Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care Within Manitoba

A Thesis

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By

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Abstract

Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (2SLGBTQ+) youth in care not only have to encounter the challenges that come with being a youth in care, but experience oppression due to colonialism, heterosexism, and cissexism. This Master of Social Work in Indigenous Knowledges thesis centres the voices of five individuals who are a part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and have had experiences of being in the care of the child welfare system in Manitoba. In the research process there were individual interviews with the five participants, and three of the participants took part in analyzing the summaries of the individual interviews in a group analysis, done by way of talking circle. Overarching themes included oppression at micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and that for some of the Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ participants, cultural identity and gender and/or sexuality, were tied. The major themes that came to light in this process were that being in care had impacts on their sexual and gender identities, impacts on their cultural identities, and that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care who had the experience of being adopted, and those who did not, had similar experiences. Arriving to the changes that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care would like to see to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the care of the child welfare system, there came the major theme of the need for affirmation at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Keywords: Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, 2SLGBTQ+, LGBT, child welfare system, youth in care, child and family services, child welfare authority, child protective services

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The child welfare system has been used as a tool of colonialism, dating back to the time of the residential school system. We continue to see these colonial practices occurring today; it is within this system where youth are so often not afforded the care and concern that they deserve. Homophobia and transphobia are values that were brought over to Turtle Island[1] during the time of colonization, and are views that are embedded within euro-western culture and society (The Native Youth Sexual Health Network & The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres [NYSHN & OFIFC], 2015); one could infer that similar values are also embedded into systems such as the child welfare system, or child and family services (CFS) in Manitoba. We already know that Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual (2SLGBTQ+) youth, and youth in care, experience a range of negative outcomes (Dyck, 2012; Gaetz, 2014; Katz et al., 2011; Dunlop, 2016; Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2013). 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the care of child and family services are not experiencing these negative outcomes because of anything that is inherently wrong with them, but it is instead a result of the structures of colonial, homophobic and transphobic systems. Children and youth in care are some of the most vulnerable populations in society, thus I would like to explore the experience of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care within this colonial system more deeply through the research process.

[1] Turtle Island is one way that some Indigenous nations describe the place referred to in present days as North America.

For the purpose of the research for my thesis, I set out to critically examine ways in which the child welfare system may be supporting and failing 2SLGBTQ+ youth and children within this system. I wondered about the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth who are in care within the context of this territory that we now refer to as Manitoba. What are their stories? What would be the changes they would want to see in the child welfare system to better support Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual children and youth in care? These questions ultimately guided the research process, and this will be expanded on later in this thesis.

Further to the questions posed above, in setting out on this research process, I wondered if foster parents had the knowledge base and foundation to provide care for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in a safe and affirming way. I wondered about social work as a practice and the ways in which we are helping or harming 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth in care. I wondered about the experiences of transgender youth, including non-binary youth, living in group homes that are often segregated by the gender one is assigned at birth. In setting out on this research, I anticipated that there was going to be themes that arose in the research that touched on these topics; it should be noted however that these questions, while related to my own research, may require further and more in-depth examination as research on their own.

For the objectives of this research, I met with five individuals who at the time of the interviews were between the ages of 18 – 30, who have been in the care of the child welfare system and who self-identify as being a part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, with one of my main research questions in mind: *What are the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care within Manitoba?* I view the participants as not only participants in the research process, but as experts regarding this topic. I wanted them to feel empowered to

put forth calls to action, so that this thesis can be used as a way to help facilitate meaningful changes within the child welfare system, for current generations of 2SLGBTQ+ youth within the child welfare system, and for any future generations.

There has been research in recent years that has examined the inequalities and many difficulties that exist for youth in care (Brownell et al., 2015; Burnside, 2012). Similarly, research has also been conducted that examines the disparities in the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth (Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, n.d.). Knowing that these negative outcomes exist for both 2SLGBTQ+ youth and youth in care, I wondered about what the experience is for youth when these realities intersect; I wondered about the challenges that are unique to 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care. As a queer, cisgender woman and social worker who is a part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and who has worked with 2SLGBTQ+ youth in various capacities, the gaps in the outcomes have been evident to me in the stories that I have been told from 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, whom I have had the privilege of learning from prior to embarking on this research journey.

This research is important to me, because 2SLGBTQ+ youth are important. They are valued, and are deserving of safety, security, and love. I came to this work with the understanding that youth in care are often the most vulnerable; I had imagined this reality was heightened when they are experiencing homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. I also came to this research with the understanding that it would be crucial to examine how oppressive forces such as colonialism, heterosexism, and cissexism, are impacting 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, and that their negative experiences and outcomes may be heightened if they are experiencing other forms of oppression – such as racism, classism, ableism, sexism, and so on.

1.2 2SLGBTQ+ Terminology and Language

I imagine that there are individuals reading this document, who may be unfamiliar with some of the language presented here as it relates to terms that are connected to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. One thing I want to highlight is that language within the community (as is true for many communities) is continuously changing and evolving. This might mean that by the time the reader has found this thesis, there may be terms as described below that may be outdated, so the reader is encouraged to seek out the most up to date information as possible at the time of reading.

I would first like to address the acronym that you will see used throughout this thesis, "2SLGBTQ+", and for simplicity's sake, this is what I will be using to describe the community throughout the course of this thesis. While I will be referring to the community collectively in using the acronym 2SLGBTQ+, this does not mean that our experiences are all the same and I want to name that there is immense diversity as to what it means to be a part of the "2SLGBTQ+ community". The acronym I have chosen for the purpose of this thesis has even changed in the time that I have started this research to the ending, and it is the reality that in a few years I may look back on this thesis with new knowledge on other ways I could have described the 2SLGBTQ+ community. I want to highlight that there are a number of variations of the acronym, and this is also ever changing. Additionally, language and self-identity are complex and varies from person to person. As expressed by the Sexuality Education and Resource Centre of Manitoba:

> 2STLGBQ+ individuals may self-identify, and/or use terms in a variety of ways. Identities are personal, and can be fluid and change over the course of a lifetime. Identities are about feelings, or a sense of self, and not about behaviours. The way that a person expresses themselves may not necessarily reflect their identity. For example, it is important not to assume someone's gender based on appearance or behaviour. Instead, allow opportunities for people to self-identify by actively

> listening for cues, or by asking. (Sexuality Education Resource Centre, 2018 para. 2)

I have used the acronym 2SLGBTQ+ to refer to individuals who are Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and a plus sign for all of those who are a part of the "queer" community but whose identities are not reflected in the acronym. I will define some of these terms, however I again want to emphasize that language is fluid, ever changing, and identity is deeply personal to each individual who chooses a term to reflect their own identities. Some of the identities that participants have chosen to describe themselves are highlighted in section 5.1. Here are some terms that come up in this thesis, adapted from the *LGBTQI2S glossary of terms* by Egale (n.d.):

- *Asexual:* A person who does not experience sexual attraction, or who has little to no interest in sexual activity.
- *Bisexual:* A person who experiences attraction to both people of their own gender and people of genders different from their own.
- *Cisgender:* A person whose gender identity corresponds with what is socially expected based on their sex assigned at birth.
- *Gay:* A person who experiences attraction to people the same gender as themselves. Gay may be used by individuals of a diversity of genders or may refer specifically to men who are attracted to other men.
- *Queer:* Although queer has been used as a slur, this term has been reclaimed by some 2SLGBTQ+ communities as a term of pride and affirmation of diversity. It can be used to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to sex, gender, and attraction or by an individual to reflect the interrelatedness of these aspects of their identity.

- *Lesbian:* A person who identifies as a woman and experiences attraction to other women.
- *Pansexual:* A person who experiences attraction regardless of gender.
- *Intersex:* A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside of the conventional classifications of male or female.
- *Transgender:* A person whose gender identity does not correspond with what is socially expected based on their assigned sex at birth. It can be used as an umbrella term to refer to a range of gender identities and experiences.
- *Two-Spirit:* An english umbrella term to reflect and restore Indigenous traditions forcefully suppressed by colonization, honouring the fluid and diverse nature and gender and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. This identity will be expanded on in more detail in the literature review below.

In regards to language that describes oppression experienced by some of those in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, the terms homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are meant to describe "constellations of negative attitudes toward and feelings about 2STLGBQ+ people or those perceived to be" (Sexuality Education Resource Centre, 2018, para. 3). Homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, are often built on systems of oppression such as heterosexism and cissexism, as defined by the Sexuality and Education Resource Centre (2018):

- *Heterosexism:* A system of oppression that assumes (and therefore acts on this assumption), that everyone is straight and therefore 2SLGBTQ+ people, identities, and experiences do not and should not exist.

- *Cissexism:* A system of oppression that assumes (and therefore acts on this assumption) that everyone is cisgender and therefore trans people, identities, and experiences do not and should not exist.

One thing I would like to highlight is that because these terms are all defined in the english language, this poses limitations as a euro-western lens is one that has typically been from a place that is binary in regards to sexuality and gender identity, and it is known around the world there is in fact rich and varied histories and teachings, when it comes to diversity of sexuality and gender identity.

1.3 Location of Self in the Research

I feel it is necessary to take some time before continuing further, to locate myself in relationship to this research. I have come into the Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges (MSW-IK) Program because I have felt it is important to centre research methodologies that are anti-oppressive and anti-colonial. In learning from Traditional Indigenous Knowledge Keepers of the MSW-IK Program, my instructors, those on my advisory council, and most importantly, the participants, I feel this has helped guide me so that I could do this work in a good way. I am reminded of how fundamental 'locating' oneself in the research is, and the importance of this as emphasized by Sinclair (2003):

> It means revealing our identity to others; who we are, where we come from, our experiences that have shaped those things, and our intentions for the work we plan to do. Hence, 'location' in Indigenous research, as in life, is a critical starting point. (p. 122)

In light of this knowledge, I will start by speaking to where I am from and where I grew up, as this will inherently impact my epistemological lens.

I was raised on a second-generation dairy farm in between two bilingual (french and english) rural communities, St. Claude and Haywood, about an hour south-west of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The closest Indigenous communities to these towns are Long Plains, Dakota Plains, and Dakota Tipi. Generations of my family, both on my maternal and paternal sides, have farmed on lands in southern Manitoba, near French communities. I now know that the lands my family has farmed on, are on stolen lands. I have an immense amount of gratitude for the work that my parents and grandparents have done, and how their continued efforts were about caring for me, my siblings, their grandchildren, and the future generations of my family to come. Yet, I am also conscious of the fact that the ways that I have benefited from this, have been at the detriment of my Anishinaabe and Dakota neighbours.

As it pertains to my ethnic or cultural background, I grew up with the french language surrounding me, as my parents and grandparents are fluent speakers. Although french may be my mother tongue, I would not consider it to be the language I am most fluent in or feel most comfortable in. From what I know, my ancestors can be traced back recently to France, and french-speaking communities in Belgium and Switzerland, and arrived as settlers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In my time in the Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges Program, learning about the importance of knowing who you are and where you come from makes me want to learn even more about my ancestors, so that I can better understand this part of myself.

My family is not only French, but also French catholic. We attended church regularly in the community of Haywood, and rarely missed a Sunday service. While I do not recall my parents' speaking much about church, religion, or "God", church continues to be a regular part of their lives. When I was young I felt connected to the church,

however as I have grown and learned more about myself, about the world around me, and about catholicism, I felt disconnected from teachings that I see as inherently patriarchal, homophobic, and reflect deeply on this missionary, "white saviour complex" in the church that has been a part of attempting to destroy and erase Indigenous knowledges, teachings, and people. The term "white savior industrial complex" was first coined by the American author Teju Cole who used this expression to speak to how white people are "rewarded from 'saving' those less fortunate and are able to completely disregard the policies they have supported that have created/maintained systems of oppression" (Aronson, 2017, p. 36). One could easily connect this concept to the harm that the catholic church has inflicted upon Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island.

Further to my social location, I am mindful of the immense power and privilege I hold in this work, while also being conscious of the aspects of my identity that experience oppression. As a queer, bisexual, cisgender woman, I experience oppression on varying levels. Euro-western society has a rigid notion of sexuality that does not accept fluidity. As a bisexual woman, I feel the tension of having an identity that is so often sexualized and co-opted by the male gaze, an identity that is invalidated by hetero-normative culture. I reflect on experiencing sexism and sexual harassment as a girl and as a woman. As a white woman, I recognize that my experiences of sexism do not compare to experiences that women of Black, Indigenous, and Women of Colour, who are more vulnerable due to racialized and misogynistic violence as a result of ongoing colonization. I inherently benefit from systems of oppression like white privilege and white supremacy. I am especially mindful of the notion of the "white saviour complex", and how I perpetuate this complex, as a white woman who is also a social worker. As a cisgender woman, I will not know what it's like to experience transphobia, or the transmisogyny that trans

women experience. I have never been in the child welfare system; thus, will not be able to relate to the participants in this way. Being a white, cisgender woman doing this research, is in my opinion, an ethical dilemma in itself, and is something I will re-address in the section on ethical considerations, section 4.3.

I reflect on all of this, to put some of the truths of who I am out into the open, so that others will understand the various lenses and parts of my identity that makeup who I am. I know I will not be able to relate to many aspects of the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, thus I want to ensure the research is done in a way that I am "passing the mic." I want to use my own privilege and power in this thesis to amplify their voices. I want to reflect deeply on my upbringing and social location because it has effectively shaped my worldview deeply, both in a positive way and a negative way. Although I have taken on this research, I will not position myself as an "expert" in this field of research, as I can only be an expert of myself; as stated by Absolon and Willet (2005), "we write about ourselves at the outset of our work because the only thing we can write about with authority is ourselves" (p. 97).

1.4 Research Questions

It is difficult to find research that examines the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, particularly within a Canadian or Manitoban context. Literature has highlighted that youth in care, 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and Indigenous youth, have highly disproportionate rates of negative outcomes such as homelessness, and suicide (Dyck, 2012; 2010; Gaetz, 2014; Katz et al., 2011; Dunlop, 2016; Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2013), compared to those who do not have these experiences. Additionally, there is a lack of research that considers the outcomes when these backgrounds intersect. To

address this gap of knowledge, the overarching question that will be guiding my research is:

- What are the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, asexual, and intersex (2SLGBTQ+) youth in care, within Manitoba?

Based on the literature review in section 2.0, my assumption is that the child welfare system can do better to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth, therefore the second main research question for the participants will be:

- What changes would they like to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the last decade or so, there has been research on the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (2SLGBTQ+) youth in the school system within Canada; from this research, it is evident that heterosexism and cissexism continue to be prevalent (Taylor et al., 2011). While there is research that has been done across Turtle Island (North America) in recent decades on the experiences and outcomes for youth in care, it was difficult in my search to find research that centred specifically around the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care. This is particularly true for a Canadian or Manitoban context. Additionally, finding research that focused on the experience of Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth and Two-Spirit youth was also difficult.

In a review of the literature on the experiences of youth in care, and 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous youth in care, there were common themes that arose as it related to negative outcomes pertaining to homelessness and suicidality. I will break down these themes and highlight the major points as it connects to the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care.

It is important to state that there are specific terms in various Indigenous communities and Indigenous languages across North America for LGBTQ+ people. I will take some time to speak to the term Two-Spirit, however, it is important to name that not all LGBTQ+ people Indigenous to Turtle Island identify as Two-Spirit (Laing, 2018). Additionally, it is crucial to explore how oppression has impacted Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth in care, both in terms of the creation of the colonial child welfare system and the enforcement of heterosexism and cissexism. First and foremost, however, I will take some time to speak to what I have learned about the history behind the term Two-Spirit.

2.2 Two-Spirit Identity

The term "Two-Spirit" is an English term for the Anishinaabemowin phrase *niizh manidoowag*, meaning two spirits (Re:searching for LGBTQ Health, n.d.). In the seventh issue of the publication *Red Rising*, Albert McLeod offers some context around the history of the term Two-Spirit and how it came to be. The term Two-Spirit came to the Two-Spirit Elder, Myra Laramee, in the summer of 1990, and was introduced at a gathering of Indigenous LGBTQ+ people from across North America, near Beausejour, Manitoba on the weekend of August 3 -5, 1990 (McLeod, 2017). Two-Spirit is an

identity that speaks to resilience, resurgence, spirituality, and Indigeneity. As highlighted by McLeod (2017):

> Today, I believe that the Two-Spirit name (whoever or whatever it refers to) is about the depth of strength that we possess to be who we are and to carry a name brought to us from the spiritual realm. Today, almost all First Nations in Canada have replaced their colonial names with traditional names in their language. And we, Two-Spirit Indigenous people, are aligned with the spirit-naming and re-naming practices of our cultures – an important aspect of decolonization and Indigenous resurgence. (p. 7)

In the same issue of the publication, *Red Rising*, the Two-Spirit academic, Midewiwin, and Sundancer, Dr. Chantal Fiola, recounts a time in ceremony when passing tobacco to the Chief of a Midewiwin lodge in Shoal Lake, Ontario, who is also a Two-Spirit person. At this time, he shared a Midewiwin Anishinaabe Creation Story to Fiola including Two-Spirit people and granted permission to share this knowledge. As expressed by Fiola (2017):

> … early in human history, there emerged human beings that displayed a curiosity for knowledge and an ability for compassion that set them apart – they could love in a way that others couldn't. Spirit chose them as spiritual/ceremonial knowledge-carriers and tasked them with keeping community together (among other things). There had been times in human history when humanity had forgotten the original instructions Creator gave to us for *mino-bimaadiziwin* (good, healthy, balanced life); the beings were not like others brought reminders of Creator's instructions. These ones were called *naawenaangweyaabeg* – those in the centre who keep others from wandering. While this is an Anishinaabe teaching, I have no doubt there are teachings like this is many other Indigenous nations (p. 13 – 14).

The term Two-Spirit was chosen intentionally, to maintain that connection to Indigenous culture, as stated by Driskill in the article "Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies" (2010):

> Two-Spirit is a word that itself is a critique. It is a challenge not only to the field of anthropology's use of the word berdache, but also to the white-dominated GLBTQ community's labels and taxonomies. It claims Native traditions as precedents for understanding gender and sexuality, and asserts that Two-Spirit people are vital to our tribal communities. Further, Two-Spirit asserts ceremonial

> and spiritual communities and traditions and relationships with medicine as central in constituting various identities, marking itself as distinct from dominant constructions of GLBTQ identities. This is not an essentialist move but an assertion that Indigenous gender and sexual identities are intimately connected to land, community, and history. (p. 72 – 73)

2.3 Homophobia, Transphobia, and Colonization

One cannot explore the challenges that Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people face on these lands without examining colonial impositions of euro-western views on sexuality and gender, as highlighted by Ristock, Zoccole, and Pissante (2010): "It is impossible to consider research regarding the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ peoples without considering the historical impacts of colonization and its contemporary effects." (p. 5). Homophobic and transphobic values were imposed onto Indigenous communities and lands across North America as a result of colonization. The joint report by the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), *Supporting Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTT2QQIA Youth in the Ontario Child Welfare System* (2015), emphasizes how colonization imposed patriarchal (i.e. male dominated and male led) values onto these lands, and onto Indigenous peoples throughout Turtle Island. These values imposed binary ideas about gender, in contrast to Indigenous world views across Turtle Island that saw gender and sexuality as fluid (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015). To be clear, Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people have existed within Indigenous communities since time immemorial (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015). Historically, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ people were valued across Turtle Island and held respected roles such as visionaries, caregivers, healers, and warriors (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015). Colonization has attempted to erase

these teachings and ways of knowing, and directly contributed to the emergence of homophobia and transphobia within Indigenous communities (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015).

Furthermore, in the text "Anger, Resentment and Love: Fuelling Resurgent Struggle", Leanne Simpson speaks to core values within Mississauga Nishnaabeg systems valued self-determination, reciprocity, and self-determination, creating an environment where individual differences, including sexual and gender identity, were not merely tolerated, but celebrated, respected, and normalized (2015). Being LGBTQ+ was something seen as natural and normal within Indigenous communities, however, past and present colonization of Indigenous communities has imposed cissexism and heterosexism, as recounted by Simpson (2015):

> While I could think of lots of words to describe trans-gendered people and queer relationships, I had never come across a word for "queer". Alex Wilson agreed, because she reminded me, we weren't "queer", we were normal. Many of our societies normalized gender variance, variance in sexual orientation and all different kinds of relationships as long as they were consistent with our basic values of consent, transparency, respect and reciprocity. *We weren't "queer" until settlers came into our communities and positioned the "queer" parts of our relationships and societies as defiant, abnormal and sinful.* (emphasis added, p. 9)

2.4 Child Welfare and Colonization

Prior to the interference with the colonial Canadian state, Indigenous peoples across these lands parented and raised their children for thousands of years. Children were raised in loving and safe communities, and free to learn their spiritual and cultural teachings from their ancestors, free to speak and learn their languages. This drastically changed during the time of the residential school system. Residential schools were created with the purpose of removing Indigenous children from their families and communities, in an attempt to assimilate them into white, euro-christian values (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Thousands upon thousands of

Indigenous children were stolen from their families during this period of time; in fact, numbers show that nearly 100,000 Indigenous children were placed into these schools from the early 1800s to mid 1990s (Blackstock, Brown & Bennett, 2007). Within these schools, children faced horrific forms of cultural, spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and sexual abuses and violence, all of which have been documented and outlined in the *Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). One might question how this applies to child welfare, and yet, many of the children were taken into these systems under the pretext of "child welfare concerns" (often times as a result of "neglect" which was always defined by colonial, european standards); as expressed:

> …residential schools, particularly in southern Canada, where the rate of progress was most extensive, became, to a degree alarming to the department, repositories for 'neglected' children. *A confidential 1966 departmental report estimated that 75 percent of children in the schools were "from homes which, by reasons of overcrowding and parental neglect or indifference, are considered unfit for school children."* (emphasis added, Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 323 - 324)

This continued through to the period that is now referred to as the Sixties Scoop, where from the 1960s to the 1980s Indigenous children were once again, removed from their families and communities and placed into non-Indigenous foster and adoptive homes (McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne & Day, 2016).

The child welfare system as a tool of colonialism, has not ended with the Residential School System or the Sixties Scoop. There are more Indigenous children in care now, than at the height of the residential school era (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, n.d.). This overrepresentation has been referred to as the "Millennium Scoop" (Sinclair, 2007). Across Canada, First Nations children are 6 to 8 times more likely to go into child welfare care than non-Indigenous children (First

Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, n.d.). Here in Manitoba, it seems that we are the epicentre of this crisis; in 2017 there were nearly 11,000 children in care with nearly 90 percent of those children being Indigenous, and on a national level Manitoba has the highest rate of children in care (Department of Families, 2017).

The child welfare systems of the past have had tragic consequences today, as it pertains to the intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous people who were stolen by these systems as children. As highlighted in the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC):

> The TRC Report also points to the legacy of the residential school system as a reason in itself for the disproportionate number of Indigenous children in care, by beginning and perpetuating an intergenerational cycle of neglect and abuse. In a survey by the First Nations Centre in 2002-2003, 43% of intergenerational Survivors believed that they were affected by their parents' experience in residential schools, and 73.4% reported that their parents were affected by their grandparents' experience in residential schools. Removing children from their families and communities and subjecting them to strict discipline, harsh conditions and a lack of family structure has hampered the ability of these survivors to be caring and skilled parents. Survivors of the IRS system and the ''Sixties Scoop" point to these often abusive and isolating experiences as the main reason for their inability to be caring parents (Brown, p. 172 -173)

Intergenerational trauma is not the only factor that contributes to the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care. Racism plays a role in this, as stated by McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, and Day, "Indigenous families continue to be treated differentially than other, non-Indigenous children by child welfare services in Canada, and other White-settler states, namely New Zealand, Australia, and the United States" (2016, p. 8). Compared to non-Indigenous families in Canada, Indigenous families are "investigated for neglect at 6 times the rate compared to non-Indigenous families", and child welfare workers are more likely to substantiate neglect in Indigenous homes even when the same risk factors are present in non-Indigenous homes (Brown, 2017, p. 172). Discrimination

is not just about what happens on the frontlines of child welfare but occurs across systems, especially when one considers the systemic poverty experienced by Indigenous communities; as expressed by Vowel (2016):

> Poverty is compounded by intergenerational trauma and poor structural conditions. As the Kiskisik Awasisak report notes, First Nations children and families have complex needs, which are very expensive to provide for, particularly in the more remote communities.
>
> Inadequate housing is a serious, systemic problem in many First Nations communities. Overcrowding, lack of indoor plumbing or potable water, mould-infested homes, and crumbling infrastructure all play a part in what constitutes "inadequate housing." The fact that deplorably common conditions found on-reserve work against families, resulting in children being removed and making family reunification out of reach for many, is very troubling. As discussed in chapter 16 on First Nations housing, it is also a factor that is rarely something the families in question can directly control.
>
> Low-income parents often have fewer coping mechanisms, which can lead to higher levels of substance misuse. In fact, these three risk factors are so interrelated that it is very difficult to say where one ends and the other begins. Indigenous children and their families are being punished for being faced with unacceptable living conditions that no one in Canada should have to contend with. (p. 163)

2.5 Homelessness

Youth homelessness is a significant concern, and youth have been estimated to make up 20% of the rates of the Canadian homeless population (Gaetz, 2014). Marginalized and oppressed youth are especially at risk of homelessness, and this is expressed in the report *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada* from The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. The "subpopulations" that are over-represented within the youth homeless population in Canada include Indigenous youth, Black youth in the context of cities such as Toronto, and 2SLGBTQ+ youth (Gaetz, 2014).

While there are some similarities in the experiences of homelessness for both youth and adults, Gaetz expresses that there are differences, examples of this including "lack of experiences", as homeless youth may not have the same skills as adults to live independently (2014). Differences in causes of homelessness of youth compared to adults include youth becoming homeless after leaving abusive situations or the care of child protective services (Gaetz, 2014). The experience of youth "aging out" of the care of the child welfare at 18 was stated as an institutional failure that makes youth in care more vulnerable to becoming homeless (Gaetz, 2014).

2.6 Suicide

Suicide is a complicated and multi-faceted issue that involves a multitude of risk factors and becomes an option for people when they have an elevated sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Current research and statistical data have shown that 2SLGBTQ+ youth, Indigenous youth, and youth in care, have significantly higher accounts of suicide than youth who do not have these lived experiences or identities. It has proven difficult to find literature or research that considers what the experiences are when these identities intersect, thus I have examined literature that considers each of these experiences individually.

It is difficult to ascertain what number of the approximately five hundred Canadian youth who die by suicide each year identify as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or questioning. In the *LGBTQ Youth Suicide Prevention Summit, Report on Outcome and Recommendations,* Dyck (2012) notes how prevalent suicidal ideation and behaviour is for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in comparison to their non-2SLGBTQ+ peers. A limitation that has been addressed by

Dyck (2012) is that oppressed groups within LGBTQ+ research have systematically been ignored, such as the experiences of transgender, Two-Spirit, and racialized youth. The research in the report speaks to the connection between homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia and poor mental health concerns, which can elevate 2SLGBTQ+ youth experiences of poor mental health concerns that make them more vulnerable to suicide (Dyck, 2012).

The 2011 article, *Suicide and suicide attempts in children and adolescents in the child welfare system* (Katz et al.) researched the experiences of suicidality for children and adolescents connected to the child welfare system within Manitoba. The research compared the experiences of children in care to a cohort of children and adolescents not in care. Children and youth in care were shown to have much higher rates of death by suicide and suicide attempts than youth who have not been connected to this system (Katz et al., 2011). Furthermore, the study found that rates of suicide attempts and admission to hospital were highest prior to entering care and appeared to decrease after being admitted into care (Katz et al., 2011). This study did not look at the causes of suicide behaviour, thus it is difficult to determine what factors contributed to this decrease in suicide attempts and admissions after being taken into the care of child and family services.

The *Inuit, First Nations Métis: Suicide Prevention Resource Toolkit* from the Centre for Suicide Prevention speaks to how Indigenous people in Canada have some of the highest rates of suicide in the world (2013). For First Nations youth, suicide has been shown to be the leading cause of death; moreover, the suicide rate for First Nations youth is significantly higher than non-Indigenous youth (Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2013). Prior to contact with Europeans and prior to colonization, suicide has historically

been rare within Indigenous communities across Canada; it is after colonization that suicide has become widespread (Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2013). Colonialism has led to the residential schools, forced adoptions, forced relocations for communities, and even the denial of Indigeneity and existence, such as is the case for the Métis people; it is this tragic legacy that created this climate of intergenerational trauma and erosion of traditional values for Indigenous people across Canada (Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2013).

2.7 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care

Knowledge from the United States demonstrates that 2SLGBTQ+ youth are over-represented within the child welfare system. The issue brief *LGBTQ Youth in the Foster Care System*, from the group the Human Rights Campaign, notes that 2SLGBTQ+ youth come into care for many of the same reasons as non-2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, while also experiencing discrimination for their sexual orientation and or gender identities (n.d.). It was expressed that the foster care system does not have the tools to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and these youths have been shown to have more instabilities in their foster placements and higher probability of living in a group home (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

One major difference from a Canadian to a U.S. context is that 2SLGBTQ+ youth are not protected on the basis of discrimination against their sexual and gender identities in all of the states, as was demonstrated by a map of the United States which displays a "patchwork of legal protection" for sexual and gender minorities that varies from state to state (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). Sexual orientation has been protected on the basis of legal discrimination in Canada since 1996 (Government of Canada, 2017), while

gender identity and gender expression have been protected on the basis of discrimination since 2016 (Parliament of Canada, 2016).

Indigenous youth continue to experience the consequences of the harm the child welfare system has inflicted upon Indigenous communities across Canada, dating back to the time of the Residentials Schools System and "Sixties Scoop" (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015). Presently, there are more Indigenous children in care now than at the height of the residential school system in the 1940s (Blackstock, 2003). As noted in the joint submission from The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) and The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), there are more Indigenous children in care now than there were at the time of the "Sixties Scoop" (2015). For Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth, they not only have to deal with the challenges that come with being in care due to systemic racism, but also have to face homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and/or transphobia. The report emphasizes how Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth should not have to choose between their sexual and/or gender identities and Indigenous culture to receive supports and services (NYSHN, & OFIFC, 2015).

Homophobia has been imposed on Indigenous communities as a result of colonization, and Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals are sometimes forced to leave their communities as a result of this (NYSHN, & OFIFC, 2015). It was noted in the text that some Indigenous traditionalists do not recognize Two-Spirit identities, further disconnecting Two-Spirit people from their culture (NYSHN, & OFIFC, 2015). Additionally, LGBTQ+ spaces are not free from racism, and Two-Spirit individuals may feel further disconnected from potential support systems as a result of this (NYSHN, & OFIFC, 2015). It is emphasized that foster homes and group homes must be able to

provide safe and caring supports to Two-Spirit youth that respects all aspects of their identities and provide appropriate services to meet their needs (NYSHN, & OFIFC, 2015).

2.8 Recommendations for Service Providers

The toolkit *beFIERCE! A Toolkit for Providers Working with LGBTQ Foster Youth*, highlights a number of recommendations from the service, Our Space, which is located in Hayward, California and is a program of the Bay Area Youth Center, a division of Sunny Hills Services. The recommendations for service providers include, but is not exclusive to:

- Keeping intersectionality at the core of our work with 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care
- Meeting youth from a non-judgmental place and not making assumptions in our work
- Using participatory approaches and seeing youth as experts in their own lives
- Approaching youth from a place of vulnerability and authenticity
- Centring self-determination and respecting youth's gender identity and expression
- Not "outing" youth's sexual orientation and/or gender identities and navigating this even when interacting with service providers

(Perron, 2015)

The organization Human Rights Campaign (n.d.) based in the United States notes the following calls to actions when supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care:

- Providing affirming foster placements for 2SLGBTQ+ youth.
- Ensuring that staff at all levels within the child welfare system have the knowledge they need to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

- Ensuring that child welfare professionals and foster parents educate themselves on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth.
- Having child welfare professionals work towards increasing levels of acceptance amongst supportive adults in the lives of 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

Existing 2SLGBTQ+ resources are recommended to increase knowledge and ability to better provide services to Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals, as many lack the knowledge to provide appropriate services to Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ people. If Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth do not receive the support they need, it can amplify feelings of internalized transphobia and homophobia increasing the risk of poorer outcomes (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015). It has been recommended that Two-Spirit specific resources be developed by Indigenous communities to better serve Two-Spirit youth; that the identity is understood and supported by all levels of the child-welfare system; that policies and procedures be implemented to target racism, homophobia, and transphobia; and that these systems create visible and affirming environments for youth (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015)

3.0 Research Methodologies and Design

3.1 Introduction

I am cognizant of not simply coming from my "head" in this work, but the value and importance of coming from my heart (Gehl, 2012). I have chosen research methodologies that are centred on qualitative methods of storytelling, while also being mindful of doing my best to use decolonized approaches. One thing I would like to express, especially as a white settler doing this work, it has been important to me to

approach this research in utilizing these methods carefully and respectfully, in understanding how white people have a history of appropriating and stealing knowledge that does not belong them. My hope is that I have utilized these methods in a way that honours the knowledge, instead of appropriating them, and done so with the understanding that the stories of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care (either presently or formally connected to this system) will be central to the research process.

3.2 Research Methodologies and Theory

3.2.1 Intersectionality

First and foremost, an intersectional lens has been at the forefront of how I understand the research, and how I engaged in this research process. The term intersectionality was coined by the critical race theory scholar and civil rights advocate, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), to describe how Black women have been excluded from feminist theory and anti-racist discourse, as a result of their intersecting identities that experience racism and sexism. Crenshaw highlights that "Black women can experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those experienced by white women and Black men" (p. 149), and Crenshaw goes onto describe the "double-discrimination" that Black woman sometimes experience, in other words, "the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex" (p. 149). When applying this to the research process, in meetings with the participants, it has meant understanding that people's experiences of oppression are not all the same, and how factors such as colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, cissexism, etc., etc., affect individuals differently depending on their social locations.

3.2.2 Qualitative research methodologies

As a social worker, I feel that this work is so much about the relationships with the people we provide support to, and that so often as social workers we find ourselves as keepers of stories, which is one of the reasons I am drawn to qualitative research. I understand however that qualitative research does not exist without its own faults and limitations, and has been used unethically, especially in anthropology within Indigenous communities and has caused significant harms. What I appreciate about qualitative research, however, is if done with care and ethics, it can allow for people to tell their stories from their perspectives, to amplify their voices, and speak their truths.

3.2.3 Storytelling & conversational methods

Storytelling was the central method of this research on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care. The act of storytelling is an essential part of Indigenous communities around the world, and from a research perspective is a qualitative method (Drawson, Toombs & Mushquash, 2017). Kovach (2010) states that "The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 40). Conversational methods speak to knowledge based in oral history and traditions of storytelling and that is collectivist by nature, and this knowledge is created within relational contexts (Kovach, 2010). The relational piece should be emphasized in this method as "The relational dynamic between self, others, and nature is central" (Kovach, 2010, p. 41). Similarly, this concept is brought forth by Drawson, Toombs, and Mushquash (2017) who noted: "the relationship and co-creation between the researcher and participant or a group of participants is also considered" (p. 7).

Additional methodologies of community-based participatory research and self-location have also been necessary in this process; this will be expanded on in sections 3.2.4 and 3.2.5, respectively.

Additionally, I wanted the participants to know that they only needed to share what they felt comfortable sharing, and I was mindful of doing this in a way that is "trauma-informed", which speaks to conducting research "in a manner that is welcoming and appropriate to the special needs of those affected by trauma" (Klinic Community Health Centre, 2013, p. 15). Storytelling is healing, and I also know from my experience that there are times as humans when we can be re-traumatized and even re-live our traumas when re-telling them. Trauma-informed care will be spoken to in more detail in the ethics section of this proposal (see section 4.3).

3.2.4 Community-based participatory research

In this research it has always been my goal to give back rather than take from the community. I am conscious of the fact that within research, Indigenous and marginalized communities have historically been exploited by the process. Therefore, I set out to utilize elements of community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR has been highlighted as an "acceptable approach to Indigenous research" (Drawson, Toombs & Mushquash, 2017, p. 6) and is a type of research that puts the needs of the community first (rather than research that centralizes the needs of the researcher). I set out to utilize the principles below to direct me in this work as outlined by Drawson Toombs and Mushquash:

- Recognizes community as a unity of identity.
- Builds on strengths and resources of the community.

- Integrates knowledge and action for mutual benefits of all partners.
- Promotes a co-learning and empowering process that attends to all social inequalities.
- Involves a cyclical and iterative process.
- Addresses health from both positive and ecological perspectives.
- Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners. (2017, p. 6-7)

In using these principles to lead me, I knew that I needed to be flexible in my approach to meet the needs of those who participated in this work. I wanted to centre empowerment in the way in which this is done. Additionally, I wanted to come from a place that explores how the participants have been impacted by the child welfare system and other systems on all levels – mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I wanted the experience to be beneficial for all participants. It should be noted, although I have used some elements of CBPR, that this process has not been "true" CPBR as such a process would involve participation of the community in every step of the way, including the development of the research questions and process. I attempted to mitigate this however, by seeking participant feedback along the way.

3.2.5 Self-location

Locating oneself in relation should be a crucial part of any social work research. As I am asking the participants to be open and courageous with me and share so much of themselves, I firmly believe it is crucial for me to be open with them, thus I have spoken to my own self-location at the forefront of the research with the participants and at the outset of the interviews. As expressed by Absolon and Willet "As an anti-oppressive methodology, location brings ownership and responsibility to the forefront. When

researchers own who or what they represent, they also reveal what they do not represent" (2005, p. 110). Sharing my own social location has been a way of highlighting my own truths, and so that participants have a sense of who I am and where I am coming from, both literally and figuratively.

3.3 Research Design and Instruments

3.3.1 Recruiting

The first step of this research was the recruiting phase, in which I set out to recruit 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who have been in the care of child and family services and were between the ages of 18-30. I recruited individuals by creating a poster and sending it to relevant organizations and community groups, as well as going to talk to youth at the Rainbow Resource Centre and practitioners working with youth in care through Action Therapy. Because Indigenous children and youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system, I wanted to ensure that more than half the participants were Indigenous, thus I also planned for additional recruiting if needed.

3.3.2 Pre-interview conversation

Following the recruiting phase, when prospective participants were getting in touch with me regarding their interest in the research process, came the pre-interview conversations, which took place over the phone. The research questions and research design were shared with the participants during this process and their feedback regarding the structure of this was encouraged. I set out with the intention that the research questions and design may need to be adapted, dependent on feedback from participants. Asking the participants for feedback on the research question, and the research design, is

in an important part of community-based participatory research as it speaks to the principles of building on the strengths and resources of the community and facilitating collaborative partnerships (Drawson, Toombs & Mushquash, 2017). The participants were also asked if they deemed the research and research question to be relevant; the importance of relevancy when conducting research will be elaborated on further in section 4.3.

3.3.3 Interviews

As expressed, the research centred on the experiences of those who identify as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex or asexual, who have spent any amount of time in care in Manitoba. Since I wanted to focus on experiences that are relatively recent and individuals who are still considered to be youth, the age range for the participants was 18 – 30 years old. It should be noted, that there is no agreed upon definition of youth and there is a broad range of age categories by governments, social service agencies, advocacy groups, etc., for what they consider "youth" to be. For the purpose of the research for my thesis, I have chosen the age of up to thirty years old, as this is the same age that Voices: Manitoba's Youth in Care Network, a support and advocacy resource for youth who are in or from care, utilizes for their programming (Voices: Manitoba's Youth in Care Network, n.d.). My aim was to meet with anywhere from 5 – 15 participants who were a part of individual interviews, and all of those I met with had the option of attending the group analysis.

Individual interviews were recorded, and participants were made aware of this during the pre-interview discussion. Prior to the interview beginning, the research process was again reviewed in full detail, to ensure that participants had informed

consent. Consent forms were reviewed and signed, unless the participants preferred to give consent orally. In addition, participants were given the option to remain anonymous or not. Interviews ranged from 1-2 hours, although this was meant to be flexible if more time was required. Participants were also compensated monetarily for their time and expertise.

As I wanted to ensure a variety of voices were represented, I obtained information on the background and identities of the participants at these individual meetings. The interview question list, in addition to the research questions, was provided to the participants ahead of time and they had an opportunity to give feedback on the interview question list prior to meeting. The main research questions were as follows:

- What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?
- What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

I attempted to conduct these meeting with the utmost care, keeping in mind trauma-informed principles and practices; this is expanded on in the ethics section of this proposal, section 4.3., but included making sure that participants knew that they ultimately could decide on what they chose to share and what they chose not to share, and ensuring that a list of community-based mental health resources was provided. I let the participants know that if there was anything they wished to add, that they could follow up with me afterwards at any time.

3.3.4 Group analysis

The group analysis was a part of this research process and was a way of analyzing the data, is expanded on in section 4.2.2. I met with Two-Spirit Elder, Albert McLeod,

ahead of time and passed tobacco to him, as I wanted to ensure that we began this process in a good way. Similarly to the individual interviews, the group analysis was audio recorded. As an additional way of ensuring confidentiality, oaths of confidentiality were signed, unless participants opted to make the oath orally. Just as I had at the individual interviews, I felt it was important to compensate the participants for their time and knowledge by way of honourarium. As part of ensuring safety, group agreements were decided upon and set by the group. The group analysis followed protocols similar to sharing circles but is instead referred to as a talking circle[2], and began with a smudge and opening from Two-Spirit Elder, Albert McLeod. We then had an opportunity to introduce ourselves by going around the circle. Then, we moved into the presentation of the findings, which was followed by a group analysis of the data. The analysis process will be expanded on in section 4.0.

3.3.5 Proposed research instruments

The following research instruments were included in the research process and approved by ethics. These research instruments included:

- Appendix 1) Ethics Board Protocol Approval
- Appendix 2) Ethics Board Renewal Approval
- Appendix 3) Ethics Board Amendment Approval
- Appendix 4) Recruitment Poster
- Appendix 5) Pre-Interview Conversation (i.e. Screening)
- Appendix 6) Study Information & Informed Consent Form

[2] As I have learned from my teachers in the MSW-IK Program, using the language sharing circle implies ceremony. A true sharing circle should not be recorded as this process is sacred, thus this is why the circle that was held is referred to as a talking circle, rather than a sharing circle.

- Appendix 7) Interview Outline and Questions
- Appendix 8) Feedback for the Research Process
- Appendix 9) Elder Confidentiality Form
- Appendix 10) Facilitator's Guide for the Group Analysis
- Appendix 11) Participants' Agenda for the Group Analysis
- Appendix 12) Participants Confidentiality Agreement
- Appendix 13) List of Available Support Resources

4.0 Data Collection, Analysis and Ethics

4.1 Introduction

In this section I provide an overview of the data collection procedures and analysis that I undertook in carrying out the research. I conclude with consideration of the subject of validity, as well as the many ethical issues that were important for me to consider in this work.

4.2 Data Collection, Analysis and Feedback

4.2.1 Data collection procedures

To answer the research question *"What are the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQ+) youth in care in Manitoba?"* I collected data through the individual interviews with 2SLGBTQ+ individuals between the ages of 18-30 who have been in the care of child and family services at some point of their lives. My main sources of data were audio recordings from the interviews and group analysis. For the interviews I used the conversational

method as an approach for the data collection, that meaning an open-ended structure. This type of structure offers the participants "greater control over what they wish to share with respect to the research question" (Kovach, 2010, p. 124).

4.2.2 Approaches and techniques for analyzing data

The first phase of data analysis involved sorting through the audio recordings of individual interviews, converting them into written transcripts and creating summaries of the responses to the main research questions and sub-questions. Following this, participants were given a transcript of their interviews. Summaries of the main research questions (What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?, What changes to do you want to see to the child welfare system in Manitoba?) were put together in preparation for a group analysis process and sent to the participants ahead of time for their approval and for their feedback. I then invited all of the participants to come together for a group analysis. At the analysis, I presented summaries in a PowerPoint format of the responses to the main research questions. From these summaries, I asked participants to share by way of talking circle, any ways in which the summaries were similar or different to their own experiences, and to comment on any general themes they noticed.

Following this phase of the analysis, I returned to the data. Transcripts of interviews and group analysis, along with my own notes, allowed me to review the "raw data" and utilize an analysis inductive approach, which part of the purpose was:

> 1. To condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format;
> 2. To establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research); and

> 3. To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data. (Thomas, 2006, p. 238)

The first step of organizing the data involved "open coding" which "refers to the process of breaking down data into themes, patterns, and concepts to create a meaningful story from the volume of data" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 214); the themes were identified based on conclusions of the participants in the group analysis phase. One of the goals of the coding process was to find consistencies in the raw data (Saldana, 2009). Through the process of coding I looked for patterns that may have included similarities, differences, causation, and frequency (Saldana, 2009). Then I took time to determine the categories and subcategories that arose, and the themes or concepts that I was able to infer to in the process. Validity by the participants was fundamental in this process, and this will be spoken to in section 4.2.3.

4.2.3 Validity of the data

When I reflect on validity, to me this means centring trust. I anticipated that the participants may not trust me, and this was for good reason. Although I am a part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, I do not share the experience of having been in care, and for any of Indigenous youth, I do not share their experiences of colonial oppression. I also have a great deal of privilege as white, cisgender woman, as a social worker, and power as a "researcher". With privilege comes an inherent power imbalance. This is something I was mindful of attending to in the work and am conscious of, as power differences can get in the way of trust. Having the community, that being the individuals in the 2SLGBTQ+ community who have been in care, have trust in myself and trust in the research process, is something that was and is of utmost important to me. I hope that in

approaching the research with reflexivity, from an intersectional anti-oppressive lens, and in a way that utilizes participatory research approaches and member checking, has helped to mitigate the inherent power imbalances.

Part of trust also speaks to "giving back" in the research process as expressed by Kovach (2010); I hope this giving included doing this work in a way that facilitates healing through the research process, giving back the knowledge from the research process to the community, and work towards facilitating social change based on the wisdom and experiences of the participants. This is one of the reasons why I involved a Two-Spirit Elder for the group analysis, to help facilitate healing in the process and ensuring that this process is done in a good way. Although I believe I brought good intentions and a good heart in this work, it is my personal belief that intentions are not enough. I hope that my actions speak to this and that I have done the work in a way of giving back rather than "taking from".

It is for the reasons above why I wanted to utilize aspects of the community participatory based-research processes as outlined by Chilisa (2012), and have input from participants as it relates to giving feedback about the research questions and how data is collected, and being included in identifying the themes that are derived from the data. I returned to the participants through the research process, to ensure that the research process and the conclusions I am arriving to in the research process truly honours the truth behind the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care. Furthermore, as it pertains to rigor and validity regarding Indigenous research methodologies, it is stated by Kovach "attempting to validate Indigenous knowledge from a western framework creates an ethical problem" (Kovach, 2010, p. 148). I included the group analysis as a way to hear

directly from the participants about the themes that they noticed amongst the experiences of themselves and others, and as a way to mitigate the inherent challenges with validity.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

I would like to first focus on the axiology, or ethics, that guided my research. I want to highlight the importance of doing this work and research in a way that is not focused on "taking" from those I learned from, but that the emphasis is on giving. It was my intention and I hope my outcome, to set up the knowledge sharing in a way that allows people to feel empowered. The "4 Rs" that Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) have spoken to, were an important piece of the ethics process, the four Rs being respect, relevancy, reciprocity, and responsibility.

Kovach (2010) highlighted in various ways the importance of reciprocity or giving back in the research process. As mentioned, participants were monetarily compensated for their time, however this is only one piece of reciprocity. I provided food, access to transportation, and upheld any respective cultural protocols the participants may have (such as giving tobacco). I will also provide small gifts at the completion of this process as a token of appreciation.

Kovach noted the relationship between ethical considerations and relevancy and the importance of ensuring the research is relevant for the community, and the connection between relevancy and reciprocity:

> Relevancy is integral to giving back. Did the research assist the community, and could the community make sense of the research? Dissemination of the research is a central issue, and it is important that the research is available to the community in a manner that is accessible and useful. This means ensuring that the research is grounded in community needs, as opposed to the needs of the academy… Giving back does not only mean the disseminations of the findings; it means creating a relationship throughout the entirety of the research. (2010, p. 149)

Respect speaks to honouring the wisdom and contribution of the participants. In line with participatory methods, the participants were invited to the thesis defense and will be invited to co-present any presentations that may come from the research. Additionally, for participants who would like a copy of the final thesis, this is something that will be given to them. However, as expressed by Kovach, I know that disseminating research to the participants is not enough, thus the involvement and feedback from participants has been crucial, as was and is my relationship to the participants.

Pragmatically, there are several ethical considerations I am reflecting on at this time as it pertains to the individual interviews and group analysis with the participants. Informed consent was and is a key priority. I connect informed consent to the principle of respect, "The principle of Respect for persons means to honour every individual's and community's capacity and autonomy to make free and informed decisions. This includes the freedom to refuse to participate" (Panel of Research Ethics, n.d., p. 8). My intention was to adequately prepare those who took part in the research process, so they knew what to expect as it pertains to individual interviews and group analysis, and to ensure that they were aware of potentially negative outcomes. I also wanted to make it clear to participants that they could withdraw at any time. Although I had consent forms available, I know that these lands have a long history of broken promises and contracts through the process of the signed treaties; I was mindful ahead of time that there may be participants who may not want to give written consent. For participants who chose not to sign consent forms, this is something I respected. For participants who participated in the group analysis, I ensured they were aware of the fact that confidentiality can be difficult to control in a group space. Through the process of instilling a sense of safety and

community in the group, I am hopeful that we created a culture in which confidentiality is respected and upheld. Additionally, I ensured that participants have agency and control over whether they would like to be anonymous or not. Confidentiality can mean different things within euro-western and Indigenous contexts, Kovach (2010) highlights that from an Indigenous worldview, participants may choose to share their identities rather than remain anonymous; as stated in the text, "It matters because our stories are our truth and knowledge" (p. 148).

I reflect on the position of power I bring to this work as a white settler, as a cisgender woman, and social worker; the words of Ball and Janyst (2008) are on my mind, "Non-Indigenous researchers need to acknowledge that as members of the currently dominant culture and as researchers—typically with funding and university positions—they are in positions of power" (p. 49). When I set out to conduct research on the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (2SLGBTQ+) youth in care, although I knew I may be able to relate to the participants on one level because I am queer, I was conscious of the fact that there will be many aspects of their experiences and identities I will not be able to relate to. I have never had the experience of being a child or youth in care. As a cisgender woman, I will not be able to relate to the experiences of transgender youth. As a white settler, I cannot relate to the experience of being a Two-Spirit youth and being continuously impacted by racism and colonialism. I view privilege and power as an ethical dilemma in itself. My social locations bring up my own status as an insider or outsider in relation to the experiences of the participants, or as someone who occupies a "space between" which speaks to "a dialectical approach allows the preservation of the complexity of similarities and differences" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 60). Depending on the social locations of

the participants, my status as an insider or outsider was fluid. Although there may be trust in me and in my identity due to my queerness, my status as an outsider is connected to my position as the researcher, not having been in care, and other aspects of my identity depending on the participant. Knowing that my own place as an outsider was a part of the research process, I was mindful that this may impact the participants' ability to trust me and may create a lack of oversight on my part.

There are a number of things I have kept in mind to mitigate the ethical dilemmas that have arisen from my outsider status. I was open and transparent with the participants about my own identities and social locations. I took guidance from those on my advisory council. I worked to be constantly aware and challenge my own privilege and seek to minimize power differences in my work. An anti-oppressive and intersectional lens has assisted me in challenging my own biases as they arose in the research process and helped me practice from a place of attending to power and privilege. Additionally, utilizing a participatory action research framework was vital in this process. Because the participants are the experts of their own experiences, I utilized participatory analysis in which the participants were able to draw their own themes from the data that they have shared in the individual meetings and talking circles.

The principles of ownership, control, access, and possession, also known as OCAP, were a part of the research process (Schnarch, 2004). While the OCAP principles have been developed specifically for working with First Nations communities, there are a number of components that I feel are applicable to many communities who have experienced marginalization. Because I wanted to ensure that the voices of Indigenous youth who have been in care were amplified in the research, the principles of OCAP were essential. I wanted the participants to have absolute control over their stories and the

experiences. I wanted to offset the inherent power difference of the research process and utilize mechanisms of OCAP; this included releasing data only after the participants have had time to conduct their own interpretations via group analysis and only using the data for the agreed upon purpose (Schnarch, 2004).

Lastly, but importantly, I wanted to come from a trauma-informed perspective in my research. I hope I have utilized the core principles of trauma-informed care along every step of the way, these trauma-informed principles include leading with *safety, trust, compassion, collaboration, choice and control*, and coming from a perspective that is *strengths-based* (Klinic Community Health Centre, 2013). As mentioned, I emphasised to participants that they have choice and control over what they share, and what they choose not to share. I see this as part of nurturing an environment of collaboration, safety, and trust; I tried to be mindful in watching for any participants who may be triggered by their traumas throughout the individual interviews or group analysis. As an additional way to ensure safety following the interview and group analysis there was a debrief to check in on how those who shared were feeling, and information about community mental health resources was provided. It was my hope to lead with compassion, in every interaction with the participants, and lead with compassion in writing this thesis. I hope that these principles of trauma-informed care have been another framework to help me to do this work in a good way.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Introduction

A number of themes arose in the course of collecting data for this research. Four significant themes emerged upon analysis of the responses to the two main research questions. Regarding the first research question, "What was your experience like an as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?" three major themes emerged from the responses. Two of the major themes that came to light in the participants' responses to this question were that being in care had impacts on youth both in regard to their 1) sexual and gender identity, as well as 2) their cultural identity. As it pertains to these two major themes, there emerged two overarching themes regarding A) oppression at various levels, and B) the interconnection of cultural and gender and/or sexuality for Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth. Another major theme in response to the first research question was that 3) 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, and those who were in care and adopted, had similar stories and experiences. The second main research question, "What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?", produced the fourth major theme of 4) affirmation at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. For 2SLGBTQ+ youth, affirmation is needed at all levels of the child and family services (CFS) system. All four major themes have their own respective sub themes, and each of the major and sub-themes will be discussed in the pages to come. To help in understanding the themes visually, the following chart identifies the research question and the corresponding overarching, major, and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of participant's responses to the research questions:

Corresponding Research Question	Overarching Themes	Major Themes	Sub-themes
What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?	A) Oppression at the micro, mezzo and macro levels B) For Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ participants, cultural identity, and gender and /or sexuality, are tied	1) Impacts on sexual and gender identity	a) Homophobia & transphobia b) CFS systems do not adequately support 2SLGBTQ+ youth c) Not able to be their authentic self
		2) Impacts on cultural identity	a) Racism b) Disconnection from culture c) Transracial homes face challenges in adequately supporting Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth
		3) 2SLGBTQ+ adoptees and youth in care have similar experiences	a) Disconnection & isolation b) "What could have been?"
What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?		4) Affirmation at micro, mezzo and macro levels	a) Affirming 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care b) Cultural connections for Indigenous youth c) More awareness and training for front line workers d) More inclusive practices from front-line workers e) CFS agency specifically for 2SLGBTQ+ youth

In this section, I will take time to unpack and examine the overarching themes, major themes, and sub-themes, while including a discussion on literature that relates to the findings. One thing I would like to draw attention to, as it relates to the above themes, is that although the research questions are speaking to the 2SLGBTQ+ community broadly, those reading this thesis should be mindful that this does not mean there is not diversity in the experiences, especially as it relates to the varied identities and experiences that each of the participants have brought with them. As there absolutely is diversity in the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals within the child welfare system depending on their intersecting identities. With that being said, I would like to move on into introducing you to each of the participants.

5.1.1 Introduction of participants

Before diving into the themes that arose in the course of this research journey, I feel that it is of utmost importance to first begin with introducing those of whom this entire thesis could not exist without. Five individuals came forward to lend their voices to this process, and I will now take time to introduce you collectively to Ash, Britt, Desie, Jay, and Leah.

5.1.2 Experiences in the child welfare system

The experiences of being in the care of the child welfare system is only one part of the experiences of the participants but is of course a crucial part to the research process. When it comes to experiences within the child welfare system in Manitoba, the participants have a range of stories regarding how they have come to be connected to this system. The majority had families who became connected to the child welfare system when the participants were quite young, either as newborns, infants, or toddlers.

Experiences of care for the participants ranged from being in the foster care system for the majority of their lives, to being in care as a newborn and adopted as an infant, to having CFS involvement with their biological parent throughout their lifetime.

5.1.3 Identities of participants

Due to the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in care, I felt it was important to get a sense of the cultural backgrounds of the participants so that I could ensure that the majority of the voices of those in this thesis were Indigenous, to be reflective of this overrepresentation. I feel that because of this, it is important to speak to the cultural identities that are a part of the participants' experiences. Four of five of those who took part in this research self-identified as being Indigenous, with one of the folks identifying themselves as being Cree and Ojibwe, and three described their identities as Métis, with additional self-described identities that include being part Filipino, and part Caucasian. Many of those with Métis background also spoke about connection to other aspects of their cultural identities, and some spoke about the cultures in which they were adopted into. One of the five individuals self-described their culture as being German Canadian.

Identity can also be tied to the communities we are connected to. Community can be where our families of origin are from, where our biological families are from, where we grew up, but they can also include communities that are connected to our identities. For the purpose of this thesis however, I will more so use community to refer to place and family connections. Some of the participants spoke about ties to rural communities; that being in the South-Central region of Manitoba, the Interlake regions of Manitoba, and Indigenous communities in Treaty 4 and Treaty 5. Four of the five of the participants spoke about ties to Winnipeg, with communities including Charleswood, the North End,

River Heights, St. James, and so on. Three of the participants were raised in Winnipeg, while two grew up in rural communities.

Similar to cultural or ethnic identities, I felt it was important to ask those who shared their stories about how they identified in regards to gender and/or sexual identities (although one could argue that 2SLGBTQ+ identities also have their own unique cultures and may also be a part of the cultural identities of the participants) so I could get a sense of the place in which they were coming from in this regard, and to again ensure a range of voices were represented. Regarding 2SLGBTQ+ identities, there were many different terms that those who shared their stories used to describe themselves, and some spoke about the challenges in ascribing a "label" due to the fact that there can be many layers that make up ones sexual or gender identities. Some of the identifiers used included a combination of the terms Two-Spirit, bisexual, pansexual, panromantic, gay, queer, cisgender, transgender, and non-binary.

Identity is multi-faceted and multi-layered, and there are a number of things that make up the identities of individuals. Identity can be unique and deeply personal, and it should be noted that the identities and experiences I am sharing with you as you read this, will not be reflective of all the identities that make up the participants, and is only the tip of the iceberg of who they are, so to speak. The aspects of identity spoken to are only a part of this picture, and there are many other ways I have come to know the participants. All of the participants, in their own way, struck me as being a part of changes and movements to make the world a better place; this include involvement with supporting youth in various capacities (within schooling, volunteer, or work roles), as academics and students, supportive roles within their families (as a parent, uncle, sibling, cousin, etc.),

advocates for social change, in raising awareness about mental health, artists, leaders in their spiritual communities, activists, volunteers, and so on and so forth.

5.1.4 Additional remarks

At this time I reflect not only about the identities that the participants shared with me, but the qualities that I noticed in their stories and in getting to know them, qualities they embodied such as kindness, courage, bravery, empathy, wisdom, honesty, strength, humility, and hopefulness for a better future for other 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care. I do not believe that in a few paragraphs I can do justice in telling you about the amazing people who took part in this research process and journey, however it is my hope that you now have a bit of an understanding of who they are, and where they come from, literally and figuratively.

5.2 Overarching Themes

The two major themes, 1) impacts on sexuality and/or gender, and 2) impacts on cultural identity, had two overarching themes being that A) experiences of oppression at the micro, mezzo and macro levels, and B) that for some Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ participants, cultural identity and gender and /or sexuality, are tied. I explain these overarching themes in more detail in the paragraphs below.

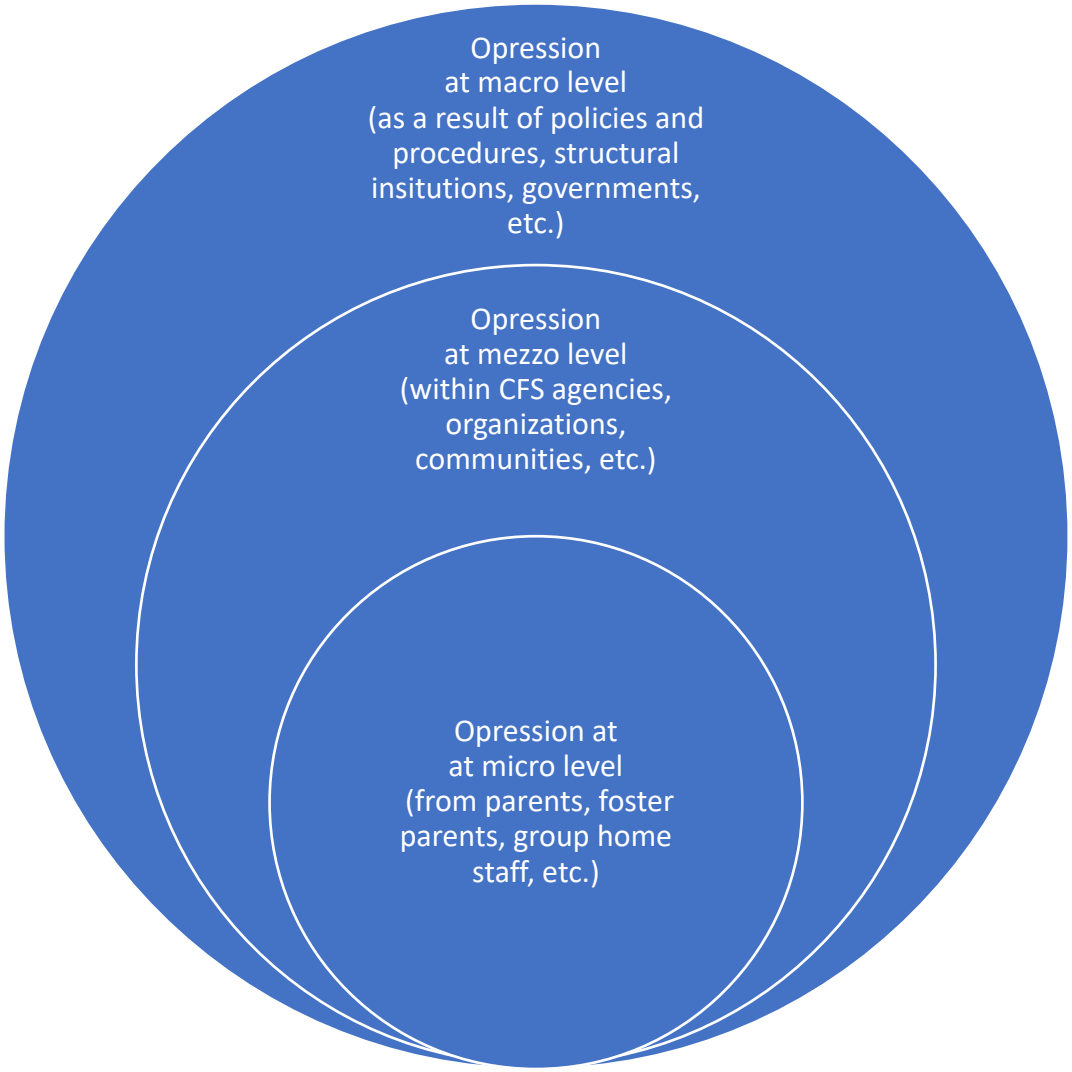
5.2.1 Oppression at the micro, mezzo and macro levels

There are a number of perspectives that guide social work practice. One way of conceptualizing social work practice is within the micro, mezzo, and macro levels or understanding the individual within the context of the small, medium, and larger systems

that have an impact. As noted in the text *Social Work Practice: Problem Solving and Beyond*:

> … *micro* social work practice has been used to refer to small systems that include individuals and usually families. *Macro* systems refer to large units, such as organizations, communities, and neighbourhoods. *Mezzo* practice is in between: working with small groups and communities. (Heinonen & Spearman, 2009, p. 8)

Incorporating the framework of the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, I will use this concept to describe how oppression of sexuality, gender, and/or cultural background impact 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, particularly as it applies to anti-Indigenous racism occurring on both individual and systemic levels.



On a micro level, oppression against 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care relating to their sexuality and/or gender identities, and cultural identities, was the experience in some shape or form for most of those who shared their stories in this research. This oppression was displayed in homophobic slurs from foster parents, and heterosexism from the majority of caregivers. One of the individuals who shared their story, described racist slurs by the foster parent; and two of those in adoptive care described not being given understanding or teachings about their cultural background as Indigenous youth, being raised in white homes.

At the mezzo level we see the practice of how some social workers have not given 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care the support they needed. This included an experience of a social worker not listening to a young person who told their social worker that the violence they were experiencing from their caregiver escalated after coming out as transgender, and not placing this young person in care when they and their parent were asking for help. There are the social workers not asking young people what type of group home they would like to be in regarding gender, potentially inhibiting a trans youth from coming out. There is the story of a meeting with an elder in a christian church, the meeting having been arranged by the foster parent with the intention to encourage this young person, “not to be gay”. There is the lack of visibility and representation for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in their communities, particularly in rural areas. The list continues on, which I describe in more detail later in this section.

On a macro level, it is apparent that these oppressions do not exist in silos but are reflective of a wider issue within the CFS system in Manitoba. As highlighted by Elder

Albert McLeod after hearing numerous stories of the participants, while participating in the group analysis:

> For me part of this is around seeing a system that takes children into protective care, but the system itself is inadequate and abusive. Hearing racist or homophobic comments from the foster parents, is abuse, so where does the abuse stop? And how does the system say that it's not more abusive than families that the children were taken from? So, I think that needs to be put on the table for discussion, is that are Two-Spirit, LGBTQ youth, who are in care, being abused by the system itself, through the workers, the legislation, or the foster parents? So that needs to be addressed, and analyzed. And some of the messaging is around don't be queer, don't be Indigenous, but there's no alternative – so what's the alternative to that? Tell me, what I should be then, right? So to me it is about conforming, from a conservative point of view, and so that is about inalienable rights, that you have the right to be out, to come out as trans or queer, *and if the state says that they're going to protect you, then it has to be aligned with that.* (emphasis added)

Elder Albert McLeod raises a necessary point about how children are removed from their homes, their families, because of concerns regarding protection, and yet they are placed in circumstances where they are not protected from oppression pertaining to their culture, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. To add more words from Albert, to his statement above:

> I think a really clear message needs to go to government, to say, that we need a revamping of the system. It needs to be equitable for all children based on their identity, sexual orientation, and that there needs to be extensive training for parents. You know*, because if they're going to be abusive, the system's failing right there.* To have any child in a home where people are using homophobic or racist remarks, is abuse, it's lateral violence, and why is that tolerated? (emphasis added)

This oppression appears to be a challenge that is widespread in the system, as reflected by Jay at the group analysis:

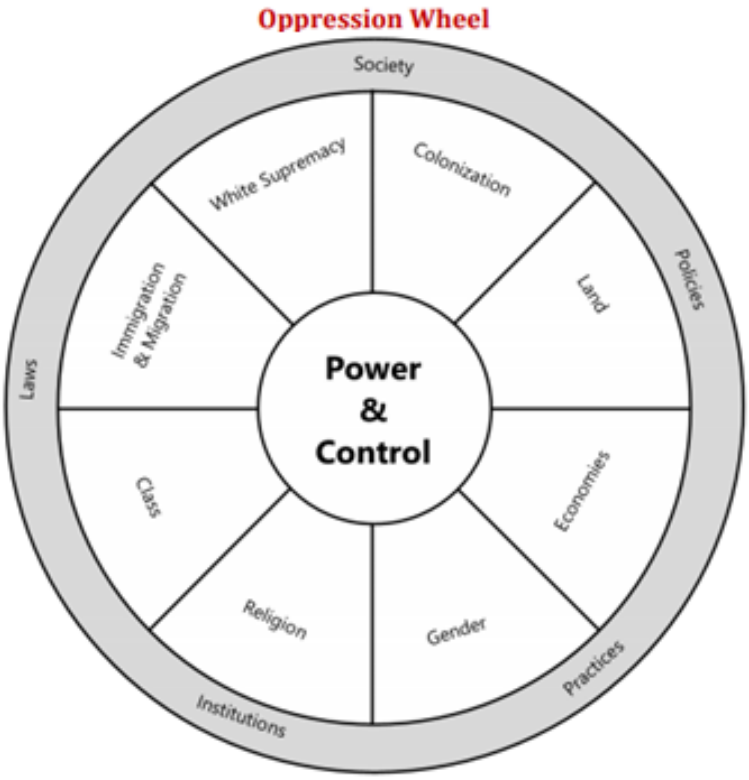
> I don't know, the only thing coming to my mind now is it's a little sad for me to see how many similarities there are, because there's no chance that we all had the same social worker, foster home, group home, or whatever. So, the fact that so many of us have similar experiences with the system, just makes me so sad,

> ‘cause how many kids lives are being affected by this, and still to this day, how many kids are being treated like this?

5.2.1a Discussion on overarching theme 1: Oppression at the micro, mezzo and macro levels

Oppression is complex, layered, and multidimensional. This was apparent in the overarching theme in which oppression tied to sexuality and/or gender, or culture, was found at multiple levels for those who shared their stories and experiences. As it pertains to oppression, understanding it within the context of the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, is certainly not the only way of understanding how oppression has affected those who have shared their stories, but was one way that made sense to me. Understanding oppression in this way, reminded me of other frameworks of oppression I have encountered in my own social work practice and informed my own anti-oppressive lens, and I felt it would be relevant to connect these in this section. These tools include the Oppression Wheel from the Battered Women Support Services (2016) and the Intersectionality Wheel from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (2009). Anti-oppressive practice is rooted in understanding how individual struggles are linked to social inequality and actively fighting for social change, while incorporating approaches that are anti-colonial, anti-racist, feminist, anti-capitalist, and so forth (Baines, 2011). These frameworks help in understanding some of the larger structural forces that create these systems of oppression, which ties into the stories and experience of those who lent their stories to this research. In understanding these forces that uphold oppression, it is my hope that this offers a lens in which to actively challenge these oppressive structures.

The Oppression Wheel from the Battered Women Support Services (2016) is a lens that I first learned about in presentations by local leaders from Ka Ni Kanichihk, Elder Leslie Spillett, and Dana Connolly. This tool originates from the Battered Women Support Services in Vancouver and highlights how at the core of all forms of oppression is power and control.



Battered Women Support Services (2016)

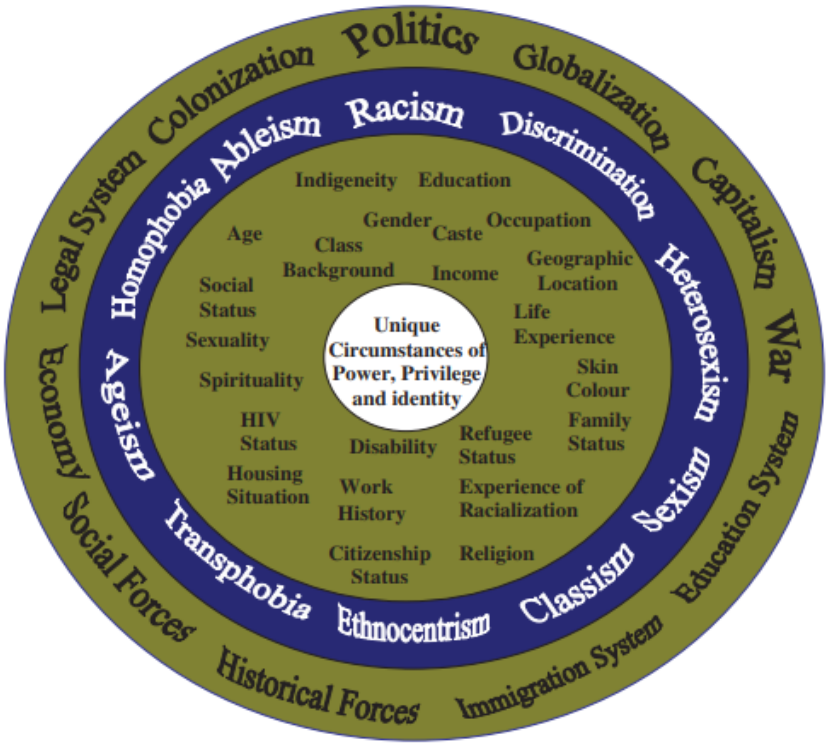
Many aspects of these forms of power and control related to the stories of the participants. There is the fact the child welfare system in this state that is currently called Canada, was created as a part of colonization and upholding white supremacy, by way of the residential school system. In the stories of the participants, we see colonialism and white supremacy being perpetuated through disconnection from culture and anti-Indigenous racism. When it comes to a gendered lens, in the stories we have heard about sexuality and/or gender of youth in care being policed. I connect this to the early form of

the child welfare system, the residential school system, in which the gender expression of children was highly policed. As pointed out by Pruden (2019) in speaking to a picture of children in the residential school system in which gender roles were enforced in the dress and gender expression of Indigenous children, and sharing how this in turn impacted Two-Spirit people:

> We as Two-Spirit people are not forced to the margins; we are forced completely out of this framework. Gone are the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or even seven different genders. Leaving room for only their two genders. (33:20)

Moving to economies, I am reminded in hearing Isaac Murdoch speak, when Murdoch shared the concept of "poverty politics." Murdoch demonstrates the concept of poverty politics through a visual representation of how Canada has deliberately forced Indigenous peoples off their lands, into poverty, attempting to disconnect Indigenous peoples from their culture, and into a "programs and services" welfare state (personal communication, December 5, 2017). Social workers and others who work in the child welfare system, especially white workers, benefit from this welfare state in which they are paid to run programs and services that often keep people disempowered. In the stories from the research, we hear about how social workers, foster parents, and others who are paid by the child welfare system, literally profit off of the oppression of 2SLGBTQ+ young people in the child welfare system. The outer layer of this wheel, which includes society, policies, practices, institutions, and laws, upholding the inner spokes of the wheel, has also been spoken to in the stories of the participants. That being, how societal beliefs pertaining to anti-2SLGBTQ+ bias and colonialism negatively impact 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, and policies, practices, institutions and laws, that fail to provide affirming support to 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care.

The Intersectionality Wheel from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women is one way of not only conceptualizing and applying an intersectional framework, but is something that can be used to look at how oppression is multi-layered. As noted in the centre of the wheel below, as individuals we all have our own unique circumstances of power, privilege and identity. Moving outward to the second layer there are our various aspects of identity, which then bring us to the third layer that being, experiences of oppression based on identity (Simpson, 2009). On the outermost layer, there are the larger structures and forces that uphold oppression (Simpson, 2009). This again connects to the micro, mezzo, and macro layers of oppression that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care experience, because within their stories we learn how their identities are faced with many of the "isms" or discriminations listed in the third circle from the inside, and how this is upheld by colonialism, politics, legal system, capitalism, social forces, and of course, the child welfare system.



- Innermost circle represents a person's unique circumstances.
- Second circle from inside represents aspects of identity.
- Third circle from the inside represents different types of discrimination/isms/attitudes that impact identity.
- Outermost circle represents larger forces and structures that work together to reinforce exclusion.

Note it is impossible to name every discrimination, identity or structure. These are just examples to help give you a sense of what interectionality is.

(Simpson, 2009, p. 15)

5.2.2 Overarching theme 2: For Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ participants, cultural identity and gender and /or sexuality, are tied

Although the impacts on sexuality and gender, and impacts on cultural identity, arose as separate subthemes, it was apparent that in some instances, for some of the Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals who shared their stories, these were concepts that were interrelated and tied. Colonialism has impacted gender, sexuality, and cultural identity for many Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Indigenous youth, thus I felt that it was imperative, for this to be an overarching theme. For some of those who lent their voices to the research, in talking about disconnection from their families of origin, this at times

was related to their experience of Indigeneity and sexual and/or gender identity. As reflected in this quote from Leah at the group analysis in reference to 2SLGBTQ+ identities and Indigenous identities, “I think for Indigenous people a lot of the time those concepts are tied.”

5.2.2.a Discussion on overarching theme 2: For Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ participants, cultural identity and gender and /or sexuality, are tied

Around the world it has been documented that culture, gender, and sexuality, are linked and connected, and this is no different for some of the Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ youth who shared their experiences in this research. This interconnection between sexuality, gender, and Indigenous identity, is described by Wilson (2008) in the text *N’tacimowin inna nah’: Our Coming In Stories*. Wilson speaks to the “coming in” process for Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, in contrast to the narrative of the “coming out” process. As expressed by Wilson (2008):

> *As the two-spirit people who participated in this research make clear, their understanding of sexuality is inseparable from their culture and socio-historical position*. For two-spirit people, who typically live with sustained racism, homophobia and sexism, the process of "coming in" to their identity is likely to be very different from the conventional "coming out" story circulated in mainstream Canadian (GLBT) culture. In these narratives, "coming out" is typically a declaration of an independent identity: an GLBT person musters their courage and, anticipating conflict, announces their sexuality to a friend or family member - at the risk of being met with anger, resistance, violence or flat-out rejection or abandonment. In the narratives of two-spirit people, however, *"coming in" is not a declaration or an announcement. Rather, it is an affirmation of interdependent identity: an Aboriginal person who is GLBT comes to understand their relationship to and place and value in their own family, community, culture, history and present-day world.* "Coming in" is not a declaration or an announcement; it is simply presenting oneself and being fully present as an Aboriginal person who is GLBT. (emphasis added, p. 197)

5.3 Major Theme 1: Impacts on Sexual and Gender Identity

Amongst those who lent their knowledge and stories to this research, in all of the experiences there was some kind of impact on sexuality and gender, tied directly to their experience of being connected to the child welfare system. These impacts have manifested as homophobia and/or transphobia at various levels, individuals who are connected to the child welfare system not feeling that they can be their authentic selves, and in many of the stories it was evident that the child welfare system does not adequately provide support to 2SLGBTQ+ youth connected to the child welfare system. This is apparent in the following excerpt from Leah at the group analysis:

> I think Albert shared some very relevant points as to why a lot of queer folks in care may suffer with a lack of identity in that regard. There are a lot of cultural differences, it's not quote unquote "normal" or accepted at this point necessarily to be genderqueer or queer in a sexuality sense, it's also not normal to be connected spiritually to Indigenous roots, which has connection to Two-Spirited people, correct? It's not necessarily, always outright hostility towards the person in question, but there are a lot of neglectful attitudes, where people are saying things in passing that they may not necessarily view harmful, but are harmful to the identity of the youth in care, especially regards to being queer. Normalizing these things and normalizing, perhaps using slurs, for the example that was used earlier, so that's kind of my addition. It may not always be intentional, but it's definitely there, to my experience. And it continues to youth outside of care as well, in my experience.

5.3.1 Homophobia and transphobia

All of those who shared their stories, experienced some type of heterosexism, cissexism, homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and/or transphobia. To again review these concepts as discussed in the terminology presented in section 1.2, they can be defined as follows:

> ….homophobia, biphobia, lesbophobia, and transphobia… are constellations of negative attitudes toward and feelings about 2STLGBQ+ people or those perceived to be. 2STLGBQ+ folks may also experience heterosexism and cissexism. Heterosexism is the system of oppression that assumes (and therefore

> acts on this assumption), that everyone is straight and therefore 2STLGBQ+ folks, identities, and experiences do not and should not exist. Cissexism is a system of oppression that assumes (and therefore acts on this assumption) that everyone is cisgender (not trans*) and therefore trans* folks, identities, and experiences do not and should not exist. (Sexuality Education Resource Centre, 2018, para. 3)

The discrimination experienced was at times on display not as outright homophobia, but heterosexism. As expressed by two individuals who both had experiences of being in adoptive care:

> Leah: I think it was a fairly supportive environment, I didn't grow up with any intolerance towards those ideas, I did try and I think a few times, try and experimenting to identifying as queer, gay, all the different things that we go through, and my mom was the one who was not receptive to it. She wasn't against it or anything, she's pretty open minded. When I would try and talk to her about it, she would say 'Aren't you more interested in boys or this and that?' So, it was that kind of environment, not overtly oppressive but not necessarily supportive of that either.
>
> Britt: With my queer identity my biological family, at least my bio mom, for sure, is accepting, and so I have that acceptance there. My adopted family said they always were, but when I originally tried coming out in high school, didn't necessarily go the greatest, so I've just kind of left it.

There were the stories of experiencing homophobia in foster homes or groups homes. Desie spoke about living in a foster home where the foster parent displayed overt homophobia, "I remember she would say lesbian is so bad, like an insult, but I would think, who cares?". Sexuality in general, not only related to queerness, was shamed in this home, "I wasn't even allowed to date, or anything like that, 'cause right away if I wanted to date it was like right away like, you're gonna end up getting pregnant," and this seemed to tie into the foster parent's view on sexuality impacted by religion and christianity.

Another individual, Ash, had a similar experience in which his foster parents' views on queerness was influenced by religion, and he was encouraged to meet with an elder in his church community for non-affirming religious guidance:

> My foster dad ended up getting me help for being gay, with where I would meet with an elder in the church and we would discuss the feelings I was having. So thankfully it wasn't done in a super, straight camp way. That part was never traumatic, I think it just kind of just like put those feelings on pause.

5.3.2 CFS systems do not adequately support 2SLGBTQ+ youth

It seems that a related impact of this experience of heterosexism, cissexism, homophobia, and/or transphobia, directly affected the ability for those who shared their stories, to be their authentic selves in regard to their sexual and/or gender identities. In both situations of adoption and fostering, there were adopted or foster parents not being openly affirming, and in some instances outright homophobia was displayed.

This inadequate support does not end with adopted and foster parents. Jay described mixed experiences from group home workers while being out as queer; some were supportive while others "weren't really great about it". This was apparent through body language or being cut off when trying to talk about queer identity. There was also the account in the stories shared of being placed in a group home, not aligned with gender, limiting the ability to come out as trans earlier.

There is the outright violence that some of the youth experienced from a foster parent, adopted parent, or biological parent. For one of the accounts, violence from the parent escalated after coming out as a trans and the social worker did not take the safety concerns seriously:

> My interactions with the last social worker I had wasn't really great. She was the one that was of the opinion that the mental strain, the mental and emotional strain

> of my mom not accepting my gender identity wasn't important of a reason for me to be out of there. And she didn't consider the physical stuff that my mom was putting me through either because of it, was important enough to pull me out of my mother's house.

The same social worker described above, denied a request for protection and support with going into care, which resulted in a need for couch surfing, and being left essentially homeless. During the group analysis, one of those present offered a story of a friend of theirs who was in care and adopted, and experienced violence when coming out as trans:

> I have a friend who was in care, and I suppose this is anecdotal because they can't be here, but they got adopted, then they came out as trans to their adopted parents, and got physically abused for it, and the meaning behind that is that the parents were afraid they wouldn't be able to get a job, because they're trans, but that's not an excuse to abuse someone. So, I think that more resources for training people in that situation and reaching out for that, would be really helpful too.

There appears to be inadequacy in the support given to 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, particularly as it comes from caregivers who are not a part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. It appears that non-2SLGBTQ+ caregivers may not have the tools they need to properly support queer and trans young people. As expressed by Ash:

> I would say the biggest thing that just stands out is, it's like essentially an equivalent of fostering someone of a different ethnicity and you don't have any of the tools to deal with those unique circumstances, so clearly there needs to be more education and more emphasis put on that, and people that are fostering. I think there needs to be a very clear statement that you won't do anything that's not supporting someone that's LGBT.

Although there was one instance of a youth describing a social worker who was supportive of their identity, in all stories shared it seems like there are examples of the CFS system not adequately supporting youth in care as it pertains to sexual and/or gender identity. It is important to point out that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care are overrepresented in foster care (Baams &Wilson, 2019), and are two times more likely to experience poor

treatment in care and experience disproportionately negative outcomes (Wilson, Cooper, Kastanis & Nezhad, 2014).

Lack of knowledge on the part of foster parents, social workers, and other helpers, was identified at the group analysis as part of the reason for why this inadequacy of system support exists. Within this apparent lack of knowledge there is a possible solution that appears in the need of training for helpers supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system and this will be expanded later on in the major theme pertaining to affirmation.

5.3.3 Not able to be their authentic self

For most, if not all, of those who shared their stories, it seems that their experience of being able to be their authentic self, and that "coming out" or "coming in" was impacted as a result of their connection to the child welfare system. In those who experienced overt homophobia in the home, this really limited the sense of being able to be open about sexuality, as stated by Desie:

> It's almost like you're being brainwashed to be how they want you to be or she wanted me to be, so for sure that. Like she (the foster parent) was one of my biggest bumps in the road, why I couldn't come out and why I didn't want to.

There is not only the overt homophobia or transphobia within the home that impacts 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care's ability to be their authentic self as it relates to the ability to come out, but the cissexism within the system that assumes the gender of youth in care, such as in the instance of a young person being placed in a group home based on gender assigned at birth.

Caregivers are vital in the in the overall physical and emotional wellness of 2SLGBTQ+ youth. If young people are in a home environment where they feel safe and

affirmed, this increases their likelihood of coming out/coming in and ability to be their authentic selves, as in a survey by the Human Rights Campaign, 2SLGBTQ+ youth reported "that being out was a positive and affirming experience for them also report better outcomes in terms of their overall health and well-being" (2018, p. 16). For many 2SLGBTQ youth, their gender and/or sexual identity is seen as a more positive, rather than a negative attribute (Higa et al., 2012), however if youth are in a non-supportive environment, this does not come without challenges:

> Feeling and perhaps, even embodying a sense of uniqueness because of one's LGBTQ identity may contribute to authenticity but this sense of being "different" may also be isolating for some LGBTQ youth, particularly in contexts (e.g., peer groups, school, religious institutions) where individuality may be undervalued. This dilemma suggests that identity presentation for LGBTQ youth is strategic and lends support to the importance of espousing a "flexible" identity. (Higa et al., 2012, p. 680)

One might infer from this that supportive home environments, such as affirming foster parents, adopted parents, group homes, etc., are necessary in having youth be able to be their authentic selves.

Wilson (2008) speaks to how for Two-Spirit people, the importance of the "process of 'coming in' to an empowered identity that integrates their sexuality, culture, gender and all other aspects of who they understand and know themselves to be." In reading this quote, for me what stands out is the importance of integrating all aspects of one's identity and the authenticity of being able to express this.

5.3.4 Discussion on major theme 1: Impacts on sexuality and gender

As was found in the review of the literature and was demonstrated from those who shared their stories, the child welfare system does not provide adequate support to 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). This is likely due in part to

the fact that we live in a heterosexist and cissexist society and in which the child welfare system is certainly not immune from heterosexism and cissexism. Within the state that is currently called Canada, homophobia and transphobia by way of gender role policing has been a facet within the child welfare system since the creation of the residential school system, impacting young people's abilities to be their authentic selves and express their gender and/or sexual identity as they feel most comfortable. It is no surprise to me that this would then continue into the child welfare system as it exists today.

5.4 Major Theme 2: Impacts on Cultural Identity

It seems for all of the Indigenous youth who shared their stories, there was a sense of impacts on the cultural level, in particular for those who were not raised within their biological families, and this was one the major themes that arose. The sub-themes from this include overt racism, disconnection from culture, and in a number of instances, transracial homes facing challenges in adequately supporting Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

5.4.1 Racism

Desie described anti-Indigenous racism from her foster parent, and this was apparent in what the foster parent would say about ceremony and Indigenous people:

> She would talk down about her sister, because her sister was Métis and she would be in ceremonies and would be like oh 'my sister is putting bad Indian medicine on you' or she's a witch or something. She would be really discouraging, and it was awful just thinking about.

In addition to racism within the home, there is the reality of racism that Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth face when being raised in a predominantly white community:

> I always felt like I was different when I lived in (name of town redacted) and I didn't fit in and I knew I didn't fit in because of who I was. Like I had brown

> skin and I'm around all these (white people). I did get bullied for that too obviously you know and being called down. I had to deal with a lot with that and then finally when I moved to my (Indigenous) community you know where, it wasn't all Indigenous, obviously there was other cultures, or you know backgrounds there too. It was nice though 'cause it wasn't like you were called down. Obviously, racism is real, like it's gonna be everywhere, but it wasn't bad there.

The child welfare system in Canada is fraught with racism at various levels; while it was difficult for me to find literature demonstrating racism for youth in care at the micro level, it has been shown by the Human Rights Tribunal in Canada that the federal government is discriminating against Indigenous children in care and has displayed inequitable and discriminatory treatment towards First Nation Children (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2016). It is critical to examine these experiences of racism at the micro level by connecting these instances to the systemic issues that are rampant in the child welfare system, as stated:

> It is this issue of complicity – whether conscious or not – that warrants a critical unpacking. It is not our intention to individualize the problem of minoritization and place blame on individual service providers or agencies, but rather to make visible our involvement in the systemic structures of minoritization as they operate under neoliberalism and neocolonialism. (DeFinney, Dean, Loiselle & Saraceno, 2011, p. 373)

The discrimination that Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth experience is elevated as a result of the intersections between racism, colonial factors, in addition to anti-2SLGBTQ+ bias, and this increases their likelihood of being subjected to negative outcomes, as noted:

> LGBTQ youth of color often experience additional stress and adverse effects to their health and well-being as a result of bias around their intersecting identities. In addition to homophobia or transphobia, LGBTQ youth of color may encounter racism and discrimination on a daily basis and in various forms that can further complicate their ability to express, explore and/or manage their LGBTQ identities. (The Human Rights Campaign, 2018, p. 11)

5.4.2 Disconnection from culture

For many of the Indigenous young people with experiences of being in the child welfare system, there was disconnection from their cultural identity, and this came up in both situations of adoption and foster care. Time and time again, there was a desire from Indigenous youth connected to the child welfare system to be connected to their traditions and teachings. And yet, time and time again, this connection to their traditional teachings was not presented, or even denied. As Desie stated:

> Over there it was pure christianity. It's kind of something I deal with too, still to this day... I always knew I wanted to be a part of the traditional side of myself, but I was forced to go to church.

Similarly, Britt spoke about not even having the option to learn about their own cultural roots, and having this knowledge suppressed from her through adoption. As expressed:

> I don't know if that's a big thing when your adopted, all this stuff gets pushed aside and it's like 'this is your identity now' but that's how it basically felt to me especially, and essentially took place in my family, so for that purpose I definitely don't want others to have to go through that. In that sense, you can't really stop it, but one thing that can help is ensuring that Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ youth are put in proper care for them; affirming homes, homes that respect their traditional backgrounds, maybe have parents and families to have similar backgrounds so you don't lose all your traditions. Because me and my brother, we never grew up learning our traditions.

Access to culture is a right of Indigenous people, and this extends to Indigenous youth within the child welfare system in Canada; as stated in section 3, Article 141 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

> States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, *particularly children, including those living outside their communities,* to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language (The United Nations, 1990, emphasis added).

Ensuring that Indigenous youth are connected to their cultures is also included as an "important priority" as part of the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in that it be "a requirement that placements of Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate" and that the commission "call(s) upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 1). Access to culture is healing and vital, and we know that disconnection from culture can be traumatic:

> Culture helps us understand and manage our life experiences, especially those that are terrifying or that cause us to feel grief and loss. When colonial governments outlawed Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices — including dancing, the sweat lodge, the sundance, and the potlatch — they removed the processes Indigenous peoples used to understand or manage the terrifying experiences of colonization. For those who attended residential school, cultural genocide was only one part of the equation. *When children were separated from their families and forced to attend the schools, the separation from a support system meant that they struggled alone with their traumatic experiences, which made recovery difficult or impossible. This disruption in social structure is one of the main reasons why trauma has become intergenerational within Indigenous communities*. (Methot, 2019, ch. 2, emphasis added)

5.4.3 Transracial homes face challenges in adequately supporting Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth

Another sub-theme tied to the major theme of the impacts on cultural identity and disconnection from culture, is that transracial homes face challenges in adequately supporting Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, and this again arose in both foster care and adoptive care. The fact that Indigenous youth in care are experiencing racism and disconnection from culture, shows that transracial homes may not be providing proper support and care to Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth. It seems that non-Indigenous

caregivers may not have the tools needed to provide adequate supports regarding cultural identity. As expressed in these accounts:

> Leah: I definitely questioned it as a child, you wonder why you look so different from your family. I was told I was adopted for as long as I can remember, but it's still something that comes up regardless of that, I think.
>
> Britt: Specifically talking about Indigenous youth in care whether they're queer or not, having those resources to still continue learning… so that continuation of learning about your background, about your culture about your values and spirituality. For me as an adoptee I was adopted as a baby and I was raised in how it's phrased, a white-washed household, so I grew up in a Caucasian family, so having two Caucasian parents, and not even knowing that I was Indigenous, having Métis background, until I was over 18 and able to go through vital statistics. So then not having that information to even learn my cultural background, was a big setback as well.

Multiple sources reveal that removing children and Indigenous children from their homes and placing them into non-Indigenous homes negatively affects Indigenous children (Carriere, 2005; Sinclair, 2007), and this is unpacked further in the discussion below.

5.4.4 Discussion on major theme 2: Impacts on cultural identity

The Masters of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges Program is structured around four steps rooted in teachings and guidance presented by the late Art Solomon, an Anishinaabe Elder who shared the knowledge that "in order to know where we are going we need to know where we are; to know where we are, we need to know who we are; to know who we are, we need to know where we come from" (Masters of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges Program, n.d.). Similarly, the following was stated in The Final Report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015):

> In order for any society to function properly and to its full capacity, it must raise and educate its children so that they can answer what philosophers and Elders call 'the great questions of life.' Those questions are:
>
> - Where do I come from?

- Where am I going?
- Why am I here?
- Who am I?

> Children need to know their personal story, including the part that precedes their birth. We need to know the stories of our parents and grandparents, our direct and indirect ancestors, and our real and mythological villains and heroes. As part of this story, we also need to know about the community of people to which we are attached—our collective story—all the way back to our place in the creation of this world. We all have a creation story, and we all need to understand it. We also need to learn that although not all creation stories are the same, they all have truth. This is an important teaching about respect. (p. 157 & 158)

The importance of knowing your own creation story, was an important teaching highlighted by Knowledge Keeper Sherry Copenace in the MSW-IK course "Remembering Our Histories – Setting Our Knowledges" (December 2017). The residential school system, which then leads into the child welfare system of past and present day, has effectively taken a toll on young people's ability to answer these fundamental questions, resulting in disconnection from cultural identity, and this was also the case for many of those who shared their stories as part of this research.

Raven Sinclair has looked at research and literature on the experiences of Indigenous adoptees in transracial homes and found that while "transracial adoption results in positive and favourable outcomes for both child and family, Aboriginal transracial adoption has been a notable exception" (2007, p. 77). Sinclair understands this in the context of theories on human and social development and concluded that:

> The literature helps one understand the tremendous challenges for an Aboriginal child in North America to develop a healthy identity and sense of self in the current ideological and social context. The denigration of Aboriginal culture and racism abound in both subtle and blatant ways for Aboriginal people. For Aboriginal adoptees, in particular, these experiences may be a harsh contrast to their experience of a safe, privileged non-Aboriginal environment. For Aboriginal adoptees, they must deal with the contradictions of being a member of the marginalized group, despite having a socialization, identity, and role expectations of the dominant group. (2007, p. 78)

Although that review of literature is focused on the experience of transracial adoptees, one might infer that this would also be similar for Indigenous youth in care being raised in transracial homes.

5.5 Major theme 3: 2SLGBTQ+ Adoptees and Youth in Care Have Similar Experiences

When first embarking on this research journey, hearing from those who were in foster care and adopted when they were young, was not something I had personally anticipated. When those who came forward to share their experience of being care and adopted, it seemed it was necessary to include this perspective. One thing that became clear upon hearing the stories, and as shown in the group analysis by way of talking circle, is that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, have similar experiences to those who were in care and adopted. As summarized in Britt's statement from the talking circle:

> I definitely agree that there are a lot of similarities and patterns with things, for those who participated who are adoptees as well as those who were or may still be in foster care, in the sense of not knowing how things would turn out if these resources were given to them, and different things like that around not having information or support. So that's definitely a big similarity and pattern no matter what, if they were in foster care or adoptive care. The situations seem to be very similar in the ways, even the connection to identity of being LGBT or Indigenous identity.

5.5.1 Disconnection, isolation, and loss

In both experiences of adoption and fostering, particularly for Indigenous youth in care, there seems to be the experience of disconnection and isolation in general. Disconnection from family, cultural teachings, and identity. As reflected by Leah at the group analysis, "I really see a pattern of both feeling not listened to, not represented, not being reached out to, maybe forgotten." This disconnection is reflected in the following quote from Leah:

> I would say I struggled a lot with identity as a kid in general, just with the experience of being in care, it was a closed adoption, I didn't know anything, I know as much now as I did then…I guess of the biological family I came from. So, I guess I just always questioned things like that. When I did get old enough to start questioning about sexual orientation, I think I found it more confusing because of that lack of background in general identity I suppose? I wasn't confident enough to really explore those things and feel okay about it, especially when it's still something that is marginalized in our community.

This experience of disconnection for Indigenous adoptees can be connected to health outcomes and could be seen as a factor for social determinants of health:

> Disconnection and exclusion appear to be on the same continuum of conditions that lead to poor health. Because the literature on First Nations health emphasizes the need to examine these issues from a holistic framework, it seems logical that connectedness plays a key role in health. In First Nations adoptions, disconnection can happen in a number of ways. (Carriere, 2005 p. 547).

Furthermore, the experience of loss has been found to play a role in the experience of Indigenous adoptees, and it is my belief that the same connections could be made for Indigenous youth in foster care:

> The loss of culture was described by all participants as a factor that created barriers for them. Not knowing who they were as First Nations people – their customs, language and traditions – interfered with their link to their birth families, and frustrated and embarrassed them. Some described how they thought they were from one tribe and found out that they were from another. Participants described using coping strategies, such as drugs and alcohol, which in turn affected their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health. (Carriere, 2005 p. 548)

5.5.2 What could have been?

There was a sense of "What could have been?" for some of the 2SLGBTQ+ youth who shared their stories. This speaks to not knowing what things would have been like for them, as it relates to their cultural identities and/or sexual and gender identities, had they been raised within their biological families or had they been given the care they needed. That sense of not knowing, wondering how things would have been different.

As stated by Leah at the group analysis "All the same story of 'Well I don't know how things would have turned out if I had been offered these supports, if someone had identified that maybe I don't live in a supportive environment', that kind of thing". This is also highlighted in Britt's excerpt from the group analysis:

> And definitely I found, since I learnt that my biological mother is accepting, I found it's like, this would've been a lot easier, and I probably even would have discovered sooner, and had that opportunity to figure it out and have that support, as opposed to kind of doing everything when I'm with friends or out on my own or anything, and not at home with my adoptive family…. Yeah, and I mean I know that she's accepting, I don't know about any of my other biological family, but either way I still would have had a different experience, and I've always wondered how I could have, how my life could have been.

This sense of "what could have been" and these "what if" questions relates to what was said by Wolfs and Eaton (2015) in regard to the experiences of those who have been adopted and those who have been in long-term care:

> Some children of primary school age fantasise frequently about 'what could have/should have been'. Or they suddenly think about the fact that they might have grandfathers, grandmothers, brothers and sister whom they don't know (well). (p. 48)

This ties into how ones 'autobiographical self' or our self-image that is based on our "past, present and expectations for the future" as well as our relationships, including to our family (Wolfs & Eaton, 2015, p. 27). As it pertains to the experience of loss, "if you lose something that was an important part of your life story, you also lose a piece of yourself" (Wolfs & Eaton, 2015, p. 27). A number of "what if" questions may come up for those who have been adopted or are in long-term foster care:

> If you were placed into care or were adopted and you don't know your birth father or mother, this issue is often complicated. You cannot define yourself then on the basis of the important other. The question 'Who am I without the other?' is thus difficult to answer. (Wolfs & Eaton, 2015, p. 27)

5.5.3 Discussion on major theme 3: 2SLGBTQ+ adoptees and youth in care have similar experiences

There is overlap between this major theme and those that have been spoken to so far. For 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system, those who have experience with adoption and those who have not been adopted, seem to have had similar experiences as it relates to impacts of sexuality and/or gender and cultural identity. One thing I want to focus on in this discussion section that has not yet been explicitly named however, is grief, which ties into the sub-themes of "disconnection and isolation" and "what could have been".

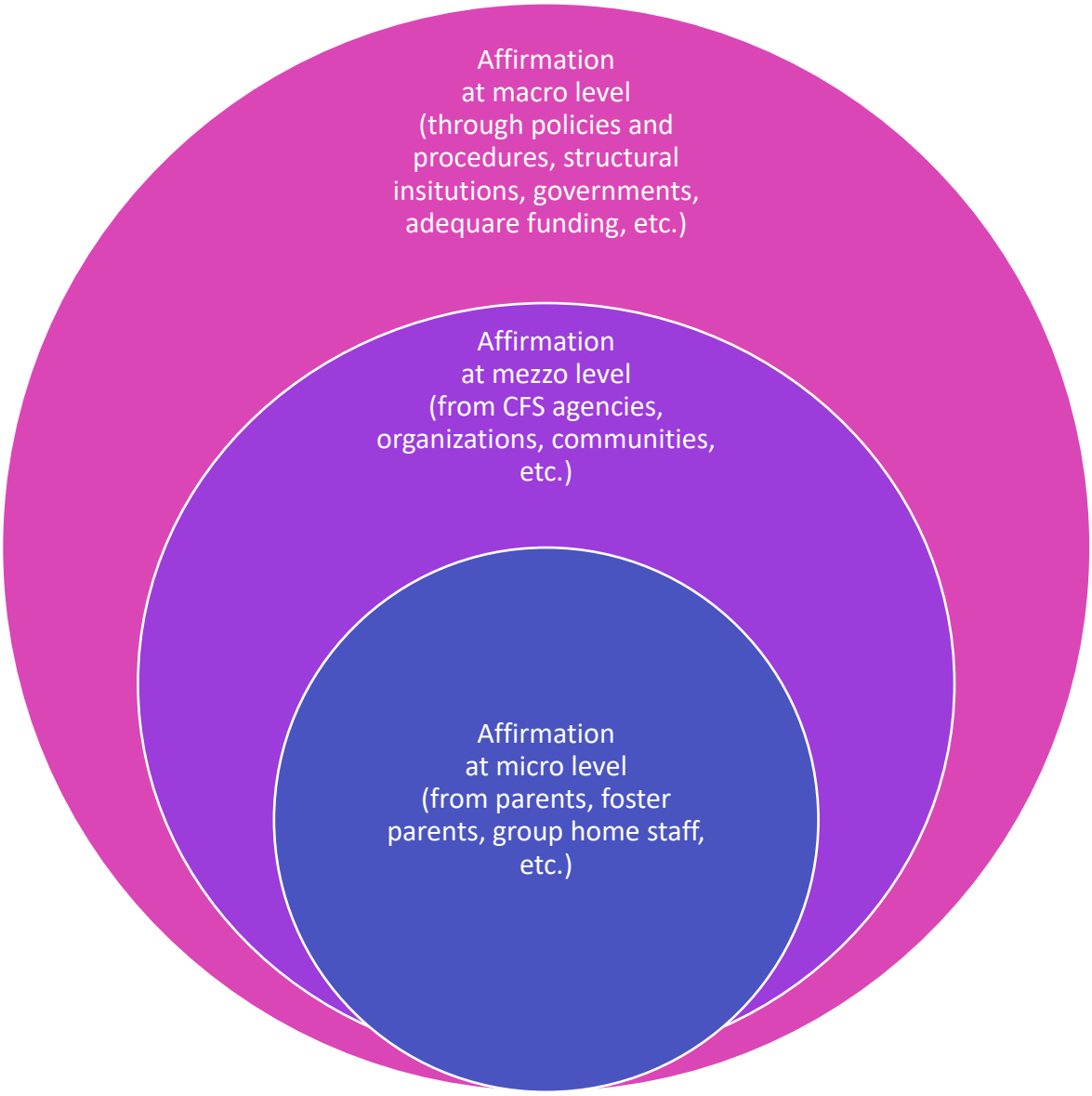
Pauline Boss coined the term "ambiguous loss" to describe a wide range of losses and grief that occur without clear closure (Boss, 1999). Children in care experience grief on many levels, and for youth who do not attain permanent homes, there are "ambiguous losses that arise" i.e. losses that do not have clear boundaries (Samuels, 2009). Boss describes the loss that some adoptees experience and the difficulties some experience in not knowing their biological parents, and the searching they embark upon to connect with their roots in attempts to resolve the feeling of loss (Boss, 1999). One could also connect the grief related to ambiguous loss surrounding cultural identity, particularly for children of colour who have been placed in transracial homes, as was the case for some of those who shared their stories. For some of the Indigenous young people who shared their stories in care or adoption, this feeling of loss can also tie into the trauma that Indigenous people are subjected to as a result of on-going colonization, as stated "For Indigenous peoples, the trauma of colonization is chronic because it happens across time as a result of a continual, persistent, and *progressive process of loss*" (Methot, 2019, ch. 2, emphasis added)

5.6 Major Theme: Affirmation at Micro, Mezzo and Macro levels

A systems model of social work, such as considering the micro, mezzo, and macro level of systems does not come without limitations, as pointed out by Mullaly, "Systems theory and an ecological approach, however, do not try to change the essential nature of the system but deal with individuals and/or environmental influences within the system" (2007, p. 229). It is my hope however, to use the systems model in a way that does try to "change the essential nature of the system" in an anti-oppressive way. Earlier, the challenges that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care in Manitoba face, have been presented in a framework that examines the micro, mezzo, and macro oppression that those who shared their stories experienced, thus it only makes sense to propose the solutions in this format as well, in an attempt to change the system rather than uphold these oppressive forces.

When those who shared their stories spoke about what changes they wanted to see in the system to better support 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system in Manitoba, the importance and need for affirmation at all levels (micro, mezzo, and macro), was highlighted. In the group analysis, based on the summaries of the individual interviews that were presented, affirmation was noted as something that stood out in terms of changes that need to be made, in response to the question "What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?". As stated by Leah at the group analysis "With the affirmation part of things, I think that's super, super important for people in care specifically. We don't have a resource, like we're all kind of mentioning here, for children in care who are experiencing, questioning even, their sexuality." What came from the sharing on an individual level and in the

group analysis via talking circles, was the need for affirming supports and structures for all 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care.



5.6.1 Affirming 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care

In hearing the stories and responses to what changes need to be made, it is apparent that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, need to know that they are supported, that they are safe, and that they will be loved, cared for, and affirmed when it comes their identity

as a 2SLGBTQ+ person. As stated at the group analysis by Elder Albert McLeod in regard to changes that are needed after hearing the stories of participants at the group analysis:

> I think that word affirming is very powerful, and I think it's something we need to bring forward in this conversation, in that youth transitioning out of care, or even in adoptive situations, it's that trajectory of their life – which is they will find a partner, they will find a job, they will find a career, they may even want to get married, right? They may want to have children. So it's that affirmation, it's not as a queer person you're going to have a lonely life in isolation, and I think where, with straight or cis youth in care, where there may be more of an affirmation of them, and their future trajectory life, whereas for queer people, I think the system or the of neglected, or they don't know how to affirm that journey. And it's just little questions, you know, do you have a partner? Or what career are you interested in? Or you know, because some youth who are queer, may end up being parents, or grandparents, and so, I think so if it's affirming for cis or straight people, it should be as affirming. In the idea of care, and whole post care life, that sort of intention of the system is, how do I support you?... It has to be equitable; *it has to be affirming, and it should be built in from day one, right with training social workers or whoever in the system, that it has to be affirming*. (emphasis added)

Affirming the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, at all levels, is a necessity and can promote positive outcomes:

> To effectively serve LGBT children, adolescents, and families, professionals in the child welfare system must first accept that they have clients who are LGBT. They also must acknowledge that LGBT persons are affected by every level of child welfare services, from adoption to out-of-home care, from child protection to family preservation services. *Integration of an LGBT-affirming perspective in contemporary child welfare policies and practices can promote the well-being of LGBT children.* (Mallon & Wornoff, 2006, p. 117-118)

Being free from discrimination is an inherent right of 2SLGBTQ + children as expressed by the United Nations in Article 2 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*:

> 1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race,

> colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
>
> 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members. (The United Nations, 1990)

5.6.2 Cultural connections for Indigenous youth

Affirmation does not end with sexual and/or gender identity but includes cultural connections for Indigenous youth who have had experience within the child welfare system. Youth need to be given the opportunity to connect to their cultural roots and identities. As expressed by Britt, "Specifically talking about Indigenous youth in care whether they're queer or not, having those resources to still continue learning … so that continuation of learning about your background, about your culture about your values and spirituality."

For Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth, they are not only faced with the intersections of heterosexism and cissexism but are battling racism and colonialism in addition to this, thus a strong sense of cultural identity is even more necessary, as "Crafting a strong cultural identity is a particularly important developmental task for Indigenous and other ethnic minority young people who experience discrimination, racism, and prejudice." (Wexler, 2009, p. 269). Further to this, a strong cultural identity is found to have a connection with an increased positive outcome for Indigenous youth:

> A positive ethnic identity seems to provide minority adolescents with self-esteem gained through coping skills that make them more likely to use active strategies to confront hardship. This has been found to be particularly important for Indigenous young people who may have experienced discrimination and prejudice based on their ethnic group affiliation. A strong sense of cultural identity has also been correlated with higher levels of psychological health for Indigenous youth. Psychological well-being encourages individuals to meaningfully engage with larger societal issues." (Wexler, 2009, p. 269)

5.6.3 More awareness and training for front line workers

An increased awareness and training for front line workers was identified as a change that is needed. It seems that front line workers do not have the adequate tools to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, thus more training and awareness is needed. This need for training applies to social workers, foster parents, youth home workers, etc. There are thousands of workers who support 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care, and so this need for awareness and training should capture the workers at all levels. As stated by Elder Albert McLeod:

> They need to be trained, everybody needs to be trained, to be inclusive, and that you know with, how many, 12,000 children in care in Manitoba, and you extrapolate that by two foster parents, that's 20,000 caregivers, and two social workers, that's another 20,000. So, it's a huge system, but how prepared are they? And they set laws and protection around gender identity or sexual orientation, the system itself has to catch up, and they have to invest in education and training and creating safe spaces with qualified foster parents or families.

Increased education for front line workers will hopefully increase the awareness and practice of front-line workers, as safe and affirming care is necessary for the well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ youth:

> *Access to culturally competent, LGBTQ-affirming mental health providers, both within schools and in the broader health care system, is essential to the well-being of LGBTQ teens*. There are many learning opportunities available to professional counselors and therapists who wish to enhance their skills and knowledge for effectively working with LGBTQ youth, from web-based learning modules to large-scale conferences dedicated solely to this topic. (emphasis added, The Human Rights Campaign, 2018, p. 7)

Cultural competency however does not go far enough, and it would be my hope, that this increased education, awareness, and change in practice will lead to an environment of cultural safety for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, cultural safety being defined as:

> …an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their

> identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together (Williams, 1991, p. 213)

5.6.4 More inclusive practices from front-line workers

As stated above, education is not where these changes must end, and the need for inclusive practice from front line workers who support 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care is vital. These are some examples of the ways in which front line workers can practice more inclusively, as brought forth by the participants:

- Outreach as a need for all youth who have experiences of being in care, including those who have been adopted.
- Having social workers be explicitly 2SLGBTQ+ affirming, so that young people in care know that if they do come out, their social workers will be a support to them.
- Ensuring that all youth in care, regardless of having "come out", are made aware by their social workers or other frontline workers, of 2SLGBTQ+ resources.
- Open lines of communication between youth in care and their social worker.
- Asking all youth, whether or not they have come out as being trans, what gender of group home they prefer to go in, as one cannot assume their preference of gender of group home without having asked the youth.
- Social workers and child protection workers needing to seriously recognize the disclosures that young people in care make regarding their safety and well-being, including how damaging not being accepted as 2SLGBTQ+ by caregivers is for young people.

It should be noted that this list is not all encompassing but are just some of the examples on which changes can be made to more appropriately support 2SLGBTQ+ young people who are connected to the child welfare system, and that this list is generated based on what was expressed in individual interviews and at the group analysis.

5.6.5 A CFS agency specifically for 2SLGBTQ+ youth

One need that was recognized by all of those who lent their stories and voices to this research, is that it is necessary for 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care to be in homes that are affirming of their 2SLGBTQ+ identities. There was the suggestion that the sexuality and gender identity of foster families and adoptive families should be taken into consideration when taking in 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care. A proposed solution to meet this need, is having a branch of child and family services that is specifically dedicated for 2SLGBTQ+ young people. Such a model does exist in Canada already, and the suggestion of following the direction of the Ontario agency, Five/Fourteen "the only foster agency dedicated solely to providing services and support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, Two-Spirit, and otherwise gender-independent children and youth in foster care" (Five/Fourteen, n.d.). As stated by Jay at the group analysis:

> I actually have heard about Five/Fourteen, the agency in Ontario, a couple of months ago, and I think having something like that here in Manitoba would be a really great idea. Having an agency that's specifically affirming, would be so helpful to youth, in the community. Because then, they're faced with going into care, then they know there's somewhere that's affirming for them to go.

It should be named however, that for Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth, they should not have to make the decision between supports that are affirming of their Indigenous identity and 2SLGBTQ+ identity. For Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth, they not only have to deal with the challenges that come with being in care, but also have to face

homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and/or transphobia. Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth should not have to choose between their sexual and/or gender identities and Indigenous culture to receive supports and services (NYSHN, & OFIFC, 2015).

5.6.6 Discussion on major theme 4: Affirmation at micro, mezzo and macro levels

Those who shared their stories for this research and participated in the group analysis, offered a number of solutions to better support 2SLGBTQ+ young people in the child welfare system at micro, mezzo and macro levels, and this compliments some of the research done by Asakura (2015), who considers a socioecological prospective of resilience in supporting the well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ youths at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. As stated:

> Practices at micro, mezzo, and macro levels all play essential roles in promoting resilience among LGBTQ youth. Recognizing a need for specialized knowledge and skills in each of the practice domains, I do not argue that each worker must engage in all practice domains simultaneously when adopting this practice framework. Rather, workers across practice domains might be more effective in collaborating with each other and other professionals to offer more comprehensive, multilevel interventions for these marginalized youth. (Asakura, 2015, p. 21)

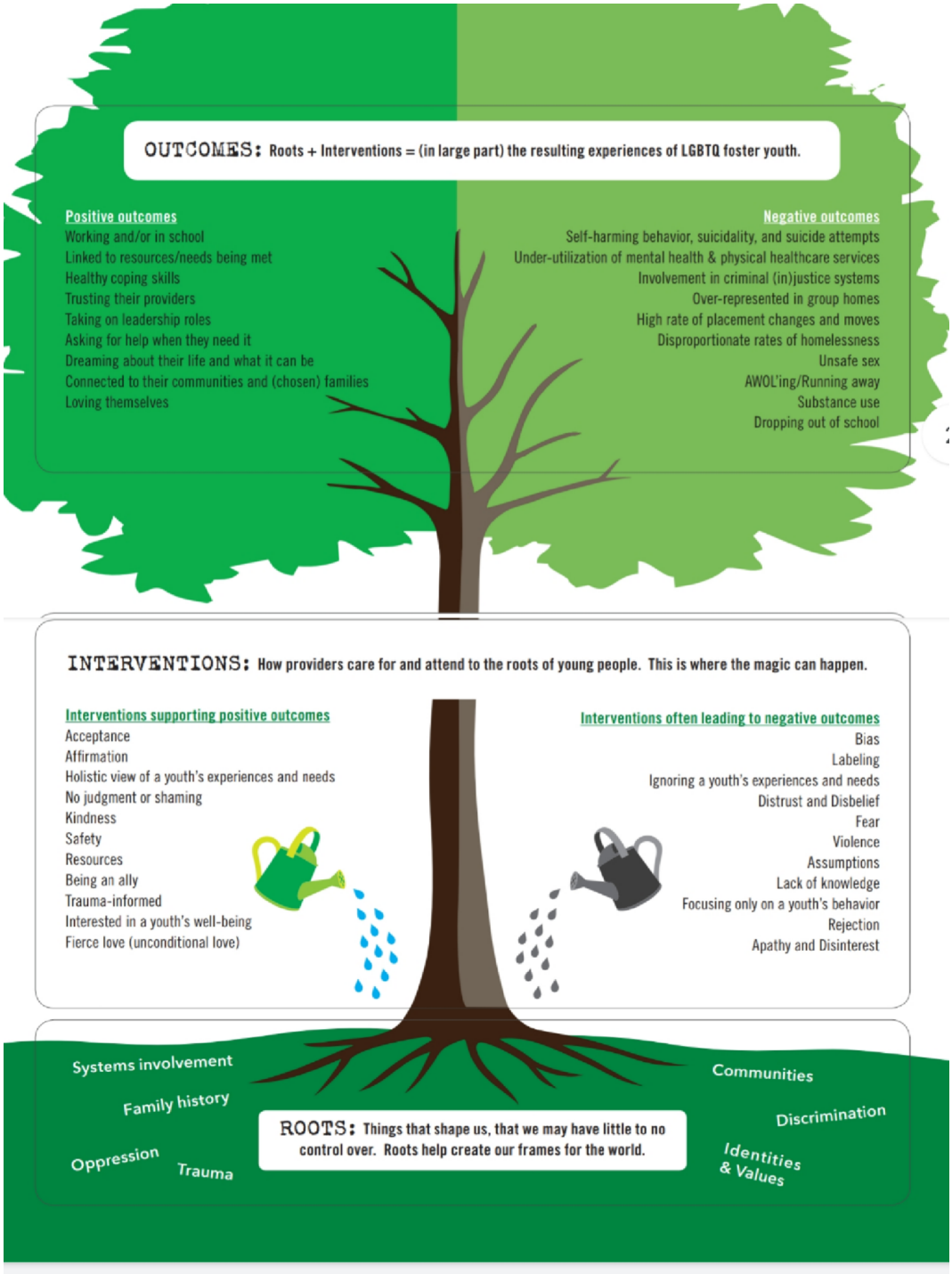
Although the article *It Takes a Village: Applying a Social Ecological Framework of Resilience in Working With LGBTQ Youth* is meant to inform social work practice, many of those who are involved in supporting 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care could consider these approaches, as depicted in the table below, and many of these compliment the call for changes put forth by the participants.

Table 1. *Social Ecological Framework of Resilience in Working With LGBTQ Youth*

Scope of practice	Purpose of social workers	Tasks of social workers
Micro Practice: Working with individuals	To promote the capacity of LGBTQ youth to navigate their ways to well-being in the face of adversity	• Assist youth in cultivating skills to assess and navigate safety across contexts. • Empower youth to make use of their personal agency in identifying needs and goals and making life decisions. • Support youth in navigating oppression related to their LGBTQ and other marginal social identities.
Mezzo Practice: Working with families, schools, and other relevant systems	To build or restore capacity among families, schools, and other relevant resources to better support LGBTQ youth	• Engage the families of LGBTQ youth, and their teachers, peers, and community groups in building or restoring their capacity to support youth. • Engage social service agencies to build greater capacity to offer affirmative services to LGBTQ youth.
Macro Practice: Working with social institutions and systems	To advocate for relevant social and policy-level changes to prevent system-level oppression that poses risks to LGBTQ youth	• Advocate for funding for relevant resources for LGBTQ youth. • Advocate for legal rights and protection for LGBTQ people. • Engage in social action to eradicate oppression against LGBTQ people.

(Asakura, 2016, p.19)

Affirmation was something that also came up from a source referenced earlier in the literature review, *beFIERCE! A Toolkit for Providers Working with LGBTQ Foster Youth*, as depicted in the image below (Perron, 2015, p. 22). On the left hand side of this image, you will notice how affirmation is near the top of the list for interventions that support positive outcomes, and many of the other forms of "interventions" listed (acceptance, non-judgement, kindness, safety, allyship, trauma-informed, etc.) are directly in line with taking a position that is affirmative and accepting of youth in care.



(Perron, 2015, p. 22)

5.7 Conclusion

It is evident to me, in witnessing a number of accounts of 2SLGBTQ+ young people in the child welfare system, that the experience of oppression is a significant overarching theme that affects youth at various levels and across various systems. This is depicted in this section through a systems theory lens, that examines the micro, mezzo, and macro layers of oppression.

The next overarching theme ties together two of the major themes, 1) impacts on sexual and/or gender identity, and 2) impacts on cultural identity. The overarching theme speaks to the fact that these are not completely separate identities and are at times interconnected. This was demonstrated in the overarching theme of the interconnection between sexual and/or gender identity and cultural identity, for Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who shared their stories. A euro-centric, colonial worldview might see these as separate forces that do not interact or have an effect on one another, and yet we know that this is not the case.

The first major theme, that being in care had 1) impact on sexuality and/or gender identity, for 2SLGBTQ+ youth, included sub-themes of homophobia and transphobia, CFS systems not adequately supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care were not able to be their authentic self. The child welfare system in Canada is a colonial creation dating back to the era of the residential school system (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996), and we know that binary gender roles where heavily enforced in residential school (Pruden, 2019), thus it is no surprise that these heterosexist and cissexist notions would continue to exist in the child welfare system of this present day.

The second major theme, 1) impacts on cultural identity, speaks to that fact that for Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care, there were experiences of racism, disconnection from culture, and transracial homes facing challenges in adequately supporting Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth. The experiences of impacts on cultural identity, particularly as it applies to anti-Indigenous discrimination, were shared in anecdotes that described this oppression in the micro and mezzo levels, and yet this cannot be separated from the macro level. Even the Canadian colonial state is actively discriminating against Indigenous young people in care (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2016), and if the "highest" level of government in this colonial system is discriminating against Indigenous children in care, one might presume that it would make sense that this discrimination would trickle down into the direct, lived experiences of Indigenous young people in care.

Another major theme that came to light was that 3) 2SLGBTQ+ adoptees and youth in care have similar experiences. These resulted in feelings of disconnection and isolation, and a wondering of "What could have been?". These shared experiences, feelings, and wondering, tie directly into the literature that speaks to grief and trauma.

This brings us to the major theme that is presented last, but certainly not least, that being the need for 4) affirmation at micro, mezzo and macro levels. It is imperative that front line workers in the child welfare system are affirming towards 2SLGBTQ+ youths identities, that we create cultural connections for Indigenous youth in care, that there is increased awareness for front line workers which will hopefully lead to more inclusive practices, and the dream of a CFS agency specifically for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care. In hearing the stories for this research, the thing that stands out to me the most upon reflection, is that 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who have had the experience of being in care,

know what is needed for change across all levels and systems, to better support and affirm the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care. Those who have had the experience of being a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, hold the knowledge that is required to make systematic changes in the child welfare system, and it is these voices that we should put first, when it comes to how we move forward in supporting 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care.

6.0 Discussion and Concluding Remarks

6.1 Introduction

In this closing chapter, I will summarize the research process and findings. In doing so, I will consider the following aspects: the connection between the findings and the literature review, responding to the main research questions, and lastly, a critical evaluation of the research. In addition, I will speak to some of the implications for social work practice, followed by concluding remarks.

6.2 Summary of the Research and Findings

This research was about the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth within the child welfare system and focused on the two main questions: 1) What are the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth within the child welfare system in Manitoba? and 2) What changes do they want to see in the child welfare system to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth? The process involved sitting down one on one with five individuals who are a part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community who had experiences of being in care, hearing their stories, and then summarizing their stories in response to the main research questions. Following this, a

talking circle and group analysis took place with three of the participants, with Two-Spirit Elder Albert McLeod present, and the summaries of the responses from individual interviews were presented. The talking circle and group analysis revealed the themes, which resulted in two overarching themes and four major themes. In response to the question "What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?" the two overarching themes were experiences of A) oppression at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and that B) for Two-Spirit Indigenous LGBTQ+ participants, cultural identity and gender and /or sexuality, are tied. From these overarching themes the major themes that were connected were being in care had 1) impacts on sexual and gender identity, and 2) impacts on cultural identity. Another major theme that arose was that 3) 2SLGBTQ+ adoptees with experiences in care and youth in care who did not have the experience of adoption, have similar experiences. Lastly, in response to the research question "What changes do 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care want to see in the child welfare system to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth?" there was the major theme and need of 4) affirmation at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. The participants who attended the group analysis were given the option of reviewing the table below as a means of validating the data. Two of the participants responded to this offer and chose to provide feedback and noted that the table below accurately summarized the themes discussed at the group analysis.

Corresponding Research Question	Overarching Themes	Major Themes	Sub-themes
What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?	A) Oppression at the micro, mezzo and macro levels B) For Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ participants, cultural identity, and gender and /or sexuality, are tied	1) Impacts on sexual and gender identity	a) Homophobia & transphobia b) CFS systems do not adequately support 2SLGBTQ+ youth c) Not able to be their authentic self
		2) Impacts on cultural identity	a) Racism b) Disconnection from culture c) Transracial homes face challenges in adequately supporting Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth
		3) 2SLGBTQ+ adoptees and youth in care have similar experiences	a) Disconnection & isolation b) "What could have been?"
What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?		4) Affirmation at micro, mezzo and macro levels	a) Affirming 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care b) Cultural connections for Indigenous youth c) More awareness and training for front line workers d) More inclusive practices from front-line workers e) CFS agency specifically for 2SLGBTQ+ youth

6.3 Relationship to Literature Review

The literature review in this thesis begins with a brief discussion on the Two-Spirit identity and reflection on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous people across Turtle Island. I felt this was a crucial place to start, due to the attempted erasure by colonial forces of Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ peoples. It is my belief that homophobia and transphobia on these lands cannot be discussed, without also having a discussion on how Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people have existed since time immemorial (NYSHN & OFIFC, 2015). This brings me to focus on homophobia, transphobia, and colonization. For all of those who shared their stories in this research, there were experiences of homophobia and/or transphobia, and for all of the Indigenous youth, there was the interconnection between oppression due to being 2SLGBTQ+ and oppression due to colonial factors. Similarly, as one cannot discuss homophobia and transphobia on these lands without discussing colonization, one cannot discuss the child welfare system in the Canadian state without discussing colonization. This is due not only to the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in care in present days during what one may call the "Millennium Scoop" (Sinclair, 2007), but to the fact that the child welfare system on these lands was created with the purpose of stealing Indigenous children from their families and disconnecting them from their culture by way of the residential school system (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). This disconnection from culture continues today, and for many of the Indigenous participants in this research process, there was an acknowledgement of disconnection from their own Indigenous identities and cultures. Another focus of the literature was an examination of related negative outcomes for Indigenous youth, 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and

youth in care, and two areas of overlap for these negative outcomes included experiences of suicide and homelessness. Although experiences of homelessness and suicide was not a specific theme that arose in the course of this research, I am reminded of words from Elder Albert McLeod in the talking circle/group analysis when speaking to the fact that caregivers for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care do not have the training to provide adequate support:

> …the system itself has to catch up, and they have to invest in education and training and creating safe spaces with qualified foster parents or families, *because it is resulting in suicide ideation, or suicides, and homelessness*. I think there really has to be a reframing of identity in terms of the children that go in care, so that the system is able to act appropriately, and provide the type of supports that are needed. (emphasis added)

I want to say that one should not assume that experiences of homelessness and suicide are not impacting 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, even though they did not arise as specific themes in this research. These continue to be serious challenges that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care face and should not be minimized. Lastly, literature on experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care was looked at specifically, including a consideration of recommendations for best supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care. Some of the recommendations and calls to action found in the review of the literature, is directly in line with what youth expressed in the course of this research, such as a need for affirmation, awareness, and inclusivity from caregivers of 2LGBTQ+ young people in care.

There have been a number of limitations that have arisen in the midst of this literature review. As noted in the literature review, it was difficult at the time of creating the literature review, to find current, peer-reviewed literature on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care within a Canadian context, thus I felt it was necessary to also

utilize sources from the United States. While there are some similarities between climates of Canada and the United States, there are some differences as it pertains to service delivery, legal protections for sexual and gender minorities, and political climate. Thus, it is difficult to know how this research, or these sources would be applied on a Canadian or Manitoban context. Because of lack of peer reviewed studies on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care within Canada, much of the literature has been pulled from reports. One could argue that there is bias in which these reports are conducted as they are not coming from peer-reviewed studies, however one could also assume that there is no such thing as unbiased, or neutral research in any context. This does however speak to the gap of research that centres on the narratives of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, and the need for more research to be done within this area.

6.4 Addressing the Study's Research Question

The main research questions consider the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care, and the changes required to better support 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care. As stated throughout this thesis, one of the two main research questions for the participants was: 1) What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care? This was followed by the sub-questions listed:

a) What was your experience like with the different helpers you interacted with who were connected to the child welfare system? (e.g. social workers, foster parents, group home staff, respite workers, etc.)

b) Were there any challenges you experienced in the care of child and family services as a result of being 2SLGBTQ+?

c) How did being a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system impact you mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually?

The next main research question directed towards participants was 2) What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth? Through this research process in sitting down with those who shared their stories and at the group analysis, it is my belief that the answers to these questions have been found, and these answers lie in the wisdom, knowledge, and truth of those who had the courage to share their stories in this process.

6.5 Critical evaluation

As someone who has never had the experience of being in care and is a white settler on Indigenous land, especially considering the fact that most of the participants are Indigenous, this creates a challenge in which my lens is one that comes from my socialization of being a white woman who has benefited from colonialism and whose family has not been harmed by the child welfare system. It was my hope to mitigate this by utilizing participatory methods, asking the participants for feedback upon the first meeting and giving an opportunity for feedback at the end, as well as involving participants in the group analysis by way of talking circle. I think this buffered some of those inherent power imbalances and lack of understanding that inherently exists on my part. That being said, in future, if I were to do research on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care again, I think the best approach would be to utilize participatory methods through and through, and having the community involved with the creation of the research questions, structure of the research process, as well as the analysis, rather than "sprinkling" participatory methods in.

6.6 Implications and Recommendations for Social Work Practice

One thing that stands out to me in the course of my own social work education (particularly, in the completion of my Bachelor of Social Work degree), is the lack of accountability towards social work as a profession, for the harms that are perpetuated by social work, past and present. Social work as a practice, as a profession, has perpetuated harm on these lands and this continues to be the case today. An implication I see from this research, is a need for education within social work training and a better understanding of colonialism, heterosexism, and cissexism, for all social workers. Social change should be at the core of social work practice, and this leads me to the implication of advocacy for social workers, advocating for changes within the systems we work in, especially child welfare, to better support the needs of 2SLGBTQ+ young people. Any social worker must consider if they are agents of social change or social control. If a social worker is an agent of social control, then they are likely upholding colonialism, and possibly even heterosexism, and cissexism. For social work practice to be anti-oppressive, in needs to incorporate values that are anti-colonial, anti-racist, and 2SLGBTQ+ affirming, among other things. As social workers, particularly those who are supporting 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care and their caregivers, we have a responsibility to the safety of these young people, and this need for safety must be provided in a way that affirms all of their identities, including but not exclusive to, their cultural identities, and sexual and/or gender identities. We have a responsibility to create a space of openness and affirmation, *before* youth choose to "come out" to us, so that they know we are a safe person they can go to if this is something they choose to share

with us. As social workers, we have an inherent responsibility to actively challenge colonialism and affirm 2SLGBTQ+ identities.

6.7 Concluding Remarks

Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, youth who have had experiences within the child welfare system, know what they need best. For helpers and caregivers who have any connection to supporting 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care, we need to honour their stories, but more importantly, we must respect and honour their proposed needs so that they can be afforded the care and safety that they deserve. For any of those reading this who are helpers towards 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care, I would encourage you to think about your own practice as a helper. What are the areas of improvements that you need to make in your practice, so that you can create true safety for the youth you support? How is your practice as a helper explicitly 2SLGBTQ+ affirming and anti-colonial in the work that you do?

For any 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who have had the experience of being in the care of the child welfare system, I want you to know that your voices matter, and you hold the knowledge and wisdom towards what is needed for supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system. To any 2SLGBTQ+ people with experiences of being within the child welfare system, who are reading this, I want you to know that you are loved, and you are valued. For those who shared their stories as part of this research, I want to again extend my thanks and gratitude, for the contributions you have made; it is my hope that this will have some part in making changes to better support the needs of other 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care, so that the more challenging parts of what you went

through, does not have to be the same experience for 2SLGBTQ+ young people in care now, and in the future.

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Appendices

1. Ethics Board Protocol Approval
2. Ethics Board Renewal Approval
3. Ethics Board Amendment Approval
4. Recruitment Poster
5. Pre-Interview Conversation (i.e. Screening)
6. Study Information & Informed Consent Form
7. Interview Outline and Questions
8. Feedback for the Research Process
9. Elder Confidentiality Form
10. Facilitator's Guide for the Group Analysis
11. Participants' Agenda for the Group Analysis
12. Participants Confidentiality Agreement
13. List of Available Support Resources

Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: **Sylvia Massinion** **(Advisor: Marlyn Bennett)**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Kelley Main, Acting Chair**
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

[redacted]

Re: **Protocol #P2018:089 (HS22036)**
Honouring the Voices of LGBT2SQ+ Youth in Care

Effective: November 8, 2018 **Expiry:** November 8, 2019

Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. PSREB 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 only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the research must be submitted to PSREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to PSREB 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 PSREB 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 mail/e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.**

Appendix 2

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

RENEWAL APPROVAL

Date: October 17, 2019 **New Expiry: November 8, 2020**

TO: **Sylvia Massinon** **(Advisor: Marlyn Bennett)**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Jonathan Marotta, Chair**
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

[redacted]

Re: **Protocol #P2018:089 (HS22036)**
"Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care"

Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) has reviewed and renewed the above research. PSREB 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. Any modification to the research must be submitted to PSREB for approval before implementation.
2. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to PSREB as soon as possible.
3. This renewal is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
4. A Study Closure form must be submitted to PSREB when the research is complete or terminated.

Appendix 3

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

AMENDMENT APPROVAL

November 13, 2019

TO: **Sylvia Massinon** **(Advisor: Marlyn Bennett)**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Jonathan Marotta, Chair**
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

[redacted]

Re: **Protocol #P2018:089 (HS22036)**
"Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care"

Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) has reviewed and approved your Amendment Request received on **November 12, 2019** to the above-noted protocol. PSREB 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 given for this amendment only. Any further changes to the protocol must be reported to the Human Ethics Coordinator in advance of implementation.
2. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to PSREB as soon as possible.
3. Amendment Approvals do not change the protocol expiry date. Please refer to the original Protocol Approval or subsequent Renewal Approvals for the protocol expiry date.

Appendix 4

UNIVERSITY | Faculty of Social Work

521 Tier Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-7050
Fax (204) 474-7594
Social_Work@umanitoba.ca

- Do you identify as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, queer, asexual and/or intersex? (2SLGBTQ+)
- Have you ever been in the care of child and family services in Manitoba?
- Are you between the ages of 18-30?

If so, you may want to participate in a research study on the experiences of **2SLGBTQ+** youth in care**.**

Participation will involve taking part in an interview and possibly being a part of a group discussion with other 2SLGBTQ+individuals who have been in the care of child and family services.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please contact Sylvia Massinon.

Email: massinon@myumanitoba.ca | Phone: [redacted]

This research project has been approved by the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB).

Appendix 5: Pre-Interview Conversation (i.e. Screening)

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+Youth in Care

First Contact Script for Interview (Telephone or In-Person)
Researcher: Sylvia Massinon

Name of Participant: _____ Contact Information: _____

Hello, my name is Sylvia Massinon. I am a graduate student in the Master of Social Work program based in Indigenous Knowledges working on a research study for my thesis at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting a study on the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (2SLGBTQ+ or LGBT2SQ+) individuals who have been in the care of child and family services in Manitoba. This study will hopefully contribute to supporting the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth in the care of child and family services.

Before the possibility of meeting for an interview, I would like to provide you with information about the study. If you have any questions, I can answer any questions you might have, either now or at a later time.

This study will include participation in an individual interview, and an optional group analysis with other 2SLGBTQ+individuals who have been in the care of child and family services. The interview may take up to two hours, and the group analysis may take up to 3 hours; both will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

Can we arrange a date, time, and location for the individual interview? Information pertaining to consent will be provided prior to the interview beginning.

<u>If No:</u>

Thank you for your time and consideration of this research study.

<u>If Yes:</u>

When is a convenient time to meet?

Before we meet, can I confirm with you that you identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, are between the ages of 18-30, and have been in the care of child and family services at some point in your life? Please know that this information will be kept confidential.
Because of the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the child welfare system in Manitoba I will be asking all participants if they are Indigenous, to ensure that there is a fair representation of voices from Indigenous youth. Do you identify as being Indigenous (i.e. First Nations, Métis, or Inuit)?

If Yes:

What does that mean for you?

I would also like to get feedback from all participants regarding the structure of the study, and would like to send information pertaining to the research study (e.g. forms, interview questions) to you ahead of our interview. What would be your preferred method of receiving this information? (e.g. email, mail, in person drop-off, etc.).

Do you have any literacy or learning concerns and would prefer to receive this information in a format other than written form? (If so, this will be arranged and could include myself relaying the information to you verbally in-person or over the phone).

I will follow up with you in your preferred method of communication prior to the interview to ensure that I receive any feedback you might have about the research process. What would be your preferred way of connecting so that I can make note of this feedback? (e.g. phone, email, in person)

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Social Work

521 Tier Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
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Appendix 6: Study Information & Informed Consent Form

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care

Researcher:
Sylvia Massinon (Principle Investigator)
Master of Social Work – Indigenous Knowledge
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
250 7-9530
massinon@myumanitoba.ca

Thesis Advisor:
Marlyn Bennett, Ph.D.
Director / Assistant Professor
Master of Social Work Based in Indigenous Knowledges Program (MSW-IK)
Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba
Phone: (204) 474-6862
marlyn.bennett@umanitoba.ca

My name is Sylvia Massinon. I am a graduate student in the Master of Social Work program based in Indigenous Knowledges working on a research study for my thesis at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting a study on the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (2SLGBTQ+ or LGBT2SQ+) individuals who have been in the care of child and family services in Manitoba. This study will hopefully contribute to supporting the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+children and youth in the care of child and family services. This study information and 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.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

You have the right to delete or change portions of your data, including the entire interview, that you do not wish to have used.

In the event you decide to withdraw from participating in this research study, you will have the option of allowing collected data to remain in the study for inclusion in the analysis, or withdrawing your respective data completely from the study and having it destroyed. In the event you withdraw and decide to have your data destroyed, this will be done within five businesses days following your decision to withdraw (with the exception of extenuating circumstances such as the researcher being outside of Winnipeg for an extended period of time, in those cases this will occur upon her return).

Any of your data collected for this research study will only be used for the agreed upon purposes, and any data relating to your own experiences (e.g. quotes or anecdotes) will only be released upon your approval.

Declining to participate will not have negative results. In the event you access services at agencies I am connected to in a professional capacity (i.e. the Rainbow Resource Centre and Klinic Community Health), withdrawing from this study will not affect your ability to seek support at these agencies.

Please take your time to read or have this information read to you carefully so that all the information is clear. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask.

Purpose

While there have been studies in recent years that have examined the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, asexual, and intersex (2SLGBTQ+ or LGBT2SQ+) youth within school settings, there is limited research on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the care of the child welfare system, especially within a Manitoba context. This research seeks out to determine what the experiences of being in the care of the child welfare system have been like for 2SLGBTQ+ youth within Manitoba

Procedures

The procedures in this research study will be as follows:

1. **Individual interviews:** There will be an individual interview with the researcher. This will also be an opportunity for the researcher to obtain relevant information about you, your identity, and experiences. This will also be an opportunity for you to respond to the main research questions, below:
   a. What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?
   b. What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

   The meetings will take approximately 60-180 minutes; however, if you would like more time the meeting will continue. In such cases where there is not enough time to complete the conversation in one sitting, more time can be scheduled to meet.

   With your permission, the individual interview will be audio-recorded. Following all interviews, the researcher will transcribe the interviews, and create summaries of your

responses to the two main research questions.

2. **Group Analysis:** The summaries of the two main research questions will be presented at the optional group analysis session. Before presenting any quotes or stories from the interviews in the summaries, the researcher will connect with you prior and ensure you approve of what is included from your individual interview in the collective summaries. A Two-Spirit Elder will be present during the session to provide guidance and support. After the summaries are presented, the researcher will invite all participants to speak to similarities or differences they noticed in the stories of the summaries, how the summaries were different or similar than their own experiences, and any themes they noticed. This sharing will take place in a talking circle format. This feedback will ultimately inform the researcher's own data analysis process and conclusions about the research.

   Three hours of time (180 minutes) will be scheduled which will include introductions, group analysis, and will be followed by a feast.

   With the permission of the participants, the group analysis will be audio-recorded and the researcher will transcribe the audio-recording from the group analysis.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to your participation in this study. Benefits are collective and they will contribute to knowledge about 2SLGBTQ+ individuals within the care of the child welfare system in Manitoba. You will be able to share your story on matters that may not have been previously addressed and you may feel empowered by being able to add your voice to this process.

Risks

The researcher acknowledges that with this study has a small degree of risk. The first risk that the researcher acknowledges is the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Winnipeg, Manitoba can sometimes be small, so there may be a risk of knowing the other participants in the study. Requesting a safe and confidential environment as the group forms, creating group guidelines at the beginning will be essential.

In the event that you find any aspect of the study upsetting, during or after our individual interview or group analysis, you will be provided with contact information for relevant services, such as counseling services available in the community. The group analysis will be facilitated by the researcher and a Two-Spirit Elder, thus the researcher or Elder can also provide support to you and the other participants during the group analysis as needed.

Your safety and the safety of others is of utmost importance to the researcher. Please note that the researcher has a duty to report any sign or disclosure of child abuse or neglect, or if there is any intent by you (the participant) to harm yourself and/or others. If you disclose that you are at high risk of suicide and are not open to safety planning, support services may need to be involved to ensure your safety, including but not exclusive to the Winnipeg Police or Mobile Crisis. If you disclose you are seriously considering to cause harm to someone else, the Winnipeg Police and/or RCMP may need to be notified. If you disclose information that indicates a child (i.e. someone under the age of 18 years old) is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect, we are under obligation to report this abuse to Child and Family Services and/or Winnipeg Police. Please note that any disclosures of

criminal activity such as gang related violence or drug trafficking that have the potential to cause harm to yourself or others, may be reported to the appropriate authorities such as Winnipeg Police or the RCMP.

Confidentiality

All participants will be assigned an alphanumeric code that will be used to identify all of their interviews as sound files and as transcripts. All data, including audio recordings will be kept on a password protected computer; interviews notes, transcripts and consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office. The names of participants or signed documents will be stored separately from the assigned alphanumeric code. The recordings and transcripts will be destroyed after the research is finalized. Only the researcher will have access to these forms and will not share the information in these forms with anyone outside the study.

You will have the option of either having your name included in any publications that arise from the research, or the option of remaining anonymous.

The issues of privacy and confidentiality will be repeatedly stressed throughout the group analysis, and this will be an important part of establishing group norms during the group analysis.

The following steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality of the participants (except those who choose to be openly identified, as discussed above).

- Any narratives of the participants cited in publications will be identified by a pseudonym.
- Any participants' comments or narratives quoted in reports, articles or other publications will be stripped of identifying details, if removing these details distorts the data then these comments will not be cited publicly. If a participant chooses to be openly identified than they will be given opportunities to give feedback or omit any information prior to publication.

Compensation

For providing your feedback on the structure of the research process an honourarium of $25 will be provided. An honourarium of $50 will be given prior to the interview and an honourarium of $50 will be given prior to the additional group analysis. Bus tokens and parking costs will be covered as needed, and refreshments will be provided, and there will be a feast following the group analysis.

Sharing the Results

Results of this study may be disseminated through presentations at scholarly conferences, workshops and through publication in academic journals. A summary of the results will be provided to each participant after the data analysis by mail or email, which ever you prefer. Extensive checking in will take place with all of participants prior to release of the completed thesis. A final copy of the thesis can also be provided if requested.

Providing Consent

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. Again, in the event you access services at agencies the researcher is connected to professionally (i.e. the Rainbow Resource Centre and Klinic Community Health), withdrawing from this study will not affect your ability to seek or receive support at these agencies.

Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have you read all of the above information?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time? You do not have to give a reason and it will not affect you. There is no penalty for withdrawing from this study at any time.	☐ Yes ☐ No
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you agree to respect the confidentiality of others who participate in the group analysis?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you understand that there may be risk of identification based on your participation in this study through the sharing of your stories?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Please note that the interviews and group analysis will be audio-recorded to ensure the reliability and validity of the information discussed. Because of the group setting of the group analysis, anonymity is not possible. However, all participants of the group interviews will be asked to respect each other's privacy and confidentiality in relation to all discussions throughout the course of the project. Know that there may be a risk of identification resulting from participation in this project during the dissemination of the project results. Your participation in this study will provide firsthand knowledge about experiences of 2SLGBTQ+youth in the care of the child welfare system in Manitoba that will hopefully be used to help 2SLGBTQ+youth who are presently in care.

It is important for you to know that at any time you can refuse to answer any questions, without facing penalty, posed to you during the course of the research process.

For the purpose of this study I prefer to be identified by (check one):

☐ a pseudonym / fictitious name ☐ my name (listed below)

For the purposes of this study I want to be identified by the following name:

_____

For the purposes of this study I want to be identified by the following pronouns:

_____

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.

The researcher will adhere to the Research Ethics Board (REB) for the University of Manitoba protocols and procedures in case of an adverse event occurs and this research project has been approved by the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB).

I agree to take part in this study through:

☐ an individual interview with the researcher

☐ participating in the group analysis

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Participant Printed Name

☐ Written Consent ☐ Verbal Consent

If you prefer to give verbal consent, consent will be obtained through Cree or Anishinaabe protocols of passing tobacco.

If you would like a copy of a summary and transcript from your interview and a summary of the results from this study, please share your email or mailing address.

Email/Address_____

I would like to receive a summary and transcript of my interview: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like to receive a summary of the study results: ☐Yes ☐ No

I would like to receive a copy of the final thesis: ☐Yes ☐ No

The University of Manitoba may look at my research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology 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 by email at humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

Appendix 7: Interview Outline and Questions

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+Youth in Care

Researcher:
Sylvia Massinon (Principle Investigator)
Master of Social Work – Indigenous Knowledge
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
[redacted]
massinon@myumanitoba.ca

After the consent form has been signed or verbal consent has been completed, the interview questions will be asked.

As you will be taking the opportunity to be courageous and vulnerable about your own experiences, I think it is also important for me to be open and honest about my own identities, social location, and why I have chosen this topic for my master's thesis. Before we begin, I will let you know who I am, where I come from, and speak to my own connection(s) to this topic.

It is important for you to know that before we begin, you are only required to share whatever you feel comfortable sharing. There are times when story telling can be healing for us as humans, and times when story telling may also be triggering. During this interview if you are ever feeling triggered please let me know and I will do what I can to support you in the moment.

Demographic Questions

2. Cultural Background

    a. How do you identify in terms of your cultural background?

3. Community of Origin

    a. Where are you from?

    b. What community / communities is your family from?

4. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities

    a. How do you identify in terms of your sexual orientation?

    b. How do you identify in terms of your gender identity?

        a)What pronouns do you use? (e.g. she/her, him/him, they/them, etc.)

c. Because of the marginalization of transgender individuals within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer community, I would like to ensure that the voices of transgender people are included. Do you identify as being transgender?

a)If yes, what does this mean to you?

5. Child and Family Services
    a. How old were you when child and family services became involved in your life?
    b. How long did you spend in the care of child and family services?
    c. What kind of setting(s) did you live in while you were in the care of child and family services? (e.g. group home, foster home, etc.)
    d. What community / communities did you live in when you were in the care of child and family services?
    e. Was going into the care of child and family services at all related to identifying as 2SLGBTQ+?

Research Questions

6. Main research questions and sub-questions (answers to be recorded on a separate audio-recording device from the questions above and any notes are to be taken separately):
    a. What was your experience like as an 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?

        a)What was your experience like with the different helpers you interacted with who were connected to the child welfare system? (e.g. social workers, foster parents, group home staff, respite workers, etc.)

        b) Were there any challenges you experienced in the care of child and family services as a result of being 2SLGBTQ+?

        c)How did being a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system impact you mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually?

    b. What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

Debrief

1. How are you feeling about what we talked about today? Do you need additional support? Can you identify someone who you can talk to if you need support?
2. What will you do for self-care today?

Thank you very much for your time. I am grateful for your generosity in sharing your time and story and look forward to meeting with you at the talking circles as scheduled.

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Appendix 8: Feedback for the Research Process

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care

Researcher:
Sylvia Massinon (Principle Investigator)
Master of Social Work – Indigenous Knowledge
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
250 7-9530
massinon@myumanitoba.ca

Research Questions Feedback

I would like to receive feedback from all participants about the research questions. How do you feel about the relevancy (i.e. importance) of the following questions?

1. What are the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, asexual, and intersex (2SLGBTQ+) youth in care, within Manitoba?

2. What changes would 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care like to see to the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

Individual Interview Structure

There will be an individual interview with the researcher. This will also be an opportunity for the researcher to obtain relevant information about you, your identity, and experiences. This will also be an opportunity for you to respond to the main research questions, below:

a. What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?
b. What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

It will be emphasized to the participants that they do not need to offer answers to any questions that they do not feel comfortable responding to.

The meetings will take approximately 60-180 minutes; however, if you would like more time the meeting will continue. In such cases where there is not enough time to complete the conversation in one sitting, more time can be scheduled to meet.

With the permission of the participants', the individual interview will be audio-recorded. Following all interviews, the researcher will transcribe the interviews, and create summaries of your responses to the two main research questions.

See below for an outline of additional questions that will be asked at the interview:

Demographic Questions

7. Cultural Background
   a. How do you identify in terms of your cultural background?

8. Community of Origin
   a. Where are you from?
   b. What community / communities is your family from?

9. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities
   a. How do you identify in terms of your sexual orientation?
   b. How do you identify in terms of your gender identity?
   c. What pronouns do you use? (e.g. she/her, him/him, they/them, etc.)
   d. Because of the marginalization of transgender individuals within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer community, I would like to ensure that the voices of transgender people are included. Do you identify as being transgender?
      a) If yes, what does this mean to you?

10. Child and Family Services
    a. How old were you when child and family services became involved in your life?
    b. How long did you spend in the care of child and family services?
    c. What kind of setting(s) did you live in while you were in the care of child and family services? (e.g. group home, foster home, etc.)
    d. What community / communities did you live in when you were in the care of child and family services?
    e. Was going into the care of child and family services at all related to identifying as 2SLGBTQ+?

Research Questions

11. Main research questions and sub-questions (answers to be recorded on a separate audio-recording device from the questions above and any notes are to be taken on a separate document):
    a. What was your experience like as an 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?
    b. What was your experience like with the different helpers you interacted with who were connected to the child welfare system? (e.g. social workers, foster parents, group home staff, respite workers, etc.)
    c. Were there any challenges you experienced in the care of child and family services as a result of being 2SLGBTQ+?
    d. How did being a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system impact you mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually?
    e. What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

Debrief

3. How are you feeling about what we talked about today? Do you need additional support? Can you identify someone who you can talk to if you need support?
4. What will you do for self-care today?

Individual Interview Feedback

1. Do you have any feedback regarding how the group analysis is currently structured? Are there any changes you would like to see?
2. Is there a location you have in mind where you would like to meet?

Group Analysis Structure

An optional group analysis session will take place once all of the interviews are transcribed and a summary of the responses to the two main research questions ("What was your experience like as an LGBT2SQ+ youth in care?" and "What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve LGBT2SQ+ youth?") is put together.

Before including any quotes or stories from the interviews in the summaries, the researcher will connect with you prior and ensure you approve of what is included from your individual interview in the collective summaries. A Two-Spirit Elder will be present during the session to provide guidance and support. After the summaries are presented, the researcher will invite all participants to speak to similarities or differences they noticed in the stories of the summaries, how the summaries were different or similar than their own experiences, and any themes they noticed. This sharing will take place in a talking circle format. This feedback will ultimately inform the researcher's own data analysis process and conclusions about the research.

It will be emphasized to the participants that they do not need to provide answers to any questions that they do not feel comfortable responding to.
Three hours of time (180 minutes) will be scheduled which will include introductions, group analysis, and will be followed by a feast.

With the permission of the participants, the group analysis will be audio-recorded and the researcher will transcribe the audio-recording from the group analysis.

See below for the proposed outline of the group analysis session:

1. ***Housekeeping:*** Distribution of honourarium, handouts, oath of confidentiality, expectations, and relevant information.

2. ***Group Agreements:*** As a group, we will come up with agreements that we can keep in mind to ensure that this is a safe space for people to share and participate.

3. ***Elder Opening & Smudge:*** A Two-Spirit Elder is to begin the session with a traditional opening. To ensure that we start off in a good way, we will also begin with a smudge. Smudging protocols will be explained, which includes the option of opting out of smudging if you choose.

4. ***Introductions:*** Before beginning the talking circle, you will be invited you to share the following about yourself.
   a. Name
   b. Pronouns
   c. Anything else you would like others to know about yourself

5. ***Researcher's Presentation on Summary of Responses to the Main Research Questions:*** This will be an opportunity for the researcher to present a summary of what was discussed in the individual interviews in response to the questions "What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?" and "What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?".

6. ***Group Analysis:*** You will be given the opportunity to take part in a group analysis where you have the chance to identify any themes or patterns in the stories / summaries that you heard. In line with talking circle protocols, we will go around the circle once giving each of you an opportunity to respond to these questions. At the end, we will go around a second time asking if there is anything else you would like to add.
   a. What similarities or differences did you notice in the summaries of the talking circles?
   b. What are the patterns or themes you noticed?
   c. Only if you feel comfortable sharing this in the group, are the similarities or differences to your own experiences of being a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?
   d. Based on what you have heard today, is there anything else you would like to mention for changes that need to happen within the child welfare system to better support 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

7. ***Debriefing Period:*** It is important for us to debrief while we are still together to discuss how the research process has impacted you, explore unexpected negative consequences, and what you need to care for yourselves today.
   a. What has your experience been like today?
   b. What do you need to care for yourself today?

8. ***Closing Feast***

Group Analysis Feedback

1. Do you have any feedback regarding how the group analysis is currently structured? Are there any changes you would like to see?
2. Is there a location you have in mind where you would like to meet?
3. Possible locations could include the Rainbow Resource Centre, Klinic Community Health, and the William Norrie. Do you have any concerns about these proposed locations?

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Appendix 9: Elder Confidentiality Form

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+Youth in Care

Researcher:
Sylvia Massinon (Principle Investigator)
Master of Social Work – Indigenous Knowledge
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
[redacted]
massinon@myumanitoba.ca

As per the Research Ethics Board protocols, this form is to ensure the confidentially of all research participants for the Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges program thesis research study, "Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care". I agree that during and following my involvement as an Elder for this research study on the experiences of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and/or asexual (2SLGBTQ+) within the child welfare system, that I will keep the names, stories, and any identifying information, of all participants confidential and private.

_____ _____
Elder's Signature Date

_____
Elder's Name Printed

☐ Written Consent ☐ Verbal Consent

If you prefer to give verbal consent, consent will be obtained through Cree or Anishinaabe protocols of passing tobacco.

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Appendix 10: Facilitator's Guide for the Group Analysis

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care

Researcher:
Sylvia Massinon (Principle Investigator)
Master of Social Work – Indigenous Knowledge
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
[redacted]
massinon@myumanitoba.ca

Honourariums will be distributed as participants arrive, and refreshments will be made available. The researcher will introduce themselves and the Elder will introduce themselves, and the participants will be thanked for coming together to share with them today. To ensure confidentiality of group members, this will be discussed in group agreements (below). Name tags will be distributed, and participants will be asked to include on the name tags whatever name they feel comfortable using and their pronouns. Participants will be given information about the process. Housekeeping will include letting participants know about designated smoking areas, locations of washrooms, that they can take breaks as needed, and so forth. Afterwards, participants will be given opportunities to ask questions.

When the group is ready to proceed they will be given an agenda and participants will sign an oath of confidentiality. The meeting will be up to three hours and include group agreements, introductions, researcher's presentation on summaries of the responses to the main research questions in the individual interviews, group analysis, and ending with a feast.

Participants will be informed that it is the responsibility of the researcher to be mindful of time, ensure that the group agreements are held, to facilitate the discussion, and step out of the room to debrief with participants as needed.

The following information and questions will be used to guide the talking circles.

1. **Housekeeping:** Distribution of honourarium, handouts, oath of confidentiality, expectations, and relevant information.

2. **Group Agreements**: We will come up with "group agreements" (some might also call them ground rules) as a group. I will flipchart them so that we can keep them in mind. It will be the responsibility of myself to ensure that they are upheld. What are some agreements we can keep in mind to ensure that this is a safe space for everyone to share and participate?

Points to address if not brought up:

a. If you feel uncomfortable you have the right to leave or pass at any time.
b. You get to choose what you share and what you don't share in this space
c. It is important to approach this conversation from a non-judgmental place and create an environment of safety.
d. The person who is holding the stone has the space to share and it is important to listen to them and give them that space (rather than interrupting).
e. What's said in this room about people's personal stories stays in this room and your confidentiality is of extreme importance. Does anyone have any questions about confidentiality?
   When we are sharing stories that contain potentially traumatic details, even if we feel okay to speak to those experiences in a group setting, we never know what can be triggering for someone else, so I ask that we be mindful about limiting traumatic details in our sharing when possible. If someone is triggered, I encourage you to do whatever you need to do to care for yourself, including speaking to (name of Elder) or myself.

3. **Elder Opening & Smudge:** Tobacco will have been passed to a Two-Spirit Elder to begin the session with a traditional opening. To ensure that we start off in a good way, we will also begin with a smudge (smudging protocols will be explained at this time including the right to "pass" as well).

4. **Introductions:** Before beginning the talking circle, we will invite you to share the following about yourself.
   a. Name
   b. Pronouns (if you would like others to use she/her, he/him, they/them, or any other)
   c. Is there anything else you would like us to know about yourself?

5. **Researcher's Presentation on Summary of Responses to the Main Research Questions**: I would like to now present to you a summary of what was discussed in the individual interviews in response to the questions "What was your experience like as a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?" and "What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?". I look forward to the feedback and insight that you bring to this process following the presentation.

6. **Group Analysis:** You will be given the opportunity to take part in a group analysis where you will have the chance to identify any themes or patterns in the stories that you heard from the summaries. In line with talking circle protocols, we will go around the circle once giving each of you an opportunity to respond to these questions. At the end, we will go around a second time asking if there is anything else you would like to add.

   a. What similarities or differences did you notice in the summaries?
   b. What are the patterns or themes you noticed?

c. Only if you feel comfortable sharing this in the group, are the similarities or differences to your own experiences of being a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?
d. Based on what you have heard today, is there anything else you would like to mention for changes that need to happen within the child welfare system to better support 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

7. **Debriefing Period:** It is important for us to debrief while we are still together as a group to discuss how the research process has impacted you, explore unexpected negative consequences, and what you need to care for yourselves today. (Emphasize that if anyone is feeling impacted and needs to talk to someone, they are welcome to speak with the researcher or the Elder; alternatively, they can be encouraged to connect with supports in their own life or access other resources.)
    a. What has your experience been like today?
    b. What do you need to care for yourself today?

    Know that possible negative effects may arise when participation in a research process such as this one. The researcher will checking in with you by telephone, or other means (e.g. in person or email) if you do not have access to a phone, within the week, to see how you are doing. At this time, you will be provided with a list of community resources that you can access as needed.)

8. Closing Feast

Thank you very much for your time. I am grateful for your generosity in sharing your time and feedback today, and look forward to the contributions you have made to the research process.

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Appendix 11: Participants' Agenda for the Group Analysis

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+Youth in Care

Researcher:
Sylvia Massinon (Principle Investigator)
Master of Social Work – Indigenous Knowledge
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
[redacted]
massinon@myumanitoba.ca

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this group analysis. This agenda will serve as a guide so that you know what you expect in our time together. It is my intention that this gathering will be no more than three hours, which includes the feast.

Please note that this research project has been approved by the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB).

1. **Housekeeping:** Distribution of honourarium, handouts, oath of confidentiality, expectations, and relevant information.

2. **Group Agreements:** As a group, coming up with agreements that we can keep in mind to ensure that this is a safe space for people to share and participate.

3. **Elder Opening & Smudge:** Two-Spirit Elder, Albert McLeod, will begin the session with a traditional opening. To ensure that we start off in a good way, we will also begin with a smudge. Smudging protocols will be explained, which also includes your right to pass if you choose not to smudge.

4. **Introductions:** Before beginning the talking circle, you will be invited you to share the following about yourself.
    a. Name
    b. Pronouns
    c. Anything else you would like others to know about yourself

5. **Researcher's Presentation on Summary of Responses to the Main Research Questions:** This will be an opportunity for the researcher to present a summary of what was discussed in the individual interviews in response to the questions "What was your experience like as an 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?" and "What changes do you want to see in the child welfare system in Manitoba to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ youth?". I look forward to the feedback and insight that you bring to this process following the presentation.

6. **Group Analysis:** You will be given the opportunity to take part in a group analysis where you have the chance to identify any themes or patterns in the stories / summaries that you heard. In line with talking circle protocols, we will go around the circle once giving each of you an opportunity to respond to these questions. At the end, we will go around a second time asking if there is anything else you would like to add.

    a. What similarities or differences did you notice in the summaries?
    b. What are the patterns or themes you noticed?
    c. Only if you feel comfortable sharing this in the group, are the similarities or differences to your own experiences of being a 2SLGBTQ+ youth in care?
    d. Based on what you have heard today, is there anything else you would like to mention for changes that need to happen within the child welfare system to better support 2SLGBTQ+ youth??

7. **Debriefing Period:** It is important for us to debrief while we are still together to discuss how the research process has impacted you, explore unexpected negative consequences, and what you need to care for yourselves today.
    a. What has your experience been like today?
    b. What do you need to care for yourself today?

8. CLOSING FEAST

Thank you very much for your time. I am grateful for your generosity in sharing your time and stories today, and throughout this research project.

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Appendix 12: Participants Confidentiality Agreement

Study Title: Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+Youth in Care

Researcher:
Sylvia Massinon (Principle Investigator)
Master of Social Work – Indigenous Knowledge
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
[redacted]
massinon@myumanitoba.ca

As per the Research Ethics Board protocols, this form is to ensure the confidentially of all research participants for the Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges program thesis research study, "Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+LGBT2SQ+ Youth in Care". I agree that during and following my involvement for this group session, I will keep the names, stories, and any identifying information, of all participants confidential and private.

_____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Participant Printed Name

☐ Written Consent ☐ Verbal Consent

If you prefer to give verbal consent, consent will be obtained through Cree or Anishinaabe protocols of passing tobacco.

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Appendix 13: List of Available Support Resources

Crisis Services

Klinic Crisis Line
204-786-8686 or 1-888-322-3019
TTY 204-784-4097

Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line "Reason to Live"
1-877-435-7170 (1-877-HELP170)
www.reasontolive.ca

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line
1-855-242-3310
Counselling available in English and French - upon request, in Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktut

Crisis Response Centre & Mobile Crisis Services – WRHA
817 Bannatyne Avenue
Telephone: 204-940-1781.

Counselling Supports

Klinic Community Health
870 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg MB
Telephone: (204) 784-4067
Email: dropin@klinic.mb.ca
www.klinic.mb.ca/in-person-counselling/klinic-drop-in-counselling /
Monday, Friday, Saturday Noon-4PMl; Tuesday and Thursday Noon-7PM

Rainbow Resource Centre
170 Scott Street, Winnipeg MB
Telephone: 204-474-0212 ext 201
www.rainbowresourcecentre.org/
Call on a Monday morning at 10:00 am to book a counselling appointment.