Indigenous and industry perspectives on funerary trends and their impact on Indigenous client services in urban and peri-urban centers of Manitoba, Canada

By

Lesley Martin

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Anthropology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba

© Lesley Martin 2019
ABSTRACT

Contemporary Indigenous funerary rituals in urban settings is a subject that has virtually been ignored, despite funerary ritual having such a profound impact on the cultures and identity of Indigenous people. This thesis explores perspectives of death, dying, and the funerary process within the dominant Indigenous cultures in Manitoba, and how modern funeral homes cater to the unique needs of an Indigenous population living in an urban or per-urban community. Data was obtained by conducting structured and semi-structured interviews with funeral home employees and Indigenous people who have utilized professional funerary services.

Trends in the funeral home industry point to people becoming less involved in the funerary process, relying on professional services offered by the modern funeral home. In contrast, Indigenous funerary practices continue to emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for their own, utilizing professional services only when necessary. Interviews with key informants revealed that in some cases funeral directors can play a vital role in preserving Indigenous funerary traditions by providing resources for those who have lost any connection with their community. This analysis of contemporary perspectives of Indigenous mortuary rituals in urban environments represents only a small portion of a much larger discussion of the current state and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and cultures in Manitoba.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the many people who contributed their time and knowledge to this research project. Without their kindness this thesis would not have been possible. I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Kent Fowler who gave me the support and freedom to pursue my own research interests. His feedback and guidance was instrumental throughout this entire process. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Kathleen Buddle, and Dr. Mark Ruml for their continued support and interest over the years.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to my family whose love support allowed me to pursue a graduate degree. They have always encouraged me to follow my dreams, and for that I am eternally grateful.
DEDICATION

~ Dedicated to G & G ~
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgments .......................................................................................................................... iii
Dedication ........................................................................................................................................ iv
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................................... v
List of Appendices .......................................................................................................................... vi

Chapter 1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   
   Introduction to the Problem ......................................................................................................... 1
   Objectives of Research ............................................................................................................... 2
   Organization of the Thesis .......................................................................................................... 3
   Prospective Outcomes ............................................................................................................... 4

Chapter 2. Approaches to the Study of Contemporary Mortuary Customs .................................. 6
   
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 6
   Mortuary Anthropology ............................................................................................................. 6
   Funeral Homes ............................................................................................................................ 9
   Indigenous Funerary Practices .................................................................................................. 11
   Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 17

Chapter 3. Methodology .............................................................................................................. 19
   
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 19
   Methods ..................................................................................................................................... 19
   Research Instruments .............................................................................................................. 23
   Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................. 26
   Research Challenges and Weaknesses ..................................................................................... 26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Sample</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary/Conclusion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4. Case Study</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary Funerary Trends</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral Home Perspective: Indigenous Funerary Practices</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Perspective: Contemporary Funerary Practices</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5. Discussion/Conclusion</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Directions</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Interview Questions/Objectives</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: TCPS 2: CORE Ethics Certificate</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3: Research Ethics and Compliance Project Approval Certificate</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4: Informed Consent (Indigenous participants)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5: Informed Consent (funeral home employees)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6: Recruitment email script (Indigenous participants &amp; funeral home employees)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Questions/Objectives

APPENDIX 2: TCPS 2: CORE Ethics Certificate

APPENDIX 3: Research Ethics and Compliance Project Approval Certificate

APPENDIX 4: Informed Consent (Indigenous participants)

APPENDIX 5: Informed Consent (funeral home employees)

APPENDIX 6: Recruitment email script (Indigenous participants & funeral home employees)
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction to the problem

Death and commemoration play a vital role in the lives and cultures of Indigenous people. As generations of Indigenous people build their lives within an urban environment, it has become increasingly important to understand how mortuary customs are being carried out within urban settings. Key research by Ruml (2016) and DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) have provided detailed observations of ceremonies surrounding death and analyzed culturally appropriate services and spaces for Indigenous people in Winnipeg. However, how the funerary industry meets the material and spatial requirements for Indigenous funerary practices in urban centres are poorly understood.

This thesis expands on previous work conducted by Ruml (2016) and DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) by examining the cultural, social, financial, and legal factors influencing Indigenous funerary traditions and contemporary practices in an urban setting. This analysis will concentrate on the perspectives of death, dying, and the funerary process within the dominant Indigenous cultures in Manitoba. Additionally, I will examine how modern funeral homes cater to the unique needs of an Indigenous population living in an urban or peri-urban community and their services may influence legal, financial, and traditional obligations. Modern funeral homes represent a necessary step that must be taken to fulfill the legal requirements of the funerary process. They also play an economic role, as many of these businesses provide services that are incorporated into the funerary process. Financially some of these services may be unobtainable, or the individual and the family may not consider them, as they do not fit with the traditional funeral customs that are requested.
The perspectives of Indigenous individuals are examined by conducting a series of semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share in experiences utilizing professional funerary services and personal perspectives on death and the funerary process. Data collected from each interview was transcribed and then analyzed to identify significant themes and reoccurring thoughts and perspectives. Individuals have relative freedom to choose how their body is treated after death and the funerary rituals and customs that are carried out. The individual’s family also plays a vital role, as they are the people who ultimately carry out the funerary rituals and customs that have been requested by the individual. Data was also be collected from funeral home employees, utilizing a structured interview format. Interview questions centred on the unique services funeral homes provide to Indigenous clients and the role that professional funeral directors play in the Indigenous funerary process.

II. Objectives of Research

The main objective of this project is to establish a comprehensive understanding of the current state of Indigenous funerary rituals being conducted in urban centres in Manitoba, and the role that the modern funeral home plays. The most compelling research questions that this thesis attempts to answer are as follows:

1) How do funeral homes in Manitoba cater to the unique funerary needs of Indigenous clients?
2) What are the legal requirements and financial implications associated with funeral homes, and how do these specifically impact Indigenous people utilizing these services?
3) Investigate the current state of Indigenous funerary rituals, by exploring which factors are shaping the decisions made by families and individuals in regards to the funerary process?
III. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant literature that must be examined when studying mortuary customs. This includes an analysis of anthropological perspectives of mortuary customs that encompass both ethnographic and archaeological data. This chapter explores ethnographic research of morticians and funeral directors and the negative stigmas associated with these professions. The second half of chapter 2 discusses contemporary Indigenous funerary practices, including the three major themes that are present after an examination of the literature. Themes include; pre-contact and historical perspectives of Indigenous funerary practices, modern Indigenous funerary practices, and medical perspectives on death and dying within Indigenous communities.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods and materials used during the research portion of this thesis project. This chapter outlines the rapid research approach employed to answer the research questions formulated after an examination of the relevant literature. Both structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with funeral home employees and Indigenous participants from different cultural backgrounds living in urban and peri-urban communities. The research took place in multiple urban centres within the province of Manitoba, including; Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Steinbach, and Minnedosa. Participants were recruited primarily by utilizing email correspondence, and consent was obtained under the parameters of the Research Ethics and Compliance Board. Each interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed and combined with additional notes taken during the interview process. Transcripts and interview notes from both informant groups were reviewed to identify significant themes and specific points of interest. Multiple research challenges and weaknesses are also identified and discussed.
in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the results from the semi-structured and structured interviews conducted with Indigenous individuals and funeral home employees. Results were presented by theme and not by each interview in an effort to maintain the anonymity of the participants. Funeral home regulations and policies are thoroughly examined in this chapter to provide a more contextualized perspective of the funeral home business in Manitoba. This chapter also includes an analysis of Indigenous funerary practices from the perspective of funeral home professionals, and an analysis of contemporary funerary practices from the perspective Indigenous people living in urban settings.

Finally, Chapter 5 reviews the prominent themes presented in the case study and presents the synthesized results of the questions proposed by this research project. This chapter presents considerations of the future role of the modern funeral home in Indigenous funerary practices, as well as potential directions for additional research of this subject matter.

**IV. Prospective Outcomes**

The prospective outcome of this research is to better understand the current state of funerary ritual practices by Indigenous Manitobans, how they have transformed, and what we can predict for future funerary customs and rituals within an urban population. Additionally, how changes in economic and legal factors controlled primarily by the provincial government, and the Funeral Board of Manitoba, will influence the nature of Indigenous funerary customs in urban and rural Indigenous communities. This thesis project also hopes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the services funeral homes offer Indigenous peoples in peri-urban and urban environments. This includes an increased understanding of contemporary trends in the funeral
industry and how businesses are adapting funerary space and services to meet the demands of Indigenous clients. By combining key information from both the perspective of the individual and the view of those in the funeral industry, the implications of this research could lead to more culturally sensitive policies and services offered to Indigenous people living in an urban setting.
CHAPTER 2: Approaches to the Study of Contemporary Mortuary Customs

I. Introduction

This chapter discusses the multiple avenues of literary research that must be examined when studying mortuary customs. Here, I discuss four complementary approaches that provide insights into the nature of Indigenous mortuary practices in a contemporary, urban setting. These include anthropological perspectives of mortuary customs that encompass both ethnographic and archaeological data regarding what we know about past mortuary practices from ethnography and archaeology; the economic and social impact of funeral homes; pre-contact and historic perspectives of death and dying; and culturally-specific Indigenous mortuary customs, all of which are critical to provide a basis for new mortuary customs and traditions to be identified.

II. Mortuary Anthropology

Anthropology has taken two significant approaches to the study of mortuary processes: ethnographic and archaeological. Through the study of mortuary practices, both archaeologists and ethnographers share an interest in examining group and individual identities and analyzing how social organizations such as kinship and hierarchy can be expressed through mortuary practice (Chesson, 2001).

Ethnographic research has focused on contemporary mortuary practices to chronicle ritual practices and understand how social institutions, values, attitudes, and beliefs mediate the process of death and dying. More recently, the ethnographic analysis of death and mortuary rituals has come to focus more attention on the role of mortuary practices before, during, and after death in creating and maintaining social memory (Chesson, 2001, pp.2). Ethnographers
have the unique opportunity of observing living participants, and exploring the importance of lived experiences and how they shape communities, identities, memories, and rituals of commemoration (Chesson, 2001). These can be given a material form or have material consequences, which help archaeologists interpret past mortuary practices.

More recent studies suggest that archaeologists have a role to play in understanding contemporary mortuary customs. Williams (2011) argues that archaeology facilitates an understanding of contemporary death through quantification and an analysis of local material contexts by which the dead are experienced, managed, and remembered (pp. 95). Danielsson (2011) suggests archaeologists in many cases may have played a key role in the process of re-inventing contemporary mortuary practices, and argues that archaeologists were vital in introducing cremation in Europe in the 19th century (pp. 104). The incentives of cremation in Europe during the 19th century were clear, as it was a hygienic and effective way to dispose of human bodies. However, Danielsson (2011) notes the “archaeological” reason as being the prehistoric cremation practices described by archaeologists became the key motivations behind the adoption of cremation in modern funerary practices (pp. 105). Archaeologists from the 17th to 20th century in Europe were professionals belonging to the upper-class circles of society, encouraging those with the financial means and interest in ancient monuments to incorporate these trends into their own modern burials (Danielsson, 2011, pp. 110).

Archaeological approaches have attempted to reconstruct mortuary practices through the study of the material remains in both historic and prehistoric societies. Mortuary archaeology has traditionally emphasized social organization as the primary factor that determines mortuary practice (Carr, 1995). Typical dimensions of social organization traditionally studied in mortuary archaeology include age, gender, and personal identities. Secondarily, physical and
circumstantial determinants, including location, timing, and cause of death, are also seen as significant factors that influence mortuary practices. Both social and physical factors influence the performance of practical funerary logistics such as the treatment and disposal of the body. For example, the location and form of the grave, including associated grave goods, are determined by social position (Carr, 1995, pp. 167-168).

However, more recently, these perspectives have changed, and new studies have revealed the necessity to examine mortuary rituals through multiple, more complex lenses (Carr, 1995, pp. 106). A study conducted by Carr (1995) used a Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) cross-cultural survey by examining philosophical-religious, social, organizational, circumstantial, and physical factors that affect specific kinds of mortuary practices. Philosophical-religious factors within the context of this study include many categories of socially institutionalized “folk” beliefs. These beliefs include world-view assumptions about disease, dying, the afterlife, and the cosmos (Carr, 1995, pp. 107). The results of the cross-cultural survey indicate that philosophical-religious factors are responsible for a significant variation in mortuary practices within a society. Additionally, the cross-cultural survey revealed that social organization and physical factors are in most cases not directly expressed in mortuary practices, but rather are filtered through a framework of philosophical-religious beliefs and world-views (Carr, 1995, pp. 189). The cross-cultural survey revealed that a complex mix of factors determines most categories of mortuary practice and that mortuary archaeologists need to take a balanced, more holistic, and multidisciplinary approach, which is essential for explaining why certain mortuary practices are chosen over others.

Anthropological perspectives of mortuary practices attempt to understand how people treat the dead and why, with the advantage of a deep time, long-term and comparative perspective.
What we have come to understand is that a wide-range of factors influence practices and the choices people have amongst alternatives. It is vital to understand that mortuary practices expressed both in the past and present cannot be analyzed exclusively through social or physical determinants, but instead should be studied through multiple lenses.

III. Funeral Homes

In a contemporary setting, funeral homes are institutions that mediate the process of death and dying and have an essential role in constraining the choices available to individuals and families. Analyzing funeral homes is critical to this research design, as they represent the legal obligations that need to take place during the funerary process. Research is varied on the subject of funeral homes, as both anthropologists and psychologists alike have studied funeral homes from an employee and business perspective. Morticians, funeral directors, and anyone who makes a living by handling the dead have been the primary subject of extensive ethnographic research.

In many cases, researchers choose to focus on exploring the negative stigma associated with work that involves the handling of the dead. This negative stigma is often attached to employees and businesses, as their work is often perceived as profiting from death and grief. Ethnographic research conducted by Thompson (2010) identifies the symbolic and dramaturgical techniques employed by morticians and funeral directors to neutralize and diminish this negative stigma, which includes practicing role distance and emphasizing professionalism. By doing so, morticians and funeral directors shift emphasis away from their work of handling the dead, and more towards providing an essential and necessary service to the living.
Funeral Holmes: Economic Perspective

A second major theme identified in the literature is a discussion of funeral homes and the economics of death. Funeral homes are a business and are susceptible to economic rise and decline. Many researchers have questioned the morality of treating death as a viable economic project. Sanders (2009) describes the inclusion of additional funerary services and luxuries, while marketed as ways of improving the mental state of mourners, they may also be seen as a way to increase profit and could be the result of a higher marketing mind driven by capitalism. A generalized example of these services includes the creation of what the funeral industry deems as “consumables.” These can take the form of material objects such as caskets, or social gatherings, such as receptions and buffets. The central argument of such analyses is that death must be made consumable by the funeral industry to alleviate the fears that surround mortality (Sanders, 2009).

Funeral Homes: Sociological Perspective

Sociological studies have utilized records to investigate funeral expenditures as a possible indicator of reactions to death. The research conducted by Pine & Phillips (1970) sought to explore the increasing lack of both the ceremonial, social mechanisms and arrangements that once existed to help mourners cope with death. Financial expenditures have taken on added importance as a means to allow the bereaved to express (both to themselves and others) their sentiments for the deceased. With so few modes of expression remaining to the bereaved, funeral expenditures serve as evidence of their concern for both the dead and the conventional standards of decency in their community of residence (Pine & Phillips, 1970). These discussions are relevant to this research project, as the financial accessibility of funerary services may influence which funerary services are carried out. Negative stigmas associated with funeral homes,
employees, and services have the potential to impact relationships with Indigenous people, and these factors may be important influences on the nature of urban Indigenous funerary practices.

IV. Indigenous Funerary Practices

How Indigenous mortuary rituals have changed in Winnipeg, and the factors that influence these rituals and processes for Indigenous populations has only been addressed indirectly in previous research. An understanding of the traditional funerary practices of the Dakota and Ojibwe communities in Manitoba is essential for this research project, as it provides a firm knowledge base to formulate interview questions and analyze the results. Published works that discuss traditional Indigenous funerary practices are varied, and three major themes present themselves after a review of the literature. These themes include funerary practices of the Cree and Ojibway from a historical perspective, modern ethnographic research constructed from personal accounts, and an analysis of death and dying among the Indigenous people from a medical perspective.

Pre-Contact Indigenous Funerary Practices

Pre-contact era Indigenous burial customs vary across Canada, including mummification, cremation, surface burials, scaffolding, inhumations, and mound burials (e.g., Bryan, 1991, pp. 64, 71-78, 153-170; Northcott & Wilson, 2017; Valentine, 2006; Warren 2009, pp. 40). With a high mortality rate, and a short life expectancy of only 30 to 40 years of age, death was a common event among pre-contact era Indigenous peoples. Older individuals would have likely experienced limitations to their physical capabilities and would have been more vulnerable to periods of starvation or illness (Northcott & Wilson, 2017, pp.6). People lived in small intimate communities, which fostered an environment where death was highly visible and a generally
accepted facet of society. Events surrounding death were often prolonged through the staging of rituals such as the “feast of the dead” which required family members to return to the grave of the deceased individual every 8 to 12 years (Northcott & Wilson, 2017, pp.7).

The arrival of Europeans to Canada and the subsequent establishment of permanent trading posts spawned a drastically different environment for Indigenous people, and began to create a new reality of death and dying. Permanent camps were established close to fur trading posts and settlements, as Indigenous people started trading and working in these economic centres. Initial contact with traders and later settlers transformed the way that Indigenous people died: through conflict, rapid depletion of resources, and diseases that decimated Indigenous populations. Traditional knowledge and healing practices were unequipped to deal with the disease and illnesses and the rapid spread of foreign pathogens (Northcott & Wilson, 2017, pp.9). As such, they were forced to adopt European healthcare measures, as reoccurring infections and illnesses continued to plague their population. In altering these practices, traditional rituals and ceremonies became abandoned, or were outlawed, and a new “norm” was introduced. This shift caused certain traditional practices to fall out of use, and they may eventually fall out of collective memory, or knowledge of them may be retained, but the reason(s) for them and their significance may be forgotten or simplified.

Indigenous Funerary Practices: Historical Perspectives

Historical accounts of Cree and Ojibway mourning practices and funerary rituals in Manitoba and Western Canada are limited. However, a study conducted by Hackett (2005) has identified two consistently observed mourning customs by Cree and Ojibway communities of the Central Subarctic that took place up to the mid-nineteenth century. The first practice was the
abandonment or destruction of the deceased’s possessions. Items such as furs, clothing, and goods were abandoned, burned, thrown in a river, or in some cases, donated to others. Additionally, relatives were expected to destroy some of their personal belongings to signify their sorrow (Hackett, 2005, pp.506). The second practice was the required cessation of hunting for one year. In some cases, only the trapping of furs for the purpose of trade was suspended, and in others, area hunting entirely ceased (Hackett, 2005, pp.507). Both mortuary customs varied significantly between groups over a large geographic area, but all served several key practical, personal, and social functions (Hackett, 2005, pp.506-507).

Historically, mortuary rituals served many purposes that were both practical and social. These rituals aided in the disposal of the body, and to help the mourners and community reorient themselves after a loss (Hackett, 2005, pp.504-505). Both the destruction of objects and the cessation of hunting for an extended period represent opportunities for families and communities to express personal grief (Hackett, 2005, pp.511). Moreover, these mourning practices occurred within a social context, which extends beyond the needs of the individual. These are group and not individual practices. Failure to adhere to these mourning practices could result in punishments that often took the form of a supernatural agent invoking disease, or corrupting and destroying food sources (Hackett, 2005, pp.511).

The introduction of residential schools in the late 19th century irreversibly altered the traditions and cultures of Indigenous people in Canada (Elias et al., 2012, pp. 1561). Residential schools were jointly established and run by the federal government and churches who wished to educate, and assimilate Indigenous children into a Eurocentric Canadian society (Regan & Alfred, 2014, pp. 4). Indigenous children were removed from their families, and prohibited from practicing their own culture, traditions, and speaking their own language. Overcrowding, lack of
care and cleanliness, and the absence of adequate medical care led to an extremely high rate of tubercular infections, resulting in the deaths of many students (Milloy & McCallum, 2017, pp.82). With the last residential school closing its doors as recently as 1996, the devastating and long lasting cultural, psychological, and emotional impact of these institutions continues to plague the approximately 80,000 survivors today (Regan & Alfred, 2014, pp.5).

Indigenous Funerary Practices: Contemporary Perspectives

Recent work by Ruml (2016) provides a contemporary perspective on Indigenous funerary customs and rituals within Manitoba. Ruml applied an Indigenous methodological approach that emphasizes a reflexive view of the author in the research conducted. Ruml examined multiple Dakota and Ojibwe funerary traditions and outlines contemporary funerary practices in southern Manitoba, while also providing a rationale for the practices. Ruml’s personal approach to Dakota and Ojibwe ceremonies was based on his own experiences with death, grief, and the funerary process.

Immediately following the news that an individual has died, friends and family generally respond by going to the mourner’s home to provide support. According to Ruml (2016, pp. 296), this type of support is an expression of basic cultural values that are grounded in what is called the “eternal natural law” for the Anishinaabe and “all my relatives” for the Dakota. Tasks involved in funeral preparation are assigned immediately to family members, and a fire is started at the deceased’s home. A “firekeeper” is designated, and that individual plays a major role in the funerary process by maintaining the sacred fire and moving the fire to the place where the wake will take place (Ruml, 2016, pp. 296). Other major roles include the shkabewisak, or helpers, who will smudge the casket and mourners with sage, cedar, or sweetgrass periodically.
throughout the wake to aid in purifying and expelling negative thoughts and to sanctify the "profane" space.

Ruml (2016, pp.296) found that burial typically takes place four days after the death, following an all day and all night wake. After the wake, on the day of the burial, there is a final feast and viewing of the body at high noon. The final steps in the funerary process include the mourners gathering at the gravesite Elders say prayers singers and drummers play funeral songs. Ruml’s account provides a basis for comparing Dakota and Ojibwe funerary traditions relative to those used by Indigenous people in an urban setting who are reliant on funeral homes. In the following, I will utilize this comparative data to identify similarities and differences in customs practiced in an urban environment.

Indigenous Funerary Practices: Medical Perspective

Conceptions of death and dying amongst Indigenous populations in Manitoba are a focal point in discussions of Indigenous health and healthcare services. Healthcare focused research provides insight into the needs of Indigenous people prior to the death of an individual. A study conducted by DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) explored how the Indigenous population within the city of Winnipeg interacts with health and social service programs that have not been distinctly designed to meet their unique social and cultural needs. These dynamics were explored through 24 in-depth interviews with staff members of facilities located in Winnipeg. DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) found that urban communities, including Winnipeg, are not spaces in which Indigenous people are recognized as having special status and requiring culturally appropriate services. In this context, it is therefore not surprising that local services are not geared towards Indigenous clients (DeVerteuil & Wilson, 2010). The researchers argue that the lack of funding
is likely to be a critical barrier to developing services that address the unique needs of an
Indigenous population.

DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) utilized a similar methodological framework as this current
thesis research and analyzed the same urban space. However, DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) did
not explore the cultural and spiritual perspectives of the people who utilize these healthcare
services. Additionally, they do not consider how the unique cultural and social needs of urban
Indigenous populations are met by private businesses, as their study focuses solely on
government-funded services.

Other medically focused research has explored the unique Indigenous cultural and spiritual
factors that are associated with death and dying. Hotson (2004) describes local palliative care
services available to residents of remote Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba, by
conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants that include both the staff
that administered the palliative care and the Indigenous people who received those services.
Hotson (2004, pp.25) found that many Indigenous people living in remote communities are
transported to large urban centres to die, isolated from friends, family, and cultures. Interviews
with key informants revealed that most Indigenous people living in remote communities would
prefer to die at home and that many factors contributed to the decision of whether or not to
receive palliative care. These factors included an unwillingness to relocate self and family, fears
of an unfamiliar environment, and the expressed need to be near family and friends. The issue of
spirituality was noted to be different for each community and each individual. Many Indigenous
people reported that they do not believe in, or follow, traditional ways (Hotson, 2004, pp.33).

It was concluded by Hotson (2004) that the issues surrounding palliative care are both
geographic and cultural. Geographic isolation forces patients to move to urban centres to receive
care. The challenge becomes respecting patients’ wishes and providing culturally sensitive care so that they may have access to family and traditional services if requested. The research conducted by Hotson (2004) showcases how examining the influences facing decision-making within Indigenous communities concerning death and dying is essential for improving end of life care and servicing the cultural needs of individuals within and away from urban centres during this process.

V. Conclusion

An analysis of the current literature has shown that there are multiple gaps in knowledge of the current state of Indigenous funerary rituals, and how traditional rites, and financial and legal restraints impact these mortuary customs. The available research on modern funeral homes does not include an analysis of Indigenous services. Government-funded services were explored by DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) within the city of Winnipeg. However, the interviews and perspectives were collected from employees, not from the individuals that utilize these services. Additionally, DeVerteuil & Wilson (2010) fail to examine if privately owned businesses create specialized services to accommodate the unique social and cultural needs of an urban Indigenous population.

Research conducted by Ruml (2016) has provided an extensive base of information regarding Dakota and Ojibwe funerary traditions solely from an individual perspective. Utilizing the work done by Ruml as a base, this project will attempt to remedy the gaps identified after an examination of the literature. Primarily, I attempt to synthesize perspectives from both the people who provide these funerary services and those who utilize them. Similar to Hotson (2004), I will examine many factors (cultural, economic, legal) that are at play when it comes to the decision-
making process. But unlike Hotson (2004) and other medically centred research, I will examine the events and choices that are made after death.

Assembling a comprehensive collection of relevant research material was a challenging endeavour for this project. As previously stated, while Ruml (2016) provided a starting point, it was a struggle to find research directly exploring Indigenous funerary customs in Canada. It is clear that much of the research interest in how death and dying impact Indigenous populations lies in the research of medical issues. For this reason, this research includes evaluations of health, and concerns surrounding palliative care and other medical services.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

I. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods and materials used during the research portion of this project. An examination of the pertinent literature revealed multiple research questions that require the analysis of data collected from key informant groups to be answered. Therefore, the goal of this data collection process was to take a rapid research approach and formulate questions for both a structured and semi-structured interview format. These interviews were conducted with funeral home employees and Indigenous participants from different cultural backgrounds living in urban and peri-urban communities. Additionally, this chapter provides an overview of the methods used to collect data, and the methods employed for the subsequent analysis of the information.

II. Methods

A rapid research approach was adopted as I sought to target very specific informant groups to answer the questions proposed by this thesis study. Rapid research methods were employed over more traditional ethnographic approaches, as the time needed to adequately engage in the rapport building stages with local Indigenous communities, was outside the scope of this research project (e.g., Beebe, 1995; Harris et al. 1997).

The first informant group was comprised of employees who work at funeral homes that provide services to Indigenous clients. Informants were asked to answer questions from a professional viewpoint, not a personal one. Therefore, a structured interview format was chosen
for retrieving information. The goal of these interviews was to explore what traditional and non-traditional services these businesses provide, including offering services that go beyond what is legally required of a funeral home. The financial implications of funerals were also explored because what a family can afford may affect the funerary process and what services are provided.

The second informant group consisted of Indigenous individuals who discussed personal experiences and preferences regarding the funerary process. A semi-structured interview format was selected in this case, as it allowed informants to explore ideas outside of the original line of questioning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals from various age groups and cultural backgrounds that have utilized professional funerary services. Interviews included both guiding questions and objectives that were altered depending on how the individual responded to the questions being asked. Appendix 1 contains the complete list of structured and semi-structured interview questions and objectives.

Methods: Study Area

The research took place within multiple urban centres in the province of Manitoba. It should be noted that this was not the original study area selected when this project first took shape. Originally, Winnipeg was the only urban environment that was going to be analyzed, and I quickly realized that just looking at Winnipeg was not going to be sufficient to answer the questions. I will elaborate more on these challenges in the research strengths and weaknesses portion of this chapter. I concluded that it was the urban centre aspect of the study area that was important to focus on; therefore, I expanded my study area to other centres, including Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Steinbach, and Minnedosa. These urban and peri-urban centres serve as central hubs for rural areas.
Methods: Ethics

In March 2017, in preparation for the participant interviews required for this research, I completed the necessary online ethics program and received my certificate (Appendix 2) for the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE). I submitted a research application to The Joint Council Research Ethics Board, and after a short round of revisions, I received my ethics approval certificate (Appendix 3) in early September 2019. Research involving First Nations people of Canada required an additional document “Schedule A” to be submitted during the ethics approval process. Schedule A was completed to outline how Indigenous individuals or communities that are participating may be impacted and benefit from the research being conducted. In this case, only individuals (not communities) were approached for interviews, therefore not requiring a research agreement to be set in place.

Participants understood that they were being interviewed and were not deceived in any way. Additionally, vulnerable groups of individuals were not addressed, as the minimum age to participate in this research was 18 years of age. An assessment of risk to both the primary investigator and funeral home employees concluded that there was no risk involved in the participation of this study. For individual participants, there was an assessed risk to participation, as they would be asked to discuss the sensitive topic of death and funerals. To minimize the associated emotional and psychological risk to individual participants, they were provided with the contact information of a local Elder and reminded that if they started to feel uncomfortable or upset in any way during the interview process that they could withdraw or not answer the question.
A full explanation of the project was provided without the use of jargon before the interview process began. To ensure the participant understood what was being asked of them, they were asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix 4 & 5) printed on the University of Manitoba letterhead. This consent form outlined to participants that they had the right at any point to withdraw from the interview, or not answer a question without consequence. Participants were also asked to initial on the consent form if they were comfortable with being audio recorded, or if they would rather hand-written notes be taken during the interview. All participants agreed with the notion that the interview process would go more quickly, and the information collected would be more accurate if an audio recording was permitted. Therefore all informants agreed to be audio recorded.

At the beginning of interviews with both groups of informants, it was stated that their anonymity would be maintained unless otherwise requested. Anonymity was recommended, as the subject matter of each discussion was highly personal, and discussed sensitive issues. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants so that their experiences can be addressed in the case study portion of this thesis. In the interest of maintaining confidentiality, interview transcripts were not included in the appendices of this report, given the relatively small sample size. Only my advisor and I have access to the information linking the participant’s real names and information to their assigned pseudonyms. To further the assurance of anonymity, instead of presenting this case study as separate views/opinions made by participants, common themes, problems, and ideas will be identified as a product of an overall examination of all of the collected information. As many common themes and concepts were identified, I believe that this is the best way to approach analyzing perspectives and stories shared during the interview process.
III. Research Instruments

Research Instruments: Recruitment

Recruitment of participants was predominately accomplished using email and phone contact. Please see the appendices for a copy of the recruitment scripts used to contact funeral home employees and potential Indigenous participants (Appendix 6). For recruiting employees of funeral homes, I initially contacted the business via email, using the contact information available online. After making initial contact in all cases, I was referred to specific individuals who had experience working with Indigenous clients that were willing to speak with me. I contacted these potential participants personally via telephone and set a mutually agreed-upon interview location time and place. All of the funeral home employees that agreed to participate required that I meet with them in person, and allowed me approximately one hour of their time.

My second informant group, which consisted of Indigenous individuals, was recruited using a variety of different methods. I began my recruitment process by contacting the Indigenous Student Centre at the University of Manitoba to inquire as to the appropriate channels for requesting meetings with Elders and other sharers of Indigenous knowledge. Once I had received the contact information for key individuals, I contacted them via email (see Appendix 6 for script) to setup up a meeting. This recruitment process allowed me to meet with only a small handful of participants, requiring me to look elsewhere. During my interviews with funeral home employees, I was given information about individuals who would likely be willing to participate in my project. In some cases, these individuals even came to the location where my original
interview was taking place, and were willing to talk right afterwards. This was an unexpected but welcomed surprise, and resulted in many impromptu interviews happening within a short period of time.

Research Instruments: Consent

Consent forms for both research groups were created following the requirements put in place by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. After the recruitment process, if a potential participant showed interest in the project, they were contacted via email telephone so that they could give verbal consent to be interviewed at a later date. Once a mutually agreed upon date and time was set, the research project and goals were explained to the participant to ensure they fully understood what was being asked of them and to address any questions. Once completed, written consent was given on the appropriate forms, and a copy was left with the participant for future reference. This copy also contained the contact information for me, and for the Research Ethics Board in case they had any questions or concerns. A copy of this consent form for both funeral home employees and individual participants can be found in the appendices.

Research Instruments: Interview Questions

Interview questions were prepared separately for each informant group with one for Indigenous participants, and a separate set of questions for funeral employees. The interview questions for funeral home employees were more structured when compared to those asked of Indigenous participants. Questions for funeral home employees were more specific about the services that funeral homes provided Indigenous clients. I also inquired as to their own experiences working with Indigenous families and communities. For individual Indigenous
participants, interview questions were only semi-structured, beginning with a few personal questions about where they were from and then moving on to questions regarding their experiences attending funerals. I encouraged participants to speak in-depth about their own experiences working with funeral homes in Manitoba, and if any of their funerary needs could not be accommodated. These questions were asked to elicit a response that I would be able to analyze and compare with perspectives obtained from funeral employees.

I began each interview with a brief overview of what I was hoping to accomplish during the interview process. I encouraged all participants to speak as long as they wanted to while responding to each question. It should be noted that I began to omit specific questions from the interview process as my research progressed. After my first two interviews with funeral home employees, I had collected a substantial amount of information regarding the legal obligations and financial implications involved in the funerary process. As a result, I removed those questions from the list for the rest of my funeral home interviews, as the information obtained from each employee was the same. I also began to omit a few questions from my list for individual participants, as I found a few questions were not relevant. I will elaborate more on this in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

**Research Instruments: Recordings**

In addition to hand-written notes taken during each interview, I also obtained consent from each participant to use a small audio-recording device to record our meeting. As previously stated, the participants agreed that recording the interview was the most accurate and efficient way to gather information. Immediately upon completion of each interview, the audio file was transferred from the recording device to an encrypted folder on my password-protected laptop.
This level of security was essential to maintain confidentiality as the audio recordings mention business names and people, which of course, will be omitted from the results of this study. The audio recordings were then transcribed and kept in a separate encrypted folder. Once the process was complete, the original audio files on the recording device were permanently deleted.

IV. Data Analysis

Data analysis for this project was completed using the following steps:

1. Audio recordings of each interview were transcribed, printed, and then combined with the hand-written notes

2. Transcripts and interview notes from both informant groups were reviewed to identify any significant themes present across each interview.

3. Specific points of interest were identified and then analyzed and expanded upon in the discussion chapter of this thesis. This analysis includes compelling similarities and differences in perspectives between each of the participant groups analyzed.

V. Research Challenges & Weaknesses

Finding participants who were willing to be interviewed for this thesis project was more difficult than I had initially predicted. I decided to begin with contacting funeral homes as dealing with a business that had set working hours seemed like a more feasible place to start. I contacted twenty funeral homes across the province, with the majority located in Winnipeg. Responses from businesses primarily stated that they did not provide any funeral services to Indigenous clients, therefore eliminating them as potential informants. I found this to be very surprising, as many of the funeral homes across the province claimed to be available to all faiths
and beliefs, yet none of them had any experience working with Indigenous clients. It seemed, then, that while funeral homes would offer services to a range of clientele, Indigenous people were potentially being very selective about where they obtained these services.

There is only one funeral home in the province advertising that it primarily offers funerary services to Indigenous clients. I attempted to contact them numerous times with no response. Finally, I went down to the business in person, and I managed to informally receive some basic information about the services that they provide, but they were not interested in being interviewed. After this somewhat frustrating process, I turned my attention to other urban centres within the province, and I had more success making connections in Steinbach, Portage La Prairie, Brandon, and Minnedosa.

Individual participant recruitment was also incredibly challenging, as I did not have established ties with members of any Indigenous communities in the region. I received multiple suggestions to place recruitment posters and visit Indigenous-learning centres across the city, but this recruitment method did not prove effective for this project. It was beginning to become alarmingly clear that the subject of death, dying, and funeral homes was not a topic that people were motivated to discuss. As a non-Indigenous student, I wanted to tread very lightly around these sensitive topics, and not overstep or offend anyone who I approached.

VI. Research Sample

Sample: Funeral Homes

According to the Funeral Board of Manitoba, there are ninety-three registered funeral homes in the province of Manitoba in 2019. As the largest urban centre in the province, Winnipeg is home to 30 registered funeral home businesses. Out of the thirty businesses present
in Winnipeg, twelve funeral homes were identified as potential research candidates based on information publicly available through online research. In some cases, funeral homes advertised directly that they provided services to Indigenous populations, while others advertised that they were willing to provide services to people of all faiths, backgrounds, and beliefs. Out of the twelve businesses contacted in Winnipeg, just half responded to my request for information. Out of these six, three businesses stated that they did not provide services to Indigenous clients, two were willing to participate, and one business stated that they were too busy to engage in any interviews. Using the identical selection methods outlined above, seven funeral homes in peri-urban environments were contacted. Out of the seven funeral homes contacted via telephone and email, only four businesses responded to my participation request. These funeral homes are located in Steinbach, Portage La Prairie, Brandon, and Minnedosa.

Sample: Indigenous Participants

A total of six Indigenous individuals, and two Indigenous cultural centres located within Winnipeg were contacted for this research project. I did not receive any response from either cultural centre, despite my effort to contact them via telephone and in person. Indigenous individuals identified through mutual friends, and contacts at the University of Manitoba, four of which politely declined my request for an interview. As a result, I was able to speak with two people in Winnipeg, one of which self identified as an Elder. In peri-urban centres outside of Winnipeg, I spoke to four Indigenous participants of varying ages and backgrounds. Each individual was keen to participate, as they shared either a personal connection to a funeral home employee, or had extensively utilized the funerary home services in their area. In summary, a total of six Indigenous participants were engaged to collect data for this research project.
VII: Summary/Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the rapid research methods used to collect data for this thesis study. The methodological approach outlined in this chapter was devised to take this research from the initial stage of a review of the relevant literature, through to an analysis of contemporary Indigenous funerary practices in urban and peri-urban environments. After an examination of the literature, pertinent research questions were highlighted, and structured and semi-structured interviews were formulated for two key informant groups to answer these research questions. Participants were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the information, and transcripts and interview notes from both informant groups were compiled. Data analysis consisted of identifying reoccurring themes within each informant group, as well as analyzing compelling perspectives and experiences across all of the data collected. The goal of this analysis is to understand the current state of Indigenous funerary rituals better, how they have transformed, and what we can predict for the future of funerary customs within an urban setting.
CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY

I. Introduction

In this chapter, the detailed results of both the participant and funeral employee interviews are presented. Results from each informant group are organized by central themes and ideas to maintain the anonymity of participants. As outlined in Chapter 3, the following information was obtained as a result of interviewing employees from six different funeral homes and engaging with six Indigenous participants across Manitoba. This chapter is divided into three sections, based on the information obtained from participant interviews and follow-up research. The first section investigates contemporary funerary trends addressing, funeral regulations and policy, the shift from "community" to "traditional" funerals, funeral cooperatives, and how the funeral home business is adapting to more diverse funerary traditions. The second section discusses the relationship between funeral homes and Indigenous clients from the perspective of funeral directors. This includes financial implications, as well as the role funeral directors play in the Indigenous funerary process. The final part of this chapter investigates the responses of Indigenous participants when questioned about Indigenous contemporary funerary practices, and their experiences utilizing modern funerary services.

II. Contemporary Funerary Trends

Funeral Regulations & Policy

Funeral homes are highly regulated at the provincial level across Canada. Long-time funeral professionals expressed that it would be more beneficial if a national funeral board
regulated the industry. According to multiple funeral home employees interviewed, new policies are interpreted as reactionary, never progressive, or anticipatory. Typically, when a family has a bad experience with a funeral home, they go to the funeral board, the board responds, and new regulations are pushed forward for everyone in the funeral business to follow. Consumer dissatisfaction with funeral prices and advertising are met with attempts from the Manitoba Funeral Board to mediate a resolution. However, there is little the board can do other than revoke a funeral home's license, which in most cases is too severe a punishment (Smith, 2007, pp. 91). According to one of the funeral directors, there are a few current cases in Manitoba of funeral homes being audited as money has gone missing for funded arrangements. Therefore, Manitoba is going through a regulation reassessment that will change how prearranged funds are handled to make everyone more accountable. These types of situations are not uncommon; therefore, regulations are extremely tight, and at any time, a member of the funeral board can visit a funeral home and check to make sure everything is in order.

The protection of the public is the first and foremost concern for all funeral homes when they receive a deceased person before even beginning to plan any part of the funeral. According to funeral directors, the government mandates that if there is a viewing of the deceased, the public can be present if the decomposition of the body has been arrested. By law, bodies do not have to be embalmed. However, embalming has been one of the pivotal services that funeral homes have offered since their inception and is particularly crucial in situations where the viewing of the body has been delayed for any number of reasons (Smith, 2007, pp. 104). While funeral homes are focused on health and preservation concerns, the primary concern of families when first discussing funeral arrangements is how their loved one will be presented, they rarely, if ever, consider the health and regulatory processes and rarely consider the protection or
preservation aspects of the process. Therefore, as a service, funeral homes need to pay particularly close attention to this.

Shift from “Community” to “Traditional” Funerals

Grief is the number one stressor that impacts families when they are trying to make funeral arrangements. Part of helping manage the grief that families are dealing with is discussing the financial implications of a funeral. According to one of the funeral directors interviewed, a hundred years ago, in the province of Manitoba, the community shared the cost of a funeral. As a community, people would provide services, such as the gravedigger, a pastor, and the casket maker. The idea of a community-based funeral in the early 20th century, where expenses are shared, is corroborated by Poulter (2011), who gives the example of a carpenter committing a full day's work constructing a coffin without charging the family of the deceased. These services were offered free of charge, as they were seen as an essential contribution to the community (Poulter, 2011, pp. 138).

In the present, it is clear that the majority of people have given up the authority to organize these components of a funeral and now rely on funeral homes to carry out these tasks. There are a few factors to consider when discussing the shift in trends from a community-based funeral to a “traditional funeral”. First is the use of the word “traditional” by professionals to describe a wide range of funerary services offered. According to Poulter (2011), "traditional" funerals derived key elements from pre-modern traditions but were adapted to the modern industrial environment. In an increasingly urbanized setting, a sense of community was lost, and people were less likely to commit services without compensation. Community involvement was replaced with professional expertise, as families hired funeral directors to create a version of the community
funeral and achieve what was perceived as a proper burial (Poulter, 2011, pp.141). Secondarily the use of the term "director" is significant, as a community-based funeral did not need any direction but instead took shape organically. This terminology could be attributed to the eagerness of funeral directors to assert a professional status and offer services and expertise such as embalming and bereavement counseling (Poulter, 2011, pp. 153).

It is now commonplace that the disposition of the body is regulated to a funeral home, and families do not take the responsibility of caring for the deceased within their own homes. In Manitoba, there is no legal requirement to use a funeral director or any legal obligation to only move the deceased by ambulance or hearse (Smith, 2007, pp. 104). However, one significant aspect that people may overlook when assuming responsibility for a deceased individual is the significant amount of paperwork required by the province. Funeral directors are vital in assisting with the processing of death certificates, which are required documents at banks and insurance companies to settle the affairs of the deceased (Smith, 2007, pp.105).

**Business Adaptation & Versatile Space**

According to multiple funeral home employees, funeral homes, as a business, are trying to adapt to the changing cultural landscape of people present in urban centres within Manitoba. This adaptation manifests in the form of new funeral home buildings having the ability to be adaptable for all services requested by clients. Urban areas within the province that have primarily have had the same religious funerary services requested of them are now noticing an increase in the diversity of the surrounding population. This requires funeral directors to be more adaptive to new funerary practices. This adaptation has taken many forms, including allowing people to remain in the funeral home overnight to be with the body, or having space outdoors for
smudging ceremonies, or other gatherings. This notion of adaptive funerary space is supported by Isaac (2006 pp.167), who states that the space for funerary rituals needs to acknowledge the transformative potential of a funeral event and provide an opportunity for congregation, spontaneity, and memory.

According to one of the funeral directors, the main goal of the funeral home is to never say no to any request, as clients are quick to go elsewhere to seek funerary services. In cases where Indigenous clients are dealing with a funeral home that does not typically offer Indigenous services, they are quite sensitive not to overstep. One funeral director described working with Indigenous clients, as so far from demanding, that they need to stress to Indigenous clients the services that are required. Indigenous families that move into an urban area that is predominately comprised of non-Indigenous people, in most cases, feel like they are outsiders and are tentative when requesting services.

It was also noted by funeral directors that people utilizing their services were becoming more practical in regard to funeral expenses. One funeral director provided an example from ten years ago, where most caskets that were made available to clients ranged from $2500 up to $6000. In some cases, as seen with the Orthodox Jewish traditions, their caskets require a concrete liner that ranged from $6000 to $12000. At present, clients now opt for less expensive alternatives. In response, funeral homes supply a wide range of caskets, urns, and memorial pieces that are at a more reasonable price point. One funeral home employee, who was in charge of maintaining the funeral casket and urn catalogue, commented that clients appreciate having a variety of less-expensive products to choose from, and generally speaking, feel less “ripped off” by their purchase. According to Issac (2006 pp.169), funeral homes in Manitoba have been and continue to be receptive to changes within the market by reaching out to communities instead of
focusing inward.

Funeral Cooperatives

Funeral co-operatives have emerged as an alternative business model to address the rising cost of funeral services, and general dissatisfaction with an industry perceived as taking advantage of people’s grief and loss. Cooperatives offer high quality, diversified services, and remedy the issue of the high cost of funerals (Lafleur, 2012, pp. 22). There is only one funeral cooperative in Manitoba, and it is located in the peri-urban community of Steinbach. Birchwood Funeral Chapel was founded in 1997, and by the time construction had begun at the end of the year, the cooperative had attracted 1700 members who had paid a membership fee of $200. The funeral cooperative drove the price of a funeral down by thousands of dollars and captured close to eighty percent of the regional market (Smith, 2007, pp.81-82). According to an employee at the cooperative, the funeral home that used to service the Steinbach community had an average staff and service fee of $3200 and subsequently went out of business. In 2019, Birchwood Funeral Chapel offers the entire staff and service fee for a traditional casket burial funeral service for $2800. According to Smith (2007 pp. 82), the lower prices offered by funeral cooperatives are not intended to drive out the competition, but rather to eliminate the corporations that were gouging people. Employees noted that you do not need to be a member of the cooperative to be a client and receive discounted funeral services. However, members are entitled to a twenty percent discount on the funeral service fee, and also receive a portion of the profits from that year, in the form of a dividend.

After interviewing employees at the Birchwood Funeral Chapel, I was given a tour of the massive facility that houses two chapels and multiple adaptable reception spaces. I was informed
that the cooperative has access to a network of over seventy-five volunteers who assist with food preparation and serving during funeral receptions. The willingness of volunteers to perform tasks that would typically be paid positions exemplifies the strong connection between the funeral home cooperative and the community that it serves. Strong community ties and a mandate to keep funeral costs as reasonable as possible, makes a substantial difference in how funeral home employees are perceived by clients. According to employees of the Birchwood Funeral Chapel, families have expressed a sense of ease sitting down with funeral directors, knowing that the bottom line is not the priority of the funeral home when discussing costs.

In summary, the success of the Birchwood Funeral Chapel funeral cooperative in the peri-urban community of Steinbach is not surprising given the deep connection to the community in which they serve. Funeral cooperatives represent an alternative economic model that combats market domination by private and multi-national companies. Findings from a study of funeral cooperatives in Quebec indicate that cooperatives can operate and succeed alone, but are only able to impact long-embedded institutional frameworks by working together at a local, national, and international level (Audebrand & Barros, 2018, pp. 31). Birchwood Funeral Chapel is currently the only funeral cooperative in Manitoba, but its current success in the funeral industry may motivate other communities to create cooperatives of their own.

III: Funeral Home Perspective: Indigenous Funerary Practices

Finances: Indigenous Funerals

The financial implications for Indigenous funerals are generally not dealt with on an individual or family level. In most cases, families meet with funeral directors to discuss what they need, and then they take the information to the Chief or community leader. The Chief has a
lot to say regarding the cost, and in some cases, the funeral director may never deal directly with the family at any point. As the deceased individual is viewed as a part of the community, it is believed that it is the community’s responsibility to take of care them and their family, and not have the family worry about funeral costs. It is the common perspective that most of it not all of the funeral costs will be covered by the band. This is surprising, as Indigenous & Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) are only involved with estates of Indigenous people who maintain a permanent residence on a reserve. Under the Indian Act, Indigenous people living “off-reserve” at the time of their death, will not have their expenses covered through INAC, but rather are the responsibility of the province or territory in which they reside (Government of Canada, 2008). The contradiction between what communities are doing to cover funerary costs in practice, or people’s perception of what should be done, and what the Indian Act actually stipulates, implies that the reality of finances surrounding Indigenous funerals can be quite complex.

It should be noted that another key aspect of Indigenous funerary process is bringing the deceased back to their home community. In some cases, this can be very expensive, as flights to return an individual to a remote northern community can exceed $2000. When asked if there is ever a cap on funeral expenses when dealing with Indigenous clients, the simple response was “No.” Indigenous communities will only work with funeral homes and staff with whom they have established a trusting relationship and who they know will not charge them for things that they do not need.

Role of the Funeral Home in Indigenous Funerary Practices

After speaking with funeral home employees, it was clear that a history of positive business interactions and a trusting relationship connects individual Indigenous communities to
specific funeral homes. In some cases, this relationship is relatively new, with Indigenous funeral services happening in urban centres only quite recently. In other situations, the trusting relationship between the Indigenous community and the funeral home has been established for many decades. When an Indigenous person passes, and the funeral director is working with the family, they meet with the family and make arrangements. This includes getting vital statistics information to register the death and beginning to organize aspects such as booking the spirit lodge, food, and arranging the gravediggers. On the day of the wake, the family will come to the funeral home for a viewing, and then everyone will drive to the community (when possible) in a procession. Funeral directors will generally stay in the community for a little while, while they get funerary rituals started. The funeral director then returns the next day for the feast and ceremony that happens at noon.

Many funeral directors acknowledged that funeral homes represent only a small part of what happens when an Indigenous person living in an urban environment passes away. In cases where the relationship between the funeral home and Indigenous community is quite strong, funeral directors may be present through the entire funerary process, to assist and help organize events. In other cases, where the bond between a funeral home and Indigenous community is relatively new, funeral directors may only be asked to help transport the deceased back to their home community. Again, funeral homes ensure that public health is protected, and take the necessary steps to guarantee the safety of the family when they receive the deceased individual.

It is quite clear that Indigenous funerals are highly community-based. This is perhaps most evident when analyzing the financial implications of funerals, as the band or community to which that person belongs will most often pay for any funeral expenses incurred. However, from the perspective of funeral home employees who have had long-standing relationships with
Indigenous communities, the actual execution of a "community-based" funeral can be quite complex. Funeral directors handle much of the complicated paperwork that is required but they leave the majority of funeral preparations to the family of the deceased. Preparations would include contacting the correct people within a community to help prepare food, booking the spirit lodge, and preparing the body and casket. This is easier said than done, as many families living in urban centres have lost their connection to their community and are unsure who to contact. The funeral directors with strong ties to these communities often have a list available to them of people to contact. They highly encourage families to use this information and organize funeral preparations themselves. One funeral director believes that maintaining the idea of a community-based funeral is essential, as non-Indigenous funerals have gone too far the other way by allowing the funeral home to do all of the planning and providing an all-inclusive service. As a result, people have become disconnected from funerals, and are not dealing with death. It is their opinion that by not engaging in the process of dealing with a deceased loved one, it inhibits the grieving process.

IV: Indigenous Perspective: Contemporary Funerary Practices

Utilizing Funeral Home Services:

The Indigenous people with whom I spoke to who were living in these areas want to respect where they are living. They understand that what they require for funerals is much different than what has traditionally been offered in the area. These ideas again, go back to developing a positive relationship between the funeral home and Indigenous people living within a particular community. From the perspective of the funeral home employees, they are facing new challenges and trying to be as accommodating as possible, as clients who have a positive
experience are more likely to be a repeat customer or recommend their services. One funeral director put it best by saying, "Regardless of how we express our grief and our loss, the bottom line is we have lost somebody that we have cared very much about, and we want to do right by them."

Current State of Indigenous Funerary Practices

The foremost issue confronting Indigenous funerary rituals is that traditions are being lost and are not widely understood. It is quite clear that the majority of Indigenous individuals living in urban centres are unsure exactly how to proceed when someone dies. As a result, they rely on key members of the communities with whom they are connected for guidance. It is quite often the same people in each community who get contacted for their knowledge of the necessary funerary rituals. I did encounter a few individuals who had lost all connection to the Elders or leaders from their community, and as a result, had no knowledge of Indigenous traditions and how to integrate them into funeral proceedings.

According to Elders from different communities, this loss of traditional knowledge can be seen within all aspects of Indigenous cultures, especially the loss of their language. However, the loss of traditional Indigenous funerary customs is not something that is happening rapidly. There is a great deal of pride taken in their ability to guide people through the grieving process. Wakes allow those who are grieving to be closely involved with the body and enable people to come to terms with a death in a healthy way. Their significant concerns regarding the loss of traditional knowledge come from the small details that can easily be overlooked. One participant provided the example of a casket. Once opened, there is a veil that is placed over the casket for the whole wake, and people can move the veil if they want to have a viewing. Most Indigenous participants
agreed that these little things are always the first to be forgotten, and will eventually lead to the omission of other important traditions.

Participants noted that they have noticed in recent years, a drastic shift in young people stepping away from the Church, traditional Indigenous knowledge, or some combination of the two. This, coupled with young Indigenous people moving away from their communities and living in urban centres, has created a disconnect with the practice of having community-based funerals. Indigenous participants whom I spoke with between the ages of 20-30, and had lived in urban centre for the majority of their adult lives, knew that funerals involved returning the deceased to their community, but they did not have any strong opinions about funerary traditions they would like carried out in the event of their death.

V. Conclusion

This chapter presented interview results from two key informant groups approached for this research study. Interviews revealed that funeral directors acknowledge that in order to thrive as a business, funeral homes need to be adaptive and create a versatile space for commemoration and mortuary rituals. Alternative economic models exist, such as funeral cooperatives ensure that funeral costs remain reasonable, and are not motivated by profit when providing services to a community. Based on interviews with funeral directors, it was the consensus that they play only a small role in the Indigenous funerary process. Their professional role typically includes a discussion of finances with the Chief, and arranging any required transportation for the deceased. In some cases, this role may be extended, requiring a funeral director to assist families by providing guidance and information on who to contact and the preparations that are need to be
made to uphold their Indigenous traditions. Indigenous individuals who were interviewed felt that many factors are contributing to a decline in traditional Indigenous funerary practices. These factors include a disconnect between people living in urban centres and their home communities, the rapid increase in the deaths of young people, and many young people stepping away from the church, or not being engaged with their traditions.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

I. Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis provides a summary of the research questions proposed at the beginning of this project, as well as a summary of the literature, methods, and interview results used to answer them. In this chapter I will also draw conclusions from the findings of my research, when measured against my research objectives, and also make suggestions for future related research projects.

II. Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis project as an investigation of perspectives of death, dying, and the funerary within the dominant Indigenous cultures in Manitoba. Death and commemoration play a vital role in the lives of Indigenous people. As more Indigenous people now live in urban environments, it is crucial to understand how mortuary customs are being carried out in these settings. One of the main objectives of this research project was to investigate how funeral homes in Manitoba cater to the unique funerary needs of Indigenous clients, and how legal requirements and financial implications associated with funerals impact these funerary rituals.

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the relevant literature that must be examined when studying mortuary customs. This included an analysis of anthropological approaches to mortuary customs that encompass both ethnographic and archaeological data. Ethnographic research of contemporary mortuary practices has focused less on the factors that mediate the process of
death and dying and has focused more on the role of mortuary practices before, during, and after death in creating and maintaining social memory (Chesson, 2001, pp.2.) Archaeological approaches have attempted to reconstruct mortuary practices through the study of the material remains in both historic and prehistoric societies. Traditionally, mortuary archaeology has viewed social organization as the primary factor influencing mortuary practice. However, Carr’s (1995) seminal cross-cultural survey revealed that a complex mix of practical, social, economic, and philosophical-religious factors influences the decisions and practices that encompass the treatment, handling, and interment of the deceased in past societies.

An examination of the literature was conducted to gain an understanding of the extensive ethnographic research of morticians, funeral directors, and anyone who makes a living by handling the dead. There is a distinct negative stigma associated with the handling of the dead, as the work of funeral homes is profoundly perceived as profiting from death and grief (Thompson, 2010). Ethnographic analyses of funeral homes have largely focused on economics, arguing that funeral homes are susceptible to economic rise and decline, and argue that death should be treated as a viable economic project (Sanders, 2009). Sociological studies have utilized funeral home records to investigate funeral expenditures as a possible indicator of reactions to death. It was determined by Pine & Phillips (1970), that funeral expenditures serve as evidence of the concern to both the dead and conventional standards of decency in their community.

Contemporary Indigenous funerary practices are unable to be fully understood without a thorough review of traditional funerary practices. After an analysis of the literature, three major themes present themselves. The first is a pre-contact and historical perspective of Indigenous funerary practices. Pre-contact era Indigenous burial customs vary across Canada, including mummification, cremation, surface burials, and inhumations (Northcott & Wilson, 2017). The
arrival of Europeans to Canada drastically altered the environment for Indigenous people and spawned a new reality of death and dying. Conflict, rapid depletion of resources, and new foreign pathogens all contributed to a rapid decline in the Indigenous population. As a result, traditional funerary practices fell out of use, and a new "norm" was introduced (Northcott & Wilson, 2017). The introduction of the residential school system at the end of 19th century also dramatically altered the state of Indigenous people in Canada by separating young children from their families, and forcing them to abandon their culture, traditions, and language. Poor living conditions and inadequate access to healthcare are only a few factors that led to a high numbers of tuberculosis and death (Milloy & McCallum, 2017, pp.82).

The second major theme identified in the literature analyzes modern Indigenous funerary practices. Ruml (2016) utilizes an approach to study contemporary Indigenous funerary rituals that provides a basis for comparing Dakota and Ojibwe funerary traditions relative to those used by Indigenous people in an urban setting who are reliant on funeral homes. Finally, the most prominent theme identified in the literature are the medical perspectives of death and dying within Indigenous communities. Healthcare-focused research provides insight into the needs of Indigenous people prior to the death of an individual. Research conducted by Hotson (2004) examines the influences facing decision-making within Indigenous communities concerning death and dying. Hotson (2004) argues that these perspectives are essential for improving end of life care and servicing the cultural needs of individuals within and away from urban centres during the dying process.

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the rapid research approach used to collect data for this thesis study. The research sample was comprised of six funeral homes and six Indigenous participants from various urban and peri-urban centres across the province. Data analysis was
completed by transcribing audio recordings from each interview and identifying significant themes present from both informant groups. A complete list of interview questions for both Indigenous participants and funeral home employees can be found in Appendix 1.

Chapter 4 discusses interviews results from both informant groups, and are divided into three main sections. The first sections outlines contemporary funerary trends, discussing funeral regulation and policy, the apparent shift from community-based to what funeral professional have labelled as “traditional” funerals. This section also discusses funeral home business adaptation and versatile space, as well as the emergence of funeral cooperatives intended to combat the rising cost of funeral services. The second section of results discusses Indigenous funerary practices from the perspective of funeral home employees. This includes a discussion of the financial implications, as well as the role of the funeral director in traditional Indigenous funerary practices. The final section of interview results presents a small sample of Indigenous perspectives of contemporary funerary practices. Major discussions include, how Indigenous people utilize funeral home services, and perspectives of the current state of Indigenous funerary practices.

III. Conclusions

What is most evident in this research is how funeral homes have impacted funerary practices in urban communities in Manitoba. In some cases, funeral professionals are playing a vital role in helping Indigenous people living in urban centres preserve their traditions by providing guidance and resources. In other communities, funeral cooperatives are forging new positive relationships with Indigenous people living in the same area. These funeral homes realize that their clientele is becoming more diverse, and are seeking to offer a versatile and open
space for all forms of funerary ritual.

The financial impacts of funerals are substantial. Funeral directors have identified that non-Indigenous clients are becoming more practical about spending, opting for less expensive options when choosing caskets and funerary services. The financial stress associated with funerals has motivated some communities to adopt alternative economic models to address these concerns. Funeral cooperatives remove profit as a motivator for prices and services, and instead respond to community needs by offering lower cost funerary items and services. It remains to be seen if a funeral cooperative will emerge in other urban centres in Manitoba, given the success of the Birchwood Funeral Chapel. Major centres like Winnipeg may experience a tipping point where funeral services become so expensive that the average middle-class family may opt to forfeit any form of funerary ritual. Despite a funeral cooperative being an obvious cost-saving initiative, they require a community to express a desire for such a service. Indigenous peoples living in urban centres may have to take the initiative in finding partners to develop funeral cooperatives to service the needs of particular Indigenous communities in the province.

For Indigenous clients, it is the common perspective that the band covers most if not all funeral costs, including transportation of the deceased back to their community. However, this is in direct contradiction legislation set in place by the Indian Act, stating that Indigenous people living “off-reserve” will not have estate costs covered by the INAC (Government of Canada, 2008). This perspective is significant for two reasons. First, that despite the rising cost of funerary services, and restrictions set in place by the Indian Act, communities continue to make a commitment to their own people. This commitment exemplifies the importance of traditional funerary rituals in Indigenous communities, and for the community to be able take the necessary steps to properly grieve the deceased. Second, it should be made clear that Indigenous
communities are not seeking out funeral homes in urban centres and blindly paying funeral fees. Certain bands will only contact funeral homes with whom they have had previous positive experiences and who they trust to present reasonable prices for funerary services. A clear example of this was found in Portage La Prairie, with funeral directors fostering a trusting relationship with Long Plain First Nation. In this case, funeral directors were also working actively to preserve Indigenous funerary practices, providing guidance and contacts to families who are unaware of traditional funerary practices.

**IV. Future Directions**

This analysis of contemporary mortuary rituals in urban and peri-urban environments represents only a small portion of a much larger discussion of the current state and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and cultures in Manitoba. Future research could assess the current state of mortuary ritual in remote Indigenous communities. After an analysis of the literature, healthcare in remote Indigenous communities has be researched extensively, but an analysis of modern funerary customs is absent. Applying the same research questions to other provinces could reveal an entirely different picture, and is a worthy pursuit. Future investigations could reassess the importance of the community, as a driving force behind Indigenous funerary rituals. Or will Indigenous communities in the future rely more heavily on professional funerary services to facilitate a new form of mortuary ritual? Future research could also investigate shifting trends in the funeral home business, as people are less willing to pay for high funeral costs, we could see a more wide-spread push for funeral cooperatives?

In conclusion, contemporary Indigenous funerary rituals in urban settings is a subject that has virtually been ignored, despite funerary ritual having such a profound impact on the cultures
and identities of Indigenous people. The ability to conduct funerary rituals within the framework of traditions and cultures upheld by a community is vital in supporting people on their path to healing. Trends in the funeral home industry point to people becoming less involved in the funerary process, relying on professionals to look after the deceased, and people becoming more conservative in their spending. In contrast, Indigenous funerary practices continue to emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for their own. They ensure that in most cases individuals who have left their community are able to return home, in the event of their death regardless of costs. In addition, families and community members are always present, caring for the deceased up until their internment. The current status of treating the dead by and for Indigenous peoples, in my opinion, is an unacknowledged setting to address many of the Calls to Action set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC 2012). Anthropologists and historians have long argued and demonstrated cross-culturally that in both contemporary and past societies, funerary settings provide space and time for commemoration and remembrance, for teaching and learning values, attitudes, and beliefs that underpin the solidarity and identity of community members and cultures. Both the funerary industry and Indigenous communities are taking action to create these settings in respectful and acceptable ways. But they are not yet broadly viewed as key and intimate settings to address issues of education, language and cultures, health, or child welfare from uniquely indigenous perspectives.
REFERENCES


Lafleur, M. (2012). *The contribution of funeral cooperatives to a better world*. Sherbrooke, Canada: IRECUS.


LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Questions/Objectives

APPENDIX 2: TCPS 2: CORE Ethics Certificate

APPENDIX 3: Research Ethics and Compliance Project Approval certificate

APPENDIX 4: Informed Consent (Indigenous participants)

APPENDIX 5: Informed Consent (funeral home employees)

APPENDIX 6: Recruitment email script (Indigenous participants & funeral home employees)
Appendix 1: Interview Questions & Objectives

Semi-structured Interviews: Indigenous Participants

Objectives:
1. To gain an understanding of the participant’s experiences participating in the funerary process.
2. Discuss personal preferences regarding what funerary processes the individual would like at their own funeral. What are the factors that influence these decisions?

Personal questions:
1. Age of participant
2. What community did you grow up in?
3. How long have you lived in Winnipeg?

Experience attending funerals:
1. Have you ever attended a funeral of an indigenous person?
2. Was the funeral in Winnipeg, a different urban centre or elsewhere?
3. Were you a part of the funerary process? Did you have a role?
4. Did your relationship with the deceased person influence the role that was assigned to you in the funerary process?
5. Where did the funeral take place? Was it at a home, funeral home, or elsewhere?
6. From your experience, when a funeral home was involved in the funerary process, what role did it play?
7. Have financial constraints ever influenced any decisions made in the funerary process?
8. Where you satisfied with the services provided by these businesses?

Personal funerary preference:
1. Where would you like your own funeral to take place? In Winnipeg or elsewhere? Why?
2. Would you like traditional funerary practices performed at your funeral? Why? Why not?
3. Does your family or close friends influence your decision to include or exclude certain traditions? Are there other factors at play?
4. Are there any unique or personal preferences you have in regards to your own funeral? Why?

Structured Interviews: Funeral Home Employees

Objectives:
1. To gain an understanding of the services offered to Indigenous communities regarding the funerary process from a business/professional perspective.
2. Understand the requirements that funeral homes are legally obligated to fulfill
3. Explore financial constraints as a possible factor that may influence choices made by families and individuals when planning the funerary process.

Indigenous Services:
1. What unique services do you offer to Indigenous clients? Are they primarily traditional or non-traditional?
2. Are there ever any unique requests from clients? Either traditional or non-traditional?
3. Are clients from Winnipeg, or from somewhere else? Urban? Rural?
4. How long have you been offering these unique services?
5. Has the demand for unique Indigenous services changed? More or less in demand?

Legal Requirements:

1. What are the legal requirements that funeral homes are obligated to fulfill for a client?
2. Are these legal obligations difficult to achieve when a client is from a rural community that does not have a funeral home?

Financial Implications:

1. Are the financial implications the primary stressor when planning a funeral?
2. Does the price of your services ever influence a client’s decision to include or exclude certain funerary processes?
3. Do funeral costs limit clients who live in a non-urban setting?
Appendix 2: TCPS 2: CORE Ethics Certificate

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Lesley Martin

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: 19 March, 2017
Appendix 3: Research Ethics & Compliance Protocol Approval

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: Lesley Martin
   Principal Investigator

(Advisor: Kent Fowler)

FROM: Julia Witt, Chair
       Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: Protocol J2019:055 (HS23052)
   “The Funerary Choice: An exploration of the factors that influence the
   funerary processes within an urban Indigenous population”

Effective: August 19, 2019         Expiry: August 19, 2020

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) has reviewed and approved the above
research. JFREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current Tri-Council Policy
Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in the application only.
2. Any modification to the research or research materials must be submitted to JFREB for
   approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to JFREB as soon
   as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and
   approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to JFREB when the research is complete or
   terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba 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.

Funded Protocols:
- Please e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to
  the Research Grants Officer at researchgrants@umanitoba.ca

Research Ethics and Compliance is a part of the Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)
umanitoba.ca/research
Appendix 4: Informed Consent (Indigenous Participants)

Research Project Title: The Funerary Choice: An exploration of the factors that influence the funerary processes within an urban Indigenous population

Principal Investigator: Lesley Martin, BA Honours, Graduate Student Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba.
Email: martinl6@myumanitoba.ca
Telephone: (204) 720-4933

Research Supervisor: Dr. Kent Fowler, Associate Professor and Chair, Graduate Programs, Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba.
Email: kent.fowler@umanitoba.ca
Phone: (204) 474-1504

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 is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

My name is Lesley Martin, and I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba currently conducting my Master’s thesis work within the department of Anthropology. I have chosen to focus on funerary processes of First Nation’s people living in Winnipeg. The purpose of my research project is to try and understand the traditional, personal, and legal factors that dictate final wishes when we pass away. The perspective outcome of this research is to understand the current state of funerary rituals, and how they have transformed, and what we can predict for funerary customs and rituals with an increasingly urbanized First Nation’s population. It is with this project in mind that I have approached you today at this mutually agreed upon location. I would like to take the next thirty to sixty minutes to talk to you about some of the traditional and personal processes that you would like to take place at your own funeral.

The information you provide may be used in my final Master’s Thesis, which will be circulated to my advisor, members of my committee, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please be advised that I may choose to publish my findings in a peer-reviewed journal at a later date. My advisor will have access to a transcript of this interview, and will be the only other person provided with a key linking any pseudonym assigned to you, to your true name.

I would like to ask your permission to record our interview so that I remember accurately all the information you provide. It is entirely up to you whether or not you grant me permission to audio record and I can take written notes as an alternative. I will keep either audio recordings or written notes in a password-protected location that will be accessible only to me. These notes or audio files will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.
I agree to be audio recorded (please initial)

Yes  No

Any recording, transcripts of this recording, or written note will be labeled with a pseudonym so as to avoid linking it or any other information obtained from you. A key to these pseudonyms identifying you only by your first name and the first initial of your last name will be kept in a separate encrypted folder accessible only to my advisor and me. I will destroy the recording, transcript, and key after I complete this project no later than February 2020. The results of this study will help me increase my knowledge of how First Nation’s people living in Winnipeg conduct funerary rituals, and I will share any insight I gain with you through a brief one to three-page summary of my findings by December 2019. Additionally, you are also free to request a copy of the final thesis report anytime after its completion on January 2nd, 2020, if you wish to read the entire work.

The benefit to you participating in this study is that your thoughts and ideas may contribute to more culturally sensitive funerary policies and an increased understanding of current funerary rituals. The risk to you in participating in this study is that your thoughts regarding funeral process and final wishes, or other potentially sensitive information will be known. The above-mentioned methods that I have put in place are designed to minimize that risk. An Elder or spiritual leader may be provided to you upon request. In addition, if at any time and for any reason, you prefer not to answer a particular question or would like to stop participating, please tell me. I will immediately stop the interview and will destroy any records of it. If you would like to withdraw from the study or withhold specific information following the completion of this interview, please contact me through the telephone number or email I have provided you with and I will respect your wishes. The final date by which you can withdraw from this study prior to my writing it up in my final research paper is November 1st, 2019.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at these research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. The Joint Faculty 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 Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.
Appendix 5: Informed Consent (Funeral Home Employees)

Research Project Title: The Funerary Choice: An exploration of the factors that influence the funerary processes within an urban Indigenous population

Principal Investigator: Lesley Martin, BA Honours, Graduate Student Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba.
Email: martinl6@myumanitoba.ca
Telephone: (204) 720-4933

Research Supervisor: Dr. Kent Fowler, Associate Professor and Chair, Graduate Programs, Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba.
Email: kent.fowler@umanitoba.ca
Telephone: (204) 474-1504

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 is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

My name is Lesley Martin, I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba currently conducting my Master’s thesis work within the department of Anthropology. I have chosen to focus on funerary processes of First Nation’s people living in Winnipeg. The purpose of my research project is to try and understand the traditional, personal, and legal factors that dictate final wishes when we pass away. The perspective outcome of this research is to understand the current state of funerary rituals, and how they have transformed, and what we can predict for funerary customs and rituals with an increasingly urbanized First Nation’s population. It is with this project in mind that I have approached you today at this mutually agree upon location. I would like to take the next thirty to sixty minutes to talk to you about some of the services that you offer to Indigenous clients seeking funerary services.

The information you provide may be used in my final Master’s Thesis, which will be circulated to my advisor, members of my committee, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please be advised that I may choose to publish my findings in a peer-reviewed journal at a later date. My advisor will have access to a transcript of this interview, and will be the only other person provided with a key linking any pseudonym assigned to you, to your true name or place of business.

I would like to ask your permission to record our interview so that I remember accurately all the information you provide. It is entirely up to you whether or not you grant me permission to audio record and I can take written notes as an alternative. I will keep either audio recordings or written notes in a password-protected location that will be accessible only to me. These notes or audio files will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.

I agree to be audio recorded (please initial)
A pseudonym will be used for the name of the business you work for, and any recording, transcripts of this recording, or written notes will be labeled with this pseudonym so as to avoid linking it or any other information obtained from you. As an individual you have the option to be acknowledged by name in this study or you can choose to be referred to by a pseudonym. A key to this pseudonym identifying you only by your first name and the first initial of your last name will be kept in a separate encrypted folder accessible only to my advisor and me. I will destroy the recording, transcript, and key after I complete this project no later than February, 2020. The results of this study will help me increase my knowledge of how First Nation’s people living in Winnipeg conduct funerary rituals, and I will share any insight I gain with you through a brief one to three-page summary of my findings by December, 2019. You are also free to request a copy of the final thesis report anytime after its completion on January 2nd, 2020, if you wish to read the entire work.

The benefit to you participating in this study is that the information about services and experiences that you provide will contribute to a better understanding of current Indigenous funerary needs, and may lead to more culturally sensitive policies surrounding death. The above-mentioned methods that I have put in place are designed to minimize any risks that may be associated to you for participation in this study. If at any time and for any reason, you prefer not to answer a particular question or would like to stop participating, please tell me. I will immediately stop the interview and will destroy any records of it. If you would like to withdraw from the study or withhold specific information following the completion of this interview, please contact me through the telephone number or email I have provided you with and I will respect your wishes. The final date by which you can withdraw from this study prior to my writing it up in my final research paper is November 1st, 2019.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at these research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant’s Signature ________________________ Date ________
Appendix 6: Recruitment Email Script

Funeral Homes Invitation

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Lesley Martin and I am graduate student studying Anthropology at the University of Manitoba. I am writing to your business to see if you would be interested in participating in my thesis project. The aim of my research is to collect new information about how Indigenous people living in Winnipeg make decisions regarding funerary processes that they wish to have carried out. Part of this research is exploring the necessary role that the modern funeral home plays, and how they cater to the unique needs of an Indigenous population. The prospective outcome of this research is to better understand the current state of funerary ritual, how they have transformed, and what we can predict for future funerary customs and rituals within an urban population.

If you were interested in participating in my project it would take place in the form of a structured interview at a mutually agreed upon location, and would take approximately thirty to sixty minutes of your time. A consent form will be presented to you before the interview takes place that outlines where the results of this research will be disseminated, how the information you present will be stored, and the ethical compliance of this study. The Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba has approved this research. If you are interested in participating in this research project please contact me directly via email or telephone.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Lesley Martin B.A. Honours
Principal Investigator
Department of Anthropology
University of Manitoba

Email: martinl6@myumanitoba.ca
Telephone: (204) 720-4933
Individual Participants Invitation

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Lesley Martin and I am graduate student studying Anthropology at the University of Manitoba. I am writing to you to see if you would be interested in participating in my thesis project. The aim of my research is to collect new information about how Indigenous people living in Winnipeg make decisions regarding funerary processes that they wish to have carried out. This research will assess the legal requirements, financial stressors, and traditional rites and customs that influence decisions made by both the individual and their families as to how to conduct the funerary process. The prospective outcome of this research is to better understand the current state of funerary ritual, how they have transformed, and what we can predict for future funerary customs and rituals within an urban population. I am hoping that this research could lead to more culturally sensitive policies and services being offered to Indigenous people living in an urban setting.

If you were interested in participating in my project it would take place in the form of a semi-structured interview, at a mutually agreed upon location, and take approximately thirty to sixty minutes of your time. A consent form will be presented to you before the interview takes place that outlines where the results of this research will be disseminated, how the information you present will be stored, and the ethical compliance of this study. The Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba has approved this research. If you choose to participate in this study you will be given the option to be acknowledged by name or alternatively assigned a pseudonym to ensure the confidentiality of your personal information. If you are interested in participating in this research project please contact the Principal Investigator via email or by phone. Alternatively, please forward this letter to others who you think may be interested in participating in this project and they can contact me directly.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Lesley Martin B.A. Honours
Principal Investigator
Department of Anthropology
University of Manitoba

Email: martinl6@myumanitoba.ca
Telephone: (204) 720-4933