# Healing Historical Trauma through Resurgence and Radical Resistance

by

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## Abstract

For 500 years, Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island[1] have had to contend with colonial tactics intended to displace, dispossess, disconnect, and disempower Indigenous peoples from their relationships with their territories and their cultural identities. Historical Trauma theory explains these colonial experiences cause disruption and disconnection within Indigenous peoples who now exhibit historical trauma symptoms. This research project is essential because it focuses on how Indigenous peoples can heal from these experiences. Grounded in an Indigenous research paradigm, six participants engaged in six individual one-on-one visits and four days of group work, revealing how resurgence and radical resistance heals historical trauma. Findings show that healing does not occur in isolation, nor is it based solely on the present. For the participants, healing historical trauma by choice is key, the past, present and future is understood through radical resistance, and resurgence resists the compounding affects of historical trauma. Recommendations speak to the necessity of the individual beginning their healing journey, radiating outwards to include family and community to be supportive and to join in on the healing. There is a need for advanced healing programming, education reform, helpful allies, and an anti-colonial shift in how the state provides funding to Indigenous organizations and communities who are engaged in healing practices.

[1] Turtle Island is the name Indigenous peoples held for the continent North America prior to colonization, and includes Canada and the United States of America.

**Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my children, *Misko Dibiki-Giizis* and *Ghaanadazhic Binesiiwag*, without whom I would not be the person I am today.

Thank you for choosing me to be your mother. I love you to the moon and back.

and

To my ancestors, who walk alongside me, guiding me, loving me. Miigwetch for your sacrifices in holding onto this traditional way of life because without it, I would be lost.

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Thank you to my parents, Denise and Darrell Bear, for being there for us, for pushing me to further my education, for reminding me of ceremony and the importance of healing.

To my grandparents, for the knowledge and wisdom you have gifted me with through the years. I think about the things you have shared with me often and crave more.

To MK. You are an incredible person. I have learned so much from you. Words cannot express my gratitude for all your hard work. It wouldn't have been the same with anyone else.

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To my courageous, determined, inspiring participants. You are the rock-stars! Look at what you helped create! Wow! I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your time, words, vulnerability and good heart work you put into this project. I hope I translated what you shared with me correctly, and that we all carry on in the healing work we do to reclaim and renew our relationships with who we are.

To Garry, our Elder for this research project. Even though our time together was short-lived, I will carry you in my heart forever and hope we can work together again one day. Miigwetch!

To *Anakwudwubisayquay*. I love you and cherish you.

The Wolf Pack! Keep going y'all! A-woooo!

To Peguis Post-Secondary School Board, who funded this journey. I deeply appreciate and value the gift of being financially funded. Many miigwetch's!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to Research and Researcher

Historical Trauma theory explains the adverse socio-psychological-economic symptoms displayed by Indigenous peoples[2] are caused from experiencing colonization (Brave Heart, 1998). The history of colonization is lengthy and sordid, but it is necessary to provide context to this story of trauma. Pre-contact Indigenous nations held their own ways of releasing trauma, loss and grief (Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998), but with the intentional interjection of western worldviews from settler colonialism this was interrupted through legally imposed heteropatriarchal, oppressive, assimilative legislation (Brave Heart, 1998; Finley, 2011; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Mitchell, 2017). The result was Indigenous peoples displaced, dispossessed, disconnected, and disempowered from their traditional ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being, triggering trauma and unresolved grief expressed through suicide, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, rage, and mental health issues (Brave Heart, 1998). This thesis is an essential study because Indigenous peoples are still attempting to recover from colonization and oppression within a racialized space (Razack, 2000). Within the research, the solution is clear: to heal historical trauma we must initiate the grieving process our ancestors could not, then, we must reclaim our Indigenous identity and return to our original ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being, through the engagement of ceremonies, medicines, land, and languages (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998; Simpson, 2017).

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to continue the healing of historical trauma in a Manitoba context. Due to legislation outlawing pre-contact Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being, many Indigenous peoples have become disconnected from their indigeneity and their

[2] The term Indigenous peoples refers to people who identify as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada.

traditional cultures, so were unable to resolve their trauma and grief for generations (Brave Heart, 1998; Hart & Rowe, 2014). Today, legislation no longer outlaws our indigeneity, ceremonies, and ways of healing, so I will continue to participate in and contribute to the healing efforts our Elders/Knowledge Keepers[3] engage in, with reclaiming our ways and initiating the release of historical trauma. In honour of the resistance our ancestors have done to hold onto this way of being, and in the spirit of collectivity and reciprocity, this thesis is meant to be shared freely with whomever seeks the solution to healing historical trauma with a good heart.

**Objectives**

The objectives of this study are four-fold. First, since the public education system is a tool for indoctrination and settler colonialism (Adams, 1999; Meissner & Whyte, 2017), it is unlikely my participants were taught the true history of colonization, so I want to provide educational workshops on colonization. Accompanying colonial history will be the history of our ancestors, both pre-contact and post-contact, which cannot be forgotten because within it holds a guide to collective healing and resistance held by our ancestors who fought to hold onto our traditional knowledge (Simpson, 2017). Second, by presenting this knowledge, I wish to raise my participants critical consciousness in the hopes to empower a shift toward engaging in resurgence and radical resistance (Rowe & Kirkpatrick, 2018; Simpson, 2017). After learning the true history of colonization and what my people endured, I was blessed to experience this personally where I felt a change occur within. With education comes the strength to "point out and name colonialism, resist and even mobilize to change it" (Simpson, 2017, p. 1). This is an empowering feeling that I hope as many Indigenous people as possible can experience.

[3] Knowledge Keepers are the ones who carry traditional Indigenous ceremonial and sacred knowledges to be shared with the next generation.

Third, through education of this history, I wish to use Historical Trauma Theory to explain the current socio-economic context held by Indigenous peoples. Essentially, we did not get here on our own. These terrible things were done to us intentionally because of the settlers' desire to access the land and exploit it for resource extraction (Alfred, 2009). By presenting the connection between colonization and historical trauma theory, I will alleviate the guilt and shame created from enduring the politics of recognition[4] (Coulthard, 2006). My fourth and final objective is to help my participants initiate their journey of releasing trauma and grief through psychoeducational groupwork (Brave Heart, 1998). Indigenous people are a collective people, and these social injustices were done to us collectively, so to overcome this trauma and grief, we must heal collectively as well. We must not get stuck in the anger of colonization. We must move past the anger and begin healing from the wrongs that were, and continue to be done to us. Otherwise, the settler objective to destroy Indigenous peoples has been accomplished.

**Rationale**

Working with trauma can be an intimidating experience. Living with trauma, even more so. My rationale for engaging in this research project is love. I love my Indigenous relatives and I believe we deserve this opportunity to heal our historical trauma. While I am aware there are risks involved in working with trauma for myself, my participants and their families, I believe the benefits outweigh the risks. Healing from historical trauma is possible (Brave Heart, 1998), and I want to bring Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's work to Manitoba.

**Grounding of Self**

[4] Politics of recognition is the perspective or viewpoint one population holds regarding another population. In this context, I am referring to the perspective that settlers hold for Indigenous peoples in that Indigenous peoples are viewed as derogatory savages, making Indigenous peoples less human and justifying their mistreatment.

I am an Anishinaabe woman, who grew up on Peguis First Nation Reserve in Treaty One territory. My traditional name is *Ozhaawashko-Binishii Niimekaage*[5]. My Warrior Name is *Mukaday Mikinak Ogitchidaa Ikwe*[6], and I come from the Prairie Bear Clan. I attribute the beginning of my family's healing journey with my grandmother, Josephine Bear, who started her healing journey more than 35 years ago. I thank my mother, Denise Bear, who introduced me to our traditional culture and encouraged that relationship as a source of healing, strength, and guidance. I thank my father, Darrell Bear, for showing me what an *Ogitchidaa*[7] looks like. But, just like nearly every other Indigenous person, my childhood held trauma. I intend no disrespect to my parents and I acknowledge they did the best they could to parent me. I am grateful for all they did to heal themselves because it helped me carry on my own healing and provide a better life for my children. Since I became a mother, my desire to heal has intensified along with a desire to know more about my own Indigenous identity. Everything I engage in towards helping, healing, sharing knowledge, and fighting for a better world is for them. I want to give them a better mother and a better world. A mother who can give them a loving childhood, one that is filled with memories of being around medicines, ceremonies, relationships to land and relatives, and a solid foundation of knowing who they are as an Indigenous person. Education and awareness are a powerful gift. One that I do not take lightly and am grateful for every day. I want to give that gift to my children and to other Indigenous people. I want to learn how I can be the best helper I can be because it pains me to think of everything that has happened to me and my people because of colonization. I have witnessed the symptoms of historical trauma and unresolved grief within myself and other Indigenous peoples, and it is difficult to say the least.

[5] Dancing Blue Bird
[6] Black Turtle Warrior Woman
[7] A being with a great heart

This project is very close to my heart, so I worked hard to do this right, respectfully, and safe. I want to witness my people healing and helping each other collectively once again. I believe we have a rich, powerful culture; powerful enough to overcome the complexity of historical trauma and unresolved grief.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island have had to contend with the debauchery of Europeans since they landed on this continent. Held by the Europeans was a vastly different worldview causing traumatic, pervasive, devastating and overwhelming impacts that Indigenous peoples are still, to this day, working to overcome (Brave Heart, 1998; Brown Rice, 2013; Frideres & Gadacz, 2012; Hart & Rowe, 2014). First, I will present the history of Turtle Island's colonization to explain how Historical Trauma Theory exists and persists within Indigenous communities, families and individuals. It is essential to be aware of the fact that Turtle Island's Indigenous peoples have been displaced, dispossessed, disconnected, and disempowered by the infliction of heteropatriarchal legislation, causing massive loss of land, culture, and generations of family members (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Cannon, 2019; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). By outlining the history of colonization, I hope to convey that the trauma felt by Indigenous peoples is externally sourced, politically motivated, and highly intentional (Alfred, 2009). Second, I will examine the felt affects of surviving colonial history through the lens of Historical Trauma Theory, epigenetics, and current research projects, which explains that the current socio-psychological-economic issues exhibited by many Indigenous peoples are known as historical loss symptoms and historical unresolved grief (Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins & Altschul, 2011). Finally, while education about the history of colonization is an objective, I do not wish to stay stuck in that angry space, which is why I will end this literature review with an overview of resurgence and radical resistance as a choice of healing from historical trauma and what this means to me as an Indigenous researcher and helper. Ultimately, I will convey that the trauma felt by Indigenous

people is collective, meaning we are not in this alone. We must rely on each other to heal and return to our collective ways.

**History of Colonization**

While the history of colonization is not the focus of this literature review, it is essential to provide context to this story of trauma. In the beginning, most Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, such as the Ojibway, held a way of being that can be described as egalitarian and collective, using a traditional clan system to support each other, often distributing wealth amongst each clan ensuring a democratic, peaceful, and just society (Hart & Rowe, 2014). Complementing this way of being was a matrilineal kinship within each tribe (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Remnants of this way are not lost, as Josephine Bear, an Elder in Peguis, shares how women were highly valued and respected in this society, as they were the life-givers and protected by the community (personal communication, November 22, 2019). The value of Indigenous women did not stop at giving life. They were also a vital part of running the household, where they would hunt and gather for the family (Stevenson, 2011), run powerful ceremonies, such as the sundance (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996), and participate in tribal decisions (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). The leaders of Indigenous nations were elected "only by consent and will of their people" (RCAP, 1996, p. 71).

Throughout everything, the land was paramount to survival and way of life. It was not considered merely a means to food and drink. There is a deep spiritual connection Indigenous peoples hold to the land, where we believe everything is interconnected and interrelated with all life, including rocks, plants, and animals (Baskin, 2016). This deep respect Indigenous peoples hold for the land influences our every move, from where we hunt and gather, where we perform our ceremony, and where we raise our children. "Land is medicine" (Yerxa, 2014, p. 159), and

"our land-based practices carry the very essence of who we are as Anishinaabeg" (p. 161). Simpson (2014) captures the concept of how land engages with us best.

> The land, *aki*, is both context and process. The process of coming to know is learner-led and profoundly spiritual in nature. Coming to know is the pursuit of whole body intelligence practised in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, inter-dependent and self-regulating community minded individuals. (Simpson, 2014, p. 7)

Indigenous peoples were thriving, all of which would begin to change upon the arrival of the Europeans.

Initially, Indigenous peoples held power due to their numbers; it is theorized that the Indigenous population ranged from 500,000 to two million (RCAP, 1996). During this point in time, many events were occurring, with some simultaneously. One, Indigenous peoples were helping the early French immigrants survive by teaching them subsistence strategies suited for the territory (Stevenson, 2011). Two, the fur-trade was developing where the Indigenous were main contributors to this success (Stevenson, 2011). Three, the introduction of diseases, such as smallpox, tuberculosis, influenza, scarlet fever, and measles, wiped out as much as 80% of the Indigenous population (Frideres & Gadacz, 2012; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). The introduction of diseases may not have been intentional in the beginning, but it quickly turned intentional and deliberate, resembling biological warfare[8] (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). In a letter written in 1763 by Jeffery Amherst, an English Field Marshall, Amherst states, "You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets, as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race" (Gill, 2017, "Inoculate the Indians").

[8] Biological warfare – also known as germ warfare – is the use of biological toxins or infectious agents such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi with the intent to kill or cause harm.

Amherst is referring to intentionally spreading smallpox to Indigenous peoples through sharing infected blankets for the purposes of reproductive sterilization and/or intent to kill (Gill, 2017, "Inoculate the Indians"). Four, with Indigenous numbers dwindling from deaths related to disease and a decline in the fur-trade market, a power shift was happening in the Europeans favour (Hart & Rowe, 2014). Indigenous peoples no longer held the numbers to cause "a serious military threat to Britain's colonial aspirations and the colonial regime" (Alfred, 2009, p. 46), allowing the fifth happening to occur. Five, with Indigenous numbers dwindling, the Europeans true intentions emerged: gaining territorial control of Indigenous lands for resource extraction to generate profit (Alfred, 2009).

The Europeans discovered that Indigenous peoples would not simply abandon their traditional territories, so they realized they would need to "harness, or at least neutralize, the activities of the Aboriginal population" (Frideres & Gidacz, 2012). From a theoretical perspective of the process of colonization, Smith (2012) explains that colonization is one expression of imperialism that "frames the indigenous experience" (p. 20) and is explained with four different aspirations: "(1) imperialism as economic expansion; (2) imperialism as the subjugation of 'others'; (3) imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization; and (4) imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge" (p. 22). Settlers realized that in order to neutralize Indigenous peoples and gain control of economic expansion, Indigenous peoples had to be subjugated, which was accomplished through the politics of recognition and systematic legislation. First, the *British Royal Proclamation of 1763* was a key piece of legislation as it "identified the Crown as the only legitimate force to enter treaty negotiations with First Nations for access to their land, and unilaterally placed First Nations peoples and their lands under the dominion and protection of the British Crown" (Hart & Rowe, 2014, p. 24). Then, the *1867*

*British North America Act* "gave the Federal Government of Canada exclusive jurisdiction over the administration of Indians and lands reserved for Indians" (Stevenson, 2011, p. 50). Finally, treaties, a document intended to agree on a relationship, were signed between Indigenous nations and settlers, but each signee held vastly different ideas what these treaties meant (TRC, 2015). When Indigenous nations signed into treaties with the Europeans, they thought they were signing into an agreement to share in the land, but to the Europeans, Indigenous peoples were signing over their lands (TRC, 2015). Because of this difference in intention, treaties between the British and Indigenous peoples negotiated from the 1790s and onward, were rarely honoured the way they should have been (TRC, 2015). Often, treaties were created under bribery, coercion, threats, and false promises, or were ignored entirely by the British North American authorities (TRC, 2015). With the land under colonial legislation, the Indigenous peoples on treaty land, the next step was to gain control of the bodies of Indigenous peoples.

The era of gaining control through colonial legislation continued with the creation of the *Indian Act* in 1876. The TRC (2015) describes the *Indian Act* as a document that commits cultural genocide, although some would go further to say that it commits genocide. There is no greater displacing, dispossessing, disconnecting and disempowering force than the *Indian Act*, which was created to control and assimilate every Indigenous person into the politics of Canada (TRC, 2015). The *Indian Act* displaces by working alongside treaties, removing Indigenous peoples from their territories (RCAP, 1996). The *Indian Act* dispossesses by determining who holds Indian[9] status through the use of European heteropatriarchal legislation, which is "rooted in religiously authorized ethnocentrism and monotheistic exclusivism [or normalizing] heterosexuality" (Cannon, 2019, p. 14). The *Indian Act* carries with it pervasive disconnecting

[9] The term Indian is the legal and political terminology used by the Government of Canada in identifying an Indigenous person who carries Treaty rights.

powers that reach into all aspects of Indigenous peoples lives. It outlawed Indigenous ceremonies, gatherings, and cultural expressions, separating us and attempting to break our bonds held with the land and each other (TRC, 2015), and thus our interconnectedness and interrelatedness with our surroundings, creation, and the very essence of who we are as Indigenous peoples (Yerxa, 2014). The *Indian Act* further disconnected generations of Indigenous families by legalizing the Residential School system, day schools and the 60s scoop, forcefully disconnecting children from their families and communities for many traumatic and terrible years (TRC, 2015). The affects Residential School survivors endure, embodies historical trauma and is displayed by the current Indigenous population across Canada. The *Indian Act* further disconnected us from our traditional values we held toward our two-spirit relatives and the values of women as life-givers in the community (Kelm & Smith, 2018). The *Indian Act* disempowered Indigenous peoples through intensive, pervasive power and control that outlawed our traditional governance, our protest, our sacred objects, our culture, our language, and thus, our identities (Kelm & Smith, 2018).

While the *Indian* Act was gathering stability for long-term stay, it was accompanied with the implementation of social structures geared toward the erasure and oppression of Indigenous peoples, also known as settler colonialism (Meissner & White, 2017). Kelm and Smith (2018) define settler colonialism as, “a variant of imperialism in which the settlers come to stay” (p. 1), where Indigenous peoples relationships and “rights to land and resources, are obstacles that must be eliminated” (p. 2). It is essential to point out that all literature, written by Indigenous scholars or allies, pinpoint the adverse shift in Indigenous well-being, or lack thereof, to the pain and trauma caused from experiencing colonization (Adams, 2016; Alfred, 2009; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Castellano, 2006; Dorman, Biedermann, Linklater & Jaffer, 2018; Finley, 2011;

Frideres & Gadacz, 2012; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Linklater, 2014; Marsh, Cote-Meek, Young, Najavits & Toulouse, 2016; Mitchell, 2017; Nutton & Fast, 2015; Razack, 2000; RCAP, 1996; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). The authors are precise with their intent. They, along with myself, wish to convey that many injustices have been done intentionally to the Indigenous peoples of Canada and that we did not come to depict high rates of suicide, substance abuse, domestic violence, abuse within families, child welfare and justice involvement, and mental health issues on our own. The trauma that is displayed by Indigenous peoples is rooted in social injustices that have been inflicted for generations, legally imposed by heteropatriarchal and oppressive legislation (Adams, 2016; Hart & Rowe, 2014). These traumatic experiences of colonialism and settler colonialism have led to the development of Historical Trauma Theory, which explains the trauma symptoms Indigenous peoples exhibit.

**Historical Trauma Theory**

In the late 1980s, a Lakota woman by the name of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart connected the genocidal dots and theorized that the trauma felt by Holocaust survivors and their children, could be applied to her own Lakota people who experienced colonization (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Brave Heart developed Historical Trauma (HT) Theory, and defined it as, "cumulative trauma – collective and compounding emotional and psychic wounding - both over the life span and across generations" (Brave Heart, 1998, p. 288). Brave Heart theorizes that due to the destructive nature of colonization that has spanned over generations in a pervasive manner, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, now live with intergenerational group trauma that is expressed in collective, cumulative, and complex ways, also known as Historical Trauma Response (HTR). Brave Heart has gathered data on HTR, which include symptoms such as, "elevated mortality rates and health problems emanating from heart disease, hypertension,

alcohol abuse, suicidal behaviour" (Brave Heart, 1999, p. 1), high rates of homicide, accidental deaths, domestic violence, child abuse (Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998), mental health issues, rage, and PTSD symptoms (Brave Heart et al., 2011).

HTR is cumulative because of the manner Indigenous peoples experienced loss in the past, and in present day. In the past, colonization stole foundational pieces of identity from Indigenous peoples: connection to the land, language, freedom, children, sacred items, and it outlawed our ceremonial practices (TRC, 2015). These things, specifically our ceremonial practices, helped Indigenous peoples grieve their trauma and pain in a collective supported manner, so when the Europeans banned these practices, or took away our sacred items, including our children, it prevented our ancestors from processing their grief (Brave Heart, 1998). Additionally, it was not just one generation who experienced a loss; it was grandparents losing their land, parents losing a child, then the child experiencing residential school. It was an accumulation of loss after loss, for generations. They were essentially stuck with this disenfranchised grief, unable to publicly mourn and release their emotions in a healthy way (Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998).

In the present day, it is cumulative in five ways. First, Indigenous peoples are still oppressed through racist legislation, such as the *Indian Act*, and societal systems that work to erase, assimilate and oppress, such as education systems, justice systems, and the child welfare system (Adams, 1999). Second, through settler colonialism the Europeans have created a world where not enough people remember the horrors of colonization. Lefevre (2015) defines settler colonialism as an unending structure of colonial oppression, where the colonizing societies goal is to dispossess the original inhabitants of their territories through erasure of their history and presence of said original inhabitants in their territories. This erasure of history is consistently

accomplished through the public education system, which is a tool used by colonizers for indoctrination, blinding all to colonial history who attend (Adams, 1999). Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains how knowledge and history are intertwined to oppress.

> History is also about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalized and Othered. (Smith, 1999, p. 34)

Third, colonization has worked to some degree because many Indigenous peoples have been disconnected from the healing power of their ceremonies, medicines, culture, and home communities, and struggle returning to these healing methods for various reasons. Fourth, Fanon's work surrounding the politics of recognition explains that the "colonized populations tend to internalize the derogatory messages imposed in them by their colonial 'masters'" (as cited in Coulthard, 2006, p. 10). Ultimately, these four ways work together to wound and oppress current generations, causing HTR to be expressed in new, complex ways, in new developing societal contexts. This inability to process HTR is conceptualized as historical unresolved grief (Brave Heart, 1998).

Historical unresolved grief is a component of HTR (Brave Heart & Debruyn, 2011), and a result of cumulative HT (Brave Heart, 1999). Historical unresolved grief is the profound grief that Indigenous peoples feel from the generations of disconnection experienced in the past (Brave Heart, 1998). This grief is compounded further from current racist beliefs and perceptions held by the dominant Western society (Brave Heart, 1998), which excludes, marginalizes and Otheres Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999). It is the grief our ancestors were unable to mourn, that was passed onto this current generation unintentionally through HTR (Brave Heart, 1998). It

has been described as “delayed mourning” (Brave Heart, 1999, p. 3), which accompanies the experience of profound generational disconnection and trauma. An individual with historical unresolved grief, HT, the symptoms that follow, and societal marginalization, inevitably pass on trauma responses to “successive generations through environmental and psychological factors, and prejudice and discrimination” (Brown-Rice, 2013, p. 118). Which brings me to my fifth explanation of how HTR is cumulative: epigenetics and environmental stressors.

**Epigenetics and Historical Trauma**

There is physiological evidence that HTR is cumulative, but first, an overview of structures in the brain will help explain how these structures are related to the stress response. Trauma has been well researched, and it has been proven that trauma disrupts the homeostasis of the human body – otherwise known as the steady state of internal functioning (Wade, Tavris, Garry, Saucier & Elias, 2016). The homeostasis of the human body is controlled by the same organ, the hypothalamus, that controls the fight or flight response and is considered a part of the limbic system that is heavily associated with the emotions fear and rage (Wade et al., 2016). It has been proven that when a person experiences a traumatic event, they become more sensitive to that particular stimulus (Brown-Rice, 2013). Brohawn, Offringa, Pfaff, Hughes and Shin (2010) explain this happens because the individual’s amygdala adapts to their perceived environment and becomes overactive. The amygdala is a part of the limbic system mentioned earlier and is responsible for evaluating sensory information and determining whether the information is important to remember or not (Wade et al., 2016). These structures and their functions have been developed over centuries and were essential to survive threats (Wade et al., 2016).

Scientists now understand that both the environment (nurture) and heredity (nature) consistently interact with each other to express physiological and physical traits, otherwise known as our genetic expression (Wade et al., 2016). The idea that our experiences or environment, influence our genetic expression is the study of epigenetics (Wade et al., 2016). Our limbic system reacting and changing to stress and trauma is proof of this. Confirming this is Brian Dias who conducted an experiment with male mice, where he introduced the sweet smell of almond followed by a mild foot shock (as cited in Hughes, 2014). This was done over a period of time, at which point the males were then allowed to mate (as cited in Hughes, 2014). The offspring were found to have the genetic expression of sensitivity to the smell of almonds, as well as a higher likelihood of being startled while the smell was present (as cited in Hughes, 2014). Diaz explains this is due to epigenetics – where the chemical changes to the genome influences the genetic expression, without altering the DNA sequence (as cited in Hughes, 2014).

Conching and Thayer (2019) proved epigenetics also occurs in instances where historical trauma is involved and that it does affect current and future generations. By utilizing a two-pathway model, they were able to prove two things. One, populations who experience historical trauma are more likely to develop poor health outcomes through epigenetic mechanisms, meaning the environment triggers their genome expression causing things such as an increased sensitivity to stress and trauma (Conching & Thayer, 2019). The stress hormone cortisol has been known to cause damage to internal systems when activated over an extended period of time, leading to hypertension and depression (Wade et al., 2016), which coincidentally are HTR symptoms. Two, the intergenerational effects found within the parent's epigenetic expressions in pathway one influenced the epigenome in their offspring, meaning they passed their trauma influenced genome onto their child (Conching & Thayer, 2019). Finally, prenatal exposure to the

stress hormone cortisol has been known to cause damage to the fetus, increasing the risk of cognitive and emotional problems later on their life, as well as vulnerability to diseases (Wade et al., 2016).

Now, imagine an entire community enduring stress and trauma over generations. This is Historical Trauma Theory: masses of populations experiencing the same stressor over a period of time together (Brave Heart, 1998). The cumulative factor presents itself in the following way: the previous generation (the parents) would have been forbidden to engage in their cultural ways, thus unable to heal or release their trauma. This would cause their genome to adapt to their stressful environment, passing their changed genome onto their child. The child inherits the parent's genome, which are now coded to be sensitive to trauma and stress, and are also born into an environment where the parents have historical unresolved grief and express HTR, thus altering the child's genetic code even further due to their own environment stressors and influences (Conching & Thayer, 2019). Add in attending residential school, day school, being a survivor of the 60s scoop, or living in a world where discrimination and systemic racism is the norm, both the child and their parents are living in a world where their genome is changing further. The child has both the genetics passed on, and is experiencing the historical trauma responses expressed by the parent. This continues accumulating until a generation begins to heal the historical trauma and historical unresolved grief.

**Current Research using Historical Trauma Theory**

After Brave Heart created this theory, many scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have taken up this theory and used it to understand the impacts of colonization. Brave Heart has applied her theory in a short-term, psychoeducational program, entitled Return to the Sacred Path (Brave Heart, 1998). She gathered Lakota participants and collected data on

their traumatic grief from experiences such as: the assassination of Sitting Bull, who personified Lakota resistance; the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, where hundreds of Lakota were murdered and their bodies thrown into a mass grave resembling the Holocaust; the forced removal of Lakota children to attend boarding school, where they experienced horrific abuses similar to Canada's residential school children; and finally, the boarding school death rates, where as many as one-third of Lakota children passed from tuberculosis or abuse (Brave Heart, 1998). Again, in this study, Brave Heart (1998) highlighted the cumulative effects of experiencing loss after loss in a rapid manner, concluding that HTR complicates historical unresolved grief.

In regards to solutions for overcoming HT and historical unresolved grief, Brave Heart (1998) hypothesized three things in her study: HT education can lead to awareness and understanding about HT, HTR, and historical unresolved grief; sharing this new knowledge with other Lakota people is liberating and cathartic; and psychoeducation leads to healing and initiating that long-awaited mourning process. One missing piece from Brave Heart's (1998) particular study was returning to Lakota ways, which research from other Indigenous scholars identifies as an integral part of healing. Although, I believe she did this intentionally, as her four-day program focused on initiating mourning and reframing past traumas.

> Neither Wounded Knee nor the generational boarding school trauma can be forgotten. However, the Lakota must shift from identifying with the victimization and massacre of deceased ancestors and begin to develop a constructive collective memory and a healthy collective ego, which includes traditional Lakota values and language. (Brave Heart, 1998, p. 302)

Lawson-Te Aho (2014) took a similar approach to work with Māori women and their historical trauma. Lawson-Te Aho (2014) gathered five Māori women from the same tribal community, educated them on Māori history and how colonial forces have interrupted their way of living, then revisited and re-narrated the pain and trauma they felt from experiencing colonization. Lawson-Te Aho (2014) confirmed Brave Hearts' hypothesis that creating awareness "creates access to healing through the achievement of consciousness of the impacts of history" (p. 181). By providing an outlet for testimony, the resilience of ancestral survival was highlighted, "providing insights very deep in the psyche and spirit of Indigenous peoples that reflect legacies of courage and determination to overcome" (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014, p. 183). This resembles the concept of blood memory that is spoken of by numerous scholars and healers, and is defined as "the collection of memories that we are born with" (Linklater, 2014, p. 23). By educating one on the histories of injustices, there are one of two things that can happen: "a determination to heal, or an insurmountable helplessness" (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014, p. 184), which is why the environment to this education and raising awareness must be prepared correctly. Otherwise, we risk our participants leaving feeling as though they cannot resist the pressure from oppression and assimilation (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014).

**Limitations of Historical Trauma Theory**

Thankfully, the literature has pointed out the limitations. Brave Heart (1999) noticed that more research needed to be done on gender differences in expression of HTR, so she completed a study that following year. She found that females expressed more internally projected stressors, such as depression or mental health issues, while the males projected their HTR more externally, such as through violence (Brave Heart, 1999). Another limitation that was noted amongst the research gathered is more empirical evidence of health and emotional impacts (Brave Heart et

al., 2011; Conching & Thayer, 2019). Empirically measuring emotions would be difficult as each individual would have their unique mental health state, which would affect their tolerance levels for stress. Additionally, depending on where they reside, their support system and access to support services would alleviate or aggravate these levels. We also need to consider the level of prevalent systemic racism where they reside, which influences an individual's desire to seek the support they need.

**Resurgence and Radical Resistance**

It is difficult to create a single simple definition of resurgence, as it presents as complex, embodying multiple attributes that work together to achieve the goal of decolonization. Resurgence is a self-transformative act that requires strength, clarity and commitment, where one regenerates, "Indigenous intelligence so that we can begin to use our own conceptual framework to make choices as we move through the world" (Alfred, 2005, p. 199). Simpson (2017) describes Indigenous intelligence as, "Biiskabiyang – the process of returning to ourselves, a reengagement with the things we have left behind, a reemergence, an unfolding from the inside out – is a concept, an individual and collective process of decolonization and resurgence" (p. 17). Resurgent self-transformation requires, "Engaging in deep and reciprocal indigeneity…because it fundamentally changes…how we conceptualize nationhood" (Simpson, 2017, p. 19). In other words, resurgence is a return to Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being, to turn away from the colonial mindset that we exist on an individual level into the collective level where we thrive in a deep reciprocal sustaining relationship with the land (Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2017). Resurgence is practiced in daily personal and collective place-based practices.

> These daily acts of renewal, whether through prayer, speaking your language, honouring your ancestors, etc., are the foundations of resurgence. It is through this renewal process

> that commitments are made to reclaim and restore cultural practices that have been neglected and/or disrupted. (Corntassel, 2012, p.89).

The theory of resurgence has been well-discussed since its' emergence. It has proven extremely useful when utilized as a tool for focusing decolonizing action toward political resistance, personal and community healing, re-engagement with Indigenous ways of being, resisting the omnipresent colonial efforts of the state (Alfred, 2005), and protecting the ecological rights of our Mother Earth (Dhillon, 2022). In fact, the theory of resurgence can be applied to any situation where achieving Indigenous intelligence and thought processes are needed. Still today, Indigenous academics and scholars engage with this term in constant evolution, yet the foundation of resurgence has remained steadfast, despite the shifting climate we engage resurgence in. Alfred (2005) warns, before one can engage effectively in resurgence, we must first heal "our minds and hearts [from] the stains of colonialism" (p. 180), otherwise we risk complicitly reifying "the social and political foundations of injustice" (p. 180) in an alternate, yet with the same intention, form of colonialism. Stains of colonialism include colonial thought concepts that have been infused into our Indigenous minds, hearts and bodies that consist of valuing capitalism, individualistic self-priority, harmful hierarchal systems of power, heteropatriarchy, the idea that Indigenous people do not deserve to take up space, fear, arrogance and entitlement, and lack of value placed onto our Elders (Alfred, 2005). These stains include the trauma from being displaced, dispossessed, disconnected and disempowered through colonization, otherwise known as historical trauma. Becoming aware of these stains is where radical resistance comes in.

Resisting is not new to Indigenous peoples. Our ancestors utilized many ways to hold onto our knowledge and ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being so we can appreciate them

today. Radical resistance is a term in Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson's book, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. Simpson (2017) defines radical resistance as Indigenous resistance where Indigenous peoples engage in deep rejection of the place-based colonialism that has caused harm and dispossession of Indigenous bodies and land. This rejection of place-based colonial systems is born from education and awareness of how these state-sanctioned systems and thought processes have affected us and our Indigenous relatives on an individual and collective level (Simpson, 2017). It is radical because it is Indigenous focused and grounded in Indigenous intelligence, where we become aware of colonial events that have caused harm in Indigenous peoples minds, hearts and bodies through the lens of Indigenous theory (Simpson, 2017). It is interconnected and intertwined with resurgence because both are about committing bravely to change born through education and awareness (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2017). When one engages in resurgence and radical resistance, there comes the power of choice, which is why resurgence and radical resistance are capable of healing historical trauma on an individual and generational level.

**Conclusion**

When we reflect on the timeline of colonization, we can recognize patterns of disruption to our ways of being, hearts, minds and bodies, which has caused historical trauma to be expressed within Indigenous people. Historical trauma theory does hold intergenerational affects felt by Indigenous families and relatives, but we also hold the potential to heal these same affects through the engagement of resurgence and radical resistance. The research is clear and our Elders/Knowledge Keepers have always known: healing historical trauma is possible, and can be done through reclaiming our Indigenous identity (Adams, 2016; Alfred, 2005; Brave Heart,

1998; Brown-Rice, 2013; Castellano, 2006; Dorman et al., 2018; Lawson-Te Aho, 2014; Linklater, 2018; Marsh et al., 2016; Mitchell, 2017; Nutton & Fast, 2015; Rowe & Kirkpatrick, 2018; RCAP, 1996; Simpson, 2011, 2017; TRC, 2015; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004; Yerxa, 2014). Despite the overwhelmingly negative lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, the fact that we are still here, and that we still have our Elders/Knowledge Keepers to turn to, to reclaim our ancient knowledge, our story does carry a hopeful element. Indigenous peoples cannot lose sight of this fact. Despite how difficult acknowledging the past to build awareness and historical understanding is, it is essential for healing and growth. We must understand the pain, so we can grow past the pain. Indigenous peoples are not victims. We are survivors, so we must reframe our history as a story of survival and resilience that is not over yet. We are still writing it and we are not done yet.

## Chapter 3: An Indigenous Research Paradigm

A "relational way of being [is] at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (Wilson, 2008, p. 80). This concept informed my decisions while creating this research project. I not only wanted to build relationships with my participants, I also wanted to understand how they see their relationship with their indigeneity. This next section will discuss how I answered my research question through utilizing Indigenous research methodologies and methods. As primary researcher, I worked to create a research project with a foundation of Indigenous ways of being, knowing, doing, and seeing, so my participants and myself could remain grounded as if we were in ceremony together. Due to the devastating effects of colonization and many Indigenous peoples adopting state-sanctioned labelling of 'being Aboriginal', I sought participants who self-identified as Indigenous. This allowed me to find participants who held a genuine curiosity in reconnecting to their indigeneity and who were eager to participate in my research project. This section also explores and explains the risks that were mitigated and the benefits a participant could expect if they chose to participate. Finally, my data analysis process and ethical considerations will also be described.

### Research Question

Colonization has affected every Indigenous person across Turtle Island. Historical trauma (HT) is present in Indigenous peoples because of colonization, what was taken from us, and what is enforced on us. For over a century and continuing today, colonization has dictated every area of Indigenous lives, from where we live, how we live, our language and cultural practices, our parenting skills, our connection to Mother Earth, our physical health and sense of identity, and has left us with this massive sense of disconnection (Brave Heart, 1998). As a result, the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island express and display HTR to varying degrees. HT is

overwhelming, complex, and expressed in many ways. Due to the complexity of this situation, my research question is: How do we heal historical trauma through resurgence and radical resistance?

**Indigenous Research Methodologies**

It is important to acknowledge theories as they are what guide research projects. Only recently have Indigenous researchers been 'allowed' to conduct research on their own terms (Wilson, 2008). Indigenous researchers can thank Māori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith for her sentinel work, *Decolonizing Methodologies (1999)*. Since then, Indigenous researchers have jumped on the proverbial 'decolonizing bandwagon' doing "research that emanates from, honours and illuminates their world views" (Wilson, 2008, p. 54). "'Theories', as they are seen through the eyes of science, do exist in Anishinaabe knowledge systems, and are contained in stories, teachings, values, beliefs, ceremonies, songs, dances, and other practices" (McGregor, Restoule, & Johnston, 2018, p. 244). Smith (2012) takes this idea further by detailing exactly how theory can benefit Indigenous peoples.

> At the very least it helps make sense of reality. It enables us to make assumptions and predictions about the world in which we live. It contains within it a method or methods for selecting and arranging, for prioritizing and legitimating what we see and do. Theory enables us to deal with contradictions and uncertainties. Perhaps more significantly, it gives us space to plan, to strategize, to take greater control over our resistances. The language of a theory can also be used as a way of organizing and determining action. It helps us to interpret what is being told to us, and to predict the consequences of what is being promised. Theory can also protect us because it contains within it a way of putting reality into perspective. If it is a good theory, it also allows for new ideas and ways of

> looking at things to be incorporated constantly, without the need to search constantly for new theories. (Smith, 2012, p. 40)

Smith (2012) is advocating not to fear theory and believes it is possible to use theories so they work for us, not against us, which is exactly what I worked to embody in this research design.

An Indigenous research design is possible and can be understood in terms of its' ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology (Wilson, 2008). Wilson (2008) defines an Indigenous ontology as "the nature of reality" (p. 33). Epistemology is our relationship with how we come to know what we know, and is considered to work in tandem with ontology (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Axiology is placing value on these things we come to know, but from an Indigenous perspective value is placed on the researcher as well (Wilson, 2008). An Indigenous methodology also works closely with axiology, by placing value on respect, reciprocity and responsibility (Wilson, 2008). For my research project, my ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology operated from a two-eyed seeing approach, where I blended both Indigenous and western theories, methodologies, and methods (Luby, 2018). As well, as an Indigenous researcher, it was important for me to stay grounded in Indigenous ways of being, researching in a respectful, safe, loving manner, which is why I approached my data collection in a qualitative manner, and utilized the Indigenous and Western methods of the Visiting Way, Knowledge Sharing, Anti-oppressive, and Indigenous methodologies.

### *Visiting Way Methodology*

Gaudet (2019) explains the Visiting Way Methodology as putting in the effort to "slow down, take time, make the effort, knock on the door, sit down, listen, share, go to the land, meditate, empty myself, and be present" (p. 48). Gaudet (2019) describes this methodology as practical, social, political, and spiritual, which are all elements I strove for my research project to

encompass. For me, visiting my participants was a process of coming to know them with care and respect. From an Indigenous perspective, it was grounded with "self, place, land, and family" (Gaudet, 2019, p. 53). I worked to apply these elements to my project by visiting with my participants ensuring they felt safe and respected to share their knowledge. I was fortunate to become familiar with each participant on varying levels. I also used the visiting way when sitting with my Elders and my helpers, so I could hear their perspectives and advice. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to maintain a safe distance from Elder and Knowledge Keeper Garry Robson. We would meet over Zoom for discussions, with the exception of passing tobacco and offering my gift to him. Finally, during times of reflection, there were many times I sat and visited with the land. This helped keep me grounded, clear my head and adjust accordingly.

***Knowledge Sharing***

McGregor, Restoule and Johnston (2018) define knowledge sharing as "a process that allows teachers and learners to transmit, create, and receive knowledge as a community within the context of mentoring and apprenticeship-like relationships" (p. 18). I used this methodology because it allowed me to achieve my objective to educate my participants on the history and effects of colonization. As stated previously, the education system is an indoctrination tool for settler colonialism (Adams, 1999) and because of this, Indigenous peoples are prevented from learning un-white-washed history. It is a means to control the status quo. They learn what the system wants them to learn, which is that Canada was never Turtle Island, that capitalism and economic development is the way to freedom, and that Indigenous peoples are marginalized to the point of non-existence. My second reason is because I lived the first reason and I never want another Indigenous person to go through what I went through: living my life as if my eyes were closed without questioning anything. My third reason is because I wanted to learn from my

participants as well. They provides perspectives that I have not thought of and gave me guidance to continue this work after my thesis is completed.

### *Anti-Oppressive Methodology*

An anti-oppressive methodology includes the tenets that depict how I worked with my participants. The first tenet is about creating social justice and social change (Potts & Brown, 2015). Brave Heart (1998) has proven that HT education can lead to awareness and understanding about HT, HTR, and historical unresolved grief; sharing this knowledge is liberating and cathartic; and psychoeducation leads to healing and initiating that long-awaited mourning process. I believe that Indigenous peoples are capable of overcoming HT. We need to be given the chance in a supportive, therapeutic environment. The second tenet of anti-oppressive methodology contends that all knowledge is socially constructed, political, and shaped by the neoliberal context (Potts & Brown, 2015). This is directly related to settler colonialism, which dictates the true history of colonialism is not taught in public education systems. It is time Indigenous peoples learned the true history. Our Elders who have lived through it are dying, along with their knowledges that hold the key to healing through connection to land, ceremony, language and medicines. I cannot speak for anyone else, but I was not taught colonization in school and my children are still not taught it. It is time we take this into our own hands and start telling the truth because it is necessary for liberation.

The third tenet dictates that the researcher-researched relationship foregrounds hierarchy and power imbalances (Potts & Brown, 2015). In line with an anti-oppressive methodology, relationship is paramount and can be developed through paying attention, being creative, and being open to whichever form the data presents itself (Potts & Brown, 2015). As a researcher using an anti-oppressive methodology, it was my responsibility to develop my political listening

and critical reflecting skills, so I can capture what is unfolding in front of me (Potts & Brown, 2015). Potts & Brown (2015) explain that by truly engaging in the art of anti-oppressive methodology, your "research is reconceptualized and becomes an emergent, unfolding process, rather than a trip to a predetermined destination" (p. 29). This was entirely true for my research project, except I felt as though I was blessed to watch six different destinations unfold in front of me. Each participant's journey was unique, and the factors that influenced their journey was their willingness to commit to the process of the project, their courage in facing their own personal historical trauma, and their honesty in answering the visiting questions. Essentially, the direction my research took, depended on what the participants chose to share with me.

### *Indigenous Methodologies*

Indigenous methodologies were the foundation in my planning and from where I worked. It helped guide my protocols when I engaged with participants, Elders, helpers and spirit to guide me, ensuring that our "activities are carried out in a manner that reflects community teachings and are done in a good way" (Kovach, 2010, p. 124). This methodology is surrounded by an Indigenous worldview, where my relationships with all involved embody respect, reciprocity, and responsibility over everything else (Gaudet, 2019; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous worldviews believe that everything is connected and interconnected (Baskin, 2016), so I not only worked from an awareness that I am connected to my research work, but my participants were connected with each other through their knowledge they shared with each other. Finally, when conducting research from an Indigenous methodology, it is important that the researcher be reflexive (Kovach, 2009), which is something that I strove to embody working with trauma. For example, there were a few times I had to cancel the visit because I could tell the participant was having a bad day. I would forgo the questions and visiting tasks I had planned and sit with them

discussing whatever was on their mind. I feel this helped build our relationship and it showed the participant that I was there for more than just collecting data.

## Indigenous Methods

Kirby et al. explains that "epistemology, theory, and methods need to be in alignment and that methods are drawn from the choice of methodology" (as cited in Kovach, 2009, p. 122). My methods when working with participants will be conversational method, talking circles during group work, and storytelling, all of which are related to one or more of the methodologies I previously listed. I obtained participants consent to audio record throughout the use of these methods, with the exception of the letter writing ceremony and the first two days of group work as Elder Garry was sharing traditional sacred teachings and asked me not to record. I honoured Garry's wishes and was transparent in letting everyone know when the recorder was turned on or off.

### *Conversational Method*

Kovach (2010) defines the conversational method as a "method of gathering knowledge based on oral storytelling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 124). I chose to use this method to guide my data collection because I wanted to honour the oral traditions of passing on knowledge, as well as build relationality by sharing stories. Additionally, there are several distinctive characteristics such as: a) it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology; b) the tribal epistemology depicts certain protocols to be followed; c) it is relational; d) it is purposeful, most often used to decolonize; e) it involves informality and flexibility; f) it is collaborative and dialogic; and g) it is reflexive (Kovach, 2010). These are the characteristics I worked to embody throughout my research project. Initially, I was able to conduct in-person research, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to move to online research methods nearing completion of initial

visits. I appreciate the time I got to sit with my participants because it allowed us to build a stronger relationship and for them to determine if they can trust me or not. In regards to characteristic b); when I approached Elder Garry, I passed tobacco to him for his knowledge he was willing to share during the group work. I also passed tobacco and gifted my participants medicines, a small smudge bowl, and a book, as the beginning of their bundles[10]. Some participants already held a bundle, for others these gifts were the first step in building their bundles. When engaged in the visits, I utilized open-ended, and semi-structured questions to guide the conversation, so both myself and the participant had the opportunity to create knowledge together (Kovach, 2010).

### *Talking Circles*

My second method of gathering data was talking circles. Talking circles are an inherently Indigenous method of gathering research. There are certain protocols that must be followed, such as offering tobacco, smudging with medicines, or using an item to indicate whose turn it is to share (Kovach, 2009). Talking circles encourage connection and relationships between the participants (Kovach, 2009). They can be healing, in that the people involved can see they are not alone in their pain and could learn from each other in how to overcome their trauma (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014). I used this method to allow my participants the opportunity to connect and relate with each other. I wanted them to witness each other re-narrating their trauma, pushing them towards liberation and "giving voice to narratives of repression and oppression in a reframed acknowledgement that freedom from fear can be achieved by voicing experiences and recalling ancestor struggles as empowering and potentially powerful mechanisms for healing" (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014, p. 188).

[10] A bundle is the traditional items an Indigenous person carries. These items are considered sacred and must be treated with the utmost respect.

### *Storytelling*

My third method, storytelling, also fits into an Indigenous methodology and is defined as "the writing of the self that is connected to the cultural, the political, and the social" (Sanduliak, 2016 p. 369). This method would help center both myself and my participants in a cultural, political and social location, which is one of my objectives within my research project: to teach my participants the connection between the history of colonization, historical trauma, and how it has affected Indigenous peoples. Simpson (2011) explains, "Storytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning and creating a just reality where Nishnaabeg live as both Nishnaabeg and peoples" (p. 33). It is a way for Indigenous peoples to "envision our way out of cognitive imperialism" (Simpson, 2011, p. 34), because we must honour the knowledge that guides who we are as Indigenous peoples, such as our traditional name and clan, what territory we are from, what challenges the group endures, the gifts present, and what emotions the group brings. Throughout this research project, there were many stories shared. We shared deeply personal stories of our trauma and how we carry it, and we also shared what gives us strength each day to continue. During the four days of group work, Elder Garry shared stories of resistance and healing. Through this sharing, we came together as a group, collectively, embodying resurgence and radical resistance.

## Participant Characteristics

I sought a total of six participants for this research project. I chose to work with a lower number of participants to allow me the freedom to give the time and attention each participant deserved. My participants met all the criteria I was searching for: a) identified as Indigenous, as they must have experienced what it is like to be colonized and carry historical trauma, b) over 18 years of age as that is the legal age of consent, c) identified as any gender, and d) lived in

Manitoba. Each participant was able to identify which community or territory they came from, which ranged from Métis communities, to First Nation Reserves located within Cree, Ojibwe or Dakota territories in Manitoba, Canada. One participant had a parent that held Nigerian and French ancestry and felt it was important to raise her son with that knowledge along with her Cree ancestry. Each participant held varying degrees of prior knowledge of colonial history and traditional knowledge. Participants ages ranged from 25 to 42, with one male and five female.

**Participant Recruitment**

For recruitment I used social media. I created my recruitment poster (Appendix A) and posted it on my Facebook at public settings so people could share it. This garnered me half my participants, while the remainder were sent my way through fellow social work colleagues. Once people contacted me expressing interest in participating, I arranged a phone call with them to discuss the research project. During this initial phone call, I would read my information letter (Appendix B) and gave them the chance to ask questions. If they still wanted to participate, we arranged our first visit with each other.

**Data Sources**

It is important to acknowledge the sentinel work Indigenous scholars have contributed to the theory of historical trauma. The foundation of my project can be attributed to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, who created Historical Trauma Theory in the late 1980s. To determine whether or not I should use a specific piece of literature, I engaged in a checklist that resembles the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (Wright, Wahoush, Ballantyne, Gabel, & Jack, 2016), meaning I check for “rigour, credibility, and relevance of the findings” (p. 2233). I take note of where their funding came from, any influences this may hold, and what their research framework is. I used an electronic database to gather academic resources and organized them

into an Indigenous framework that tells a story. Storytelling is a method of passing on knowledge, disciplining children, and connecting with others. Kovach (2009) explains the importance of stories and the impact they carry.

> Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon. Oral stories are born of connections within the world, and are thus recounted relationally. They tie us with our past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations. (Kovach, 2009, p. 94)

Organizing my literature into a story framework has allowed me to create a contextualized story of Indigenous peoples. It has allowed me to create a story of survival, resilience, and presenting solutions that will allow us to move on from historical trauma together. This also falls into alignment with anti-oppressive methodology, which is geared toward social justice and social change through education (Potts & Brown, 2015).

My participants are an integral source of data, for without them, this project would not have been possible. Since all my participants identified as Indigenous, all were able to provide data proving that Indigenous peoples live with and carry historical trauma in varying levels. All are affected by colonization and historical trauma, with some growing up in the child welfare system, some still dealing with this system raising their own children, some with addictions, some who experienced homelessness, some with prior involvement in the justice system, and most who feel lost inside, unsure where they belong. While it was important for me to do this project as gentle as possible, it was also equally important to push them to face their trauma, acknowledge it, and reframe it into a story of resilience and strength. It was a constant delicate

balance of being gentle, and encouraging those tough conversations. I appreciated when they spoke up and were honest with me in telling me they could not answer certain questions, whether it was too difficult to remember, or they honestly did not know. I acknowledge their courage and honesty.

## Data Collection

I received consent to audio record three sources of data: initial visits, talking circles, and closing visits. I did not record the letter writing ceremony as I have been taught by my Knowledge Keepers that recording ceremony is inappropriate, but during the closing visits I did ask each participant if they found this exercise meaningful and what it meant for them. My consent form (Appendix C) followed the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board – Fort Garry protocols and requirements and outlined in detail what my participants could expect if they chose to engage in this research project. I practiced ethical transparency to ensure safety of my participants. This consent form was provided to the participants, Elder Garry, and myself to review and sign.

### *Initial Visits*

Three initial visits were the first phase of working with my participants. Each visit was geared towards accomplishing certain tasks and discussing certain questions (Appendix D). These visits ranged in time from half an hour, to two hours. For the first visit, I gifted my participants tobacco, sage and sweetgrass, a small smudge bowl, matches, and a book to signify the start of a ceremonial relationship. We reviewed and signed paperwork, created a safety plan, practiced grounding exercises (Appendix F) and went through the handout of supports or resources to connect with (Appendix E). As Indigenous peoples have been disempowered from colonization through the years, it was important for me to encourage empowerment within my

participants and focus on their healing, rather than the colonial history that impacts us. I wanted them to feel the desire of taking control of their own healing. For the second visit, we completed a genogram together and talked about their relationships to medicines, land, language and ceremony. As we discussed these things, I would mark on the genogram where each ended or began. At the end of this visit, I made sure to reflect back on the genogram with them and highlight their efforts of reclaiming the disconnection through their family line. The third visit was geared toward learning about their knowledge of the history of colonization and how they feel this affected them and their family. It was important to me that I sit with each participant individually so we could build a relationship (Kovach, 2010). By doing this, there is a "likelihood of deeper conversations, and consequently the potential for richer insights to the research question" (Kovach, 2010, p. 46). I believe this was achieved, as all participants shared deeply personal history about their historical trauma experiences. Out of respect for my participants and their trauma they carry, I will not disclose these wounds they carry, but will focus more on how they heal from these events. As Indigenous peoples have been victimized and traumatized through research previously (Smith, 2012), being transparent, honest and respectful with my participants is important to me.

### *Talking Circles*

The next phase of working with my participants was bringing them together for the talking circles. There were four in total, one for each group work day. Due to Covid-19, the talking circles were conducted over Zoom. All participants expressed disappointment, as did I, over having to move to online work, although all understood why this was necessary. While it was unfortunate losing out on the in-person experience, I still worked to ground the talking circles in an Indigenous methodology. I offered additional sage to be dropped off to each

participant, so we would smudge together as a group before the start of each day. To make up for the missing talking stick, we used the Zoom function of raising our digital hand. On the very first day of the group work, participants collaboratively created a list of agreements to follow to create a space of safety and trust. Agreements included confidentiality, respect for others differing opinions, taking turns when speaking, and no interrupting. This worked well and everyone was respectful of each other the entire time.

The agenda for the in-person talking circles can be found in Appendix G (1), while the agenda for the online talking circles can be found on Appendix G (2). The schedules are different because Garry and I agreed to switch the two days of history with his two days of traditional teachings. Garry explained that he has done workshops similar to what we were doing, and the feedback from previous participants was usually, 'I wish I could have had the teachings first, to help me deal with hearing about the traumatic history'. I agreed with him, so we switched our days. Garry facilitated the first two days of group, while I facilitated the last two. Garry shared teachings geared towards building participant Indigenous identity and included teachings on the roles and purposes of traditional Indigenous spirit name and colours, the clan system, the medicine wheel and the importance of balance, the creation and recreation story, and a teaching on past, present, and future. Garry was also knowledgeable on colonial history and was encouraged to add to my two days if he felt I missed a piece of information. Out of respect for Garry's sacred teachings he shared, I did not record the two days he facilitated. I found Garry to be ideal for this work as he was knowledgeable, respectful, patient and would add perfectly timed humour during tough moments.

For my two days of facilitation, we discussed historical trauma, resurgence, and radical resistance. I split the history of colonization into four eras of time: pre-contact, pre-contact to

*Indian Act, Indian Act* to residential schools, and residential schools to today. Before I started going through the history, I encouraged everyone to add to the history and if they knew of any stories of resistance. I made sure to point out where the connection to medicines, land, languages, and ceremony was interrupted through settler colonial legislation. I wanted to ensure my participants walked away knowing that colonization was done to Indigenous peoples intentionally, to gain access to the land. By doing this, it alleviated the guilt and shame that comes along with being disconnected to our Indigenous identity. I planned to have a second helper present, but a few days before the group work, my helper cancelled. They had experience running groups and knew I could count on them to help facilitate. I believe everything happens for a reason and I was meant to run this group on my own to show myself I could do it.

***Letter Writing***

To encourage healing and emotional release, participants were asked to write a letter to whomever they wish: themselves, the colonizers, their ancestors, their parents, or their children, and then on the fourth day to burn it signifying a letting go ceremony. At the end of every day, they added onto their letters. On the fourth day, they were encouraged to read their letter out loud because by reading out loud, it helps make the connection from their head to their heart (Gehl, 2012). Everyone chose to share their letters with the group and since we were in online methods, they were asked to have items prepared to safely burn their letters after sharing. This exercise was intended to help participants release emotions surrounding what they learned over the past four days, with the intent of moving towards healing, change, decolonization, and reclaiming their Indigenous identity. This was also an opportunity to re-narrate their trauma, which is “an exercise in self-determination through the re-empowerment of their voices and visions” (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014, p. 181). As part of the data collection, I did not record this activity as it

felt ceremonial. I also wanted my participants to be able to focus on the healing, rather than feeling self-conscious about being recorded during this emotional moment. During the closing visits I asked them if or how this exercise was meaningful for them.

### *Closing Visits*

The final phase of working with my participants was three closing visits. I began these a few days after the group work concluded. These were also held over Zoom and took half an hour to two hours to complete. During these visits I did safety check-ins and inquired about their mental health status. All indicated they were handling the information from the group work well. After ensuring they were safe, I asked my closing visit questions (Appendix I). The first visit questions were similar to the questions asked during the second initial visit, where I asked participants about their relationships with medicines, land, language and ceremony. I did this to compare their answers between before and after group work, to see if learning about the history of colonization and building their identity as an Indigenous person changed their perspective on how we can heal historical trauma. The second closing visit questions were geared toward the group work, what they felt was beneficial and what was not. The third closing visit gathered information on what they learned from the activities we did together, such as the letter writing and talking circles. After my participants stated they have no other insights to share with me and they feel safe to end our time together, I concluded the research project with them. I let them know they can continue to reach out to me if they feel they need to, or if they have further questions.

## Risks

There were risks that I planned for to ensure the safety of my participants, so they could feel secure and trust in the process I was initiating and guiding them through. Within case studies

of social workers and counsellors confronting and initiating the healing of trauma, the risks included: triggering a traumatic memory (Malmo & Laidlaw, 2010), the dichotomy of conscientiousness (Freire, 1996; Lawson-Te Aho, 2014), vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, workplace burnout (Devilly, Wright, & Varker, 2009), transference, and participant-researcher interactions (Lawson, 2017).

The first risk I planned for is triggering a trauma response in a person as they revisit and re-narrate their trauma. Malmo and Laidlaw (2010) explain that traumatic memories are often buried deep within the psyche of a person, which is labelled as "memory disturbance" (p. 24). My participants may or may not remember the abuse that happened to them, or they may be aware of the memory and simply the trauma narrative of other participants may cause am unexpected trauma response (Malmo & Laidlaw, 2010). Lawson (2017) advises prior to initiating any complex trauma work that it is helpful to create "safety plans that distinguish safe and unsafe people" (p. 290). To help prepare my participants for a potential trauma response, I practiced self-regulation skills, created a safety plan, provided resource supports (Appendix E) and a self-care guideline for managing trauma and stress during our first initial visit together. Participants were advised their safety plan person would be contacted if need be. Fortunately, I did not have to activate this safety plan as all participants handled the group work discussions well, and those who did leave let me know they were safe. Some participants refused the safety person indicating they felt they were capable of managing their stress and trauma, and that they had a support network they could count on. As well, having an Elder present during the group work provided a sense of security, safety, and knowledge (TCPS2, 2018).

My second risk I planned for is the dichotomy of consciousness. Friere (1972) explains, "critical consciousness may lead to disorder" (p. 35), meaning that the awareness of social

discontent creates stress in the individual when they realize they are living in a traumatic oppressive environment. Once the participant becomes aware of their traumatic history as Indigenous peoples, there then comes the dichotomous choice between "to give in or fight" (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014, p. 189). To mitigate this risk, I chose to be proactive and gentle with my participants. I asked how much they knew about the history of colonization, to which many indicated they felt they knew very little and all stated they did not learn this history while attending elementary, middle, or high school. In the spirit of being gentle, I adjusted the curriculum by reducing the amount of information I presented to protect against any adverse reactions. I did not want to risk overwhelming them with information on colonial history and wanted to ensure they were emotionally stable throughout this project. In the event they do choose to fight colonial oppression and reclaim their indigeneity, I provided all with connections to traditional Indigenous ceremonies. Finally, the gifts I provided in the beginning of the research project was not only the beginning of their bundle, but it also helped support their healing.

The third set of risks I planned for are vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress (STS), and workplace burnout (Devilly, Wright, & Varker, 2009). These risks could occur to the participants, as they will be hearing other HT narratives, but I also wanted to include these to acknowledge what I was facing as a researcher. To prevent these things from happening with my participants, I reminded them of the list of available support resources and to engage in self-care after difficult emotional conversations. I would also talk to them about their troubles for as long as needed to ensure they were safe. Many of these conversations happened when the audio recorder was off, and out of respect for them, I let them know that I would not write about these private conversations. For myself as a researcher, I definitely felt all these risks at varying levels throughout this research project. I had to constantly engage in self-care and traditional spiritual

activities that would help me stay emotionally regulated. For example, I engaged in physical exercise to help me expel the emotional buildup in my body, I smudged and smoked my traditional pipe, I turned to my trusted people who I knew could help ground me and pull me back to the present, and since I was bound by confidentiality, I phoned Garry or my thesis advisor Dr. Dennis if I needed a consult regarding participants.

My fourth set of risks is transference and participant-researcher interactions (Lawson, 2017). To mitigate these risks, I set transparent and strong boundaries with my participants (Lawson, 2017). I paid attention to the interactions I held with my participants and addressed any dynamics with empathy and support (Lawson, 2017). For example, one participant offered to be my support system. I addressed this by thanking them for their concern and that their offering meant a lot, but I had supports already present working for me. To me, this was not a negative aspect of the research, but rather it was evidence of support within collective settings. As well, in following an Indigenous methodology, relationships are key. So, as I found myself feeling closer to each participant, I also felt conflicted over an obligation to maintain Western constructs of researcher-participant relationship. It was a constant balance of relationship building, and maintaining healthy researcher-participant boundaries. As a researcher engaged in a project about historical trauma, I felt there was a healthy balance between myself and the participants.

**Benefits**

Brave Heart (1998) proved three things with her research project: historical trauma education can lead to awareness and understanding about historical trauma, historical trauma response, and historical unresolved grief; sharing this knowledge is liberating and cathartic; and psychoeducation leads to healing and initiating that long-awaited mourning process. Each participant experienced these benefits to varying degrees. This research project helped my

participants understand that the trauma felt by Indigenous peoples has an external source, is politically motivated, and highly intentional. By gathering together, it helped initiate that long-awaited release of grief and recognition that the guilt and shame projected onto us as Indigenous peoples is not a singular event, but rather it is felt collectively in all. As Brave Heart (1998) hypothesized, sharing this knowledge is cathartic and liberating, which is exactly what my participants expressed at the end of the research project. They want to share with their families and friends what they learned and how they felt when they learned it because when we connect and relate with each other, that is where the healing happens, (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014).

The group setting is crucial for this research project. Prior research tells us, collectively we were harmed, so we must collectively heal (Brave Heart, 1998; Lawson-Te Aho, 2014). By doing this, we engage in resurgence and radical resistance. The group shared with each other their personal meaning of healing, overcoming barriers and what collectivity means to them. Conducting my research project in a group setting, my participants recognized they were not alone in their historical trauma and that historical trauma can be expressed in many different ways, which diminished much of the fear held towards facing their historical trauma (Lawson-Te Aho, 2014). As well, connecting in a group setting allowed the participants to bond and use each other as support systems. After all, Indigenous peoples are inherently collective, from the ceremonies we conduct, to how our language is structured, to how our self-government originally operated. Ultimately, I hope that my participants understand their trauma in a historical context and begin reclaiming their indigeneity, initiating their healing journey.

**Data Analysis**

I transcribed participants audio using the software program Trint. To code participants transcriptions, I used the NVivo analysis software. While coding, I ensured their words were

treated in a respectful manner with nothing significant left out. This helped me remain accountable to my participants by including their entire voice in the analysis. Throughout analyzing the data, I worked to ground myself within an Indigenous paradigm thought process by smudging and asking for guidance and clarity to see what needs to be seen, understand what needs to be understood, and write what needs to be written in a good, kind-hearted, loving way. It is important to me that I reframe their colonial experiences into a story of survival and resilience as this is how I believe we will generate ideas on how Indigenous peoples heal from historical trauma.

To make meaning of the data, I engaged in two methods: Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, n.d.) and collaborative analysis (Wilson, 2008). RTA is a method used to analyze your research data where you locate emerging themes or patterns within the data you collected that answer your research question (Braun & Clarke, n.d.). There are a number of ways you can utilize RTA, such as inductive, deductive, semantic, latent, critical, or constructionist (Braun & Clarke, n.d.). I used this approach because it allowed me freedom to analyse, so I could switch from method to method according to how the data presented itself. In an effort to conduct decolonized research I practiced collaborative analysis, returning to my participants giving them a chance to clarify whether their meaning is coming through the data as intended (Wilson, 2008). Doing this helped me "not only check the accuracy of the analysis but also to elaborate upon ideas" (Wilson, 2008, p. 121). As a researcher, this was important to me as it would not only encourage the relationship between researcher and participant, but it helps the participant build their relationship with their healing.

***Validation***

I have worked to validate the data through a few different methods. Firstly, since I am coming from an Indigenous research paradigm, I ensured the way I seek data is comprised of "*debwewin*[11]" (Srigley & Varley, 2018, p. 49). As a result of doing this, I believe my participants felt comfortable in sharing their stories that came from their heart. Secondly, I declared my biases early on in this proposal and have worked to overcome them privately and alongside my participants with transparency and honesty. Thirdly, collaborative analysis works in validating the data through triangulation, which means I bring the findings back to the participants so they can confirm their truth is present (Wilson, 2008). There were times I returned to my participants and asked for clarity on certain topics they had talked about. This helped greatly in painting the full picture of their story. I feel it is important to include participants in validating their data as, "Validation is crucial for personal self-empowerment because [during the early years of research] Indigenous peoples were involuntarily denied or stripped of their autonomous identities" (Martin, 2018, p.187).

***Feedback***

Feedback is similar to validation in that both share findings, but with feedback the researcher is seeking suggestions or opinions on the findings. In this instance, I sought my participants feedback on the findings after coding and creating themes from the codes. I shared the codes and themes I found, as well as a write-up of what I seen within the themes and how I planned on presenting the findings. I invited each participant to provide their own perspective on the findings and asked if they had any feedback to give. Of the six participants, none responded, but once I began writing, there were times I needed clarification on things they said to me. I

[11] *Debwewin* is an Anishinaabe word meaning "tell the truth from the heart".

would check in with them on these moments giving them the opportunity to add, change or delete their statements, ensuring they were presented correctly.

**Ethical Considerations**

In the past, Indigenous peoples of Canada have primarily been researched by non-Indigenous people with non-Indigenous world views (TCPS2, 2018). As a result, Indigenous peoples are leery of research, and rightfully so. As an Indigenous researcher conducting a research project with Indigenous peoples as participants, I felt a responsibility to role-model ethical research conducted with Indigenous world views, theories, methodologies, and methods to the best of my abilities. The ethical concerns that arose from this research project included the population I was choosing to work with, compensation and the responsibility of reporting child abuse as a social worker. I mitigated these ethical concerns guided by the principles Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) (Shnarch, 2004). Additionally, I utilized the guidelines to ethical research involving Indigenous peoples within the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS2) (2018): Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice.

My first ethical concern was the Indigenous population I chose to work with, who are considered a marginalized population and have been unethically researched in the past (Smith, 2012). To mitigate this concern, I maintained a high level of transparency and informed consent, self-awareness, and constant checking-in with my participants. I let all participants know they had the right to refuse answering a visiting question or participating in an activity with no consequence. My second ethical concern was my gifts and monetary compensation I provided to each participant. To avoid placing undue pressure, I gifted my participants their bundle at the very beginning of the research project, and the honorarium for group work was provided regardless if they attended or not. A third ethical concern I faced was my legal obligation as a

social worker to protect children and their families. To mitigate this concern, I ensured each participant was aware of this and that it was included in the consent form.

### *OCAP® Principles*

Ownership is the first principle and is defined by a community owning their data or information (Schnarch, 2004). To uphold the ownership principle, I gave my participants a copy of their transcripts to reflect on their experiences after completing this project. Control is the second principle and is defined as research participants having the right to control research aspects that impact them (Schnarch, 2004). To uphold the control principle, I practiced informed consent with my participants and ensured they knew they had the right to refuse any activity or visiting question with no consequence. As part of informed consent, I kept them up to date on the stages of the research process. I also provided a summary of findings and allowed participants the opportunity to provide feedback, ask further questions and confirm that the data communicates their truth. The third principle is access and is defined as allowing the participants access to the data regarding themselves (Schnarch, 2004). To uphold the access principle, I offered participants the option of receiving a copy of their transcriptions and a summary of their dataset to confirm it conveys what they intended. All six participants chose yes to this option. The fourth principle is possession, which is defined as protection or stewardship of the data (Schnarch, 2004). To protect my participants data, I applied pseudonyms to all identifying work throughout the research project. When it came time to write the thesis, I offered each participant the option of remaining anonymous. Three of six participants have chosen to remain anonymous, so I assigned a traditional spirit animal for their pseudonym. The audio recordings, field notes, and transcriptions were stored on my laptop that needs my fingerprint and a password to unlock

it. After completion of the project, all data, transcriptions and consent forms will be kept for a period of five years, then destroyed (Srigley & Varley, 2018).

### *TCPS2 Guidelines*

I worked to embody the guidelines to ethical research involving Indigenous peoples within the TCPS2 (2018). For me, Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare and Justice are closely tied to one another. Whenever anybody chooses to work with marginalized populations, good work that comes from the heart cannot be done effectively with these guidelines thought of as individualized. For example, by being transparent with my participants on what they could expect from engaging in this research project, I ensured they maintained their self-determination and "free-will" (S. Copenace, personal communication, December 2, 2019). As well, giving participants the free-will to choose to leave or refuse a question, is also providing Respect for Persons. Transparency can also be grounded in Concern for Welfare, as I did not want to force my participants to do something they felt uncomfortable with. Additionally, one of my objectives had roots in all three guidelines of TCPS 2, which was to teach my participants the history of colonization, so we have an opportunity to "tell our own stories, write our own version, in our own ways, for our own purposes" (Smith, 2012, p. 29). It is with respect, concern for well-being, and justice that motivated me to complete this research project.

## Conclusion

My research paradigm is an Indigenous paradigm where I plan to engage in Indigenous protocols and ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being as much as possible. I seek to answer my research question by utilizing the methodologies Visiting Way, Knowledge Sharing, Anti-oppressive, and Indigenous methodologies. I worked with six participants, who identify as Indigenous. My data collection methods were initial visits, talking circles, letter writing, and

closing visits. I alleviated risks by having an Elder present, traditional medicines available, teaching my participants self-regulation skills, safety planning, debriefing, enforcing clear and strong boundaries, and practicing self-care often. I analyzed my data using Reflexive Thematic Analysis and collaborative analysis. I followed the ethical guidelines as outlined by the principles Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (Shnarch, 2004) and TCPS2 (2018).

From prior research, we know that it is possible to heal historical trauma (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998; Marsh et al., 2016; Simpson, 2017). My research question is, how do we heal historical trauma through resurgence and radical resistance? My research design was six individual visits and four-days of group work. Each visit had specific tasks and questions to be completed with each participant. The group work was two days of facilitated by Elder Garry, who provided traditional teachings. The other two days were facilitated by myself where I educated my participants on the history of colonization, the theory of Historical Trauma and how we can heal through engagement of resurgence and radical resistance. By doing this research project, I hoped to create awareness within my participants that Indigenous peoples display HTR through no fault of our own, and that with this newfound awareness comes a choice to heal and change. I also want my participants to realize that historical trauma is felt collectively. We were traumatized collectively, so we can heal collectively as well. We are not alone in this. We have each other. The following chapter speaks to how my six participants achieved this as a group.

## Chapter 4: Findings

In Indigenous cultures, storytelling is an intricate part of who we are and how we pass on our traditional knowledge to younger generations. By gathering to share stories, we build relationships with each other, we teach the young ones how to be good people and how to live a good life. It is also how Indigenous peoples have resisted colonialism for hundreds of years (Simpson, 2011). Through storytelling, Indigenous peoples have the opportunity to engage in resurgence and radical resistance. These are the reasons why I have chosen to present the findings as a collection of stories. This thesis was generated by six participants who shared their lives to create stories of resilience, resistance and hope. While their stories may cause sadness, anger, or frustration, that is not the message the participants intend to leave imprinted on the reader. To begin, I will introduce each participant so the reader can get to know them on a relational level. Secondly, I will do a brief project overview by touching on whether I achieved my research objectives according to participants feedback. The remainder of chapter four will be a presentation of themes found within the participants data. The themes range from descriptions of how they and their families have been affected by colonization, to elements that help encourage reconnection, what participants want more of and what they value, and finally ending with how the participants have found guidance and healing in their lives. While the focus is not what colonialism has done to Indigenous peoples, I feel it is necessary to acknowledge and record the harms that were done to my participants, their emotions surrounding these actions, and their resiliency in overcoming these affects. The overall message garnered by the participants is that despite the terrible history of colonization and the disconnections caused from these experiences, Indigenous peoples are still here, we are a resilient people, and we all hold within us the answers to healing historical trauma.

## Participants Stories and Resiliency against Colonization

In this research project, I worked with six participants who identified as having Cree, Ojibwe, Dakota, Métis, or Black Indigenous and Peoples of Colour (BIPOC) ancestry. Three have chosen to have their names attached to the findings and stories, while the other three have opted to remain anonymous with pseudonyms. For ease of identifying and applying the stories and lessons into the readers lives, I have made the anonymous participants gender neutral. This is my acknowledgment to my two-spirited relatives, who are often defined by their gender expression, rather than their strength and resiliency. The participants I collaborated with throughout this research project are Katherine, Kayla, Savannah, Wolf, Eagle, and Sabe.
In this section, I will provide a brief introduction to each participant and share a piece of their story so the reader can get to know the participants. I hope they are seen as relatable as each participant's story is unique in how they have been affected by colonization and will be presented as inspirational stories of resilience against colonization.

### *Katherine*

Katherine is a 60s scoop survivor who grew up in the child welfare system from two months old, to age 18. She was placed with white foster parents who told her repeatedly that her culture was witchcraft and evil. This understandably had an affect on Katherine, where she now feels a sense of unease when around traditional Indigenous culture, but she is actively working to undue this harmful mindset instilled in her. Growing up in the child welfare system has caused many disconnections in Katherines life, including to her parents, siblings and extended family, her traditional language and home community, and any cultural involvement she could have participated in. Katherine is inspirational because despite everything she has survived, she made the choice to change and heal for herself and her children. She worked hard to stop the

intergenerational cycle of child welfare involvement in the lives of her and her children, but this did not come easy. After years of substance misuse, she is now proudly sober and working to reconnect with her indigeneity and repair the disconnections caused by the child welfare system. Katherine attends her father's powwow competitions and reaches out to her siblings and extended family. Katherine held a close relationship with her older brother, Matthew, who was placed with her while in care. Sadly, Matthew passed away in early 2021, which was a particularly devastating loss for Katherine. She maintains a relationship with her younger brother but has little connection to her two younger sisters. When asked why she wants to participate in this research project, this is what Katherine responded with:

> It just made sense to participate in this program to maybe be a stepping stone for healing for others. Healing for myself. Healing so I can be a better mother, a better person for my partner, for my siblings and all the rest of my family. And just basically searching for healing and education.

To me this is a profound, and selfless response, which is exactly how I saw Katherine during our time spent together. Katherine's response tells me that she not only wants healing for herself, she hopes that her healing can extend to the rest of her loved ones in her life as well. She is an incredibly humble and kind individual who I am glad to have met. Her desire and tenacity for healing is inspiring and I hope this message is conveyed throughout this thesis.

***Kayla***

Kayla holds roots in the community of Peguis First Nation, but grew up in Winnipeg with her mother. Kayla describes her relationship with her mother as complicated, where somewhere along the way Kayla stepped into the caregiving role. Kayla remembers moving often as a child, so now it is important to her to provide a stable home for her children. While her relationship

with her mother is complicated, she describes her relationship with her father as positive. As a child, Kayla would attend sundance ceremonies with her dad at Bird's Hill and Canupawakpa Dakota First Nation. Kayla is passionate about reconnecting with her traditional culture, and carries the gift of working with traditional Indigenous medicines. While she does not know her traditional Indigenous language, relearning Dakota or Ojibwe is one of her goals in life. When asked what she hopes to get out of this research project, this was Kayla's response:

> I guess to release things. Just to connect with culture, that's my biggest thing, it's hard for me to connect to culture being in the city. I feel like everyone says, go to counseling. I've been to counseling. It's what's right, I guess. For me, it never really worked. So, I just want to connect to culture and other people that are like me.

To me, this speaks highly of the theory behind healing historical trauma. Kayla has tried western methods of healing with counseling, but she wants to try something that her spirit is telling her she needs. To me, that is incredibly insightful, which is exactly how I seen Kayla during our time together. She is wise beyond her years, and I hope that her wisdom and introspective skills are conveyed throughout this thesis.

***Savannah***

Savannah is a charismatic, energetic individual who maintains a close relationship with her traditional Indigenous ways of being. Throughout our visits together, there were many times Savannah would nonchalantly mention little people[12], healing through Grandmother Moon, and personal ways she has resisted colonialism. She will probably deny this, but she is an advocate for all. She was raised by her mother, minus a two-year stint while her mother was incarcerated. She remembers seeing her mother struggle with substance misuse and would often witness

[12] Little people are part of many cultures throughout human history. In this context, it is referring to a sacred spirit/helper found within Indigenous Ojibwe cultural beliefs.

domestic violence between her mother and father. Savannah describes her teenage years as unpredictable, where she would often run away from home. Savannah shared that she started 'working the streets', and that her mother's friends would often check on her to make sure she was okay. As Savannah grew older and became aware of colonization and its' impacts, she developed an understanding that her mother most likely experienced trauma while attending residential school. Sadly, Savannah's mother has passed on but she maintains a relationship with her father that Savannah describes as a sibling relationship. The biggest quality I admire of Savannah, is her ability to network. When I asked her what her support system looks like, she listed an array of multiple sources she receives support from:

> OK, so my support system…I've added some positive street family to my life. Michael Champagne. My street brother, Clayton, and these are men that I choose to have in my life safely. I have my friend Magnus. I have a lot of activist friends. Sometimes I go to Magnus's and argue with her positively, you know what I mean? I have some NA and AA family. And then just the program facilitators from Wahbung Family, Tree Parenting at Northwest Douglas, First Nations Advocate, Oyate Tipi, and Family Group Conference.

To me, Savannah's ability to survive and network is reminiscent of how our ancestors used to live communally pre-contact to settlers. As well, I loved how she says, "These are men I choose to have in my life safely", which indicates growth, self-love and awareness. Savannah has a pure heart, and lives her life with good intentions, which is what I hope is conveyed throughout this thesis.

***Wolf***

From the moment I met Wolf, it was clear they are deeply passionate about reconnecting to their Indigenous culture. They came into this research project with many traditional teachings that added richness and context, and for that I am grateful. Wolf explains they did not grow up surrounded by their Indigenous culture and that reconnecting was a decision they made later in life. Unfortunately, Wolf's Ojibwe father died by suicide when Wolf was one year old, so Wolf was raised by their Cree single mother, a devout Roman Catholic. Wolf shares that traditional Indigenous culture was not trusted in their household, so when Wolf decided to reconnect with their traditional Indigenous ways of being, it was done without much support from their biological family. This did not deter Wolf who sought Elders and found acceptance and belonging from the nearby Dakota people. After the group work was completed, Wolf was asked if their approach to reconnecting will change. This is what they said:

> I don't think so, I think I will still take the same approach that I have in this. That openness and willingness to share and learn from others I already had going into this. The connections that I have with myself, my traditional teachings, ceremony, none of that was really in question going into this. It's every part of my life. It has been every part of my life for quite a long period of time now. So, I think moments like this or experiences like this just solidify the foundation that's already very strong and set in ceremony and my culture. This whole experience, like I said, has just supported that growth even more than it did before.

To me, it is a rare quality indeed when an individual is certain they are doing the right thing, especially when one is reconnecting with their indigeneity. Wolf's level of self-confidence, their gentleness and forgiveness they carry for themselves and others, is a message that I hope is received from this thesis.

***Eagle***

Eagle has roots with Fisher River First Nation and the original settlers of Gimli, Manitoba. Eagle is an interesting participant because they were raised immersed in Indigenous ways of being. For Eagle, there was never any doubt over the pride they felt being an Indigenous person. However, this pride was not always nurtured in Eagle's family. Due to Eagle's grandmother attending residential school, there was a period of disconnection felt within Eagle's family. Thankfully, there were events that Eagle's mother and grandmother experienced that caused them to begin that journey of reclaiming their indigeneity. Eagle's grandmother initiated this journey and became involved in cultural events in her home community of Fisher River First Nation, where she is now a highly respected Elder. Eagle's mother attained post-secondary education, where she learned the true history of colonization and joined her mother in reclaiming their indigeneity. This has caused a ripple effect that Eagle now benefits from. Eagle's grandmother would often take Eagle to sweat lodge ceremonies, drumming groups, powwows and other cultural events, while Eagle's mother taught Eagle the history of colonization from a young age. These collective efforts have inspired strong self-love within Eagle, where Eagle now finds themselves carrying deep respect for Indigenous ways of being. Eagle shared the following regarding the deep respect they carry:

> If you're not practicing, you're not with everybody, you're not connected to everybody that's going through the same stuff. I feel like it takes a lot to go to ceremonies. It does. It takes a lot of courage for people to show up and be there without using, without doing stuff, because you can't go there [while using] because it's disrespectful. That's why I lost it, because I was using or drinking.

Despite Eagle being raised immersed surrounded by her Indigenous culture, they still experienced historical trauma symptoms, which only speaks to how much time and effort it takes to repair the intergeneration affects of colonization. Eagle has recently welcomed a baby into their life and is committed to raising their child surrounded by their culture, just like they were. It is my hope that Eagle's love for traditional Indigenous culture is conveyed throughout this thesis.

***Sabe***

In traditional Ojibwe culture, Sabe carries the teaching of honesty. For every visit held with Sabe, they were consistently honest, straight-forward and incredibly logical, which is why Sabe's name in this thesis is Sabe. Sabe has roots that come from Rooster Town and St. Laurent, both of which are Métis towns. Sabe's parents do not speak their traditional language, but remembers their grandmother speaking French as a small child. Sabe identifies as Métis and is hard at work figuring out their identity. Throughout our visits together, Sabe would speak on the confliction they feel holding a Métis identity:

> I look like a total white [gender] if I don't dye my hair, it's blond, blue eyes. It's conflicting because I love my traditional side of my family, but it's kind of conflicting because of colonization. Where do I fit in? Am I just the white [gender] or how do I stop trying to be in that confliction with myself? I feel like I judge myself a lot more than anybody else judging me when I go to ceremonies and stuff, because I'm pretty much the whitest one there. And it feels a little bit weird, but it doesn't at the same time and that's something I struggle with myself is fighting that feeling like I shouldn't be there, more than I resonate with the feeling good about being there.

Throughout our time together, I heard a duality within Sabe: one is a fighting spirit seeking belonging, and the other shames that fighting spirit into silence. Sabe is inspiring because of the

fighting spirit they carry. Despite everything they have survived, they are still actively searching for ways to heal and find belonging in cultural events. Additionally, Sabe has learned from their experiences and wants to provide a different upbringing for their children, one where they are raised connected to their Indigenous heritage. I hope Sabe's honesty and relentless search for healing is conveyed throughout this thesis.

Each participant added a unique characteristic to this research project. Within each participant exist qualities such as honesty, love, wisdom, and determination that not only gives depth and complexity to the data collected, but also, they help balance out the affects of historical trauma experiences. As a researcher, it was fascinating to witness these qualities surface and interact, displaying personal acts of resistance, survival and resurgence. Yes, disconnections from colonization exist but what is even more prevalent is how each participant is working to repair these disconnections. Whether the disconnection was with family, medicines, land, language or Indigenous ways of being, the participants are relentlessly navigating their way to a healthier space in their own ways that work for them. They are creating their own families, breaking the cycles of CFS and justice involvement, and bonding with lands outside their territories, accepted by Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This was hopeful to see in the data and suggests innumerable ways to engage with resistance and resurgence to heal historical trauma.

**Research Objectives and Participants Feedback**

According to participants feedback on the research project, most of the four objectives were met to varying degrees. My first objective was to provide educational workshops on the history of colonization and resistance of our Indigenous ancestors. My intent was to teach my participants new information, in the hopes of transforming their perspectives on western systems and informing how Indigenous peoples continue to be colonized. Five of the participants agreed

they learnt something valuable by attending these educational workshops, with the exception of Wolf, who explained they were already aware of the history of colonization as it is closely aligned to their field of work. Katherine shared that learning the history of colonization was the most impactful moment of the four days of group work:

> For me, it was when we got into reading the Appendix [Appendix H]. With pre-contact and all that. Anyways, just realizing… it was documented in history, just made it more real. I almost lived my life just strolling along because of the 60s scoop. You know, feeling like an apple and just live my life and not really looking at the big picture.

Kayla feels this history is so important to pass on to others that she asked for permission to share Appendix H with others. For Savannah, she connected the timeline to her childhood with her mother, where she knew something was not right but she did not know what. Sabe shared that they had learned about the history of colonization previously, and that it had upset them so much it sent them into using substances:

> Before when I was talking colonization, I never noticed it, but it put me in a place when I'd go use and stuff. I think I just tried to keep them (emotions) at bay, be neutral. [It] didn't affect me as much.

If we think back to the risks, there is a dichotomy of conscientiousness between giving in or fighting when ones critical consciousness is raised. Sabe shared learning this traumatic history the first time pushed them into using substances, but there is also evidence of growth because this time around they were able to mentally protect themselves from their emotions. The fact Sabe had such an intense adverse reaction the first time around, but still decided to enter into this research project shows bravery and a commitment to healing.

The second objective was engaging in radical resistance to empower change within. Wolf actually denied learning anything new in this research project, yet when I compared Wolf's responses from before to after group work regarding traditional Indigenous medicines, there was a difference. During group work, the topic of medicines came up, where Savannah spoke about using the moon as medicine work, which then led to the group asking further questions on how she does this. Before group work, Wolf listed only plant-based medicines, but after group work expanded their response to include other forms of medicines. Wolf must have reflected after group work and created their own list of medicines that help them. This proves that radical resistance happens when we come together in a group to share our knowledge and teachings with each other. By sharing our traditional knowledge with Wolf, they were able to build on their previous knowledge they carried into this research project creating a change within. Savannah also experienced a change within. This is what Savannah had to share:

> Now that I know the history of it, it definitely changes my perspective of Canada. I feel like now that I know, I feel like people [the colonizers] knew what they were doing. I don't feel sorry for myself, but I want to use education as a weapon to show my son because he's half Indigenous, that no one has the right to do anything to you because of the color of your skin. I want to have him very culturally involved.

Savannah's awareness that colonization was done intentionally has caused a change in how she wishes to educate her son on history, culture and social systems, giving him opportunities and a level of awareness she did not feel until later in life.

The third objective was using historical trauma theory to explain the current socio-psychological-economic context held by Indigenous peoples. My intention with this objective was to alleviate the negative emotions that participants may feel regarding their experiences as

Indigenous people. Katherine is one who benefited greatly from this objective as she came into this research project feeling as though she does not belong at ceremony, to leaving with an understanding of why she feels this way. During group work, Katherine heard others share similar feelings, which alleviated her shame she carries over how colonialism affected her as an Indigenous person. After group work, Katherine shared that the discussions helped shift her understand where these emotional difficulties stem. While Katherine still has those feelings of not belonging, it is now paired with an awareness and understanding of why. She hopes to eventually attend powwows more often, for extended periods. Kayla also shared they achieved a greater understanding. This is what Kayla had to share:

> I'm going through my own things with my own family and hearing all these things, helped me to learn more about myself and my family and why things are the way they are. I think that was my biggest thing through this whole thing is learning to let go. For me, that was my profound 'aha' moment, learning to let go. Like there's history behind all of this, you know.

For Kayla, a greater understanding of how colonization has affected her family helped her to understand and move on in a good way. Kayla is aware that she cannot change or fix her family, but now she also understands they are also on their own journey of healing their historical trauma.

The fourth objective was to help participants initiate that journey of releasing trauma and grief. For most of the participants, there was a significant feeling of grief over losing their language. Katherine displayed significant emotional changes regarding loss of language. For her, hearing her family members speak their language is a trigger for her, reminding her she grew up in the child welfare system. Before group work, Katherine expressed shame for not being able to

speak her language. During group work, discussing the history of colonization coupled with seeing the other participants express similar emotions over the loss of their language, helped alleviate Katherines shame she carries and thus initiating the release of trauma and grief. After group work, this was her response regarding her grief:

> I guess just waking the Anishinaabe in me. It's the grief, feeling the grief and waking it, but, you know, it was always there and I was wondering, what was that? Now I know what it is. Now I know what I can focus on. Now I know what I can move forward with healing.

There were many times throughout this research project where Katherine expressed profound grief over growing up in the child welfare system, disconnected from her culture, family and community. Katherine not only grieves her own losses, but with this new knowledge of what her ancestors endured, she grieves what her ancestors endured as well. Healing historical trauma symptoms and intergenerational affects takes an incredible amount of courage, honesty, vulnerability, and faith. It also requires humility in admitting you need healing, especially in areas you feel particularly vulnerable about. Facing these four objectives was not an easy task, but it is interesting how each participant got what they needed from this research project. Despite my planning and preparing, each participant came from different paths in life, causing them to value different aspects of this research project. Their unique lived experiences helped them walk away with personalized meanings from the lessons and teachings, which is much better than what I could have hoped for.

### Living Experiences from Colonization

Within this theme are the living experiences, emotions, and affects of colonization each participant has survived. Garry the Elder will also be included in the remainder of this thesis, as

his contributions are too valuable to be ignored. Before we begin, let us examine what colonization means for each participant. Kayla described it as loss of history, culture, identities, family structure and the roles within those family structures. Sabe said it means broken, or torn apart. For Katherine, it means forced change. Wolf had this to share:

> I think colonization for me is really the intentional dismantling of a culture. To really look at the strengths, the adaptabilities, especially of Indigenous culture and then to pick it apart at its very core and to take away those values and morals that are so deeply intertwined within our people's ways.

Savannah shared that colonization means oppression. Eagle responded that it means taking away. While each participants perceptions varied, they were all similar in that they perceive loss.

## Experiences from Colonization

The experiences the participants discussed are uniquely felt by Indigenous peoples. These experiences, while not all were personally lived by the participants, they still held a direct affect on their family lineage. Some participants are still working to maneuver through difficult to appease legislation. All are still feeling and healing from the intergenerational effects of their parents and grandparents attending residential school. Four of six participants had involvement with the child welfare system. It is an extremely difficult task to heal from these historical and current experiences, all while enduring public and systemic discrimination.

### *Legislative*

The legislative experiences the participants spoke of include the *Indian Act* and the amendments from this. Every participant, including Elder Garry and myself, have been impacted by the *Indian Act.* For 116 years, from 1876 until 1985, the *Indian Act* determined through paternalistic lineage who was an Indian or not (Vowel, 2016) and up until 1985, if an Indian

woman lost her status, she was forced to leave her community (Kelm & Smith, 2018). As such, the loss of Indian status is a common experience for many Indigenous families across Canada. While *Bill C31* was passed in 1985 to combat the gender-inequality found within the *Indian Act,* the historical ramifications still exist (Kelm & Smith, 2018). Katherine shares how her family is affected by the *Indian Act* and amendment, *Bill C31*:

> My mother-in-law didn't bother to register her children. Now they're adults and they're struggling because they've never had a doctor because they've had to pay, right? And they couldn't afford it. And my kids are told that if they have children with non-status, my grandchildren will not be treaty. So, it kind of hits home and it's so frustrating to me.

When a person loses their Indian status, they automatically lose the Treaty rights that come along with this status, which is what Katherine is referring to. Katherine's powerlessness she feels regarding legislation dictating inherent treaty rights is a common emotion felt by many Indigenous peoples. While the government has since introduced *Bill C3,* which is another attempt by the government to reduce gender inequality (Kelm & Smith, 2018), there is still the navigating of confusing policies to reclaim Indian status that Indigenous peoples have to contend with. Garry shared a story of his married friends that speaks to how complicated these policies are:

> I'll tell you a story. A friend of mine, he was considered non-status. A Métis. And then he married a woman from a reserve, they had kids. One day he came into the house and his wife was sitting at the table with this piece of paper in front of her, and he said, what's that? She said, the counselor came over to me, says, because I married you, I have to sign this piece of paper saying that I'm out of treaty. And she said, I don't know what to do. So, he said, "Did someone grab your hand like this and make you sign that". And

> she said, “No”. He said, “Well, throw it away”. So, she did. Later on, when this Bill C31 came into existence, she wanted her children that are not registered to be registered. So, she wrote a letter to Indian Affairs and asked that her children be put back on the registration list. And they said, we have no documentation showing that you have signed out of treaty. But if you sign out, a treaty will put you back on the list and we’ll put your children back on the list. Which seemed to me pretty stupid, but anyway, that’s what they told her.

Difficult to appease policies is one reason why Indian status is not reclaimed. With generations adopted out through the 60s scoop, disconnected through CFS, or forced to leave their communities, they have lost contact with their biological families and communities creating a barrier of acquiring historical family documents to prove their Indigenous lineage. This prevents many from applying for Treaty Indian status.

### *Residential Schools*

Residential schools were legislated into law for Indigenous families to send their children. While no participants attended residential school, each felt the intergenerational effects from their parents or grandparents attending. All felt, in varying degrees, a disconnection from culture, family, and/or territory. Some had parents or siblings pass at an early age. All participants lost their traditional language. Most childhoods were affected by their parent’s lack of parenting skills or the historical trauma symptoms their parents carried. One participant shared their mother was impregnated by a priest, which means they may have a sibling somewhere they have never met. Elder Garry is a residential school survivor and had stories to share about his experience. One horrific story is related to children’s unmarked grave.

> One time I was in Brandon Residential School and I was walking in downtown Brandon, and this old man was sitting on a bench and he said, “Who are you?” He made a motion for me to sit down beside him. So, I went over there and I sat down beside him. And I told him my name, I told him that I was at that residential school up there up on the hill, and he said, “Oh, I was in that school when it first opened up.” He said, “Did you ever see the graveyard?” I said, “Yes, it was a graveyard north east of the residential school”. He said, “No, no, not that one. That one has a fence around it. The other one where the kids were taken?” What would happen is that the young kids were dying and they would take them out the back door and they’d bring new ones in the front door. Over half the kids died, that first started coming to that residential school. And so, there’s unmarked grave yards around that Brandon residential school. That school is not there anymore. They leveled out the ground. So that you can’t even see that there was a school there. That’s getting rid of key evidence. (Garry)

Garry also shared a story about how some parents sent their children to residential school for survival because surviving in their community seemed near impossible:

> I went amongst the Dakota people. I was talking to them and I was telling them about what this residential school did to our people. An old man said, “Maybe it wasn’t so bad for us because that Indian agent wouldn’t allow us to go hunting”. He said, “Our people were snaring gophers in order to eat, to feed their children”. And he said, “At least at residential school, they had three meals even though, it may not be the greatest. They had three meals and had a blanket to cover up with at night. So how can you say that wasn’t a good place for some people, to help our people survive”. I think about that. One time I was listening to this young guy I was talking to from Saskatchewan. I said, “How come

> you are here in Brandon? Don't you guys have residential schools where you come from?" He said, "We do, but they sent me here. My reserve is in a valley and these people from town used to come and sit up on top of a hill and shoot down into our houses. My family didn't want me to get shot. So, they sent me to residential school".

The experience of attending residential schools held a devastating affect for each family. Through sharing their own stories and family histories, the participants connected over how they have been affected by residential schools and their goals for healing. Some spoke of overcoming their addictions and substance misuse, reconnecting with their families, community and culture, and focusing on their mental and emotional well-being. These healing goals held by the participants are common amongst families of residential school survivors. Although, many families are still learning what their ancestors went through, which creates more complex healing goals as time goes on.

### *Child and Family Services*

The most common western system participants had experience of was the Child and Family Services (CFS) system. Firstly, I feel the need to acknowledge that there are many genuine caring social workers in this field, but the colonial policies that are centred from a Eurocentric lens force their hand, which is where the damage comes into play. Secondly, while in recent years there has been some positive movement to give Indigenous communities their power back in providing services to families, there are still a lot of changes to be done and the damage from previous years is going to take generations for families to recover from. In the early years, CFS enforced harmful policies that separated many Indigenous children from their families and communities. Katherine, who is a survivor of the 60s Scoop, is an example of this. Katherine shares her experience growing up in foster care was traumatizing and completely

isolating as an Indigenous child. She grew up with a white foster family, attended a white school, away from her community, with zero contact to her biological family. Katherine has lived a lifetime of isolation away from other Indigenous people. When asked how her foster family treated her, this is what she had to say, “At home I was made to feel that Indians were dirty and scary. So, I really didn’t identify as Aboriginal when I was young” (Katherine). Katherine’s placement into a foster home that held extreme racist views towards Indigenous children, speaks volumes of the lack of care and attention that Indigenous children and families received and receive from Canada’s systems. It has left a lasting impact on Katherine that she is still, to this day, working to overcome. Katherine shares her feelings about facing her traumatic past:

> I guess I am stuck in victim mode and to be honest, I’m scared. I’m scared to face some of my demons, like my past. It really, really hurts. And I know I have to get it done because I have children that are looking up to me. That’s all I want to say is that for me, I’m very scared and I just want you guys to know that there’s people that have a lot of fear in front of them. And I know many people I pray for them, that they find their strength for healing. (Katherine)

The fact that Katherine continues to feel so isolated from her community and family is indicative of the lack of support Canada is giving today to survivors of their previous legislation. This does not stop Katherine though, who is working hard to overcome the difficult affects of being a 60s scoop survivor.

Savannah is a participant who has intergenerational experience with the CFS system. Savannah’s mother is a residential school survivor, who had involvement in the justice system, held her own historical trauma symptoms and struggled parenting Savannah. When Savannah’s mother was incarcerated, Savannah was placed into care. Savannah herself was also incarcerated,

where her children were also placed into care. Here is a statement Savannah made about her involvement in western systems:

> I made bad choices because my mom didn't know how to parent me. That's what I learned, because I was always getting little sentences in MYC and even when I started going to jail. My friends, when I'd give birth to my child, they'd be always asking or wondering why I wouldn't fight for my child. But they knew I was in such a bad relationship when I was younger and also, I guess I was always embarrassed. When I first had [child], Métis CFS let me take home [child] and I parented [child] for a long time.

Intergenerational involvement with western systems is a difficult cycle to break, as each time the cycle continues, there becomes another generation to recover from the effects. Nonetheless, Savannah still wants to break the cycle and begin her healing journey. She acknowledges that educating herself on Indigenous history has helped her a great deal. Through education she gained compassion and understanding for her mother, thus her childhood, as well she now carries historical understanding of her own past. Today, Savannah is working closely with Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc. in their Family Group Conferencing program, which works alongside CFS to reunite families. She had positive things to share about this program and has high hopes to reunite with her son.

### *Discrimination*

Discrimination is the mistreatment of an individual based on their assignment or perceived assignment to a group or category of people (DiAngelo, 2018). All participants had experiences to share regarding discrimination, and it seemed that the more participants shared, the more they opened up with each other in sharing their stories of discrimination. Additionally, it was not just the mere experience of discrimination that stayed with each participant, the

experiences themselves caused pain, humiliation, trauma, anger, and a feeling of powerlessness. The examples that the participants shared prove that discrimination does exist in Winnipeg. For example, regardless how many times Savannah shops at her local Shoppers Drug Mart, she is racially profiled and has a security guard follow her around the store. Eagle shares how they were mistreated while in the hospital, until their parents who appear white showed up. It was then the hospital staff began treating Eagle with respect and compassion. Wolf shares that depending on whether they are accessing their treaty benefits, or employee benefits they can notice a difference in the services they receive. A common emotion that was present amongst each participant was defense fatigue. The participants are tired of combatting prejudice and dealing with discrimination, simply for being an Indigenous person.

The experiences of discrimination run so deep for the participants that when the topic of reconciliation was raised, some participants felt distrust towards the idea and doubted whether reconciliation held their best interests. Wolf shared their thoughts on reconciliation and how it makes them feel apprehensive and distrustful:

> We have to also take into consideration that the people that we're essentially working towards allyship with or reconciling have intergenerational racism, intergenerational narcissism. I mean, this is what we have to work towards and people are actually considering allyship, and working with people, [who for] multiple generations, that have been literally trying to destroy us. So, this whole allyship reconciliation thing for me is a little scary.

Reconciliation has been a topic in Canada since the TRC report came out. The 94 Calls to Action urges all levels of the Canadian government to work together to create positive change and repair the harms caused by residential schools (TRC, 2015). While reconciliation is hopeful in theory,

we must remember that many Indigenous peoples are still dealing with the emotional fallout of losing their language, culture, and connections to family and community caused by past and current colonial experiences (Vowel, 2016). If the source of these harms is not addressed, we bypass a foundational issue that caused residential schools in the first place, which is racism.

## Emotions from Colonization

This research project was an emotional journey for everyone involved. For the participants, discussing colonial history that caused the interruption between Indigenous peoples and their ways of being, and the injustices and trauma that are still inflicted on Indigenous peoples, brought forth complex emotions. For myself, I had the delicate task of presenting the colonial history as the traumatic experience it was, while balancing and refocusing with the resilience of our ancestors. The participants, Elder Garry and myself shared our emotions in a courageous manner. When the sharing happened, this helped ease sitting with these emotions and reflect back to us that we were not alone on this journey. Some participants were beginning their journey of healing and reconnecting, while others were on their journey for years, sharing knowledge that helped them overcome their distressing emotions. Throughout our time together, the participants, Elder Garry, and myself shared a deep sense of loss and grief, and feelings of anger and shame over the things that were done to us as Indigenous peoples.

### *Sense of Loss and Grief*

For Indigenous peoples, colonization interrupted many aspects of our indigeneity. Many Indigenous families lost their languages, their culture, their relationships with ceremony, medicines, languages and the land, and their connection to their families and communities. For the participants, this knowledge that their ancestors identity once stood on a strong foundation that encompassed all these important aspects was extremely difficult to sit with. When we

considered all our ancestors experienced from colonization, the participants spoke of a deep sense of loss and grief. For many Indigenous people experiencing interruption, reconnecting to their community and family is an important step in reclaiming the foundation for their identity (Vowel, 2016). Kayla is one who feels there is a disconnection from her family in community and had this share:

> I grew up in the city. I carry a lot of trauma with my family dynamic. I was pretty much isolated my whole life, since I was a child. My mom moved to the city away from everyone in Peguis. My grandma lived out there. Most of my family lives out there. So, I never really got to build that connection with my family, [with] all my cousins and everything. They all have nicknames. I never really felt like a part of that.

Kayla was raised with her mother in Winnipeg, which is two hours away from Peguis. Kayla explains that she did not visit enough to build the connection she sees between her family members who did grow up together. Kayla also shared that she does not know why her mother felt the need to move away or why they rarely visited Peguis, but is aware this lack of knowing is contributing to the barrier that Kayla now senses when she visits her family in Peguis.

For some of the participants who were raised with Christianity, this sense of loss and grief was present in their relationship to the religion they were raised with. While emotions regarding Christianity varied from participant to participant, there was a common understanding that Christianity was misused to abuse Indigenous peoples. For the participants who follow Christianity, they explained it as an extremely confusing experience coming to terms with how their religion was used against their ancestors. For Wolf, who is choosing to reconnect to Indigenous ways of being, coming to terms with this history and reconciling their present with Indigenous teachings is an emotional process that still continues today:

> I've been able to identify how mad I've been and acknowledging the people that chose to impact my people this way. And confused, because a God that I once believed in so much, who I've learned and can now see how many people use that word of that God to justify their actions confuses me, because if that one God can do that to my people through their own people. How confusing is that? I have a sense of grief and loss because of the relationship that I used to have with the Christian God. I mourn that.

For Wolf and others raised with religion, reconciling these two histories with each other can be confusing. Wolf spoke of having to grieve the traditional culture their ancestors once held, and again grieving the way their Christian God was manipulated. After learning the church's role in residential schools, those raised with religion felt a sense of anger towards the church that once gave them comfort and stability. There is also a feeling of guilt for some, who choose to carry both belief systems in their hearts. For some, peace came with choosing to step away from their religious upbringing and towards their traditional Indigenous culture.

Katherine shares her experience of how Christianity was manipulated to reinforce the idea that Indigenous ways of being was the wrong way to live:

> I was brought up white and I only know English. But the thing is. I was taught Christianity, and to me that's really strong, and then my foster parents told me that powwow, tradition, smudging, [it was all] witchcraft. So, I'm just trying to get back to my family. There's a battle going on inside of me and it's just very heartbreaking. And I'm trying to be me. I'm trying to heal. And I just I don't know. I'm so confused.

Katherine's childhood holds many losses. There is the loss of her childhood with her family, the loss of her languages, the loss of participating in cultural activities with her family, the relationship with her community, and the overall loss of her identity as an Indigenous woman.

Katherine internalized what she was told as a child, and now is working to reconcile the things she was told, with what is in her heart. The loss of language is a similarity held by all participants, including myself. There are feelings of sadness or regret from not being taught their language and some admit feelings of jealousy when they hear those who can speak their language. Overall, the loss of language was an emotional affect of colonization felt by all, including myself.

### *Anger*

Many of the participants spoke of feeling anger towards the government of Canada for all they did to Indigenous peoples, and towards the church for the role they played in residential schools. Feeling angry over the injustices that Indigenous peoples have and still endure is a common emotion felt amongst Indigenous peoples. For many participants, anger was paired with a sense of powerlessness in their inability to change their peoples and families' circumstances for the better. Some felt frustration towards their families lack of anger regarding colonization, wishing that their families would acknowledge how deeply they were affected by colonization just so they would realize the urgency of reconnecting with traditional Indigenous ways of being. For Savannah, she feels angry, but her anger is paired with a wonderment over whether her childhood would have been different if she was raised connected to her culture. Savannah shares her emotions and thoughts she contemplates, "I feel ripped off. I feel pissed off. I feel hurt. Because would I have went a different way of life? Would I have been somebody else or benefited from knowing?" (Savannah). Once Savannah became educated on the history of colonization, it spurred multiple changes in her life. It inspired her to heal, it created a curiosity of how her life would have been different and she started exploring these potential changes, and

she began processing her anger over the losses and injustices that Indigenous peoples are still enduring.

A few of the participants spoke of not being aware of the anger their families and themselves carried within, until they became aware of the history of colonization. For these participants, anger was normalized, but this does not mean it was harmless. Katherine acknowledges this anger caused harm to herself and her family:

> I knew I had pent up anger and I didn't really know where it was coming from and it was affecting my family in the way I behaved. And now that we've done this group work and I know the timeline, it all makes sense. All the feelings that I've been having, and knowing that my parents went through something, I knew that in my head a little bit, but I didn't let myself feel it in here. So, something opened and allowed my knowledge to get into my soul and then let that knowledge explode [and] just cry for sorrow, because that was suppressed for so long. But for me, I've been living with it for 38 years, and it's hard to let go of something that you've known for so long. How do I let go of this anger? It's been, so to speak, my best friend for years and years. And it's so heavy and [I'm] tired of carrying it. I just want to live lighter.

Katherine is in the process of understanding how her historical trauma she carries affects her life. She is adapting to this new knowledge she carries. Despite the newness, Katherine knows she does not want to carry her anger anymore. Kayla learned the history of colonization previous to this research project, so has been able to sit with her anger and reflect on it for a longer period of time. Kayla shared once she learned the history of colonization, she understood why this anger is inside her. This also helped her gain compassion for her family members:

> I'm still angry, but it makes me understand more. So, I guess I have more compassion for myself with the anger, like this is why I'm angry. I have reasons to be angry and so do other people. And I guess compassion for my family too and what they've been through, realizing that this all stems from something greater than just them.

For those who are finally understanding and becoming aware of this anger within, they speak of experiencing a shift within. Some are planning on using their anger in a positive way, where it pushes them to continue on in healing and reconnecting to their Indigenous ways of being, while others are tired are carrying it and want to let it go. Either way, education and awareness has helped give them the push they needed to heal and change for the better.

***Shame***

There were moments throughout this research project where I would hear my participants speak about shame and how this emotion plays a part in their lives. Some spoke of growing up in an environment filled with secrecy, silence and judgement, all qualities necessary for cultivating shame (Brown, 2018). Some would describe their healing prevented by fear, aggression, isolation and addictions, all expressions of shame (Brown, 2018). Some participants spoke of being shamed by fellow Indigenous people for not knowing their traditional culture or their languages, which only further isolated them from seeking reconnection. Katherine was always open and vulnerable with her feelings of shame she carried, courageously naming it:

> I'm a newborn in this culture. In my own culture I feel like a newborn. It kind of feels a little bit shameful, like I should know this and I feel ashamed that I don't. But then... That's not my fault.

Shame is a powerful emotional state to be in. Shame can cause a person to view their entire being in a negative light, hindering engagement of change, causing them to question their every

step towards healing and whether it is the right one. Katherine feels exactly this, and has shared that she is unsure where or who to turn to for help in healing. There is an intense fear of being rejected for not being an acceptable participant in the chosen healing method. Katherine may feel alone in this state, but there are many survivors of residential school and child welfare who feel similar. For example, Kayla also feels shame over being disconnected from her community and family members:

> I see all my cousins who did grow up in Peguis, and they all have their nicknames. And they know all their other cousins and stuff like that. And me, I was totally isolated. It's like, the sense of shame that comes with being urban. Feeling like you can't identify as.... It's the shame I think, impacted my identity as an Indigenous person, I don't even know how to identify, like, I don't know.

The common denominator between Kayla and Katherine's childhoods is silence and isolation. Both women were raised in an environment of secrecy and silence, with no trusting adult to turn to who could reflect back to them that it was okay to practice their indigeneity. This contributed to the shame spawned within both.

**Affects of Colonization**

If we consider how colonization has affected Indigenous peoples from a wellness perspective, it can help us move past a dichotomous perspective of healthy or unhealthy, which can often cause guilt, shame, or regression on healing (Linklater, 2014). Rather, if we face our healing with an open and accepting perspective, we give ourselves a chance to reflect wholistically and become aware of goals that work toward wellness (Linklater, 2014). After all, each participant is on their own unique journey of reclamation and healing because none were affected by colonization exactly the same. Each participants identity, mental health, physical

being and spirituality have been affected by colonization. Additionally, it was very inspiring to hear each participant acknowledge they knew they were affected by colonization and that they were not planning on staying stuck in their trauma and other affects. All held goals to heal and overcome.

### *Identity*

Identity is what encompasses a person and includes cultural aspects that one engages in to express their identity. When the participants were asked if they felt colonization affected their identity, all agreed. Identity conflict stems from a loss of identity and is a shared experience amongst the participants. Their hearts and spirits tell them they are Indigenous and they deserve to express who they are as Indigenous people, but because of their living experiences of colonization, their minds make them question this. Many feel this inner conflict intrudes on their ability to build their relationships with the four cultural elements medicines, land, language and ceremony. All participants expressed a desire to strengthen their relationship with the four cultural elements as adults.

The participants indicate medicine knowledge helps form their identity as an Indigenous person, as well there are correlations between knowledge carried, foundation of identity and level of self-esteem regarding oneself. Wolf was raised Catholic surrounded by very little Indigenous medicines, but always held a curiosity towards Indigenous ways of being. Once an adult, they began working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to reclaim and integrate medicinal knowledge and healing into their lives. This is what Wolf had to say:

> I think in our culture, in our ceremony and our language, our medicines, our relationship with Creator, our relationship with each other; It's all interconnected, each and every aspect of that makes us up, who we are as a whole. So, medicines are a big part of who I

> am and how I identify. What I learn from them and the relationship that I have with them, definitely impacts how I view myself.

Wolf considers their relationship with medicine and how they view their identity as a positive characteristic. Savannah offers a different perspective on medicinal knowledge and how it impacts her adult identity. For Savannah, she feels her lack of knowledge contributes to her lack of identity and thus her self-esteem. She had this to share, “My identity with traditionality and medicines is kind of patchy. It’s blotchy and there’s no knowledge there” (Savannah). Throughout this research project, I witnessed Savannah being very hard on herself and downplaying the gifts she carries. Unfortunately, low self-esteem is a common symptom from historical trauma and can cause people to struggle with recognising their gifts. While Savannah may feel her knowledge about medicines is patchy or blotchy, myself, along with the remainder of the group, feel this statement was disproved many times, because we witnessed Savannah sharing incredibly gifted and thoughtful perspectives on traditional medicines.

The participants relationships to the land also serve as a piece of their identity and is something they recognise as being cultivated from childhood. Connecting to the land as children through play is a similarity held among the participants. They share fond memories of feeling a sense of safety and security with their relationship to the land as children. While a ceremonial relationship to the land was not as prevalent, they knew they could rely on the land to support their expression of themselves as children through play. These pleasant memories have supported their connection to the land as adults in a secure manner and has encouraged this relationship to evolve on a spiritual level. As adults, they feel a need to connect to the land on a spiritual level and accomplish this by putting in the time and effort to learn teachings from Knowledge Keepers and Elders. The participants identify honouring the land as an important part

of their identity and roles in life, such as protectors of Mother Earth. As parents, there is a desire to facilitate experiences of the land through the lens of Indigenous knowledges. It is the hope of the parents in this study to encourage in their children an identity grounded in Indigenous ways of being, where the values they place in the land is passed onto their children.

Language is another cultural element that the participants indicate make up a part of their indigeneity. While not one of the participants speak their traditional Indigenous language, all, with the exception of Sabe, feel a desire to reclaim this part of their identity. Some participants have taken steps to relearn their language by taking a class, or they have chosen to surround themselves with fluent speakers. Wolf explains that surrounding themselves with fluent speakers has shown them they can relate to and understand their cultural surroundings and identity in a decolonized way. It has helped them deepen their relationship with themselves, ceremonies, medicines, land and to their ancestors. To most of the participants, including myself, speaking your language represents a strong identity, one where your family lineage successfully resisted through the years or fought hard to reclaim a disconnection. The participants and myself, admire those who speak their language.

For the participants, their relationship to ceremony is a highly valued aspect of their identity. For generations, Indigenous spiritual practices were outlawed and missionaries forcefully entered into Indigenous communities, causing widespread effects of ceremony disconnection that many Indigenous people are still recovering from. The affects on identity from these actions vary within each participant and in their family lineage. The participants, myself included, are recovering from this and wish to hold a sacred relationship to ceremony, but identity confliction is a powerful barrier to overcome indeed. For some of the participants, this confliction is so strong that it prevents attending or forces them to leave earlier. Sabe feels

identity confliction when attending ceremony, where they feel they do not belong or are not worthy of being there. This is what Sabe had to share about that, “I try my best, but it’s that conflicting thing there, that kind of persuades me not to go. I’m trying to get comfortable within my own skin for that. I’m trying”. Sabe is not the only participant who feels this way. Katherine is another who struggles with attending ceremony due to identity confliction. Many of the participants turn to their families for support to overcome this confliction, such as Katherine, who attends powwows accompanied by the safety net of her family. Doing this gives Katherine a sense of safety and security, especially during those initial moments of reconnecting and reintroducing herself back to ceremony that she describes as emotionally difficult.

Kayla is also working to rebuild her relationship to ceremony. For Kayla, growing up in the city has created a ceremonial disconnection she is working to repair. While she did have involvement with ceremonies during her childhood, it was not to the extent she wished, so Kayla works to include her children as much as she can. Kayla is an example of positively change compounding on each other through the generations, where with each generation, the harm from colonization is repaired. When Kayla choses to reconnect, her family inevitably does too. All this work Kayla is doing to reengage with ceremony and her culture, has had an affect on not only her identity as an individual, but her children as well. This is what Kayla had to share about her identity and ceremony:

> Yeah, because I feel that connection now. I feel like instead of something that’s outside of me that I’m trying to reach for, I know that it’s something that I have and I’ve always had. It’s just up to me to connect to it in whatever ways. I would say it’s a part of who I am.

Every one of the participants, despite the difficulties they face in doing so, value rebuilding their relationship to ceremony. They value doing this with their families and they are aware that it is helping create a stronger sense of identity as Indigenous peoples for themselves, and for their children.

### *Mental Health*

When the participants were asked if they feel colonization has affected their mental health, all had a different perspective regarding how their mental health has been affected. Some referred to the stigma they feel when dealing with western services for support. One spoke of experiencing eating disorders during times of intense stress when dealing with colonial systems. Some spoke of depression, suicidal ideation and self-harm. Wolf shared a thought on how living through colonization has caused Indigenous peoples to reflexively rely on western methods to support our mental health:

> Because we live in a westernized world, the way in which we view our people's teachings have been, I think, a lot harder to re-emerge because we have a tendency of seeing things from a western perspective. The idea that our teachings, our medicines, our ceremonial works are limitless, and that anything is possible has been a tough concept to grasp.

Wolf is referring to the years of oppression from colonial systems, coupled with the perspectives held by the people who run them, that Indigenous people and our ways were not the effective way of meeting the needs of our well-being. In a world where it is necessary to obtain a diagnosis to receive support services, many have been forced to turn to western ways. Thankfully, each participant seemed to be aware of this and were working to overcome this.

### *Physical*

When the participants were asked if they felt colonization has affected them physically, some participants joked about fast food, which is true considering how far Indigenous peoples have strayed from their traditional diet. Katherine linked climate change and high rates of cancer to how we eat as a society. Kayla wondered if she would be more fit living on the land and harvesting her food. All of the participants have experience with addiction, where either themselves or their caregiver engaged in addictive behaviours. Addiction is a common historical trauma response and can cause a myriad of health issues to the user. Sabe reflected on their time as a sex worker:

> I'm going to say yes and I don't know if this is going to fit into the physicalness of it. But like I started thinking a while ago, I started doing drugs, working on the streets. That has a physical detrimental effect. I feel that has a part of colonization.

For some individuals engaging in sex work, this is done consensually. Sabe does not see their time as a sex worker this way. For Sabe, they relate sex work to colonization. Sabe realized that at some point their decision to work in the sex trade, became less choice, and more existing and coping from colonial impacts.

***Spirituality***

All participants feel colonization has affected them spiritually. During groupwork, the participants reflected on how practicing our spirituality was outlawed. All felt this had a huge detrimental effect on their ancestors experiences and their own current foundation with their spirituality, which in turn has affected other areas in their lives. Elder Garry shared his thoughts on having a strong spiritual foundation:

> In all of the things that Jewish people have gone through, why are they still so strong today? It's because no matter what happened to them, their spirituality was left intact.

> Even though everything in their life was moving, there was something that grounded them. There was something that held them fast. But if you look at our people, that was one of the things that they did, is that they got rid of our spirituality. They outlawed it, and everything in our life was moving. There was nothing to ground us in the same way that Jewish people had. So today, when we're trying to get back that spirituality, what we're trying to do is we're trying to get back that grounding that held us strong. Even though all of this has happened to us, we can say we are still here today. And why? Because of the things that our people taught us about who we are and what we are. To me I think that's really something.

Garry's explanation resonated strongly with each participant where we all felt a greater understanding why our spirituality was affected by colonization. With all the participants in varying stages of reconnecting with their spirituality they offered different perceptions of how this affects their lives. Wolf and Eagle are two participants who feel they have a strong foundation in knowing who they are spiritually, and that they completely trust Creator and their helpers to guide and support them. Katherine relies on Christian religion and the bible for spiritual guidance, but feels she needs to reconnect with her Indigenous spirituality for healing and release of traumatic memories and emotions. Kayla wishes to reclaim more spiritual knowledge to understand herself better. After considering our history with colonization and the affects from these experiences, it is no wonder why the participants feel there are barriers to reconnecting, which is what I will now share with you.

## Barriers to Reconnection

The barriers to reconnection create difficulties for the participants when they attempt to reconnect to their family, cultural elements, and community. Each of the barriers were created

from colonization, causing pain, fear, distrust, frustration, and anger, all reactions that make it difficult for the participant to overcome their emotional barriers and personal trauma. The barriers experienced by the participants are heavily influenced by their past life experiences, where some participants were triggered by certain barriers that prevent them from continuing on in their attempts to reconnect. Sadly, some of these barriers were committed by other Indigenous people, who undoubtably are also on their own healing journey.

**Family Disconnection**

Colonization broke the bonds between Indigenous families. With political goals and resource attainment in mind, little thought was given to the legislation inflicted onto Indigenous families. The result is Indigenous families disconnected from each other, geographically, emotionally, mentally, and culturally. Many are working to overcome these types of disconnections, while others, after unsuccessful attempts, come to terms with being left to create their own family support systems. For some participants, the emotional disconnection was too great to make an attempt and there was also a fear of being rejected that prevented them from reaching out. These participants were left wondering what would happen if they did reach out. Kayla was one of these participants, who shared this, “I always want to ask my aunties, because I seen recently that they were picking (medicines) and I thought, ‘Oh, I would love to join them’. Then it’s like, how do I reach out”. Kayla shared this comment prior to group work. After group work, where we discussed why colonization had intentionally disconnected Indigenous families, Kayla became recharged with reconnecting to her family members and vehemently denied colonial control over her life any further.

For Katherine, the emotional disconnection and risk of rejection was also present, but her desire for family closeness and connection overwhelmed the fear, causing her to reach out to her

family. Unfortunately, the outcome was not as positive as Katherine had hoped for. Katherine shares her experiences with attempts to reconnect with her sisters, “My sisters don’t talk to me. I love them and I wish them happy birthday. I tell them, I love you, and they just give me nothing but hate. It hurts”. It is hard to say why Katherine’s family responded like this without hearing their side of the story, but Katherine guesses that her sisters are angry with her because they also went into care and that Katherine should have done more to protect them. Again, it is hard to assess this family dynamic without hearing or speaking to Katherine’s sisters, so I will not attempt to interpret this situation.

Despite the will and desire to heal and work toward well-being as a family, the impacts of disconnection are felt intergenerationally amongst the participants as well. Despite their best efforts, some participants are carrying on the experiences of disconnection with their children.

> I stand there stubborn and I wonder why I have to force myself to… I have to go and touch my child on the head or caress, so they feel that because I never got that growing up. So, the little girl inside me, [says] “Remember, touch your kids”. Even that’s heartbreaking. I’m sitting on the bus, I’m sitting so far away from my daughter, and she’s right there and she wants to cuddle and I’m just kind of like [pretends to push away child], why am I like this? Because I didn’t get it. My parents didn’t know how. (Katherine)

Residential school survivors often have a difficult time giving affection and showing love to their children, which, unfortunately, can be role modelled and passed on through the generations (TRC, 2015). It is the memory of abuse that exists in the survivors’ mind that makes some fearful of enacting that same abuse they experienced (TRC, 2015). In Katherine’s case, she never received loving affection from her foster parents, so is learning how to do this with her children.

What is hopeful with Katherine is that she recognizes there is something wrong and expresses the desire to change for the sake of her children. Katherine and Kayla are taking on the tremendous task of breaking their familial cycles of disconnection caused by colonization.

**Difficulty Finding Belonging at Ceremony**

For many Indigenous peoples, they find belonging in ceremony with their families, but as we just discussed, this is not an option for some. When this happens, people are left to seek out and create their own cultural families. Unfortunately, they are sometimes met with rejection, lateral violence, or issues with external recognition. For Savannah, who I admire for their social network they have created that surrounds them, this did not come easy. Savannah shared stories of being pushed out of drum groups, being shamed for not wearing a ribbon skirt despite her explanation of not owning one, and of rivals claiming cultural territory preventing her from attending certain locations hosting ceremonies. While Savannah has finally found her cultural family, she shares she still carries pain over the rejection she faced in previous years. For others, like Sabe, there was no outright act of aggression or rejection, yet they still hold a fear over the possibility of this occurring over not appearing Indigenous enough.

> When I first get there [to ceremony]. When I first get there, yes. Because it's like everybody is there already. And I'm like, 'oh here's the white [person] walking in', but then it goes away after…. that little part there, that judgment, I'm the hardest critic on myself. (Sabe)

That fear of being rejected at cultural activities over not looking Indigenous enough stems from the internalization of colonial oppression (Rae, 2021). For hundreds of years, Indigenous people have been told we are not good enough and mistreated simply for being born an Indigenous person, which has been embedded into the minds and hearts of some Indigenous people. In

Sabe's situation, internalized colonial oppression is expressed by feeling as though they do not live up to the visual standards instilled by society. Additionally, colonization is directly tied to the fear of rejection and rejection of people over a perceived value. Indigenous peoples are coming back together and relearning their ways in a climate of colonialism that constantly tells them they are not good enough, so it is being transferred to the climate of our ceremonies.

### *Lateral Violence*

Lateral violence happens when a person attempts to gain power and control over another (Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC], 2011). In Indigenous contexts, lateral violence is directly connected to and has roots in "colonialism, oppression, intergenerational trauma and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination" (NWAC, 2011, p. 1). Essentially, Indigenous peoples feel powerless to stop living under colonial oppression, so we are now turning our anger against each other (NWAC, 2011). All participants shared experiences with lateral violence. All have been previously shamed for not knowing their traditional language, as if losing their language was a choice they made. Three participants have been pushed out of ceremonies for not knowing certain protocols, despite the fact that protocols may differ from nation to nation, or Knowledge Keeper to Knowledge Keeper. Some have felt lateral violence for not looking Indigenous enough. The examples that the participants shared were many and varied from situation to situation, with each holding a commonality, which is that lateral violence does exist amongst and between Indigenous people and that it creates a barrier to reconnection that is emotionally difficult to overcome.

Interestingly, some of the participants were both victims and perpetrators of lateral violence. In this section, I will not name who did what because I do not believe shaming is the way to healing, but it is still important we acknowledge that lateral violence is happening

amongst Indigenous people. NWAC (2011) explains, “Lateral violence happens when individuals who have endured oppression suppress feelings such as: anger, shame, and rage.” (p. 3). This is an important statement to take in and reflect on. Indigenous peoples have been oppressed, have either been told to supress their feelings or are told outright their feelings are invalid, leaving them powerless, which can often cause anger, shame and rage. Each participant has expressed this sentiment throughout this research project, and yet they have also shared personal stories or perspectives of committing lateral violence. In the moment of listening to these stories and perspectives, the participants who enacted lateral violence did not realize they were enacting lateral violence. It then becomes an issue of whether or not we address the lateral violence we witness, which in these moments I unfortunately did not. From this experience, I learned that it takes courage from both parties when addressing and confronting lateral violence, because if we continue to deny and ignore, this further entrenches the problem and invalidates our collective experience of lateral violence as Indigenous people.

### *Politics of Recognition*

A commonality amongst the participants who experienced identity confliction was seeking external recognition, otherwise known as the politics of recognition. The politics of recognition is when an Indigenous person seeks recognition for being Indigenous or validating their experiences as Indigenous peoples from the settler state (Coulthard, 2014). The participants may not have outrightly sought recognition by the settler state, but two participants felt they could use settler modes of recognition, such as their Treaty cards to feel accepted and a sense of belonging amongst their people. If their people accept them and recognize them, then that validates their belonging. While there is nothing wrong with this, it speaks volumes to how colonialism has infiltrated the Indigenous mindset to rely on western ways. What is also

interesting is that both Katherine and Sabe seek external recognition, but for completely different reasons: Sabe feels they do not appear Indigenous enough while Katherine feels she is not Indigenous enough on the inside, and yet both feel as though they do not belong with their own people. This also speaks to how effectively colonialism has divided us. This seeking recognition was often expressed amongst the other participants, including myself, which suggests that perhaps this is a potential generalizable attribute for Indigenous peoples outside this study.

**Resistance from Indigenous Communities**

While there has been movement within Indigenous communities to reclaim culture for a number of years, there is still resistance present. This resistance often presents itself in the form of systems and their policies that often prevents helping and providing support or guidance. Elder Garry shared his experiences of being invited into communities to do ceremonies at schools with children and their teachers:

> I've been working with the Department of Education since early 1970s. We used to go into different communities to talk about our culture and how our culture has to be taught to the children. Sometimes some of the communities wanted a pipe ceremony and some of them wanted a smudge. Of course, that wasn't done in the schools at that time. So, we were taking part in it [the teaching], then I realized that all of these people were cutting me off. They wouldn't hear anything that I was saying because I was part of that cultural component. So, what we started to do is we said, if you want a smudge, if you want a pipe ceremony, you have to bring somebody else inside there to do that. And so that pipe, all of that was put away and then they would introduce me, then these people could hear me. They couldn't hear me if I was a part of that pipe ceremony. Anything dealing with spirituality was thrown out.

This experience that Garry shared with us was something that happened decades ago, during a time when there was high resistance from Indigenous communities. Kayla shared a more current story about the resistance she had witnessed:

> I was just thinking about [community]. My grandmother works in the school system out there, and she was talking to me about teenagers having a hard time and their social workers and all the people that are involved in trying to help these youth. I asked her, you have a smudge room or anything at that school. She said, "No", I was like, "What? Maybe that's something that could be helpful". Like if you're on a First Nation reserve, you think that culture would be appropriate and you would think that they would know that. But it's not known.

When I was a social worker, I visited siblings on my caseload in community and would sometimes visit them during school hours to meet their teachers or other helpers involved. While in the school system, I discovered there were very little cultural aspects integrated into their education system. I found this odd and I agree with Kayla's thoughts: if the school is on-reserve why is there not as much cultural aspects as possible. On-reserve carries a wealth of cultural Knowledge Keepers, language speakers and land-based folks who are eager to share what they know with the youth. After asking around, I found out that cultural immersion was limited because some caregivers felt uncomfortable with their children being present at cultural activities. In an effort to accommodate comfort levels surrounding religion and spirituality, the entire possibility was eliminated, which is not fair to those who want it present within the school system. This has created one of the biggest barriers of passing traditional knowledge onto the next generation.

**Covid-19**

Since its' emergence in March 2020, Covid-19 has had a widespread global affect. Around the world, countries have implemented public health safety measures in the hopes of slowing down transmission rates of the Covid-19 virus. This research project was no exception and was adjusted to conform to safety standards upheld by the University of Manitoba to protect all involved. For myself and the participants, a big loss was having to remove the sweat lodge and naming ceremonies that were planned for the end of the group work. I also had to stop doing in-person visits with the participants mid-way through the project and move to Zoom visits. While everyone in the study understood why we had to move to online methods, all felt disappointed. Each participant shared their frustrations they feel over living through a pandemic, and spoke about how Covid-19 affects their lives. The participants shared how their support systems have diminished causing an increase in their stress. The participants who were connected to agencies and their helpers, feel a sense of loss from being unable to attend in-person to receive services. Some of the participants have stated they feel their journeys of healing through cultural means have been halted, as the programming is no longer available. Thankfully, some agencies have adjusted by moving to online support services. While this provides some semblance of social connection and cultural support, most feel online does not provide the same sense of support that in-person does, so all are eager to return to in-person gatherings.

## Elements that Encourage Reconnection

On a more positive note, the participants spoke of elements they feel help encourage reconnection to their indigeneity. What is promising is that most of the elements of reconnection are within the control of the person seeking reconnection, meaning it is in the hands of the participants whether they take that first step or not. Since most of the participants spoke about

how they wish they had the opportunity to live a childhood connected to their family and history, it is understandable that history and family are identified as elements of encouragement. A second element participants have identified is what they need from themselves, which includes finding their voice against colonization, decolonizing efforts, forgiveness, and belonging and acceptance. The third element is what they need from others, specifically what their access to culture should feel like. Overall, the participants identify cultural locations and helpers present should encourage reconnection and provide safety and reassurance they are on the right track.

**History and Family**

The participants often reflected on how their childhood felt and how they feel it impacts them today. It is this reflection that motivates the participants to give their children a childhood connected to their culture, family and history. Wolf ensures their nieces and nephews are well informed of colonial history and how it has impacted Indigenous people, as well as participating in ceremonies with them on a consistent basis. Eagle grew up this same way and is proud of standing up for the truth about colonization in school. Some of the public-school divisions in Winnipeg are finally changing to repair the damage caused from colonization. One way they are doing this is implementing language immersion programs within their schools. A few of the participants are lucky enough to have their children able to attend these language programs. Katherine's child attends a public school where they have a choice to attend Ojibwe and Cree language courses. Katherine shared:

> I have my seven-year-old daughter. She goes to [school] and they have a Cree program and an Ojibwe program in there… I can't teach my kids Ojibwe because that's my dad's side and Cree's my mom's side. I can't teach them anything because I don't really know. But the thing is, is that I think it's beautiful. At least with my kids… I'm sad that I can't

> teach them the language. But another aspect is that my daughter going to school, coming home, teaching me all these things, she's teaching me. It's a beautiful thing.

An unintended side effect from witnessing her child learn the language, is that it is pushing Katherine to face the grief she carries over losing her language. The fact this teaching is coming from her daughter who she loves unconditionally, is no mistake. After all, our Elders and Knowledge Keepers often say our children are our biggest teachers (personal communication, Josephine Bear, February 3, 2022). For other participants, like Kayla, they are the ones who are learning the language and then bring it home to share with their children:

> I've been practicing my introduction because my college will get me to do videos and I practice, over and over. So, my child sits there and listens to me all the time. They're always like, "Aniin, Boozhoo, I'm Indigenous". They make fun of me, but it's funny. I always bug them, all I say is Aniin, Boozhoo and then they'll go on. So, they are learning.

Kayla speaks of this experience with her daughter as creating a positive memory together. One where they are accepting of each other while they learn the language, despite the mistakes each other make. Kayla and Katherine's language goals for their families are an element of encouragement for them. It is motivation from the history they have lived that is pushing the participants to give their children access to the culture they wish they had. Access to language, ceremony, medicines and smudging, and learning their spirit names are helping them give their children a childhood they wish they had, one that is connected to their culture, family and history.

**What Participants Need from Themselves**

The participants carry a deep need to feel empowered, which they are achieving in a variety of ways. The strongest form of empowerment found in the data is finding their voice against colonization, which is highly correlated with education. A second form of empowerment for the participants was their choice to engage in decolonizing efforts. For the participants, after they became educated on the history of colonization, this awareness that they can choose to engage in cultural practices that were once outlawed, was an extremely empowering experience. A third need that was present in the participants was forgiveness, which was either expressed through forgiving those who wronged them, or forgiving themselves for past mistakes. Either way, forgiveness led to a feeling of freedom within the participants. A fourth need, belonging and acceptance, initially presented as something they needed from others, but after deeper analysis transformed into a need they fulfill themselves. These are the needs in the participants that must be fulfilled before they can whole-heartedly continue on in their healing journey. They are healing steps they need to take for themselves that lead to empowerment.

### *Finding Their Voice Against Colonization*

For many of the participants, finding their voice against colonization is expressed in a variety of ways. For some, it runs parallel with getting educated, but not necessarily on colonial history. For Eagle, they use their knowledge of their traditional culture to stand up against the discrimination and racism they face:

> When she's a baby, I'm going to be smudging her. It's not bad. It's not like a cigarette. It's perfectly normal. There's no harm to it. If anyone tells me you shouldn't be smudging your baby. [I'll respond with] "Are you trying to be racist".

For Eagle, they feel great purpose in voicing against the harms of colonization. The majority of participants identify how essential it is we share both traditional knowledge and accurate history

of colonization as much as possible to our younger generations. Wolf has been doing this with their nieces and nephews and feels a sense of fulfillment educating their younger generation so they can find their voice against colonization.

Kayla shared multiple aspects she identifies as helpful when she is expressing her voice against colonization. First, feeling supported and validated during group work and throughout the research project gave her the strength and inspiration she needed to fulfill her dream of organizing gatherings for teachings on ribbon skirt making. Second, connecting with other group members helped her feel empathy towards those who were learning the history of colonization for the first time. Kayla shared:

> Connecting with others and seeing their pain. I don't acknowledge my pain, but like, see[ing] others going through that and, you know… [participant]. [Gender] didn't know much about it. So, to see someone go through that whole process, I guess it was like everyone needs to know and like not very many people do. So yeah, it is important work and it makes me feel like I have a new drive to be more.

For a few of the participants, there was an undertone of empathy and inspiration present after group work. For those who came into this research project with prior knowledge of colonial history, they felt a strong desire to help their fellow Indigenous people by sharing their knowledge on colonial history. This was present within all participants where they wanted to help other Indigenous peoples experience an awakening through education and awareness in the hopes to break intergenerational trauma cycles. Wolf spoke of having a personal understanding that this lack of awareness of colonial impacts could alter the course of a person's life. Katherine has expressed multiple times she knows they are on the beginning of their journey of education

and renewal and that they are in that beginning stage of finding their own strength and voice against colonization:

> This is needed (referring to the education on the history of colonization), otherwise I would have lived the rest of my life like this, and that scares me. I was born Anishinaabe, I'm entitled to that, so I'm going to stop letting them think that they can deny me all this stuff when it's my right. [I'm going to] take back the power.

For Katherine, a significant piece of finding her voice against colonization is sharing her childhood and how growing up in the child welfare system affected her. Katherine hopes that by sharing her story, she can inspire change within others and the systems.

***Decolonizing Efforts***

For the majority of the participants, they recognize they need to decolonize their mindset. The participants efforts include daily mental well-being check-in's and prioritizing daily acts of decolonization. Wolf shared their morning routine includes a well-being check-in:

> Every day I wake up, I think I stated before, I really try to live to become a better [gender], live to become a better Indian or Indigenous [gender]. Wake up to try to change, to be a better human being.

Wolf, who is very passionate about their indigeneity, seeks daily ways they can engage in decolonization. Wolf elaborated that when they do their check-in, they maintain a non-judgmental, gentle approach and really try to focus their intentions on performing decolonizing acts, in whatever form they feel they may need that day. With their morning check-in completed, this helps them prioritize daily acts of decolonizing varying from smudging and prayer, to ceremony, to turning to the land for guidance. Decolonizing can also be efforts to shift the

ideology our mindset may centre around. For example, Wolf shared how they are working to shift from a Western mindset to an Indigenous oriented way of thinking:

> I think that when we use the word land, it has a Western connotation with it, which makes us feel like we own this. We claim ownership of it. So, to decolonize substitute that word land with Earth. It's a small step because then you begin to see it as a whole, versus sectors or acres, but that everything is interconnected.

Decolonizing your mindset can be complicated work, one that often involves facing difficult emotions or personal traumas. Both Katherine and Sabe spoke of their efforts to decolonize their mindset they have in regards to attending ceremonies and powwows. The shame they both feel has caused them to leave early, or not attend at all. Katherine had this to share about decolonizing her mindset:

> Yes, going forward, I'm going to be participating and loving and accepting instead of being shame and hiding in the corner. And like, "Oh stay five minutes, ok gotta go". Because I felt shame and didn't feel like I had a right there, [I] felt like a black sheep among my people. That's a hard pill to swallow. But if I carry this any longer, they win.

Sabe, who also feels similar, had this to share:

> I got to start putting that into my own perspective, too, is who cares what other people say and think about you. Cause it's me thinking what they think about me. I try and tell my kids all the time, who cares what other people say and think about you. But here I am caring about what other people say and think.

Both Katherine and Sabe know they belong at ceremony and powwow and are working on this through self-talk, prayer, and seeking support through close friends and family. Both have described this task as of decolonizing their mindset from shame as incredibly difficult.

***Forgiveness***

Forgiveness can be an emotional complex subject. Even something as simple as raising the topic of forgiveness created an emotional reaction within both myself and the participants. Forgiveness also plays a unique role in each individuals lives. Some have been reflecting on the idea of forgiveness for years, such as Wolf, who has worked incredibly hard to forgive their father for dying by suicide. This was always a difficult topic for Wolf to bring up, so I appreciate their vulnerability and honesty in sharing this part of their story with me. For Wolf, who wanted to reconnect with their Ojibwe ancestry, forgiving their father was a task they felt they had to come to before they could whole-heartedly start this journey. Wolf shared:

> Because of the fact that my father died by suicide at such a young age, I hid from that. I was angry with him for a very long time. And I chose not to invest in my Anishinaabe culture. And only until recently, about ten years ago, I started to open up to my father, to forgive him and then to start looking into Anishinaabe cultures.

For Wolf, forgiving their father was something they needed to do before they could take the next steps in building and deepening their indigeneity. This idea that forgiveness was necessary before moving on to the next stage in their healing was a common perception in other participants as well, like Kayla, who shared that she is aware she needs to forgive her family before she can move on and let go. This was a fairly new realization for Kayla, one that Garry helped her come to by listening to his stories he shared during group work. Kayla had this to share, “I’m trying to let go and learn to forgive my family and, you know, that will help my children I think”. For Kayla, forgiveness means more than just helping herself. Forgiveness holds the power of impacting future generations by helping her become a better mother for her children and by role modelling a healthier way of dealing with trauma.

Both Kayla and Wolf shared how forgiveness played a role in their lives when it came to forgiving others, but forgiveness can also exist in our lives when we must forgive ourselves. Savannah shared an experience she is still coming to terms with. During a tumultuous time in her life, she lost her bundle. For years she punished herself by avoiding ceremony and gatherings, and intentionally blocking out teachings that came to her because of the shame and regret she carried. She felt she did not deserve love or forgiveness from Creator. This is what she had to share about this experience:

> I lost a bundle. I was in a very bad place. People from my community, North Point Douglas, I got some gifts from some people in other fields. To me, that was me being disrespectful [losing the bundle]. Just because I was relapsing, lying…I don't beat myself up for letting a man take that bundle from me, but I do beat myself up for not being sober or paying attention when I had a bundle. So that's something I think about a lot. It hurts. I've been taught all my life what to do and what not to do and what happens when someone takes a bundle. I was scared. And I really, honestly think Gitchii Manitou knew it wasn't my fault. So, what changed was my feelings. That was not my fault. I'm going to start a new bundle. I'm going to feast my drum. I'm not going to be scared. I missed out on a whole lot because of my judgments and blaming myself.

To the participants, forgiveness represents freedom, letting go, and having that ability to move on in their next step of their healing journey. It is an act they must achieve in order to continue on in their journey of healing with a healthy mindset.

***Belonging and Acceptance***

Initially, this section presented as something that the participants needed from other people, but after deeper analysis it transformed into something the participants need to achieve

within themselves before they can find it within other people. When it comes to belonging and acceptance, the participants spoke of it as difficult to attain. They seemed leery of new cultural locations, and if they did not feel that sense of belonging or unconditional acceptance, they would often leave that cultural location. Some would continue trying to find where they fit in, while others would stop seeking a new cultural location altogether. Savannah has experience with trying multiple locations until she can find somewhere she belongs, and yet she still feels as though this is something she must get used to when she does feel that belonging feeling, such as within this research project. Savannah had this to share, “Now that I know we’re all happy with each other and feel the same way, I feel the belonging part just really messes up my heart”. For some people, when they have been mistreated for most of their lives, they become used to this type of treatment, so when a sense of belonging and acceptance comes along, it can feel unfamiliar to the point it scares them. As well, the risk of losing that sense of belonging can be something they fear, which is what three of six participants expressed at the end of this research project. Katherine is one who held this feeling and had this to share, “I really enjoyed that and I felt sad when it was over. I kind of connected with these people and you, and it’s beautiful to me”.

For the participants, losing the feeling of belonging within this research project also meant they were losing access to their clan connections, access to Elder Garry, and gathering together with people who share similar cultural goals and aspirations. Garry our Elder shared how unconditional acceptance helped him on his journey of reconnection:

> I can tell you for me, I was a glass half empty before, when I came out of residential school, I was always looking at what’s not there. And it was those old people that started to make me enjoy what’s there, rather than what’s not. And that really made a difference

> in my thought process. Those old people, when I sat in ceremony because I didn't know my language, didn't treat me any less. I was still equal, as I sat there and listened to what they were telling me, putting that in my heart, my mind and my spirit.

For Garry, finding that sense of belonging started within himself, which is an interesting and somewhat intimidating thought process for individuals who have lived a life of trauma and disconnection. Sabe also had similar feelings that Garry expressed when it came to finding where they belong. This is what Sabe had to share:

> I don't know, but like for myself, my historical trauma, yeah, because I have a really hard time with that and I think that's a big factor into my addiction as well, is because I have that loss of identity. I don't know where to fit myself in at the moment. So, I think that's why I still struggle with addiction, actually. And that's why I want to work harder at it.

It would be easy to say that a sense of belonging and acceptance is something that others can give us, but then we would be disregarding our power we carry as individuals and our histories that have made us who we are today. This is why belonging is not something that others can give us until we have accepted who we are and our histories that have shaped who we have become, both the good and the bad. Garry and Sabe are right, in that we must start looking within for that sense of belonging and that begins with knowing who we are as a person and accepting that unconditionally.

**What Participants Need from Others**

For many urban Indigenous people, accessing cultural activities through institutions is the only option they have at that point in their lives. Whether they are taught from a place of love, patience and acceptance could make or break their return to that cultural location. The participants shared their experiences at these institutions and what surfaced is patterns that either

helped them return or pushed them away. A second need that presented is the style that teachings are shared that the participants identified as positive when attending cultural activities. These are the needs that the participants expressed that would help them feel safe and encourage them to continue on in their journey of reconnection to their indigeneity.

***Needs from Cultural Locations***

The participants, including myself, are urban Indigenous folks who often seek cultural connections from institutions within Winnipeg. For some, this was an emotional thing to discuss as it reminds them of their disconnection from their home communities and families. Kayla shares her experience as an urban Indigenous person seeking cultural activities within Winnipeg:

> If you're not involved in educational institutions or CFS or what other programs in the community, you're really on your own. Unless you have family or community that you can go to. But a lot of us are disconnected from that. And then you have that like shame in you. I feel like a lot of urban Indigenous people have that, where do you even begin? Who do you even talk to you?

Kayla, who grew up in Winnipeg, shared she got involved with her culture again when she began attending a post-secondary institution. Prior to this, Kayla was unsure where to access cultural programming, which is a common experience for many urban Indigenous people. Katherine shared the same sentiment: feeling as through she was unsure where to turn to for that cultural experience and knowledge she was seeking.

Kayla's cultural experience at her college was positive, where she spoke about how prior to the pandemic, the Indigenous cultural centre offered consistent programming and an open-door policy when accessing the Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This ease of access encouraged

and increased her returning. Kayla appreciated the cultural education she received from the institution and spoke of it as having a ripple effect within her family:

> I took a land-based learning course at Red River College in 2019 and I learned a lot. And ever since that day, I keep going back to the areas that he took us to, to pick with my girls. So, I've taken them and my boyfriend. I believe in that connection, I want to feed it, I want to build more. I want to invite more people to come and see.

For many urban Indigenous folks, attending a cultural event through an agency can be an intimidating experience. Some participants spoke of not attending because they were unsure what to expect, they had nobody to attend with, there was a fear of being rejected, or they simply were not aware the programming was occurring. For the participants who did attend cultural programming at agencies or institutions, they seemed to experience a snowball effect, where they attend one cultural program then learn of another cultural program. It is just a matter of knowing of the program and then choosing to attend.

Some of the participants who accessed culture through institutions described this as helpful and valuable, where they found a sense of belonging amidst the other people who attend. The participants attributed this to the fact that the other attendees held similar characteristics and history, which helped create a sense of acceptance and understanding between each other. Savannah, who has an impressive network surrounding her, had extensive contact with multiple systems. For Savannah, she finds it helpful when there is support within the institution, especially if they prepare you for when you eventually have to venture out on your own. For Savannah, this was accomplished by building up her self-esteem up through encouragement, holding her accountable for her actions and advocating for her when other systems attempt to mistreat her. It was these actions that role-modelled to Savannah how to handle certain situations

for when she was on her own. Further, these actions helped encourage her consistent long-term return, as well as helping create an environment of belonging, love, peace and acceptance.

### *Needs from People*

The participants identified humour and laughter as extremely helpful in building relationships and connection. The participants explained that the history of colonization is difficult, yet necessary, to hear and learn about, so balancing out those heavy moments with laughter or jokes helped significantly.

> I think everybody's personalities helped the group come together. It was great to have Savannah be really outgoing and happy. And then jokes and all that. Oh, it was so awesome. It was exciting. It wasn't like I thought. I was a little nervous [but] it was more of a beautiful thing. I was looking forward to the next day. (Katherine)

Katherine was not the only participant who appreciated Savannah's humour and lighthearted personality. Kayla and Wolf also noticed and appreciated what Savannah brought to the group. It is interesting that nearly all participants pointed out how Savannah's lighthearted personality helped the group thrive and bond. In some Indigenous cultures, *Windiigookans*[13] are considered sacred beings who bring healing through laughter wherever they go. Savannah has shared she carries this type of spirit, but is also aware to be considerate of others feelings, as sometimes humour can be inappropriate in certain situations. Wolf identified that humour can also be used as a tool to help people bring down their guards so they can connect easier and remember the teachings more effectively. Kayla confirmed this and shared that every participants personalities, along with their humour helped her connect to the group.

## Participants Want More

[13] Windiigookans are a sacred healing spirit in Indigenous cultures. They are also known as contrary spirits. They are used in ceremonies for healing and removing negative energy.

This theme speaks to what the participants want more of in their lives. They want to reclaim traditional knowledge and teachings, and become more educated on colonial history so they can better understand how it has affected them as Indigenous peoples. The participants also want more connection and cultural community in their lives, which is something that is severely lacking due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A common method the participants identify as helping them achieve connection and cultural community is talking circles, which coincidentally helps them achieve the other goals as well by facilitating healing, communication, validation, and inclusion. This felt exciting to see in the data because it speaks to a desire to use decolonized methods to heal.

**Traditional Knowledge**

All the participants want to reclaim more traditional knowledge because they know it helps further their healing by building their indigeneity. They also feel that traditional knowledge is important to reclaim so it can be passed onto future generations. Many shared they found that once they got the opportunity to learn traditional knowledge, they felt a strong desire to learn more. Katherine shares her experience with this:

> I could listen to Garry's stories for days. I need that. I want to find out my name, my colors, my clan. I want what was taken away from me, what was denied to me. I just want to live proud and strong. I'd like to know more knowledge, more stories, because I know that our First Nations people have a lot of oral history as opposed to written down. So, this is how we pass on our knowledge is through stories, I crave that.

For Katherine, learning traditional knowledge also leads to self-confidence, as it helps build our identity of who we are as Indigenous people. Kayla felt similar, but for her, she knows her

traditional name, so hearing a teaching from Garry expanded her thought process as to why this knowledge is important to know:

> Garry taught a lot. You know, how important our names were, how to connect. I know our names are important, but I didn't really realize that was like a version of our higher self and to know that there are good and bad things [to know about our name].

Kayla built on her knowledge regarding her traditional name, and is now aware there is more knowledge to be gained rather than simply knowing what your name is. Essentially, our spirit names help us discover who we are. For Kayla and the other participants, it is not enough to simply know their name(s). They now know that with their name comes a task of learning aspects of ourselves, both good and bad. Personally, I appreciated how Garry presented this teaching as completely non-judgmental to those 'bad' parts that are within each of us. It resonates with wholistic healing, belonging and self-acceptance, which is something all participants indicated they need when learning who they are.

***Clan System***

Overwhelmingly, all the participants want to know more traditional knowledge on the clan system. Many participants spoke about how they felt a deep connection within and would feel emotional at times as they listened to Elder Garry's teachings on the clan system. To them, the clan system is not just an animal accompanied with a meaning. The clan system goes significantly deeper where it represents belonging with ancestral family ties. For the participants who already know their clan, they describe this belonging like deep, supportive, and accepting healing for and to each other, where each person carries similar roles, responsibilities and qualities they identify with and understand in each other. Savannah, who has an impressive network of support surrounding her, still feels an emptiness at times, but after being reminded by

Garry who is also Turtle Clan, feels that her clan family, the Turtle Clan, fits in that emptiness perfectly:

> When Garry reminded me that if I was turtle and he was Turtle Clan, we were family no matter what. That impacted me in my heart because there's only me and [child] and my adopted parents' right. And I forgot. I forgot about those ways. I'm lost in my traditional ways, but I have a big family I don't know about.

At a later visit, Savannah had this to add as well:

> When we talked about the family, and that you couldn't marry anybody from the Turtle Clan. At that one second, I didn't feel alone. You know, it's real, and you don't think like that, nobody thinks like that. And it just felt good to know that not a regular human being is saying you have a big family. It's an Elder that you don't know is saying we're a family. I don't know you, but we're connected and you're my family. And moving forward, if we're family, you can't marry anybody from the Turtle Clan.

The clan system gives hope for belonging to the participants. Hope that they are not alone in this colonial world, where they will always have that clan family to rely on for support. It is an incredibly comforting thought the participants held.

**Education on History of Colonization**

All the participants indicated they want to learn more on the history of colonization. While many feel this would be a difficult history to learn further details on, it is also a necessary one for a few reasons. First, all participants remember that they either did not learn the history of colonization, or they were too busy surviving their childhood traumas to pay much attention in school, which they feel has influenced their life experiences in a negative manner. The participants realize that the history they were fed while attending public school, was white

washed to fit the agenda of the colonizer, which for some held negative consequences. Wolf shared their thoughts on the public education system and how it impacted them:

> Yes, I think it's impacted my relationships with my family and how I view women, how I viewed women. Impacted the relationship that I have with myself, my own self-worth, the value that I now see in myself just wasn't there. And I think that, you know, obviously racism being a big part of that, how I internalized the systemic teachings that we see from a colonial perspective were also negative. So, it impacted my own view of myself, my own self-worth. And then, like I said, the relationships that I had with other people.

For Wolf, they see their experience in the public education system as a negative that had long-lasting effects that instilled colonial perspectives from a young age. It was not until Wolf became older they realized how this experience truly affected them. Two, since the participants have identified that education helped them heal their own historical trauma symptoms, they want their children's schools to incorporate an Indigenous lens into their curriculum. The participants feel this would benefit their children by combatting racism and discrimination, and give their children a head-start on their healing. This change would produce a more positive experience for Indigenous children, one that is inclusive of their presence and voice as Indigenous peoples, where they and their ancestors are acknowledged.

### *Historical Trauma Theory*

The participants also want to learn deeper knowledge on historical trauma (HT) theory. Some came into this project aware of HT theory and the knowledge behind it. For the rest, learning the academic name merely helped them put a face to their colonial experiences. For Katherine, learning this theory was emotional as it helped her understand her colonial

experiences on multiple levels. She spoke of how this theory explained her childhood, her responses to her trauma, her loneliness and anger she feels within, that it helps her know she is not alone and that she was intended to feel this way. Many spoke of how learning this theory had a freeing effect, as if the guilt and shame was lifted and explained away. For Eagle, they joined this project wanting to learn more about HT theory so they could incorporate this knowledge into their healing journey. This is what Eagle had to share, "I've been wanting to get into that [historical trauma theory] for a while and even my family members said it might be good for me to start learning how to deal with my issues in different ways". Like the rest of the participants who are on their healing journey, Eagle is attempting alternate methods searching for a variety of ways to heal. Educating oneself on historical trauma theory and participating in this research project was one method employed to further their healing. The participants are aware that education and understanding brings healing. This was a common reason amongst the participants why they want to learn more about HT theory; with greater understanding, comes greater awareness of what healing needs to be done.

**Connection and Cultural Community**

The Covid-19 pandemic has removed a considerable amount of connection within our lives. This pandemic has dwindled support systems for people, leaving many struggling without their positive relationships. This data was collected during a height of one of the waves we were living through, which translated to extreme restrictions on social gatherings between family, friends and loved ones, eliminating the possibility of connecting and building cultural community. When I was analyzing the data and organizing how I should present this particular set of findings, a few interesting aspects stood out for me. Firstly, the participants view connection and cultural community as highly interrelated to the other three wants in this section.

They view connection and cultural community as opportunities to gather and share traditional knowledge, where we can teach each other the history in a supportive environment, and learn from each other's healing work. Kayla speaks to her experience of the connection and cultural community this research project worked to build:

> I feel more strength. They say there's strength in numbers and I felt supported. I felt heard. You know, sometimes you don't always feel that way. I feel more strength as an Indigenous person. I feel enlightened. I have my own projects too. I want to start making skirts. So, I had so much in my head while I was writing it out and it just like gave me so much strength. It put a light under my butt and I can't even explain the feeling. It gave me a sense of direction, like, I know what needs to be done. I can't even explain it, but it feels good. I feel like I have a purpose. I feel stronger. It put it all into perspective for me. It's like I needed this. To really see people and where they're at and see the hurt and the pain from other people and knowing that I'm not alone in that. That was really awesome and it just gave me a sense of purpose, direction and fulfillment. I need to do this.

At the time of writing this, Kayla has successfully created her own cultural community: a Facebook group where people can connect and share their knowledge on sewing ribbon skirts.

A second aspect I noticed amongst the participants is how genuine they were in connecting and supporting each other. They achieved connection and cultural community in a collective manner. They genuinely enjoyed supporting each other and found healing in identifying emotions that others were feeling. The participants wanted this and they worked to achieve it. Being in a supportive, nonjudgmental environment, where they can connect and build cultural community was something that was highly important for each participant to experience in this research project. Savannah speaks to her thoughts on this:

> Usually, I don't trust people. You know, I was exploited and it's very hard to trust women, right? I learned that not everybody's the same. What I learned was to trust people and that not everybody is the same or they have the same intentions. I learned that we were a group that wanted the same thing. It's like take out the thesis part and just bring us together, we want the same thing. I've never been in a group lately because remember I said that people were clique in organizations or drum groups and they push away. But I felt that we all wanted the same thing and we let each other know we wanted the same thing and we didn't stick [together] or bully or anything. That's what I learned; we all wanted the same thing.

Savannah's comment supports the idea that one needs to continue seeking their cultural family until they find one that want the same thing, where they all feel safe together. It is unfortunate that this group had to end eventually because most of the participants expressed a feeling of safety and acceptance amongst each other. There was a definite atmosphere of sadness expressed by the participants because the ending of this group, means they begin their search for another one. To them I say, keep looking. Do not give up because cultural community is out there.

### *More Talking Circles*

While the participants did not overtly say they wanted to participate in more talking circles, they all want more traditional teachings, deeper education on colonial history in a supportive environment, connection and cultural community, and support through healing. This commonality cannot be ignored because these tasks can be achieved through talking circles and they were achieved in this study through utilizing the talking circle. Katherine shares her perspective on why she believes the talking circle was used in this research project:

> I guess for a chance to ask questions about the topics that were discussed. Because we went through a lot and there's bound to be questions and then everybody's walk is different and it's great to get perspectives from different stories, not just one. And then I really connected with you guys and when it was all over, I literally cried. I felt like part of a family. I really needed that. It was awesome. It was awesome to hear the stories, especially from Garry.

Katherine's quote touches on the four desires expressed by the participants: the connection with each other, the teachings from Garry, learning the history, and the healing she received. All of which were achieved through the context of the talking circle used in this research project.

### Values – What is Important to the Participants

This theme speaks to what the participants value in their journey of reconnecting to their indigeneity. It is not an exhaustive list, as I am sure there are other things valued that are not listed. These are four values that repeatedly surfaced throughout our time together. The first value is encouraging their children's connection to their Indigenous culture. Influenced by their childhoods and lack of involvement in their culture, they want to give their children something they wish they had: a childhood raised with their Indigenous culture. The second value is a combination of both Elders and storytelling as the participants viewed both as effective in transferring knowledge to the next generation. The third value is the importance of practicing spirituality, as spirituality is a healing method and form of release the participants rely on in their lives. The final value is the protection of mother earth. A few different perspectives influenced this one. For one, wanting to leave this world in a better state for the sake of our children or grandchildren, and the second is that many participants felt it was their responsibility as Indigenous peoples to care for and protect the world we live in.

**Reconnecting their Children to their Indigenous Culture**

All the participants are parents and all value raising their child surrounded with their traditional Indigenous culture. Kayla explains that she had moderate access to her culture as a child, and now as a mother, she wants to provide even more opportunities for reconnection to her children. For Katherine, healing is her priority and feels reconnecting to her indigeneity is a huge part of that journey, which will inevitably help her children reconnect as well. Eagle, who is a soon to be parent, expressed their value of raising their child closely connected to their Indigenous culture:

> My grandmother brought me back to it. She actually was fighting for us to learn when we were little. That's what I'm going to do with this one because I want her to walk with me and be okay with us [as Indigenous people].

For Eagle, being surrounded by their Indigenous culture helped them become a proud Indigenous person. They want to give this experience to their child. Within the participants who did not grow up immersed in their culture, there seems to be a correlation between reconnecting to their indigeneity to when they began their healing journey. For Wolf, experiencing this connection between healing and reconnecting with their Indigenous identity was not enough for them. They felt the need to share this experience with those around them and this is what they had to share about that:

> It impacts me by raising awareness of how this (historical trauma) impacts my people and the people around me. I find it of absolute importance to share these teachings with my nieces and nephews and my daughter to ensure the fact that they are aware, at the age that they are, of these impacts and what it can do to the relationships of the people that they center themselves with. So that changes how they will go about living the rest of their

> lives because they are aware of this. And so, the likelihood of them reducing the impacts of these things is that much higher because of that. The more we raise awareness of colonization, the more we raise awareness of the impacts of it, the more we raise awareness of healing and the more we raise awareness of them inevitably living a good life because of that.

For Wolf, learning the history of colonization, reconnecting with their indigeneity, and raising their child surrounded by their culture are all interconnected. This value the participants have created was formed after beginning their healing journey, and as a result it also helps inform their parenting decisions. They want their child to live a better life than they did. They want their child to have a better understanding of who they are as an Indigenous person by ensuring that transfer of knowledge to their generation. For the participants, they want a good life for their children and they feel helping their child build their indigeneity is one way they can provide this.

**Importance of Elders and Storytelling**

These two values are combined because the participants perceive them both as important methods of transferring knowledge. The definition of Elder differed between the participants, including Garry, who had his own idea of what an Elder meant to him:

> I think a lot of times we have to realize that in our lives we have learned from young Elders, people that were younger than me, they taught me things. So, I'm open to either side that does that and we can see your children teach you something. And so that Elder, they can switch back and forth, because if our child teaches us something, they become the Elder, even for a split second, it's there and then it goes back to what we teach them. So, I think that we have to look at that, an Elders not so much an age. An Elder, they teach.

While the definition of Elder may have differed between the participants, there were definitely similarities between the participants perceptions as well. All participants spoke about how we must show respect to Elders and the knowledge they share with us when we seek it. Additionally, all participants said they rely on Elders for guidance throughout their healing journeys. Kayla and Wolf appreciated how Elders give a different perspective when they seek advice and that often times it is how Elders give the advice that makes the most affect. Wolf had this to say about Garry and the way he shared with us throughout our group work days:

> I think the way that he shared from a place of humor is a way for people to remember and for you to log those impactful moments, not just from a place where you are learning from someone who has so much knowledge, but also, to let down that guard through humor and to be able to connect not only with him, but with everybody else that was there learning also.

Wolf shared a profound observation that could hold true for the rest of the group. During the group work, there were times when it would start to feel too heavy. While colonial history itself is a heavy topic to learn, Garry had a way of guiding us through those heavy times with a relevant story to help us understand the event. Sometimes these stories would make us laugh, so we could sit with the history and the emotions that came with it. There were also times when he would express his own emotions, making it okay for us to express ours.

Garry used storytelling as a way of helping and guiding us. Within Indigenous nations, storytelling is often thought of as an oral method of transferring traditional knowledge through the generations (Simpson, 2011). According to Kayla, storytelling can be a way to validate what Indigenous peoples survive in this colonial world:

> Validation. Yeah, for me that's why I valued it so much because for me it was validation. You always hear about the history and you read it in the books, but it's different to actually hear from someone who has been there. I think it hit closer to home for me too, because he said he was from Peguis. It's like hearing the history of my family. It's almost like my family telling me their stories through him because we're from the same place.

For Katherine, Elders, storytelling and transferring traditional knowledge go hand in hand, where Elders carry the traditional knowledge that help us discover who we are as Indigenous people. Elders are keepers of our ceremonial ways, and where we learn our names, our clans, and our gifts we carry to share with the world. For the participants, where many are disconnected to various degrees with their families, Garry reminded them of something they did not have, but what they desperately want in their lives: a reason to gather and listen to stories together, supporting each other and not feeling so alone in this colonial world.

**Importance of Spirituality**

The third value is the importance of spirituality in the participants lives. Spirituality for the participants came in a variety of forms, where some relied heavily on Christian spirituality. Katherine is one who self-described herself this way:

> For me, I follow the bible. I follow God. Creator and God is the same thing. I understand that. I have a bible, but I'm not constantly like that (meaning evangelizing). I'll go for a reference if I'm feeling lonely. I'll read scriptures that makes me feel better. And that's my religion. That's what I was taught when I was growing up.

At the same time, Katherine is on her way to reconnecting with Indigenous ways of being so does feel some form of spiritual support from smudging and prayer with traditional medicines. On the other end of the spiritual spectrum, other participants relied only on Indigenous ways of

being for their spiritual support and would often express an inability to understand how an Indigenous person could reject their culture's spirituality. It is important to note that these participants would only openly express their anger towards Christianity when it was just one on one between us, but once in the group setting everyone was respectful of each other's spiritual choices regardless of what form they came in. There were also participants who used a blended method of these two ways, where they would engage both methods as necessary. For many of the participants, their relationship with their spirituality is the most important relationship they nurture. All spoke of their spirituality giving them feelings of love, guidance and reassurance they are on the right path. For some, they feel it has given them the confidence to self-reflect and admit there are things they need to heal from. For many people, this can be a scary thing to face, but knowing they have their spirituality there to walk with, provides the comfort and protection they need to continue on.

**Protecting Mother Earth**

When it comes to Mother Earth, all participants expressed a personal expectation they must help protect Mother Earth. To some, this work was done through recycling and picking up litter when they see it, while some spoke of wanting to get involved in environmental activism. This value system lies on a foundation of feeling a connection to Mother Earth, much like building a relationship with her. Katherine had this to say about the importance of building a relationship with Mother Earth:

> I feel it's important to have a relationship with the land as an adult, because I see how necessary it is to preserve our water sources for future. I see how companies are greedy and just go and do what they wish. I think that's really disrespectful. So, I do have strong

> feelings for anti-pipeline, for preserving water. It's our future, we have to think about ultimately.

To some participants, this relationship is already damaged. Savannah sees Mother Earth as suffering and feels there are no longer any clean areas to walk barefoot, pick medicine or pray. This causes her much sadness and grief, something she admits she does not know how to process as it feels as though Mother Earth's well-being is already being taken for granted. Wolf worries that Indigenous peoples are carrying on a Western mentality of land ownership that it is coming through in land acknowledgments:

> I'm a little iffy about the land acknowledgment. I guess the way I see our teachings is that our teachings are not ours. They're not ours to claim, much like the land that we live on, that we really have been gifted to protect. So, these teachings are gifted to us from Creator, not to own or to claim ownership of, but to share with everyone, no matter what your color is, or what race you are, or what nationality or tribe. When we think of it that way and we think about the land that we have, land was gifted to us to protect. When we think about it from a place of land ownership, it places a Western value on the land.

Wolf not only wants to protect Mother Earth environmentally, but also wishes to protect Mother Earth from the ideology of ownership. In their eyes ownership equates the possibility of rights denied.

## Finding Guidance and Healing

This theme speaks to how the participants encourage guidance and healing in their lives. We begin with their goals for healing, which are motivated by their living experiences as Indigenous peoples. The participants goals range from overcoming their traumas by facing their traumas, to deepening their relationship with their indigeneity. Most of the participants view

their healing as journeys, where the goal and journey changes as time goes on according to what they encounter on the way. With the exception of one participant, all felt this was a lifelong event where they work towards a vision of well-being for themselves and their families. Along this journey, there are means of support that help facilitate and encourage achievement of said goals, and that is medicines, land and ceremony. Medicines and land will be presented together as they are so closely related to each other they are impossible to discuss separately. Ceremony will be discussed independently and also encompasses the teachings received and protocols followed. For the participants, it is not as simple as attending ceremony and you automatically receive guidance and healing, but rather the teachings you receive depends on who is running the ceremony and your willingness to receive what is being said. As such, each participant holds unique relationships with each of the three methods of support and each have varied experiences to share.

**Goals for Healing**

The participants goals for healing are to overcome their traumas by facing their traumas and to reconnect with their Indigenous identity. Interestingly, the participants view these goals are interconnected, where by facing their trauma, they overcome the barrier that is preventing them from reconnecting to their indigeneity, community, family or culture. It is also because of this view, that if the barrier is overcome, their journey to reconnection is eased as well. For example, all the participants know their indigeneity will give them the confidence to overcome their barrier to reconnection and continue on in their healing path, but, when they move forward, they come face to face with the reasons why this disconnection exists in the first place. For most, the experiences, emotions, and affects surrounding their disconnection is a traumatizing experience they must face. The participants know they must face their trauma, but this does not

make this task any easier. Which is why they seek out methods of support through medicine, land and ceremony, to give them the healing and guidance along the way, which also helps them reconnect with their Indigenous identity at the same time. Now that the participants are all adults, they learned that ignoring or denying their trauma only extends the difficulties they experience. Elder Garry shared with us a teaching about change and healing:

> I guess for me, like what I was telling you before, when the children are like this and there's a little bend [to them]. When you're young, you can straighten it. If they become so strong and you try straighten them, you're going to break them. So, I think there's a lot of talking that we have to do when children are really young, even if they don't seem like they're listening. They're listening, and maybe what you said to them will make a difference 20 years down the way, but at least they heard it. If they never hear it, then it's going to be a lot harder.

Garry believes it is easier to change when you are younger, yet is also aware that healing and change can only happen when we are ready. Each of the participants expressed similar beliefs in their healing timelines as well. By waiting until they were ready, the participants approached their healing with more courage and confidence in their capabilities, allowing them to take in the healing experiences on a deeper level.

### *Facing Trauma Through Letter Writing*

The letter writing exercise was created to give the participants a form of release. An unintended effect is that by writing their letter, this helped them face their trauma. Some found writing the letter caused them to think about what to write, the emotions that come along with that experience and how it affects them today. They were facing their trauma by doing this.

Katherine is one who admits she struggles with facing her trauma, so had this to say about the letter writing exercise:

> It actually helped me. [I was] burying things that were really bothering me and not knowing that they really were bothering me. It was more than that, it was actually coming to terms that I'm part of the 60s scoop. I didn't want to believe that. Pretty much to me, it's helped me be aware of some of the emotions, [the] negative and how to just have them there and know what you need to work on and release. It made me aware of some of the things I needed to heal.

Katherines letter writing exercise began by addressing herself in present day, but after reflection realized she was writing to the little girl within who experienced the trauma. For Kayla, writing the letter helped her slow down and face her emotions within about her decision over disconnecting from an unhealthy relationship. Seeing her emotions in print in front of her, helped her feel accountable to herself and her healing. This is what Kayla had to share:

> I guess connecting with how I feel, because a lot of the times I just try to run away from it and act like I don't have them just to keep going through life. I have a lot to deal with and so I just put my feelings to the side and keep going. So, seeing how I'm feeling, writing it down and getting it out, it was easier to connect to what I was feeling, what I was going through. I don't really talk about it and don't really have the space or opportunity to do, so it's nice to have that and it was nice to share it.

For both Kayla and Katherine, awareness had to come before they could know what their next steps in their healing journeys had to be. In other words, before they could heal, they needed to face what they were feeling, acknowledge it, reflect on it, then the guidance they sought arrived.

**Through Medicines and Land**

When asked what they consider medicine, everyone listed plant-based medicines, but after group work mostly everyone expanded their inclusion of medicine beyond plant-form, as long as it provides healing. Many participants acknowledged Grandmother Moon, Elders or Knowledge Keepers, and participating in ceremony. Eagle shared how saying their spirit name is medicine, "Your spirit name is a medicine. Yeah, by saying it. That's what [helper] taught me. When you're having issues, say your spirit name, they'll come. They'll help you. They'll guide you back". Some entered this research project with prior teachings on working with medicine and spoke of protocols that indicate respect and gratitude to strengthen their relationship with medicines. For example, the passing of tobacco to Elders or Knowledge Keepers for the teachings received. Wolf had this to say about building relationship with medicines:

> You know… when you're cleansing, acknowledge, be thankful and have gratitude for that medicine that is cleansing you. The truth behind it is that those medicines are choosing me and giving up their life so that I can connect with them or through them and that my prayers get taken to Creator. That is the teaching behind cleansing or smudging. Every aspect of our culture is about connecting with ourselves, connecting with medicines, each other and then inevitably Creator. The medicines that we use are conduits that strengthen that connection so that when we do burn them and that smoke cleanses us, that it connects us with ourselves, which is what that teaching is about.

It is important to Wolf to follow protocols closely, as this is their way of maintaining their relationship and respect to medicines. On the other hand, Eagle held a very loving approach to learning about medicines and building that relationship with them:

> It (medicines and smudging) teaches you how to be patient with yourself and ground yourself. Because honestly, when you learn, it takes practice. It's not an overnight thing.

> It takes practice within and you don't learn it on your own. You need to learn it from a teacher or grandma or someone that loves you enough to show you the right way. There is a right way, but there's not a perfectionist way. It's just how you do it. No one's wrong. Everybody's right.

For most of the participants, it is important to be guided and instructed in a kind, gentle way to avoid scaring or shaming for knowledge disconnection that is out of their control. While Wolf and Eagle hold varying levels of personal expectations when smudging, both appreciated gentleness and forgiveness when newly learning.

The participants expressed multiple beliefs in how medicines and land provide guidance and healing. For most, going out onto the land to pick medicines is used as a form of stress relief that gives them a break from their lives that revolve around western systems. Most participants believe that medicines and the land are a conduit for our prayers to reach Creator and our ancestors. Kayla believes that medicines and land clear your energy, allowing the guidance to come:

> I think it (medicines) helps with clearing our minds and clearing our energy, so that we can be guided. If you're mentally drained or, you're holding on to something, you smudge, and then it kind of helps you to release that. Then you have a clearer mind to figure out which way to go. So, I say it helps. For sure.

Connection is also an important aspect of building a relationship with medicines and the land. Kayla trusts in the land and allows herself to connect to the land in the moment. It is in this manner she receives guidance and healing from medicines and the land, not only during the moments while out on the land, but also during times she is away. She trusts she can return to the land and receive the guidance and healing she seeks. Wolf feels being out on the land alone gives

them the most healing, but other participants feel that being out on the land with their families and loved ones is a feeling of connection that is like no other. It is an opportunity to share with each other the experience of reconnecting and renewing their relationship with medicines, land, and each other.

**Through Ceremonies and Teachings**

For most of the participants, experiencing guidance or healing at ceremony is not as simple as merely attending, but rather there are certain conditions that must be met before the attendee can experience these benefits. Firstly, there must be a willingness on the part of the attendee to receive the teachings shared by the Elder conducting the ceremony. The participants elaborate this willingness occurs when one is finally ready to take on the task of healing, "Same as any culture, right? If you really want it to provide guidance, you'll see it. If you don't want it, you're not going to see it" (Sabe). Elder Garry adds that even if we may not be ready, it is important we enter ceremony with an open heart and mind. We must not throw away teachings we receive, but rather store them away in our memories, because even if we do not agree with them that day, they are there for us if needed because one day they may make sense for us and be of use to us. Second, the attendee must trust in themselves first before they can trust the ceremonial environment. Savannah is one who holds this level of trust within that allows herself to feel completely vulnerable. If she has attended this ceremony, with this conductor, she knows she is safe. In this state of mind, allowing oneself to release freely is incredibly healing. Eagle is another who holds a level of trust with ceremonies:

> Honestly, you hear the drum, you feel. You might be gathered with everybody and just filled with love. There's no disrespect. There's no fights. There's no war. You know, it's just to honor ourselves and our people. That's what I like.

For Eagle, who recently exited a relationship where they were mistreated, being honoured and respected holds high value. For those exiting abusive relationships, entering into ceremony where honour, respect and healthy boundaries is the norm can be a healing experience.

For those who hold willingness and trust in their hearts when entering into ceremony, they can experience guidance and healing in different ways. For Wolf, they experience guidance by connecting within so they can hear the medicines and ancestors who show up during ceremony. Another way wolf experiences healing, is by giving thanks and showing gratitude for all they have been given:

> I think just the process of ceremony, the use of our language, connecting with yourself, with medicines, with the ancestors, with Creator, developing those relationships, identifying what you're putting on the altar, the relationships that you have with the medicines and the offerings that you have and what sacred objects you put out there. Each one of them. That in itself is I think, probably the epitome of healing from anything that I've ever experienced, at least from a traditional perspective.

For Wolf, it is the methodical process of honouring and acknowledging their sacred items they have been gifted that reminds them they have Creator and their ancestors walking alongside them. There is also an additional element of passing on this knowledge to the younger generations that gives Wolf a feeling of community, connectedness and leadership. So, it seems that finding guidance and healing within ceremony depends on a few different factors, ones that may take a bit of time to find, such as willingness, mutual respect, connection, safety, and trust.

***Protocols and Guidance***

At each ceremony we attend, there are protocols we must follow. We do this out of respect for the Elder or Knowledge Keeper running the ceremony and for the medicines, helpers,

and ancestors who show up for us. For Savannah, the protocols of the ceremony help guide her, even when she is away from the ceremony. This is her explanation how:

> Protocols also put me back on board and they guide me as well. I guess that's where walking that good [road] comes in. The values and principles of what they taught me is how I am guided and it's always been positive. It's always been long term. I know when I choose to walk fully, I'm guided. I know that it is really there. Guidance, it just happens, it comes freely with that tradition of Indigenous culture, it's very beautiful.

Walking the red road, or living a sober life, is something that came up often for the participants. They all had that respect for ceremony to never enter into ceremony or use medicines under the influence of drugs or alcohol. For most of the participants, following protocols helps guide them while they are away from ceremony, so they can enter back in with a good heart.

## Conclusion

From the interviews collected during the visits and group work, six themes of findings were found during the analysis stage. To ground the data and humanize this thesis, we began with a brief story of each participant. The story highlights different characteristics of each participant, a summary of their life, what led them to where they are now, and showcases their resistance against colonization. I hope my readers can connect and relate to the participants, as their diverse life paths prove that anyone, no matter their life circumstances, can work toward healing their historical trauma. Each theme was intended to add context to each participants story of survival and resistance, and showcase how their historical trauma exists in their lives and how they overcome. The themes living experiences of colonization and barriers to reconnection describe how the participants feel they have been affected by colonization and what they feel they need to overcome in order to heal their historical trauma. The following themes take a

positive shift and focus on how the six participants seek, engage and experience healing in their lives. Empowerment, support, and belonging are most prevalent, encouraging the participants to seek and gather more knowledge, awareness, and connection. Values also play a powerful influence in their healing work, as values push the participants into learning who they are in relation to parenting, honouring Elders, their spirituality, and their roles as Indigenous peoples on Mother Earth. Finally, how the participants encourage healing and guidance in their lives is highly connected to building relationships with medicines, land, and ceremony, which help facilitate healing and reconnecting to their Indigenous identity. When one reflects, we see the themes are incredibly interconnected where they work together, pushing the participants into finding guidance and healing.

## Chapter Five: Discussion, Learnings and Recommendations

When one reflects on the efforts of colonization, such as legislation, residential schools, 60s scoop, and current social systems, it is easy to see these events work to infuse disconnection and disruption into the lives of Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous peoples, disconnection is the source of historical trauma as colonization has worked to sever us from everything that makes up our identity, including our territories, languages, medicinal knowledge, ceremonies and spiritual connections, families and kinship ties, our self-esteem and the value tied to the gifts we carry, our protocols, and finally, our story-telling and stories. This thesis set out to answer how we heal historical trauma (HT) through resurgence and radical resistance. Through exploration of historical perceptions and relationships held with medicines, land, language and ceremony, the participants revealed solutions to heal HT in the following ways: our choice to heal must be ours alone; radical resistance is necessary as it facilitates awareness and reflection, as well as understanding and healing of both historical unresolved grief and HT; and resurgence resists the compounding effects of historical trauma. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss what I learned in this research project and tie it to the recommendations that were inspired by this research project, the participants, Elder Garry and myself.

### The Choice to Heal Should be Ours

Six participants came into this research project willing to heal and face their traumas. While every participant's healing journey looked different, there was one commonality they shared: their journey began with their choice to heal. Only the one engaging in healing can make that choice to begin their healing journey. By waiting until they were ready, the participants approached their healing with courage and confidence in their capabilities, allowing them to take in the healing experiences on a deeper level. Waldram (2014), who researches healing historical

trauma with incarcerated males, confirms this by stating, “Individuals cannot be forced to heal. They must make the decision to undertake the healing journey themselves.” (p. 377). For many who make this choice to heal, the depth of healing they experience is directly influenced by their level of willingness to face past traumas. I add that the individual facing their trauma needs to find their voice first, accompanied by surrounding support they trust and can rely on when needed because facing trauma can indeed be intimidating and often scary to reflect on, but it is a factor that highly influences their healing journey. Erfan (2017) is a therapeutic planner who supports that maximum healing occurs when there is a willingness to become vulnerable while facing trauma. While there were differing levels of willingness to become vulnerable and share inner thoughts among my six participants, this is understandable. However, at the same time, I do hope this research project was a starting point where they continue on in their healing journey and find someone they can become vulnerable with in order to experience maximum healing one day.

**The Past, Present and Radical Resistance**

By reflecting on the past through the lens of radical resistance, the participants were able to understand how colonialism has caused their historical unresolved grief and how HT has affected them as Indigenous peoples. While some researchers suggest that by receiving psychoeducation on the theory of HT, “Aboriginal people today are being taught how to be traumatized” (Waldram, 2014, p. 381), I, along with other researchers disagree (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998; Dennis, 2021; Doxtater, 2011; Erfan, 2017). I argue that the way Indigenous people are taught and the lens through which their education flows through, makes all the difference. Indigenous peoples are not damaged, but rather colonization and its’ systems caused

harm that we can recover from. Doxtater advocates why one should face historical unresolved grief.

> Humans of any race should not ignore unresolved grief. In this part of human life we gain extremely significant self-knowledge. We learn about our resilience. We learn about survival. We learn that power is possessed and not given. We are not being empowered. We have power. (Doxtater, 2011, p. 100)

Previous research on healing historical unresolved grief and HT, as well as the participants prior healing experiences, both within and outside this study, corroborate this statement. In fact, the participants expanded their healing journey to not only process the past and grieve what their ancestors endured, they added in they must also grieve what they endured as Indigenous peoples. By learning of the past, this helped the participants achieve a historical understanding of how the past has influenced where they stand now. It was not too much for my participants, in fact, they asked for more. It is because of the combination of previous research and the findings in this study that I stipulate that Indigenous people are not as weak as society attempts to portray us. Rather, we are a wealth of strength and resilience that can be activated through resurgence and radical resistance. It is a matter of choosing to do so.

**Resurgence Resists the Compounding Affects of HT**

Brave Heart (2011) explains that historical trauma compounds through the generations due to the intergenerational expression of historical trauma and the current oppression in our societal environment that Indigenous peoples must navigate. The findings within this thesis indicate that resurgence resists the compounding affects of historical trauma by repairing the disconnections created by colonization. By coming together collectively, engaging in Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, feeling and being to generate Indigenous intelligence together, we

inherently resist the compounding affects of HT. Dennis (2021) who researches both individual and communal grief within Indigenous communities, has witnessed the powerful healing effects of gathering together to conduct ceremonies of grief. Dennis (2021) explains, "The community…share[s] the weight of the grief…[by] allow[ing] individuals to feel and process grief while working to find a way to lessen the burden of others. Collectively the grief is felt and healed individually." (p. 152). Essentially, the compounding affects of HT cannot be carried on if the individual is surrounded in an environment rife with the healing elements of resurgence, such as connection and relationship to self, family and community, reciprocity, empowerment, traditional knowledge, honour of gifts carried, value of children, Elders and spirituality, and finally healing through medicines, land, language and ceremony. In this research project, we engaged in resurgence together, we faced our historical trauma collectively with others who related to what we are surviving and we healed through connection and cultural community.

**What I learned**

When I first began this journey as a helper nearly twenty years ago, I would often feel overwhelmed with the complexity of helping my Indigenous relatives. This was before learning the theory of historical trauma. After this research project, the solution feels tangible, just as complex, but not as overwhelming. The solution is not as simple as reconnecting ourselves to our Indigenous cultures in a one-size-fits-all manner, but rather it is multifaceted, intergenerational, interconnected and incredibly unique where only the individual knows when they are ready and what must be done for their healing process. This perspective is encouraging because this means there is no one 'right' way to heal. Simpson (2017) speaks often of returning to Indigenous ways of being, where each individual has a responsibility to nurture their unique gifts and roles they are born with. This is an incredibly empowering attitude to place on Indigenous peoples, but for

someone who is just beginning their journey of facing their historical trauma, this can be intimidating as well as it places the onus on the individual. Although, I do not believe Simpson intended this journey to be taken in solitude, but rather it is time we begin our healing work together, surrounded and supported while we make it. We must return to this decolonized way of thinking, not only to encourage healing historical trauma on an individual level, but on a community level as well because together, we are stronger. It is because of this awareness, I will suggest the following recommendations for those beginning their healing journey, for the family members, community, helpers, allies and state, and for potential future research avenues.

***Recommendations***

For years we have heard recommendations from social work research and helpers, asking for change to be implemented in the form of policy changes or social work practice that promote a more inclusive social work environment for Indigenous families who access these resources. This research project centered resurgence and radical resistance, where we turn away from western influences towards Indigenous ways of being to regenerate Indigenous intelligence. These recommendations reflect this way of thinking, where the recommendations begin with individuals who are beginning their healing journey, then radiate outwards to include their family members, and their community. We then move towards advocating for advanced healing programming, direction for allies, educational system reform starting from elementary school, and a call for a shift in funding provisions. While I believe calling for a reform to social work practice is helpful and needed, Indigenous communities must continue to regenerate empowerment, Indigenous intelligence and community healing programs that utilizes the healing knowledge that already exists within communities. This is the solution to mentally break free from the oppressive mindset that was instilled into us from colonization. It is an exciting thing to

witness and be a part of the positive change happening within Indigenous communities, where helpers and leaders are returning to a decolonized way of helping and healing, where relationship is centred, spirituality is priority and empowerment is shared freely. This is my contribution to these efforts.

**For Those Beginning their Healing Journey.** For this recommendation, I will write this recommendation in the form of a letter. I am doing this because I remember how scary it felt taking that first step in my healing journey. To me, a letter feels less intimidating, which allows the reader to absorb the content easier. A letter also allows me to communicate in the most loving form possible, as that is what I have learned to be the most powerful method of healing.

*To my Indigenous relatives who are just beginning their healing journey,*

*I hope this letter finds you well. The reason I am writing is because I have something to share with you. It is time to begin your healing journey. Stop waiting. There is a powerful movement happening amongst our people and it is time you join it. If you are considering beginning your healing journey, do it. It is hard, but worth it. It is scary, but worth it. I promise you, you are worth it. If you have any inkling of a feeling within telling you to begin, listen to that voice because that is your spirit guiding you. Stop letting fear stop you because that was placed there by colonization. Stop letting shame stop you because I guarantee you are not alone in how you feel. You know what must be done to heal, and only you can take that first step. Start your journey and take your place in the world. Let your gifts shine and you will inspire others around you to shine as well. Your healing is waiting for you and only you know what is right for you. You must do this simply because you deserve it. Your children and future generations deserve this. Your family deserves this. Your community deserves this. Together, we are stronger,*

*and I guarantee others are out there taking their first step, just as you are. You are not alone in this journey and can do this.*

*Lovingly,*

*Ozhaawashko-Pinishii Niimekaage*

**For Family.** It can be a scary thing when you witness a family member change. This sudden shift in your world can cause a feeling of uncomfortable instability in your family system where you feel you are losing them or the person is disregarding their typical family roles and responsibilities (Thoburn & Sexton, 2015). While this can be an uncomfortable event, it is a perfectly normal one, as families constantly change and evolve (Thoburn & Sexton, 2015). While you cannot control what they do, you can control what you do and it is imperative you are nothing but supportive and accepting of those beginning their healing journey. It can be a scary task indeed when initiating healing, so when family is unsupportive it can be devastating and discouraging to those who are placing themselves in that vulnerable position of healing work. So, the two helpful options you can take: support them, or become inspired by them. Either is a good choice and can foster the relationship as it changes and evolves.

**For Community.** This recommendation comes from a place of hope and love within my heart for Indigenous communities, so it is not my intention to admonish or shame. I understand that colonialism has indeed done much damage to Indigenous communities, to the point many of us have internalized the hate and anger that comes from living through colonialism. It is time to start healing from colonization as a community, together. It is time to repair the damage that has been done by colonization and start supporting each other to succeed. We must start accepting each other despite our differences, because according to Simpson (2017) our differences are actually our strengths. Simpson (2017) advocates that we all have a responsibility to nurture our

gifts for community succession and that diversity helps a community flourish. It is time to reflect on ourselves, learn how to work together safely and begin healing together because our communities deserve it.

**Advanced Healing Programming.** Many Indigenous people have taken that difficult first step of beginning their hard work of healing and are seeking deeper healing programming suited for their advancement. Darrell Bear, who works in Peguis First Nation, MB, is a mental health therapist who has been engaged in healing work for nearly twenty years. Bear advocates there is a substantial number of people who indicate they are ready for advanced healing programming.

> After attending several residential school gatherings and watching my mother and her friends attend, I've seen little to no healing, or movement in their journey. More than anything, I've seen them come back worse. Telling stories over and over again does not help without learning to heal those traumas and numerous losses in their childhood. (D. Bear, personal communication, June 4, 2022)

This statement is confirmed by the participants within this study, as most came into this study knowing a varying levels of colonial history and how this has affected them through the years. More than one participant indicated they wish this research project offered a deeper level of healing and radical resistance. While this research project was tailored to an audience just beginning their healing journey, there now must be a variety of healing programming available for those who seek deeper, more advanced healing methods. Of course, those who participate must be cautioned to avoid harm to attendees.

**Education Reform.** Elder Garry, myself and the participants feel that a mandated comprehensive education regarding Indigenous history, historical unresolved grief and HT for all

who enter into post-secondary institutions would address and diminish the systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous peoples face. This recommendation has been suggested numerous times in previous research (Adams, 1999; Nelson, 2017), including the TRC (2015). It is now 2022, and Universities have finally made the requirement to mandate every student, regardless of their academic focus, to complete one native studies course. This was a necessary, long-awaited change because many who have graduated prior to, they do cause harm from lack of education. For example, when I was taking my Bachelor of Social Work, I completed a practicum placement at Child and Family All Nations Coordinated Response Network (ANCR). While I was there, I shadowed a white social worker who graduated from Booth University. This worker must have had very little education on Indigenous peoples and the colonial history of the Canadian government because she asked me, "How come Natives can't just get over it". A social worker in a position of power such as ANCR should not have the opportunity to wonder this, which is why I reiterate TRC's Call to Action 62:

> We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
>
> i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students. (TRC, 2015)

I argue that the root causes of racism and discrimination must be addressed at a much earlier age than post-secondary education levels. If we remember the teaching of change given by Elder Garry, we must teach the child before they are too difficult to bend. By implementing the TRC's Call to Action 62, we can rebuild the education system so systemic racism can die out.

**To Allies.** Driskell, Finley, Gilley and Morgensen (2011) rationalize, allies must join the fight because colonialism hurts us all, including non-Indigenous people, through heteropatriarchal legislature that promotes sexism, transphobia, and biphobia. There is also the fact that colonialism and capitalism is killing our Earth and pushing us further into climate change (Waziyatawin, 2012), so it would benefit all if we unite and work together. Simpson (2004) explains allies can be helpful when they "step outside of their privileged position and challenge…the guidelines outlined by the colonial power structure and route their work in the politics of decolonization and anti-colonialism" (p. 381). Within academic articles and stories written that reference helpful allies, they are described as having no desire to claim what is not theirs, such as Dr. Driben (Simpson, 2017), or Silvia Straka who stated, "I am grateful to receive whatever they consider to be appropriate to share with an outsider and recognize that I have no claims on this knowledge" (Hart, Straka & Rowe, 2017, p. 338). It is time allies join the fight by listening and asking what they can do to help, by challenging the colonial systems that benefit them and by working together to create meaningful change within harmful systems.

**Funding From the State.** Typically, when funders become involved they enforce stipulations and conditions on how the money should be spent, they shift the direction of the movement to align more with their own to justify providing the money in the first place, or the funding is denied as the spending does not align with the funders intentions. This needs to stop. Within research articles that speak of building capacity in Indigenous communities, a significant indicator of whether capacity is operationalized or not, is the level of available resources for the people working in their communities (Gittelsohn et al., 2020; Hasan, T. M., 2020; Jernigan et al., 2021). In other words, it takes money to operationalize the healing we want to provide. Additionally, Canada would not be where it is today without Indigenous land and the resources

they stripped from this land. So, the money provided by the state to Indigenous communities, organizations and grassroots helpers needs to be given with no influence attached to it (B. Cook, personal communication, June 28, 2022).

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

The following recommendations are for potential future research geared toward healing aspects of historical trauma. A few are inspired from this research project and what the participants identified as important in their healing journey.

**Language Revitalization.** Within this research study, language was the cultural element that was affected the most from colonization. The TRC (2015) states that Indigenous languages are on the verge of extinction. Unfortunately, my family lost our Anishinaabemowin language during the residential school era when my grandparents attended, so I can attest the loss of language in one's family is a painful experience indeed. I yearn to speak my language and am slowly working on reclaiming this. Elders and Knowledge Keepers advocate the importance of Indigenous language revitalization for a number of reasons. Chiblow and Meighan (2022) expplain Indigenous languages are important because it provides a "unique, relational way of naming, seeing, and relating to the world…Indigenous languages are like ecological encyclopedias and ancestral guides with profound knowledge cultivated over centuries" (p. 207). Accompanying these strong ties to the land, are systems of governance, teachings, and worldviews, all embedded within Indigenous languages (Chiblow & Meighan, 2022). Essentially, language makes up a part of our identity as Indigenous peoples, so I recommend a future research project oriented around the healing benefits of relearning ones traditional Indigenous languages and how it contributes to reconnecting with ones Indigenous identity.

**The Clan System.** The participants in this study held a high level of curiosity towards reconnecting with the Indigenous intelligence of the clan system. Within this research study, the knowledge generated and shared among the participants displayed incredible healing, finding belonging and feeling acceptance within and on a community scale. I recommend a larger research project, dedicated to solving a social issue by regenerating the Indigenous intelligence of the Ojibwe clan system, guided by clan grandmothers and implemented into a community to study the healing effects felt from this.

## Conclusion

Historical Trauma theory explains that due to the devastating nature of colonization and the disconnections ensued from surviving this, Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island now exhibit adverse socio-psychological-economic symptoms (Brave Heart, 1998). Being a helper in the social work field has allowed me to witness the unfair social environment my Indigenous relatives must contend with when working to overcome these adverse socio-psychological-economic symptoms. I focused my research on healing historical trauma because I wanted to learn how to help my people. I believe I accomplished this because each chapter in this thesis provided a new perspective on how we can heal historical trauma. Within the literature review, there is context as to why historical trauma exists and persists compounding through the generations. There is also the knowledge of resurgence and radical resistance that pushed me to centre my research design around an Indigenous research paradigm. Creating a research paradigm grounded in Indigenous ways of being encouraged the participants to come together collectively, share their stories of how colonization have affected them and how they work to overcome these impacts. For the participants, the healing was in the gathering and supporting of each other. This genuine work from the heart enabled me to gather the findings I did.

Story-telling is often used in Indigenous cultures to connect the past, present, and future, creating a lesson for the listener. This method of presenting the findings proved to flow well with the style I analyzed my data. I searched for themes within the data and soon found that each theme added further details of each participants healing journey and their resiliency. This thesis is more than data collected. It is a collective story of six people working to overcome historical trauma. On a hopeful note, the healing methods are diverse, interconnected and far outweigh the impacts of colonization, and yet, there are still certain tasks that must be completed when addressing historical trauma. Making the choice to begin ones healing journey is key, where this act cultivates empowerment over one's life. Radical resistance allows us to understand our past, present and future, how colonization has affected us as Indigenous peoples and by acknowledging and releasing our ancestral and personal grief. Finally, resurgence resists the compounding affects of historical trauma, by surrounding and reconnecting our bodies, minds and spirits with what was once disconnected. Resurgence and radical resistance work in tandem, by pushing us to move forward, repairing the disconnection caused by colonization and engaging in regeneration of Indigenous intelligence. The recommendations speak to the necessity of the individual choosing to begin their healing journey, radiating outwards to include family and community members to be more supportive and to join in on the healing. There is a call for advanced healing programming, education reform, helpful allies, and a shift in how the state provides funding. Within this research project, I have witnessed the solution to healing historical trauma is within each of us and if we collectively come together to support each other, we can overcome our colonial experiences to heal our historical trauma.

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**Appendix A(1): Recruitment Poster for In-Person Project**

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**Appendix A(2): Recruitment Poster for Online Project**

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**Appendix B(1): Information Letter Regarding In-Person Research Project**

**Title of Study:** Healing Historical Trauma through Resurgence and Radical Resistance

**Principal Investigator:** Germaine Bear

Hello, and thank you for your interest in participating in my research project!

Please take your time to review the information in this handout and feel free to ask me any questions you have.

My English name is Germaine Bear and I am in my second year of the Masters of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges program, offered through the University of Manitoba. My spirit name is Dancing Blue Bird (*Ozhaawashko-Pinishii Niimekaage*), my clan is Prairie Bear Clan, and my community is Peguis First Nation. I am a mother of two and enjoy reconnecting with my Indigenous culture. I am grateful to be given this opportunity to do this work and am honored you feel safe enough to ask for more information. Thank you!

My research idea is centered on learning how we can heal historical trauma through resurgence and radical resistance. Before I go any further, let me explain these terms. The theory of historical trauma suggests that the adverse symptoms exhibited by Indigenous peoples of Canada is caused from experiencing colonization. The research I have gathered, along with my own personal experiences, suggest that healing historical trauma is possible through the engagement of traditional Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being, otherwise known as resurgence. Resurgence is centering oneself on reclaiming Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being that have survived, despite 150 years of colonization. Radical resistance is in relationship to the colonial structures that continue to affect Indigenous peoples. Resistance is born from an awareness of these colonial structures that work to erase, resettle, violate, legislate, incarcerate, and de-educate Indigenous peoples on their Indigenous identity. From this awareness, comes an active resistance against these colonial structures, all in an effort to engage in resurgence.

I would like a maximum of 6 participants, age 18 or older, who must identify as Indigenous, Métis, or Inuit, to engage in six hourly one-on-one visits, and four half days of group work. You will have the opportunity to learn about the history of colonization and how this has affected you and your family uniquely, building your critical consciousness on how this has caused historical trauma in Turtle Island's Indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples. You will be asked to engage in exploring this historical trauma and gently guided through revisiting, re-

narrating, and releasing this trauma so you can begin your healing journey by reconnecting with your Indigenous identity. I am asking you to participate in seeking an answer on *how* we can heal historical trauma through engagement of resurgence and radical resistance. Participants have the choice of remaining anonymous in the published work, and will be required to sign an oath of confidentiality to ensure safety during group work.

Visits can be held anywhere participants feel safe, but the group work will be held at Wa-Say Healing Centre located at Unit 226 – 388 Donald Street in Winnipeg.

Participants will be gifted traditional medicines sage, sweetgrass, and a book by Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson, entitled "*As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*". Participants will receive an honorarium that consists of $30 a day. Bus tokens and meals during group work will be provided.

Covid-19 risks will be mitigated by provincial regulations. There are risks related to your emotional and psychological well-being if you choose to participate in this study. Learning of colonial history and historical trauma responses could be distressing for some. There will be multiple safeguards in place to support your well-being, during and after this project.
One safeguard will be choosing a support person you can reach out to in the event your emotional and psychological well-being is disrupted. Additionally, you are always welcome to reach out to Germaine or access any of the support services listed on the community supports handout.

Finally, it is important you are aware you can withdraw, or refuse to answer an interview question at any time with no consequence. The honorarium, book and medicines will still be provided.

If you have any further questions regarding this research project, please reach out. I look forward to hearing from you.
Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

My Research Supervisor is Dr. Mary Kate Dennis. Her contact information is as follows:
Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

Respectfully,
Germaine Bear

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**Appendix B(2): Information Letter Regarding Online Research Project**

**Title of Study:** Healing Historical Trauma through Resurgence and Radical Resistance

**Principal Investigator:** Germaine Bear

Hello, and thank you for your interest in participating in my research project!

Please take your time to review the information in this handout and feel free to ask me any questions you have.

My English name is Germaine Bear and I am in my second year of the Masters of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges program, offered through the University of Manitoba. My spirit name is Dancing Blue Bird (*Ozhaawashko-Pinishii Niimekaage*), my clan is Prairie Bear Clan, and my community is Peguis First Nation. I am a mother of two and enjoy reconnecting with my Indigenous culture. I am grateful to be given this opportunity to do this work and am honored you feel safe enough to ask for more information. Thank you!

My research idea is centered on learning how we can heal historical trauma through resurgence and radical resistance. Before I go any further, let me explain these terms. The theory of historical trauma suggests that the adverse symptoms exhibited by Indigenous peoples of Canada is caused from experiencing colonization. The research I have gathered, along with my own personal experiences, suggest that healing historical trauma is possible through the engagement of traditional Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being, otherwise known as resurgence. Resurgence is centering oneself on reclaiming Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, feeling, and being that have survived, despite 150 years of colonization. Radical resistance is in relationship to the colonial structures that continue to affect Indigenous peoples. Resistance is born from an awareness of these colonial structures that work to erase, resettle, violate, legislate, incarcerate, and de-educate Indigenous peoples on their Indigenous identity. From this awareness, comes an active resistance against these colonial structures, all in an effort to engage in resurgence.

I would like a maximum of 6 participants, age 18 or older, who must identify as Indigenous, Métis, or Inuit, to engage in six hourly online one-on-one visits, and four half days of online group work. You will have the opportunity to learn about the history of colonization and how this has affected you and your family uniquely, building your critical consciousness on how this has caused historical trauma in Turtle Island's Indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples. You will be asked to engage in exploring this historical trauma and gently guided through revisiting,

re-narrating, and releasing this trauma so you can begin your healing journey by reconnecting with your Indigenous identity. I am asking you to participate in seeking an answer on *how* we can heal historical trauma through engagement of resurgence and radical resistance. Participants have the choice of remaining anonymous in the published work, and will be required to sign an oath of confidentiality to ensure safety during group work.

Due to Covid-19, visits and group work will be conducted over Zoom.

Participants will be gifted traditional medicines such as sage, sweetgrass, and tobacco, along with a book by Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson, entitled "*As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*". Participants will receive an honorarium that consists of $30 a day.

There are risks related to your emotional and psychological well-being if you choose to participate in this study. Learning of colonial history and historical trauma responses could be distressing for some. There will be multiple safeguards in place to support your well-being, during and after this project. One safeguard will be choosing a support person you can reach out to in the event your emotional and psychological well-being is disrupted. Additionally, you are always welcome to reach out to Germaine, or access any of the support services listed on the community supports handout.

Finally, it is important you are aware you can remain anonymous, withdraw, or refuse to answer an interview question at any time with no consequence. The honorarium, book and medicines will still be provided.

If you have any further questions regarding this research project, please reach out. I look forward to hearing from you.

Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

My Research Supervisor is Dr. Mary Kate Dennis. Her contact information is as follows:

Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

Respectfully,
Germaine Bear

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**Appendix C(1): Consent Form for In-Person Project**

**Research Project Title:** Healing Historical Trauma through Resurgence and Radical Resistance

**Principal Investigator and contact information:** Germaine Bear
Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges Program
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]
**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Mary Kate Dennis
Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges Program
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

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. **Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Declining to participate will not have negative results.** If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

**Purpose of Research**

Still today, Indigenous peoples fight for their land, well-being, and basic human rights, which has caused Indigenous peoples to live under the weight of historical trauma and colonization. I wish to participate in and contribute to the healing of historical trauma.

**Procedures**

This research project consists of six hourly one-on-one visits, and four half-days of group work. I estimate a time commitment of six hours of individual visiting time, and thirteen hours of group work. Recruitment of participants will be conducted primarily over social media, where Germaine will post a shareable PDF information poster on her personal Facebook page.

Initial visits are focused on gathering information on how you and your family have been uniquely affected by colonization, the support system you have, education on grounding exercises and self-regulating skills, as well as what you hope to achieve from participating in this study. Group work consists of learning the history of colonization, the theories of historical trauma, resurgence and radical resistance, traditional Indigenous teachings, and finishing with a traditional sweat lodge ceremony. Three days will be held indoors, while the fourth outdoors for a traditional sweat lodge ceremony. Participants are asked to write a letter addressed to whomever they wish. On the fourth day, participants have the option to read their letter out loud, and burn it signifying a letting go ceremony. Visits after group work will be focused on gathering information from participants on what they learned, how this knowledge affected them, and how they plan on carrying this knowledge forward in their lives.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic and close proximity of traditional sacred items, it is mandatory that all participants refrain from substance use during visits and group work. This will help ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all who wish to attend and participate. If a participant presents as under the influence of substances, the visit can be rescheduled and participants are welcome to return to the next group gathering.

Debriefing is intended to ensure participants are feeling safe, grounded, and good about their participation in this research project and will be done daily ensuring safety for all. As well, two weeks after the closing visits, Germaine will follow up with you for a check in.

With the exception of the sweat lodge ceremony, this project will be audio recorded. Professional transcription services will be utilized for audio recordings. These recordings will be kept safely in my laptop that is password and finger-print protected. Data will be destroyed in five years on August 1, 2026. Unless indicated otherwise, participants identities will be protected through pseudonyms. The pseudonym key will be kept in a locked cabinet. Germaine and her research committee have access to this data. Participants can request a copy of their individual recordings.

**Withdrawal Process**

At any point, you may refuse to answer a question, take a break, or withdraw entirely with no risk of consequences. This can be done by contacting Germaine through email, phone call, text, or verbally indicating your choice. Your data that was collected will be destroyed and will not be used for the final research product. You have the right to request your information be removed from the study up until the analysis stage has begun, which is estimated to be July 1, 2021. You can still expect to receive the honorarium, book and medicines.

**Benefits**

Psychoeducation of historical trauma can lead to healing, awareness, and understanding of historical trauma, historical trauma response, and historical unresolved grief. Sharing this

knowledge is empowering and therapeutic, so I want my participants to share what they learn with their families and friends. Participants will have the opportunity to recognize they are not alone in their historical trauma and that historical trauma can be expressed in many different ways, which can take away much of the fear held towards facing pain and trauma. Healing can happen through connection and relating with others. As well, by connecting with each other in a group setting, participants can use each other as support systems after the project is completed. I am hopeful this research project is just a stepping stone in a journey of reclamation and healing.

An honorarium will be given to each participant, which consists of $30 per day of group work. This will equal out to $120 for four-days of group work sessions. Each participant will receive a book by Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson, "*As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*" and a bundle of the traditional medicines, sage and sweetgrass. During group work, meals and bus tickets will be provided.

**Risks**

Due to Covid-19, there are current protocols that we must follow to ensure group safety. The University of Manitoba is committed to taking measures to protect the health and safety of their campuses and the wider community. Your safety is important to us. The university has suspended most research that cannot be conducted remotely or virtually. Our study has been approved to proceed by our Faculty, the Vice-President Research and International office and the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. In order to gain approval, we created policies to ensure the safety of the research team and participants. These plans were reviewed and approved by the parties above, as well as a representative from the Office of Risk Management. These policies include:

- All members of the research team will wear masks. Masks will be provided daily for participants.
- We ask that all involved screen themselves for symptoms daily before visits or group work. This will be done through a survey.
- The location of group work will be disinfected daily. Hand sanitizer will also be provided for each participant and research team member.
- Distribution of food and coffee/tea will be done by Germaine and the helper.
- We are limiting the number of visitors accompanying people for group work, and have rearranged and/or removed furniture in our work area to enforce physical distancing.
- We ask that you attend the study alone, but accommodations can be made if necessary. Please let Germaine know ahead of time if you require someone to attend with you.

In addition to Covid-19 risks, there are also risks related to your emotional and psychological well-being. The topic we are discussing is historical trauma, which is related to the colonial trauma that Indigenous people have been surviving and resisting since settler contact. Learning

of the history and historical trauma responses could be distressing for some. In an effort to mitigate these concerns, Germaine will do the following safety precautions:

- Three visits prior to group work where Germaine and yourself will work to build self-regulation skills and practice grounding exercises.
- A list of community resources and cultural supports will be provided.
- A safety plan that consists of a support person you can turn to if needed will be created. The support person identified may be contacted if the researcher feels that the participant may be at risk
- An Elder/Knowledge Holder will be present throughout the group work.
- A second helper with experience working with trauma will be present throughout the group work.
- Sacred medicines will be available for smudging and grounding.
- Three individual closing visits will be arranged to ensure you feel safe, grounded, and good about your contribution to this research project. Two weeks after these visits, Germaine will also do a check-in via phone or visit.
- The option to stop involvement with all or a portion of the research project is available at any time with no consequence.

Finally, despite confidentiality measures being taken, there is still a risk that other participants in the group work may breach confidentiality. If knowledge of child maltreatment surfaces, it is Germaine's ethical responsibility as a social worker to report it.

If you have questions regarding this study and measures we are taking to keep all parties safe, please do not hesitate to ask. If you have concerns with these measures, please contact one of the research team members or the Human Ethics office at [redacted]

**How results will be publicised**

Results of this research project will be publicised through journal articles, the final thesis product and in the University of Manitoba MSpace Library where it could be accessed for future academic work. There is also the chance the results could be presented at conferences. There will be direct quotations publicised made by participants analysed into themes that answer the research question. You will have the opportunity to read a brief summary (1-3 pages) of the results prior to publication and provide feedback, if you wish. This will be provided to you by mail or email. At the end of this consent form, there will be a space for you to indicate your choice.

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 or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any

time, and/or refuse to answer any questions you prefer, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at our 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 Research Ethics Board – Fort Garry. 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 [redacted] or [redacted] A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

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

Email/Address/Alternative option _____

I would like to receive a copy of my transcript: Yes No

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

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**Appendix C(2): Consent Form for Online Project**

**Research Project Title:** Healing Historical Trauma through Resurgence and Radical Resistance

**Principal Investigator and contact information:** Germaine Bear
Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges Program
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]
**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Mary Kate Dennis
Master of Social Work based in Indigenous Knowledges Program
University of Manitoba
William Norrie Centre
Phone #: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

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. **Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Declining to participate will not have negative results.** If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

**Purpose of Research**

Still today, Indigenous peoples fight for their land, well-being, and basic human rights, which has caused Indigenous peoples to live under the weight of historical trauma and colonization. I wish to participate in and contribute to the healing of historical trauma.

**Procedures**

This research project consists of six hourly one-on-one online visits, and four half-days of online group work. I estimate a time commitment of six hours of individual visiting time, and thirteen hours of group work. Recruitment of participants will be conducted primarily over social media, where Germaine will post a shareable PDF information poster on her personal Facebook page.

Initial visits are focused on gathering information on how you and your family have been uniquely affected by colonization, the support system you have, education on grounding exercises and self-regulating skills, as well as what you hope to achieve from participating in this study. Group work consists of learning the history of colonization, the theories of historical trauma, resurgence and radical resistance, and traditional Indigenous teachings. Participants are asked to write a letter addressed to whomever they wish. On the fourth day, participants have the option to read their letter out loud, and burn it signifying a letting go ceremony. Visits after group work will be focused on gathering information from participants on what they learned, how this knowledge affected them, and how they plan on carrying this knowledge forward in their lives.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic and close proximity of traditional sacred items, it is mandatory that all participants refrain from substance use during visits and group work. This will help ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all who wish to attend and participate. If a participant presents as under the influence of substances, the visit can be rescheduled and participants are welcome to return to the next group gathering.

Debriefing is intended to ensure participants are feeling safe, grounded, and good about their participation in this research project and will be done daily ensuring safety for all. As well, two weeks after the closing visits, Germaine will follow up with you for a check in.

This project will be audio recorded. Professional transcription services will be utilized for audio recordings. These recordings will be kept safely in my laptop that is password and finger-print protected. Data will be destroyed in five years on August 1, 2026. Unless indicated otherwise, participants identities will be protected through pseudonyms. The pseudonym key will be kept in a locked cabinet. Germaine and her research committee have access to this data. Participants can request a copy of their individual recordings.

**Withdrawal Process**

At any point, you may refuse to answer a question, take a break, or withdraw entirely with no risk of consequences. This can be done by contacting Germaine through email, phone call, text, or verbally indicating your choice. Your data that was collected will be destroyed and will not be used for the final research product. You have the right to request your information be removed from the study up until the analysis stage has begun, which is estimated to be July 1, 2021. You can still expect to receive the honorarium, book and medicines.

**Benefits**

Psychoeducation of historical trauma can lead to healing, awareness, and understanding of historical trauma, historical trauma response, and historical unresolved grief. Sharing this knowledge is empowering and therapeutic, so I want my participants to share what they learn

with their families and friends. Participants will have the opportunity to recognize they are not alone in their historical trauma and that historical trauma can be expressed in many different ways, which can take away much of the fear held towards facing pain and trauma. Healing can happen through connection and relating with others. As well, by connecting with each other in a group setting, participants can use each other as support systems after the project is completed. I am hopeful this research project is just a stepping stone in a journey of reclamation and healing.

An honorarium will be given to each participant, which consists of $30 per day of group work. This will equal out to $120 for four-days of group work sessions. Each participant will receive a book by Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson, "*As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*" and a bundle of the traditional medicines, sage and sweetgrass.

**Risks**

Due to Covid-19, there are current protocols that we must follow to ensure group safety. The University of Manitoba is committed to taking measures to protect the health and safety of their campuses and the wider community. Your safety is important to us. The university has suspended most research that cannot be conducted remotely or virtually. Our study has been approved to proceed by our Faculty, the Vice-President Research and International office, the Covid Recovery Response Team, the COVID Recovery Steering Committee, and the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. In order to gain approval, we created policies to ensure the safety of the research team and participants. These plans were reviewed and approved by the parties above, as well as a representative from the Office of Risk Management.

In addition to Covid-19 risks, there are risks related to your emotional and psychological well-being. The topic we are discussing is historical trauma, which is related to the colonial trauma that Indigenous people have been surviving and resisting since settler contact. Learning of the history and historical trauma responses could be distressing for some. In an effort to mitigate these concerns, Germaine will do the following safety precautions:

- Three visits prior to group work where Germaine and yourself will work to build self-regulation skills and practice grounding exercises.
- A list of community resources and cultural supports will be provided.
- A safety plan that consists of a support person you can turn to if needed will be created. The support person identified may be contacted if the researcher feels that the participant may be at risk.
- An Elder/Knowledge Holder will be present throughout the group work.
- Sacred medicines will be provided for smudging and grounding.
- Three individual closing visits will be arranged to ensure you feel safe, grounded, and good about your contribution to this research project. Two weeks after these visits, Germaine will also do a check-in via phone call or Zoom.

- The option to stop involvement with all or a portion of the research project is available at any time with no consequence.

Finally, despite confidentiality measures being taken, there is still a risk that other participants in the group work may breach confidentiality. If knowledge of child maltreatment surfaces, it is Germaine's ethical responsibility as a social worker to report it.

If you have questions regarding this study and measures we are taking to keep all parties safe, please do not hesitate to ask. If you have concerns with these measures, please contact one of the research team members or the Human Ethics office at humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

**How results will be publicised**

Results of this research project will be publicised through journal articles, the final thesis product and in the University of Manitoba MSpace Library where it could be accessed for future academic work. There is also the chance the results could be presented at conferences. There will be direct quotations publicised made by participants analysed into themes that answer the research question. You will have the opportunity to read a brief summary (1-3 pages) of the results prior to publication and provide feedback, if you wish. This will be provided to you by mail or email. At the end of this consent form, there will be a space for you to indicate your choice.

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 or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refuse to answer any questions you prefer, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at our 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 Research Ethics Board – Fort Garry. 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 [redacted] or [redacted] A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

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

Email/Address/Alternative option _____

I would like to receive a copy of my transcript: Yes No

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

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## Appendix D: Questions for initial visits

**Legend**

- ❑ Tasks to be completed during visit

#'s Questions to be asked during visit

**First Initial Visit – Intention to build relationship and trust**

- ❑ Introductions will occur first. I offer participants the opportunity to ask me any questions if they have any. Refresh terminology of historical trauma, resurgence and radical resistance.
- ❑ Make a safety plan with the participant. Name a support person they can turn to for support. Gather the support persons phone number if the participant feels comfortable in sharing this information. Get the consent from the support person to hold this knowledge and that they are aware they are the participants support person. Arrange a meeting with the support person to sign the Oath of Confidentiality.
- ❑ Go through Appendix E: Handout on supports and resources.
- ❑ Go through Appendix F: Grounding Exercises and Information on Self-Regulation Skills. Practice the grounding exercises with the participant.
- ❑ Show them Appendix J: Consent form to publish their name, and let them know that they do not have to sign it until the end of the project.

1) What made you decide to participate in this research project?
2) What are you hoping to get out of it?
3) Do you hold any concerns about this research project?
4) How do you cope during stressful moments?
5) What does your support system look like?
6) If you were to become triggered or distressed by something during this project, who would you reach out to, to help keep you safe?

7) Do you have any food allergies? Are you a vegetarian or vegan? Discuss the meals to be served during group work.

**Second Initial Visit – Intention is to inquire about cultural involvement and practice that revolves around their identity as an Indigenous person.**

- ❑ Family structure – complete a three-generation Genogram with the participant (this would include their immediate family structure, their parents/caregivers, and their grandparents). This is to provide a visual for the questions related to ceremony, traditional Indigenous medicines, land, and languages, to see where each stopped, if they did.

1) Did you hold a relationship to ceremonies as a child? If yes or no, how do you feel this impacted you?
2) Do you hold a relationship to ceremonies as an adult? If yes or no, how do you feel this is impacting you?
3) Do you feel ceremony provides healing? If yes or no, how so?
4) Do you feel ceremony provides guidance? If yes or no, how so?
5) Which ceremonies have you attended?
6) Do you feel a relationship to ceremony is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? How so?

7) Did you hold a relationship to traditional Indigenous medicines as a child? If yes or no, how do you feel this impacted you?
8) Do you hold a relationship to traditional Indigenous medicines as an adult? If yes or no, how do you feel this is impacting you?
9) Do you feel traditional Indigenous medicines provide healing? If yes, how so?
10) Do you feel traditional Indigenous medicines provide guidance? If yes, how so?
11) What traditional Indigenous medicines do you use?
12) Do you feel a relationship to traditional Indigenous medicines are a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? How so?

13) Did you hold a relationship with the land as a child? If yes or no, how do you feel this impacted you?
14) Do you feel you hold a relationship to the land as an adult? If yes or no, how do you feel this is this impacting you?
15) How do you connect to the land?
16) Do you feel the land provides healing? If yes, how so?
17) Do you feel the land provides guidance? If yes, how so?
18) Do you feel a relationship to the land is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? How so?

19) Did you grow up hearing your traditional Indigenous language spoken? If yes or no, how do you feel this impacted you?
20) Do any of your family members speak a traditional Indigenous language?
    a) If not, which generation did it stop? (Show it on the genogram).
21) Do you know how to speak your traditional Indigenous language?
    a) If yes, who taught you? Do you feel holding a conversation in the language provides comfort? Are you passing this knowledge onto your children?
    b) If not, have you ever tried to learn?
22) Do you feel speaking the language is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? How so?

**Third Initial Visit – Intention is to inquire about their knowledge of the history of colonization and how they feel this impacted them.**

1) What does the word colonization mean for you?
2) Did you learn about colonization when you attended school as a child?
    a) If yes, what do you remember? Do you feel this knowledge has impacted you? In what way?
    b) If no, do you feel the lack of this knowledge has impacted you? How so?
3) Do you feel colonization has impacted you spiritually? If yes or no, how so?
4) Do you feel colonization has impacted you mentally? If yes or no, how so?
5) Do you feel colonization has impacted you physically? If yes or no, how so?

6) Do you feel colonization has impacted you emotionally? If yes or no, how so?

7) Do you feel colonization has impacted your identity as an Indigenous person?
    a) If yes or no, how so?

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## Appendix E: List of Available Support Resources

### Province-Wide Crisis Lines

**First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line**
1-855-242-3310
Counselling available in English, French, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut.

**Kids Help Phone**
To start using the text service, text CONNECT to 686868.
Their texting service is free and available 24/7.
Or call 1-800-668-6868

**Klinic Crisis Line**
Phone: 204-786-8686
Toll free: 1-888-322-3019
TTY 204-784-4097

**Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services**
supportline.ca - online counselling
1-866-367-3276

**Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line**
1-877-435-7170 (1-877-HELP170)

**Sexual Assault Crisis Line**
Phone: 204-786-8631
Toll free: 1-888-292-7565

**Adult Mobile Crisis Services**
Phone: 204-940-1781

**Crisis Stabilization Unit**
Phone: 204-940-3633

**Youth Mobile Crisis Team**
204-949-4777

## Non-Crisis Mental Health Supports

**WHRA Community Mental Health Services**
Intake line - (204) 788-8330

## Counselling Supports

**Aboriginal Health and Wellness/Clinic**
215-181 Higgins Avenue
Winnipeg, MB
Telephone: 204-925-3700
e-mail: reception@ahwc.ca

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program**
Phone toll free: 1-866-818-3505

**Non-Insured Health Benefits**
Medical supplies and equipment, mental health counseling and vision care
Toll free: 1800-665-8507

**Klinic Community Health**
167 Sherbrook Street, Winnipeg, MB
Phone: 204-784-4090
Community Drop-In Counselling hours
Monday, Friday, Saturday Noon-4PM
Tuesday and Thursday Noon-7PM

**Wa-Say Healing Centre**
Unit 226-388 Donald Street
Winnipeg, MB
Phone: 204-774-6484

## Community Resources

**Ma Mawi Chi It Tata Center**

- 445 King Street
  Phone: 204-925-0300
- McGregor Community Care Site
  Phone: 204-925-6816
- Spence Community Care Site
  Phone: 204-925-0348

Established in 1984, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata is a Grandmother in the Winnipeg family of community service-providers with more than 30 years of experience working with Indigenous families. We are community people helping other community people reclaim our inherent roles and responsibilities as Indigenous caregivers and the most important teachers of our children. Ma

Mawi offers community-based programming that offers solutions to building local capacity for self-care.

**Rainbow Resource Center**
170 Scott Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Phone: 204-474-0212
Rainbow Resource Centre (RRC) offers support to the LGBT2SQ+ community in the form of counselling, education, and programming for individuals ranging from children through to 55±. It also supports families, friends, and employers of LGBT2SQ+ individuals.

**Thrive: Community Support Circle**

- Administration Office Phone: 204-772-9091
  https://www.thrivecommunitysupportcircle.com/
- Parenting Programs / Therapy Department
  5-505 Sargent Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba
  Phone: 204-774-2161
- Thrive Resource Centre / Therapy Department/Crisis Support
  555 Spence Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba
  Phone: 204-775-9934

Thrive offers a wide variety of services and programs for people of all ages and all stages of life, so they can grow and *Thrive* in their community. A participant led holistic approach at health and healing, we provide essential needs like food, clothing and safety, family supports, such as; parenting , child care and community resources also support for physical, emotional and spiritual health, whether that is connection to cultural needs, that ability to speak their truth or be authentic for themselves and others, whatever promotes empowerment, whole health and support for a better life and community for those we serve.

**Wahbung Abinoonjiiag Inc.**
225 Dufferin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB
Phone: 204-925-4610
An organization dedicated to dealing with domestic violence. Wahbung is open to anyone who has been impacted by family violence, and believes that traditional Indigenous teachings help families heal and learn to live healthy lifestyles without violence.

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**Appendix F: Grounding Exercises and Information on Self-Regulation Skills**

Due to the sensitive nature of the topics we are going to discuss, there is a risk of you becoming distressed. For safety of yourself and the rest of the group, I have compiled a few exercises for us to practice together. They are exercises to help ground you and some are self-care tips that you can use while you are away from the group.

- **Deep Breathing Activity**

The first activity we will practice together is deep breathing. Take a deep, slow breath in. Fill your lungs with air all the way down to the bottom of your belly as far as you can. I want you to notice how it feels to fill your body with oxygen and imagine that wonderful air is filling the rest of your body as well, including your arms and legs. Let the air out slowly and think about how it feels to push that air back out of your body. Let's take three deep slow breaths together and then do a check-in with each other to see if we feel better. Let's do it again two more times and do another check-in.

- **5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Method**

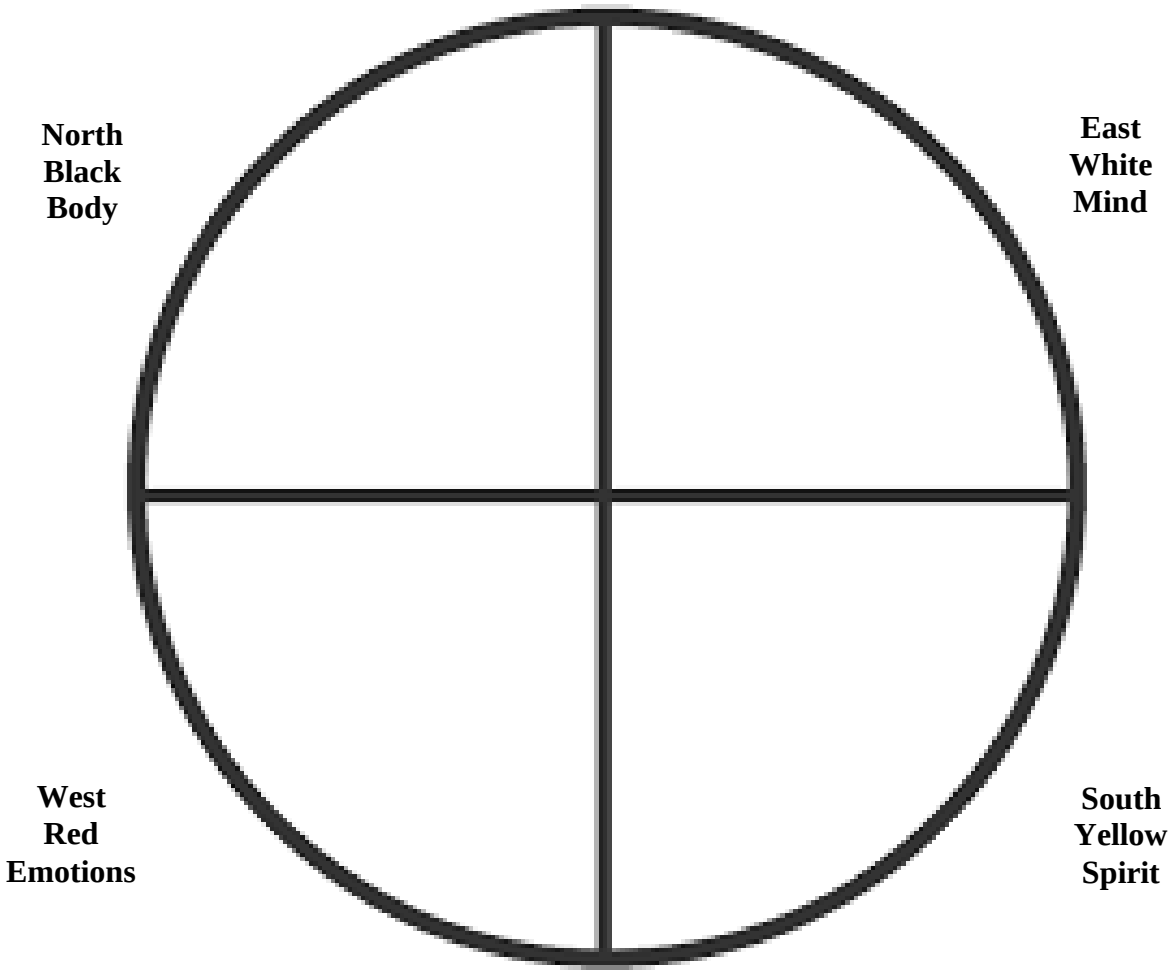
The next activity we will practice is a grounding technique. This can be used when you start to feel overwhelmed and need some help being brought back to the present moment. To start, I would like you to sit and take a few deep breaths, just like in the Deep Breathing Activity we just did. Once you feel ready, I want you to point out and say 5 things you can hear in the room with you, 4 things you can see, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. By doing this exercise it helps bring you back to the present moment, where you are safe and surrounded by safe people.

- **Self-Care Tips**

*This will be completed by each participant, as each person needs and responds differently to different styles of self-care.*

We will be filling in the medicine wheel with some self-care tips to help keep our mental health well. Also, please be mindful of the fact that we are all human and live/deal with mental health wellness on the daily. We are not simply good or bad people, unhealthy or healthy people. We all need help occasionally to feel well, and that's okay. The ideas suggested are only suggestions if

you are stuck with coming up with ideas. The point of this exercise is to show us that we are not stuck in our sad feelings. There are things we can do to feel well.




**Ideas to fill in the medicine wheel**

- ❑ See a doctor
- ❑ Eat good food
- ❑ Drink water
- ❑ Be sexual
- ❑ Get enough sleep
- ❑ Take time off
- ❑ Acupuncture
- ❑ Massage
- ❑ Ask for nurture
- ❑ Take a bubble bath/hot shower
- ❑ Take a walk
- ❑ Turn off cell
- ❑ Go to the land
- ❑ Watch a funny movie
- ❑ Therapy
- ❑ Journal
- ❑ Sensory engagement
- ❑ Read a self-help book
- ❑ Ask for help
- ❑ Cry/Release
- ❑ Pray
- ❑ Smudge with sacred medicines
- ❑ Find a hobby
- ❑ Create something
- ❑ Do positive affirmations
- ❑ Call an Elder
- ❑ Call a loved one
- ❑ Sing and dance
- ❑ Exercise
- ❑ Be silly
- ❑ Cook/Bake something delicious
- ❑ Make a vision board
- ❑ Drum and sing
- ❑ Make a bonfire
- ❑ List what you are grateful for
- ❑ Listen to music
- ❑ Draw

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**Appendix G(1): Agenda for In-Person Talking Circles**

**Day One:** Spent indoors.
Introductions.
Smudge.
Group rules created.
Ice-breaker.
Talking Circle to start the day.
Historical Trauma Theory, Resurgence and Radical Resistance discussed.
Era 1 discussed – Pre-contact.
Era 2 discussed – Pre-contact to *Indian Act*.
Dyad group work discussion about topics learned.
Letter writing.
Check out and grounding.

**Day Two:** Spent indoors.
Ice-breaker.
Talking Circle to start the day.
Era 3 discussed – *Indian Act* to Residential Schools.
Era 4 discussed – Residential Schools to present day.
Dyad group work discussion about topics learned.
Letter writing.
Check out and grounding.

**Day Three:** Spent indoors.
Ice-breaker.
Talking Circle to start the day.
Teachings on spirit names and clans.
Teachings on the Creation story.
Teachings on dream interpretation.
Drumming.
Dyad group work discussion about topics learned.
Letter writing.

Check out and grounding.

**Day Four:** Spent on the land.
Talking Circle to start the day.
Sweat lodge ceremony.
Naming Ceremony in the sweat for the participants who do not have their spirit name.
Ceremony to burn the letters.
Feast and closure of program.

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**Appendix G(2): Agenda for Online Talking Circles**

**Day One – Thursday May 20, 2021, 5pm to 8pm**
Introductions.
Smudge.
Group agreements created.
Ice-breaker.
Check-in.
Teachings from Elder Garry.
Talking Circle about topics learned.
Letter writing.
Drumming.
Check out, smudge and grounding.

**Day Two – Friday May 21, 2021, 5pm to 8pm**
Smudge.
Ice-breaker.
Check-in.
Teachings from Elder Garry.
Talking Circle about day's events.
Letter writing.
Drumming.
Check out, smudge and grounding.

**Day Three – Saturday May 22, 2021, 12noon to 3pm**
Smudge.
Ice-breaker.
Check-in.
Historical Trauma Theory, Resurgence and Radical Resistance discussed.
Talking Circle about topics learned.
Era 1 discussed – Pre-contact.
Talking Circle about topics learned.
Era 2 discussed – Pre-contact to *Indian Act*.
Talking Circle about topics learned.

Letter writing.
Drumming.
Check out, smudge and grounding.

**Day Four – Sunday May 23, 2021, 12noon to 3pm**
Smudge.
Ice-breaker.
Check-in.
Era 3 discussed – *Indian Act* to Residential Schools.
Talking Circle about topics learned.
Era 4 discussed – Residential Schools to present day.
Talking Circle about topics learned.
Ceremony to burn the letters. It is optional to read your letter out loud to the group. Items needed: something to safely burn your letter – firepit, empty coffee tin, a plate covered with tin foil, lighter or matches. Please have a cup of water nearby for putting fire out if need be.
Drumming.
Grounding, smudge and closure of group.

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**Appendix H: Curriculum on History of Colonization and impact on Indigeneity**

The story of Turtle Island's colonization is an emotional story indeed. Within this story, is an explanation of how Indigenous peoples came to express historical trauma symptoms. Within this story is an explanation as to why there are so many Indigenous peoples who feel lost and cannot explain why they feel this way. Prior to settler contact, Indigenous nations held their own ways of being, knowing, doing, and feeling. These ways of being were the foundation for our Indigenous identity, or indigeneity. It held our own ways of healing, connection to ceremony, acceptance for gender and sexual expression, governing that was equal for all, and above all a deep powerful, spiritual relationship to the land. When settlers arrived, these ways of being were interrupted, which caused devastating impacts felt collectively within each Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit person across Turtle Island.

I battled in my head on how I was going to present this history. At first, I considered showing you a timeline and leaving it at that, but that didn't feel enough. It was missing the mark because it is not enough to simply learn the history that our ancestors went through. There's more to it. So, I sat with that feeling and began reflecting on what spirit was trying to tell me. This is what came to me. I am going to present the history of colonization in a way that explains why historical trauma is expressed within Indigenous peoples. I want you folks to walk away from here really understanding that colonization attacked our identity as Indigenous peoples. I want you guys to understand that the trauma felt by Indigenous peoples comes at us externally, that it is politically motivated, and highly intentional. I want you guys to know that colonization was done to us to gain access to the land.

The history we are about to discuss is not intended to create anger and hatred in your hearts, because that is not the way to healing. My intention is to build historical understanding, compassion, forgiveness and to help initiate a journey of releasing trauma and grief through reclaiming your indigeneity. Indigenous peoples are a collective people, and these injustices were done to us collectively, so we must heal collectively as well. We must not stay stuck in the anger of colonization. We must move past the anger and begin healing from the wrongs that were, and continue to be done to us. Otherwise, the settler objective to destroy Indigenous peoples has been accomplished.

## Day One Group Work

### Era One – Pre-Contact

- Before contact, Indigenous nations were fully independent, organized and interdependent in societies and occupying the land as their ancestors had done for centuries.
- **Connection to land** was paramount. Indigenous people held a land-based spirituality where it created connections to others, to community, and to the land. Everything was connected and interconnected, seen as equal and interdependent, part of creation and as having spirit. This deep connection brought meaning and fulfillment into their lives and work. Everything revolved around the land from gathering food and water, participation in ceremony, well-being or health, and connection to each other. Indigenous nations moved and travelled with the seasons and animals. There was a reciprocal relationship with the land, where Earth was referred to as our Mother, she gave birth to us and provided all we needed. The land held the ability to calm, restore and inspire creativity. The land sustained Indigenous communities and identities.
- Indigenous nations were **egalitarian** in nature, where all were equal and would share resources freely with each other.
- Wealth was redistributed throughout these societies interconnected and managed by the clan systems. The Ojibway still hold the knowledge for clan systems.
- **Chiefs** or leaders, would be elected only by consent of the people and would be based on how well they could provide for their followers. They would have power of persuasion, but no coercive ability.
- Chiefs would often be the poorest due to the group's continual demands on their resources.
- There was no band council. This was created later on by the *Indian Act.*
- **Gender/ Sexuality/ Two-Spirited.** Prior to contact, gender and sexuality was fluid and accepted. Men and women roles were not rigid. Women could hunt and gather just as men did. Women were highly valued, where they would help run powerful ceremonies, such as the sundance, and participate in tribal decisions. Two-spirited peoples were viewed as holding a special power to walk in two worlds. With settler contact, came rigid ways of viewing gender and sexuality. Later on, we will hear how gender was used to dominate and control Indigenous peoples.
- It is theorized that Indigenous population ranged from 500,000 to two million.
- **1497** – Europeans arrived. John Cabot arrives on East coast of what will become Canada and begins to claim land.

**Era Two – Pre-Contact to *Indian Act***

- **Doctrine of Discovery** used to justify the colonization of new lands. Based on 2 concepts: 1) their Christian God gives the right to colonize lands they "discover" as long as they convert the Indigenous, and 2) the Europeans brought the benefits of colonization to the "heathens".
- ***Terra Nullius* –** Settlers arrived with the idea that the land was 'empty and belonged to no one'.
- **1608** first permanent European French settlement established by Samuel de Champlain.
- **Settlement** for French Europeans was successful and amicable, the Fur Trade was what they were primarily after. British English on the other hand made a rush for land. Indigenous survival skills were only appreciated at first arrival, then discarded by pushing further into Indigenous lands.
- **Christian Churches –** in the seventeenth century, the churches brought a view that Indigenous peoples needed to be saved from their savagery. Priests coming to Canada from Europe noted that Indians needed to be regulated by French laws and modes of living. Remember, when the Europeans arrived, there was no hierarchies, no patriarchy, Indigenous nations lived egalitarian, gender and sexual lines were blurred which made Indigenous peoples sinful in the eyes of the church.
- **Gender/ Sexuality/ Two-Spirited.** Heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity were tools used to destruct Indigenous ways of being, doing, knowing, and feeling. Colonialism needs heteropatriarchy to normalize hierarchies and unequal gender relations. For example, heteropatriarchy separated communities and families through creating hierarchies amongst the people. It separates families according to gender and roles. Heteropatriarchy was needed for colonialism to succeed. Indigenous women bearing children with white men (aka heteronormativity) would allow land to be passed on to their sons – patriarchy is passed on through the father.
- **Women** are in a conflict of roles, where they are either valued and appreciated for their hunting and gathering skills, or they are subjugated for being savage, unladylike, and given names like "squaw drudge".
- **Economic dependence begins.**
    - **Fur Trade.** Indigenous peoples were relied on heavily by the settlers for their involvement and help in catching beaver and other types of fur pelts. Fur trade continue for about 250 years 1600s to 1750s approximately. Women were often used by settlers to hunt and trap fur. These alliances were cemented through marriage – this is where Métis come from. Indigenous peoples became accustomed to this way of trade, appreciating the settler's technology (guns, copper cups/bowls/plates, blankets, cotton clothing, alcohol). As the fur trade became permanent, the balance in power shifted.

    - **Near extermination of the buffalo.** Settlers hunted the buffalo to near extinction. This was successful and increased the dependence from Indigenous peoples onto the settlers.
- **Introduction of diseases** – Smallpox, tuberculosis, typhus, yellow fever, measles, and influenza wiped out 80% of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. Some of these diseases were intentionally spread to Indigenous peoples. Jeffery Amherst, an English field Marshall stated to his troops, "You will do well to try inoculate (infect) the Indians by means of blankets, as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate (destroy) this execrable (extremely bad) race". Amherst is referring to infecting Indians through infected smallpox blankets.
- **1650s –** Missionaries attempted to change Indigenous nations and family function into a European style of living. They brought with them patriarchy, female devotion, elimination of divorce, polygamy, and sexual freedom. Indigenous women resisted this strongly as they were accustomed to being economically independent, actively involved in the public working. Indigenous women owned their own fruits of their labor, controlled their own sexuality, and had the right to divorce.
- **Resistance** strengthens. Women resist European imposed ideals which would remove a vast majority of their power and ability to choose.
- **1670** British parliament enacts first legislation concerning Indians to protect Indians from evil forces and to prevent fraudulent trading practices.
- **1755 Indian Department** is created to coordinate better alliances with the powerful Iroquois Confederacy, to attempt to alleviate concerns of colonial fraud and abuses against First Nations people and their lands along the colonial frontier.
- **Seven Years War 1756 – 1763** takes place between the French and English/British in New Canada. European settlers compete with each other in order to obtain Indigenous lands. There is a shift in who the Indigenous is dealing with here. Initially it was the French, now it is the British.
- **Royal Proclamation of 1763** – recognised Indigenous entitlement to the land, identified the British Crown as the only force to enter into Treaty relations for exchange of the land and placed Indigenous peoples under the protection of the Crown. It was a piece of legislation that allowed land to be traded from Indigenous hands, to settler hands.
- **1812.** With the numbers in the favor of the settlers due to Indigenous dying from diseases, the colonial government decided that Indigenous peoples should be forced to surrender their traditional lifestyles.
- **1815** British adopts another legislation policy to civilize the Indian. The first reservations were created as an experiment in an attempt to teach Indians how to farm, and follow religious instruction and education.
- **1820s** This decade sees Anglican and Methodist missionary schools built in Upper Canada and along Red River Settlement.

- **1839 Crown Lands Protection Act.** This act gave the government the guardian, aka control and ownership, of all Crown lands, including Indian Reserve lands.
- **1844 Bagot Report** A report that recommended control over Indians be centralized, that Indian children be sent away to boarding schools away from the influence of their communities and culture, and that land be eventually owned under an Indian land registry system where Indians can sell to each other but to non-Indians. The Bagot report provided the framework for the *Indian Act.*
- **1857 Gradual Civilization Act** created to encourage enfranchisement, but failed as only 1 voluntarily did so.
- **1867 British North America Act** – the creation of Canada as its own country (amid fears of US invasion after the Civil War). Provinces are given control and ownership of land and natural resources. Canada retains responsibility for Indians and lands reserved for Indians (where Federal and Provincial originate from).
- **1869 Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians Act** established the band council system that remains in the *Indian Act* today. The governing powers of the band council were heavily restricted and needed prior approval before making any sort of decisions. The Superintendent General of Indian Affairs had extreme control over status Indians. The General could determine who was of "good moral character" deserving of certain benefits (food, clothing, allowed widows to keep her children). This Act also stood in contradiction of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which gave Indigenous nations control over whether they could sell their land or not. Indigenous leaders recognised this and resisted through petitions, removing their children from schools, or denying to participate in the conversation.
- **1869 Red River Resistance** Under **Louis Riel**, the Métis people in the Red River Valley declared a provisional government and demanded entry into the confederation as a people.
- **Treaties 1871 to 1929/1930.** Treaties were and are held in a sacred manner by Indigenous nations. It was meant to be a nation to nation agreement to share in the land together. Treaties promised education, medicine, annual allowances, and protection against famine. Each new Treaty that was signed, promised the same benefits as the last, ensuring that all Indigenous people were treated just as well as the last group.
    - **1871 Treaty 1** was signed.
    - **1871 Treaty 2** was signed.
    - **1873 Treaty 3** was signed.
    - **1874 Treaty 4** was signed.
    - **1875 & 1908 Treaty 5** was signed.
    - **1876 & 1889 Treaty 6** was signed.
    - **1877 Treaty 7** was signed.
    - **1899 Treaty 8** was signed.
    - **1929/1930 Treaty 9** was signed.
    - **1908 Treaty 10** was signed.

## Day Two Group Work

### Era Three – *Indian Act* to Residential Schools

- ***Indian Act* of 1876 –** Set the course for Canada's relationships with Indigenous peoples, relationships that are embedded within the structures of settler colonialism.
    - Attempted to eliminate Indigenous peoples by determining who was, and was not, an Indian. Defined "Status Indian" as racially pure without regard for the complexity of Indigenous peoples communities or kinship networks. Gender was its' primary tool for elimination, where Indian Status could only be passed through the father, mothers who married white men lost their status and were removed from their communities. Their children also lost their status.
    - Continued the work to sever Indigenous connection to lands, their families and communities.
    - Disrupted systems of Indigenous governance by creating the Band Council and giving them more authority.
    - Silenced protest.
    - Primary goal was the destruction of tribal organization, cultural transformation, and the eventual assimilation of all Indians into the body politic of Canada.
- **1880 Indian Department** is changed to **Department of Indian Affairs** and lease Indian land without band consent. Amendment allows the removal of Chiefs.
- **1881** Amendment: created a permit system to control Indians ability to sell products from farms. Indians on-reserve needed permission from the Indian Agent to sell their farming goods off-reserve.
- **1884 *Indian Advancement Act*** gives power to the Indian Agent to direct Band Council. Pass System is created. Amendment: it is illegal to sell guns or ammunitions to Indians; potlatches are banned; it is illegal to sell alcohol to Indians.
- ***Indian Act* of 1890 –** Amended so that land that was not being used properly (farming, towns settled, which was determined by the Indian Agent) by Indigenous peoples could be taken by municipalities or companies for settler public purposes.
- **1892** regulations pass giving control over daily school administration to churches: Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist.
- **1894 to 1895** Amendment: Indian agents become justice of peace: Indians caught intoxicated could be arrested; superintendent general now approves all wills; sundance ceremony is outlawed; Department of Indian Affairs now hold the power to educate Indian children, with or without consent.
- **1914** Amendment outlaws Indians dances; Indians need approval if attending an exhibition or stampede if in "aboriginal costume".
- **1920** Amendment approves involuntary enfranchisement and compulsory school attendance.

- **1927** Amendment: prohibited from raising funds to hire a lawyer or to pursue land claims; prohibited from forming political parties; prohibited from entering pool halls.
- **1933** Amendment: all dances restricted.
- **1936** Amendment: Indian Agent oversees band council meetings and can cast deciding vote.
- **1936 Department of Indian Affairs** is changed to **Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.**
- **1939 –** Supreme Court of Canada ruled that for administration purposes, Inuit were Indians and fell under the *Indian Act.*
- **1951** Amendment: Potlaches are allowed again; fundraising for land claims is allowed; women can vote in band council elections; Indian Register created.
- **1960** Amended: Right to vote and retain Indian Status are granted.

**Era Four - Residential Schools to Today**

- **1850** Indigenous nations played a role in funding and establishing mission schools. They supported them because they believed their children would benefit from Western education, would be treated well, and that the communities would have involvement in how they were run. When they realized this would not happen, their support quickly withdrew. Many parents refused to send their children and many children ran away due to the harsh treatment. To keep enrollment up, the schools allowed non-Indigenous and adults to register in the schools.
- **1861** St. Mary's Mission School in Mission, and Presbyterian Coqualeetza Mission School in Chilliwack are established in BC. First mission schools in Canada.
- **1862** Blue Quills mission school built in St. Paul, AB. First mission school built on the prairies.
- **1885** There is a shift from mission schools to residential schools. Said to be necessary to remove children from influence of the home is the only way "of advancing the Indian in civilization".
- **1886 to 1996** Residential and boarding schools are created.
    - Compulsory school attendance for Indigenous children is legislated.
    - Indian children are to be "civilized and educated" and to "kill the Indian in the child".
    - Indigenous children are not allowed to speak their language or practice their traditional culture.
    - Extreme physical, sexual and emotional abuse occurs at the schools.
    - Schools are poorly built with overcrowding under unsanitary conditions – nutrition is deplorable.
    - These conditions lead to numerous deaths and serious widespread illnesses.
- **1893** Duncan Campbell Scott becomes Deputy of the Department of Indian Affairs. He rules until 1932. His stated objective was to assimilate all Indians into British culture.
- **1896** Laws pass that forbid Indian children from speaking their language while at IRS.

- **Early 1900s –** When Canada decided to develop the North, the government decided there needed to be a census to establish the actual number of Inuit. "Disc" numbers were created and allotted to each Inuk. Only those with numbers were officially defined as Inuit.
- **1904** Dr. Peter Bryce appointed "Medical Inspector" to Department of Indian Affairs.
- **1907** Dr. Bryce visits 35 IRS and reports appallingly unsanitary conditions and poor ventilation, all of which contribute to the children's high death rates of tuberculosis.
- **1908** Indian Affairs Accountant F.H. Paget reports IRS buildings in bad condition.
- **1919** Position of Medical Inspector for Indian Agencies and IRS is abolished for "economic reasons".
- **1920** Duncan Scott states, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem" to the Parliament. Scott instigated an amendment to the Indian Act where children aged 7-15 must attend IRS.
- **1922** Dr. Bryce publishes *The Story of a National Crime: Being an Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada, the Wards of the Nation, Our Allies in the Revolutionary War, Our Brothers-in-Arms in the Great War.* Bryce reveals 30-60% of children who attended IRS had died, an avoidable mortality that could have been prevented. His 1907 recommendations on TB control were ignored directly by Duncan Scott.
- **1923** Residential Schools term adopted replacing "boarding" or "industrial" school. IRS schools house 5347 children.
- **1932** Duncan Scott retires as Deputy General of Indian Affairs.
- **1939** 9027 children are in 79 IRS run by Catholic (60%), Anglican (25%), United and Presbyterian (15%).
- **1944** Census develops among senior Indian Affairs officials that Indian education should be integrated into provincial systems.
- **1955** Jean Lesage gets cabinet approval for Inuit education in the North. Until then Inuit children were sent south to IRS. "Destitute" Métis were also sometimes enrolled.
- **1966 Hawthorn Report** is released criticizing the Indian Affairs policy of assimilation and recommends that Indian and Northern Affairs be reorganized to better serve the needs of Aboriginal people.
- **1969** Indian Affairs resumes control of IRS from churches.
- **1969 White Paper** is introduced but due to an Indigenous uprising was quickly withdrawn in 1970. The White Paper was intended to abolish the *Indian Act,* all existing Treaties and Treaty Rights.
- **1975** Six IRS close this year. 15 remain.
- **1976** National Indian Brotherhood (predecessor of Assembly of First Nations) proposes amendments to *Indian Act* for Indian control of education – rejected by government.
- **1982** Constitutional amendments included the Métis people as one of the three Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- **1984** 187 Bands are operating day schools, half in BC, the rest mainly on the prairies.

- **1985 Bill C-31** allows Indigenous women who married non-status men to reapply for their status and their children's status.
- **1996** Last residential school closes. Gordon Residential School in Saskatchewan. There were 130 IRS in Canada.
- **1990** Oka happens. For 78 days Mohawks face off with Quebec provincial police and Canadian Armed Forces to protect their sacred lands. The town of Oka wanted to build a golf course on these sacred lands.
- **1991** Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is created. The Commissions mandate was to propose specific solutions to issues that had plagued the relationship between Indigenous peoples, the Canadian government and Canadian society as a whole. Commission published its' final report in 1996 and is still used to inform public policy.
- **2005** Indian and Inuit Affairs were created, which emerged from the *Indian Act.*
- **2007** The government of Canada announces a landmark compensation package for residential school survivors.
- **2007** Truth and Reconciliation Commission is created. Acts to provide a safe and culturally appropriate place for former students and their families affected by IRS to share their experiences.
- **2008** Government of Canada issues a formal apology given by then Prime Minister Steven Harper.
- **2012** Idle No More is started by four women advocating for resurgence, resistance and reclamation.
- **2015** TRC released its final report and 94 Calls to Action.
- **2016** As a result of the TRC and its' Calls to Action, the Government of Canada launches a national inquiry into the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.
- **2019** MMIWG releases their report and includes 231 Calls for Justice and the conclusion that Canada's treatment of cases has amounted to genocide.
- **2019** Indian Day School class action law suit approved by Federal Courts.
- **2020 Bill C-92** *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families* is passed, giving power and control of child welfare back to communities.

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## Appendix I(1): Questions for Closing Visits with Sweat Lodge Ceremony

**First Closing Visit**

Thinking back to the questions I asked you during our first initial visits with each other, I would like to ask you a few of the same questions, so I can compare your answers between then and now. I am asking these questions to see if learning about the history of colonization and building your identity as an Indigenous person changed your perspective on how healing historical trauma has changed.

1) Do you feel ceremony provides healing? If yes or no, how so?
2) Do you feel ceremony provides guidance? If yes or no, how so?
3) Do you feel ceremony is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?

4) Do you feel traditional Indigenous medicines provide healing? If yes or no, how so?
5) Do you feel traditional Indigenous medicines provide guidance? If yes or no, how so?
6) Do you feel traditional Indigenous medicines are a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?

7) Do you feel the land provides healing? If yes or no, how so?
8) Do you feel the land provides guidance? If yes or no, how so?
9) Do you feel a connection to the land is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?

10) Do you feel speaking the language is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?

11) Do you feel receiving your name, clan and colors has changed you? How so?
12) Do you feel this has provided you with a foundation to your Indigenous identity?
13) Do you feel reclaiming your Indigenous identity is the solution to healing historical trauma?

**Second Closing Visit**

This visit is intended to help us have a conversation surrounding how you feel about the group work.

1) What was the most impactful moment of the four days?
2) What was the least impactful moment of the four days?
3) Is there anything you wish did not happen?
4) Is there anything that you wanted to learn more of?
5) Can you share your emotions surrounding learning about the history?
6) Now that you know the history of colonization, how does this impact you? Does it change you? How?
7) Has your perception of the history changed in any way?
8) Did you experience any realizations or profound moments throughout the research project, or afterwards?
9) Going forward, will you be different, in terms of actions, feelings, and/or attitude towards ceremony, land, language, medicines, and your children?
10) Now that you have completed this project, do you feel your Indigenous identity has changed? How?

**Third Closing Visit**

This visit is geared toward gathering information on what you learned from the activities the letter writing, the ceremony on the land, the talking circles, and our visits we have had together.

1) What do you feel was the purpose of the letter writing?
2) What benefits did you experience from this exercise?
3) Did it help you let go of any negative emotions? How so?
4) Who were you communicating with in this exercise? Did you feel connected to them? How so?
5) What did you learn from this activity?

6) What do you feel was the purpose of the talking circles?
7) What benefits did you experience from this exercise?
8) Did it help you let go of any negative emotions? How so?
9) Did you feel connected to the group? What qualities of the group helped this happen?
10) Will you continue to rely on members of the group to continue on in your journey?
11) What did you learn from this activity?

12) What do you feel was the purpose of the ceremony?
13) What benefits did you experience from this exercise?
14) Did you experience any sort of negative experiences? How so?
15) Did the ceremony help you let go of negative emotions? How so?
16) Did the ceremony help you heal? How so?
17) What did you learn from participating in the ceremony?

18) Do you think you will continue on in this journey of reclaiming your Indigenous identity?
19) Is there anything else you wish to share with me?
20) Do you feel safe to end our time together in this research project?
    a. If no, what can I do for you to feel safe?
    b. If yes, thank you so much for your time, energy and commitment to this research project. I greatly appreciate all you have contributed during our time together. I will be contacting you in a few weeks for another quick check-in, and again after the data is analysed to provide you with the summary of our results. Feel free to call me if you need help or have any further questions.

- ❑ Ask the participant if they would like their name published in the results. Have them sign Appendix J: Consent form to publish participants name, declaring whether they want their name published or not.

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**Appendix I(2): Questions for Closing Visits without Sweat Lodge Ceremony**

**First Closing Visit**

Thinking back to the questions I asked you during our first initial visits with each other, I would like to ask you a few of the same questions, so I can compare your answers between then and now. I am asking these questions to see if learning about the history of colonization and building your identity as an Indigenous person changed your perspective on how healing historical trauma has changed.

1) Do you feel ceremony provides healing? If yes or no, how so?
2) Do you feel ceremony provides guidance? If yes or no, how so?
3) Do you feel ceremony is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?

4) Do you feel traditional Indigenous medicines provide healing? If yes or no, how so?
5) Do you feel traditional Indigenous medicines provide guidance? If yes or no, how so?
6) Do you feel medicines are a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?

7) Do you feel the land provides healing? If yes or no, how so?
8) Do you feel the land provides guidance? If yes or no, how so?
9) Do you feel a connection to the land is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?

10) Do you feel speaking the language is a part of your identity as an Indigenous person? If yes or no, how so?
11) Do you feel receiving your name, clan and colors has changed you? How so?

12) Do you feel this has provided you with a foundation to your Indigenous identity?
13) Do you feel reclaiming your Indigenous identity is the solution to healing historical trauma?

**Second Closing Visit**

This visit is intended to help us have a conversation surrounding how you feel about the group work.

1) What was the most impactful moment of the four days?
2) What was the least impactful moment of the four days?
3) Is there anything you wish did not happen?
4) Is there anything that you wanted to learn more of?
5) Can you share your emotions surrounding learning about the history?
6) Now that you know the history of colonization, how does this impact you? Does it change you? How?
7) Has your perception of the history changed in any way?
8) Did you experience any realizations or profound moments throughout the research project, or afterwards?
9) Going forward, will you be different, in terms of actions, feelings, and/or attitude towards ceremony, land, language, medicines, and your children?
10) Now that you have completed this project, do you feel your Indigenous identity has changed? How?

**Third Closing Visit**

This visit is geared toward gathering information on what you learned from the activities the letter writing, the ceremony on the land, the talking circles, and our visits we have had together.

1) What do you feel was the purpose of the letter writing?
2) What benefits did you experience from this exercise?
3) Did it help you let go of any negative emotions? How so?
4) Who were you communicating with in this exercise? Did you feel connected to them? How so?
5) What did you learn from this activity?
6) What do you feel was the purpose of the talking circles?

7) What benefits did you experience from this exercise?
8) Did it help you let go of any negative emotions? How so?
9) Did you feel connected to the group? What qualities of the group helped this happen?
10) Will you continue to rely on members of the group to continue on in your journey?
11) What did you learn from this activity?

12) Did you experience any sort of negative experiences throughout this project together? How so?
13) Did this research project help you heal? How so?
14) What did you learn from participating in this research project?

15) Do you think you will continue on in this journey of reclaiming your Indigenous identity?
16) Is there anything else you wish to share with me?
17) Do you feel safe to end our time together in this research project?
    a. If no, what can I do for you to feel safe?
    b. If yes, thank you so much for your time, energy and commitment to this research project. I greatly appreciate all you have contributed during our time together. I will be contacting you in a few weeks for another quick check-in, and again after the data is analysed to provide you with the summary of our results. Feel free to call me if you need help or have any further questions.

- ❑ Ask the participant if they would like their name published in the results. Let them know you will email a signed copy of Appendix J: Consent form to publish participants name, declaring whether they want their name published or not.

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**Appendix J: Consent form to publish participants names**

Hello and thank you for your contribution to this research project. This form is asking permission on whether you would like your name published in the final product of the research. You have the right to remain anonymous through the use of the pseudonym that was assigned to your identity at the beginning of the project. There will be no prejudice or consequences to you if you decide to remain anonymous.

By now, we have completed our visits with each other and the group work with the rest of the participants. The reason I have waited until the very end to ask this question is so you can take the time to reflect on what you have shared and then decide whether you want that information publicly displayed. Some people who participate in research projects wish their name to be published as a form of owning their journey of healing, while others prefer to keep this information confidential. This choice is entirely up to you.

If you choose to have your name published, it will be published through the final thesis product, in journal articles and in the MSpace Library at the University of Manitoba. It will be attached to your direct quotations and connected to relevant interview questions.

I would like to have my name published in the results of this study. Yes No

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

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**Appendix K: COVID-19 Screening Survey for In-Person Project**

To be completed each day before participants enter into group setting.

Participant name (please print) _____

Day of Group Work (please circle) 1 / 2 / 3 / 4

**Do you have a new onset, or worsening, of any ONE of the following symptoms?** **Yes** **No**

- Fever greater than 38° or think you have a fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath/breathing difficulties
- Loss of taste or smell
- Vomiting or diarrhea for more than 24 hours

**If you have answered "Yes" to any of the above, DO NOT ENTER.**

**Do you have a new onset, or worsening, of any TWO of the following symptoms?** **Yes** **No**

- Runny nose
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Headache
- Skin rash of unknown cause

- Nausea or loss of appetite

**If you have answered "Yes" to any TWO of the above, DO NOT ENTER.**

| **Exposure history** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| 1) Have you been in close contact (within two metres/ six feet for more than 15 minutes) in the last 14 days with a confirmed COVID-19 case? | | |
| 2) Have you been exposed to COVID-19 in a work or public setting? | | |
| 3) Have you travelled outside of Canada, or within Canada, east of Terrace Bay, Ontario in the past 14 days? | | |
| 4) MIn the last 14 days has anyone living in your household travelled outside of Canada, or within Canada, east of Terrace Bay, Ontario? If yes, proceed to question 4a and 4b. | | |
| a. If yes to 4, is your household traveller exempt from self-isolation (quarantine) requirements? | | |
| b. Have you been in close contact with the household traveller in the last 14 days since their return from travel? | | |

**If you have answered "Yes" to Questions 1, 2, 3, or 4b, DO NOT ENTER.**

If the checklist advises you NOT TO ENTER, please stay home to self-isolate and refer to the online COVID-19 Screening tool found at https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/ or call Health Links – Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or toll free at -1-888-315-9257 for further guidance.

Up to date information on COVID-19 can be found at: www.manitoba.ca/covid19

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

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## Appendix L: Oath of Confidentiality

**Research Project Title:** Healing Historical Trauma through Resurgence and Radical Resistance

I, _____ through my participation and involvement with the research project *Healing Historical Trauma through Resurgence and Radical Resistance*, will have access to information that is considered personal and private. I understand that access to this confidential information carries with it a responsibility not to disclose this information to others who are outside this project. Such a disclosure would violate the confidentiality promised to participants and would violate University ethics policies.

I agree to maintain confidentiality and privacy throughout my participation and after the project is concluded as well.

Signature _____ Date _____