences; addictions, gang affiliation and suicide; and losses while in care. The coding of research question two resulted in 29 nodes that were reorganized and categorized into four major headings: barriers, challenges, opportunities and concurrent challenges and opportunities. Each node

has a number of sub-themes. The node Barriers had six additional sub-themes. The node Challenges had four sub-themes. The nodes Opportunities and Concurrent Challenges and Opportunities had three sub-themes each. Research question three resulted in three overall nodes that corresponded to the issue of connections with family, community, and culture. Research question four led to 20 nodes that were categorized into 12 different themes on the issue of attaining adulthood after leaving care: adulthood is just a word; not feeling like an adult yet; reaching adulthood before 18; graduating from high school; working, ability to support self, and not relying upon parents; becoming a parent; adulthood requires courage; adulthood is serious; role modeling; and making mistakes, being ready and optimistic for the future. The responses to the post-workshop research question were coded and the resulting nodes were organized according to the questions. Some of the nodes and themes may appear to be similar. For instance, discussions about gang activity, the use of drugs and alcohol, and suicide issues deal with matters that the participants identified as things that they dealt with while in care and then later while out of care. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data sources are identified in detail in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes Identified in the Transcripts of the Talking Circles, Videos and Post-Workshop Interviews

Data Source	Themes	Sub-Themes
Results Pertaining to Research Question One		
Discussions from Talking Circle One and 12 Video Responses	Time in Care	• Age of involvement with CFS • Participants' Understanding about why they were in care • Multiple placements • Emotional thoughts tied to placement experiences • Addictions, Gang Affiliation and Suicide • Losses while in care
	Transitioning Experiences	
Results Pertaining to Research Question Two		
Discussions from Talking Circle Two and 12 Video Responses	Barriers	• Feeling lost and alone • Anger, resentment and trust issues • Suicidal thoughts • Gang and criminal involvement • Drugs and alcohol • Finding employment, a place to live, and racism

	Challenges	• Getting Identification and Obtaining a Driver's License • Independence, Paying Bills and Budgeting • Loss of Supports and Resources • Knowing How to Love Again
	Opportunities	• Education and Aspirations for the Future • Friends, Family, and Mentors • Participating in Cultural Events
	Concurrent Challenges and Opportunities	• Being in Care Beyond 18 Years • Becoming a Parent • Rebuilding and Re-establishing Relationships
Results Pertaining to Research Question Three		
Discussions from Talking Circle Three and 12 Video Responses	Connections to family Connections to Culture Connections to Community	

Results Pertaining to Research Question Four	
Discussions from Talking Circle Four and 12 Video Responses	Adulthood is Just a Word Not Feeling Like an Adult Yet Reaching Adulthood Before 18 Graduating from High School Working, Ability to Support Self, and Not Relying on Parents Becoming a Parent Adulthood Requires Courage Adulthood is Serious Role Modeling and Finding Purpose Making Mistakes, Being Ready and Optimistic for the Future
Results Pertaining to Post-Workshop Interview Questions	
Post-Workshop Interview Responses	How Participants Learned of Workshops Reasons for Participating in the Workshops Prior Expectations Reflections on Experience and Expectations Participants' Feelings During and After Workshops Impacts Participants' Workshop Highlights Positive/Negative Aspects of the Workshops Screening of Videos Overall Assessment of Experience

3.3.3 Validity

3.3.3.1 Tracking Reflexivity

> "You never come in an isolated way; you always come with pieces of the world attached to you."
>
> (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 53)

Reflexively, to acknowledge "the knower is a part of the matrix of what is known" (DuBois, 1983, cited in Tindall, 1994, p. 151) is a fundamental part of qualitative research. In particular, from a sociocultural perspective, the process of reflexivity is an acknowledgement by the researcher that "all findings are constructions, personal views of reality, open to change and reconstruction" (Tindall, 1994, p. 151). Reflexivity in qualitative research increases validity: "we arrive at the closest we can get to an objective account of the phenomenon in question through an exploration of the ways in which the subjectivity of the researcher has structured the way it is defined in the first place" (Parker, 1994, p. 13). In an effort to make explicit how my understandings were formed and what "pieces of the world" I bring attached to me, a reflective journal (either written or audio recorded) with observational and analytical notes formed a part of the data collected for this study.

Reviewing my observational and analytical notes from the story circles held with the participants in each of the workshops was the first step in my analytical process. I read and reread my observational notes and analytic memos before engaging in the second step of the analysis process, which was transcribing and reviewing the transcriptions from all the other data collection sources. The purpose of reading observational notes and analytic memos during this first step was to orient me to the time in the field and to the data that emerged from other data sources. Memo writing, as a method for organizing my ideas for later "reflection and analytic insight" (p. 12) was endorsed by Maxwell (2005). Analytic memos and observational notes are important tools for researchers to develop in relation to tracking thoughts, tracking reflexivity, collecting data, and analyzing data. It is also a way to contribute my own narrative to the process. I wrote observation notes and analytical memos as my primary methods of tracking and organizing my own growing thoughts and understandings that emerged during the data collection and analysis phases. Writing observational notes and memos helped me slow down the thinking process so that I was able to

reflect on my own learning in an organized and critical way while also keeping my thoughts contemporary during the time in which the data was being collected. At the conclusion of each day I wrote brief observational notes in a reflective journal immediately after each workshop and after every post-workshop interview. During the writing of these memos, I recorded the connections and my reactivity. These thoughts and recorded notes assisted me in identifying *emic* (data-driven) codes from the story circles and interview data and connecting *etic* (literature-driven) codes to the data (Maxwell, 2005). These reflections and observations are incorporated in Chapter Four.

3.3.3.2 Addressing Bias or Researcher Reflexivity/Reactivity

The researcher must describe for consumers of the research any assumptions, beliefs, values, or biases the researcher possesses that could have affected the study. He or she must then identify how these assumptions, beliefs, values, and biases were suspended or controlled for during the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this research I address only two of eight possible threats (Bernard, 2006)[13] to validity – reactivity and researcher bias. Maxwell (2005) defines reactivity as the influence of the researcher on the site or the individuals being studied. I am not sure if my prior experience as a former child in care or if my role as a doctoral student influenced my participants' perception of me. In many ways these two roles make me both an outsider (as the researcher) but also an insider (as a person with my own child welfare and transitioning experiences as a First Nations person, but also as "empty nester" and the mother of a young daughter who has recently transitioned out of my home). Before each workshop started, I briefly discussed my professional background, my personal background, and spoke of my own personal experiences transitioning out of care as part of the story circles. I made it clear to the participants that they were in the workshops and the interviews because of their own unique but similar experiences as emerging adults

[13] Bernard (2006) notes there are 7 or 8 common threats (sometimes more, sometimes less) depending on the research. Some of these would include: History, Maturation, Testing and Instrumentation, Regression to the Mean, Selection of Participants, Mortality, and Diffusion of Treatments. Not all of these apply to this research.

transitioning of the child welfare system in Manitoba. I believe that I learned from the participants as much as they learned from me as well as from each other through the collaborative learning experience and environment. In taking a participatory, arts-based approach, I promoted a knowledge-based approach that came from a perspective that I was co-constructing knowledge with the participants of this study. In essence, I was doing research "with" and "for them" which is important in taking a participatory approach in doing this kind of research. I reminded the participants of the informed consents. These forms reiterate my commitment only to use the data from the workshops, their individual videos, and the interviews to inform my research and I honored their prerogatives to skip interview questions they did not want to discuss. However, I also gave those who chose to skip another chance to respond to the question if they wanted before we closed the talking circles. Throughout the research process, I established a close bond with the participants, especially among those who participated in the workshop that was held in my home. Narrative inquiry through digital storytelling, therefore, is the vehicle that has transported me as the researcher into the world of the participants.

In addition to my role as a researcher, my race and gender may influence the participants' perspectives and comfort with me. Because reflexivity cannot be eliminated in qualitative research (Paterson, 1994), my goal was to understand my influence on the participants and use it productively (Maxwell, 2005). I was conscious of the nonverbal and verbal messages that were exuded by me during the workshop and interviews. I wrote about some of these observations in my daily observational and analytical memos, most of which are reflected in the following chapter that speaks to the process of conducting the digital storytelling workshops.

To address plausible threats to validity (descriptive, interpretative, and theoretical), traditional and modernist researchers have developed various checks and balances to enhance the validity of their findings (i.e., member checking, triangulation, collaboration, etc.) (Lewis, 2009).

Below I discuss some of the checks and balances I incorporated into ensuring descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity in my findings.

3.3.4 Descriptive Validity

Descriptive validity refers to the accuracy of the facts of the study as reported by the qualitative researcher (Johnson, 1997). As described in the data analysis section, I wrote observational notes and memos to myself and I utilized a digital recorder to ensure the reliability of the information that I collected during the story circles, the videos and each post-workshop interview. The data collected and identified above emerges from 16 sources of data, which provides me with multiple sources of information supporting the validity of the data. I estimate that there are approximately 18 – 25 hours of data that provided "rich, thick" data to help me see a "full and revealing picture of what was going on" (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2014, p. 297) among the participants involved in this study. I developed themes based on my ability to triangulate the data across the narratives produced in the talking circles and the videos produced by the emerging adults who participated in these workshops.

3.3.4.1 Triangulation

The concept of triangulation involves locating an unknown point from two or more known points. The more known points that are used, the more likely the unknown location will be identified. In qualitative research, by using interviews, theory, previous research literature, personal observations, and other data, findings can be compared to determine the validity of certain themes or categories. In using a multitude of sources to explain an event, the findings become more valid than explaining an event from a single incident or observation (Lewis, 2009, p. 11). Triangulation was achieved throughout this research in that the resulting findings with respect to themes and categories emerged from the multiple sources that had been built into the research approach for this

study. The narrative from the talking circles, the videos, the post-workshop interviews as well as my observational notes and analytical memos were compared with each other and confirmed and contrasted (disconfirming evidence) by the existing theories and literature where issues of emerging adulthood and youth leaving care have been the focus. A key level of triangulation was met through the sharing of a copy of my findings with two individuals who have intimate knowledge about each of the participants, their stories and backgrounds, which I discuss more fully in the following section.

3.3.4.2 Interpretive Validity

One way of ensuring interpretive validity is through obtaining feedback from the participants on the interpretation of the findings that result from the data. This is called member checking. "The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake-holding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Member checking is a continuous process. It provides the participant with both an immediate and continuous opportunity to correct errors and misinterpretations of what was stated or observed. It provides the participant with the opportunity to volunteer additional information and to summarize information. Finally, it reinforces the data by having the participant confirm what was said and observed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Johnson (1997) notes that interpretive validity may be obtained to the extent that participants' viewpoints, thoughts, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood and reported by the researcher.

In order to check my interpretations of the participants' perspectives in my findings I transcribed my own material as a way to ensure confidentiality of the data and because I was more able to accurately reflect on what participants said because I was present when the data was obtained. Once I completed the transcription of the talking circle discussion, the video narratives,

and the post-workshop interviews, I then re-read each of the transcripts several times noting initial themes, potential quotes, and areas that might require further clarification. I utilized Padgett's (1998) and Patton's (1999) notion of analytic triangulation and requested a third party[14] to review my transcripts and my initial findings as a first step in checking my selective perceptions and illuminating on any blind spots that might be present in my interpretive analysis of the data. After incorporating feedback from the third party, I then presented the transcripts of the talking circles, the post-workshop interviews, as well as the first draft of my findings to the participants.

I also conducted a member check both at the data collection and data analysis stages. At the data collection stage, during the course of the workshops, I checked continuously with the participants to ensure that what is being discussed was both relevant and in line with the research questions and purposes of this study. Going back to the research participants to confirm the themes arising from the data is referred to as member checking in qualitative research. It is a method of ensuring trustworthiness of the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). By returning the transcripts to the participants for their review I sought to ensure that what was presented in the transcripts and the findings was consistent with participants' memories of the workshop and that it reflected the understanding of their perceptions on what they shared about being in care, leaving care, life post-care and on having reached adulthood. The purpose of returning the transcripts and was to provide participants with a further opportunity to edit, delete, or add to the content. For instance, I reflected back to the participants what I came to understand about what they previously shared with me at the beginning of each subsequent talking circle. At the data analysis stage, when reviewing the findings that emerge from the data, I followed up with each of the participants twice. The first time I emailed participants to thank them for participating in my study and asked them to reflect on the accuracy of

14 The person who reviewed these transcripts and the initial findings was an individual who assisted in facilitating the workshops. As he was present at all of the talking circles, helped record the narrative audio and video recordings and attended the post-workshop interviews with me, I felt he was in the best position to provide me with his thoughts and opinions on the initial findings.

the transcripts produced from the talking circles, their videos and their post-workshop interviews. In the second email to the participants, I asked them to reflect on the interpretation of my findings and gave them a chance to provide additional and/or alternative comments to build upon a fuller participatory interpretation of the findings. After the feedback from participants, I then prepared my findings and shared a copy of that section with two other individuals[15] who had some prior knowledge about the workshops and the participants to get their feedback on the veracity of the findings.

The digital storytelling videos that were produced by the participants have an "artful authenticity" (Childton & Leavy, 2014, p. 417) because they emanated from the lived experiences of the workshop participants. As the digital storytelling videos are based on an arts-based approach to research, audiences will experience the videos as feeling "true" because authenticity is apparent through artful presentations (at a particular time) of distinct and expressive voices that are unique to each participant. As Weber (2008) notes, art forms that provide vivid imagery can enhance transparency, as "hearing or seeing or feeling the details of a lived experience, its textures and shapes, helps make the representation trustworthy or believable" (p. 45).

3.3.4.3 Theoretical Validity

At the onset of an inquiry, the researcher often has a particular theory or perspective that he or she believes the data will support. Researchers must "ensure that they do not force the data to fit a certain theory, nor can they ignore data that does not fit the theory (discrepant data). Researchers must present all data even if it does not support their hypotheses" (Lewis, 2009, p. 10). Maxwell (2005) cautioned that researchers should be aware of alternative theories about the phenomena and

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[15] These two individuals helped connect many of the participants to the researcher and played a huge role in making sure that the participants were transported to the workshops that started in the morning or started in the evening. As they knew the majority of the participants, they were able to comment on the veracity of the stories shared within the transcripts. They were also privy to the participants' perspectives about the workshop and learned from the participants that the experience of participating in the digital storytelling workshops was "transformative" and healing.

include sources other than previous research as "an important counterweight to the ideological hegemony of existing theory and research" (p. 46).

In using triangulation, researchers must attempt to confirm certain themes and categories. After the themes or categories are determined, researchers must then search for data that would disprove the established themes or do not fit into one of the categories. Creswell and Miller (2000) noted:

> In practice, the search for disconfirming evidence is a difficult process because researchers have the proclivity to find confirming rather than disconfirming evidence. Further, the disconfirming evidence should not outweigh the confirming evidence. As evidence for the validity of a narrative account, however, this search for disconfirming evidence provides further support of the account's credibility because reality, according to constructivists, is multiple and complex. (p. 127)

Supporting and discrepant data need to be rigorously examined to determine if the themes or categories support it. If the themes or categories cannot support the data, they need to be modified (Maxwell, 1996). Regardless if the themes and categories are modified (Maxwell, 1996) or the prevalent data are reported (Creswell & Miller, 2000), the researcher must use the research narrative to alert her or his audience of the discrepant data. As a result, I actively looked for discrepant data and/or disconfirming evidence as part of my analysis activities, which I include in the final chapter of this dissertation.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

There are many ethical concerns to be addressed in narrative inquiry, especially considering the dual role of the researcher. I have alluded to the fact that I am both an insider and an outsider with respect to this research. Where a researcher is involved in two relationships at the same time, both have distinct responsibilities. There is the responsibility to the participants as well as to the scholarly community (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Josselson (2007) advocates maintaining an

"ethical attitude" (p. 538). This ethical attitude is not a list of guidelines for the researcher to follow, but instead must be internally navigated with two main purposes in mind: to honor and protect the participant(s) and maintain standards for responsible scholarship (Ross, 2011, p.45). The Center for Digital Storytelling presents a set of roles and responsibilities that put the emotional well-being of participants at the top of its priorities (storycenter.org). The Center explicitly states that the digital storytelling process is not appropriate for individuals currently experiencing strong symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The Center for Digital Storytelling has also addressed the emotional impact involved in digital storytelling and has pointed out the responsibilities of facilitators to respect the privacy of workshop participants.

Writing a story in the first person narrative can be a complicated process for people with difficult or potentially distressing memories. Because of the intimacy of storytelling, some of the ethical considerations that were examined include understanding what emotions this process might generate for some participants and how this could be addressed in a way that was culturally safe for the participant in question during the workshops. I included the participation of an Elder in the process as a possible way to assist participants and provide them with a cultural contact to talk with in case they were stressed or feeling anxiety from dealing with the prior memories of being in care. I was prepared to provide additional resources in the event that participants felt they needed help to deal with any unresolved trauma that surfaced as a result of having participated in this research. Fortunately this did not occur during the course of the workshops. I shared a number of resources with the participants including the *Digital Storyteller's Bill of Rights*, which was created by the Center for Digital Storytelling, with participants at the beginning of my workshop.

Participants received a digital storytelling toolkit produced by *Nindibaajimomin: A Digital Storytelling Resource for Children of Residential School Survivors* (Oral History Centre, 2014b). As I previously trained in digital storytelling, I was granted permission to use and share this toolkit with

the participants. This toolkit was useful to me not only as a facilitator but also as a helpful resource for participants in learning how to generate their digital stories as part of this research. This toolkit supplemented the training that was provided in the workshops. The toolkit included the following resources: 1) Overview of the Digital Storytelling Tools and Techniques; 2) Introduction and Overview of Digital Storytelling Guides on the Legacy of Residential Schools; 3) Planning and Preparing a Digital Storytelling Project on the Legacy of Residential Schools; 4) Creating and Sharing Digital Stories on the Legacy of Residential Schools; and 5) *kiskinohamatotapanask*: Intergenerational effects on professional First Nations women whose mothers are residential school survivors. Participants also learned about other resources and viewed sample videos from the website http://nindibaajimomin.com to assist them in developing their videos. Although these resources were developed for those considering the experiences of residential school they were equally applicable to those with child welfare experience and the many examples of the digital videos developed by others helped participants initially understand what a digital video story was and what went into the making of a digital video story.

The *Digital Storyteller's Bill of Rights* emphasizes transparency in how the digital stories should be used and the rights of the participants to control the production and distribution of their own stories once they were completed. Key to this document is the idea of the creator's control over the digital story throughout the creation and sharing of the story. Participants were told to only include in their story what they feel comfortable sharing with a larger audience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Most of the participants were proud of the end product and were not opposed to sharing and having their videos posted on the Internet. For those who granted me with permission to share their videos I uploaded them to a website on the Internet and in the process I made sure to obtain a video release from them as one of the important informed consent considerations that participants had to

decide upon once they completed their videos. Examples of these consent forms are located at Appendices M and N).

3.5 Summary

This chapter had identified the research methodologies utilized in conducting this research. These methodologies are rooted in qualitative, participatory, and arts-based methodologies conducted with First Nations emerging adults incorporating narrative inquiry through digital storytelling techniques. The methods undertaken for conducting the digital storytelling workshops included how the workshop locations and participants were recruited along with the inclusion criteria the researcher relied upon in selecting participants. The four key research questions were identified, incorporated into the group discussions associated with the daily talking circles, and integrated into the videos produced by the participants. The discussion of methods outlined the approaches the researcher took to obtaining informed consent. The approaches taken to addressing the data analysis of the information collected was reviewed. It also identified how reflexivity, reactivity and researcher bias, including descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validities were addressed. I concluded this chapter with an examination of the ethical considerations undertaken in conducting the two digital storytelling workshops. The next chapter incorporates much of the observations taken from my analytical notes and memos into how the two digital storytelling workshops were conducted from beginning to end, with a focus on profiling the workshop team and the participants. It concludes with a reflection on the success of the workshops as well as my reflections respecting my personal interactions with participants in both workshops.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONDUCTING THE DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS AND POST-WORKSHOP INTERVIEWS WITH EMERGING FIRST NATIONS ADULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter profiles the workshop team and the participants involved in the first and second workshops. It also explains the nature of the workshops, the location and dates of the workshops, and details the process of both digital storytelling workshops. Included near the end of the chapter are my observations about each workshop and reflections on the interaction with workshop participants. The chapter concludes with a summary and foreshadows the content to be covered in Chapter Five.

4.1 Workshop Team

The workshop team consisted of three individuals. The facilitator of the workshop is the author of this dissertation. The facilitator enlisted the support of a research assistant in helping her with the delivery of the workshops and all logistics. The research assistant took care of picking up and preparing meals as well as transporting the Elder to the workshops and home. He also assisted in welcoming the participants and answering any technical questions when the facilitator was busy helping other participants. The third member of the team was a female Elder. Although the Elder did not attend the workshop in person every day, she agreed to keep her schedule open and to make herself available to all participants when and if needed. The Elder attended in person on days one and five and opened and closed both workshops with a prayer. The Elder explained to participants how the talking circles worked and what was expected of the participants when participating in the talking circles. She contributed her own stories about growing up and becoming an adult. She was available to speak with the participants for one-on-one cultural counselling sessions if there was need expressed by any one of the participants.

4.2 Workshop Participants

The following information is a brief background on the twelve participants who were involved in the two workshops associated with this research. This background is based on the researcher's notes and memos written during the workshop and from information learned from the participants through talking circles and from general conversations the researcher had with the participants or had overheard throughout the course of conducting both workshops.

In Workshop 1 there were eight participants. In Workshop 2, originally there were six participants registered, however one participant did not show up and another dropped out of the workshop after the first day. The second workshop had four participants in total.

4.2.1 Workshop 1 Participants

A total of eight individuals attended and completed this first workshop. The ages of the participants were between 18 and 24 years of age. They shared having anywhere from 6 years to 18+ years of experience being a child in care. Half of the participants were still in extensions of care[16] while the other half had completely aged out and were no longer involved with the child welfare system at the time they participated in the workshop. In addition, half of the individuals who indicated they were no longer with the child welfare system noted that they had graduated with their grade 12 and have since had children. All of the participants identified being affiliated with First Nations communities located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Ontario. In Table 2 the profiles of the participants can be viewed. Alternative names have been given to each of the participants.

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[16] In Manitoba the majority of youth in permanent care are usually discharged from care upon reaching the age of majority (18 years). The *Child and Family Services Act* allows the appropriate Authority the discretion to extend care of a permanent ward up to the age of 21 years in order to assist youth in completing high school or a treatment program. Extension of care agreements for youth beyond their 18th birthday can be granted, however they are exclusive to youth under permanent guardianship with the agency (excluding youth under voluntary placement agreement or temporary guardianship orders), typically for the purpose of completing an education, treatment, or independent living program. Excluding youth under temporary guardianship or voluntary placement agreements dismisses a significant segment as a large number of youth in the care of provincial child welfare agencies have one of these two legal status designations. Youth normally must agree to the extension and extensions do not continue beyond the age of 21. If there is no agreement, youth are discharged from care leaving no room for error in judgment regarding readiness. In Manitoba, there is no provision for youth to return to care if services have been terminated upon reaching the age of majority (McEwan-Morris, 2006).

Table 2: Profiles of the Participants in Workshop 1

NAME*	AGE	EDUCATION	LOCATION OF COMMUNITY	TIME IN CARE	AGED OUT OF CARE	CHILDREN
Andrea	24	Grade 12	Manitoba	6 years	Yes	3 children
Kevin	18	In process of completing high school	Ontario	15 years	Currently in extension of care	No
Jared	23	Grade 12	Manitoba	15-16 years	Yes	1 child
Mackenzie	24	Grade 12	Saskatchewan	6 years	Yes	2 children
Tanner	18	In process of completing high school	Manitoba	12-13 years	Currently in extension of care	No
Octavio	18	In process of completing high school	Manitoba	13 years	Currently in extension of care	No
Tavis	18	In process of completing high school	Ontario	18+ years	Currently in extension of care	No
Cain	19	Grade 12	Manitoba	18 years	Yes	1 child

* **Note:** Original names altered to protect the identity of participants even though permission was given to disclose personal information.

The following information summarizes what the researcher learned about each of the participants who were involved in the first workshop. Information was obtained from having personal conversations with the participant, from what was shared by the participant in the talking circles or in their videos, and from the registration forms they completed prior to the start of the workshops.

4.2.1.1 Andrea

Andrea is a 24-year-old mother to three children. She was in care from the time she was 12 until she aged out of the system. She is from a First Nations community in Manitoba and has only recently been returning to her community to get to know her father who has cancer. Andrea has some experience with filmmaking through the Adam Beach Institute, but has not had a chance to work on editing films. Andrea learned about the digital storytelling workshop through Facebook and had contacted the researcher to register well in advance of the workshop. She indicated on the registration form that she has had experience working with both Apple and Windows based computers. She has worked with the Photoshop software and has experience working with a digital camera and recording. Andrea explained that what interested her about the workshop was being able to "talk about her experience with CFS care." Andrea attended and participated in all talking circle discussions. She also developed a video, which she feels needs further editing as some of her images were missing. Andrea also participated in the post-interview that took place after the workshop concluded. Andrea considers herself to be an adult now given her responsibilities as a mother.

4.2.1.2 Kevin

Kevin is a tall 18-year-old male, who indicated that he was currently in an extension of care situation and living with a man who he believes has provided him with stability over the last three years. Kevin is from a First Nations community in Ontario that is associated with Treaty 5. He spoke highly of his grandmother during talking circle discussions and about his home back in Ontario. He learned about and participated in the workshop at the request of a social worker who had told him about the workshop. He shared that he had been affiliated with gangs in the past and as a result has previously been in trouble with the law and was dealing with adult charges. At the time he participated in the workshop he was dealing with adult charges. Kevin attended and

participated in all talking circle discussions and developed a video, which the researcher edited after the workshop. He initially did not want to share the video he created but did sign the release form providing full authority to the researcher to edit and share his video. Kevin did not participate in the post-interview that took place after the workshop concluded because of prior work related commitments. Kevin does not yet feel that he is an adult.

4.2.1.3 Jared

Jared is a quiet 23-year-old male, who indicated that he has been in care since he was three or four years old. He is the father of one son and he currently lives with his girlfriend and her family in Winnipeg. Jared indicated that he is from the First Nations community located on the east side of Manitoba. While he is affiliated with this community, he has never been there. Jared attended and participated in all talking circle discussions and developed a video. He stated on his registration form that he has had experience working with both Apple and Windows based computers. He has experience working with a digital camera and is familiar with audio recording. Jared did not participate in the post-interview that took place after the workshop concluded even though we did make plans to meet at his home the following week. Despite being a parent Jared indicated that he does not always feel like he has reached adulthood.

4.2.1.4 Mackenzie

Mackenzie is a 24-year-old male who had been in care since he was 12 years old. Mackenzie indicates that his family is from a First Nations community located in Saskatchewan. He is the father of two girls, one of whom is now in the care of his mother. Mackenzie became a father at 17 years of age before he aged out of care. Mackenzie shared being involved in gangs and participated in activities related to selling drugs. He indicates he has since left those activities behind because it was important to focus on being a father to his two daughters. He graduated from high school and at the

time of the workshop was scheduled to start his first year of university at the University of Manitoba in the fall of 2015. He had learned about the workshop from one of his mentors and he said he wanted to be involved in the workshop because he wanted to tell his story. Mackenzie has experience with windows computers and has digital camera and recording experience. Mackenzie participated in the post-interview that took place following the workshop. Mackenzie believes he reached adulthood before he turned 18 and this is connected with having become a father at 17 for the first time.

4.2.1.5 Tanner

Tanner is an 18-year-old male who is also in an extension of care placement. He indicated that he's been in care since he was five or six years old. He comes from a large extended family on both his mother's and father's sides of the family. He is connected to a First Nations located in southern Manitoba through his mother's side of the family. Tanner identified as having a mixture of First Nations, Black and White backgrounds. He is still very much connected to his community and was looking forward to receiving monies from his community associated with his coming of age. He learned about and participated in the workshop at the suggestion of a social worker. He shared that he had been affiliated with gangs in the past and as a result has previously been in trouble with the law. He was incarcerated in a youth detention facility for two years. Gang involvement and time spent in jail put him behind in school but he is prepared to complete his education and is grateful to have the chance to complete high school while he is still in care through the child welfare system. Tanner self-identified as being dyslexic, which has made it difficult for him to function in school, and indicated that he gets extensive help from a tutor. Tanner explained that what interested him about the workshop was being able to "tell and show his story to people who have doubted him" and because it was important to him that other youth in similar situations know that they "are not alone." Tanner attended and participated in all talking circle discussions. He developed one of two

of the longest videos at 10 minutes in length. He indicated having experience working with Windows and Apple based computers, as well as experience with digital camera and audio recording experience. Tanner also participated in the post-interview that took place after the workshop concluded. Tanner does not believe he has reached adulthood.

4.2.1.6 Octavio

Octavio is a very quiet 18-year-old male who is also in an extension of care placement. He shared his memories of being in care since he was a young child around five years old. He also spoke highly of his father who had passed away while he was incarcerated in a youth detention facility in Winnipeg. He maintains contact with his mother and sister who reside in Brandon, Manitoba. He learned about and participated at the request of a social worker who had told him about the workshop. Octavio is looking forward to completing high school, getting a job, and eventually graduating from high school when his extension of care expires. Freedom was also something that he said that he was looking forward to once he leaves the child welfare system at 21 years. Octavio identifies as an artist and a songwriter. Octavio's video details some of the abusive placements he has experienced while being in care. On the registration form Octavio indicated having experience working with Windows and Apple based computers, as well as experience with digital camera and audio recording experience. He also participated in the post-interview that took place after the workshop concluded. Octavio does not feel that he is an adult yet because he has much more to achieve.

4.2.1.7 Tavis

Tavis is another young man who identified as being in an extension of care. He was 18 years old at the time he participated in the workshop. Tavis has been in care since he was a baby. He is affiliated with a First Nations community in Ontario. He had lived until recently with foster parents

on a farm just outside of Winnipeg. He considers his foster parents to be his family now. He is a big young man, but very quiet and reflective. He felt that being visibly Aboriginal coupled with his "gigantic" stature has made getting a job difficult for him. Tavis learned about the workshop through a social work mentor and shared on his registration form that he "wanted to share his story about being in care." He is an artist and he produced a very different video compared to other participants. His video showcases the art that he produced while in care. Many of the images speak of emotions that he experienced while in care and deal primarily with bullying that he experienced in his younger years. Tavis has spent a great deal of time learning Apple and Windows based computers and was able to assist other participants with learning the software to create their videos. He also has experience working with a digital camera and audio recording. He did not participate in the post-interview that took place after the workshop finished as he did not have a phone or access to the Internet making it difficult to set appointment to meet. Although he is currently in an extension of care and living independently in an apartment, Tavis feels he has not yet attained adulthood, as he believes that he needs to complete school, work and provide for himself in order to be considered an adult.

4.2.1.8 Cain

Cain is a 19-year-old male who is a new father. His son was five months old at the time he participated in the workshop. Cain self-identified as being FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder). He has been in care since he was a baby and also identifies his foster parents as being his family. He identified as having affiliation with a First Nations community located on the east side of Manitoba. He currently lives with his partner's family. Cain learned about the workshop from a social worker at the post-secondary facility that he is currently attending. Cain's interest in being involved in the digital storytelling workshop is to "help and inspire those who are in CFS care." Cain learned the software program to create his video quickly although his video needed to be re-edited by the

researcher to fix some of the blank spots in the video. He also has experience working with a digital camera and recording. He did participate in the post-interview that took place after the workshop concluded. Although he is now on his own and has a five-month-old son, Cain feels he has not yet reached adulthood. He feels he is still learning what it means to be an adult.

4.2.2 Workshop 2 Participants

Six individuals were registered to participate in the second workshop. However, only four participants ended up attending and completing the second workshop. One participant left the group after the first day while the other registered participant did not show up despite assurances to the researcher that she would be attending. The ages of the participants in this workshop were between 19 and 32 years of age. They each shared having anywhere from six to 12 years of experience being in care. All of the participants had aged out and were no longer involved with the child welfare system at the time they participated in this workshop. Two individuals stated that they had graduated from grade 12 before leaving care while the other two are still in the process of completing high school. Only one individual from this group had a child since leaving care. All of the participants identified being affiliated with First Nations communities located within Manitoba. In Table 3 the profiles of the participants from Workshop 2 can be viewed. Pseudonyms have been given to each of the participants.

Table 3: Profiles of the Participants in Workshop 2

NAMES*	AGE	EDUCATION	FIRST NATIONS LOCATION	TIME IN CARE	AGED OUT OF CARE	CHILDREN
Jace	32	Grade 12	Manitoba	12 years	Yes	No
Teagan	19	In process of completing high school	Manitoba	6 years	Yes	No
Adele	24	Grade 12	Manitoba	9 years	Yes	No
Carson	19	In process of completing high school	Manitoba	6 years	Yes	1 child

* **Note:** Original names altered to protect the identity of participants even though permission was given to disclose personal information.

The following information summarizes what the researcher learned about each of the participants who were involved in the second workshop. Information was gleaned from having personal conversations with the participant, from what was shared by the participant in the talking circles and their videos, and from what was gathered from the registration forms they completed prior to the start of the workshops.

4.2.2.1 Jace

Jace was the oldest participant at 32 years of age. It is safe to say that Jace considers himself to have reached adulthood, but not without having his own trials and tribulations along the way in learning to live independently. In addition to working full time, he is also a support worker and he works with other young men who are in care. Jace states that he was in care since he was around six or seven. He shared that prior to being placed in care he lived with an abusive alcoholic father and that his mother died of brain cancer when he was 15 years old. Jace did not identify whether he was affiliated with a First Nations community. He has found people who were previous respite caregivers, but who now serve as his surrogate parents. Jace participated in the workshop on the

advice of a social worker that he has great respect for. Jace participated in the workshops because he "wants to help change the system and offer more support for kids leaving care." He indicated having experience working on both Apple and Windows computers. Because Jace had prior commitments he participated in four of the five days of the workshop. As a result, he was the first one to complete his video on day four of the workshop. Jace participated in the post-interview by providing written responses to the questions via email about his workshop experience. Jace is currently employed, in a loving relationship and owns his own home.

4.2.2.2 Teagan

Teagan is a 19-year-old woman who grew up in care during her teenage years. She aged out of care at 18. Teagan is associated with a First Nations community located on the west side of Manitoba. At the time she participated in the second workshop held in August she had shared that she was homeless and couch surfing among friends and family. Teagan learned about the workshops through a social worker at the post-secondary institution that she was attending. On her registration form she indicated that she was interested in the workshop because she wanted to share her experience in care. Teagan hardly asked for help as she was constructing her video. At first we were worried about why she did not ask for help, but in the end we were pleasantly surprised by how open and in-depth her video turned out. Her video was over 13 minutes in length and details her experience running away from placements and time spent in the Manitoba Youth Centre because of her running. Teagan stated that she had experience working on Windows computers as well as experience with using digital cameras and doing digital recording. Teagan participated in the post-workshop interview. On the last day of the workshop and embedded within her video is a belief that she is not yet an adult and that she is still in the process of working toward adulthood.

4.2.2.3 Adele

Adele is a quiet and reflective 24-year-old woman who is affiliated with a First Nations community located in Manitoba. She came to the workshops with a positive energy and was pleasant and helpful. She currently lives with her boyfriend and his family in Winnipeg. She has been with her boyfriend for seven years. She stated that she had come into care when her family moved from Winnipeg to Thompson when she was around nine years old. She learned about the workshop through a posting on Facebook and indicated that her interest in participating was tied to meeting new people and also to share her experience about having been in care. Adele came to the workshops with experience using computers and indicated that she has used a digital camera and has done some digital recording. Adele participated in the post-interview. At the conclusion of the workshop Adele stated that she feels that she has reached an adult status.

4.2.2.4 Carson

Carson is a young man who was 19 years old at the time he participated in the second workshop. Carson is associated with a community located in northwestern Manitoba. He is also the father of a daughter who was under a year at the time he was in the workshop. He does not live with the mother and daughter but they are important to him. Carson heard about the workshop through a mentor in the social work field. He stated that he participated in the workshop because he wanted "to discuss issues when he was in care." Carson attended and participated in all of the workshop discussions and with a little probing he addressed many of the questions related to this research study in his video. He indicated having experience working with Windows and Apple based computers, as well as experience with digital camera and audio recording experience. Carson also participated in providing his assessment of his experience in a post-interview meeting. He stated that although he was a father, due to his young age, he felt he was not yet an adult.

4.3 Venues and Scheduling

4.3.1 Workshop 1: Location and Schedule

The Winnipeg office of the Sandy Bay Child & Family Services agency on Main Street served as the first workshop venue. The participants were provided with transportation to the workshop in the mornings on a daily basis. Each participant received a bus pass for the week to ensure transportation home. One participant was able to get herself to and from the workshop on a daily basis without a bus pass.

Sandy Bay's Winnipeg office was an ideal location to have the first workshop. The majority of the participants were comfortable with the location. It was fairly local and quick to get to for most of the participants. Workshop activities took place on the main floor in the agency's boardroom. The agency supplied the research team with eight laptop computers. As well, the agency provided access to the Internet and a smart TV, which was useful for watching training videos.

Lunch was ordered from a local restaurant on the first day of the workshop and thereafter the facilitator provided homemade meals for the remaining days. The workshop was five days in length and each day was approximately five hours long. The workshop took place during the day between 9:00 am to 3:00 pm during the week of July 6-10, 2015. Table 4 sets out the workshop stages and the five-day schedule for Workshop 1.

Table 4: Schedule Associated with Workshop 1

DATE	WORKSHOP STAGE	VENUE	PARTICIPATING TEAM MEMBERS	NO. OF PARTICI-PANTS
Day 1 Monday July 6, 2015	Gathering and Introduction Talking Circle 1	Sandy Bay CFS Office – Winnipeg	Facilitator Research Assistant and Elder	8
Day 2 Tuesday July 7, 2015	Talking Circle 2 Storyboarding and Audio Recording	Sandy Bay CFS Office – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant	8
Day 3 Wednesday July 8, 2015	Talking Circle 3 Audio Recording and Visual Search	Sandy Bay CFS Office – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant	8
Day 4 Thursday July 9, 2015	Visual Search and Putting the Digital Story together	Sandy Bay CFS Office – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant	8
Day 5 Friday July 10, 2015	Talking Circle 4 In-group Screening Feast and Presentation of Certificate	Sandy Bay CFS Office – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant and Elder	8

This location, however, presented challenges in that it was difficult to find quiet space for participants to audio record their stories. The challenges were partly due to the traffic in and out of the location. Since the location was a local child welfare agency office we contended with a great deal of staff movement and family visits. For instance, while there were two rooms available to do audio recordings, they were sometimes not always available for recording due to a scheduled family visit. When these rooms were available, the dryers in the washroom just outside the room, when turned on, would be noticeably evident in the audio recordings and participants then had to re-record. This meant that sometimes it took longer for participants to produce audio recordings than otherwise would have happened had there not been all this traffic and background noise going on. Other than this glitch, the participants found the atmosphere within the agency comfortable and

inviting. The oval table in the boardroom was useful in helping the researcher facilitate the talking circles.

4.3.2 Workshop 2: Location and Schedule

The researcher hosted the second workshop from her home in Winnipeg. Participants were able to get transportation to the workshop from others on a daily basis. The researcher provided funds to cover the gas for one of the participants who took responsibility for providing the other participants with transportation home after the workshop ended for the evening.

The idea for hosting the second workshop from the researcher's home came about as a result of the failed recruitment of participants from the original location at Thompson, Manitoba. Although the location was not ideal for most of the participants because of the distance from their own homes, the participants did find the location to be very warn, inviting and comfortable. Sandy Bay Child & Family Services continued to lend the research team the use of four laptop computers. The researcher provided access to her local Wi-Fi connection and a smart TV for training purposes. The researcher and her team provided homemade meals for the entire week of the workshop.

Like the first, the second workshop was five days in length and each day was approximately five hours in length. This second workshop took place during the evening between the hours of 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm during the week of August 10-14, 2015. Table 5 sets out the workshop stages and five-day schedule for workshop 2.

Table 5: Schedule Associated with Workshop 2

DATE	WORKSHOP STAGE	VENUE	PARTICIPATING TEAM MEMBERS	NO. OF PARTICI-PANTS
Evening 1 Monday August 10, 2015	Gathering and Introduction Talking Circle 1	Researcher's Home – Winnipeg	Facilitator Research Assistant and Elder	5
Evening 2 Tuesday August 11, 2015	Talking Circle 2 Writing the Story and Audio Recording	Researcher's Home – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant	4
Evening 3 Wednesday August 12, 2015	Talking Circle 3 Audio Recording and Image Search	Researcher's Home – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant	4
Evening 4 Thursday August 13, 2015	Talking Circle 4 Image Search and Putting the Digital Story together In-group Screening	Researcher's Home – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant	4
Evening 5 Friday August 14, 2015	Putting the Digital Story together In-group Screening, Feast, and Presentation of Certificate	Researcher's Home – Winnipeg	Facilitator and Research Assistant and Elder	3

Hosting the workshop in the facilitator's home proved to be the ideal approach for this particular event given the small number of participants. The facilitator and research assistant were able to provide quality homemade meals and host BBQs for the participants. There was separate break out space where participants were able to quietly reflect and record the audio for their videos without interruption or noise. Having the workshop in a home setting seemed to facilitate a deeper connection between the research team and the participants. The talking circles and general discussions around the dining room table seemed to bring out much deeper thoughts and perspectives among the participants in this workshop compared to what had been observed in the first workshop. The research team and Elder agreed that the experience and feel of the second workshop was significantly different from the first workshop.

4.4 Workshop Process

4.4.1 Gathering and Introduction

On the first day of each workshop, I introduced my team and myself and had the participants introduce themselves; however, as the introductions followed one another, I learned that some of the participants already knew each other from different activities and/or other community based events. Over time I learned that there was some conflict among the participants, which came to light and unfolded over the course of both workshops.

As the facilitator, I discussed the purpose of the research and explained in detail what the workshop was about. I also explained to the participants that the workshop would be a part of my PhD research, and that it was an ethics requirement to obtain consent forms from the participants. Informed consent was discussed and obtained from all the participants before I proceeded further. It was also important to present the participants with a braid of Sweetgrass, ceremonial tobacco, and a painted rock as the Indigenous way of obtaining their consent for participating. I then reviewed the schedule of activities covering the five days of the workshop.

I screened my digital story, *My Mother's Love was in a Bowl of Porridge,* after giving brief information about digital stories as a form. I also screened a number of other digital stories from the *Nindibaajimomin Digital Storytelling Project for Children of Residential School Survivors* website to give participants a range of ideas and examples of how digital stories had been developed by others in a different context. I provided the participants with the *Nindibaajimomin Digital Storytelling Project for Children of Residential School Survivors* toolkit that they could utilize as a resource that would help them understand the digital storytelling techniques they would learn over the course of the week. Participants also received training on the ethical practices of taking pictures and videos.

4.4.2 Equipment and Software

The workshop facilitator provided participants with the URL link to the online trial version of the video editing application (Adobe Premier Pro CC 2015) used for the workshop. Participants were encouraged to bring their own laptops, however I made sure to have additional laptops on hand for use during the workshop session. Audio recording devices, a scanner for scanning participants' photos and a printer was available to workshop participants. Most participants had a smart phone, which they used for taking photographs, videos and audio recording that might be used in their videos. The research assistant ensured that a camera, including audio and video recording equipment, was available for participants' use at the workshop locations.

4.4.3 Talking Circles

At the beginning of each day of the first four days of the workshops, participants were asked to engage in four talking circle. The talking circle is similar to a sharing circle but not in the traditional sense (sharing circles cannot be recorded whereas a talking circle can). The talking circles were implemented as a way to engage participants in discussion and dialogue centered on four key research questions. The talking circle facilitated critical dialogue among the participants as a way to identify strengths, challenges and issues, solutions and resolutions that related to some of the emerging adulthood issues they experienced as First Nations survivors of the child welfare system. The talking circle discussions were aided by the use of a talking stick and the discussions were audio recorded. The majority of the information for this research was drawn from the rich narrative produced from these talking circles.

4.4.4 Benefits for Participants

The twelve individuals who participated in the workshops for this research received the following benefits:

- An opportunity to express and share experiences through group discussions and retrospective storytelling with other emerging adult survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba
- An opportunity to engage in story-based and art-based healing processes
- A video they created that they will be able to keep and share with others as they choose, which tells their story
- Learning the techniques of creating a video story so that they can create more in the future and teach others how do the same
- An honorarium of $150 in appreciation for their time and commitment
- Bus pass for the week or gas money for participants who volunteered to drive other participants home
- Food, which brings people together, was provided on a daily basis
- On the last day of each of the workshops, a celebratory feast took place for all workshop participants to celebrate their experiences, stories, knowledge and accomplishments
- Each participant was presented with a Certificate of Completion/Appreciation recognizing his or her participation. The Certificates were personalized based on the date and location for each workshop.

4.4.5 Risks for Participants

Storytelling is highly personal and can trigger emotions. Some participants did relate stories, emotions and experiences that were distressing to recall. The Elder was available to sit down with those participants to help them talk through their pain (see the following section). Participants were free to withdraw from the research and workshop at any time. I followed-up with the one participant who did withdraw and provided her with a list of potential resources or supports. All risks and potential harm was reviewed and collectively discussed and addressed with the participants on the first day of each workshop in the first talking circles.

4.4.6 Providing Emotional and Cultural Supports

The process of engaging in digital storytelling is a healing journey unto itself. The participants were told that the feelings and emotions that might arise as they worked through developing their videos were normal and natural. No feelings or concerns were minimized. Participants were told they had every right to their feelings and emotions. No participant was left alone to deal with their emotions unless they choose to be alone. The facilitator also encouraged the

participants to support and talk with one another. Daily workshop activities included centering on kindness and ways of coping with emotions. The researcher/facilitator was on hand throughout each five-day workshop to sit down and talk one-on-one with the participants if any physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual signs of distress appeared to emerge among participants. The researcher was available to help participants talk about, and process how they were feeling and thinking. The researcher connected with participants who needed to work through emotional issues and assisted participants in creating a plan to help them work through concerns. Other workshop activities include debriefing, regular breaks, movement, and healthy meals, snacks, water and refreshments. Additionally, and importantly, the Elder was available to provide emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural support for any participant who needed this additional support. Workshop materials about understanding and coping with trauma were provided to all participants and an excellent list of community resources within Winnipeg and the province was also printed and shared with participants (Canadian Mental Health Association [Manitoba], 2015) (see http://winnipeg.cmha.ca/files/2014/10/Mental-Health-Resource-Guide-for-Winnipeg-19th-Edition-2015.pdf). I am unsure of whether the participants utilized any of the listed resources after the workshops ended, but the information provided might prove to be useful to them in the future.

4.4.7 Writing the Story

After the first talking circle on day one, participants were tasked with writing a one-page story responding to each of the four research questions. Participants were given homework, which involved going home and writing down the story they wanted to tell in their videos and preparing to return the next day to audio record their story. This was a hard task for many of the participants as many expressed concerns about what to write. Many expressed anxiety about writing in general. One participant from the first workshop noted that his anxiety stemmed from his struggle with dyslexia. To overcome these anxieties, I explained that there were no hard and fast rules about what had to be

in their stories. I asked that they at least respond to the four key research questions and then add whatever else they wanted to include in their videos, keeping in mind that it is best to keep their videos short. However, I did not dictate how long their videos could be. I also emphasized that there would be no rules around writing their stories and that correct grammar or syntax was not going to be given priority. The participants in the first workshop expressed the most anxiety about writing down their stories. A solution to this dilemma was to interview participants while video and audio taping them as they responded to each of the research questions. This helped many of the participants in the first workshop with getting the narrative element needed for their videos. For those who wrote down their story, their text was not edited, as it was important to keep the words of the storyteller intact. Once the story was written down participants were ready to move onto the audio recording stage.

4.4.8 Audio Recording

After writing their responses to the four key research questions, participants were then asked to audio record their stories. Some of the participants used the audio recorder on their smart phones to record their responses. The research assistant worked with the participants in getting their audio recorded. In many cases the research assistant videotaped participants responding to the questions. In other cases, he helped participants understand how to use the recording device so that when they were ready they could record their responses in another room on their own so that they didn't feel uncomfortable when recording with someone else present. The only real difficulty with audio recording had to do with the first workshop location where there were too many distracting noises in the background, which meant that some participants then had to re-record their narrative content. This took additional time and was anxiety producing for some of the participants as it set them back. Once the audio recording was completed, participants then moved onto the next stage of finding images to match their narrative recordings.

4.4.9 Image Search, Production and Editing

After recording the responses to the key research questions, participants were then tasked with collecting images for their videos and keeping notes about the meaning behind the pictures used in their videos. The participants relied upon a number of techniques for getting images for their videos. Many obtained open sourced images or free stock images from the Internet. Others incorporated pictures from their Facebook accounts, while others took their own images and videos and incorporated them into their videos. I introduced the participants to free resources on the Internet using the Creative Commons website, which was useful for raising awareness about Creative Commons licenses and the fact that some images are copyrighted and not appropriate for use in this exercise. While searching for images, participants were encouraged to record where they obtained the image in order to add it to the credit section at the end of their videos. The participants were informed about the importance of credits for the photos taken by friends and family. Participants were encouraged to get permission from the people in the photos they used from their personal photo albums due to privacy concerns. Some of the participants even drew their own pictures or used pictures that had been drawn when they were younger. One participant relied almost exclusively in his video on pictures he had drawn expressing various emotions he experienced when he was being bullied as a young child. Some participants photographed their own images with their phones and incorporated these images into their videos. Once the right images were found and photographs collected participants then moved to the next stage of putting the digital story together and incorporating the appropriate music.

4.4.10 Putting the Digital Story Together

In conducting the workshops, I utilized easy-to-use, 30-day trial video-editing software so that the participants were able to download and use the software not only during the workshop but could also download it and work on their video projects from home. The Adobe Premiere Pro CC

2015 editing software was used to produce the digital video stories for both workshops. Most of the participants were new to this software program and required tutorials to understand how to use the software program. Only one person from Workshop 1 was familiar with the program. At the time of the first workshop the facilitator had learned that the software program had undergone a major upgrade such that navigating the new interface was difficult for the researcher and the assistant to even teach to the participants. The facilitator had to take some time to get to know how the new software interface worked before teaching the participants in the first workshop how to use it. Although this stage was difficult to complete for some participants, once they understood how to import their audio and visual files into the program and begin building their videos, they began to feel more confident. In building their videos participants were informed that they should place the audio recording of their stories into the program first and then begin placing images on the time line according to the sequence of their audio recording. Brief tutorials and overviews on how to use the software were provided to participants in both workshops. In putting together their videos, participants also looked for background music to add to their videos. While putting the images, audio and music recordings together, participants were advised to decide on a name for their videos and pseudonyms if they did not want to use their own names on their video. The names that participants titled their videos were all similar. Most of the participants were eager to share their story. All twelve participants from both workshops created digital stories, but not all the videos are available for viewing at this time. The videos uploaded to the Internet include the sample video that the facilitator and research assistant put together to show participants how quick and simple it was to learn the new software interface in putting videos together. There are two videos from the first workshop that still need further editing and so have not been posted online and one participant asked that we not upload his video to the Internet. The links to the videos that the researcher had permission to upload to the Internet are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Digital Stories Created by Participants from both Workshops

NAME/PSEUDONYM	ORIGINAL NAME OF VIDEO	LENGTH OF VIDEO	VIDEO URL
***Workshop 1**: July 6 – 10, 2015 – Sandy Bay Child and Family Services Winnipeg Office*			
Andrea	This is My Story	7:11 minutes	Not Available
Kevin	A Digital Video by …	2:32 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1hwXo9d
Jared	Jared's CFS Story	2:11 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1MRnSks
Mackenzie	Untold	3:41 minutes	Not Available
Tanner	My Story	10:41 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1kjQExL
Octavio	My Story	2:09 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1J96AIE
Tavis	My Life in Care	4:26 minutes	Not Available
Cain	Moving on: My Story Transitioning to Adulthood	5:30 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1NYORrl
Marlyn and Mike	About our Rexi …	1:34 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1JvyyOf
***Workshop 2:** August 10 – 14, 2015 – Researchers' home in Winnipeg, Manitoba*			
Jace	My Journey	4:16 minutes	http://adobe.ly/20FICzR
Teagan	My Story	13:54 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1NYNU2w
Adele	This is My Story	3:06 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1QdbcVx
Carson	My Life in Care	2:57 minutes	http://adobe.ly/1RHyK2z

4.4.11 Screening the Videos

On the final day of the workshop participants took the early part of the morning or the evening to finalize their videos and upload them for screening. The option to invite guests to the screening of videos on the last day of the workshop was open to all participants. However, those who did not wish to have their video screened were not required to screen it if it made them uncomfortable.

The participants in Workshop 1 did not invite any guests to attend to the screening of their videos. However, they did view each other's videos. The Elder was also in attendance at the screening and was very excited to view the videos that had been created. After the screening, a feast was held for the participants in Workshop 1.

One of the participants in Workshop 2 had to leave a day earlier, and so his video was screened the second last day before the workshop ended. The screening of his video gave the other

participants a good idea of what they could aspire to and they all worked hard by stepping up to finalize their videos for screening the following day. The three remaining participants from Workshop 2 each invited one person to attend the screening of their videos. Some other guests, invited by the facilitator and research team, including the Elder, attended the screening of the videos as well. After the screening, a feast took place for the second workshop participants and guests.

On the last day of the workshop participants were asked to sign a release form allowing the researcher to screen and refer to the narrative in their videos for her doctoral dissertation, to present their video at knowledge exchange events or showcase their video on a website or use their videos for any educational and or teaching purposes. All the participants consented to these terms except for one participant. A male participant from Workshop 1 agreed to all the terms of the release except for having his video posted online. Two of the videos that still needed further editing have not been made available yet as the participants indicated that they wanted a chance to work on completing them before they were posted online.

Both workshops closed with the facilitator and research assistant presenting the participants and the Elder with certificates of appreciation, a thank you card and an honorarium.

4.4.12 Food, Beverages and Snacks

A key part of both workshops was food. Participants in Workshop 1 were provided with lunch on a daily basis, while those who participated in Workshop 2 were provided with supper. All the food was purchased, prepared and cooked by the facilitator and her research assistant.

With Workshop 1, coffee and muffins were provided to start the workshop. Also, candies, chips and soft drinks were provided later in the afternoon as a way to get everyone's sugar levels up and as a way to keep them motivated to continue working on the elements of their videos. The research team ordered wraps, sandwiches and a fruit tray for the lunch on the first day. The meals on other days consisted of sub sandwiches, chips, fruit and vegetable trays and a host of other

homemade foods. A stew along with bannock and lasagna rounded out the menu for the feast on the last day of the workshop. I served a cake as well.

Participants in Workshop 2 started the evening off with a BBQ before they turned to working on their videos. Later in the evening, I offered candies and an assortment of chips and soft drinks as well as the usual beverages like water, tea and coffee. Homemade hamburgers, hot dogs, lasagna, potato salad, chicken; roasted potatoes, vegetables and other foods were some of the menu items I offered to the participants over the course of the week.

The food was considered an important part of the workshop. It was considered to be one of the most important events that participants looked forward to as part of their time in the workshop and it also kept them coming back. The candy, in particular, was a big hit with the participants. On the last day of both workshops we were able to put together a small jar of the left over candy for every participant, including the Elder.

4.4.13 Post-Workshop Interviews

Prior to the end of both workshops, the facilitator asked each participant if they were able to participate in a short interview a couple of days after the workshop concluded. A mutual date and time was arranged between the participant and the facilitator. The participants were provided with a letter reminding them that they would be participating in a post-workshop interview about their experiences with the workshop. The post-workshop interview questions centered on the participants' thoughts around their experience in the digital storytelling workshops. Participants were asked to share personal reflections and provide feedback on the digital storytelling process and any in-depth learning that emerged from the videos produced by themselves and the other participants involved in this research. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and notes taken if participants did not wish the interview to be audio-recorded. Most of these interviews took place a couple of days after the workshop ended. The researcher and research assistant often

met participants at a restaurant. The participants were not paid to participate in the post-interviews but the researcher paid for their meals as a way of thanking them for their feedback on the experience of participating in the digital storytelling workshops. Only nine of the 12 participants were able to participate in the post-workshop interviews.

4.5 Reflecting On Workshop Observations and Participant Interactions

4.5.1 Workshop 1 Observations and Reflections

The first group was comprised of seven young men and one young lady. The first reflection the research team had was that a good majority of the participants were really young and we worried about the ability of some to be able to look back and be reflective about transitioning out of care. In particular, we were concerned about the four young men who indicated that they were still in extensions of care and had not yet had the experience of transitioning out of care. All of the participants, however, seemed to be engaged and interested in what the research was about and all seemed eager to contribute to my research and to be involved in making their own video even though some did not initially know what the workshop was about.

Since many of the young men had prior contact with each other outside of the workshop, there were instances where some underlying conflict surfaced from time to time. However, they always managed to keep a level head and work out their differences or hold each other accountable for how they were acting. The participants in this workshop were incredibly helpful. They helped prepare the lunch, they cleaned the kitchen and they helped maintain their workstations. They were respectful to the research team and to one another, but they also had fun and they joked with each other, which kept things light and interesting. As the workshop progressed everyone started to get more comfortable with each other. One of the biggest highlights of this workshop was the time my research assistant allowed the participants to "pick anything they wanted for lunch from any

restaurant." He took orders from everyone and had two participants assist him in getting these meals.

There were frustrations with the software program and frustrations for us as we too were learning the software program along with them. We feared that we were losing their attention. But one night the research team resolved that we would take some time and really work with the program and figure out the new interface as the software program had recently been upgraded. This upgrade changed the program completely and it was like we were learning the software program along with the participants. Eventually, we figured out how the new software interface worked and it took us two hours to produce a short video about our dog, which we shared with the participants the following day. We were able to re-educate ourselves with the software and as a result we were able to share with them what we learned. We used this new knowledge to teach the participants the basic elements and get them back on track with their videos. I, along with the assistance of the research assistant, helped participants record their narratives. The research assistant also interviewed some participants by video taping them as they responded to each of the research questions.

I almost lost one participant who did not show up to the workshop on time one morning. Tanner had gone to a concert the night before with one of the other participants, who managed to make it in the following day. However, Tanner eventually showed up later in the morning and was actually one of the few people able to complete his video a day in advance of the screening. A few others had to leave early on the fourth day and we worried about their ability to complete their videos before the end of the workshop. This concern was alleviated as all of the participants came to the workshop earlier on the last day to work on completing their videos. A few participants felt they needed more time to polish their videos, but nevertheless, completed their videos in time for the group screening. The option to polish the videos in the future was given to all those who felt their videos were unfinished.

The research team was pleasantly surprised during the first talking circle and at every talking circle thereafter, as we did not expect such openness from the young men in particular. As many of these young men had previously been involved in gangs, it was important to acknowledge their efforts and thank them for sharing their words and showing them respect. It also helped to have the talking stick and the Elder participating in the talking circles. By the time day four of the workshop came to a close, most of the participants had completed their videos. Many had indicated that they still needed more time to edit their videos and I suspect this was the reason that they did not invite anyone to the screening of the videos on the last day of the workshop.

4.5.2 Workshop 2 Observations and Reflections

The second group of participants was comprised of two young men and two young women. The researcher was under the mistaken impression that the four participants had known each other outside of the workshop, but I learned later that they did not, in fact, know each other until they came to the workshop. The workshop originally started out with six people: four young women and two young men. However, one person didn't end up attending, and another individual dropped out after the first day. I later learned that two of the three female participants did indeed know one another outside of the workshop. I learned that there had been a contested relationship between them. This was the reason the one individual dropped out. I had no idea of this prior relationship. The young woman who stayed on in the workshop did not say anything and I did not learn of this relationship until three days into the workshop.

Other than this one incident, the interactions between the participants in this second workshop were very dynamic, fun and respectful. Participants got along well with each other. They helped each other and they took the time to talk with one another during meals and at breaks. Over the course of the workshop, there was healthy joking and laughter and an overall comfort level with each other and with the research team. Carson was helpful in that he took responsibility for lighting

the smudge every day and made sure that everyone smudged before the workshop began. As the workshop was a distance to travel for Carson, Jace made arrangements to meet and pick up Carson to ensure he got to the workshop on time in addition to making sure he and the other participants got home after the workshop finished for the night.

The individuals involved in this workshop learned the software program very quickly, and each took the time to ask the research team thoughtful questions as they worked through the elements of putting their videos together. As the group was small, they quickly became close as they worked diligently in producing their videos. They became even closer as they traveled home together when Jace took responsibility for driving each of them home every night until he had to leave the workshop a day before it ended. They cheered each other on, and they were eager to view each other's video. They were proud of their accomplishments, so much so that they took the time to invite one person to share in the screening of their videos on the last day of the workshop. They were very excited to share their videos with the person they had invited to the screening.

As the facilitator of this workshop, I can honestly say that it was an incredibly fulfilling experience for me to have met these young people. On reflection, my research assistant and I agreed that we had looked forward to every evening session we had with this particular group. Although we worked hard to make sure that meals were prepared in advance, and that coffee and other beverages were available, along with helping them with their videos, we had a lot of fun ourselves. We were enormously proud of the videos they produced. Each video was different, but each reflected accurately the spirit and personality of the person who produced it. I suspect that the reason this particular workshop was so successful was because we held it in our home. Having the workshop in our home allowed these participants to get to know us more intimately and to experience making their videos in an atmosphere that was completely different from what the participants from the first workshop experienced.

4.6 Summary

To summarize, this chapter reflected on the facilitator and research team instrumental in conducting the two digital storytelling workshops and the activities associated with this research. A profile of the emerging First Nations adults involved in each of the workshops was highlighted along with a brief background introducing each participant individually. The venue and the schedule of activities for each workshop were highlighted along with a quick synopsis of the positive and negative experiences associated with the workshop locations. The workshop process outlined from day one to day five consisted of the gathering and introduction phase, how the talking circles worked, what was expected from participants in writing their stories and how audio recording and image searching, production and editing proceeded along with putting the entire digital story together. URL links to each of the individual videos that the researcher had permission to post online have been included. Screening the videos on the last day of the workshop along with the importance of food brought the participants and research team together. The research concluded with post-workshop interviews that were scheduled individually with participants who were able to meet with the researcher to discuss their experience being involved in the digital storytelling process. Lastly, the researcher reflected on personal observations about the workshops generally. These reflections centered on the interactions between the participants and research team over the five days the workshops.

The digital storytelling workshop process was a meaningful and worthwhile group activity. Participants were able to listen and learn from the stories of others, and throughout the workshop they offered support and advice to one another. In the process of conducting two weeklong workshops on digital storytelling, relationship building, trust and friendships formed between each of the emerging Indigenous adult participants where they shared their transitioning and post-care stories. Sharing healing paths and the company with others maximized the potential of the twelve

participants to bond and to have fun, as they each journeyed through the digital storytelling process together. More importantly, the sense of achievement of having completed the digital storytelling project was celebrated fully, as a group, when each of the participants gathered on the last day to watch the videos they individually produced. In the process they also bore witness to the stories of strength and resilience evident in each participant and with the group as a whole. The participants took the time to share comments and provide each other with feedback and congratulated one another on the videos produced.

The emerging First Nations adults who participated in the two workshops were guided through computer tutorials that enable them, with support, to construct their own stories and videos, which ultimately formed a part of their healing and reconciliation journeys. In the next chapter, I review the responses and themes that emerged from the discussions around each of the four research questions posed to the participants during the four talking circles and highlight themes in how the participants answered these questions in their video narratives. The following chapter also includes the results from the post-workshop interviews conducted with some of the participants after the workshops ended.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP TALKING CIRCLES, VIDEOS AND POST-WORKSHOP INTERVIEWS

5.0 Introduction

Chapter five focuses on the narrative findings from eight talking circles, twelve individual videos, and interviews held with some of the participants after the workshops ended. The first section of this chapter focuses on the collective results of the discussions from the talking circles and videos, while the second section addresses the collective results of the follow-up interviews.

The first part of this chapter, which includes the findings from the talking circle discussions and the videos, addresses how workshop participants responded to the main research questions in this study. The main research questions again are: 1) What do you remember about your time in care and what was your transitioning experience out of care upon reaching 18 years of age? 2) What challenges, barriers or opportunities have you experienced since leaving care? 3) How have you maintained the connection to family, community and culture since transitioning out of care? 4) Have you reached adulthood?

The second part of this chapter thereafter focuses on the post-workshop evaluation from the participants' views and perspectives regarding the process and the experience of developing digital storytelling videos. The questions for the post-workshop interviews were: 1) Was there any particular reason why you initially wanted to take part in this digital storytelling workshop? 2) Did you have any prior expectations of the process? 3) Did your experience match up with your prior expectations of the process and the workshop overall? 4) What were your reasons for taking part? 5) How did these compare to the actual experience? 6) How did you feel during the process? And immediately after it was over? 7) How about now? 8) Has it had an impact on your life in general? 9) Why do you think that was? 10) In what ways was the digital storytelling workshop positive or

negative? Was it useful? If so, how? 11) On reflection, how would you sum up your experience? How did you find the process overall?

There was a genuine willingness by all the participants to be involved in this research. Some of the participants were very reserved in what they chose to share with the rest of group and within their videos understanding that at some point their videos might be released publically. As one male participant declared, "I'm the kind of guy to keep it inside. There's not a whole lot I can tell." Similarly, one female participant asserted, "I'm a shy person. I don't say much, but I've seen a lot and I've been through a lot." A comment by one of the women in the second workshop shared that she thought being involved in the workshop provided her with a "great opportunity to help with the healing process of being a child in care." The following narratives indeed highlight important comprehensions and memories that were necessary for each participant's healing.

5.1 Findings from the Talking Circles and Video Research Questions

5.1.1 Results Pertaining to Research Question One

On the first day of both workshops, during the first talking circle, participants were asked to reflect on a two-part question, which was directly related to the first research question in my study. The first part of the question asked them to share what they remembered about their time in care. The second part of the question asked for reflections on their transitioning experiences out of care upon reaching the legal age of majority. The participants tended to reflect more on their experiences in care rather than about what happened to them than when they transitioned out of care. The first part of this question therefore focuses heavily on early memories and draws upon what participants most remembered about going into care. It also reflects on their understanding about how they came to be in care including some of the emotions, memories and perceptions that stood out in their recollections about these early experiences.

5.1.1.1 Time in Care

5.1.1.1(a) Reflection on Age of Involvement with CFS

A slight majority of the participants shared that they came into care at a young age. A range of ages was identified. One participant indicated that he had come into care shortly after birth, while approximately half of the participants indicated that they had come into care during the tender years around three to five years of age. The remaining participants said their exposure to the child welfare system and foster and group home care experiences started later in the teenage years. All of the participants had aged out of the system at 18 years of age, with the exception of four individuals, who were still in extensions of care at the time they participated in this research. One person noted that while his exposure to child welfare did not happen until his teenage years, he had memories of having been involved with the system when he was younger, starting possibly around five years of age. Others participants shared stories of being involved with child welfare throughout their childhood until they had become permanent wards in their youth.

5.1.1.1(b) Participants' Understanding about why they were in Care

The twelve participants offered up a range of reasons for why they had been placed in care. For a good majority of the participants (11 of the 12 participants), the drug and alcohol addictions of their parents were identified as being the main reason behind what brought them into care. As one participant noted, "I was taken away from my mom because she was always drinking." Another participant who had been taken into care when he was very young had both a recollection of the experience of being left alone but also noted he had been told of his mother's drinking problems, which corresponded with his earlier memories. Carson shared the following:

> *My mother decided that she really wouldn't take care of me. She spent the money that was supposed to be going toward my food. I was told that she used it to buy alcohol and any money that she got went towards stupid drinks. Instead of taking care of me she would go out drinking and leave me in the house alone.*

Some of the participants (10 of the 12) believed that the reasons for being in care were tied to a combination of addiction and domestic violence issues within the family, which they witnessed in childhood. Mackenzie observed that, "I was only in care because my parents had an addiction problem and they kind of just left me with the responsibilities like looking after my brothers and stuff. Sometimes they didn't come home at night. I guess they used to fight a lot so a lot of cops would come to my house." Jace shared that he had witnessed the abuse of his mother and that his biological alcoholic father in turn physically abused him as well. Mixed with his explanation was an understanding of his own mother's mental health issues as perhaps being another precipitating factor. Jace's explanation and understanding of the reasons he had been placed in care was explained in the following way:

> *The guy, I call him a sperm donor because I don't think he deserves the title of father. He was a big alcoholic and drug addict and my mom was the same and he would like rape her in front of me and he would beat her and he would beat me. I remember like, like even my memories of before six, I ran into traffic because no one was watching me. I was playing with a ball and I was more scared of losing that ball because of the beating I would get than I was about running into traffic. So I ran into traffic and got hit by a car because I was so petrified of his wrath. Yeah, he would just get drunk and he would just wail on us. The cops came one time and he literally beat me and the cops had to wrestle him off and I was in the hospital. I was all black and blue. So he left and it was just my mother and myself, but she just wasn't mentally able to take care of me. So I remember the day that CFS came, there were these people in suits, they just came and they grabbed me. I was just six years old and I don't even know what is going on. I'm screaming and fighting and everything. They had to hold back my mom, the same thing, she was going crazy. And then all of a sudden you're just in this random person's house.*

Teagan stated that she had never experienced abuse as a child, but she had witnessed her mother being abused. Her mother's abuse and subsequent placement in a women's shelter resulted in Teagan and her sibling's placement in care. Teagan noted,

> *Well, growing up I had never been abused, but I've seen my mom get abused a lot. I was about 10 years old and my brother was 8 and my mom just took us to Portage La Prairie and we were staying with her boyfriend's cousin. One night they were drinking and her boyfriend ended up beating her up. We had nowhere to go so we went to the women's shelter out there. The next couple of day's social workers came there and they took me and my brother.*

This same participant further explained that over the years she experienced moving in and out of care over the course of her childhood and teenage years because "nothing really changed" for her mother. Teagan explained, "my mom always got abused in front of us … she had different boyfriends and they would just abuse her all of the time." Carson reiterated many of the same experiences but noted that despite his parents' addictions they were good people:

> *The reason why I was in CFS was because my mom and dad they always fought, they always fought, that was about it. I guess one day someone knocked on our door and they said we're here to pick up your kids. They didn't know who phoned them or anything. So they just came in there and we only had about 30 minutes to get ready, to leave the house and I was sad and my dad and my mom they had to see us leave and that's when I was sad and I was crying. Me and my sister were crying because we were missing our parents. In the beginning it was pretty strange. We were going into homes and stuff. It's weird seeing new people and living with new people but that's when my sister and me got split up. I was living in this home and I got to talk to my dad and they gave my mom and my dad nine months to sober up and to stop doing what they were doing because my dad and my mom, I can say that they weren't the best people. They were the best parents but they weren't good people cause they used to do drugs, they used to do coke and drink all the time. And then yeah, I guess it just got out of hand and people phoned in, but after time I got used to CFS.*

At least two of the participants spoke of having lived with a grandmother or with grandparents throughout their childhood, only to be apprehended when they came to live in the city with their parents. Kevin shared his memories of such a time: "I moved to the city and my dad was an alcoholic, but I was never raised by my biological parents. I was raised by my grandparents and when I came to the city I got taken away immediately." Adele spoke of having moved from Winnipeg to Thompson because of her parents' drinking and arguing. She believed the move had intensified her mother's addiction and that it likely resulted in the removal from her mother's care. Adele shared the following with me, "We moved to Thompson because my mom and my dad were always drinking and arguing and it was mostly because of jealousy. My mom had to move us out of the house, so we moved to Thompson and we stayed with my auntie. My mom got really bad into drugs and alcohol, about a month later after we moved to Thompson that's when we got taken away." A few of the participants expressed anger about their parent's addictions.

Andrea and Teagan indicated that they had come into care because they had taken initiative when they were teenagers to admit themselves into care. Teagan stated that despite the fact that her mother had experienced abuse at the hands of many men that she "didn't like the way her mom was acting." She believed that her mom was "all about her boyfriends" and that she didn't really care what she and her brother were doing especially since they were themselves "doing drugs every day." Teagan further noted that she barely saw her mother and that one day it bothered her so much that she took matters into her own hands and decided, "to see a social worker and I told her everything that my mom was doing and I was put in a foster home." Andrea spoke of being in custody of and living with her older sister when she and her sister got into a physical fight and she ended up in the emergency room. When she left the hospital Andrea shared similar recollections about the time that she took initiative for placing herself in care: "I remember walking with my arm in a sling, and a black eye and stuff, and I walked by myself to the CFS ANCR[17] place. It's where all the kids go when they first go into care."

5.1.1.1(c) Memories of Time in Care

The participants also reflected extensively on their memories of being in care. Participants spoke of the strangeness of being in care, about being split from siblings when they went into care or witnessing the abuse and bullying of siblings in care, and about the things that stood out in their minds about their first placements.

Group homes, foster homes and hotel placements were identified as being some of the places that the participants remembered about being placed when they first came into care. Most of the participants shared a common perspective about these homes. This shared perspective was epitomized in a comment made by one participant who said, "Basically I was in some good foster

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[17] "CFS" refers to child and family services while "ANCR" refers to the All Nations Coordinated Response" Network. ANCR is the first point of entry into the child welfare system within Winnipeg and it is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children and youth at risk through timely response and appropriate referral.

homes and some bad foster homes and it kind of made me who I am today." Andrea, who indicated above that she had gone to ANCR to get herself admitted into care, indicated that she had an option presented to her as to where she wished to be placed. Her memory of that time was summarized in the following way:

> *I remember the on duty social worker asking about where I could go. So she offered me the choice of going to some detention center, a foster home, an emergency shelter or a hotel. So obviously, I chose the hotel. It was fun. While I was there I guess I wasn't really supervised at all. I felt like the people that were there had no interest in helping me through this experience, which was a new experience for me. The way that they handled it was, I guess you could say it was very insensitive. So I did that. I went to a hotel. Then I went to a group home which was the only group home I went to and it was a very awesome experience for me.*

Tanner also shared that he was given the option of returning home but instead chose to stay in care. He shared how the question about returning home was put to him and the reason he chose to stay in care:

> *I remember my social worker coming up to me and asking, "do you want to go home to live with your mom?" I was there with my little sister … we had lived there for about a year. My little sister decided to go home. I said, no, I do not want to go home because I honestly knew that I would be better off in CFS instead of being with my mom and my siblings simply because there would be more supports for me.*

In his video Tanner further reiterated that the reason he chose to stay in care was that he "didn't get anything from his mom" because she was usually "passed out drunk on the couch or doing her own thing." Tanner later noted in his video that his mother has since been "clean for 2 years" now.

The digital storytelling participants often cited siblings as being significant to them. Being separated from sisters and brothers and being concerned for siblings was mentioned by many of the participants as one of their earliest memories about being in care. Adele said, "I was separated from my brother and my sisters. That was really hard just not knowing where they were and how they were doing or what kind of people they were with." In her video Adele added further thoughts on being separated from her siblings:

I remember waking up to a tall man in a dark blue long sleeved shirt and my sisters crying. I remember being pulled hard by this man and him saying, 'everything is going to be ok.' But nothing was. I was separated from my brother and my two little sisters.

Tanner commented on the importance of his siblings as well. Tanner stated that even though he had the choice of staying in care, he advocated for himself to get at least two visits a month with his siblings and his mother. His thoughts on this time were reflected in the following way:

I fought CFS to make sure I got at least two visits a month when I was younger. That's the minimum they can do every month. Sometimes they would only let me go once a month or a blue moon. I said to them this is not right. I basically stood up for myself and said, you know what, this is enough! I don't feel you guys are being fair to me. They looked in my eyes to see that they were actually hurting me. As I got older, I didn't need those visits anymore as much.

Teagan described witnessing the abuse and bullying of a sibling as being an experience that was particularly concerning for her when she was first placed in care. In her video Teagan shared a story about when she and her brother were placed in a group home where there were four other children and one of the young boys did not like her eight year old brother. She noted, "he always used to abuse my brother" and that "she didn't like seeing her brother get abused all of the time." Witnessing the bullying of her brother was considered so significant to Teagan that she provided considerable attention to it in her video. In the talking circles and in private conversations over dinner Teagan expressed frustration recollecting on all the times when she told the social workers of the abuse and that they had done nothing to assuage her concerns or to stop the bullying until Teagan and her brother were finally removed from the home as a result of her running away.

Tanner indicated that he had been bullied his whole life**.** For instance, in the narrative within his video Tanner believes bullying was something that he experienced throughout his entire life in care. Tanner strongly stated that racism was inherent in the many child welfare placements where he was placed. He noted, "Basically there is nothing I haven't experienced. I've experienced all types of

trauma; verbally, sexually, cybered [sic], I've been bullied my whole life. I grew up around racist people! No one has the right to be racist!"

Participants spoke of being treated negatively in many of the foster homes where they had been placed. The memories of this treatment stood out in their minds. For example, Kevin shared his thoughts on the treatment he and his siblings experienced in one home:

> *I don't want to get too far into details, but I remember the first time going to a shelter. It was just down the road on Bannerman by the 7-11 there and those people were mean. I had little brothers that were only two and three and still slept with their bottles. In the middle of the night they would cry and they would just cry and cry and cry. So those people at that shelter would do nothing. So I would have to just sneak out of my room to go and lie with them. It would really piss me off because they would come and they would bitch at me about putting my little brothers to sleep. "Oh you got to keep them in their own room. They've got to learn." Like they are only two and three you know? I had to sneak my own milk from my cereal just to give to my little brothers. It was really, really harsh the first couple of weeks.*

Adele stated that she used to have nightmares about her time in care. She explained in more detail that, "Now it's pretty good but I still have my nightmares. I just have a lot of bad history about that time. I will always have the memories of being in the child welfare system. There were good times but also there were a lot of bad times." Another particularly bad memory shared by Teagan was when at 17 she was moved back to the city of Winnipeg and was placed in a home with a woman and her two children. The woman immediately shaved her long hair. Teagan indicted that it was something that particularly upset and angered not only her but also her mother. Others spoke about hearing messages from people in foster homes that told them "they were not wanted there" or they heard other children in these homes tell them that "they were in care because their parents didn't love them," which was devastating to hear when many expressed feeling lost, lonely, unloved, and extremely vulnerable with this new experience.

Participants spoke of the unfamiliar feeling of being placed in the care of strangers. As Carson noted, "in the beginning it was pretty strange. We were going into homes … it's weird seeing and living with new people." Teagan noted that as a result of being placed in care, she had to learn

to become familiar with all the new restrictions that came with being placed in care with strangers. As Teagan explained, "all these new people in her life were telling her what she could and couldn't do, where she could and couldn't go, and whom she could or couldn't see or live with."

Some participants carried memories of guilt and had expressed feeling culpable and responsible for having been apprehended and for changing the trajectory of their family's life. Kevin shared that he had felt responsible, that it was his fault that he and his siblings had been taken from his mother and placed in care. In his video Kevin reflected on the guilt he remembered from that time when he was apprehended as a child:

> *I remember being young sitting in class and the intercom came on and they called my name to the office. I walked down to the office and was greeted by a lady. She took me into a room and asked me a series of questions. At that age I didn't know how to answer, I just agreed, I didn't really put any thought into it. My day went on and I went outside to play with my friends after school. I came home late. I walked in and my mother was crying and the lady was standing there with two officers. All my aunts and uncles and grandmother were sitting around the table deciding to split my siblings and me apart. I remember my grandmother calling us through the hallway to say bye and to hug and kiss my mother. I remember feeling it was my fault. If I hadn't answered correctly, if I had understood the questions better, if I listened, if I came home early, then I could have stayed with my mother.*

5.1.1.1(d) Multiple Placements

All of the participants shared similar experiences of being moved frequently and experiencing multiple placements throughout their time in care. Kevin indicated that over the span of one year, he had been "placed in seventeen different homes". At the time of the workshop he was in an extension of care arrangement and living with a man he admired and whom he said, "helped keep him out of jail." Other participants stated that they "got used to always moving around from home to home." Carson said, "I moved at least once a month from home to home"; he also reported going "from shelter to shelter; meeting pretty weird foster parents." Jace shared, "I went through several homes in a matter of months. By the time I was in care six months, I went through enough homes that so many bad things happened."

5.1.1.1(e) Emotional Thoughts Tied to Placement Experiences

Discussing and remembering these experiences inevitably lead to reflections on how the participants felt about these early experiences. Many pointed to feelings of abandonment, feeling unwanted and unloved. Adele stated that her experience of growing up in foster care "really destroyed her" because it left her feeling "lost and unwanted." Tavis, who was in an extension of care, noted that the connection with social workers appeared to diminish the older he got. Tavis expressed the sense of abandonment that he felt in the following narrative:

> *When you're young, it's more easier and people they actually give you more attention, because for the past four years, when I was 14 my CFS workers didn't even care. Like they would just dropped me off in a group home and they'd tell me stuff, "Oh we'll get you into school, and we'll give you purchase orders and we'll give you all this stuff." Once I got into a group home that was the last time I saw my worker is when they left me in the group home. They didn't help me, they didn't help me at all, they just left me on my own and that was harsh thing to me, to have no one there to help you, to guide you or anything cause you to have to do things on your own.*

Carson shared a similar story. He believed the carelessness of his social worker was a precipitating factor that led him to return to using drugs:

> *My first worker … she was careless, she didn't care. She was the type of person that I think was there for the paycheque because she just dropped me off at a group home, never came back, never asked me or never phoned me to say how is it going? Do you need anything? Do you need any help? I waited and waited. When she dropped me off she did tell me that she would get me into school. I waited three-four weeks and nothing and that's when I gave up. That's when I started to drink again. I quit for a while and then I started drinking again and I started smoking marijuana, like tons of marijuana but I pushed myself too far and I had a mild stroke because of the marijuana that I smoked.*

In the talking circle discussions, Jace commented that he had a dog in one of the foster homes where he was placed. He remarked, "That dog was my everything! That dog showed me more love than any of the foster parents I had." He further remembered that as a young child he had caregivers who strictly forbid him from calling them "mom or dad" and he was constantly reminded that he was "only temporarily there." Jace said that over the years he had to teach himself not to get attached because his placements had always been temporary and fleeting. Jace felt that he

had "no feelings of love growing up" and he noted he was "lonely all the time." As a result he questioned whether he knew how to love.

Feelings of rejection, loneliness and anger and the confusion often accompanied the experience of being in care as can be deciphered from reading the following narrative made by Tavis:

> *I remember exactly that night when she went out drinking I wouldn't stop crying. So she duck taped a soother in my mouth and went out to drink. I remember falling asleep. When I woke up there was a bunch of people in the house. I think that was where I started off with CFS after being taken for the first time. Growing up after that I went through several homes in a matter of months. By the time I was six months I went through enough homes that so many bad things happened, people calling me the devil's child. I learned not to cry because when I cried no one would show up. I started growing up believ[ing] that pain doesn't really matter and my emotions didn't matter. The people who took care of thought, not only doesn't he cry, he really doesn't do anything, he just sits there looking like a pissed off little kid who was easy to take care of. They still called me a devil's child, a demon child. When I finally came to a household that actually cared, I already knew that I almost pretty much died from starvation and dehydration. I didn't know what it was like to be taken care of very well. So many people who cared tried to show me affection. I pushed them away by biting them. I grew up holding my anger back, showing no emotions. I wouldn't be angry towards other people. I would just stare. When I was hurt, I didn't cry. When I was hungry, I didn't ask for food. I pretty much had to steal food from the household that I was in because I didn't want to ask because I knew from my experiences if you ask they never did anything. If you cry, you don't get anything. I got into trouble a lot, but it's from not being taken care of. The further I grew up, the more I hated the system. I thought I had people that understand me. I lost my childhood. I just grew up knowing hate as the only answer. People who tried to help me I'd fight them and beat them up. As I grew larger the stronger I got and my hate and my anger just fuelled everything that I did.*

Cain indicated he had never known his birth parents having spent his entire time as a child and youth in care. He too acknowledged at times being "lonely and depressed" and that he had dealt with a lot of anger issues stemming from loneliness and confusion about who his real parents were, especially after coming to realize that the people he thought were his real family were not in fact his real blood family. Today Cain still does not know his family of origin. The narrative from his video reflects his thoughts on this:

> *About what I remember about my time in care there is nothing that can be remembered other than being a kid growing up, wondering who my parents were and that my mother wasn't there and that my father died. I grew up with a married couple thinking they were my mother and father and then having to find out later in my own life that they are not, so that brought confusion in my life. I didn't really have an understanding of why I was in care, I was too young, I started off as a baby in*

care so when I grew up I thought the people who were my foster parents were my parents. So when I grew up until I was teenager they gave me an understanding.

A few participants shared the experience of having been abused in foster care. As Octavio stated in his video, "I've been in some dark places growing up"; he also described being locked up in his room for "days at a time" and remembered missing meals. Because of these experiences, Octavio felt that many of his later anger issues stemmed from those experiences. Jared remembered he and his siblings had been abused for many years in a foster home that they had lived before they were finally believed. In his video Jared explained how he and his siblings came to be removed from this abusive foster home:

> *I was taken away from my mom when I was about three or four years old with my brothers and sisters. We were put into foster homes where we got abused by the foster parents. We were in that home for about six or seven years before we were moved out by our social worker. They finally believed us after we told them after all those years.*

The participants spoke of feeling that many of the foster parents were in the business of making money rather than ensuring their wellbeing. Tanner expressed an opinion that "some social workers were there to help while others were there just for the paycheque." Jace, took a similar stance in his video where he observed the following:

> *Looking back to most of my six foster homes, I felt like a paycheque rather than a child. In one home I was allotted one glass of milk per day, a few pieces of watery ham for lunch, and would eat Kraft dinner while my foster dad would eat steak.*

A couple of the participants noted that their experience in care and the rejection they constantly experienced resulted in many of them running away from these placements. For instance, Adele shared, "In some of the homes that you grow up in, like that you go to, and it's like, what the fuck? But like … yeah most of my time was spent in youth shelters because I couldn't stay still." Many of the participants who came into care during their teenage years shared similar stories about constantly running away because they wanted to be with their families. As Teagan emphasized in her video, she ran so often that she was placed in a detention centre (the Manitoba Youth Centre)

several times as a way to deter her from running even though it didn't always work. In the following narrative Teagan explained why she often ran away:

> *My foster mom she never let me do anything. She would treat me like a little kid. She would complain about me going out every day. It was summer time and I'm like a teenage, obviously I'm going to go out to see my friends. The whole time I was in foster care my brother was in jail. And then I started running away because I wanted to be with my family. I would go and run away with my mom. I would be with her a week and then I'd decide to go back. This kept happening. Like once a month I would take off and I would be gone. The judge, she put that as one of my conditions, like I couldn't take off anymore. So I did it anyway and ended up going to jail. I got locked up there every month.*

5.1.1.1(f) Addictions, Gang Affiliation and Suicide

Some of the participants shared similar stories of getting into trouble while in care and turned to alcohol and drugs as a way of coping. A good majority of the participants, both male and female, spoke of being involved in gang related activity and doing "basically stupid things" such that they began to experience what it was like to be "going in and out of the youth correctional system." Teagan shared in her video that she "started smoking weed" when she was 10 years old and at 12 she started "consuming alcohol and drank all the time." Teagan stated that when she turned 14 she "dropped out of school and started 'repping a gang[18], and started using prescription drugs to get high. Teagan further shared that she had been "introduced to ecstasy and cocaine" and that her "drinking and drug use got worse" because she "just didn't care anymore." Kevin stated that the loss of his grandparents culminated with him becoming "an alcoholic and drug user at age 12." Other participants also spoke of hanging out with older people that got them involved in drugs and drinking and gang activities. Jace, who was the oldest participant in the study (32 at the time), stated that he battled depression and suicide for almost 10 years after leaving care and throughout that time, "I felt like I was going nowhere and lived in a bottle." Tanner ended his video by giving a tribute to former friends who had been gang members, but who have since passed on. Tanner, reflecting on his gang involvement, thought he would never make it to adulthood and often

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[18] "Repping a Gang" is a colloquial expression meaning that one is "affiliated with a gang."

surmised that he would likely die before he reached the age of 15 years. Tanner indicated that he had been incarcerated for the past two years in the Manitoba Youth Centre and essentially was two years behind in school. He was currently in an extended placement primarily for the purposes of completing high school. Other participants who spoke of gang involvement also experienced "doing some time" in the Manitoba Youth Centre. For instance, Kevin incorporated images into his video that alluded to time spent in the Manitoba Youth Centre without any dialogue other than to say that he had "gotten into trouble" and was "dealing with adult charges."

Suicide was also mentioned by a large majority of the young people who participated in these workshops as something they thought about while in care. Many spoke of meeting other people who they looked up to as mentors who provided understanding, support and friendship when they were feeling most downtrodden and vulnerable. The following narrative summarizes Jace's experience with one mentor and how it changed his perspective and turned him from being a vulnerable youth in care to becoming "the person he needed when he was younger" for those who are now in the position that he once was:

> *I've been lucky to meet [a mentor] who got me into doing support work and giving back. That's honestly what saved my life because I was pretty suicidal for a long time and just being able to give back and work with kids who are in my situation and give them that love and be that rock for them. Some of the kids that I work with, I've had them for 3 years and that showed me love more than my time in care.*

5.1.1.1(g) Losses While in Care

At least four of the participants noted that during their time in care they had lost parents, other important family members and friends to death. Jace shared that his mother died of brain cancer when he was 14 years old. Carson stated that he had "lost a lot of people in his life that he loved and didn't get to say goodbye to" while Octavio noted that his father died when he was in care but incarcerated in the Manitoba Youth Centre. Octavio explained that his father "drank himself to death" while he was in jail and further that "I didn't know about it and I wasn't able to go to the

funeral because I was in there for so long." Octavio mentioned that both he and his family were devastated when they found out that he had passed. Tanner shared that "four years ago he had witnessed his best friend get stabbed" and that his friend died in his arms. This person wasn't the only friend that he lost as he shared losing two other very good friends to death. In his video he states missing each of them and that they "lived on in his heart." Teagan declared in her video, "I lost a lot of close people I love to death, and it was hard, it was like I was cursed because everyone I knew and loved was dying, but when I lost my first love [---], it was harder on me and my brother because my brother was his best friend. He was only 15 when someone took his life over a gang!"

Grandparents were often mentioned by many of the participants as being important family members before they were placed in care. Teagan noted that her "papa" played a big role in her life and was a father figure to her. She commented in her video that when he had passed away her heart had been broken because her papa had been her "best friend, her other half, and her grandpa at the same time." Kevin spoke of the loss of connection to his grandmother when he came to live in the city.

Loss doesn't necessarily always mean death. Loss was also viewed as losing someone who won't be seen for a long while. Teagan noted in her video that while she was in care her brother had been recently arrested and that she likely wouldn't be seeing him for a couple of years. This was devastating to her as she stated they were very close. For a lot of participants loss also meant loss to family, siblings and friends from school.

5.1.1.2 Transitioning Experiences

The second part of the first research question asked for participants to reflect on their transitioning experience out of care. Few of the answers elicited as much response as the first part of the question where participants were asked to reflect on their child welfare involvement. The following commentary about the transitioning experiences for the participants briefly touched upon

leaving care with little money, finding an apartment, dealing with barriers and the aftermath of having been a person in care, drug and alcohol addictions, partying instead of being responsible, gang involvement, and dealing with parental responsibilities at a young age.

Of the 12 participants, only four young men were still in care at the time this research was undertaken. Kevin, Tanner, Octavio and Tavis are the young men currently in extensions of care. All four of these individuals participated in the first workshop. Although they were 18 years of age, they indicated that they were in extensions of care primarily to complete their high school education and build life experiences that could be reflected on their resumes. Three of the four participants said that the decision to stay longer in care was a decision that they had personally made themselves. As Octavio asserted, “Well it was kind of my decision because I wanted to finish school and do something with myself.” On the other hand, Tanner asserted that it was his social worker who made the call that he should stay in care but he also agreed with her as is evident when he said, “Yeah, my social worker doesn’t think I’m ready to be on my own. I know for a fact that I’m not ready.”

Some of the participants noted that they had been given the option of staying in care through extensions of care placements; however, many of the participants chose not to continue being in care. Mackenzie explained why he was not in favour of staying in an extension of care. He said, “Honestly once I left, I left because I didn’t want to go back because it was all bullshit.” Carson indicated that the option of living in an extension of care situation was offered to him but he declined because it was important for him to feel independent and to experience and find his own independence.

Finding a place to live after leaving care was cited as a difficulty for some of the participants. Jace was the only participant to make any reference to receiving monies to assist with the transition toward adulthood. Jace noted specifically in his video that he had received some money on his 18th birthday and in the talking circle he said, “I got my $1000 cheque and a ‘see you later,’ so I had to

find a place to live," but that he did not officially move into his first apartment until a few months after turning 18. Teagan was one of the only participants in the study to identify as being homeless after leaving care. Although she is now 19 years old, she is stated that she is still homeless and stays with family or friends, or wherever she can find a place to hang out.

Others openly shared having difficulty with addiction issues upon reaching the legal age of majority. Jace declared that upon turning 18, "I got into selling drugs and prospecting for gangs just because I had nothing, I had nobody," while Jared specifically said, "when I turned 18, I kind of just started drinking. I didn't really care about anything." Mackenzie from the first workshop shared, "Once I turned 18 I kept on going down the wrong path and then got into some shit with the law that I'm not too proud of and hurt people. After I turned 18 … like you have no options right."

Five of the 12 participants indicted that they had become parents either before or since leaving care. The participants who identified as being parents from the first workshop included Andrea, Jared, Mackenzie, and Cain. Only Carson from the second workshop identified as being a parent. Of the five participants who identified as being parents, three indicated that their children were born either before they turned 18 or shortly after. Being a parent was particularly difficult given that when their children were born they were still so young. Mackenzie shared in the talking circle that he "became a father at such a young age," and that things had come full circle for him because now his daughters were "in the care of his mother." Teagan shared in her video the heartbreaking story of having become pregnant soon after she turned 18 only to have miscarried shortly thereafter. In her video, Teagan's narrative reflected upon this time as being happy, sad, and eventually so stressful that it ultimately resulted in a significant loss for her.

5.1.2 Summary of Responses to First Research Question

In the responses to research question one, the participants focused a great deal of attention on remembering and reporting on their experiences of being in care. For most of the participants, it

appeared to be more important to remember these times rather than reflect on the experience of leaving care. The participants identified that they were in care largely because of parental addictions and domestic violence. Their recollections of time in care centered on negative memories, but there were some participants who recounted positive experiences. Some participants expressed concern for siblings when they were separated once in care and one participant recounted the bullying of a sibling in one home. Other participants reflected on negative treatment and messages heard in their placements and the strangeness of living with new people. Among the memories are the many moves they experienced while in care. Participants shared emotional perceptions about their time in care. These emotional memories centered on feelings of abandonment, unwanted, unloved and in some cases abused. A number of participants reflected on the experience of experimenting with drugs, and being involved with gangs. They also explained that suicide was something that they had thought about when they were in care and once they transitioned out of care. Participants also identified that they experienced many losses while in care. Important family members like grandparents, parents and other family members and friends passed into the spirit world while they were in care and many indicated that they did not have a chance to bereave these losses with their families.

The transitioning experience was explained as being a time in their lives where they had little money, difficulty finding a place to live, coping with bad influences such as drugs, alcohol, gangs, and homelessness. Some of the participants noted that when they turned 18 they focused on partying instead of being responsible, while others who became parents shortly after turning 18, had no choice but to become responsible at a young age. For some of the participants, it was difficult for them to reflect on leaving care when at least four of them were still in extensions of care and, as a result, could not answer this question directly or contribute to the discussion on what it was like to leave care. These comments reflect the reality that many of the participants had little guidance from

anyone in helping them transition toward adulthood. These narratives reflect participants' navigating feelings of being lost, experiencing loss and feeling confused. It reflected a time in their lives where they didn't really care about themselves or their future. Often they faced grievous situations and the transitioning experience alone.

5.1.3 Results Pertaining to Research Question Two

On the second day of the workshops, during the second talking circle, participants were asked to reflect on barriers, challenges, and opportunities they faced or had dealt with in their post-care lives. Not all of the participants perceived facing barriers or challenges yet because they were still in care. However, several participants were able to reflect extensively on the experiences they had since leaving care. The themes below identify the three types of responses (barriers, challenges and opportunities) that participants provided in answering this question in the talking circles and videos.

5.1.3.1 Barriers

The participants described a range of barriers as obstacles they had difficulty getting past in their post-care lives outside of the child welfare system. Two of the things both workshop participants mentioned as barriers in their current lives were feeling alone, lost and dealing with residual anger and the resentment of having been in care. Other barriers identified included constant suicidal thoughts and having trust issues. Gang involvement and criminal activities, including the use of drugs and alcohol, were also seen as significant barriers for a good majority of the participants as it was frequently cited as an issue among many of the participants in both workshops. The biggest barriers cited by all of the participants were finding a job and a place to live. Racism was recognized by some of the participants as possibly being the factor contributing to these barriers. These themes are reflected in both the discussions in the talking circles and mentioned in some of the videos

produced by the participants. The participants didn't expound upon these barriers in detail other than to mention them in passing as being some of the things that held them back in their post-care lives. These barriers are each briefly examined below.

5.1.3.1(a) Feeling Lost and Alone

Participants noted feelings of being lost and alone. As Mackenzie acknowledged in the talking circle regarding the barriers, challenges and opportunities that he's experienced since leaving care, he said, "Well when I turned 18, I didn't feel like I had anything going for myself. Like I felt alone. It was hard at first." Jace described feeling lost in the following way, "After leaving care and having no real relationship with my biological family or foster parents, I felt lost." Cain described his present situation as a battle, "Where I am today is where I am. I'm not looking to say I'm higher or further than anyone else in life. Obviously, every day is a battle. I wake up and I look at what matters the most, other than what's really happened." The last remark made by Tanner embodies the feelings of being lost and the fear of getting close to others: "Where am I in my life, my path right now? Well, I'm kind of feeling at a crossroads in my life right now. And I'm lost all the time. I wake up and I'm just feeling lost. Like I don't know who I am sometimes. I'm scared to get close to people."

5.1.3.1(b) Anger, Resentment and Trust Issues

A few of the participants identified the source of some of their biggest barriers as the resulting anger they've struggled with as a result of being in care. In particular, Mackenzie identified that he had been angry with everyone including his mother and that he had a hard time getting past his anger and resentment:

> *One of the things that I face is being angry at everybody, being angry at the world. Like why did my mother let me go? It's just that resentment to everything, but again, now that I've matured a lot, I'm starting to see that maybe I was angry at my mother for the wrong reasons. She did get us out of care, but it was me being a hardheaded teenager. I didn't want to see that. I just wanted to be angry,*

like just leave me alone because whatever I did was working for so long so I just wanted to keep on doing it.

Some participants also identified feeling resentment and depression over having been in care. Jace, in reflecting on his post-care experiences, said he felt that he "still had all this resentment, anger and depression" from his time in care. In his video Jace acknowledged he started drinking all the time and smoking lots of marijuana as a way to try to escape the suicidal thoughts in his head and feeling that his life wasn't going anywhere.

Tanner observed that for him trust was an issue in his life and that he too dealt with anger. He explained that as he has gotten older he was learning new ways to control his anger and deal with his trust issues. Lastly, Mackenzie stated, "I feel everything that I went through, all the hurt, all the pain, all the anger was meant to be just to see the good that was inside of me."

5.1.3.1(c) Suicidal Thoughts

As noted earlier, some participants had shared feelings of depression and thoughts of suicide while in care. These feelings continued for some of the participants even when they transitioned out of care and remain factors that they are dealing with post-care. One poignant memory shared by a Carson was that he was going to commit suicide after trying to explain to his mother how much being in care had affected him and his sister:

> *Because you know my mom, she basically gave up on us for a dime bag[19]. You know, she stuck with the coke. There was a moment when I came back to my mom for a little bit and just like when I came back to her she acted like she was in control and that's when I told her you're not in control. Where were you when my sister and me went through hard times? That's when I felt so hurt that I said that to my mom that I wanted to kill myself. That's when I had suicidal thoughts and I told my mom that and I ran away. That's when I was in this back alley and I had this knife and I was thinking of killing myself and that's when the police came and they took me and put me in a crisis centre for a while. The crisis people really helped me, they guided me and I had some guidance and they told me there is more to life than killing yourself. There is a reason for everybody, everybody has a reason to stay on this planet, because you'll do good, you'll do good.*

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[19] This is a term for a specified amount of an illegal drug, packaged and sold for a fixed price.

Teagan reflected a very recent turn of events that had her thinking of suicide when she suffered a miscarriage just prior to participating in the second digital storytelling workshop. She shared why she didn't ultimately follow through on these thoughts:

> *It was around 1:00 am June 14th I was sitting in that emergency room, and it was my 19th birthday and I had a miscarriage. I was very stressed out. Sometimes I wonder if I wasn't so stressed out I'd still be carrying my baby, I blamed myself. I didn't know what to do at that point, so I started drinking every day to take my pain away and my boyfriend didn't like that so he left me. It was hard because we lost our baby and now I lost him. I didn't know what to do. I felt like taking my own life, I thought about it but I thought about my beautiful nieces and nephews that I wanted to live for.*

Jace revealed that while he did deal with depression and suicide, that it wasn't until he was in his 30s that he finally tried to overcome this barrier. Jace shared that he constantly thought of suicide and that it had been a longstanding barrier:

> *At times depression has crippled me, leaving me with thoughts of suicide. It is only now in my thirties that I am really addressing these issues, seeking professional help to deal with them and finally moving past my childhood trauma.*

In his video Jace identified that what saved his life was the opportunity of meeting a mentor who gave him a chance to "give back and work with kids" who were in a similar situation as he once was in care. Jace stated he was able to overcome this longstanding barrier through working with these kids and through giving them love and being that rock for them. Today Jace states that some of the kids that he has worked with have "shown him more love" than what he ever experienced when in care.

5.1.3.1(d) Gang and Criminal Involvement

All but two of the young men who were involved in the digital storytelling workshops shared stories of being affiliated with gangs both during their time in care and in their post-care lives. The criminal activities associated with gang involvement were seen as a barrier as it was said that it wasn't always easy to leave these associations behind. The names of these gangs were not mentioned as

many had indicated that they had worked to distance themselves from these gangs as they moved toward adulthood. As Tanner revealed:

> *I was high risk into gang activity; I was out of control when I was younger. I was affiliated. Everyone thought I was crazy, one of these crazy people that don't care about anything but then once they actually get to know me because back in the day I always used to fight about everything but now, I just look at my past, I kind of laugh about it. It's kind of funny in a way that I did all those stupid things, but that's the past.*

Jace revealed that when he aged out of care, "I got into selling drugs and kind of like prospecting for gangs just because I had nothing, I had nobody." Mackenzie reflected that when he had left care he started making money the wrong way. He shared that, "Once I turned 18 I kept on going down the wrong path and then got into some shit with the law that I'm not too proud of and hurt people." He revealed that he also came to realize that his gang involvement and criminal ways of making money were putting his daughters in jeopardy. He explained how he came to this understanding in the following way:

> *In my head, as long as I had money I could be the best parent I could be but getting that money by any means, it wasn't the right way of making money and now I started to see that. Like me making money that way only put my daughters' lives in jeopardy.*

One of the young women who participated in the second workshop had indicated that although she was no longer affiliated with a gang as an adult, she was still impacted by her brother's involvement with a gang as it affected his freedom and that "he was always getting locked up." During the time she participated in the workshop Teagan expressed sadness because her brother had been recently incarcerated and that it would be "some time" before she would be able to see him.

5.1.3.1(e) Drugs and Alcohol

Another barrier expressed by most of the participants were problems associated with drugs and alcohol. Many shared that they started taking drugs or drinking alcohol while they were in care and then later in their post-care lives. Some started selling drugs and prospecting for a gang once

they reached the legal age of majority, but some also used it to cope with the stresses and to minimize painful experiences in their lives.

Tanner from the first workshop, who was still in an extension of care, admitted that he was addicted to smoking marijuana. Jace stated that he constantly battled with alcohol post-care. He noted that he used to go home and purchase alcohol with the majority of his pay cheque and drank every night. In the talking circle he further shared "I would drink alone. There would be empty bottles everywhere. That's how I spent my nights because I didn't know any better. I didn't have a whole lot of assets or support actually." Jace further elaborated that:

> *Post-care it's been really tough going through lots and lots of changes. I went through a 10 year rut where I would come home and drink every day and smoke tons of pot because I just didn't want to face life and felt like I was going nowhere and not doing anything. I still battle with alcohol issues and I still battle with all these things because of the trauma of being in care and not having that feeling of love. I've been lucky job wise. I've been doing ok.*

Adele explained that she "ended up getting into drugs and alcohol" but then didn't know why she eventually stopped. Jared from the first workshop stated that he quit drinking because he had a child. As Teagan shared earlier she had experience using prescription drugs, ecstasy, cocaine" and noted her "drinking and drug use got worse" as she got older because she didn't care. Teagan declared that she had recently made a decision to move away from doing these drugs and reduce her alcohol and marijuana intake.

5.1.3.1(f) Finding Employment, A Place to Live, and Racism

Many of the participants shared that they had difficulty finding a job when they were in care and once they became adults. Since turning 18 the majority of the participants indicate that finding employment has been difficult and stressful especially if they had children. Among the 12 participants, only one person had a full time job at the time they participated in the workshops. It was noted by many of the participants that because they did not have any work experience they could not build up their resumes to make themselves attractive to potential employers and it

appeared that no one would give them a chance to offer them employment. Many were working to reduce this specific barrier by taking training and working to complete high school. A good number of the participants had taken or were in the process of engaging in educational programs at Youth Build[20]. Difficulties finding employment meant that it is also difficult to find a place to live and to feed themselves. It was stated by one participant that "since turning 18 I've experienced challenges with trying to find self-independence, trying to find a job, trying to get my license, work my way up there and become a normal Canadian citizen." Another shared "My challenges were after leaving care, I didn't have anywhere to go. I didn't have anywhere to go and I didn't know what to do with my life so I dropped out of school and I looked for a job." Tavis couldn't understand why employers were not giving him a chance. He surmised, "I guess it's kind of been hard to find a job because people look at you and they're just seeing me as some kind of fuckin' gangster or something? Maybe it's something like the way I dress? But yeah I don't know." He identified racism as being perhaps one of the biggest barriers to getting a job:

> *Also finding a job. I think it is pretty damned hard because most everywhere I've gone, I've dropped off several application letters, I've dropped off my resume. I've got a lot of work experience. I know how to fix tractors, I fixed a lot of damned machinery, and I cook, clean, and I know a lot of stuff, but apparently that is not good enough for some people here in this city. For instance, national hiring day at MacDonald's … right after the lunch break, I handed in my resume and my application form, they looked at it, they threw it out and hired the next 3 people after me. Do you know how demoralizing that is? That's one thing that stopped me from job-hunting for a while. The biggest barrier for me is having the manager look at your application and not care about it. It's also the way that they look at you. It's another barrier because people judge you and I've had a lot of that. I think they think well he's a big native; he's definitely in a gang, he's probably killed a couple of people and probably doing drugs and the only thing that he needs this job for is money. No actually, my work ethic is extremely high. I've been living on a farm for most of my life. I learned that you really don't really eat much unless you do work. And so it's a well-earned meal because you pretty much work your ass off.*

Tavis further asserted that "Generally, almost every place that I've gone to get a job, they've actually turned me away and hired people that were lined up behind me. So yeah, it's racist. I've got a

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[20] Youth Build is an alternative school where young people attend full time. Youth Build is a job training and a pre-apprenticeship program whereby young people work under the supervision of journeypersons to renovate homes and develop building skills.

lot of job training experience. It's just that no one wants to hire a big Native guy that looks all beaten up and scruffy. It's always stereotypical."

Jared's solution to finding a home and a job was to move in with his girlfriend and become a father:

> *Some of the barriers I've had since turning 18 was finding a place to stay, trying to keep money in my pocket … I ended up solving that problem by just shacking up at my girlfriend's. I was just basically staying there for free. We ended up having a kid. Now I've quit drinking because I'm just relaxing being a father, trying to find a job. I'm just trying to support my kid in the right way. Yeah ever since leaving CFS that's my only barrier is finding my own place and a job, that's about it, it's just supporting my son and trying to find a job still. That's my barrier.*

Many of the participants shared that they were trying to stay motivated and focused on completing school or training until they are able to find employment. Carson positively remarked, "So I'm just starting to find a job, which is hard at the moment but the bright side to all this is now I'm out of the system. I don't have to worry about being told what to do anymore. I can actually do what I want." Kevin shared the following about his efforts to finish school and get a job while he is still in an extension of care:

> *This is a placement that is keeping me in school that is keeping me fed. I got all these opportunities coming up, jobs and being lazy … well not lazy but hardheaded. I didn't expect to turn 18 and for it to be all like this. I thought it would be like you just get your IDs and you could go to a bar or something, but it ain't like that. You actually have to do something with your life like get a job. A couple of things that I have learned that is pretty hard is just going face to face with someone and ask for a job. I'm in need of one, I'm 18 but I'm still in a placement right now until I'm 19 for school purposes.*

Finding a place to live was cited as being another big barrier for many of the participants while others indicated that they started paying rent to their foster parents immediately after turning 18 and then found themselves in their own apartment within two to three months. Some indicated that they did not have a place to live when they first left care. Adele said she moved to Thompson to live with her aunt and got a job. She starting "helping her auntie pay rent," but then moved back to Winnipeg when she met her boyfriend. She has since moved in with him and his family. Teagan shared that she was currently homeless and couch surfing with friends and family. She asserted that

while she was homeless "it wasn't stopping her from getting her life back on track and "looking for her own place to call home." Most of the digital workshop participants currently live with other people. Many shared that they were either in extensions of care, or living temporary with family members until they were able to get a job and get their own apartment. Jace is the only participant who owns a home and lives with his girlfriend, but he also was significantly older than most of the participants and indicated earlier that he had experience no barriers around obtaining employment, which would explain his ability to be able to purchase his own home.

5.1.3.2 Challenges

Challenges were considered by the workshop participants to be things that were difficult to obtain but not insurmountable. Quite often participants talked about the challenge of getting their identification after turning 18, obtaining a driver's license, learning to pay bills and be independent and relying upon themselves as some of the challenges they faced post-care. Included among these challenges were things like the loss of supports and resources and learning how to love and trust again. As in the previous section, the narratives below draw upon the discussions held around the talking circles, as well, these topics were mentioned by many of the participants in the videos they produced during the digital storytelling workshops.

5.1.3.2(a) Challenges Getting ID and Obtaining a Driver's License

Participants indicated that they had faced the challenge of obtaining the necessary identification coming out of care. As one person put it, "I had to learn to do everything on my own." Tavis summarized his perspectives on the challenges he's faced in regard to getting identification as a person who is still in an extension of care placement:

> *There are a lot of barriers coming up to light because when you turn 18 you don't have much of your IDs. Certain things you can't get without guardian signatures. Well I'm 18, I don't have a guardian anymore and they're like, oh well, you've got to get it on your own. Well how am I supposed to know where all these places are, I've never been anywhere? I don't know where these*

places are cause I was never taken there. I wasn't shown where to get this stuff. Like the Manitoba Health Card, you basically need that for everything. Your ID, you need that for everything. Your birth certificate, that too, and without your parent or guardian it's really hard to get that stuff by yourself because you don't know where to go, you don't know what you need. And sometimes you can't get one without getting the others. So there are a lot of barriers. Like I didn't have any of my IDs or anything and I did get told that I needed a guardian to sign papers just to get my status card.

Another challenge cited by the participants was obtaining a driver's license. It was said that without a driver's license it was difficult to get a job and without a job it was said to be equally difficult for most to pay to obtain a driver's license. Most of the participants did not have access to a vehicle to practice for the road test. In fact most of the participants were driven to and picked up from the workshop by others. Getting a driver's license was considered to be a "pretty huge achievement." Many participants spoke of working toward getting their driver's license and hopefully a job so that they could eventually purchase their own vehicle and enjoy a bit more freedom and mobility.

5.1.3.2(b) Independence, Paying Bills and Budgeting

Learning to be independent was considered by many of the participants to be a challenging task in their post-care lives. Cain summarized his thoughts on this in the following way:

The barriers that are blocking me are not having my mom and dad there anymore. Every morning I would wake up and I would usually hear a knock on the door because there was always someone there to wake me up, but now that isn't happening anymore. I have to find independence inside of myself, like find the responsibility inside myself to raise myself up every morning, to get up there. You've got to do it on your own.

Many of the participants also lamented about paying bills and the challenge of learning how budget. The oldest participant, Jace, who has long since learned how to budget, summarized some of the difficulties, besides budgeting, that he experienced when he first moved out on his own:

There are lots and lots of challenges. Like I never learned how to budget. I learned a little bit about doing my laundry because I was doing my laundry. I had cleaning duties in my foster home since I was 8, so I had to take care of my own laundry. So every other life skill that you have, I didn't know how to do. I had like pizza pops for my first year because I didn't even know how to cook. I got into debt really quick because I was making money but I didn't have anything. I had value village clothes my whole life. ... So I went to eat out all the time because I never got to go to

restaurants. I went and brought myself all these brand name clothes because I never had that. I was the loner, loser kid because I was wearing just hand me downs, whatever. So I just blew my money and got into debt. Like not getting paid and not making it out of my overdraft, having my electricity cut off, my water cut off, like every bill imaginable. Credit card companies calling me; creditors after me just because I didn't know how to handle having money.

Other participants shared that they had received no guidance about how to budget or how to pay bills. As one participant shared, "I had to figure everything out on my own. It was hard learning these things." Budgeting and the payment of bills were skills that they eventually had to learn on their own as Tavis explained:

Oh no, I learned that by myself. I learned how to budget, I learned how to save money but no one taught me how to pay bills, no one taught me any of that. I have to say keeping up with bills and having a place to live, is one of the best achievements you can get, but keeping your funds going and keeping your bills paid is kind of hard. Yeah sure I've got my place but I don't know, like I need a job to pay the bills because I need money. But it's really hard to pay the bills when you don't have money. And similarly you're going to end up losing your apartment.

5.1.3.2(c) Loss of Supports and Resources

Turning 18 and transitioning to an adult means loss of supports and access to resources that many had come to rely upon when they were previously in care. It was noted by some of the participants that they are no longer eligible to access many of the supports and resources they had when in care now that they are considered adults. Tavis shared his thoughts on the need to continue accessing some of these supports and resources:

Well I know that when I was under 18 there was a lot of resources that I could access and fairly easy to go to. But when I need them in any way … I guess in an emergency situation or when I'm unable to take care of myself or finding help in anyway, rather than when I'm 18, like I am now, some of those resources are no longer accessible. I've got quite a few now but only in emergency situations. Like my social worker, I can call upon him and he can help me out and a close number of staff they'll do the same but anybody else, it's actually a pretty tight schedule for them and sometimes it's really hard to access.

Some of the participants felt that "people have turned their backs on them" and feel a little like they've been "thrown to the wolves," as Tavis shared:

Well judging how I used to live, I used to have people take care of me quite a bit but now that I'm on my own in my own apartment, people don't seem to have that much time for you, it's oh you're old enough you can take care of yourself. And they expect you to do your best on your own but in the

meantime you haven't been taught these things so it's pretty hard, especially since you don't have experience to take care of yourself since you've always had someone watching over you.

Those who were in extensions of care recognize that they had the option to stay in care or branch out on their own. Some of the participants in extensions of care spoke of understanding that for now their basic needs were taken care of and that they would lose vital access to some of the resources that they've come to rely upon if they chose to leave care, as Tanner observed:

I'm 18 now, I've been offered by a couple of different people to go live at their house for free. All I have to buy is my own food, that's it, until I finish high school. Once I finish high school that's when I can start paying rent to them they said. Or if I decide to go to college, you can just sleep here and do your schoolwork. I said, all right, I want to go do that, but then I won't have the exact same supports that I do, well what I have now, cause then I won't be able to work with my mentor and I won't be able to work with my tutor or anything.

5.1.3.2(d) Not Knowing How to Love

While learning how to love again was not a challenge identified by the majority of participants, it was a specific challenge mentioned by Jace that is worth noting. For Jace, searching for self and learning how to love were challenges that presented barriers to his wellbeing as an emerging adult. He spoke of facing a number of barriers stemming from his past child welfare experiences. In his video Jace expressed his barriers in the following narrative:

After leaving care, I faced many emotional and physiological challenges from my past experiences. Having felt rejected and an outsider most of my life, I adapted to my situation by taking what I wanted either through stealing, manipulation or force.

Jace also alluded to other specific deficits that he recognized in himself. The deficits that he identified were connected to skewed perspectives on relationships and love after care. Jace indicated that after leaving care he had few "real relationships" and felt lost. In his video he shared the following:

Like any child, all I wanted was to be loved or feel I was worthy of love. I felt that need was not met in my youth and sought after it in the wrong ways as an adult. I had a skewed view of what being in a relationship was and what love is. Reflecting back on past relationships, I now see how I hurt and used my girlfriends to fill an internal void. To this day I still struggle with what love is, and wonder at times if I am capable of a selfless love or do I just take?

Essential to Jace's understanding was how he had come to know that he used and manipulated people to get what he needed to overcome his past. In regard to this, Jace highlighted the following as one of the most significant challenges he has had to deal with in his post-care life as an adult:

> *Not knowing how to love I just jumped from relationships to relationship. I was never really shown love as a child. So I was using girls to fill a void in myself whether it was through one-night stands or jumping through relationship after relationships, just trying to fill this void in my chest that I was missing. I was missing myself, but I was trying to find it in these females. I was almost trying to use them as a motherly role, a nurturing role that I never really had. I never really knew love. Previous to that it was to get something for me, to get like I'm missing something. Like even the people that I call my parents now, like I used them, I just used them and I manipulated people. I did whatever I needed to do to get what I wanted out of a situation because I felt deprived of everything. So that's how I spent 10+ years of my life and it's just like meeting this girl who just gave me the time and patience and helped me grow and then being able to give back. Now that is the only time that I feel I am starting to heal and overcome all this other stuff.*

It can be equally said that most of the participants in the workshops, like Jace, were looking for meaningful relationships. While some of the participants were still in extensions of care, there were other participants that shared similar stories of drama in their personal relationships.

5.1.3.3 Opportunities

The participants talked about education and training, future aspirations, having friends and mentors, being free from the system and having their own families as some of the various opportunities that had occurred for them since leaving care. Each one of these themes is explored briefly below.

5.1.3.3(a) Education and Aspirations for the Future

The participants spoke of some of the opportunities that were presented through education. Some talked of having to leave school early because they had children after leaving care. As Adele disclosed:

> *There were so many challenges after being discharged. I was expecting my first child not long after. I was a high school drop out. It was very hard. I had to find a way to provide stability for my new family and do my best to raise my child in a positive environment. My family has since grown. I am now a university student and a filmmaker. I now have a beautiful home and happy children.*

In the process of finding employment, Cain, who was involved in the first workshop, talked about some of the opportunities he took advantage of through the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs' Urban Eagle Transition Centre. These training opportunities provided him with a number of skills and experiences that were vitally important for building his resume.

> *Opportunities that I had … I had an opportunity working with AMC, Eagle's Nest, Phase 17, they had taught me about family life skills, and how to take on roles and taking care of a family, from cleaning a house, to cleaning up the yard, taking out the trash, doing basic chores, teaching your kids, how to discipline your kids, how to raise them the proper way in today's day. Another opportunity I had was to be a part of carpentry, working with wood. So that's another one I'm actually glad for. Another opportunity was that I had was getting my food handlers, being safe with handling food. Another I had was CPR – I learned how to save a life. And the other was ASSIST, something about preventing people from committing suicide.*

Others spoke of being engaged in seeking out learning and training from institutions like the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology. Participants shared that they were learning how to be welders and carpenters and to hopefully become apprentices in these fields. Tavis stated that he had gone for basic training and was waiting to hear whether he was accepted into the military. Adele shared that she had initially dropped out of school after leaving care and found opportunities through a program called Jobworks[21] where she felt at home, met a lot of good people, and was actually proud of herself when she finally graduated. While initially it was an aspiration to attend Red River College, Adele sought to continue her education somewhere else:

> *I ended up moving to Winnipeg so I just thought I would get my education going, so I went back to school and that didn't work out very much because I was always wanting to bitch. I didn't need to be around people that were almost like the people that I was living with when I was in CFS. I ended up dropping out. I finally went back when I was 23. That was when I went to Jobworks and then I graduated from there. … I will be going back to school in September. I was supposed to get into Red River College, but my application didn't get accepted so I went with another one* [training program].

Mackenzie indicated that he finally graduated and was accepted into the University of Manitoba and because of this believed that his opportunities were beginning to expand. To this

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[21] Jobworks is an adult learning centre in the City of Winnipeg that provides students with a variety of academic and vocational programs (http://www.jobworksschool.com).

Mackenzie added that participating in the digital storytelling workshop presented an opportunity to present his story as a way to help other youth facing similar situations:

> *I feel now that ever since I graduated and got accepted into the University of Manitoba, I feel that most of these barriers and challenges are little in comparison to the opportunities that I'm faced with now. Like even just sitting here you know, this is an opportunity to present a story, to present all of our stories that will one day touch kids that are going through the same thing that we were going through because Manitoba has the highest rate of kids being in CFS.*

Upon graduating from high school some participants feel greater opportunities will open up for them. Some indicated that with a little more experience and education they might get into the field of work that has interested them ever since they were children. Andrea, from the first workshop, for instance, stated that one of her goals was a plan to work in the United States film industry. As part of that plan Andrea had hopes of one day "working with The Rock[22]" and she looked forward to taking a "selfie with him" as a sign of having met that goal. Octavio who was still in care identified his aspiration to someday be a pharmacist or perhaps become a counselor, but he also identified as being an artist and a songwriter and that he had alternative aspirations and hoped to one day, write, and eventually record his own music.

A good majority of the participants said that they learned a great deal from one person, a common mentor to most of the workshop participants, who they admired. Many expressed perhaps becoming a social worker like the mentor they admired and who also just happens to be a social worker. A few indicated wanting to follow in his footsteps and indeed one of the participants from the second workshop was already, on the side, fulfilling a counselor-like role with other young men in care while he worked full time.

Those who had indicated that they were in extensions of care were still in the process of completing high school. One of those participants, Tavis, expressed optimism that he would

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[22] "The Rock" is the ring name of Dwayne Douglas Johnson. He is an American and Canadian actor, producer and semi-retired professional wrestler, who signed on with World Wrestling Federation (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwayne_Johnson).

complete school and graduate in the coming year. Tavis' pride and optimism are evident in the following narrative taken from the talking circle discussions from the first workshop:

> *So far, I'm doing pretty well in school. I have one more year until I graduate. I'm still missing nine credits; hopefully I can get them this next year. From coming into the city from having only nine credits, only missing nine, that's a damned good achievement to me. I know everyone used to say oh he won't graduate, he's not the type, and he's not very smart.*

Tanner, who identified as still being in care, mentioned that one positive opportunity for him was the chance to be tutored. The tutor represented and opportunity to deal with a learning disability (dyslexia). As Tanner noted, the tutor was important for helping him achieve independence later, "An opportunity that I have is my social worker is trying to help me get more independent and she got me my own tutor because I am dyslexic. I need my tutor to help me break down words into syllables because I'm not too good at reading my syllables." This same individual noted that besides finishing high school and graduating his other number one goal is to prove to those who didn't think he was going anywhere in life that "they were wrong" about him.

5.1.3.3(b) Friends, Family, and Mentors

The participants from both workshops highlighted the importance of having children, friends, family and in particular, many spoke of mentors who were instrumental in helping them access resources and connecting them with training and job opportunities after leaving care, including encouraging them to participate in the digital storytelling workshop for this research. "I just want to be one of those people that can shine a light on the dark days of people. And my mentor gave me a good opportunity to participate in this workshop. I said I honestly could not refuse because I want people to know my story," said Tanner who is still in an extension of care placement.

Children play a central role in the post-care lives of the participants who are now parents. As Mackenzie shared about becoming a father at such a young age:

> *I gave up my chance to be in childhood once I produced a child. I didn't have the luxury after that. After that I was constantly … like everything was about money, feed my kids, clothe my kids, and get pampers. It was just part of growing up. Like you have to leave the childish things behind in order to look forward and get a better future.*

Adele, at the time she participated in the second workshop stated that she has been with her boyfriend since they were both 17 years old. For Adele the relationship with her boyfriend was an opportunity that brought purpose, meaning and stability to her life. She shared that while they did go to school together for three months, she eventually dropped out, but he was also her inspiration for returning to school. Jace, on the other hand, also spoke highly of the important role that his girlfriend played in his life:

> *Four years ago, I started to date my current girlfriend; at the time she was another woman to fill a void. Since then she has shown me more love and support than I knew was possible and has stood by beside me when she should have left. She has shown me what true love in a relationship is and can be … my saving grace was meeting the girl that I'm dating right now who comforted me and let me grow and heal on my own.*

Carson shared similar perspectives about his girlfriend:

> *I quit for a while and then I started drinking again and I started smoking marijuana, like tons of marijuana but I pushed myself too far and I had a mild stroke because of the marijuana that I smoked. It was too much for me. After that that was a life changing thing and that's when my ex, every time we broke up, I never told her I loved her, so I told her you need to let go because I don't want you to be there. I don't want you to lash out at me, so when I came back all those times, like I had all those struggles and then I thought for a while so I asked her back and she took me back. I always said that if I ever asked her back, I wouldn't be the guy that I am today because she saved me; she saved me pretty much. She showed me a love that I never had for a long time.*

Mentors were said to play a significant role in the lives of the majority of the participants who took part in both workshops. For instance, Adele spoke on the significance a certain support worker played in her life. Adele felt "he was a big part of her life because he helped her see things differently." She further added that "he connected her to other support people from the community" and helped "connect her to elders, cultural advisors and cultural events and activities that started to slowly change her life" for the better. Jace also reiterated the same sentiments about two individuals that he looked up to as his mentors. Of the first mentor Jace shared that he felt he

was lucky to have met this person who got him into doing support work and giving back. The opportunity to give back he said was "honestly what saved my life because I was pretty suicidal for a long time" because he had felt lost and lonely. Jace further stated, "If it wasn't for him I wouldn't have the skillset to do anything." In his video Jace alluded to a second significant person who "opened a path for his healing journey through the Aboriginal culture" and helped him to connect to himself in a way that no other person could." He also spoke of the significance of this mentorship in the following way:

> *He was a social worker and gave me an opportunity to be a mentor and friend to youth that were in similar situations that I was once in. He gave me accountability to someone other than myself and gave me the opportunity to experience my first moment of selfless love.*

Jace stated that he believes that if he hadn't met these two individuals he didn't know where he would be where he is in his life now. As he noted, "it was a struggle with so many things that were the by-product, I guess, of growing up in the system." Carson held similar views and opinions about the person he valued as a mentor:

> *Just two years ago that's when I met the best person that I say is. I wish I knew him when I was younger … he was there. He gave me inspiration. I told him I'm just happy that you're here to help me. He gave me opportunities. He gave me work when I needed work. He was there when I needed someone to talk to because there was times I could say these past two years were the worse time in my life because I lost a lot of people in my life that I loved and I didn't get to say goodbye or that I didn't get to see in two years.*

Other participants spoke of wanting to follow in the same career paths as one of their mentors. These mentors often are social workers and community based service supports. As Tanner explained, "That's what I want to go to school for is to become something like [my mentor] to help others because I don't want people to be seeing the things that I've seen. I honestly do not want that. No one needs to see what I have seen. No one should be able to see that."

5.1.3.3(c) Participating in Cultural Events

The participants from both workshops indicated that through friends, family and the significant mentors in their lives they've had opportunity to be involved in cultural events that have played a part in their healing. Jace recounted an understanding of how important the healing journey was to him. Jace's words bare repeating here as his thoughts point to a metamorphoses from a being a self-centered person to being a person that other young people could count on in times of need:

> *Starting this healing journey through sweats and Sundances and being able to do the support work that I do now … that's the first time in my life that I kind of felt a selfless love where I will give anything for the kids I'm with. They call me at 3:00 in the morning. I'm up and I'm there no matter what happens. I'll help them out because no one was there like that for me. I never really knew love previous to that. It was to get something for me, to get like I'm missing something. Like even the people that I call my parents now, like I used them, I just used them and like I manipulated people. I did whatever I needed to do to get what I wanted out of a situation because I felt deprived of everything. So that's how I spent 10+ years of my life … now that's the only time that I feel I am starting to heal and overcome all this other stuff.*

A number of participants in the first workshop were able to identify their spirit names. Some introduced themselves speaking the Ojibway language. Tanner said that he participated in cultural activities because he felt that "it was the only way to be able to get back on the Red Road." He further recounted on the significance of the role Elders play in the cultural realm within his video. He noted that his mother had contacted a number of Medicine men for the purpose of obtaining advice on how to deal with him if he expressed thoughts of suicide.

Carson who participated in the second workshop recounted that he had wished he had the opportunity to learn more about Indigenous culture when he was younger and in care. He summarized his thoughts on the opportunity to be exposed to Indigenous culture by saying, "I love my culture. I don't really have words to describe how much passion I have for it." Tavis said, "I would have to say one of the best opportunities that I've had is to go back and learn some of my traditional ways. I'm hoping to build an arbor for a Sundance. Helping younger children kind of learn traditional ways and types of dances so it's pretty interesting."

5.1.3.4 Concurrent Challenges and Opportunities

Workshop participants described a number of situations as being both a challenge as well as an opportunity. That is, they shared perspectives that point to situations that they considered to be concurrent challenges and opportunities. For instance, it was noted that drugs were readily available to young people within the city, making it both a challenge and for some, an opportunity as Cain asserts in the narrative below:

> *The other thing that I have experienced too was drugs. That was an opportunity. I'm going to put that in the opportunity part because it is obvious that I made that choice to go out there and do drugs, that's the first mistake I made. It's easy to access in the city. I'm not going to lie.*

5.1.3.4(a) Being in Care Beyond 18 Years

For the four participants in the first workshop, being in an extension of care situation was seen as being both a challenge but also an opportunity. It was considered a challenge because it held them back from independence despite the fact that they are legally considered adults now. One young man simply stated that he was looking forward to his freedom. Another indicated that his previous involvement with a gang set him back educationally; at the same time being in an extension of care was seen as being a challenge because it now means that he has to stay in care longer in order to complete high school and graduate. At the same time he noted that for him being in care afforded him the option of accessing supports and services that he wouldn't otherwise be entitled to as a person who was no longer in care. For this particular participant, his dyslexia held him back from graduating at the same time as many of his peers. For another participant, being in care provides him with a stable placement and has helped him stay out of trouble and out of jail.

5.1.3.4(b) Becoming a Parent

In addition to facing the responsibilities and challenges of being an adult, having a child so soon after leaving care was seen as another situation where some of the participants took it be an

experience that was both challenging, but a rewarding opportunity at the same time. As was previously shared by Andrea, "there were so many challenges after being discharged. I was expecting my first child not long after. I was a high school drop out. It was very hard. I had to find a way to provide stability for my new family and do my best to raise my child in a positive environment."

The challenge with having a child in the emerging adulthood phase of their lives means that some participants who became parents young recognize that they themselves still feel like children. They are trying to reconcile the feelings of having been in care and facing the responsibility of being a parent despite not having parents to help guide them into a parental role. As Jared explained:

> *I feel that adulthood for me started when I had my son because everything changed. While I could go out and drink and party if I wanted to I didn't because that's what my Dad did and he left me. I never had a father as a kid. I just don't want my son to know how that feels and I don't want him to go through that and wonder where I am or who I am even. So I want to be there for my son and try to be a responsible adult.*

Another challenge expressed by Jared was for his child to be involved with the same system that he just recently left, as he stated, "when I had my son my worse fear is for him to get involved with CFS." This ultimately became a reality for Mackenzie when he shared that "basically I'm in the same position because now my mother is looking after my daughters." He noted that his biological mother "stepped up" when his first daughter was apprehended at 2 months. Mackenzie stated that he was okay with his daughters being placed in the care of his mother because he hadn't been ready to be a father at such a young age. His mother was the only one that he felt was actually there for him when he needed help. The following narrative evidences Mackenzie's commitment to change for the sake of his daughters.

> *I've overcome challenges and great barriers everyday to become a father. It made me realize that I had to change, not for me, but for my daughters, to become the man they need me to be … to be they man they need me to be I had to leave childish behaviour behind because my daughters need me and I need my daughters.*

5.1.3.4(c) Rebuilding and Re-establishing Relationships

Many of the participants in both workshops pointed to the challenge of re-establishing relationships with their family after leaving care. This was seen as being a challenge as well as an opportunity. As Jace noted, "it hasn't been all bad though. I have been really fortunate in my adult life to have met some amazing people who have shown me the meaning of loyalty, family and love." Jace further added:

> *After leaving care and having no real relationship with my biological family or foster parents, I felt lost. And that respite worker who once worked with me has taken me into his family. He has supported me and shown me love I previously had never experienced, treating me as a son. I struggled with what it meant to be a part of a family for many years, worrying that they would figure out who I really was or leave me like so many others had.*

For Teagan, returning to her family after care has become an important source of strength and support for her. Her narrative speaks to how important family is in her post-care life:

> *Everyone leaving me was me was a big eye opener and it feels so good doing things for myself … I got a huge support system and that's my family! I don't know where I'd be without them. They help me a lot and I appreciate everything they do for me.*

Learning to understand why he was in care, Tanner explained his thoughts on not trusting some of his family or even knowing who all his siblings were and why his father left. Tanner spoke of how his father has reached out to try and make a connection now that he is an adult:

> *I may not trust some of my family members; I have 14 siblings in total. I personally know 7 of them – all my mom's side. On my dad's, I only talk to the twins, they are 12 now. On my dad's side, I am the oldest. On my mom's side I am the third. My dad might not have been there for me for my life but he's starting to try and come around now but I at least appreciate him trying to get into my life. I even appreciate those messages he sends to me every morning now. I wish I could have gotten closer to him and knew him better. He was gone for a reason. I'm not going to ask him for what that reason was. Maybe he wasn't ready. He couldn't support me at the time. That's the past. I don't really care about it anymore.*

Lastly, Andrea shared her challenges of rebuilding and re-establishing relationships with both her mother and father post-care. Andrea's response however evidences a situation that is an opportunity, which has shifted the way that she now views her parents and how important they have become to her and her children in her post-care life:

Another challenge and barrier I guess was trying to build a relationship with my parents. At the time my mom was homeless on the street, which is why she couldn't take care of me. So it was very hard to come to terms with her situation and to have a relationship with her when she was living that life. And my dad he was never really involved with my life. Right now we are trying to build a relationship. We just found out he has cancer so I'm trying to build a relationship before he goes. Both of my parents have a great relationship with my children so that makes me very happy even though they couldn't be there for me as a child, they are there for my children, so I'm very grateful for that.

5.1.4 Summary of Responses to Second Research Question

Participants identified a range of barriers, challenges and opportunities in their responses to the second research question. Participants identified barriers as obstacles that were difficult to get past or over. Barriers identified included feeling alone, lost, having trust issues and residual anger from being in care. In addition, feelings of depression and thoughts of suicide were mentioned. Leaving criminal activity and gangs behind were also considered a barrier. Racism and lack of job opportunities often led to difficulties finding a place to live. Challenges were viewed as being difficult to obtain, but not necessarily insurmountable. For instance, challenges revolved around difficulty getting identification and the inability to get a driver's license without access to a job or a vehicle. Challenges included obtaining a sense of independence and learning to budget and handle the responsibility of paying bills along with the loss of access to resources and supports they used to have when the participants were previously in care. One participant cited a significant challenge experienced in his post-care life relating to his ability to learn how to love again. Participants identified opportunities related to educational pursuits and having aspirations for the future about what they wanted to do in the future. Friends, family, and mentors were identified as important as they connected them with other opportunities that bring purpose to their post-care lives. Another important activity mentioned as being an opportunity related to involvement in cultural events, activities, and ceremonies important for healing. Being in an extension of care placement upon turning the legal age of majority, trying to rebuild and re-establish relationships with family after

leaving care, and becoming a parent were identified by some participants as being issues that presented challenges and opportunities at the same time. A more focused examination of the narratives that the participants shared about the challenges and opportunities presented in re-establishing the connections to family, community and culture is more fully explored in the next section.

5.1.5 Results Pertaining to Research Question Three

On the third day of the workshops, participants were asked to reflect on how and whether they had maintained connections to family, community and culture. This question was intended to explore the following:

- What happened (or what they thought would happen) in the efforts to connect with their families once they left or leave care;
- To understand what those ties are now for the participants, if any; and
- To know whether or not they were connected to their communities and cultures, and if they received any guidance in understanding themselves as Indigenous adults.

5.1.5.1 Connections to Family

The connection to family was strongly highlighted in the responses by the majority of the participants. The strength of the bonds to family was evident before many were placed in care and throughout their time in care. Although several noted that the ties to family were tenuous once they left care, others felt they had better contact with their family once they left care. Mackenzie made the following statement that supports this notion, when he commented, "I feel that since transitioning out of care I have better contact with my family. It seems like CFS tried to keep me apart from my family." Adele, made a similar statement:

> *With my family I wasn't very connected to them when I was in care but these days, it's pretty good. I'm really close with my mom and my sister. I haven't seen my brother in about 6 years, my oldest brother. We still talk on the phone here and there. I still talk with my three little brothers and I guess actually, I feel closer to them now these days.*

Adele spoke of how she was disconnected from family upon leaving care. She noted, "At first coming out of CFS I really didn't have family to turn to, but as the months went by, I started talking to my mom and now these days I am close with her, and my sisters and my little brothers and also my older brother." She further added that crossing over into adulthood and having to transition alone and doing so without her family for the first couple of years was difficult. In her mind it was "worse than being in care." Others spoke of their strong need to be with family. As Adele put it when she was in care, 'I just started to spiral out of control because of my need to be with my family. I started to miss curfew, I was missing so much school and I lost my part time job."

For other participants, they spoke of having fractured relations with parents and extended family. The following narrative speaks of this fracturing, which was taken from Carson's video narratives:

> *How I maintained my connection with my family on my mom's side? … well I didn't since they really put off a feeling like they didn't care and they were doing fine. So I didn't dwell on it too long. But on my dad's side, they helped me out, called me to see how I was doing. So I can say I kept a close connection to my family and my community on my dad's side.*

A number of participants believe that as a result of being in care, they no longer have connections to their biological family. They shared that they had maintained a connection to their foster parents instead, because for many of them, these people represented parents they were as close to having parents as they would ever have. Cain spoke of how his connection to the foster parents in his life began to wane over time. The following narrative reflects this particular participant's understanding:

> *Once I turned 18, I was basically on my own. ... I may have support from the foster family. I felt their love and affection, and they met my physical needs every now and then, but after awhile it kind of just turned onto me because it was my responsibility.*

The same participant indicated that he used the following techniques for maintaining that connection with his foster family:

The way that I maintain a connection to family is I either give them a call, email or text, any way that I could and I find a way to talk to them. For sure I can contact them. I can usually face time them too with the iPhone.

Participants shared that keeping in touch with their family was done primarily through the Internet and Facebook. A male participant from the first workshop stated that although he was in care with a foster family in Manitoba, his foster parent have since moved away to British Columbia. Since they've left the province he maintains his connection with them through the Internet and through Facebook. Octavio, from the first workshop, who was still in care and living in the city of Winnipeg, also shared similar methods of connecting with his birthmother who now lives in Brandon. He noted that, in addition to connecting through Facebook with his mother, they connect daily through texting. Jared shared that he made a point of going to visit his mother every day. Others noted that their family has always been there for them, as Teagan emphasized:

I got a huge support system and that's my family! I don't know where I'd be without them. They help me a lot and I appreciate everything they do for me. … So yeah, I don't know, my family has always been there. Whenever I need them I can just go and see them whenever I want. … Usually my family is sticking together. When they get a house they would all move into together. It's like a big house and we would all live together, but we all went our separate ways and now we just live on our own. I don't see them that much but I could go see them whenever I want.

For Jace, he did not have a choice about continuing to maintain contact with family because his main biological parent (mother) passed away. Jace noted that the other remaining parent (dad) never played a role in his life while he was in care or later in his post-care life. He later found and adopted people who became like surrogate parents to him in his post-care life. Jace further elaborated on how he came to eventually find people that resembled family for him:

I don't really talk to anyone in my biological family. My biological mother died from brain cancer in 1997. I don't really know my biological father and I don't ever really want to know anything about him just because of how he really was. So I really don't talk to anyone there but I had an old respite worker when I turned 18, I never really knew where to go or had a strong connection with anyone and he kind of took me into his family and you know, from being in foster care from the age of 6 and being moved to like 6 different homes, I didn't really know what family was because anytime … I thought this could be a family I was moved again or was told like no, we're not your family sort of thing. So I never really knew what it was so it took me a long time to really learn what it

was to be a part of a family and be in a family, just not having those experiences growing up. So this old respite worker he kind of … like I never lived with him but that is where I go for like Christmases and stuff and celebrate my birthdays and his whole family has really accepted me and has taken me in and that's kind of my family now.

Mackenzie noted that he had not been very well connected to his family but for him, his daughters eventually became what he called "family" which is reflective in his narrative, which was extracted from the talking circle:

I wasn't really connected to my family in the first place and I really didn't feel the connection. I just went out on my own. I was my own family. My daughter was my family – that's how I'd see it. That's my immediate family – my daughters. That's how I look at it anyways.

Mackenzie, in another moment of reflection, stated that he did not want to maintain contact with family simply because he didn't want to be seen as being dependent on others:

I've already lasted so far on my own. Why would I want to be co-dependent on someone? I already knew that I was good on my own. I already knew. I made a family out of the streets and that is what kept me going through those teenage years.

As it was stated earlier, grandparents were identified as being significant to many of the participants. Carson, who left the First Nations community where his family originated, described the loss of connections to his home community and his grandparents in the following way:

For my family or for my reserve community from where I come from, I really don't have any connection. So it's kind of like a sad part of that. I wish I did because I miss my granny and my papa who I had seen every day until I moved out of the reserve. They've never contacted me. They never called me but I said to myself, no reason to pity, I should just move on.

In the following narrative Kevin lovingly highlights the memories of time spent with his grandmother, which embodies the reverence and respect he still has for his grandmother. He shared that this was not something that would be considered as significant to others but it was important for him to share memories of his grandmother and about the importance of the connection he had in sharing the same last name with her:

Basically my life in CFS, it started after my grandmother gave me back to my mom and I was probably around 11-12ish. I grew up in the bush, in a community where your grandma could just go yell your name on the porch and you'd be back there in like a minute. I grew up with a very spiritual grandma. She threw me in the bush when I was seven years old for three days. I knew what

to do. She was very spiritual like that, always talking about the Creator. She did 27 years of her life in residential schools. She said she was surprised to keep her last name. I got my last name from my grandma.

5.1.5.2 Connections to Culture

The majority of the participants considered culture an important element in their daily lives post-care. Many spoke of smudging and participating in sharing circles, attending ceremonies connected to sweat lodges and participating in Sundances. Some participants said that they "tried to get to a sweat whenever they could." Adele shared that the first time she attended a sweat she was 20 years old and that it was a "pretty good" experience. Other participants highlight going to powwows as a way in which they stay connected to culture.

Others don't feel a connection to an Indigenous culture. Teagan noted that she "was not really into her culture" while Cain stated, "I wouldn't really say that I kept up with the culture, I just basically learned about it." Cain further shared the following in responding that he did not have a connection to culture at this time, despite having been exposed to some cultural elements:

> *And my culture, well I'm not sure what to say? I've never really had a connection to culture. I'm not saying anything or bad or anything about it but I just learned about it and the seven teachings. So that is the main thing about our culture. I don't know if I keep in touch with it or not. It's kind of still in my life on a daily basis. I respect it all.*

The disconnection with culture starts with the way culture was viewed by the participants' parents who may have been exposed to the dichotomous Christian teachings received through residential schools. This is evident in the messages that some participants were exposed to when they were younger. Andrea explained in the following narrative why she feels disconnected from her culture and how it is now becoming important to her despite the contradictory perspectives of her parents:

> *And for culture, yeah, I've always kind of been disconnected from my culture. My dad went to residential school so he's a survivor and all my grandparents went. My mom is a Christian so she always taught me that my culture was wrong, which I guess was passed down to her from her parents being in residential school. So I didn't get to learn my language and well, since having children I've*

obviously have a deep interest in learning the culture. I take my kids to pow wow clubs and things like that. We smudge at home and we listen to a lot of pow wow music. When my kids are fighting that's kind of how I calm them down. I just throw on some traditional drumming and they shut up.

The narratives from other participants signify a healthy enthusiasm for Indigenous knowledge where many expressed desire to have learned about their culture when they were younger. The following narrative evidences Carson's perspective about culture: "My culture - wow what can I say? I don't really have words to describe how much passion I have for it. I wish I knew about my culture when I was younger." Another comment made by Kevin about culture was cultivated through his earlier experiences in school:

> *I learned about culture when I was 7 or 8. I was going to Niji Mahkwa School and that's where the first time I was smudging and I was amazed, just the smell of it and the feeling after you've done a smudging, it's an amazing feeling. We smudged every morning and all of a sudden we go in the classes where they are speaking Ojibway. If you're Ojibway you go to Ojibway classes or if you're Cree you go into Cree classes and all that stuff. We had sharing circles and it was really life learning just being in a circle and just learning about people deep inside and they are trusting you to keep that inside that circle. I learned more about my friends hanging around in a sharing circle because they opened up and I was like, wow! I went to pow wows and I was amazed at all of the dancers, the drums and the singing. It was pretty amazing. That's why one of these days I would become a dancer, maybe I can.*

Octavio shared that his father had facilitated his connection to culture at a young age but that over time it stopped. I suspect that it stopped because of his placement in care, but it also may have been because Octavio was incarcerated and also because he father had passed away while he was in care:

> *My dad was a very traditional person and my mom always encouraged us to be spiritual. My father and me would go to sweats, on visits, and smudge, and tell stories. … my spirit name is Running Red Buffalo Man and I'm with the Wolf Clan and my dad is from the Wolf Clan and my mom is from the Eagle Clan. I used to drum with my Dad a lot. He used to teach me songs and things. We made a rattle one time and an eagle whistle. And we've painted drums and made them and stuff like that and smudging. We used to be very into that. I don't know what happened. I guess I just got older and more busy and stuff.*

Jace also mentioned healing from participating in culture and that he learned about the culture from one of the persons that he most respected as a mentor. In regard to this, Jace expounded further on how essential it has been for him culturally and spiritually:

I have healed with others like me in sweats, sharing circles, and Sundance. … Culturally, I just started to get into the Aboriginal culture. I've been exposed to it. I'm just starting my journey through going to Sundances and sweats and ceremonies. I want to continue and grow and experience this culture because it's really facilitated my healing for myself by following this path and finding a level of spirituality. The people that I call my parents they are not into any sort of religion or culture, so I'm kind doing this and experiencing this on my own through another family essentially, and the action therapy group has actually kind of become like a second family to me for the cultural and spiritual side so.

Tavis expressed an interest in learning all the traditional ways, including learning his language. He noted that his interest came from visiting family back home in his community in Ontario. He shared his previous experience in helping set up a structure for a Sundance in the following narrative:

I'm going back to the traditional ways, learning all these different things. … After visiting with them I took a great interest in the traditional ways of my family and when I got back here to the city, I pretty much started looking into it. It's pretty nice because I found it really interesting. One thing I'm really looking forward to is finding an Elder to teach me how to speak Ojibway. The one thing that I really want to do is try and learn my traditional language, but there is not many elders left who know it completely.

5.1.5.3 Connections to Community

Of the different kinds of connections that were discussed by the workshop participants, connection to community was least mentioned. The participants identified being from a number of First Nations communities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario while one of the participants did not identify the community that he was associated with but identified it was in Ontario. Few participants were able to speak of having deep connections with their communities of origin. Tavis described his connection to this community as being a "50/50 thing." Tavis further stated that he barely goes back to his community and feels sadden by this disconnection, however he did state when he does go home to community, "he loves it." Cain mentioned that he often maintains his connection to his community by "being a part of every event, every function, and to just be a part of the community and to be there when they need him." Adele indicated that while she knows what community she comes from, she has not been back to her reserve community in well over 10 years.

However, she quickly added that she would like to go back one day. Andrea has maintained a connection with family in her community reserve. Returning to her home community was a way in which to connect with her own father whom she really didn't know while growing up.

Many of the participants indicate that despite being affiliated with a First Nations community, they have never stepped foot in their communities. As Cain said, "I've never really been to my reserve. I don't really know how it is out there." This last statement could be taken mean that ties to extended family and access to community for some participants are tenuous or that they have been severed because these connections have been severed by the experience of being placed in out-of-home care. It could also mean that the participant's family had left the community and as a result the connection to community slowly died out or that some of the participants had not been given an opportunity to visit their communities with family.

5.1.6 Summary of Responses to the Third Research Question

The narratives in relation to this question evidence a range of family ties between the participants. Some are very connected to their families, while others have learned over time to reconnect with family. Others indicate that the choice to reconnect with family wasn't an option when they emerged out of care because family members were unknown or had passed away. The narratives highlight that some participants continued to identify their foster parents as being the people they maintain family connections with while others have chosen to seek out other people who could stand in the place of a family whether this is through connection with friends or others. In one narrative children have become the family that one participant now connects with the most in his post-care life beyond child welfare. Some participants also reported feeling disconnected from their culture as well while others expressed interest in learning more about their cultures. The narratives above evidence varying perspectives on how the participants responded to the question on whether or not they felt connected to their cultures. For some it has been a fairly new experience,

whereas for others, their knowledge of their cultural background had been cultivated through family, school and mentors. These narratives also show that many of the participants are not connected to community as many reported having never been to the First Nations community they are affiliated with nor have they returned to these communities since being placed in care.

5.1.7 Results Pertaining to Research Question Four

The fourth and last question asked in the talking circles focused on having participants identify whether they thought they had reached adulthood? Participants were asked to reflect on whether they feel they had personally reached adulthood. I asked the participants to reflect on how and when they knew they had reached adulthood. I also asked them to identify if there were any events, any cultural markers, or anything that might have occurred that indicated to them that they had reached adulthood. Given the different ages and experiences of the participants there were different responses about whether they had reached adulthood. Most of the participants indicated that they were still trying to figure out whether they considered themselves to be an adult. Eight of the 12 participants had indicated that they felt they were not quite adults yet, while four identified as believing they reached adulthood. The four individuals who felt that they had reached adulthood were Andrea and Mackenzie from the first workshop and Jace and Adele from the second workshop. The responses below point to some of the different perspectives held by the participants about reaching adulthood. It should be noted that one person offered more than one perspective about this question. There were 12 different kinds of responses that arose from the discussions with participants in the talking circle and from their video narratives.

5.1.7.1 Adulthood is Just a Word

Four participants believe that adulthood as just a word. The narratives below evidence this perspective:

- *Adulthood to me those are some words I can't put towards me, not yet. I'm still a kid, learning how to become an adult. For now, I'm just a pre-adult, learning to find my way in the world.*

- *The word adulthood, honestly it just means a word itself. The word adulthood is just basically a simple line that makes you seem you're mature. I don't think it means anything.*

- *But for me I guess adulthood is just basically a word. No one really becomes an adult cause somewhere along our life we're growing and we all had that kid part in us that unleashes in bad moments good moments whether it is good or bad. … So adulthood to me is just nothing. I'm not an adult.*

5.1.7.2 Not Feeling Like an Adult Yet

A number of participant indicated that they did not feel that they were adults as the following statements indicate:

- *When I turned 18 I didn't really feel like an adult.*

- *I personally don't think I'm an adult yet I still have a lot of growing up to do.*

- *I don't think I've reached adulthood yet even though I'm an adult but I still have a lot of growing up to do.*

- *When I turned 18 I definitely wasn't an adult. When I turned 25 I don't think I was an adult.*

- *I think I am building up some life experiences. I don't think I'm an adult yet. I'm still learning to handle my responsibilities, but I am looking forward to my freedom.*

- *There is no much I could say about this about where I am in my life right now because right now, I'm not anywhere. I could really honestly put that out there because I ain't [sic] anywhere in life. So what I would say is that where I am right now is that I'm just completing my first baby step because I actually just went down and now I'm just getting myself back up to what we call today is an adult.*

- *I thought I had reached maturity, I guess adulthood was when I turned 17. I guess it kind of kicked into me when I was in my last year of high school. In grade 12, I guess I started to think ahead, but I had too much to the point where I didn't feel like an adult after graduation because all these responsibilities took a beating on me. So adulthood to me is just nothing. I'm not an adult.*

Jace, in particular, indicated that he felt that having grown up in care forced him to become an adult but in many respects he also felt that he was still a child. This dichotomy is clearly articulated in his response below:

I feel like growing up in care you have to become an adult in some aspects way quicker than you should, and that you stay a child in some aspects longer than you really needed to and that's kind of what it was for me.

5.1.7.3 Reaching Adulthood Before 18

Mackenzie responded that he believed he had reached adulthood before he had reached the age of 18. His perspective on this point is set out below:

To me I believe I reached adulthood before I turned 18. I believe I reached it when I was 15 because I was already independent and on my own. Really I didn't ask for anything or any help from anyone because no matter what, I was going to have to do it on my own anyways. … It's hard cause when you're dependent on yourself … I didn't really have no one there ever since I was 14. I just left home. I left everyone that I knew behind. I didn't see anything coming from it but I automatically knew that one day the decision making would be up to me. Yah, that's what I think.

5.1.7.4 Graduating from High School

Some participants see graduating as a sign or a marker that they have reached adulthood. The perspectives on this point are reflected in the three different narratives below:

- *I guess the time I knew I became an adult was when I graduated from school and got my grade 12.*
- *When I was in care I went to school up to grade 12 and I graduated.*
- *I did go back to school and I graduated. That's when it actually really hit me, hey, you've grown up and it made me feel more motivated to get my life on track and just stop all the dumb stuff I was doing before.*

5.1.7.5 Working, Ability to Support Self, and Not Relying on Parents

Some of the participants also identified getting a job, the ability to support self and having a place to call your own as the signs that evidence adulthood. Also it was mentioned that adulthood means not relying on your parents. These perspectives can be gathered from the statements set out below:

- *To me adulthood means you start working and start taking care of yourself, stop relying on your parents, just being more responsible.*

- *Responsible, caring, trustworthy: I got those but I don't consider myself an adult cause I can't support myself. I don't have a place to actually call my own and I really can't support anybody else. Until I can do those things, maybe then I will consider myself an adult, until then I'm still a child, I'm still learning.*

Travis who made the last statement above further explained that adulthood is a process of accepting oneself as an adult:

> *I don't consider myself much of an adult. I believe that I have the characteristics yes of responsibility, a good work ethic and trustworthiness, but I am unable to support myself, let alone if I am going to have to raise a family, I won't be able to support them. I don't have a job. I don't have a place to actually call my own, which I am paying for. Basically, yah, I've had a lot of achievements that I would consider a process of adulthood, but without a place to call your own, like if you can't support yourself and all that. I'm not much of an adult. I'm still a kid. I don't find myself to be. I'm mature and all, but there's some times where I just have to act like a kid. When I was growing up, I grew up way too fast. I was taken out of my home. The world is a cruel place. But I never considered myself an adult even though I was on my own for a while. I still got a lot of learning. I'm just a child until I get enough experience to finally accept myself as an adult, until then I'm just going to learn.*

5.1.7.6 Becoming a Parent

A number of the participants from both workshops felt that becoming a parent signified that they had reached adulthood or that it was incumbent upon them act more mature for the sake of their children. Jared and Mackenzie identified letting of go of childishness or childish behaviours as important aspects to being a parent. This understanding is reflected in their respective narratives below:

- *I feel that adulthood for me started when I had my son because everything changed. While I could go out and drink and party if I wanted to, but I didn't because that's what my Dad did and he left me. I never had a father as a kid. I just don't want my son to know how that feels and I don't want him to go through that and wonder where I am or who I am even. So I want to be there for my son and try to be a responsible adult. Yah, I've got to take care of my son and I guess, stop being childish all the time and stop hanging around with my friends all the time. I cut down on that. I actually quit drinking when I had my son. Well actually I quit drinking when I found out that she got pregnant. I haven't touched a bottle in a few years. Yah, I just want to be there for my son when he grows up so that he knows he has a father in his life cause I didn't have that. It's kind of hard because I don't really know how to be a father cause I didn't have any kind of father figures in my life but I'm trying to address it.*

- *When I turned 18 the reality kicked in … well, when I turned 17, the reality kicked me in the ass because that's when my baby mama gave birth to my first daughter. Then I had to leave my selfishness behind … my childishness behaviours, things that I wanted to do, things that I*

wanted to be. I started to see clearly that these little girls are the reason to give me hope because just knowing [inaudible] … that light came from me. I was a part of making that and how I see that is that I see it as maturity. I believe I have grown since then.

A statement made by one participant was contradictory in that he noted that becoming a parent didn't necessarily mean he had reached adulthood. Carson put it this way: "Even though I'm a parent now to my 7-month-old daughter, I still feel like a kid."

5.1.7.7 Adulthood Requires Courage

Becoming an adult was seen as a choice that requires courage. Moreover, it was seen specifically as being a responsibility and that it takes courage to decide to be an adult. The following quote from one of the talking circles highlights Cain's perspective on the courage of choosing to become an adult:

> *Well I think it is up to you. It's your choice. It's your responsibility. It takes courage I guess. It's the courage inside of you that makes you an adult; that means you step up and be a man. That's your choice.*

5.1.7.8 Adulthood is Serious

It was also said that becoming an adult needs to be taken seriously. Kevin, who is in an extension of care placement, stated that he had not taken turning the legal age of majority seriously enough because of his own worries facing adulthood:

> *What adulthood means to me is a jump from teenager to mature younger person and this way of life. When I first turned 18 I didn't take it so seriously up until now because of worrying about a place to say, food to eat, IDs, and adult charges.*

5.1.7.9 Role Modelling and Finding Purpose

Some of the participants indicated that it was important to have role models to teach one how to be an adult. Carson remarked that he had never learned how to become an adult because he didn't have role models when he was in care to teach him how important it was to cross over from

being a youth toward being a responsible adult. Carson made the following statement on the importance of having a role model:

> *For me, when I turned 18, it was kind of like just a number changing. It's the same thing, you just turn 18 and that's it. Yeah you get a lot more responsibilities and you do a lot more stuff. It's hard for me because I really didn't have those role models to teach me how to be an adult when I turned 18. It's kind of hard when you have no role models.*

One surprising statement made by a Jace was about how important it had become to him to become a role model for others and to put others before himself. By becoming a role model Jace became aware of how his actions would be viewed by the young people he was in turn mentoring. For this participant becoming a role model signified that he had reached adulthood. This perspective is nicely summarized in Jace's statement below:

> *I started to define and feel like an adult when I actually started owning up to and take responsibility for my actions. For the first 10+ years of being legal, I was partying and doing drugs and living from the bottle and not really taking responsibility for any of my actions so I didn't really feel like and adult, but when I started becoming a support worker, then I realized how my actions can affect other people and how they perceive me. I didn't want the kid that I'm hanging out with and trying to be a positive role to experience myself in that light. So when I started to feel responsibility for someone else and putting other people before me and not being so selfish, that's when I felt like an adult. So it was many years of still acting like a kid and not feeling any sort … sure I owned a house and I may have a job but other than that, I didn't feel like an adult until I started being a role model. I felt very accountable to these kids I work with to be that strong rock and person, somebody they look up to and that made me realize how my life choices can affect other people around me and that's when I started to feel like an adult.*

This same participant elaborated further that finding his purpose and calling in life helped him reach a level and state of maturity where he now recognizes that he is an adult. Jace's views on finding his purpose are noted below:

> *Yah I had to figure out what I wanted to do and what I was supposed to do. I had a huge problem internally with being this like 20-21 year old lifeguard and all I am going to accomplish in life is to be a city employee and it was a huge internal struggle of what I want and try to find a purpose in life. I didn't feel I had a purpose. For 10 years I just felt like my wheels were spinning around in a circle and not really going anywhere or accomplishing anything and then the support work job it opened up my life to everything. That's when I found a purpose and then once I found that purpose everything kind of morphed into place and adulthood. But previous to that, yeah, I was just a reckless youth, feeling invincible or not even thinking about what the future holds, you know, just living for the weekends and then when I stopped living for the weekends and focused on my future and growing and other people, that's when it all kind of clicked into ok now I'm being responsible,*

not just for myself but I'm being responsible for others around me and that was kind of what clicked in for me.

5.1.7.10 Making Mistakes, Being Ready and Optimistic for the Future

The participants who were still in extensions of care when they participated in these workshops expressed hope for their future. For instance, Octavio stated in his video, "I am looking forward to my freedom." For other participants they are still in the process of understanding what it means to be an adult and note that making mistakes is part of the process. The following statement was taken from the narrative in Teagan's video:

> *Recently I started seeing the light, I smartened up and started bettering my life. I'm homeless right now but its not stopping me from getting my life back on track. Now I go to school. I'm in grade 12 graduating in June 2016. I'm looking for my own place to call home. Now I actually do things for myself to better my life. Everyone leaving me was me was a big eye opener and it feels so good doing things for myself. I don't drink anymore and I don't do drugs. I cut down a lot on smoking weed and I'm just going to look forward in my life and never looking back. People say I live in the past but I'm living for my future now. I got a huge support system and that's my family! I don't know where I'd be without them. They help me a lot and I appreciate everything they do for me. One day I'll have my own family but right now I need to work on myself.*

Some of the participants indicated that they were ready to be an adult. In particular, Andrea shared: "I didn't come from a life of privilege. I'm not where I want to be in life just yet. I know I have so much further to go, but I'm ready to be an adult."

5.1.8 Summary of Responses to the Fourth Research Question

The narratives above substantiate the perspective that the majority of participants did not feel they have attained adulthood yet. Only four of the participants felt they had reached adulthood while one indicated that she was ready to take on the responsibility of adulthood, and yet another felt he had already attained maturity well before reaching the legal age of majority because he had sought out his own independence. For some of the participants "adulthood" was just a word and it didn't describe their circumstances yet. The markers that participants suggested a person has attained adulthood were identified as graduating from high school, and having the ability to work and

support themselves without relying on their parents. For other participants, adulthood is closely connected to becoming a parent or at least is a call to act more maturely for their children. Not all of the participants felt that they had reached adulthood just because they have children. Other participants indicated that to become an adult requires courage because it is also a stage of life that needs to be taken seriously. One participant indicated that role models are necessary in helping him to navigate what it means to be an adult while another highlighted that in the process of becoming a role model he found a purpose that elevated him to adult status. The last theme highlights the feeling that learning to be an adult requires that one be allowed to make mistakes and some participants noted that they are ready to take on the responsibility of being an adult.

5.2 Findings from the Post-Workshop Interview Questions

The post-workshop interviews took place with most participants the week following the conclusion of each workshop. Ten post-workshop research questions were designed primarily to understand the participants' experience of participating in the workshop and their involvement around developing their digital storytelling videos. This section of the chapter focuses on the post-workshop interviews regarding participants' views and perspectives about their experiences in the digital storytelling workshops. The questions for the post-workshop interviews were: 1) Was there any particular reason why you initially wanted to take part in this digital storytelling workshop? 2) Did you have any prior expectations of the process? 3) Did your experience match up with your prior expectations of the process and the workshop overall? 4) What were your reasons for taking part? 5) How did these compare to the actual experience? 6) How did you feel during the process? And immediately after it was over? How about now? 7) Has it had an impact on your life in general? And why do you think that was? 8) In what ways was the digital storytelling workshop positive or

negative? Was it useful? If so, how? 9) On reflection, how would you sum up your experience? And lastly, 10) How did you find the process overall?

Participants were asked to share personal opinions and provide further feedback on the digital storytelling experience and any in-depth learning that emerged from the videos that were produced by them and the other participants involved in this research. The date and time of these interviews were mutually arranged between the researcher/workshop facilitator before the workshop concluded. The participants were provided with a letter reminding them that they agreed to meet and participate in a post-workshop interview about their experiences with the workshop. Interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission (the participant reminder letter along with proposed post-workshop questions can be found at Appendices I and J). Post-workshop interviews took place primarily in restaurants where a meal served as compensation for their time and participation. Some comments were also provided via phone and through email. Interviews took anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes to conduct. While there was a total of twelve participants who participated in the two workshops, three were unable to participate in the post-workshop interviews due to other commitments that conflicted with the timing of other interviews or the researcher or participant's availability. The following narratives reflect upon the nine participants' afterthoughts regarding their experience in the weeklong digital storytelling workshops.

5.2.1 How Participants Learned of Workshops

Participants were asked to reflect on how they had come to learn about the digital storytelling workshop. Three participants said they had learned about the workshop through people and/or social workers associated with a local community education group[23]. As one participant from the first workshop shared, a social worker "called me up and told me and I had an interest in it right away." Others indicated that they learned about the workshop from a local social worker in

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[23] The name of the group is withheld at the request of the participants.

Winnipeg who has over 30 years of experience working with and providing intervention services to at risk youth, parents, other service providers and through various systems (education, justice, and child welfare). One participant mentioned learning about the workshop through another youth program within the city.

5.2.2 Reasons for Participating in the Workshops

Participants were asked to share the reasons why they initially decided to participate in the workshop. It appears that many of the participants decided to be involved in the workshop at the suggestion of a social worker that they knew. As one participant shared:

> *Well the way he came up to me and asked me if I wanted to do this for him, I was like, yah I'm totally down but what made me really think of it is that I could tell my story and I could see so many little kids looking at my story and then after that they are inspired to follow the way that I'm trying to follow now, which is the Red Road of life.*

Many of the participants shared that they participated as a means of getting things off their chest and jumped at getting a chance to talk about their prior experience of being in care. As Adele noted: "I did ask what it was about and was told that it was about young people who have been in CFS, so I guess I thought I would go and see and get some things off my back and just talk about it." Carson noted that what interested them about the workshop was "The CFS part I guess. Getting a chance to tell my story. I've never really talked to anyone about it." Mackenzie indicated that he participated in hopes of building upon his experience and interests. He said, "I don't know, just for experience. It sounded like something that I wanted to be a part of, like video making and digital arts." Andrea put her thoughts to this question this way, "I wanted to share my experience and maybe encourage someone in a similar situation." Jace summed up the reason he participated in the following way:

> *I was drawn to the idea that these stories can help change policy regarding the challenges of aging out in care. I was also hoping that by sharing my story, people in similar situations might be able to relate to my struggles and know that they are not alone facing these problems.*

5.2.3 Prior Expectations

I asked the participants to reflect back on whether they had any prior expectations coming into the workshop. Some understood that the workshop was for research and that they would get paid for participating. Some indicated that while they knew they were going to get a chance to speak about their child welfare experience, but they had no idea they were going to produce their own videos about their child welfare experience. Jace said, "I was not sure what digital storytelling was or how the workshop would be held or run." One participant found that participating in the workshop was something new and different. "I think it is good. I guess I haven't really met any people that have done what Marlyn is doing." One person was under the impression that she would be participating in a cultural learning event as was shared in this comment:

> *Honestly I thought it was going to be way, way different. The way he told me it was going to be was cultural learning. He said we were going to learn about our culture, that's why when I came, it was like, oh we're doing something else because we were talking about our past life in CFS now and how we are doing once we are out of CFS, once we aged out.*

Others reiterated that their prior expectations did not match with the eventual experience of producing a video as one participant indicated: "I just thought maybe we were helping Elders move stuff around or something like that for other people, that's what I was figuring", while another person was told they would be involved in "doing something, a project" but "really didn't know what it was." One person commented that they were surprised "how friendly everyone was" and that this was something he had not expected. Another indicated that his only prior expectation was to "have fun and get to know other people" while another said the reason she took part in the survey was to "start a healing process."

5.2.4 Reflections on Experience and Expectations

I asked participants to reflect back on whether their actual experience matched their initial expectations of the workshop. Most of the participants indicated that their experience matched their

initial expectations after they learned what was expected of them on the first day. Those participants who were unaware of what they were getting involved in expressed being initially cautious of what they would experience. Once they learned what the workshop was about, they were pleasantly surprised as one participant shared, "From what I thought, I thought it was going to be a little boring at first but then everyone was joking around and having fun. You don't get to have fun very often with a group of people, especially when you first meet them and I didn't feel that way around you guys and around the digital making experience. It actually helped that I could open up and just be open on the first day." Another noted, "I liked it. It was something different I guess and I just had fun." One participant noted that he didn't realize that he would be producing a video and noted the difficulty he initially experienced in learning the program. He noted that the experience "was pretty amazing" but also noted that, "It was kind of a struggle at first because I didn't know how to use that program but once you get the hang of it and you copy and paste and put it together, it's pretty cool." Jace commented that his experience matched his expectations. In particular he shared that "I felt bonded to the other participants. The researcher was knowledgeable, helpful and very compassionate." He further added:

> *Knowing the story behind the researchers and the intentions to use this information, I felt that it did compare to my actual experience. The digital storytelling made my story come to life and I felt more genuine.*

5.2.5 Participants' Feelings During and After Workshops

Participants were asked to reflect on how they felt about the workshop both during and after the workshop had concluded. Participants shared that they enjoyed the entire process both during the days they attended the workshop as well as after they completed the workshop. Some stated that it was intimidating the first day that they attended the workshop because many were sceptical that they could actually produce a video within a week. As one person noted, the first day of the workshop was, "kind of intimidating" but they acknowledged that it was something that "would

keep them busy" and it was "better than drinking and going out." Participants indicated that they "had fun" and eventually came to feel comfortable in sharing their story not just during the workshop, but also eventually after the workshop. Andrea stated that the workshop "felt good, it was well organized and very culturally involved." Carson came to realize the importance of having participated in the workshop. To expound upon this he shared: "I kind of felt nervous to show people what I actually worked on. I'm kind of a shy person with me being in front of a crowd, that's when I'm kind of shy and don't want to say anything but now that I made this video and accepted all these things for it and you are putting it on the Internet or whatever, I just hope a lot of young people see my story." Others noted that what made them keep returning day after day to the workshop was the opportunity to learn, as one participant shared: "Just the learning. I like learning. I like learning new things. I liked hearing the other people's stories and their struggles and how they have overcome it because once you learn how other people overcome their struggles then you can help others overcome theirs you know." Others reflected on the challenge of learning the software to produce the video while some had had prior experience with the software and were able to help some of the other participants. As Cain stated, "I have an interest in making videos and learning how to produce a video. So like in school I kind of learned about a computer so that is the reason why I stayed. But I kind of got somewhere to the point where I had to share my story. So I guess that was a good start right there." Another participant noted, "I delved in. I like to take on challenges because I think that is part of learning." Jace shared the following about how he felt about the workshop process:

> *I felt very welcomed and that my story was important and needed to be shared, during the process. I felt that it was conducted in a manner where I felt safe and was an enjoyable experience. Immediately after I was excited to see the other participants' final projects and see what they had created.*

5.2.6 Impacts

Highlights from the workshop that stood out in the minds of the participants included things like having the chance to be reflective about their time in care and being in a safe environment where that could happen. Adele said, "I just kind of remembered a lot of times from being in care. The experiences were kind of both good and bad and it felt good to get it out." Many of the participants spoke of how therapeutic it was for them to participate in producing videos about their experience in care and about their lives post-care. The chance to tell their story as well as the opportunity to share their experience was cited as primarily one of the biggest impacts they could see from being involved in the workshops as the following quotes imply:

- *Yeah it had an impact. Like I've said, just releasing our feelings and letting people know. It's the best thing you know. That's what I learned. It's not better to hold things in, it's better to talk about it."*

- *I kind of felt … you know … at first I didn't feel too comfortable with it but then as I got more into telling the story I kind of felt more into accepting this. This is my story.*

- *Impacted my life? … It made me want to do more with my life than just living in the past, but yeah, it did. I want to go back to go to school and meet new people because the people I met at your place were really good people and you're really good people.*

- *Well it got me to open up a lot. That's a big impact opening up. Other than that I just feel a little bit of a weight off my shoulders because I held that in for a while, but I guess it is kind of a coincidence that I had a chance to tell my story, maybe it was meant to be told.*

- *I think recording your story then trying to find images that reflect your words is a powerful medium. It forces you to slow down and think about your past. For me it is easy to forget the past and just keep moving forward, this workshop helped me reflect on my past and take the time to analyze some past experiences I put out of my mind.*

Others spoke of feeling passionate about telling their story because only they "can tell it the way it was." Many of the participants felt good having participated, but many also expressed sadness that the workshop was ending. Adele shared that after the workshop ended she had dreamt about the other participants and that the workshop "just continued" in her dreams. Adele shared the following commentary on her Facebook about how positively she viewed her experience in the

workshop (the punctuation and spelling and grammar as originally expressed by this participant has not been retouched):

> *Whats up ya'll xD just sitting here at this workshop here and let me tell ya this is what I needed for so long…I had a lot of things going on and plus had a lot of bad memories from being in care when I was young and now that I have other young people that went through the same things as me when I was in care I feel like I wasn't alone…im happy I got the opportunity to be here an im thankful I got my mom and my sisters and my brothers who I am very close with and most of all im happy to have my boyfriend brent that will and always be there for me (happy face) just want to say thank you (heart) iv'e learned so much these past 3 days here and now that the week is coming to an end i feel a bit emotional cause marlyn and mike are very happy people and im glad to have met them…there awesome and I really hope marlyn gets her phD she deserves it and I know she will!!! Anyways got get going here…im in the process of editing and making my own video.*

Participants highlighted that they felt a sense of accomplishment as a result of their involvement in the digital storytelling workshops. As one participant shared, "How did I feel when it was over? I feel like I accomplished something really good. Something that people can actually look up to. I'm proud of how I am now. I've come a long way. I still feel happy." Another participant, reflecting how he felt now that the workshop had ended, said that he felt "like I achieved something, that I told my story, like I turned my story into a video. It's good because at least talking about it, it helps with the inner images that you have in your head and you can show people and it helps them to realize what you've been through and the reaction you get is, 'oh hey, I went through the same thing' and they can get over it." Jace said that participating in the workshop impacted him positively. In particular he stated "it made him think about what family is and what a family does for each other." He further added, "It made him feel closer to his girlfriend" and helped him "focus on where he is in life and how he got there, including where he wants to go." Lastly, one of the impacts I was told by one participant was that she was happy to have met my assistant and I and to have the chance to learn more about storytelling and getting her feelings out. She shared that "I got to meet you guys. I learned more about storytelling and I got to talk about and get my feelings out with CFS."

Although most were happy with the resulting video they produced, some participants did express disappointment. For instance, Andrea was disappointed in her video because she was unable to complete it in time and shared, "I wasn't happy with how my video turned out, a lot of the files I was trying to use were missing."

5.2.7 Participants' Workshop Highlights

In addition to being fun, food was often mentioned as being an important part of the experience that stood out. As one participant noted, "I didn't think I was going to have that much fun over there and the food was great too. That part was awesome." Another noted that he enjoyed being a part of the workshop and "all the food" while others overwhelmingly suggested that the "candy was great too!" In particular one person shared his perspective about what stood out for him was the food and the opportunity of meeting the other participants:

> *The food. It was pretty good. I never ate like that in so long. It's usually just KD (Kraft Dinner) and sometimes it would be like take out. It was pretty awesome and actually learning and meeting new people, meeting those girls and actually getting to really know (---) and not just to see him, and just to meet more people.*

Meeting the other participants and hearing other peoples' stories were also mentioned as some of the things that stood out for another one of the participants as is reflected in this quote:

> *Well hearing other stories that's one thing. Other than that I got to know other people. I got to know a couple of people and learn about who people were. That's what I like to do is meet new people and hear their stories, who are they, and where are they from. So I think that part was good.*

Mackenzie identified the questions asked during the circles, and which formed the basis of the videos is what stood out for him. Specifically Mackenzie stated that, "Those are some pretty deep questions. You actually had to go in there and think about it. When I was the first one with the talking stick I was like 'fuck, my whole life was like flashing before my eyes.'" Jace shared what stood out for him as being:

> *The welcoming, genuine, and caring way the researchers ran the workshop really stood out for me. Sharing and hearing the stories of the other participants was a heart-warming experience. The*

realization for myself about how past actions were still affecting me in a negative way was a good release for me.

One of the participants almost didn't return to the workshop because he had not returned home the night before and consequently missed his ride to the workshop the following morning. We were told that he would not be returning to the workshop, but he was determined to finish his video and returned to the workshop that very same day, although late. He shared that, "I woke up somewhere in the North End and I was so close. It was a good thing I had all my stuff with me. So yeah, at least I still had this bus pass and I was like, yeah I can still go!"

5.2.8 Positive/Negative Aspects of the Workshops

The experience of participating in the digital storytelling workshops was seen as being mostly a positive experience by all of the participants. Many indicated that they were glad to have been a part of the workshop. With the exception of one person, the majority of the participants had never being involved in the making of a video before. The one person who had a prior experience making a video did not have the experience of using the software to put together a video but felt that by the end of the workshop she "was able to learn some editing skills." Consequently, each participant shared feelings that they had learned valuable and useful skills that could be used outside the workshops. Some participants even considered taking the skills they learned beyond the workshop and looked forward to producing their own videos unrelated to the experiences of being in care. One participant shared that she had wanted to do a follow-up video about her boyfriend who had previously been in a short documentary detailing his experience as a football player. She was looking forward to using her newfound abilities to expand upon what was highlighted in the earlier video previously made about her boyfriend. Many of the participants said that after the workshop ended, they were going to download a trial version of the software and expand upon their knowledge of the software and take time getting to learn how it works on their own time. One participant did make a

short video focusing on his daughter after the conclusion of the workshop. Adele asked if we would ever be hosting another workshop because she said her sister had expressed an interest in attending and wanted to produce her own video too.

5.2.9 Screening of Videos

Although the participants in the first workshop did not invite friends and family to the viewing of their videos, many indicated that after the workshop concluded they had shared their videos with their foster parents and other significant people in their lives. One of the foster parents who had viewed one of the videos expressed surprise that more hadn't been said in the video as he exclaimed, "Video looks good, I'm very surprised on how little he says about anything. Shame, would have been nice if he actually told his story." The participants in the second workshop all invited one significant person to attend to the viewing of their videos where the efforts of the participants were celebrated. One of the guests invited to partake in the showcasing of the videos shared a testimonial of how moved and grateful she was to have attended the screening of the video and to have been a small part of this event. Her written testimonial can be found at Appendix O.

The opinions that participants had after viewing each other's videos ranged from the perspective that "some of them were kind of funny" to the fact that they were "very nervous but excited to share their videos" while other participants "didn't feel nervous" at all. I believe, that for the most part, all of the workshop participants expressed feeling proud of themselves and proud of the videos that they had produced individually and collectively. This pride also acknowledges that these videos play an important role in educating future generations and quite possibly their own children. The following quote made by one of the participants supports this sentiment:

> *No, I wasn't nervous. I'm happy for more people to see. That's the thing, it was pretty cool. just looking at other people's videos like how they have been through CFS, how far they have came from then and now. It's pretty amazing. People are strong. It doesn't matter what you go through, you've got to be strong and one day you'll come to that point and wow, I didn't give up, I made it here. That's why I'm happy where I am. I didn't give up. I had a lot of reasons to give up but I guess*

there was something in the back of my head that made me realize that one day you're going to have a kid, so that's why.

5.2.10 Overall Assessment of Experience

The narratives below highlight some of the comments made by all of the participants when they were asked to assess their overall experience participating in the digital storytelling workshops.

- *I found the process to be very interesting. It was a great subject to explore. A lot of the questions asked are very relevant to the lives of the participants; the information gathered can maybe change the way the child welfare system works, and even though the participant were over the age of 18, I think that there can be plans/strategies that can be put in place and/or used to improve the lives of those who have aged out of care. I found the workshop to be very valuable.*

- *All I can say is you two are wonderful people and you guys are so generous and always making us feel so comfortable and always asking us if we want something, like 'do you want a coffee?' … It was very easy because when we needed help we asked and you helped us. It was a very straightforward thing and you really helped us. It was very, very positive. It was very nice.*

- *It was positive. Nothing negative. I can't really say anything is negative. I'm really highly positive about most things.*

- *The experience was opening up and clearing a weight off of your shoulder, meeting new people, hearing other stories, it's kind of an honour … it's an honour to be sharing something that other people might be going through. My past could be someone's future so you never know what will happen.*

- *In my eyes you're smart people and you put a lot into it, so you had commitment too. Yeah you did a good job too coming from my eyes. I can't say anything bad because nothing is ever perfect. That's when you get doubt. That's what I think. You get let down. So I try not to say anything negative, can't say anything bad or wrong. Nothing's ever wrong.*

- *Pretty good. I got to meet people from all different paths. I feel like honestly I didn't have it as bad as some of those guys. It actually just opened up my mind cause I was getting tunnel vision. Yeah it was just really good.*

- *I didn't think I was going to have as much fun as I did making the video and bonding with the new friends that I have right now. I don't think I'll ever get another chance like that so I had to take it while it was there.*

- *I was a very positive experience. It has been useful in showing my friends and people who I care about my life and the struggles I faced coming out of the foster care system. It has been a tool for me to reflect back on my past and something I can always come back to and re-watch.*

The last question I posed to each of the participants who consented to participate in the post-workshop interview was whether they were interested in attending the oral defence of my dissertation. While this was not an identified question listed on the post-workshop questionnaire, the participants all expressed an interest in knowing the next steps. All of the participants stated they were interested in being a part of that momentous occasion.

5.2.11 Summary of Responses to Post-Workshop Interview Questions

The narratives from the post-workshop interviews were positive and evidence to the researcher that the workshops were successful. Participants were drawn to the workshop because it was recommended by a social worker they knew and respected, but they also indicated that it was important as it provided them with chance to tell their story and to be able to do so in a way that was creative, fun and meaningful for them. Some participants indicated that while they understood the workshop was for individuals who had previously been in care, many were not aware that they would be producing a video in the process and so were pleasantly surprised that they were actually able to do what they thought was impossible on the first day they attended the workshop. The participants' narratives highlight that the workshop was a positive experience and that they felt a sense of accomplishment on having produced a video about their time in care and post-care. Overall, the participants assessed their experience in the workshop as being a healing experience. They found the process to be engaging and interesting. Food was important in bringing the group together. Meeting other young people with the lived experience of being in care was also mentioned as a highlight. Lastly, the participants who participated in the post-workshop interview wanted to continue to be involved in this study and all expressed a desire to attend the oral defence of the dissertation which is based upon the narratives of their talking circle discussions and videos.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the results of the data analysis and more specifically on the responses to each of the research questions asked during the talking circles held during each of the workshops. It incorporates the narratives from the videos produced by each of the participants including the narratives captured from the conversations the researcher had with a select numbers of participants after the workshops ended. Their digital stories are an important contribution to the literature and to the understanding of the transitioning, after-care experiences and emerging adulthood issues of First Nations individuals with prior child welfare histories.

The next and final chapter, Chapter Six, discusses the implications of the research findings for child welfare and concludes with recommendations for further research. Findings are compared with other research on emerging adulthood, and special attention is given to the use of digital storytelling as a methodology in doing research with young Indigenous adults with previous child welfare histories in light of the particular contributions this study has made.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

Through two digital storytelling workshops this study was designed to investigate the experiences of First Nations emerging adults transitioning out of care in Manitoba. The purposes for my study were three-fold: intellectual, practical, and personal. As discussed in the introductory chapter my intellectual goal was to generate insight and contribute to knowledge about the individual and collective transitioning and post-care perspectives and experiences about First Nations emerging adults with child welfare histories, in order to promote and offer opportunities for better understanding for subsequent generations of Indigenous adults emerging from care toward adulthood. My second purpose was to conduct research that had a practical purpose, and one that centered on a collaborative process that incorporated a technology that was appealing to today's emerging adults. My third purpose was personal as well as professional in that I wanted to make sure that I was not utilizing a process that was exploitative and at the expense of the individuals who decided to participate in my workshops. Based on my own in care experience and transitioning out of care myself, I believe that digital storytelling is a way in which I could contribute knowledge, encourage capacity building, and at the same time incorporate a supportive healing and reconciliatory outlet for each of the participants. This was an opportunity to test this belief. These purposes lead to the research questions that were asked of the participants during the workshops, and a series of questions were developed to assess the participants' experiences in developing digital stories. Four research questions were explored in this study. They were: 1) What do you remember about your time in care and what was your transitioning experience out of care upon reaching 18 years of age? 2) What challenges, barriers or opportunities have you experienced since leaving care or turning 18? 3) How have you maintained the connection to family, community and culture since

transitioning out of care? And lastly, 4) have you reached adulthood? These questions were discussed throughout the storytelling workshops. Embedded within the 12 videos produced during these workshops were the participants' own individual responses to these research questions. Follow up interviews were conducted with the participants to get feedback on their perspectives and their evaluative comments about the digital storytelling workshops. The questions for the post-workshop interviews were: Was there any particular reason why you initially wanted to take part in this digital storytelling workshop? Did you have any prior expectations of the process? Did your experience match up with your prior expectations of the process and the workshop overall? What were your reasons for taking part? How did these compare to the actual experience? How did you feel during the process? And immediately after it was over? How about now? Has it had an impact on your life in general? Why do you think that was? In what ways was the digital storytelling workshop positive or negative? Was it useful? If so, how? On reflection, how would you sum up your experience? How did you find the process overall?

The current study represents the first study to use digital storytelling as a method to elicit the experiences of First Nations emerging adults who were in extended care or who have aged out of care specifically in Manitoba. In this chapter the meaning and implications of the findings presented in the previous chapter are discussed. The key study findings are summarized in Table 7. The table is organized into five distinct areas identified from the participant's collective responses.

Table 7: Key Findings from Participant's Responses

Negative Pre- and In-Care Experiences and Memories	• Memories of parents' alcohol and drug addictions; Domestic violence experiences • Being split from siblings – the significance of siblings • Multiple placements – where participants were placed (i.e. group/foster homes, hotels); Good and bad experiences; Living with strangers; and Learning restrictions • Being abused in foster care (i.e. "dark places, locked up, missing meals") or Being treated negatively (mean things said to them about family not loving them; getting hair cut/shaved; nightmares) • Feeling guilty and responsible for why they were placed in care • Foster parents and social workers don't really care (i.e. feeling foster parents and social workers are just in the business of making money) • Running away from care
Transitioning Experiences and Outcomes	• Difficulty finding an apartment or a place to stay – most of the participants don't live on their own as most rely on family for shelter; or Homeless • Unemployed and no job or no work experience; Discrimination/racism experienced in the labour market; Having little money (i.e., only receiving $1000 upon leaving care); Learning to be independent (i.e., cook, clean, laundry, budgeting and paying bills, dealing with credit and debts) • Completing school (i.e. high school; Attending vocational training and or university) • Becoming a parent before turning 18 or shortly after leaving care • Peer pressures and not making the right choices (i.e., partying, taking and selling drugs, involvement with gangs, getting into trouble with the law and prior experiences of being incarcerated in juvenile detention centres) • Trouble getting ID and driver's license – no vehicle to practice driving or to do the road test • Extensions of care – a transitioning avenue chosen by four of the participants • Loss of supports and resources • Substance abuse and mental health post-care; Feelings of abandonment, unwanted, unloved, lost, resentment, rejection, loneliness, anger, confusion, having trust issues – fear of getting close, depression, suicidal thoughts
Pathways to Adulthood	• Sense of not having reached adulthood yet for majority ("It's just a word'; Not feeling like an adult; Should be allowed to make mistakes) • Adulthood markers identified by group: Having reached maturity; Graduating from high school; Getting a job or working; Finding an apartment; Reducing reliance upon parents or foster parents; Becoming a parent
Resilience and Hope	• Mention of the importance of mentors; Becoming a mentor to other young people; Overcoming adversity of youth and emerging adulthood stages of instability by becoming a mentor • Connection to family, community, and culture - Importance of family, siblings, and significant partners (boyfriend/girlfriend); Learning how to love and trust – looking for meaningful relationships • Taking advantage of post-secondary education or vocational training

The first section of this chapter examines to what extent the results of this study are connected with previous research on this general topic. The second section considers how my approach to conducting my digital storytelling workshops became a dynamic, creative, and an integrative healing experience for the participants involved in this study. The third section reviews

and highlights aspects of where the findings contribute to the field of knowledge on transitioning for youth leaving care. Implications for policy, practice, and research are discussed in the fourth section. The fifth and final section reviews and discusses the limitations of the study before finally concluding.

6.1 Research Results from the Study and their Connection to Previous Research

6.1.1 Negative Pre- and In-Care Experiences

The findings indicate that the participants in this study have negative memories associated with both the time before care and about in care experiences that have long stayed with them. The summary of results associated with this theme are grouped under the following sub-themes: Parents' addictions and domestic violence; The significance of siblings; Multiple placements; Abuse and negative treatment while in care; Foster parents and social workers don't care; and Running away.

Parents' addictions and domestic violence: For many of the participants their recollections of how they came to be in care were specifically tied to the stories of substance abuse among of their parents, which many of the participants believed set the stage for their neglect and subsequent apprehension. Included among the participants' stories of why they were in care were memories of also being exposed to domestic violence within the family. Participants' memories are consistent with the literature on the statistics evidencing reasons why First Nations children and youth are placed and overrepresented in the child welfare systems in Canada (Blackstock et al., 2004). Research by Sinha and colleagues (2011) has firmly established that First Nations children in Canada are eight times more likely to be substantiated for neglect than non-Aboriginal children, and the primary categories of maltreatment in substantiated investigations involving First Nations families include neglect, exposure to intimate partner violence, emotional maltreatment, and physical and sexual

abuse. Neglect is usually associated with the parents' poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence and social isolation (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005).

The significance of siblings: Siblings were mentioned as being very important to many of the participants. They spoke of being separated from siblings when they came into care and they talked of advocating and ensuring that they remained connected to and had access to visits with their siblings. The narratives definitely show that these participants sought to ensure they were connected with their siblings. Trauma and concern about being separated from their siblings were also identified. Oher research has identified that the trauma experienced by children and youth placed in out-of-home care can be ameliorated by maintaining the contact between siblings (Grigsby, 1994) and when placement together is not feasible, the literature has noted that children and youth request frequent visits and information about their brothers and sisters (Festinger, 1983). Canadian research has noted that siblings are more likely to be separated when children are older and when there are large age gaps between siblings (Drapeau, Simard, Beaudry, & Charbonneau, 2000).

Multiple placements: Participants shared memories of being moved frequently and experiencing multiple placements throughout their time in care. One participant in particular noted that he had been placed in 17 different homes in the span of one year, while another noted that being placed in so many homes resulted in many bad things happening to him. A study conducted with former foster youth who remember multiple placement moves suggests that the experience of placement moves is not just remembered as a series of significant moves, but can also be perceived by participants as having imprinted negative emotional scars, particularly in the area of trusting people and building and maintaining relationships (Unrau, Seita, & Putney, 2008). The research clearly has established that Aboriginal children and youth tend to be substantiated for abuse and neglect at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal children and youth, and as a result, they will experience higher rates of placement in out-of-home care than other Canadian children (Trocmé et al., 2004). Research

conducted in Manitoba has also established that youth in care experience placement instability because of multiple moves while in care (McEwan-Morris, 2006), and this can adversely affect the ability of the young person to form emotional attachments to their caregivers and ensure they build resiliency (Hawkins-Rodgers, 2007). Research also suggests that the likelihood of forging strong bonds diminishes as youth age and they may experience multiple placements because of their behaviour (Grogan-Kaylor, Ruffolo, Ortega, & Clarke, 2008). Part of the disruptive social experiences caused by multiple placements is the sense of rejection, unworthiness, and negative labeling, whereby the youth may be considered "bad", "difficult", or "disruptive". Placement instability while in foster care has been identified in the research as being significantly related to negative outcomes for children and youth (Unrau et al., 2008). For example, multiple placements have been linked to increased behaviour problems (Rubin, O'Reilly, Luan, & Localio, 2007), poor academic performance (Eckenrode, Rowe, Lairde, & Brathwaite, 1995) and involvement in the youth criminal justice system (Corrado, Freedman, & Blatier, 2011). Of course the literature notes that there may be many factors that impact on permanency planning for older children coming into care (ethnicity, duration of stay, etc.) (Albers, Reilly, & Rittner, 1993). Probably one of the worst stories on the negative impact on Indigenous children, specifically, as a result of multiple moves in child welfare is the story of Richard Cardinal who hung himself after having endured placement in over 28 homes over the course of his short life (Trocmé et al., 2004; Carriere & Richardson, 2009). A content analysis study conducted by Cross, Koh, Rolock, and Eblen-Manning (2013) suggests that: 1) caregiver-related reasons such as maltreatment by caregivers or changes in care-givers' lives; 2) child behaviour-related reasons such as aggressive behaviours, and; 3) system or policy related reasons, such as the need to use temporary placements or the aim of placing children with siblings, might account for multiple placements. Their study dispels the assumption that cases of multiple placements represent difficult children that are inherently impossible to keep in stable homes. That

particularly study shows that caregiver, child and agency behaviours all play a major role in placement instability, and disruptions due to child behaviour sometimes occur only after earlier, potentially traumatic disruptions. Even when child behaviour is the primary reason for instability in an unstable case, "more can be done to prevent instability by providing children with the services they need and caregivers with the resources and supports they need" (Cross, Koh, Rolock, & Eblen-Manning, 2013, p. 56).

Abuse and negative treatment experienced while in care: The stories and narratives of the participants touched on instances where there were abuse and negative treatment experienced in many of the foster homes where they were placed. One participant stated that he had not been believed when he talked to his social worker about the abuse he and his siblings enduring in one home over the course of seven years. Another participant explained in his video that he was in some "dark places" during his time in care where he experienced being locked up for days at a time and did not eat. While it was hard to find Canadian literature that is published about the abuse and negative treatment experienced in out-of-home child welfare placements, it has been known to happen (Bagley, 1985; Woolley, 2013). Allegations of abuse, neglect and negative treatment were identified in the publication *Children Unseen: Personal Accounts of Life in Foster Care* (2014), which is produced by *Children's Rights*, a New York-based national nonprofit that sues state governments to improve child protection and foster care (Woolley, 2013). Other confirming literature has noted for instance that sexual abuse in foster care is alleged by more than 55% of foster care alumni, sometimes in concert with other forms of maltreatment (Downs, English, Hiripi, Holmes, Kessler, O'Brien, et al., 2005). Similarly the research highlights adoptees and foster care survivors' endured violence, abuse and racism in their placements, which is a common experience of residential school survivors. In addition Indigenous children and youth in care also face the loss of language, familiarity of extended family, and connection to their identity through family, ceremony, culture, and the land (Engel et al.,

2012). On the other hand, literature has also established that what appears to be abuse and neglect in a foster home could in fact be placement breakdown (Brown & Bednar, 2006).

Some of the participants' narratives highlighted having positive relationships with foster parents and siblings and they indicate having maintained ongoing relationships with these foster families since aging out of care. As one participant shared, his foster parents were just as close to being his parents. While the literature highlights that many young people have had negative experiences in care that have led to negative outcomes (Bagley, 1985; Barth, 1990), there have been studies which have found that positive foster care experiences among First Nations children raised in alternative care (Swidrovich, 2004) and other studies that indicate these positive experiences have led to positive outcomes for those who have left care (Biehal & Wade, 1996). Some studies indicate that children who receive foster care services show positive improvements in physical health, emotional adjustment, school performance and behavioural functioning compared to the years before being placed into care (Berrick et al., 1998; Biehal & Wade, 1996).

Foster parents and social workers don't care: Most Participants' perceived that foster parents and social workers didn't really care about them. The participants commonly stated that it appeared that both social workers and foster parents were more interested in the business of "making money" rather than caring and supporting them. One participant noted that he often "felt like a pay cheque rather than a child." Similar perceptions among youth aging out of foster care have been noted in research conducted by Croce (2013) who notes that little has been written corroborating foster youth's perceptions that foster parents only foster for money. Research has noted that foster care has moved from being an activity rooted in altruism to one that is seen as a professionalized service, which might account for some of these perspectives (Corrick, 1999). However, other research has established that few foster parents do it for financial gain (Kirton, 2001), and that fostering is not a lucrative source of employment as the remuneration does not match the level of skill and "gentle

iron will" needed in parenting foster children and youth (Daniel, 2011). A lack of empathy, concern and care by social workers in the child welfare system on the other hand has been noted in other jurisdictions within Canada. The Representative for Children in Youth in British Columbia (2014b), for example, released a scathing report on how the lack of concern by social workers and the child welfare system for one First Nations girl culminated in her death at 14 years. The report *Lost in the Shadows: How a Lack of Help Meant a Loss of Hope for One First Nations Girl*, detailed how this young girl's glaring needs for child protection, mental health services and special needs support went largely unmet due mainly to a dysfunctional child welfare system in her region. The report highlighted the lack of communication between various social workers and health professionals, which was detrimental overall to the mental well-being of young girl in the long run.

Running away: The female participants in this study indicated that they had run away from many out-of-home placements. One participant indicated she had run away from so many placements that she was eventually detained in a youth facility as a way to deter her from running. The research indicates that although the vast majority of children and youth who enter into the foster care system return home to their families, other children in long term care eventually "age out" of the foster care system or exit care by means of one of several less auspicious routes such as running away or being incarcerated (Courtney & Barth, 1996). Among youth Kiepal, Carrington, and Dawson (2012) found that young women aged 19 years and younger faced a higher risk of being reported missing compared to young men. Young women between the ages of 15 and 19, in particular, face the highest risk of going missing compared to males. These numbers are supported by the Winnipeg Police (2015), which reported that the vast majority of persons reported as missing are short-term chronic runaways and most of these are vulnerable Indigenous youth (girls) currently in the care of the Child and Family Services system. Winnipeg police report approximately 550 missing reports a month. Of those, 83 percent (4 out of 5) are children in government care. The

majority, 71 percent, are female with the top 19 addresses associated with missing person's reports being Child and Family Services facilities (Winnipeg Police Service, 2015). A Canadian report on missing children (Dalley, 2009) indicated-that more females than males run away and most often they run away from their family. The possible reason for higher statistics among girls versus boys is that people are more likely to file a missing person's report when a young girl goes missing compared to if it is a boy or a man that was to go missing (Kiepal et al., 2012).

6.1.2 Transitioning Out of Care

Findings from this study suggest that Indigenous youth leaving care are still receiving little to no guidance in transitioning out of care and continue to be disadvantaged during the early phases of adulthood. The overall findings associated with this theme are grouped under the following sub-themes: Difficulty finding a place to stay and homelessness; Unemployed, no job or work experience; In the process of completing education; Becoming a parent; Peer pressures and not making the right choices; Trouble obtaining identification and driver's license: Learning to be independent; Extensions of Care; Loss of supports and resources; and Substance abuse, state of mind and mental health post-care.

Difficulty finding a place to stay and homelessness: Finding a place to live and becoming homeless were two common issues identified by the participants. These findings indicate that for this particular group of young people, they are not experiencing situations where they feel they have secure housing. This is a major barrier to successful transitions. In fact, many of the participants, with the exception of two, were not living independently as most were still living with family or living with their girlfriend or boyfriend's families. One of the participants identified as being homeless. This finding is consistent with the literature. For instance Rutman, Hubberstey, and Feduniw (2007) noted in their research that there is a significant degree of housing instability amongst young people who age out of care. Living with a spouse, partner, boyfriend, girlfriend,

friends, birthparents, siblings, and former foster parents, and being homeless were noted in Reilly's (2003) research with former youth in care. Time in care has been noted in the literature as a risk factor for homelessness in Manitoba (Fuchs et al., 2008; McEwan-Morris, 2006). Among street youth in a Manitoba, a study by Bodnarchuk, Patton, and Rieck (2006), found that over 40% of respondents had lived in a group home or foster home at some point in their lives. Similarly, Serge et al. (2002) found that 45% of homeless youth in this study had been in foster care. Comments made by the participants suggest that independent living options with supervision or a housing first framework for youth exiting care have not been implemented despite that fact that other research within Manitoba (Turk, 2009; AMR Planning, 2015) and elsewhere in Canada (Gaetz, 2014a) and the United States (Kroner, 2007) suggests this would make a world of difference for youth transitioning out of care. Homelessness among the Aboriginal population continues to be a huge issue in Canada (Patrick, 2014) and among Aboriginal youth with child welfare histories in Winnipeg (Brown et al., 2007). Baskin (2007) has further observed that there is often concealed homelessness among Aboriginal youth with child welfare histories that is not captured in the data on shelters for the homeless in this country. The preliminary results of a very recent street census conducted in Winnipeg indicate that there are more than 1,700 Winnipeggers living on the streets. The preliminary numbers indicate that 75% of the homeless population identified as Aboriginal and almost 60% indicated that they had grown up in foster care or group homes (Annable, 2015; Maes Nino, Godoy, McCullough, Retzlaff, Wiebe, & Wurcherer, 2016).

Unemployed, no job or work experience: The findings suggest that perhaps the biggest barrier that participants were dealing with at the time they participated in these workshops was that fact that they were unemployed. Participants spoke of having little money, even after receiving the one-time allowance of $1000 for independent living when leaving care (McEwan-Morris, 2006). The majority of the participants (at least 10 of 12) were without employment at the time that they participated in

this study, even though half of them had graduated. Underemployment and being unemployed has consistently been identified in the research as being a major concern for many youth leaving care (Tweddle, 2005). Other research confirms most youth leaving care do not have a job at the time they emancipated from care and most have almost no work history (McMillen & Tucker, 1999). Reid and Dudding (2006) have explained that adequate finances are necessary in order for youth leaving care to transition successfully because finances provide the foundation for housing, education and independent living. Without adequate financial assistance, these pillars cannot be attained. Many of the participants also spoke of engaging in illegal activities (like selling drugs) in order to make money. This is consistent with the research findings recorded by Reilly (2003) who notes that those who have aged out of care cite extreme financial hardship as a reason for why they engaged in illegal activities. Many former foster youth in Reilly's study did not have enough money to cover basic living expenses and resorting to doing something illegal to get money was not uncommon.

What is particularly interesting from the findings regarding the unemployment faced by the emerging Indigenous adults in this study is the fact that some were cognizant and aware that the inability to obtain employment was not due to the fact that they were previously in care, but due to the forces of racism that they see, feel and experience on a daily basis. Racism was said to be one of the factors impacting on their ability to find employment, and in turn, impacted on their ability to be able to afford their own places to live, and generally being able to live independently upon reaching the legal age of majority. The presence of racial inequality in the labour force was examined among Indigenous and other visible minority groups within Canada in the report *Unequal Act: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income* published by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (2000). This report highlighted that Aboriginal people tend to be undereducated and consequently over-represented in the lowest earning income bracket even when compared to the working-age education and earning levels of other minority groups in Canada. The racism

experienced in the labour market is for the most part subtle and "a hidden thing" (Kunz, Milan, & Schetagne, 2000). Income inequality due to unemployment clearly exists among this group of participants. MacKinnon (2015) has noted that the level of unemployment and poverty among Indigenous Canadians is an important indicator of the inadequacy of Canadian labour market policies predicated on racialized poverty and inequality. MacKinnon suggests that interventions to deal with this inequality should be built from an understanding of the historical context that has shaped Indigenous lives. She further noted that "the continued overrepresentation of Indigenous people among those who are poor, unemployed and precariously employed; their disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system and child welfare systems; and their measuring poorly on several indicators when compared with non-Aboriginal people have nothing to do with Indigeneity. These are directly related to the damaging legacy of colonialism, systemic racism, intergenerational poverty, and the many challenges that intergenerational poverty creates" (p. 40). The economic inclusion of Indigenous emerging adults should be a concern for all Canadians because this group of young people will be a significant source of labour in Canada's future. As such they should be guided to pursue education and training that will help them get good jobs so that they can support themselves, find affordable housing, and feel that they are contributing to their own successes as citizens of this country.

In the process of completing education: As many of the participants spoke of not finding employment, they have alternatively chosen to pursue other measures to make themselves more attractive to employers. Participants spoke of completing high school, and others identified that they have graduated from a number of vocational training programs. One participant identified that she had not graduated from high school but had attended a local film school. Another participant noted that since graduating he was accepted into university and at the time of this writing is in his first year. Those in extensions of care were all in the process of completing high school. Although there

has been an increase in high school graduation rates and post-secondary educational outcomes among Indigenous individuals, Aboriginal populations across all age stratifications still lag behind non-Aboriginal populations (Bougie, Kelly-Scott, & Ariagada, 2013). In Canada, as in other Western countries, there is an increasing demand for higher education and credentials to enter the workforce than ever before (Shanahan & Mortimer, 2002), which continues to put many First Nations emerging adults leaving care behind the eight ball.

Becoming a parent: Five of the twelve participants indicated that they were parents. They informed me they had become parents while in care or shortly after aging out of care. The available research confirms that compared to the general population, those who graduate out of child welfare are at risk for teen pregnancy and parenting (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010b). Other research also confirms that many young women who have aged out of care have given birth within three years of exiting care (Singer, 2004). Becoming involved with the child welfare system again was also expressed as a real fear among some of the participants who now have children. One participant indicated that he would hate for his son to be involved with the system. Another participant noted that because he had become a father too early, his children had been placed in his mother's care. These intergenerational experiences are noted in literature that recognizes the significant relationship between disadvantaged families and the child protection system, which is often maintained across generations (Hurley et al., 2003). Brown et al. (2007) has also noted that many former First Nations young people continue to be involved with the child welfare system when their children are apprehended and placed in foster care. For Indigenous populations this involvement maintains a continued intergenerational contact with the child welfare system that is concerning and indicative of ongoing colonialism (de Leeuw et al., 2009).

Peer pressures and not making the right choices: The findings reveal that many of the participants are dealing with negative peer pressure, which has influenced the choices made while in care and

after leaving care. Involvement with gangs, getting into trouble with the law, dealing with youth incarceration and turning to alcohol and drugs while in care were identified as some the ways that participants in this study indicated as ways of coping with their situations and being in care. Multiple placements and spending time in youth detention centres were also mentioned among the participants. These findings are consistent with the literature that notes that experiencing multiple out-of-home placements in child welfare and correctional facilities can be a key pathway into gang life (Totten, 2009; Goodwill, 2009).

Trouble obtaining identification and driver's license: Obtaining identification and knowing where to get important information like a health card was mentioned as being some of the barriers participants have experienced. This was especially the case for those who were still in extensions of care as one participant noted he needed a guardian to sign for certain identification even though he was 18 years of age. The participants also noted not having access to a car to be able to practice and obtain a driver's license. For many of the young men in this study, having a driver's license was key to obtaining employment. In fact one of the participants indicated that it would be a "huge achievement" to get a driver's license. These narrative findings are consistent with the research conducted by Reilly (2003) who noted that only 27% of the 100 participants in his study had obtained a driver's license upon leaving care. Getting and passing a driver's test and obtaining a license are said in the research to be an "adult accomplishment" (Goodkind, Schelbe, & Shook, 2011) and offering driving lessons can help boost a young person's self-esteem and self-confidence as well as build resilience (Berridge, 2014). Other research indicates that having a driver's license is a key resource that all foster care alumni should possess as it is considered a predictive factor that could determine the quality of life after care (Anctil, McCubbin, O'Brien, Pecora, & Anderson-Harumi, 2007). Other research has indicated that most youth already possess the necessary identification upon leaving care but don't expect to have a driver's license upon exit from care

(Brandford, 2002). Identification is vitally necessary for obtaining employment and accessing a range of services like health and dental care. Obtaining these records before leaving care is important to ensure.

Extensions of Care: Four of the twelve participants indicated that they were permanent wards and were in extension of care placements at the time they participated in this study. Many of the participants had indicated that although they had been given an option to stay in care longer however many of them chose not to take up this opportunity. This suggests to me that the participants who chose not to take up this opportunity perhaps might not have been given all the facts behind why staying in care longer would be of benefit to them. Research supports that notion that most youth do not remain in care, even when the option is available to them (Dworsky & Havlicek, 2009), yet other research supports the fact that remaining in care beyond the age of majority can increase the likelihood of a successful transition from the child welfare system to adulthood (Courtney, Dworsky, & Peters, 2009). The four participants in extensions of care indicated that they were still in the process of completing high school. This finding has support in the research, which has recognized that extensions of care and the continuation of support services offered youth an opportunity to work through historical educational deficits (Reid & Dudding, 2006). Extending foster care beyond 18 years of age has been found to promote post-secondary educational attainment in the United States (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010) and with higher education young people can experience greater employability and perhaps higher wage earnings (Courtney et al., 2009). Other literature suggests that remaining in school or pursuing a vocation should not be the necessary prerequisites for the receipt of services and support after age 18 as it is often youth who are not in school or making progress toward employment who need the most help (Atkinson, 2008). The other possibility as to why some of the participants did not take advantage of staying in care longer is that funding to extend these services may not have been available to the agency

(Blackstock, 2010). As all of the participants involved in this study were receiving services through First Nations child welfare agencies, it is unknown to what extent these agencies are able to provide similar extensions because of the restrictive funding imposed on these agencies by the federal government (Loxley, DeRivere, Prakash, Blackstock, Wien, & Thomas-Prokop, 2005; Blackstock, 2009b).

Loss of supports and resources: Some of the participants also identified loss of supports and resources that they had relied upon before leaving care as being a barrier for them. Many of these supports and resources were no longer available to them now because they are adults. These comments indicate that the young people in this study were unaware of how to access additional supports and resources that are available to adults within the community beyond the child welfare system. No mention was made of life skills training or preparatory programs for independent living, and it is apparent that many could have benefitted from accessing life skills training and independent living programs that would have connected them with community supports and resources geared toward adults, especially for Indigenous youth. Confirming research states the overall goal of independent living program services is to prepare older adolescent youth for self-sufficiency upon exist from foster care (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger, 2005) while life skills programs offer youth life skills education and connect youth with information about the local resources available in their communities. McEwan-Morris (2006) identified that many life skills groups are offered, but attendance is usually low with only 50% of participants completing such training.

Substance abuse, state of mind and mental health post-care: Many of the youth courageously admitted to dealing with addiction issues similar to that experienced by their parents both while in care and once they transitioned out of care. This pattern is consistent with other research indicating that former youth in care are at a higher risk for substance abuse (Tweddle, 2007). Research conducted in Winnipeg notes that the substance use of parents and guardians is a factor faced by many street

youth (Bodnarchuk et al., 2006). Further research confirms that foster youth who have aged out of care are at risk for not only substance abuse, but also mental health concerns (Tyler & Johnson, 2006). The participants shared information about some of the struggles they've had and the state of their mind since leaving care. Substance use along with depression, feeling lost, lonely, angry, rejection, resentment, unloved, and unable to trust and form close relationships, and having suicidal thoughts were mentioned numerous times by the participants. There are numerous studies that support the findings found in the participants' narratives about these issues. For instance, Unrau et al. (2008), found that the number of moves experienced by former foster youth can leave imprinted negative emotional scars, particularly in the area of trusting people and building and maintaining relationships later in life. This study also noted that loss of power over personal identity, separation from siblings, loss of self-esteem, trust issues, becoming unattached, and having guarded optimism among many of the long-term factors that can impact on the experience of former youth in care who have experienced multiple placements during their former experiences in care. Research also confirms that many former youth in care have dealt with depression both before and after leaving care (British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth, 2014a; White et al., 2008). Other research into the mental well-being of young people leaving care notes an important strategy in helping former youth in care achieve a secure sense of identity, in addition to stability, is to help them understand *why* their parents had abused or neglected them or were unable to care for them and how this has influenced subsequent events in order to help them understand their feelings of rejection and resentment and how to deal with this in the future (Biehal et al., 1995).

These findings also raise the very real possibility that some of the participants may be struggling with undiagnosed FASD (Streissguth et al., 1996) or with an inherited mental illness (Mussell, Cardiff, & White, 2004) due to the multi-generational losses among Aboriginal peoples. The failure to recognize these possibilities results in the failure of the system to ensure that all

children and youth are properly assessed upon entering and leaving care. This is quite tragic as the participants may live with the disability while unaware they have a disability. In addition, they would be without the necessary supports to deal with their disability, and worse, are judged for their low resiliency (Fuchs et al., 2005) and often blame themselves for the failures and disappointments in their lives (Burnside & Fuchs, 2013). FASD is an invisible disability that will never go away and many people tend to over-estimate the abilities of a person with FASD with the result that expectations become unrealistic and impossible to meet (Rutman, La Berge, & Wheway, 2005). A positive diagnosis on the other hand would generate a lifetime of disability supports - perhaps wrap around care and financial assistance (Fuchs et al., 2008; Rutman et al., 2005). All emerging adults in extensions of care or transitioning out of care ought to be properly assessed and afforded access to these benefits beyond the age of majority (Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2006). Research has indicated that Aboriginal children and youth who have been diagnosed with FASD or undiagnosed will likely experience other life challenges later in life and these factors should be considered by the child welfare system (Werk, Cui, & Tough, 2013) so that a comprehensive range of support services for adults with FASD can be developed (Burnside & Fuchs, 2013).

6.1.3 Pathways to Emerging Adulthood

The findings suggest that most Indigenous participants in this study who are in extensions of care or who have transitioned out of care do not consider themselves to have reached adulthood despite having attained legal status as an adult according to legislation in Manitoba. For the participants of this study there was a range of responses to the question about whether they had reached adulthood. All four of the participants who were still in extensions of they declared that they had not yet reached adulthood. The younger participants who were not in extensions of care, similarly indicated that they had not yet reached adult status while four of the older participants expressed having reached adulthood, however, each recognized that they had to pass through an "in

between" stage before they considered themselves to be an adult. The older participants say that they did not reach adulthood as soon as they left care; rather it was based on personal experiences and the building of capacities that took place over time. This is evident in the comment alluding to the idea that young people who are in the process of becoming adults should "be allowed to make mistakes." Comments like "It's just a word" or "I don't feel like an adult" signify that the majority of the participants in this study have an overall sense of not having reached adult status. As the results suggest all of the participants fit into or passed through the developmental stage called "emerging adulthood" as coined by Arnett (2000, 2004). Arnett proposed that the variability among this demographic is so wide that it differentiates individuals in this stage from any other stage in life; that is, there have been no established norms to define the demographics of this group. Arnett also proposed that this stage is unique because it is the only stage of life where the individual cannot completely define or clarify his or her position on adulthood status.

The markers, identified by the First Nations participants in this study, suggesting a person has reached adulthood were similar to the markers identified by non-Aboriginal populations. These include reaching maturity, graduating from high school, obtaining employment, finding an apartment, reducing reliance upon parents and/or foster parents, and becoming a parent. These perspectives on what it takes to be an adult are remarkably similar to research by Beaujot and Kerr (2007). Among the participants in this study, one unique aspect to the responses on adulthood is the marker for measuring whether one had attained adulthood by whether or not they had obtained employment. Surprisingly most of the participants did not see themselves as adults simply because they had been unable to obtain employment that would make them self-sufficient and indicate to them that they had indeed reached this pinnacle level. As considered by some of the participants, racism was seen as preventing them from becoming employed and without employment this

consequently prevents them from seeing themselves as adults. I could find no research that speaks specifically to this finding.

6.1.4 Resilience and Hope

These findings suggest that mentors, family, community and culture are important elements that support resilience and hope in the development of an Aboriginal identity for the participants in this study. The presence of these factors lends to the presence of resilience and hope among the participants. Overall results associated with this theme are grouped under the following sub-themes: Mentors; Connections to family; Connection to culture and community; Learning how to love and trust again; and Overcoming adversity and the emerging adulthood stages of instability.

Mentors: A person who was considered an important mentor was mentioned by many of the young people involved in this research. Mentors were described by the participants as important in having connected them to important resources and supports within the Aboriginal community. One participant explained that her mentor "connected her to other support people from the community" and helped her "connected to Elders, cultural advisors, and invited her to cultural events and activities that slowly changed her life." Another participant believe that his mentor "saved his life because he had been lost, lonely and suicidal for a long time." Their narratives about their interactions with mentors reflect that they had access to someone that helped them weather the difficulties associated with transitioning to independence. Research that confirms findings shared by the participants is reflected in Day's (2006) article, which evidences that mentors provide children and youth with a sense of safety, dedication and nurturance in recovering from traumatic experiences. It is said that informal caregiving can assist youth in developing a sense of trust and remain open to positive learning and emotional experiences. Mentors also teach social skills, model behaviour, give positive or negative reinforcement and introduce young people to diverse social interactions and contexts. Mentorship relationships also provide advice, emotional support,

companionship, and opportunities for socialization that at-risk youth cannot find at home or in their foster placements. Other qualitative research suggests supportive relationships prior to, during and beyond the transitioning years foster improved outcomes for youth transitioning from care into adulthood (McEwan-Morris, 2006; Scannapieco, Cornett-Carrick, & Painter, 2007; Tweddle, 2007). During emerging adulthood, Greeson, Usher, and Grinstein-Weiss (2009) also confirm that a mentor can also assist young people weather the difficulties associated with transitioning to independence. The findings in another study suggest there is an association between having another person who sees the good in the young person which helps the young person construct a coherent sense of self and a subsequent positive identity (Croce, 2013), which is evident in the narratives and the videos that the participants ended up producing during the workshops for this study. Other confirming literature is consistent with the findings in that it has identified that resilient children and youth will have some type of caring and supportive non-parental individual or adult in their lives (Osterling & Hines, 2006).

Connections to Family: The findings from the narratives shared by some participants suggest they maintained connectivity with their families both while in care and after having left care. This is consistent with the literature where it has been acknowledged that youth in care will eventually gravitate to family once they age out of care (Barth, 1990). Once leaving care the former youth in care who participated in Barth's study indicate that they saw their birth family or relatives more often than they had when they were in foster care. In fact several participants felt that their ties to family after leaving care were at first tenuous but over time they became better connected and their relationships were much closer with their families than before they went into care. As one participant shared, "at first coming out of CFS, I really didn't have family to turn to, but as the months went by, I started talking to my mom and now these days I am close with her, my sisters and my little brother, and also my older brother." Research by Collins, Paris, and Ward (2008) note that

youth leaving foster care often reconnect, and sometimes live, with members of their family of origin, even if at some point previously their families had been deemed unsafe, resulting in their removal from the home. Research however has noted that assistance to help families reunite at the leaving care stage has tended not to be a major concern for social workers in the child welfare system (Biehal et al., 1995). Aboriginal mothers in Bennett's (2008) research, however, lamented that they often had no assistance in reconnecting with their children who age of out care. The findings would seem to suggest that the majority of the participants were interested in seeking their bio-families upon leaving care. This contradicted my initial assumption that reuniting with family would be important to all the participants. These findings seem to suggest, on the other hand, that many participants were more interested in creating their own families. For the participants who no longer had a connection to birth families, their foster families or the surrogate families they established after leaving care became important family touchstones after they emancipated from care. As one participant noted, since he no longer had connection with his birth father and with the passing of his mother, he sought out and created a new connection with others who he now considers to be his family. New families created by young people who have left care, through relationships with others, through partners and by becoming parents themselves, become important in helping young people negotiate the transition to adulthood (Wade, 2006).

Connections to Culture: Participants in this study understand and are connected to the culture. Participants mentioned and were familiar with the sacred medicines (tobacco, cedar, Sweetgrass, and sage), the Medicine Wheel, the seven sacred teachings (love, trust, honest, courage, wisdom, courage and humility), sweat lodges, and participating in sharing circles with Elders as evidence of their exposure to the cultural elements of Aboriginal traditions. In fact culture played a role in every aspect of the workshop as we smudged, recited prayers, and held a circle daily to discuss the questions associated this research. Some participants indicated that they had been exposed to

Aboriginal teachings since the time they were young whereas for other participants culture did not have not much of a role in their lives until they got older. There was, however, enthusiasm and a desire to learn more about culture after having been exposed to Indigenous teachings and ceremonies. For Aboriginal youth, building a healthy identity and sense of self can be greatly enhanced by connecting with traditional knowledge and practices. Research has linked the exposure to strong cultural beliefs and values with resiliency among youth and with positive health outcomes, including improved educational achievement and self-esteem (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). As well, Lertzman (2002) and Wexler (2009) both found a strong correlation between positive affiliation and engagement with culture that had positive impact on Aboriginal young people's wellbeing and resilience.

Connections to community: The findings reveal that on the surface participants' connections to First Nations reserve communities seem to have been weakened as a result of their placement in care. While many of the participants knew and were able to identify the community to which their family was connected, very few have actually returned to their reserve communities since being apprehended by child welfare and morever, some participants have never even stepped foot in the communities from which their families originated. As one participant shared, "I've never been to my reserve; I don't really know how it is out there." The available research confirms that disconnection to a First Nations community is not unusual (Ristock et al., 2010) and many Aboriginal people have been slowing leaving and migrating to urban centers for many reasons over the last thirty years (Peters, 1996). Other literature confirms that there is now a third and fourth generation of First Nations people now living in cities (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2013). Although the 2011 census highlights that nearly half of First Nations peoples with registered Indian status still live on reserve (Statistics Canada, 2011). Other research confirms that there is still an intergenerational passing of essential Aboriginal cultural values to successive generations regardless

of where Aboriginal people eventually reside. Indigenous identity does not come from a location rather it comes from the relational connections to family (Hart, 2010). Support for this notion comes from the work of Restoule (2008), who strongly suggested that Indigenous values continue to thrive in each subsequent generation in spite of the pressures to assimilate. He notes that Indigenous values are crucial to identity, more than the material signs of identity or the connection to reserve communities. He stated that it is the values that inform and underlie the visible expressions of culture and separation from a land base. These values continue to persist in the present context. Among these values are the principles of non-interference, autonomy, as well as the related traits of adaptability and ingenuity. Respect and love are also key values that continue to be esteemed and practiced within urban spaces by many Indigenous individuals. All these values are passed on from one generation to the other in the family unit even when the older generation remains silent about their backgrounds because of the learned guilt that resulted from residential school experiences. Restoule notes that these values are conveyed and subtly incorporated by the younger generation because the traits are well engrained.

6.2 Digital Storytelling as a Transformative and Healing Approach

The findings from the post-interviews suggest that digital storytelling, as a methodology, is a transformative and healing approach to conducting research with Indigenous emerging adults who have had previous child welfare histories. This project was obviously an empowering experience for the participants involved as one participant reflected:

> *I think recording your story then trying to find images that reflect your words is a powerful medium. It forces you to slow down and think about your past. For me it is easy to forget the past and just keep moving forward, this workshop helped me reflect on my past and take the time to analyze some past experiences I put out of my mind.*

The collective responses taken as a whole from the post-workshop interviews with the majority of the participants indicate to me that the experience of being involved in the digital storytelling workshops became a powerful, therapeutic and healing opportunity for each participant. Many of the participants said that the experience of attending the workshops and creating their own video about their child welfare histories and post-care realties was transformative because it allowed them to shape the memories of their experience into their own words for the first time. As one participant put it, "The digital storytelling made my story come to life and I felt more genuine." Coming together on a daily basis with other young people who shared similar experiences was also incredibly powerful for the participants because they were working on a goal that put them in touch with one another. They leaned on each other and they helped each other. So there was healing not only in the telling of their stories but in the ability to connect with others who understood the stories they told because they have each lived these stories themselves. This is clear in the comments made by one person in summing up their experience in the workshop: "The experience was opening up and clearing a weight off of your shoulder, meeting new people, hearing other stories, it's kind of an honour … to be sharing something that other people might be going through." In research by Gubrium (2009) it was noted that digital storytelling 'can influence Indigenous healthiness and resilience by offering a means of owning and being able to tell one's own story' (p. 187). Willox et al. (2012) also stated that:

> *Digital storytelling is a powerful strategy for engaging individuals who have been historically silenced, marginalized, and/or tokenized. From our experience, these digital stories can provide rich, culturally relevant first-person visual and aural depictions of life; of triumphs and failures, fears and hopes, and laughter and pain. They open up worlds of affect and intimacy, and they share - through sound, pictures, voices, and video - a glimpse of another life, with whom we can commune through the platform of a digital narrative, with whom we can listen, and from whom we can learn. (p. 142)*

Returning to the idea of the healing that came from 'telling their stories" it is important to note that many young people who age out of the child welfare system, take their stories of this

experience with them when they transition out of care and they never really get the chance to share them nor do they get "released" from the burden of carrying these stories. Like the stories of residential school survivors, these stories need to be told because they are all too common among Indigenous people who live in a generation far removed, but still impacted, from what happened to their families in residential schools. Like residential school survivors, Aboriginal individuals who have experienced living in foster care or growing up in the child welfare systems of this country have been silenced and so this silence becomes a common thread they share with those who experienced residential school (Adelson & Olding, 2013). Through digital storytelling the power to speak takes on profound importance in that it allows for truth telling among those who have been silenced and marginalized. Each participant who produced a digital story in relation to this research engaged in a form of authentic truth telling that is like "narrative medicine" (Mehl-Madrona, 2007; Beltrán & Begun, 2014) because to tell one's story is like healing one of the wounds inflicted on Indigenous people through colonial forces such as child welfare. Aboriginal child welfare itself is still dealing with the ongoing consequences of colonial child welfare practices. The ability to narratively communicate one's story is a healing and a therapeutic process for Aboriginal individuals and communities (Adelson & Olding, 2013; Beltrán & Begun, 2014) and as one participant stated "the reason she took part in the survey was to start a healing process." When the digital storytelling workshops concluded with a screening of the videos, there was excitement and curiosity about what would be in these videos. Many of the participants came to realize that they were not alone in their experience of having been in care nor were they alone in the difficulties they experienced upon transitioning out of care and in dealing with the responsibilities of adulthood. Hearing these stories has helped the participants realize that their post-care experiences are not entirely based on individual faults. This has been noted in the literature which has stated that when we tell our stories and others bare witness, the notion that we are disconnected beings suffering alone dissolves under

the weight of the evidence offered through story (Mehl-Madrona & Mainguy, 2015). The stories told in these digital shorts opened up a dialogue on understanding First Nations emerging adult's strategies for well-being and their stories set the stage for tackling tabooed social problems (addictions, drugs, gangs, pregnancies) in ways that were uniquely authentic to them.

Digital storytelling opens up possibilities for new ways of communicating, including new ways of disseminating wisdom and knowledge about experience, suffering, and healing and resilience. Digital stories also contribute significantly to identity formation and construction. These stories place First Nations emerging adults at the center of their experiences and its consequences. These notions are reflected in the literature evidencing that digital storytelling opens up possibilities for empowerment, resistance, and decolonization (Willox, et al., 2012; Adelson & Olding, 2013) especially among those with child welfare histories. Not only was telling their story about their child welfare experiences an act of healing, but it is also an act of resistance. It must be recognized that the stories they created were acts of creative rebellion. The stories told by the participants in relation to this study are valid ways of knowing that shed light on the realities experienced all too often by those with child welfare histories (which is really a contemporary form of colonial violence) and the real ways in which they have resisted it. As Sium and Ritskes (2013) note, Indigenous stories affirm that the subjectivity of Indigenous peoples is both politically and intellectually valid. These stories also proclaim that Aboriginal peoples still exist, that the colonial project has been ultimately unsuccessful in erasing Aboriginal existence (p. IV). In addition, it can also be said that these stories offer up examples of resilience that are critical to the resurgence of Indigenous communities (Beltrán & Begun, 2014). By learning from each other's digital stories the participants were able to begin the process of learning to put the past behind so that they can begin to work toward building a stronger identities and healthier futures for not only themselves, but for their children and their families and successive generations as well.

6.3 Contributions to the Field of Knowledge on Transitioning

Digital storytelling workshops have been conducted many times over with youth on various topics. For instance, Wexler et al. (2013) conducted an analysis of 31 digital stories to better understand how young Alaska Native (Inupiaq) people creatively responded to the tensions of growing up in a world markedly different from that of their parents and grandparents. However, this study represents the first time that digital storytelling has been done with First Nations individuals in extensions of care and with First Nations young people who have transitioned out of care within the Manitoba. There are also many research initiatives where narrative storytelling has been done with Aboriginal youth with former gang experiences. An example of this kind of narrative research was conducted by Goodwill (2009) who looked at the life experiences of Aboriginal adults who experienced gang life as youth in Western Canada. However, this is the first time, to my knowledge, that digital storytelling approach has been used to help understand the child welfare and gang experiences of First Nations emerging adult men. While there are literally hundreds of research dissertations and published sources that look in-depth at myriad issues facing emerging adults leaving child welfare, this is the first study to consider the perspectives of First Nations individuals about what they consider necessary for transitioning out of care and in reaching adulthood using technology as a means for getting at this knowledge. This study therefore adds to and significantly enhances the understanding of First Nations young peoples' experiences in extensions of care and as they transition out of foster care specifically in Manitoba.

Having pointed out the obvious areas where my methods and related findings are unique, I to turn to another approach in explaining my own personal thoughts about what I feel is unique about my contributions to the field of knowledge on transitioning in the research I undertook with these participants. This perspective is rooted in an Indigenous lens.

"The longest journey … is the one between your heart and your head" (Gehl, 2012, p.55). Embarking on this research required a journey from my head to my heart as I was asking the participants to take a similar journey with me when I asked them to partake in this research. In the process of writing this last chapter I fought against this journey not realizing that the answers lie within me and not outside of me. In writing the previous section for this chapter I was able to reflect and match the findings from my study with many studies and research previously published in non-Indigenous academia that reflected many of the experiences that my participants revealed in their journeys out of care. As I was rooted in a non-Aboriginal way of thinking my mind and heart fought hard against my own inner ways of knowing in how to articulate and highlight the ways in which my research is significant and contributes to knowledge generally and in how it contributes to knowledge about the experiences of First Nations emerging adults who have transitioned out of state care. I agonized over what could possibly be new every time my advisor returned comments to me with subtle hints to expand upon its significance. As I write this last chapter for my dissertation, it has become the fourth revision (and a significant number in Indigenous epistemology, which is not lost on me). After a day of pondering it dawned on me that the answers for understanding about what was unique and significant about the findings from this study were inside me all along, rooted in the ways of knowing and being that are within me and in the ways of knowing that my participants shared with me in the digital storytelling workshops and embedded in their videos. I was so entrenched in the non-Indigenous way of looking at my data that I forgot who I was. In many ways this reflects the dual realities of my research in that one reality is rooted in understanding the non-Indigenous ways of colonization that have impacted upon the lives of First Nations emerging adults with child welfare histories while the other realities seek to utilize Indigenous approaches and means to get at the heart of understanding these lived experiences.

As an Anishinaabe woman I have come to know that Indigenous ways of knowing are subjective and relational (Hart, 2010) unlike non-Indigenous ways of knowing, which have been entrenched in ways that are supposed to be objective and where knowledge is found outside of the person (Kovach, 2009). Indigenous knowledge comes from within rather than from outside of one's self. Ermine (1995) explains that Indigenous ways of knowing are ultimately grounded in one's personal introspections, as it is only through them that people gain authentic insights and truths. With this understanding in mind I realized that I had to listen to not only my head, but also my heart in order to look at the findings from my research with fresh eyes. By taking heed of the messages behind my discomfort with viewing my knowledge through a non-Indigenous lens, I have come to understand that I was being guided to this understanding by an ancient Anishinaabe way of knowing known as a "Debwewin Journey" (Gehl, 2012). In the Anishinaabe language "Debwewin" translates to "a personal and wholistic truth that is rooted in one's heart." This truth is also inclusive of both "mind knowledge" and "heart knowledge" (p. 55). Gehl (2012) notes that in the Anishinaabe tradition one's spirit speaks through the heart and Elders have informed that the "the process of completing mind knowledge and connecting it to the heart knowledge is best referred to as a personal journey" (p. 55). Each person's Debwewin Journey will be different.

This research was not only a personal journey for me but also it became a personal journey for each of the participants who were involved in this research. In coming to understand my own Debwewin Journey as it relates to this research and the findings that resulted, I realized that I had to reformulate the linear table (see Table 7 above) to understand the underlying Indigenous messages embedded in the data connected to this research. Figure 2 articulates the data in a circular format with four equal pie-shaped sections very similar to the Medicine Wheel (Hart, 2002). The memories of time in care reflect the beginning of their journey, which is very similar to the life cycle reflected earlier in the literature review section of where the Medicine Wheel is used similarly to reflect upon

the Anishinaabe life cycle (Fearn, 2010). The next part of the participants' journey in care was a reflection on the transitioning experience and all of the experiences and outcomes that come from making the transition from being in care to leaving care. The next part of the circle reflects on another journey that Indigenous young people must past through and that is all the uncertainty that comes with becoming an adult. These experiences ultimately in the end lead them to a place where they can feel hope and exhibit resilience and feel that much stronger because of their experiences. The experience of being in care is a part of the participants' wholistic realities. The circle depicts the Debwewin journey for youth who have been in care and represents an almost unique rite of passage that they must all go through as part of the initiation upon leaving care. In the process of moving through each element of the circle those in care transitioning toward adulthood eventually come to make the long journey from being in their head to being in their heart (the centre of the circle). The data as reflected in the Medicine Wheel does indeed reflect a circular journey that each of the participants have been on, not only in their personal lives, but through their own Debwewin Journeys which are uniquely reflected in each of their personal stories and videos. I wouldn't have been able to see this data differently had I ignored my feelings and carried on trying to construct knowledge from a place that is very different from whom I am as an Anishinaabe woman. The collective truth and experience of the participants had been there all along waiting to be discovered once I learned to pay homage to my Indigenous ways of knowing.

Figure 2: Debwewin Journey for Indigenous Youth Transitioning from Care (Illustration created by Marlyn Bennett, 2015)

Some of the ways that I see as being unique to my research would be unseen from reading the findings in that one would have had to be present and interacting with the participants at the workshops to understand the other source of data that exists but is not very well reflected on these pages. I was fortunate to meet each participant and was privy to very private details about their lives. In the process of getting to know each of them the participants allowed me into their lives where I learned more about the stories behind their videos. As this research was rooted in an approach that privileged the narrative through storytelling, the following is what I believe is significant and unique about the Debwewin Journey that I have been on with these participants:

- First, through storytelling this study revealed that digital storytelling gives agency to First Nations emerging adults because they had to use their own words, pictures, narratives, and choices of music to tell their own stories. They are all truly the authors of their stories.
- Second, the stories that were created, as part of this study, were original creations, presented in a way that emphasized the voice and agency of each individual participant.

- Third, the stories created for this project produced counter-narratives about the attributes of these First ations emerging adults with prior child welfare and transitioning experiences. Counter narratives are personal stories that alter the understanding of dominant culture (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'Lakwadz, 2009). The themes in their videos offer counter-narratives that reinforced themes of pride, achievement, love, respect, connection, understanding, and reflection that contributed to personal and collective self-esteem among this particular group of participants.
- Fourth, these stories are counter-narrative in that they rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being that are specific to those who can speak about the experience of being Indigenous and having previous child welfare experience and what this experience means to them specifically.
- Fifth, participants in this study also demonstrated that Indigenous storytelling can serve as a social function that connected them to their audience and to each other. Each video produced was made for a specific audience in mind: for themselves (so that they could remember and unburden themselves from these troublesome memories), for their families (as a way of connecting them to an experience about what they went through when they were away from their families or for future generations), for me (so that I could complete my doctoral studies), for their mentors (to share their gifts and talents), for social workers (who had supported and befriended them while they were in care), and for the child welfare system (so that the system could understand their experiences as Indigenous wards). They want others to learn from their experiences. These stories and videos are incredible gifts and should be seen in that light.
- Sixth, an outgrowth of this connection through storytelling was the bonding that occurred among the participants during each of the two workshops. For five solid days they all

congregated at the same place, ate together, laughed together and joked with each other, reminisced together and participated in all the discussion circles and helped each other figure out the software program as they worked through the process of developing their videos. In the post-workshop interviews they spoke about the camaraderie and feedback that was critical for their storytelling experience. Their experience working together reinforced cultural solidarity and reinforced group cohesion, which is a prerequisite for social interactions that will happen someday in other contexts. As they are all First Nations young people with similar experiences, backgrounds and aspirations, some will move in many of the same circles such as that offered through educational or other forms of social service and community contact.

- Seventh, in this study, the participants' storytelling became a collective and a creative memory, resulting in personal transformations. Their stories were collective because they were based on the common experience and actual stories of being in care, which wove together details from a variety of sources and were combined in the unique style of each participant. At the same time their experiences and stories also drew upon the collective experience of a cultural group. Each one of the participants was engaged in a form of knowledge transfer with one another. As Gehl (2012) notes, knowledge transfer is "the process of passing on heart knowledge as an intergenerational transfer of knowledge" (p. 57).
- Eighth, Indigenous emerging adult storytelling is creative resistance because it is both creative and a source of resistance. It is creative because the stories that were crafted for this study were molded by the storytellers in ways that were unique to each individual. It is resistance because the stories were based on the participants' own "truth-telling" memories about their time in care and what happened as they moved toward adulthood. The stories

embedded in the participants' videos, like the stories about residential schools, are part of the collective truth telling that is necessary for reconciliation (Corntassel et al., 2009), especial in child welfare.

- Lastly, the videos that were created conform to the principles of OCAP™ in that all of the participants own their pictures, stories, narratives, and the videos they created a part of this project. As part of owning their videos, the participants also have the power to protect and control how their information is used. In the case of this research, they have all given me permission to use their videos at any educational forums and conferences and most have given me permission to post their videos online. As such I have become the steward of these videos, but ownership of these videos will always belong and will always be controlled by each of the participants. I am incredibly honoured to share in being a steward of these incredible stories.

I want to note that I learned much in the process of my involvement with these two groups of participants. As a former child in care myself, the wanting to share stories resonated deeply with me as it wasn't too long ago that I struggled with learning to become independent and be an adult. It was a time where there were even fewer social and financial supports available to young people than there are today. I had no one to tell my story to and didn't even know that the story of my experience would be anything worth sharing. I was able to tell a part of my transitioning experiences through my own story about my mother in my digital storytelling video *My Mother's Love was in a Bowl of Porridge* (Bennett, 2012). The search for belonging and connectedness is the lifelong route of many Indigenous people who have had to learn to come to know themselves outside of their cultures, families and communities (Carriere & Richardson, 2009). By inviting these young people to engage with me in a journey about understanding their lived experiences leaving care and becoming

emerging adults, I remembered my own experiences and sense of wanting to belong, which I underwent so many years ago myself. I believe that many of the participants underwent a transformation as they were a part of something where they felt someone understood them and they felt like they belonged and were connected in a way that had been different from what they've experienced in the past. With the help of my research assistant and the Elder I was able to get the participants to open up and become comfortable with me, with my team, with each other, and with the process of using technology to create something that reflected them. In less than a week participants in both workshops opened up about their lives in and outside of care and they created digital stories about those experiences. In the process of teaching them to use the software program, I was able to use the digital storytelling process as a way to engage them. Engagement also happened through the offering of the necessary elements related to food, respect, and laughter. By inviting the participants from the second workshop into my own home I made the participants feel like they were a part of a family, which many of them have been looking for and which is what Carriere and Richardson (2009) call belonging and connectedness. In the process of this experience, not only did the participants feel that they had been transformed and were part of an event that provided healing, but also doing this research and being involved in helping them produce videos helped transform and heal me as well. This realization became another part of my Debwewin Journey. As a mother myself, I have a daughter who has left home and I am amazed at her incredible strength and resolve to navigate life as an emerging adult in another province. I understand and remember how important it is to want independence and the safety net that comes with interdependence as well. My daughter has never been a part of the child welfare system and in my heart I am reminded that I have closed the circle on my child welfare experience and in the process halted my daughter from ever having to experience what I experienced as a young person. Knowing this as I do now is also a

part of the incredibly lifelong Debwewin Journey that I have been on. I am amazed to be able to stand in my truth and that makes me proud.

These young people allowed me to be a part of their lives for one week and I learned so much more than what could ever be written on these pages. I can still see their smiling faces and I remember the magic of those workshops. That will be a memory that I will always cherish as I learned to take the long journey from my head to my heart in understanding the incredible gift they gave to me through their participation in my research. Their collective strengths and resiliencies give me hope for the future.

6.4 Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

Results from this study have several implications for policy, practice, and research. In responding to each of these areas I move from the general to specific suggestions.

Policy: First, in the literature review section it was noted that Aboriginal agencies were important in the delivery of services to First Nations families and communities. These agencies were created primarily to stop the removal of First Nations children and youth from communities given earlier non-Aboriginal child welfare practices. It is clear that many youth are leaving the system without deeper ties to their families, communities and their cultures. The findings suggest that FNCFS agencies need to reconsider how they prepare youth for adulthood and how they will focus on the needs of First Nations emerging adults. First Nations child welfare agencies need to focus on connecting youth to cultural rites of passage that are culturally relevant in addition to ensuring that their basic needs are being met as they pass through the emerging adulthood stages. The positive experiences and interest these young people indicated about culture seem also to reinforce efforts to introduce cultural exposure in a variety of forms that are vital in strengthening self-esteem, resilience and who they were as emerging adults.

Second, FNCFS agencies need to consider the implications of the theory of development around emerging adulthood for the populations they serve. Given that true adulthood is not likely reached until the age of 25 for most young people who are not raised in care today, all agencies need to reconsider the extension of services to those who have been in long-term care. Agencies will need to reconsider the costs around transitioning services should this theory of development be embraced as a strategy in the future. Consideration must include how to repatriate the young person with their family, community and culture. Repatriation is about ensuring meaningful connections with culture, community, and especially family because that is why FNCFS agencies were developed in the first place. In addition this will require that agencies rethink policies and practices that incorporate the theory of development pertaining to emerging adulthood. Like residential schools, the child welfare system has long played a part in separating First Nations and other Indigenous children and youth from their familial generations. The system needs to build in reunification efforts to help former youth in care connect with their families. This would be an important element necessary to bring about reconciliation for all families, but specifically for Indigenous families who engage with child welfare.

Third, it is also clear from the findings that healing is necessary for those who are in extensions of care and passing through the emerging adulthood stage. As the young people in this study shared, the alcohol and substance abuse of their parents were noted as the primary reason for why they were placed in care. There is a possibility that some of the participants may have been affected by their parents' substance addictions prior to their birth but have never been diagnosed with invisible disabilities such as FASD, which subsequently may leave them more vulnerable in the emerging adulthood stage as they would not have the types of support needed to help them navigate adulthood that other young people with disabilities are able to acquire. More supports need to be in place to help them cope with these realizations and to help them navigate to a future that brings

wellness and stability. Memories of feeling unloved, unworthy, and thoughts of suicide were mentioned as possible mental health issues that were not resolved then and may still not have been resolved at the time the results of this study were prepared. Agencies may need to consider the need for more healing approaches for those who are transitioning toward adulthood and passing through the emerging adulthood stage. Healing approaches could incorporate cultural rites of passage. These rites of passage should be incorporated into the array of services that are available to young people prior to reaching the age of 18. The importance of prevention and working with the adult family members of the too many Indigenous children who are coming into care is necessary however these efforts may demand more from the system at large and not just from FNCFS agencies alone.

The fourth policy suggestion is directed at the child welfare governing bodies of the province, the Southern and Northern First Nations and Métis CFS authorities. Each governing body should fund digital storytelling research initiatives with Indigenous emerging adults and capture the voices of those who have child welfare experiences, so that we can begin to build a repository of knowledge and learn from the prior experiences of those who have aged out of care in this province. This voice has been missing from the record for many years now. Digital storytelling videos could be made that focuses on the various paths of success, as well they could chart the challenges that other foster care alumni have experienced since leaving care. Digital stories could also identify the various ways child welfare alumni have remained connected to their communities, their cultures, and their families and how these connections can be enhanced and strengthened in the process so that the future generations can be informed on how to proceed beyond the seven generations.

Second, I would suggestion implementation of the recommendation made by Commissioner Hughes in the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry to support the extension of youth transitioning out of care (2013). As was suggested by Commissioner Hughes, the *Child and Family Services Act* within Manitoba needs to be amended to allow for extension of services to any child who at the age of majority was

receiving services under the Act up to and including the age of 25. As the findings suggest, Indigenous emerging adults as well as other youth exiting child welfare are still vulnerable and struggling long after they have left care. Extending the option to stay in care longer would help ameliorate the struggles that many emerging adults face. These extended services are vitally important to Aboriginal populations who are currently overrepresented in the child welfare system.

Third, the provincial and federal governments must recognize "emerging adulthood" as a new stage of human development that needs to be reflected in our social, justice, health, and education service sectors. Such recognition would see the development of a separate department within Family Services with separate legislation and funding earmarked for addressing the needs of all emerging adults, including Indigenous emerging adults, who eventually must leave and transition out the child welfare system. Criteria and standards will need to be developed to identify the eligibility for extensions to all youth who had been receiving services at the time of reaching the age of majority. Such a move requires adequate funding from both the provincial and federal governments. This is not a new suggestion as support for this change is reflected in the community consultations, which All My Relations (AMR) Planning (2015) conducted in the process of mapping options for action to guide the Department of Family Services in response to the recommendations in the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry. This has also been reflected in research conducted in Ontario (Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth [Ontario], 2012a).

Practice: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) made a number of recommendations after hearing from over 6,000 residential school survivors. Many of the recommendations in their executive summary centre on child welfare. One of these is the need to ensure that social workers are properly trained about the history and impacts of residential school system. I would argue that governments also need to implement a policy to ensure that it captures the history and impact of child welfare on the subsequent generations of families as it has been

noted by many researchers that child welfare took over where residential school left off (McKenzie & Hudson, 1985). Agencies need to start developing healing programs and independent living and skills based programs that perhaps could incorporate digital storytelling as a technique for Indigenous adults who have been a part of the child welfare system. Many Indigenous adults who were once in care can become today's mentors to those who are currently in care. Digital storytelling could be a method for helping other former Indigenous foster care alumni to create stories of healing that could be shared as part of the transitioning training for youth preparing to leave care. Digital storytelling can be used for telling stories of aspirations about where youth want to envision themselves to be in the future. It can become a planning tool that evidences the path forward. Further ideas on how to expand upon the Debwewin Journey in the transitioning approach might be incorporated into independent living and skills based programs to assist youth leaving care with understanding of the processes related to their eventual emancipation from the system.

Research: First, more research needs to be considered by the child welfare system within the province, as a whole, to get a clearer understanding of the challenges that former youth in care are experiencing during the emerging adulthood years between 18 and 25. A more concerted research effort to look at the human stage of development regarding emerging adulthood is needed. In particular, FNCFS Agencies need to understand the ways that the theory of development regarding emerging adulthood is similar or different for First Nations young people. Follow up research with other populations of emerging youth in Manitoba may confirm that some of the experiences among this study's sample are generalizable across different groups of young people, and that much more needs to be done to support families to prevent children from coming into care, and supporting emerging adults who are in care well beyond the age of 18 so they are able to receive more assistance in achieving independence whether this occurs at age 18, 21, 25 or even later. The government and

it's systems should not be shutting the door on these vulnerable young people at some artificial age mark.

Second, further research might start with an expansion of the current study to strengthen and versify the findings. As I originally sought to incorporate a northern perspective into my understanding of transitioning issues among First Nations emerging adults with prior child welfare histories, an expansion of this research could provide an opportunity to collect northern and rural perspectives as well. Expansion of this kind of research might also be necessary for those individuals who identify as Two-Spirit or LGBTQ. Identifying a space and time that is safe to members of this community where they can come together and produce videos based on what it was like to transition out of care would provide another level of understanding to what it means for members of this community to transition out of care. Independent digital storytelling workshops equally geared to male, female and a mix of the genders can also significantly increase our understanding of transitioning issues among the Indigenous populations, specifically within the Manitoba, would bring a great deal of healing to various generations who have not had a chance to share their stories. Individuals who have been incarcerated have also expressed interest in participating in digital storytelling workshops. An expansion of this research could conceivably be extended to men, women, and youth who are currently detained in detention centres within this province. Similar research, specifically, filming, has already been done with Aboriginal street gangs within Winnipeg (Buddle, 2007) but further digital storytelling workshops could also be done with young men and women who are currently in care and affiliated with gangs. A multi-pronged approach to digital storytelling would contribute significantly to our understanding of transitioning issues amongst the various Indigenous populations who have child welfare histories in Manitoba and elsewhere. Furthermore, digital storytelling workshops could be conducted collaboratively and in partnership with various FNCFS agencies and the Provincial Department of Family Services to get a good

understanding of the transitioning issues across the province. Such an opportunity would help agencies and the province understand and begin to track the long-term outcomes experienced by former youth that were once a part of their systems. Understanding these outcomes can help agencies begin to tailor services to emerging adults who are now currently in extensions of care which can radically address how FNCFS agencies prepare young people for adulthood after emancipation from child welfare. In addition, engaging former youth in care, as mentors, assisting other youth transitioning out of care can be a transformative experience. Specifically, engaging former youth in care in helping young people develop their own digital stories as part of the process of leaving care can boost not only the young person's self-esteem but will also build the emerging adult's resilience and their sense of self.

6.5 Limitations of the study

There are some potential limitations to this study. First, the small sample size limits the ability to generalize these experiences to all First Nations or other Indigenous youth in extensions of care or transitioning from child welfare care. In response to this, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) in examining 60 in-depth interviews, found that saturation occurred with twelve interviews, with most meta-themes emerging within the six first interviews. The results of this study were not envisioned to be conclusive or to be generalized to all First Nations young people in extensions of care or aging out of care. Instead it provides in depth knowledge, which is precisely the focus of small qualitative studies. In addition, the study required teaching participants about the digital storytelling process and then training and assisting them to create and develop a video, thus it was necessary to limit the size of participants to twelve and limiting each workshop to no more than six to eight participants in total.

Second, the sample selection process may have produced some selection bias related to the individuals who ended up agreeing to participate in this study. The majority of the participants were connected to one individual whom they all had a great deal of respect for as many of them considered this individual to be an important mentor. I asked this individual if he would spread information about my digital storytelling workshops to those he knew and in turn, he identified and contacted individuals he felt fit into the research criteria of my digital storytelling workshops and asked them to participate. Many of them did so, at least initially, on his advice. So there is no way of knowing whether they agreed to be involved in the study because this person had asked them to participate and stay the course or if they truly wanted to be involved in the study. However the participants he invited stayed and participated in all discussions and events scheduled over the five days of both workshops. Through engagement with me, my assistant, the Elder and each other, it appeared that all the participants came to enjoy the process. So this tells me that they benefitted from the experience and stayed because they found the workshop interesting. For many, once they started working on their videos they wanted to stay to ensure they were able to complete their videos and tell their stories.

A third limitation relates to the exclusion of certain Aboriginal groups in this study. All of the participants in this study self-identified as being of First Nations ancestry and were selected based on this particular background. The findings and results may not accurately reflect the nuances and unique experiences of individuals with Métis and Inuit ancestry who have extensions of care and transitioning experiences within Manitoba.

A fourth limitation deals with the fact that the age and gender of the participants were also not within the age and gender range originally envisioned for my study. I envisioned persons 23 years and older participating in this research. The reason for targeting the older age set was because I believed that they would have already dealt with and struggled past the transitioning issues that most

young adults seem to still deal with as soon as they transition out of care. I also did not get equal representation among the genders, as the participants were predominantly male. Only three young women participated: one in the first workshop and two in the second workshop. In the end I had to settle for the participants who had been referred to the workshops, as there was not the widespread interest I had originally expected from the originally targeted age groups. I suspect that those who might have fit the age range originally targeted may have either been working or going to school full time, or unable to participate because they had children at home and had no means for childcare or transportation to and from the workshop. The age range of the participants was fairly young with approximately seven participants being in the age range of 18-19 years of age. Four of these seven individuals were still in extension of care placements. For many of these young persons, they struggled to articulate and to contribute to the discussion around what it means to have transitioned out of care and deal with adult based decisions. Furthermore, as the participants were predominantly male, many of the participants had gang involvement, which was unexpected. I was also looking to attract equal numbers of young women, men and members of the Two-Spirit and LGBTQ community. I was not able to get representatives of the Two-Spirit or LGBTQ community to participate in this research. Perhaps this was because I did not distribute the poster in the places Two-Spirit and LGBTQ members might have frequented. There is also the possibility these individuals may have not felt safe in participating in such a study, as it was also open to those who do not identify as LGBTQ.

A fifth limitation could involve where the location and the timing of the first workshop was held in comparison to that of the second workshop. There was a difference in the way relationships developed that impacted on the quality of the videos created in workshop one that were markedly different from those produced in workshop two. The first workshop was held in a child welfare agency office in Winnipeg during the day associated with regular work related hours (9am – 3pm),

which may not have been conducive and optimal to the young people who participated in the first workshop. The fact that the workshop was held in a child welfare agency might have also been problematic in that it would lead participants to perhaps revert back into thinking that they were still in care or possibly question whether they had reached adulthood and were exercising their own free will. The second workshop was held in the evening and it was held in a welcoming space in the researcher's home. The evening hours appeared to be more conducive to the participants, and the atmosphere was warm, inviting, welcoming and made them feel comfortable as well as free and safe to be themselves.

A sixth limitation was also detected with the quality of videos produced in workshop one versus workshop two. The difference in video quality could be tied to the software and the timing of the release of software updates that were unexpected during the first workshop. As a result I had to quickly relearn the new software interface as it had significantly changed with the new update. This impacted on my ability to effectively teach the participants how to use the software and consequently impacted slightly on the quality of the videos produced. As I was not fully aware of all the changes in the software this resulted in some of the videos from the first workshop having missing images that didn't match with the recorded narrative. As a result, I then had to re-edit three of the videos with respect to the images. The editing of these specific videos however did not in any manner change the narratives as recorded by the participants or the music tracks chosen.

6.5 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter examined the results of the study and identified how the findings were consistent with published research. The second part of the chapter considered how digital storytelling became a healing and transformative experience for the participants involved in this study. Using the Anishinaabe Debwewin Journey the third section looked at this as a metaphor

of the experiences describing the journey out of care among Indigenous emerging adults. Debwewin is about the journey from the head to heart and what is learned along the way. Implications focused on policy suggestions that center on the need to capture the Indigenous voices of those who have transitioned out of child welfare, implementation of services to ensure extensions of care is extended to all youth up to the age of 25, and expansion of the concept of emerging adulthood as a new human stage of development that should be reflected in various service sectors such as health, social, justice and education. Reflection on the ways that the current study could have been improved was identified and the final section of this chapter looked specifically at the limitations of the current study.

The digital storytelling process as a method, I believe, allowed participants to incorporate their own authentic voices, provided insight about their experiences, provided narrative tension, showcased transforming realizations and other elements that most of us would expect from a serious story or movie. Telling a story through digital storytelling encouraged participants to communicate meaning on multiple levels (using their own voice and viewpoints, and it relied upon their own emotional content, tensions, and storylines that were unique to each individual), and it allowed participants to take a fresh perspective on their in-care, transitioning and after-care experiences. I also believe that the opportunity to participate in the workshops helped participants reflect on their child welfare experiences and whether they had reached adulthood based on their understanding of what adulthood meant to each of them individually and collectively. The resulting digital stories incorporated real events from the participants' lives and about their reflections on their experiences in care and the transitioning events they have each experienced since leaving care. Together with an understanding of how to make the journey from the head to the heart through using the Debwewin Journey, Indigenous emerging adults can learn to understand what to expect in their journey out of care. In short it would appear that there is an untapped potential, for emerging

Indigenous adults transitioning out of child welfare, for creatively using technology and storytelling in a way that can lead to healing, resistance and transformation that is vitally necessary in becoming functioning healthy Indigenous adults post-care.

This study enhances the understanding of First Nations young peoples' experiences in extensions of care and as they transition out of foster care. In doing this I believe that my research has contributed to the growing body of knowledge that utilizes digital storytelling as a contemporary method conducive to working with Indigenous emerging adult populations.

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Appendices

A Recruitment poster
B Recruitment script outlining information to be shared with prospective participants
C Registration form
D Data management tracking form
E Sample certificate of completion & appreciation
F What you may need to know about trauma
G Research questions guiding the story circles and digital storytelling videos
H Workshop agenda for the five days
I Participant reminder letter re post-interviews
J Post-digital storytelling workshop interview questions
K Consent forms:
  1) Research and workshop participant consent form
  2) Photographed/video-recorded image permission form
  3) Digital storytelling video release form
  4) Consent form for post-workshop interview
L Ethics Approval Certificate dated May 1, 2015
M Digital storyteller's bill of rights
N *Nindibaajimomin: A digital storytelling resource for children of residential school survivors*
The toolkit was comprised of the following booklets:
  1) Guide 1: *Introduction and overview of digital storytelling on the legacy of residential schools*
  2) Guide 2: *Planning and preparing a digital storytelling project on the legacy of residential schools*
  3) Guide 3: *Creating and sharing digital stories on the legacy of residential schools*
  4) Guide 4: *Logistics, checklists, and resources for digital storytelling facilitator*
  5) Guide 5: *Overview of the digital storytelling tools and techniques*
O Guest's Written Testimonial regarding the Screening of Workshop Participants' Videos

Appendix A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

IN A 5-DAY DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOP ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION SURVIVORS OF THE MANITOBA CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

TWO (2) SESSIONS WILL BE OFFERED:
MAY 18-22, 2015 (WINNIPEG, MB) AND JUNE 22-26, 2015 (THOMPSON, MB)
9AM – 4:00 PM DAILY

These two workshops will provide an opportunity for emerging First Nations adult survivors of the First Nations child welfare system in Manitoba, to experience a supportive environment in which to explore and create their own recovery stories around transitioning out of care, about subsequent challenges, barriers, opportunities and resiliencies experienced throughout the "emerging adulthood" life stage, using narrative inquiry through digital storytelling. "Emerging adulthood" is defined as a developmental life stage between adolescence and young adulthood, wherein young people feel they are not adolescents but also feel they are not quite adults either. "Digital storytelling" combines writing, images and audio, and through the workshop, participants will be trained in the use of an easy to learn video editing application.

EACH Workshop is limited to SIX (6) participants ONLY. Register Early!

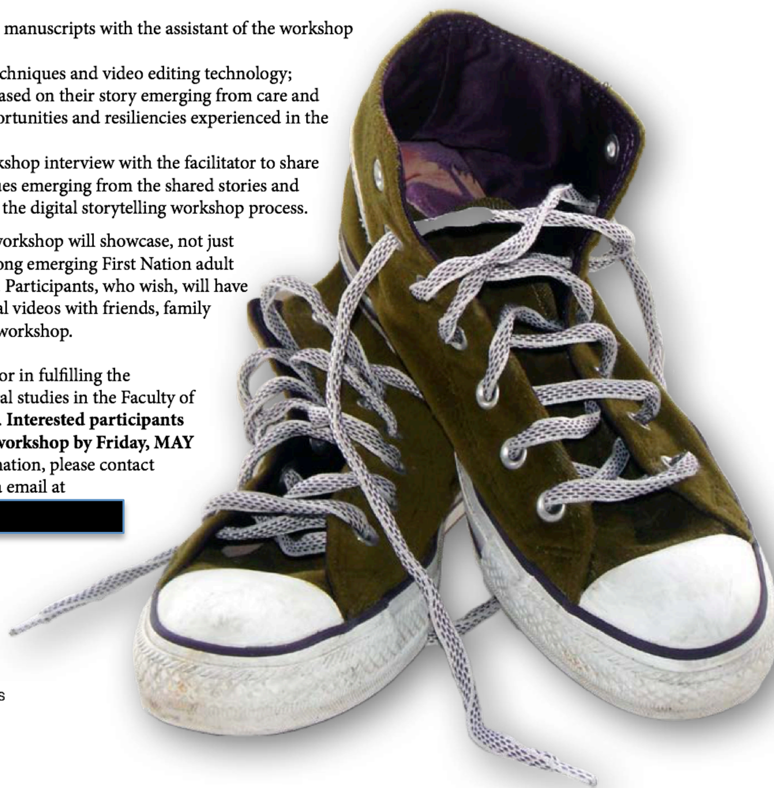
CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANTS - YOU IDENTIFY AS:

- A First Nations adult survivor of the child welfare system;
- Having prior experiences (5+ years experience) of being in care of a First Nation child and family services agency in Manitoba;
- Having transitioned out of care upon reaching the legal age of majority (18 years);
- Male, female, or as an LGBTQ individual; and
- Being an emerging adult (consider yourself to be in between adolescence and young adulthood but not quite yet an adult) and currently anywhere between the ages of 23 and 30 years of age.

Only participants, who meet the above noted criteria, will be invited to attend. Participants will be registered on a first come, first serve basis. Only those chosen to participate will receive an honorarium. Lunch will be offered daily as well. Subscriptions to the online video editing application will be provided. Participants are encouraged to bring their own laptops although laptops can be provided for use during the workshop session.

DURING THE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS WILL:

- **PARTICIPATE** in learning / story circles and share with each other their retrospective experiences transitioning out of care, their subsequent post-care challenges, barriers and the opportunities experienced in adulthood as adult survivors of the child welfare system as well as stories about their own personal resiliency and how they have come to know they have reached adulthood;
- **WRITE** short 1-2 page story manuscripts with the assistant of the workshop facilitator;
- **LEARN** video storytelling techniques and video editing technology;
- **PRODUCE** a digital video based on their story emerging from care and the challenges, barriers, opportunities and resiliencies experienced in the journey towards adulthood.
- **BE INVITED** to a post-workshop interview with the facilitator to share their perspectives on the issues emerging from the shared stories and about their experiences with the digital storytelling workshop process.



The digital stories developed in the workshop will showcase, not just the challenges but, the resiliency among emerging First Nation adult survivors of the child welfare system. Participants, who wish, will have a chance to invite and share their final videos with friends, family and the public on the last day of the workshop.

This workshop will assist the facilitator in fulfilling the research requirements for her doctoral studies in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba. **Interested participants are encouraged to register for this workshop by Friday, MAY 15th, 2015 by 5pm**. For more information, please contact Marlyn Bennett (PhD Candidate) via email at

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RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN MANITOBA

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT - Appendix B

Information to be Shared with Prospective Participants During Initial Contact

Prospective participants will be told that they will have the opportunity to:

- **PARTICIPATE** in learning / story circles and share with each other their retrospective experiences transitioning out of care, their subsequent challenges, barriers and the opportunities experienced in adulthood as adult survivors of the child welfare system as well as stories about their own personal resiliency and how they have come to know they have reached adulthood;
- **WRITE** and audio record a short 1-2 page story manuscripts with the assistant of the workshop facilitator;
- **LEARN** video storytelling techniques and about video editing softward;
- **PRODUCE** a digital video based on their story emerging from care and the challenges, barriers, opportunities and resiliencies experienced in the journey towards adulthood;
- **SHARE** their videos (if they wish) at a public screen of the videos with the other participants and invitees on the last day of the workshop; and
- **BE INVITED** to a post-workshop interview with the facilitator to share their perspectives on the issues emerging from the shared stories and about their experiences with the digital storytelling workshop process.

During the initial contact with the workshop facilitator, potential participants will learn the purpose of the workshop and about what will be required of them. Prospective participants will be advised of the risks, benefits, and the time commitment and expectations around participating in the workshop, including the amount of the honorarium to be paid.

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RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOP ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION SURVIVORS OF THE MANITOBA CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

REGISTRATION FORM (Completed by Researcher) - Appendix C

Applications are due by Tuesday, May 15th, 2015 at 5:00 pm

Name: ____
Address: ____
Email: ____
Phone: ____

1. Does the interested person fit the research criteria? Y / N

2. Attendance is required for all five days (Monday to Friday 9-5) - is the person available to attend all 5 days of the workshop? Y / N

3. Brief reason why applicant interested in workshop: ____
____
____

4. Is applicant willing to participate in discussions and activities regarding their experiences transitioning out of care toward adulthood, about where they are now post-care, about their family, community and cultural connections, and their thoughts on having attained adulthood? Y / N

5. Is applicant willing to share their final digital video story? Y / N

6. Which of the following technical skills does the applicant possess? (NOTE: none of these are required but I am trying to guage what computers are need and what skills are already present among those who plan on attending the workshop):

____ Experience with Apple based computers
____ Experience with Windows based computers
____ Photoshop
____ iMovie
____ Premiere Elements 12
____ Garage Band
____ Digital Camera
____ Digital Recording
____ Other movie and audio editing software:
Explain: ____________________________
____
____

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RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN MANITOBA

DATA MANAGEMENT TRACKING FORM - Appendix D

Research Project Title: Research and Digital Storytelling on the Emerging Adulthood Experiences of First Nations Survivors of the Manitoba Child Welfare System

Name of Researcher: Marlyn Bennett, doctoral research student, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted] [redacted]@umanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Brad McKenzie, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba [redacted] [redacted]@umanitoba.ca

Name of Participant: ______________________

Address: ______________________

Phone: ______________________

Date of Workshop: ______________________

Date of Post-Workshop Interview: ______________________

File Identification No: ______________________

Documents provided to workshop Participants:

- ☐ Informed consent to participate in research and workshop - 2 copies
- ☐ Informed consent in research using videos - 2 copies
- ☐ Photo release form - 2 copies
- ☐ Video release - 2 copies
- ☐ Copy of workshop agenda
- ☐ Copy of research questions that will guide the daily story circles and videos
- ☐ Reminder letter to participants regarding post-workshop interviews
- ☐ Informed consent to participate in post-workshop interviews
- ☐ Copy of post-workshop interview questions
- ☐ Copy of Digital storytellers' bill of rights
- ☐ Nindibaajimomin toolkit (6 booklets and video CD)
- ☐ USB memory stick
- ☐ Tobacco/sweetgrass/cultural gift (presented on welcome - 1st day)
- ☐ Bus fare (if required): $__________
- ☐ Receipt for $150 honorarium
- ☐ Certificate of completion & appreciation
- ☐ Thank you card
- ☐ $150 honorarium for participants (provided on last day)

Checklist on Completion:

- ________ Participant's video complete
- ________ Participant's video saved to computer file
- ________ Recording from post-workshop interview saved on device and saved to computer file
- ________ Handwritten notes (if any) posted to file
- ________ Receipt for honorarium signed (signature required)
- ________ Transcript of post-workshop interview transcribed Date:
- ________ Transcript of post-workshop interview sent to participate Date:

University of Manitoba

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Appendix E

this Certificate of

APPRECIATION & COMPLETION

is presented to:

Participant's Name goes here.

for successfuly completing and providing contributions to the

Research and Digital Storytelling Workshop on
the Emerging Adulthood Experiences of First Nation
Survivors of the Child Welfare Systems in Manitoba

May - June 2015

Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg / Thompson

Date: ______________________________________, 2015

____
Marlyn Bennett, PhD (Cand.), University of Manitoba

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The research and digital storytelling workshop was approved by the Psychology / Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

What You May Need to Know about Trauma

Making that first phone call to connect with a resource that can support you on your healing journey, is often one of the most difficult steps one can take toward wellness and recovery. Encouraged by your strength to reach out, we hope you find the enclosed information package useful, as you wait to meet with your counsellor for the first time.

This information package is designed to provide some clarity about trauma, its impact, what to expect from the counselling process and resources that may be helpful in managing a wide range of emotions you may be experiencing. If at any time you need to speak with a counselor while you wait for service, please call Klinic's 24-Hour Crisis Line at 786-8686.

What is Trauma?

- Trauma can be seen as an all-purpose word for what happens when your world has been turned upside down. We use the word 'trauma' to describe many feelings and circumstances.
- When a person experiences a traumatic event, they may have experienced an unexpected or extraordinary event in their lives; an experience that may be dangerous, life threatening, life altering or extremely overwhelming.
- Traumatic events may include experiences of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, assault, neglect, the witnessing violence or having suffered a suicidal loss.
- Trauma is generally known as one's response to a traumatic event.

"Trauma is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation"

What are Common Responses to Trauma?

The effects of trauma may be experienced right away or begin to appear weeks and even years after the traumatic event. What is important to know is, trauma symptoms can be managed and often minimized if we know how to identify them and intervene appropriately. Once we understand the experience and the impact it has had on our life, we are better able to move forward.

"There is no right or wrong way to respond to a traumatic event and no right way to heal from this experience"

Common Reactions to Trauma May Include:

Immediate Symptoms	Intermediate Symptoms	Long-Term Symptoms
• Shock, denial, feeling numb • Intense feelings of fear horror or helplessness • Intense feelings of anxiety • Repeated distressing memories or dreams associated with the event • Avoidance of strong emotions • Feeling 'on alert' • Disruption in sleeping / eating patterns • Difficulty focusing, concentrating, remembering or making decisions • Feelings of guilt shame • Feelings of responsibility and blame	• Intense emotional reactions triggered by sights, sounds, smells, memories, feelings and body sensations • Triggers that are accompanied by fears that the event will reoccur • Panic attacks • Difficulties in relationships, the ability to feel love, trust or other strong emotions • Frequent feelings of anger or irritability • Lowered sense of safety, trust and confidence • Withdrawn, detached or isolated – avoiding usual activities and loss of sense of enjoyment and purpose in life • Effects on sexuality	• Difficulty regulating feelings / behaviour • Difficulty with memory and concentration • Emotional distancing from loved ones • Loss of meaning, loss of safety, trust and loss of confidence in themselves and the world • Relationships may be characterized by anger and mistrust • Withdrawal and isolation from social relationships • Unable to maintain relationships and difficulty parenting • Feelings of depression • Lowered self esteem, feelings of self worth

What is Counselling? How Can it Help?

The Post Trauma Counselling Program at Klinic provides in-person and/or group counseling to individuals affected by Trauma.

Counselling is a supportive, encouraging and growth focused experience of mutual respect and responsibility. Talking with a counselor is one way an individual can begin to heal from the experience of trauma in their lives.

Through a process of knowing, understanding and honoring one's own strengths, value and life experiences, counselling is an opportunity for individual's to process their thoughts, feelings and beliefs; while finding solutions to help regain control of one's emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing.

With your counsellor, you will begin to identify and understand your concerns and needs, determine the changes that are important to you and develop a plan for your personal journey toward healing and wellness.

What Can I do to Feel Better?

Trauma symptoms can be managed and often minimized if we know how to identify them and intervene appropriately. Here are some suggestions that may help ease some of what you are experiencing;

- Spend time with other people
- If it helps, talk about how you are feeling
- Get back to your daily routines. Familiar habits can be comforting.
- Take time to grieve and cry if you need to.
- Ask for help from your family, friends, or other community resources. Join a support group.
- Take one thing at a time instead of trying to do everything at once
- Get enough rest / sleep. People may need more rest when they are stressed
- Eat healthy foods, stretch, exercise, relax
- Do some thing good for yourself; have a warm bath, cook your favorite food, read, dance (See 'Coping & Self Care' Sheet attached)
- Remember that you survived, and that has required strength, courage and creativity

While we are dealing with the impact of a traumatic experience, we are also living life. We are using and developing our strengths through our daily activities. This is true even when we are struggling with these activities. Reminding ourselves of the skills and abilities that we have used to live our life can help us remember our strengths even when we do not feel them.

What Can I do to Prepare for Counselling?

In order to prepare for your first meeting with your counselor, you might want to consider some of the following questions:

- What do I want to be different when counseling is done? How will I know when it is time to end counseling?
- Who / what support person's should I include in the counseling process?
- What has worked in the past, to help me cope?
- What does my counselor need to know about me? How would I describe myself and how might other describe me?

"Remind yourself that you have needs and you have a right to have those needs met"

What Can My Loved Ones Do?

Families and friends of individuals going through an emotionally difficult time may feel helpless about making things better for someone they care deeply about. It may be painful to watch someone you care about experience a range of intense emotions. The following is a list of suggestions, which may be helpful for your family and friend supports;

- Listen to your loved one in a non-judgmental and supportive way
- Allow your family / friend to share and express themselves in their own way and in their own time
- Seek support for yourself if things feel overwhelming
- (see "How Do I Support People Who Have Experienced Trauma?" at page 5)

SOME BOOK AND WEBSITE RESOURCES

BOOKS:

Insoo Kim Berg & Yvonne Dolan (2001). *Tales of Solutions: A Collection of Hope-Inspiring Stories*. Norton Professional Books.

Melba Colgrove, Harold Bloomfield & Peter McWilliams (1993). *How to Survive the Loss of a Love: 58 Things to Do When There is Nothing to Be Done.*

Beverly Engel, M.F.C.C (1991). *The Right to Innocence: Healing the Trauma of Childhood Sexual Abuse. A therapeutic 7-step self help program for men and women, including how to choose a therapist and find a support group.* Ballantyne Books.

Eliana Gill (1995). *Outgrowing the Pain: A Book for and About Adults Abused as Children.* Dell Publishing, NY.

Eliana Gill (1992). *Outgrowing the Pain Together: A book for spouses and partners of adults abused as children*. Dell Publishing, NY.

Miriam Greenspan (2003). *Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The wisdom of grief, fear and despair*. Shambhala, Boston & London.

Cheri Huber (1988). *How you do Anything is how you do Everything: A workbook.* Independent Publishers Group, Chicago, IL.

Peter Levine (1997). *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma - The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences*.

Jennifer Louden (2005). T*he Woman's Comfort Book: A self nurturing guide for restoring balance in your life.*

Dena Rosenbloom, Phd & Mary Beth Williams, Phd with Barbara E. Watkins (1999). *Life After Trauma: A workbook for healing.* The Guilford Press, New York London.

WEBSITES:

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba
www.afm.mb.ca

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba
www.adam.mb.ca

Canadian Health Network
www.canadian-health-network.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association – Coping With Stress
http://www.cmha.ca/english/coping_with_stress/counselling_support.htm

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
http://www.camh.ca

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
http://www.dbsalliance.org

Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre
http://www.fgwrc.ca/

Men Overcoming Sexual Abuse
http://www.mosa.ca/

Mental Health Resource of Canada
www.mherc.mb.ca

Rainbow Resource Centre
http://www.rainbowresourcecentre.org/resources.htm

Centre for Suicide Prevention
www.suicideinfo.ca

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
http://www.suicideprevention.ca

Coping & Self-Care

Self Care is the way we attend to and take care of ourselves. It is an important and powerful way to cope with how we are feeling and the impact of our traumatic experiences. Self care may include some or all of the following activities. By trying out a variety of activities, we can find ones that work for us.

- Take a bath
- Eat well
- A good nights sleep
- Go to the park
- Listen to music
- Cook your favorite food
- Light a candle
- Have coffee with a friend
- Clean you space
- Draw a picture / scrapbook / paint
- Read a book / magazine / inspirational poem
- Go for a walk / bike ride / swim / skating
- Dance like nobody is watching
- Go to a play / dance recital / comedy event
- Garden
- Go fishing
- Take a nap
- Sing like nobody is listening
- Play a game of cards
- Brush your hair and teeth
- Say something nice to yourself; "I deserve to feel okay right now"
- Go to the library
- Phone a friend / family member who is supportive
- Watch you favorite TV program / movie
- Volunteer to walk a dog at your local humane society
- Connect with your spirituality / place of worship / prayer
- Meditate
- Practice Yoga

How Do I Support People Who Have Experienced Trauma?

As a support to your loved one, you may feel have feelings of helplessness and at times, feel overwhelmed about what to do to support them. It will be important for you to become familiar with the common effects of abuse and trauma, and the recovery process. This will help to create a better understanding of what to expect, and allow you to reassure the person you care about, that what they are feeling is normal and understandable.

How Do I Support My Loved One?

- Support them to make realistic choices for themselves
- Validate their feelings: anger, pain and fear
- If appropriate, encourage them to connect with a therapist
- Express Compassion
- Never place blame on the survivor
- Plan for crisis situations – get help if the person is suicidal
- Accept that there may be changes in your relationship as they heal
- Respect the time and space it takes to heal
- Do not force forgiveness of others on them
- Avoid forcing cheerfulness on them
- Do not patronize - acknowledge the persons strengths and what they have done to survive
- Try not to overwhelm them with your own anger / frustration

How Do I Support Myself?

- Learn about the effects of abuse and the recovery process
- Find counseling or support for yourself
- Respect the persons boundaries and limits
- Be aware of your own feelings and conflicts
- Learn to practice time outs and healthy communication skills
- Communicate about sexuality
- Find a balance between spending time together and time apart
- Learn to play and have fun

Some Community Resources

In addition to medical treatment, professional counselling or therapy is often beneficial in the treatment of mental health problems or mental illnesses. Counselling may address one or more of the following issues:

- effective coping strategies for daily living
- relationships and family communication
- changing negative thought patterns
- dealing with loss and grief
- childhood issues of abuse, neglect or trauma
- crisis planning
- managing emotions in a healthy way
- problem-solving
- building self-awareness and self-esteem
- developing new skills

Counselling can come from a number of perspectives and may be focused on particular issues. Examples of different perspectives may include feminist or faith-based approaches. Sometimes counselling is focused on a particular issue such as domesticabuse, past childhood abuse, or specifically for men. When choosing a counsellor or counselling organization, ask questions about the perspective and focus to make sure it fits with your values, beliefs, and needs.

Finding a Counsellor

- Ask your doctor for a referral to a qualified counsellor (a referral may be required by the counsellor or by your insurance plan to receive coverage).
- See the Yellow Pages under Counsellors.
- Your employer may have an Employee Assistance Program (E.A.P.) that provides free confidential counselling or referral to counselling.
- Check if your private medical insurance plan covers professional counselling.
- Contact this professional organization:

MANITOBA COLLEGE OF REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS

· 204-888-9477 · www.mirsw.mb.ca | www.mbcrsw.ca

• Or call one of the agencies listed below.

KLINIC COMMUNITY DROP-IN COUNSELLING SERVICE
204-784-4067 · Drop-in counselling is available at two locations in Winnipeg. Call for locations and times or visit www.klinic.mb.ca and go to "counselling services."

These social service agencies provide low cost or no cost professional counselling:

• AULNEAU RENEWAL CENTRE
228 Hamel Avenue · 204-987-7090

• AURORA FAMILY THERAPY CENTRE
University of Winnipeg · 204-786-9251

• CENTRE DE SANTÉ SAINT BONIFACE
D-1048, 409 Taché Avenue · 204-235-3910

• CENTRE RENAISSANCE CENTRE
844 Autumnwood Drive · 204-256-6750

• CORNERSTONE COUNSELLING SERVICE
302-1200 Portage Avenue · 204-663-0050

• EVOLVE (KLINIC COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE)
870 Portage Avenue · 204-784-4208
(Specializes in domestic abuse issues)

• EYAA-KEEN HEALING CENTRE
547 Notre Dame Avenue · 204-783-2976 or 1-877-423-4648
Aboriginal Traditional based therapeutic trauma treatment and psychological rehabilitation · www.eyaa-keen.org

• FAMILY DYNAMICS 4th Floor, Portage Place · 204-947-1401

• FORT GARRY WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE · 1150-A Waverley Street · 204-477-1123

• HOPE CENTRE HEALTH CARE
240 Powers Street · 204-589-8354

• IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S COUNSELLING SERVICES, NOR' WEST CO-OP · 200-323 Portage Avenue · 204-940-2172

• JEWISH CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE
C200-123 Doncaster Street · 204-477-7430

• KLINIC COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE
870 Portage Avenue · 204-784-4090
TRAUMA COUNSELLING INTAKE · 204-784-4059
24 HOUR CRISIS LINE · 204-786-8686

• MA MAWI WI CHI ITATA CENTRE
94 McGregor Street · 204-925-0300

• MEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
115 Pulford Street · 204-415-6797 ext. 250 or 1-855-672-6727

• MOUNT CARMEL CLINIC - Multicultural Wellness Program
886 Main Street · 204-589-9475

• NEW DIRECTIONS PARENTING CENTRE
301-321 McDermot Avenue · 204-956-6560

• NOR' WEST CO-OP COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE
785 Keewatin Street · 204-938-5900

• NORTH END WOMEN'S CENTRE
394 Selkirk Avenue · 204-589-7347

• PREGNANCY & FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES INC.
555 Spence Street · 204-772-9091

• PLURI-ELLES · 570 rue des Meurons · 204-233-1735 (services francophone families)

• RAINBOW RESOURCE CENTRE
170 Scott Street · 204-452-7508
Issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity

• RECOVERY OF HOPE COUNSELLING
102-900 Harrow Street East · 1055 Molson Street
Centralized Intake Line 204-477-4673 or 1-866-493-6202

• THE LAUREL CENTRE · 104 Roslyn Road · 204-783-5460

• WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC
3rd Floor, 419 Graham Avenue · 204-947-1517

• YOUVILLE CENTRE
33 Marion Street · 204-233-0262
6-845 Dakota Street · 204-255-4840
Peer Support Phone Line • SENECA WARM LINE · 204-942-9276
(available 7:00pm - 11:00pm daily)

RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN MANITOBA

RESEARCH QUESTIONS GUIDING STORY CIRCLE DISCUSSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF VIDEOS - Appendix G

Day 1 - Monday

10:00 - 12:00 pm

(1st) First Learning / Story Circle – Questions: *What do you remember about your time in care? What is your understanding of why you were in care? Does the term "survivor" adequately capture how you feel about your child welfare experience? Why or why not?* ***What was your transitioning experience out of care once you reached 18 years of age****? What role did the child welfare agency have in helping you transition to adulthood?*

Day 2 - Tuesday

9:00 - 10:30 am

(2nd) Second Learning / Story Circle – Questions: *Have you experienced any gender specific incidences that might have impacted your ability to transition to adulthood (e.g. has being female, male or LGBTQ made your experience different from those of others who have left CFS care)?* ***What challenges, barriers and/or opportunities have you experienced since leaving care?***

Day 3 - Wednesday

9:00 - 10:30 am

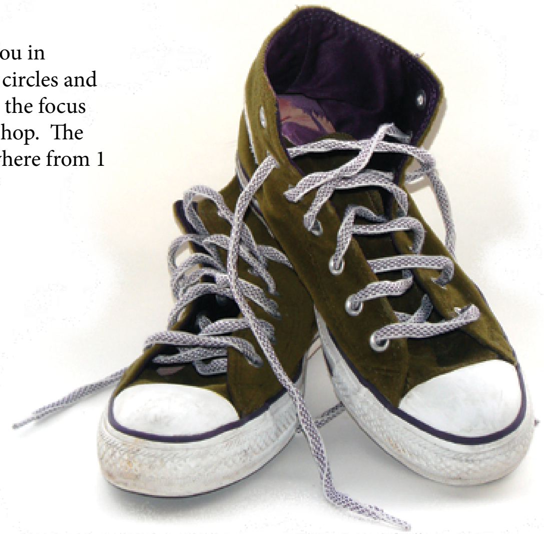
(3rd) Third Learning / Story Circle – Questions: *What challenges, barriers and opportunities have you experienced since leaving care?* **How have you mainted the connection to family, community, and/or culture since transitioning out of care?** *Where are you now on your life path (e.g. do you have a job, started a family, etc.)??*

Day 4 - Thursday

9:00 - 10:30 am

(4th) Final Learning / Story Circle – *Questions: Have you reached adulthood?* **How and when do you know you have reached adulthood?** *What are the markers and/or cultural events that tell you, or might indicate to you as a First Nation person, that you have reached adulthood?*

The questions above serve as a guide to assist you in responding to the discussions during the story circles and for developing your own digital story. They are the focus of discussions from day 1 to day 4 of the workshop. The learning / story circle discussions may be anywhere from 1 hour to 1 and 1/2 hours each day.



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RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN MANITOBA

FIVE (5) DAY WORKSHOP AGENDA - Appendix H

Day 1 – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

9:00 - 9:15 am	Opening Prayer, Welcome and Round of Introductions
9:15 - 9:30 am	Review of workshop agenda; review and signing of consent Forms; and introduction to Learning / Story Circles
9:30 - 10:30 am	Introduction to Narrative Inquiry, Digital Storytelling and Seven Elements
10:30 - 10:45 am	Break
10:45 - 12:00 pm	(1st) First Learning / Story Circle – ***Main Question: What do you remember about your time in care? What was your transitioning experience out of care once you reached 18 years of age?***
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Break LUNCH PROVIDED
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Showing examples of other Digital Stories from The University of Winnipeg's Summer Institute
2:30 - 2:45 pm	Break
2:45 – 3:00 pm	Writing Time
3:00 – 4:00 pm	Photoshop / Scanning / Start audio recording stories

Day 2 – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

9:00 - 10:30 am	(2nd) Second Learning / Story Circle – ***Main Question: What challenges, barriers and/or opportunities have you experienced since leaving care? Where are you now on your life path?***
10:30 – 12:00 pm	Work Time / Start audio recording stories
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Break LUNCH PROVIDED
1:00 – 2:30 pm	Begin audio recording of stories
2:30 – 2:45 pm	Break
2:45 – 3:15 pm	Introduction to the use of iMovie / Adobe Premier Elements 12
3:15 – 4:00 pm	Scan images and continue audio recording stories

Day 3 – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

9:00 - 10:30 am	(3rd) Third Learning / Story Circle – ***Main Question: How have you maintained the connection to family, community, and/or culture since transitioning out of care?***
10:30 – 12:00 pm	Media Ethics and consent issues around photograph / film subjects or relevant organizations (if used)
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Break LUNCH PROVIDED
1:00 – 2:30 pm	Work Time
2:30 – 2:45 pm	Break
2:45 – 4:00 pm	Work Time Identification of guests to be invited to the viewing of videos on the last day and invitations sent to Participants' friends and family

Day 4 – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

9:00 - 10:30 am	(4th) Final Learning / Story Circle – ***Questions: Have you reach adulthood? What are the markers and/or events that tell you, or might indicate to you as a First Nations person, that you have reached adulthood?***
10:30 – 12:00 pm	Work Time
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Break LUNCH PROVIDED
1:00 – 2:30 pm	Work Time
2:30 – 2:45 pm	Break
2:45 – 4:00 pm	Work Time Appointments scheduled with Participants for post-workshop interview with facilitator

Day 5 – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

9:00 - 10:30 am	Wrap up final edits to videos
10:30 – 10:45 am	Break - light snacks served
10:45 – 12:00 am	Continue work on finalizing video
12:00 – 12:30 pm	Break
12:30 – 2:00 pm	Showcase and viewing of Participants' final videos
2:00 – 3:30 pm	Feast and distribution of Certificates of Completion
3:30 pm	Wrap Up and Closing Prayer

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RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN MANITOBA

PARTICIPANTS REMINDER LETTER RE POST-INTERVIEW - Appendix I

Thank you for taking part in this study and participating in the development of your own digital storytelling video. I hope that you have found the experience and process interesting over the past few days.

As discussed with you, after the digital storytelling workshop you will have an opportunity to participate in an interview to discuss your experience and participation in the digital storytelling process. This process is known as debriefing. It is an important part of the research process and helps to ensure that you do not leave with unanswered questions or concerns about your role in the research and subsequent sharing and distribution of your video.

There is a small risk that participation could bring up disturbing emotions. If this happens I'd encourage you to discuss this either with myself, an elder, or with someone else such as a family member, friend or health professional.

Again, I am reminding you that you have the right to withdraw at any stage of the process up until the interview and subsequent debriefing; and to withdraw all or part of the data arising from the development of your digital storytelling video and your interview. I am planning to have the transcriptions complete by the end of July 2015, and apologize for the delay.

If, in the meantime, you have any questions before the scheduled interview with me, please contact me at your earliest convenience by email at marlyn.bennett@umanitoba.ca or by phone at 204.294-9167.

Finally, thank you once again for your participation. It is very much appreciated.

With best wishes,

Marlyn Bennett

The date that we have agreed to meet for the post-workshop interview is:

____

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

The research and digital storytelling workshop was approved by the Psychology / Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN MANITOBA

POST-DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - Appendix J

1. Was there any particular reason why you initially wanted to take part in this digital storytelling workshop?
2. Did you have any prior expectations of the process?
3. Did your experience match up with your prior expectations of the process and the workshop overall?
4. What were your reasons for taking part?
5. How did these compare to the actual experience?
6. How did you feel during the process? And immediately after it was over?
7. How about now?
8. Has it had an impact on your life in general?
9. Why do you think that was?
10. Was there anything about the process, experience, and context or how you used your story that stood out?
11. In what ways was the digital storytelling process a positive experience? Has it been useful? If so how?
13. On reflection, how would you sum up your experience? How did you find the process overall?

University of Manitoba

The research and digital storytelling workshop was approved by the Psychology / Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

Appendix K

Faculty of Social Work

RESEARCH AND WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title:	Research and Digital Storytelling on the Emerging Adulthood experiences of First Nations Survivors of the Manitoba Child Welfare System
Researcher:	**Marlyn Bennett**, doctoral research student, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], ------@umanitoba.ca
Research Supervisor:	**Dr. Brad McKenzie,** Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], ------@umanitoba.ca
Workshop Location:	Winnipeg / Thompson (circle appropriate one)

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research and the digital storytelling workshop is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

What is this research about?

This research is connected to a doctoral study being conducted by the researcher named above. This research aims to use narrative inquiry through digital storytelling to expand upon the experiences of emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors post-care. In particular, the proposed project will investigate the outcomes, impacts and experiences of First Nations adult survivors who have transitioned out of First Nations child welfare care. "Emerging adulthood" is defined as a developmental life stage between adolescence and young adulthood, wherein young people feel they are not adolescents but also feel that they are not quite adults either. Digital storytelling combines writing, images and audio to produce a 3-5 minute video. The objective of this research is to further promote an understanding of the impacts and outcomes on the lives of emerging adult First Nations populations as it relates to the legacy of the child welfare experience within the Province of Manitoba.

What is the purpose of this research and workshop?

The scope of the activities for this research is based on a qualitative methodology that utilizes a narrative (oral history), participatory, arts-based approach rooted in digital storytelling activities. Research activities include examining and understanding the emerging adulthood transitioning, post-care and human development experiences of First Nations child welfare survivors in Manitoba. Specifically, this research seeks:

1. To advance an understanding of the transitioning out of care, post-care experiences as well as family and community connections including human development stages among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba;

2. To enhance capacity building among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system through digital storytelling to support healing practices.
3. To enable emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors who have experienced being in care to retrospectively and contemporarily express their stories, ideas, and experiences through video storytelling;
4. To provide a safe, comfortable forum for emerging adult First Nations men, women, and gay, lesbian, transgendered, queer (LGBT) individuals to share their in-care, transitioning and post-care experiences and connections;
5. To support and foster holistic healing among emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors through the process of storytelling;
6. To promote reconciliation and healing among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system using participatory, arts-based and Indigenous approaches;
7. To support wider opportunities for knowledge exchange regarding the social determinants of health, as well as highlighting the outcomes and post-care impacts on the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors from the Manitoba child welfare system; and
8. To disseminate and showcase narratives of survival and resiliency about the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors from the Manitoba child welfare system;

What will you do in the workshop?

Your participation in this research consists of making a video based on your personal experience as an emerging adult who has transitioned out of the First Nations child welfare system in Manitoba. If you decided to participate in the digital storytelling workshop, you will be involved in the following activities:

1. You will participate in a five-day digital storytelling workshop where you will be trained by the researcher in elements of storytelling, scripting, audio recording, filming, and digital video editing software, media ethics and consent issues. Throughout the five days the workshop will be conducted in English. Lunch, snacks and refreshments, including coffee and tea, will be provided.
2. You will participate in a daily group discussion (or story circles). The discussions will focus on responding to the research questions associated with this study. The research questions will also guide the digital storytelling videos that you will learn to produce. With your permission, the discussion from the story circles will be digitally audio-recorded.
3. You will produce your own 3-5 minute digital video. On the first day of the workshop you will be asked to produce a script outlining your story with inclusion of your own photos, audio and/or videos. In your video you can choose how to tell your story about your experience in care, transitioning out of care, the challenges, opportunities and barriers you have experienced since leaving care, including your understanding of how and when you had reached adulthood. The researcher of this project will work to assist you with editing and assembling your video.
4. You may bring your own laptop computer, however, computers, recording devices, and access to temporary licensed digital editing software will be available to assist participants with developing digital storytelling videos.
5. On the final day of the workshop, you will have the option of sharing your video with the other participants and invited guests or keeping it private. If you wish to share your video publically, you will have the opportunity to extend an invite to family and friends to attend the screening of the videos on the final day of the workshop.
6. In addition to the screening of the video there will be a feast for participants and invited guests. The feast concludes the workshop and honors the efforts of workshop participants. A certificate of completion/appreciation and an honorarium ($30 per day to a maximum of $150) will be presented to you at this time.
7. Finally, you will be asked to participate in a short interview on another day after the workshop has ended. The researcher will arrange an interview date, time and location with you before the workshop ends. The researcher will ask you to sign a separate consent form to participate on the day of the interview. The interview will give you a chance to evaluate and provide feedback about your

experience and explore final perspectives about the digital storytelling process. With your permission, this meeting will also be digitally audio-recorded.

Right to refuse or withdraw
Your participation in this research and in the workshop activities outlined above is completely voluntary. At any time you are free to withdraw from the study, refuse to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable, leave the group discussions, stop developing your video, or not participate in the post-workshop interview, or have all or any part of your information removed from the data associated with this research and workshop. You should consent based on what you feel comfortable doing after gaining a solid understanding of the risks involved.

Risks
Storytelling is highly personal and can trigger emotions. Please note that sharing your personal story carries with it the risk of experiencing emotional distress. With this possibility in mind, a list of counselling resources in Manitoba and information about coping with trauma has been attached to this consent form for your assistance. In addition, a health support worker and an Elder will be available to sit down with any participant to assist in talking through any emotional distress. The Elder will be available to provide emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural support for participants who wish this additional support.

Benefits
You will be trained in a variety of digital media and story making skills to tell your story, gaining valuable media skills that may contribute positively to the issue of emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors from the Manitoba child welfare system. You may also learn more about the child welfare system in Canada and about the range of coping strategies and services used by your peers who have transitioned out care.

Reimbursement
You will receive $30 a day (up to a maximum of $150) for your participation in the workshop. You will also receive bus fare to cover your transportation costs for participating in the workshop (if needed). Lunch, snacks, coffee and tea, and refreshments will be provided daily. A feast will be held on the last day of the workshop to collectively honour the work of all participants.

Confidentiality
With your permission, the researcher may disseminate your digital stories to help advocate for positive change and bring attention to understanding the range of outcomes and post-care impacts experienced by emerging adult First Nations survivors of the child welfare system. At the end of the workshop, the researcher may disseminate the findings and possibly share your stories in the dissertation associated with her doctoral. In addition, the researcher may present the findings at scholarly conferences, on publicly accessible website, and/or publish articles in scholarly journals. However, in all cases the researcher will do so without revealing identifying information about the participants such as names, addresses, and other specific details. Nonetheless, given the relatively small population involved in this study, there is a risk that some elements of your story may be identifiable to others. The researcher will only use quotations from the interviews after removing identifying details, so they cannot be attributed to any single person.

The only person who will have access to the digital videos and post-workshop interviews collected for this research will be the researcher named above. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Documents and videos related to the interviews and workshop will be stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computer. Audio recordings and hand-written notes, if any, will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. The researcher when transcribing interviews, and in the process, remove all personal identifiers. Data containing personal identifiers will be destroyed immediately after the research has finished. All documents associated with this research and workshop will be shredded and/or deleted one year later, in July 2016.

Request for more information
If you have any questions regarding the workshop associated with this research, you can contact the researcher, Marlyn Bennett, PhD Candidate, directly at [redacted], or by email at ----- @umanitoba.ca.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

As a participant in the digital storytelling workshop described above, I understand and knowingly and voluntarily agree that:

☐ My time commitment to the workshop is critical because of the sensitive topic of discussion and the progressive learning involved with the workshop.

☐ I will participate in the story circle discussions by sharing my thoughts on the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba.

☐ I will learn to use video and audio equipment and digital editing software for the purpose of creating a digital story.

☐ I will develop a digital story based on my personal understanding of the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba. The digital story that I create will be mine to keep. I will decide whether to share my digital story publicly, or keep it private.

☐ Some of the stories shared in the workshop may trigger memories of painful experiences that might be upsetting. A health support worker or an Elder will be on hand during the workshop to speak to me about my distressing feelings. A list of potential counselling resources will be provided to me, on request.

☐ I will maintain the confidentiality of other workshop participants. I will not discuss any personal matters shared by other workshop participants.

☐ I consent to the use of my digital story by the researcher Marlyn Bennett for use in her doctoral dissertation. I understand that aspects of my story and digital video will appear in her dissertation and that it will be published in scholarly journals and at scholarly conferences and made available for others to see.

☐ My participation in this research and workshop is voluntary. I may withdraw my agreement to participate in the research and workshop at any time, for any reason, without penalty of any kind.

☐ I will receive a certificate of completion/appreciation and honorarium in appreciation of my time commitment to the research and workshop.

☐ Even if I choose to withdraw my agreement to participate, I will receive a $30 a day for every day that I attend and participate in the workshop, to a maximum of $150.

☐ I will receive bus fare (if needed) for every day that I attend the workshop.

☐ I have read and understood the information above.

☐ I have the right to refuse to answer any questions without any prejudice to me.

☐ I give my consent to participate in the digital storytelling workshop.

☐ I give consent to having the story circles discussions audio-recorded.

☐ I agree to participate in the post-workshop interview after completion of the workshop and consent to the interview being audio recorded. I will provide consent to participate in the interviews at the time the interview takes place.

☐ I have had my questions answered satisfactorily.

☐ I have received a dually signed copy of this consent form.

Statement of Consent

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research and workshop and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher from her legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrains from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participant should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

I ____ understand the information regarding my participation in the digital storytelling workshop and the research related to the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba.

____

Participant's Signature   Date

____

Marlyn Bennett, Researcher   Date

The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

The Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

PHOTOGRAPHED / VIDEO-RECORDED IMAGE PERMISSION FORM

Research Project Title: Research and Digital Storytelling on the Emerging Adulthood experiences of First Nations Survivors of the Manitoba Child Welfare System

Researcher: **Marlyn Bennett**, doctoral research student, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], -------@umanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor: **Dr. Brad McKenzie,** Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], -------@umanitoba.ca

Name of Digital Storyteller: ____

Title of Digital Story: ____

What is this research about?

This research is connected to a doctoral study being conducted by the researcher named above. This research aims to use narrative inquiry through digital storytelling to expand upon the experiences of emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors post-care. In particular, the proposed project will investigate the outcomes, impacts and experiences of First Nations adult survivors who have transitioned out of First Nations child welfare care. "Emerging adulthood" is defined as a developmental life stage between adolescence and young adulthood, wherein young people feel they are not adolescents but also feel that they are not quite adults either. Digital storytelling combines writing, images and audio to produce a 3-5 minute video. The objective of this research is to further promote an understanding of the impacts and outcomes on the lives of emerging adult First Nations populations as it relates to the legacy of the child welfare experience within the Province of Manitoba.

As a part of the digital storyteller's sharing of his or her story, the digital storyteller (the person who approached you for permission to take your picture) would like to include you in the picture or video he or she took of you. Your permission is required in order for the digital storyteller to share his or her pictures with the researcher, and possibly share a picture/pictures or video/videos of you in it/them in a public display, such as in a public photo/video exhibition or posted on the Internet, along with other pictures and videos taken for this research. Therefore, it is possible that, on the basis of the photograph or video, you might be recognized or identified by people who view the photo and video or see the picture(s) and/or video posted on the Internet.

I, ____,
(Please print your first and last name)

give Marlyn Bennett, a doctoral research student with the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba the following (please initial next to each of the statements below):

________ Unlimited permission to use photographs that may include me in presentations, as long as they do not identify me by name.

________ I am aware that the photograph(s) or video(s) that may include me may, for the purposes of sharing the findings of the research study with the public, appear on a publicly accessible website, in visual presentations at scholarly conferences, and/or in published articles in scholarly journals.

________ I understand that once the photograph(s) or video(s) have been released/published as indicated above that it is not possible to retract them. I hereby waive any right that I (and my children, if applicable) may have to inspect or approve the copy and/or finished product or products that may be used in the research for the purpose(s) stated above.

Name of person photographed (please print): ______________________________

Age (if under 18): ______________________________

Street Address, City, Province, Postal Code: ______________________________

Signature and Date: ______________________________

CONSENT OF PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN IF ABOVE INDIVIDUAL IS A MINOR

I consent and agree, individually and, as parent or legal guardian of the minor named above, to the terms and provisions stated above. I hereby warrant that I am of full age and have every right to provide consent on behalf of the minor in the above regard. I state further that I have read the above information release and that I fully understand the statements presented in this form.

Signature: ____________________ Relationship: ______________

Name of Digital Storyteller: ______________________________

Signature of Digital Storyteller: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

If you have any questions regarding the research on the digital storytelling workshop, you can contact Marlyn Bennett, PhD Candidate, at [redacted], or by email at -----@umanitoba.ca

Faculty of Social Work

DIGITAL STORY VIDEO RELEASE FORM

Research Project Title: Research and Digital Storytelling on the Emerging Adulthood experiences of First Nations Survivors of the Manitoba Child Welfare System

Researcher: **Marlyn Bennett**, doctoral research student, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], ----------@umanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor: **Dr. Brad McKenzie,** Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], ----------@umanitoba.ca

Name of Digital Storyteller: ____

Title of Digital Story: ____

What is this research about?

This research is connected to a doctoral study being conducted by the researcher named above. This research aims to use narrative inquiry through digital storytelling to expand upon the experiences of emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors post-care. In particular, the proposed project will investigate the outcomes, impacts and experiences of First Nations adult survivors who have transitioned out of First Nations child welfare care. "Emerging adulthood" is defined as a developmental life stage between adolescence and young adulthood, wherein young people feel they are not adolescents but also feel that they are not quite adults either. Digital storytelling combines writing, images and audio to produce a 3-5 minute video. The objective of this research is to further promote an understanding of the impacts and outcomes on the lives of emerging adult First Nations populations as it relates to the legacy of the child welfare experience within the Province of Manitoba.

What is the purpose of this research and workshop?

The scope of the activities for this research is based on a qualitative methodology that utilizes a narrative (oral history), participatory, arts-based approach rooted in digital storytelling activities. Research activities include examining and understanding the emerging adulthood transitioning, post-care and human development experiences of First Nations child welfare survivors in Manitoba. Specifically, this research seeks:

1. To advance an understanding of the transitioning out of care, post-care experiences as well as family and community connections including human development stages among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba;
2. To enhance capacity building among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system through digital storytelling to support healing practices.
3. To enable emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors who have experienced being in care to retrospectively and contemporarily express their stories, ideas, and experiences through video storytelling;

4. To provide a safe, comfortable forum for emerging adult First Nations men, women, and gay, lesbian, transgendered, queer (LGBT) individuals to share their in-care, transitioning and post-care experiences and connections;
5. To support and foster holistic healing among emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors through the process of storytelling;
6. To promote reconciliation and healing among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system using participatory, arts-based and Indigenous approaches;
7. To support wider opportunities for knowledge exchange regarding the social determinants of health, as well as highlighting the outcomes and post-care impacts on the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors from the Manitoba child welfare system; and
8. To disseminate and showcase narratives of survival and resiliency about the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors from the Manitoba child welfare system;

……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

As a participant in the digital storytelling workshop described above:

☐ I understand the purpose of the digital storytelling workshop.

☐ I knowingly and voluntarily agree and consent to the public screening my above-titled digital story, distributing the written script of my digital story, or displaying images from my digital story in the following ways (initial either yes or no for each use):

YES	NO	Use of Digital Story	Exceptions/Comments
		In the dissertation associated with the researcher's doctoral studies	
		On any website, television broadcast or radio station	
		At any public presentation and/or knowledge exchange event	
		In any newsletter, news report, journal article and other visual, audio or written publication	
		For any education and teaching purpose	
		Other:	

I DO / DO NOT (circle the appropriate response) want my name to appear in relation to any publication of my digital story.

☐ I have received a copy of this release form.

Digital Storyteller's Signature Date

Marlyn Bennett, Researcher Date

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Social Work

CONSENT FOR POST-WORKSHOP INTERVIEWS

Research Project Title: Research and Digital Storytelling Workshop with Emerging First Nations Adult Survivors of the Manitoba Child Welfare System

Researcher: **Marlyn Bennett**, doctoral research student, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], ----------------@umanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor: **Dr. Brad McKenzie,** Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, [redacted], ----------------@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research and the digital storytelling workshop is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompany information.

What is this research about?

This research is connected to a doctoral study being conducted by the researcher named above. This research aims to use narrative inquiry through digital storytelling to expand upon the experiences of emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors post-care. In particular, the proposed project will investigate the outcomes, impacts and experiences of First Nations adult survivors who have transitioned out of First Nations child welfare care. "Emerging adulthood" is defined as a developmental life stage between adolescence and young adulthood, wherein young people feel they are not adolescents but also feel that they are not quite adults either. Digital storytelling combines writing, images and audio to produce a 3-5 minute video. The objective of this research is to further promote an understanding of the impacts and outcomes on the lives of emerging adult First Nations populations as it relates to the legacy of the child welfare experience within the Province of Manitoba.

What is the purpose of this research and workshop?

The scope of the activities for this research is based on a qualitative methodology that utilizes a narrative (oral history), participatory, arts-based approach rooted in digital storytelling activities. Research activities include examining and understanding the emerging adulthood transitioning, post-care and human development experiences of First Nations child welfare survivors in Manitoba. Specifically, this research seeks:

1. To advance an understanding of the transitioning out of care, post-care experiences as well as family and community connections including human development stages among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the child welfare system in Manitoba;
2. To enhance capacity building among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system through digital storytelling to support healing practices.
3. To enable emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors who have experienced being in care to retrospectively and contemporarily express their stories, ideas, and experiences through video storytelling;

4. To provide a safe, comfortable forum for emerging adult First Nations men, women, and gay, lesbian, transgendered, queer (LGBT) individuals to share their in-care, transitioning and post-care experiences and connections;
5. To support and foster holistic healing among emerging adult First Nations child welfare survivors through the process of storytelling;
6. To promote reconciliation and healing among emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system using participatory, arts-based and Indigenous approaches;
7. To support wider opportunities for knowledge exchange regarding the social determinants of health, as well as highlighting the outcomes and post-care impacts on the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors from the Manitoba child welfare system; and
8. To disseminate and showcase narratives of survival and resiliency about the emerging adulthood experiences of First Nations survivors from the Manitoba child welfare system;

What is this follow up interview about?

This interview is a follow up interview regarding your experience and thoughts on the digital storytelling workshop, which you previously participated in. The interview will focus on your participation in the workshop where you will be asked to share your personal understanding and perspectives about the digital storytelling process and any in-depth learning that emerged from the videos produced by yourself and/or the other participants involved in this workshop.

If you decide to participate in this follow up interview, you should consent based on what you feel comfortable doing after gaining a solid understanding of the risks involved. You will be asked to consent to the following activity:

1. My participation in this follow up interview is voluntary.

2. I understand that I may withdraw and discontinue participation in this interview at any time without penalty.

3. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

4. If I find the interview distressing, the researcher may request and make arrangements for the Elder associated with this research to meet with me to speak about my distressed feelings. Alternatively, a list of potential counselling resources will be provided to me, on request.

5. My participation involves being interviewed by the researcher, Marlyn Bennett. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes.

6. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded. If you do not consent to being recorded, the interviewer will take notes.

7. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this follow up interview will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies, which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

8. There is no incentive or compensation for participating in this interview. I understand that I will not be paid for participating in this follow interview.

9. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

10. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Request for more information
If you have any questions regarding the study, you can contact Marlyn Bennett, PhD Candidate, at [redacted], or by email at ----------@umanitoba.ca.

Statement of Consent
I have read this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss what is involved. I understand that my personal information will be kept confidential. By signing this consent form, I have not waived any of my legal rights.

____

Participant's Signature Date

____

Marlyn Bennett, Principal Researcher Date

If you would like to receive a copy of the interview transcript, please provide an email address where this can be sent when completed:

Email: ____

The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

The Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Appendix L

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Fax +204-269-7173

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

May 1, 2015

TO: **Marlyn Bennett** (Advisor B. McKenzie)
Principal Investigator

FROM: [redacted]
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: [redacted]
"Research and Digital Storytelling on the Emerging Adulthood Experiences of First Nations Survivors of the Child Welfare System in Manitoba"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). It is the researcher's responsibility to comply with any copyright requirements. **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.**

DIGITAL STORYTELLER'S BILL OF RIGHTS – Appendix M

DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOP FOR EMERGING FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE MANITOBA CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DIGITAL STORYTELLER'S BILL RIGHTS

In relation to a workshop, you have …

The right to know from the outset why a workshop is being carried out.
The right to assistance in deciding whether you are ready to produce a digital story.
The right to understand what is involved in the process of producing a digital story.
The right to know who might view your finished story after the digital storytelling workshop.
The right to decide for yourself whether or not to participate in a workshop.
The right to ask questions at any stage of the workshop – before, during, or after.
The right to ask for teaching instructions to be repeated or made clearer.
The right to skilled emotional support if your experience of making a story is emotionally challenging.
The right to tell your story in the way you want, within the limits of the workshop.
The right to decide whether or not to reveal private or personal information to fellow participants and instructors at the workshop.
The right to advice about whether revealing your identity or other personal details about your life, in your story, may place you at risk of harm.
The right to leave information and/or photographs that identify you or others, out of your final story.
The right to reject story feedback (about words and images) if it is not useful or not offered in a spirit of respect and support.
The right to decide what language to use in telling and creating your story.
The right to be respected and supported by capable workshop facilitators.
The right to a written consent form, if your story will be shared publicly, including a signed copy for your records.
The right to know what contact and support you can expect after the workshop.

In relation to sharing your digital story after a workshop, you have …

The right to decide with project partners how your story will be shared.
The right to view and retain a copy of your story before it is shared publicly in any way.
The right to know who is likely to screen your story and for what purposes.
The right to know who is likely to watch or read your story and when (e.g. rough timeframe).
The right to advice about how the process of publicly sharing your story may be difficult.
The right to emotional support if you are present when your story is shown in public.
The right to demand that no one should be able to sell your story for profit.
The right to know if any money will be made from your story being shared (e.g. to support not-for-profit human rights work).
The right to withdraw your consent for the use of your story at any time.
The right to information about the limits of withdrawing consent for your story to be shared, if it has already been circulated online or on CD, DVD, etc.

From: http://storycenter.org/ethical-practice

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

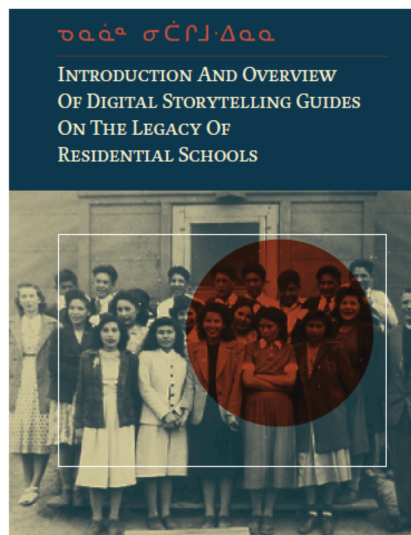
The research and digital storytelling workshop was approved by the Psychology / Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

RESEARCH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE EMERGING ADULTHOOD EXPERIENCES OF FIRST NATION ADULT SURVIVORS OF THE MANITOBA CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

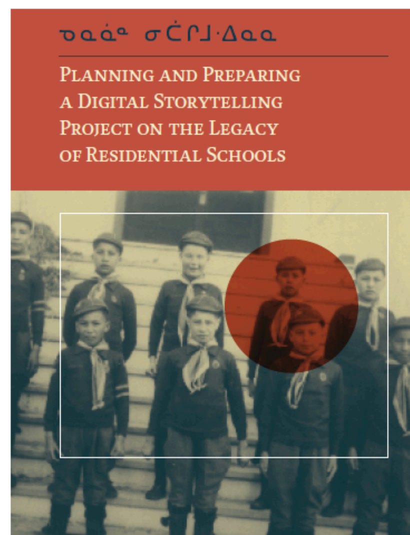
THE NINDIBAAJIMOMIN: A DIGITAL STORYTELLING RESOURCE FOR CHILDREN OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS TOOLKIT

The following five guides have been designed to walk participants through the steps of making a digital story. Although designed for digital storytelling on the legacy of residential schools, the guides have applicability to the experiences of emerging adult First Nations survivors of the Manitoba child welfare system. Printed copies of the guides will be provided to workshop participants. The guides include:

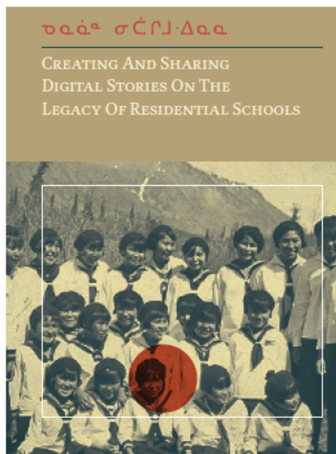
GUIDE 1: Introduction and Overview of Digital Storytelling Guides on the Legacy of Residential Schools



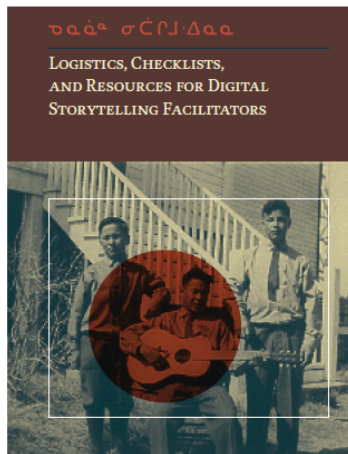
GUIDE 2: Planning and Preparing a Digital Storytelling Project on the Legacy of Residential Schools



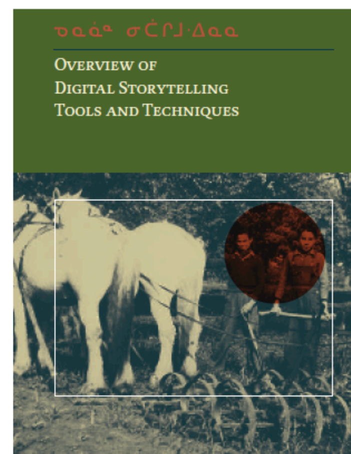
GUIDE 3: Creating and Sharing Digital Stories on the Legacy of Residential Schools



GUIDE 4: Logistics, Checklists, and Resources for Digital Storytelling Facilitators



GUIDE 5: Overview of Digital Storytelling Tools and Techniques



Guest's Written Testimonial regarding the Screening of Workshop Participants' Videos - Appendix O

October 11, 2015

Testimonial for Marlyn Bennett

How can a bowl of porridge representing unconditional love continue as a family legacy in humanitarianism?

Marlyn Bennett first shared her mother's story in reference to a bowl of porridge in a short yet powerful video of how caring for her family could be expressed in the most simplest yet consistent ways. I saw this particular video before Marlyn was inspired to use this video template as a means of completing her university doctorate program. Even from beyond the grave, her mother's Love guides her.

Creatively, I became curious and enthused in the video testimonial's potential.

The months of preparations and dedication to details were evident in the final product. With assistance from certain people, Marlyn encouraged many people to co-experience this sacred journey. I was privileged to witness the development, participate in meeting some of the candidates and view the final products. Impressed by how much of the individual's raw stories were expressed in a safe, compassionate environment, allowed the invited participants to really share some of their intimate early age development. To have released some of the locked-in details of what could be perceived as limiting beliefs, each participant had the opportunity to witness each other's story and see that they are not alone.

I can truly see the benefits of what Marlyn has created and the inspiration in her acts of humanitarianism. Modeled from her own early age development, empathy and compassion guides this compassionate, heart driven woman to motivate not only people of her chosen field, yet she has inspired many, including myself, to allow the injustices of our youth not to limit our human potential.

Abuse of power could be perceived as "for your own good" unless you are the victim.

I feel by allowing these stories to become the nourishment to fuel ourselves to rise above our personal history, the choice to inspire today's society to change their perception of once acceptable behaviour will empower other people to allow their stories to also be head.

The legacy of humanitarianism continues through this experience for the facilitator Marlyn Bennett, her assistant, guest elder and for each of the participants, as I believe this workshop has been a liberating opportunity of having each of their voices heard, honoured and video documented.

Submitted for your awareness of how grateful I am to have been a very small part of this experience,

Cynthia Jones
We All Come Home – Psychosomatic Therapy Trainer