

Urban Pathways to Justice: Exploring Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature
Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Community Health Sciences

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

I give gratitude for the lands from which my life unfolded, through honouring and recognizing the lands that gives this life are the traditional lands of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island.

I recognize that Manitoba is on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk peoples. I acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. I acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. May I tread lightly on these lands in honouring the sacredness of these lands that gives life, with a dedication to truth and reconciliation of these lands.

Abstract

Introduction: This study focuses on Indigenous women's experiences of urban biking, trail, park and nature experiences and impacts on wellness using an Indigenous gender-based analysis plus lens created by the B.C. Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW). The goal of this study was to explore Indigenous women's experiences of urban biking, park and trail use and nature experiences in the context of settler colonialism that emphasizes the historical and present-day cultural oppression experienced by Indigenous women that impacts urban wellness experiences. The research questions include Indigenous women's experiences of urban trails, parks, biking and nature experiences and how do these experiences impact wellness; the role of gender for Indigenous women's equitable access to urban spaces; and barriers to Indigenous women's urban land experiences.

Methods: The methods in this qualitative study were a blend of Indigenous and western research methods as "two-eyed seeing". The study was guided by an Indigenous women's advisory committee through several collaborative meetings throughout the study who also provided cultural protocols for the sharing circle.

Data collection included Indigenous methods of conversational interviews (n=9) and a sharing circle (n=10). Interpretative phenomenological methodology and methods informed the analysis guided by the MACIW Indigenous gendered based analysis plus lens. A decolonizing approach with community participatory research methods guided the methods.

Results: Indigenous women's experiences of urban wellness activities reveal barriers to these activities embedded in settler colonial racism and misogyny toward Indigenous women that results in violence and extensive safety barriers in accessing safe urban land. Despite these barriers, Indigenous women resist and reclaim urban spaces as sites for cultural resurgence,

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

while reinstating Indigenous women's gendered roles as Matricidal leaders, caregivers, educators, and protectors of the Land that fosters their wellness. Family and community wellness as interrelated with personal wellness was an essential aspect of Indigenous women's wellness models, drawing in cultural understandings of wellness. The wellness of the Land and its inhabitants are also a fundamental interrelated aspect of Indigenous women's wellness.

Implications: Women described a myriad of spiritual, mental, physical and emotional benefits from safe park, trail and bike use, grounded in Indigenous concepts of wholistic wellness centred on family and community wellness. Nature as kin is a fundamental aspect of women's lives that supports wellness. Yet, the women and their communities cannot experience these benefits if settler colonial city-making barriers to safe urban land are not addressed. The barriers Indigenous women and their communities face is an issue of justice, whereas access to safe urban land and wellness is a profound right of Indigenous women and their communities.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the women who participated in this study, whose time, knowledge and experiences shared were deeply appreciated. A special dedication to Mary Burton, Executive Director of Zoongizi Ode, a North End neighbourhood family and youth supports agency, for her time in supporting this study and for her knowledge shared that taught me about the strength and resilience of Indigenous women and the significance of culture in all aspects of life. A special dedication to Sharon Janakas who also contributed to the study development with Mary, who is also dedicated to supporting community and youth at Zoongizi Ode. Sharon's knowledge and experiences also taught me about the immense strength of Indigenous women. This study is also dedicated to my family of women, my sisters Laura, Anna and Leanne and my mother Monica whose continued love and support throughout my life is the foundation for my success in reaching my goals. This study is also dedicated to my father Ken for the early life lessons he taught me that shaped my path throughout life.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the scholarship support I received for this PhD study from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Joseph-Armand Bombardier Doctoral Scholarship and a University of Manitoba graduate scholarship.

I would like to acknowledge the support I received from my advisors Dr. Andrew Hatala and Dr. Jon McGavock and committee members Dr. Jay Johnson and Dr. Brian Rice. Dr. I am thankful for the support and encouragement I received from everyone on this academic journey we shared together. It was a long road with hills and valleys, yet through support we reached the highest peak of this journey in completing this PhD study. I would also like to thank the support I received from Dr. Sara Kreindler who was instrumental in my learning journey. I would like to thank Dr. Todd Duhamel who supported me throughout my academic career when challenges arose, he was there to encourage and support me, and I am very thankful for this support. Thank you to my dear friend and fellow graduate student Janice Tilly for enduring support throughout our academic journey and in life. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported, guided, encouraged, and taught me on this PhD journey. The relationships fostered on this journey enriched my life.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE	12
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	12
Introduction	13
<i>Significance of the Colonial Context of the Study</i>	15
Literature Review	17
<i>Indigenous Wellness and Relationships with the Land and Nature</i>	21
<i>Indigenous Women, the Land, Nature, and Wellness</i>	24
<i>Barriers to Indigenous Women’s Wellness</i>	25
<i>Indigenous Women in Urban Land Contexts</i>	28
<i>The Urban Land Environment and Wellness</i>	29
<i>Gender and Urban Land Use</i>	30
Study Purpose	32
Guiding Research Questions	33
Conclusion	33
CHAPTER TWO	35
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	35
Introduction	36
Decolonizing Approach	37
Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Approach	38
<i>Reflexive Position</i>	39
Study Methodology	41
<i>Target Population and Sample</i>	42
<i>Recruitment</i>	42
<i>Overview of Participants</i>	43
<i>Data Collection Methods</i>	46
<i>Interview Consenting Process</i>	47
<i>Data Analysis</i>	48
<i>Minister’s Advisory Council on Indigenous Women’s Indigenous Gender Based Analysis Plus Lens</i>	49
Ethics	57
<i>Report of Outcomes</i>	61
<i>Recipients of Outcomes</i>	61
<i>Permissions to Share Intellectual Property and Publish</i>	61

CHAPTER THREE..... 63

CENTRING THE FINDINGS FROM INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S KNOWLEDGES 63

Introduction..... 64

Table 1. Chapters and Themes of the Findings..... 68

Recognizing and Understanding the Diversity Among Indigenous Women 69

Blood Memory: Gendered Knowledge Passed Down from Ancestors..... 71

Indigenous Women’s Wholistic Community Concepts of Wellness..... 72

Indigenous Women’s Wellness Requires Gendered Social Services..... 75

Strength-Based Perspectives of The North End- “A True Community” 76

Conclusion 78

CHAPTER FOUR..... 80

BARRIERS TO INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TRAILS, PARKS, AND BIKING EXPERIENCES 80

Introduction..... 81

Structural-Societal Barriers..... 81

Indigenous Women’s Land Dispossession: “We’re not given the place to heal” 81

The Damage from Colonial Systems Separating Children from Families 83

Racism: “Racism is out there, for sure” 87

The Impact of Misogyny and Sexual Violence 89

The Injustice of Indigenous Women’s Persistent Safety Issues..... 90

Socio-Economic Barriers..... 95

Poverty is “the Number One Barrier” to Indigenous Women’s Wellness..... 95

Homeless Encampments “A big concern” 98

Barriers to Biking: “Bikes just get stolen” 99

Lack of Investment in the North End- “There’s a huge stigma with people about the North End” 101

Biking Infrastructure Barriers: “We don’t have enough bike lanes in the North End” 104

Active Transportation Barriers: “You can’t get to them [good parks]” 105

CHAPTER FIVE 109

INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF TRAILS, PARKS, BIKING AND IMPACTS ON WELLNESS..... 109

Introduction..... 110

Biking as a Catalyst for Wholistic Wellness..... 110

Biking Empowers Women: “It gives me a sense of freedom”..... 112

<i>Decolonizing Biking: Reclaiming Cultural Healthy Lifestyles</i>	113
<i>Family Biking a Priority: “Make it more kid friendly”</i>	115
<i>Gender-Specific Community Bike Shops Contribute to Women’s Biking</i>	116
Trails: Accessible Trail Use Can Promote Indigenous Women’s Wellness	117
Reclaiming Urban Land: Parks as Sites of Cultural Reclamation	119
<i>Parks as a Place for Sixties’ Scoop Grandmothers’ Family Time</i>	123
<i>Rematriation: Parks as Place for Women’s Full Moon Ceremonies</i>	125
<i>Parks as Places to Connect with Nature</i>	126
Conclusion	127
CHAPTER SIX	130
NATURE EXPERIENCES AND THEIR IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S WELLNESS	130
Introduction	131
<i>Nature and Mental and Spiritual Wellness</i>	131
<i>Nature as Wellness Reserve from Urban Life</i>	133
<i>Relational Nature Relationships: The Significance of Offerings</i>	136
<i>Nature as a Source of Spiritual Protection and Medicines from Mother Earth</i>	137
<i>Connection with Water: “We honor water as women, we're water carriers”</i>	140
<i>Kinship Relationships with Animals Fosters Wellness</i>	141
<i>Indigenous Women’s Caring Stewardship with Nature</i>	143
<i>Community Gardens as Sites for Knowledge Transmission and Cultural Continuity</i>	144
Conclusion	145
CHAPTER SEVEN	147
DISCUSSION- INDIGENOUS WOMEN RECLAIMING BIKING, TRAIL AND PARK USE FOR CULTURAL WELLNESS RESURGENCE AND NATURE AS KINSHIP	147
Introduction	148
Barriers to Indigenous Women’s Urban Wellness Experiences	148
<i>Indigenous Women’s Land Dispossession and Settler Colonialism</i>	149
<i>Gendered Racialized Poverty- A Key Barrier to Indigenous Women’s Wellness</i>	159
<i>Challenging Settler Colonialism City-Making</i>	163
Conclusion	165
Table 2. Recommendations for Addressing Barriers to Indigenous Women’s Urban Land Use and Wellness	165

Women’s Experiences of Biking, Trail and Park Use, Nature and Experiences and Impacts on Wellness 168

Women’s Experiences of Biking and its Impact on Wellness 170

The Role of Gender in Women’s Biking Experiences to Support Wellness 173

Intersections of Culture and Gender in Indigenous Women’s Cycling..... 179

Improving Biking Equity for Indigenous Women 182

Table 3. Participants Recommendations to Improve Indigenous Women’s Bike Equity and Access 186

Conclusion 187

Cultural Resistance, Reclamation and Resurgence: Indigenous Women’s Experiences of Trails and Parks and Impacts on Wellness..... 188

The Role of Gender in Indigenous Women’s Trail and Park Use 190

Intersections of Culture and Gender in Indigenous Women’s Urban Trail and Park Use 192

Parks as Places for Feasts and Gardening 194

Parks as Places for Ceremonies and Rematriation..... 197

Parks and Trails as Places for Cultured Mothering While Connected to the Land..... 204

Centring Trails and Parks as Connection to Traditional Indigenous Lands 208

Trails and Parks as Places for Indigenous Women’s Healing on the Land..... 212

Trails and Parks as Places of Land Protection by Indigenous Women..... 214

Table 4. Recommendations to Support Indigenous Women’s Park and Trail Use for Wellness 216

Conclusion 218

Relationships with Nature and Indigenous Women’s Wellness 219

Indigenous Cultural Understandings of Nature 220

Nature Supports Indigenous Wholistic Wellness..... 221

Nature as Sacred and Spiritual- Supporting Spiritual Wellness..... 223

Nature Fosters Familial Relationships 225

Nature as a Teacher- Guiding Wellness..... 228

The Role of Gender in Indigenous Women’s Experiences of Nature..... 229

Access to Nature as a Way to Justice for Indigenous Women 232

Conclusion 234

CHAPTER EIGHT 235

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS 235

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Policy 236

Limitations and Strengths 238

Dissemination of Findings and Knowledge Translation	239
Directions for Future Research	239
Recommendations	240
Table 5. NIMMIWG Calls for Justice: Health and Wellness Recommendations	241
Conclusion	243
REFERENCES	247
Appendix A	283
Appendix B	284

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This study explores experiences and factors that impact Indigenous women's equitable access and use of urban trails, parks and biking and nature experiences from an Indigenous women's wellness perspective in the Canadian prairie city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, focused on the North End neighbourhood. The North End neighbourhood is a predominantly Indigenous neighbourhood, while Winnipeg has the highest percentage of Indigenous Peoples for any major Canadian city, comprising 12.4% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2022a; 2022b). Winnipeg is located on the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. Indigenous Peoples in Winnipeg are comprised of diverse, distinct Indigenous cultures that span from many homelands and Nations across North America. There are several terms used throughout this dissertation to describe Indigenous Peoples. The term Indigenous includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada. At times, the term Aboriginal is used when this is the terminology used in the referenced research. The Government of Canada distinguished the term Aboriginal:

Is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants.

Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982 recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples. In this Act, 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. These are separate groups. Each has a unique and diverse heritage, language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. Today, people mostly use the term "Aboriginal" in a legal context. (Government of Canada, 2024).

Specific cultural Nations are also reflected throughout the dissertation when these distinctions were specified in the literature, such as "Cree". The term "land" is capitalized when

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

referring to Indigenous Peoples relationships with their Land. Land signified in this way represents an Indigenous perspective where Land is seen as a relative.

Urban cities in Canada were founded on Indigenous Lands through a process of colonization and colonialism that maintained a purpose to dispossess and remove Indigenous Peoples from their Lands, and remove their rights to their Land legally, as a way for the colonial state to gain ownership of the land. Land dispossession was a part of attempts of the Canadian colonial state to enact cultural genocide upon Indigenous Peoples (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; NIMMIWG, 2019a). Richmond and Cook (2016) added Aboriginal health and social inequities in Canada requires recognizing the rights of Aboriginal Peoples to achieve health equity, while Place (2012) emphasized colonialism “has directly and negatively impacted the social determinants of Aboriginal People’s health” (p. 12). It is important to highlight urban bike paths, parks and trail systems are essentially parcels of Indigenous traditional territories. Racial and gender inequities in access to wellness promoting urban land environments persist in Canadian urban centres (Hassen, 2022; Firth et al., 2021). In considering the impacts of the built environment in urban settings, McGavock et al. (2022) noted “attributes of the built environment that support physical activity are associated with better health outcomes for individuals living in areas adjacent to them” (p. 12), pointing to the wellness benefits of biking infrastructure, trails and parks in urban settings. Doran et al., (2021) highlighted group disparities in access to cycling and supportive cycling infrastructure include those experiencing low-incomes, racialized populations, and women and children. Rigolon (2016) added “low socioeconomic and ethnic minority people have access to fewer acres of parks, fewer acres of parks per person, and to parks with lower quality, maintenance, and safety than more privileged people” (p. 160). Drawing from racialized inequities in Winnipeg, there is

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

a substantial and obvious divide between access and investment in parks, trails and biking infrastructure in neighbourhoods where there is a large Indigenous community, such as the North End neighbourhood in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The North End neighbourhood in Winnipeg, home to a prominent and diverse Indigenous community, is a neglected neighbourhood in Winnipeg compared to other neighbourhood investments, and these barriers to wellness are compounded by the highest neighbourhood rates of poverty in Winnipeg (McCracken & Plante, 2024).

Significance of the Colonial Context of the Study

It is important to emphasize this study is situated in colonial Canada where Indigenous women have been resisting colonial rule from historical periods and into present day. Colonial rule, laws, and actions have caused extensive barriers to Indigenous women's wellness. Colonial systems of assimilation accumulated in attempts of Indigenous cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; NIMMIWG, 2019a). Assimilation attempts of culture included the implementation of Indian Residential School (IRS) systems that targeted Indigenous children and their families through physical separation, followed by the Sixties Scoop where Indigenous children were removed from their homes and adopted into other families while family separation has persisted through the Child and Family Services (CFS) system into present day. Indigenous children who were taken from their families and communities equated to complete restriction to Indigenous community and land-based education while residential schools were places of emotional, spiritual, physical, and sexual abuse perpetrated by the teachers and administrators (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). These restrictions were part of the implementation of the Indian Act, which from 1876 controlled Indigenous Peoples and their access to land rights, while being embedded in racist ideologies,

with the Act extending control of Indigenous Nationhood into present day. As the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) (2023a) detailed:

The Indian Act was created by the government of Canada with a goal to control and assimilate Indigenous Peoples into Canadian culture. Essentially, it is a set of legislative decisions and policies that govern every aspect of Indigenous People's lives (i.e. health, education, land, governance, etc.). The Indian Act is the only act in Canada that governs every aspect of an ethnically segregated group of people's lives. There is no other act that governs every aspect of an ethnically segregated group of people's lives in Canada. In its nature it is discriminatory and woven into the very fabric and systems of Canada (p. 11).

The colonial governmental ban on Indigenous cultural practices, including a ban on speaking Indigenous languages, was also devastating and forced Indigenous Peoples to be without their cultural means of coping with the devastating impact of colonialism and forced assimilation (Auger, 2021a). Through colonial legislation and actions, Indigenous Peoples were also actively displaced from their homelands and land use territories (Johnson & Ali, 2020; Teillet, 2019). Further, "the historical thefts of Indigenous Land were paramount to the colonial violence against Indigenous communities" (Johnson & Ali, 2020, p. 207). Violence against Indigenous Peoples resulting from colonialism also took, and continues to take, the form of overt racism which causes the internalization of racism among many Indigenous Peoples, which negatively impacts identity, health and wellness (Benoit et al., 2019; Johnson & Ali, 2020).

Johnson and Ali (2020) brought attention to how "colonization and exploitation of Indigenous Lands is also a gendered process that is connected to violence against Indigenous women" (p. 208). Violence against Indigenous women is a crisis across Canada, leading to a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls that commenced in

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness 2016 (NIMMIWG, 2019a; 2019b, 2019c). From the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the source of this violence is attributed to the Canadian state condoning and committing abuses against Indigenous women and girls (NIMMIWG, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c).

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG) (2019a) stated in supporting Indigenous women to “reclaim their power and place” (p. 41) includes recognizing “the importance of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being. This often starts with learning, or re-learning, what those Indigenous ways are” (p. 41). In seeking to understand Indigenous women's wellness experiences, this study responds to this call in aligning the study to reclaim Indigenous women's power and place in developing and producing knowledge from Indigenous ways of knowing (i.e., conversations and a sharing circle) and drawing from Indigenous women's knowledges about wellness. This focus contributes to decolonizing research that requires drawing upon Indigenous knowledges, and particularly Indigenous women's knowledges, situated with the significance of a decolonizing and colonial context in wellness research (Gamby et al., 2021; Goulet et al., 2011; Nelson & Wilson, 2017). Understanding Indigenous women's wellness in relation to Indigenous women's urban trail, park, bike and nature experiences derived from Indigenous knowledges is central to this inquiry. The following review of literature centres on Indigenous knowledges of wellness with a focus on Indigenous women's discussions of wellness.

Literature Review

Drawing upon Indigenous knowledges, the review of literature begins with defining Indigenous wellness. In doing so, Indigenous wellness is revealed as multidimensional and culturally informed, with an integral role of spirit. The importance of wellness and Indigenous

cultural continuity is discussed followed by the important interrelationship of individual Indigenous wellness with community wellness. The significance of relationships with the Land and Indigenous wellness is brought to attention followed by research about the urban land environment and Indigenous wellness. The next section of the review focuses on gender by discussing Indigenous women, gender, and wellness. Barriers to Indigenous women's wellness is examined, which is followed by a review about Indigenous women, wellness and the Land. Indigenous women and urban land use research is then explored which points to a dearth in research on this topic. The review of literature concludes with research about gender and urban land use which highlights the significance of a gender lens in inquiry about women's urban land use experiences.

Concepts of Indigenous Wellness

As Lavallée (2007) emphasized, values and beliefs about wellness vary across Indigenous nations, yet there are many similarities. To illustrate, Métis wellness is interconnected with mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health (Bartlett, 2005) with an emphasis on holistic understandings that expand beyond the individual to include family, community, neighbourhood, and nation (Dyck, 2009). The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG, 2019a) centres wellness as wholeness, with a wholistic understanding of safety and well-being, while caring for mental, emotional, spiritual and physical needs. This unified interconnected wholism is also described from Indigenous perspectives “that encompass all aspects of individuals and communities including physical, mental and spiritual dimensions” (Weaver, 2002, p. 5). Drawing from Indigenous perspectives, Weaver (2002) elaborated, “wellness is a holistic concept that includes connections among various aspects of a whole. Connections exist across generations including ancestors and people yet to be born. The sacred

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness and secular are two parts on a unified whole" (p. 12). Here, Indigenous concepts of wellness are understood intergenerationally, spanning beyond the individual, to include community, and further still as part of previous and future generations. Many Indigenous culture's also view health, wellness and healing through the medicine wheel that includes the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual (Lavallée, 2007). In Landry et al.'s (2019) research, they described Algonquian concepts related to wellness:

In North America, Indigenous peoples belonging to the Algonquian language family use the term *mino-pimatisiwin*, which could be loosely translated as "living the good life", to describe a state of harmony, well-being, and comprehensive health based on relationships, cultural identity, and connection to the land. (p. 2)

In Auger's (2019) study, Métis participants added the importance of community connectedness and cultural continuity, the importance of having a strong sense of identity, self-esteem and self-awareness to support wellness and mental health.

Within Indigenous concepts of wellness is the view of the spirit as a powerful source of healing and wellness (Baskin, 2016; McCabe, 2008). As Lavallée and Poole (2009) explained:

Sickness begins with the spirit, if the spirit is wounded—because of the principle of interconnectedness—the mind, emotions and body become sick. Colonization has wounded the spirit of Indigenous Peoples and this is one of the reasons for ill health amongst Indigenous Peoples globally (p. 274).

In resisting colonialism, Plains Cree Peoples discussed the significance of spiritual and cultural practices such as sweats, sun dances, and pow wows in supporting their mental health and well-being (Graham & Martin, 2016). Here, the interconnected aspects of culture and spirituality bring forth the significance of spirituality in Indigenous wellness models.

Indigenous Wellness Supported by Cultural Continuity

As highlighted in Métis culture, cultural continuity supports enduring cultural identity (i.e., awareness of ancestry, history, and family stories), culture and language, and spirituality (Auger, 2019; Auger 2021a; Auger 2021b). To elaborate, Kumar and Janz (2010) defined Indigenous cultural continuity as “the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to another along with the means by which transmission occur,” including “the connection that individuals have with their own cultural past, and ideas of their potential future self” (p. 63). Transmission of culture is therefore intricately linked with family and community relationships. To illustrate, the Cree concept of *whakotowin* encompasses how “we are related to all life forms within Creation” (Dorion, 2010, p. 54). Such a concept highlights the significance of community within Indigenous family relations. Drawing from Métis knowledges, individual wellness is intertwined with family wellness, community wellness and collectivism (Auger, 2019; Bartlett, 2005; Auger, 2021a; Auger, 2021b). As Edge and McCallum (2006) observed, Indigenous wellness is supported by relationships with Elders and mentors that support wellness at the individual and community level. Indigenous Elders particularly contribute to community wellness by participating in intergenerational solidarity by transmitting knowledge, values, and culture in a holistic approach (Viscogliosi et al., 2020). Macdougall (2017) further noted the interconnectedness of Métis wellness and community wellness by explaining how a shared sense of mutual responsibility links wellness with the whole of community. As described, the coming together for Métis gatherings is an integral part of Métis culture and is “essentially about wellness” (Flaminio et al., 2020, p. 59). Ginn et al., (2021) noted “health, spirituality and well-being were all connected to Métis identity and community (p. 456). These positive social

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness networks inclusive of family and community members who engage in intentional healing work to address trauma also contributes to wellness (Auger, 2019).

Indigenous Wellness and Relationships with the Land and Nature

It is important to understand that wellness activities, such as trail and park use, biking and nature experiences all take place on the land, with Indigenous relationships to the Land being integral to spirituality, cultural continuity and community connection for Indigenous Peoples (Auger, 2021a). Place-based concepts of wellness includes environmental specificity embedded in historical and geographical contexts (Panelli & Tipa, 2007; Richmond & Ross, 2009; Wilson, 2003; Wilson & Peters, 2005). By placing emphasis on place in health and wellness research, Indigenous efforts to decolonize and reclaim Land within settler-colonial nation-states like Canada are brought to acute attention (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Additionally, this study aligns with Brown et al.'s (2012) research that critically analyzes the broader social determinants of health and wellness while focusing on how these determinants can be reshaped to enhance health and wellness status.

Previous research has demonstrated the interconnectedness of Indigenous wellness and relationships with the Land, the planet and greater universe (Auger, 2021a; Alvord & Van Pelt, 1999; Dyck, 2009; Ginn et al., 2021; Hatala et al., 2020; Tobias & Richmond, 2014). As part of Indigenous concepts of the Seven Circles of Wellness, sacred living space and connection to Land nurtures clanship/community relationships, provision of real food, sleep, movement, and ensuing peacefulness (Gamby et al., 2021). It is on the Land that spiritual ceremonies take place that connect individuals deeply with the Land whereas the body, mind, and spirit are connected to the planet and universe (Alvord & Van Pelt, 1999). Further, spiritual ceremonial teachings from Elder Knowledge Keepers and Land-based experiences have contributed to healing and for

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

enduring Métis wellness (Auger, 2021b). As Auger (2021a) added, “the importance of land” is “an integral component of cultural continuity and Métis wellness” (p. 22). Further, Métis Peoples “through discussing kinship relationships and responsibilities between people and the land, participants described the interconnectedness of all living things, and the importance of reciprocity in promoting wellness.” (Auger, 2021a, p. 19).

This current study also focuses on the role of nature and Indigenous women's wellness which responds to a gap in research with Indigenous women since “limited research demonstrates how conceptions of ‘Land’ and human-nature relations are constructed, maintained, and function within urban contexts” (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 122). With a focus on Land and nature experiences, Brymer et al., (2010) suggested exposure to nature aids in physiological, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health. Theoretical explorations into how nature impacts wellness includes how exposure to nature restores mental fatigue and encourages deep reflections while providing a nurturing, connected experience (Brymer et al., 2010; Reese & Myers, 2012). Indigenous understandings of nature reveal a personal relationship. For example, “a central feature of the Cree philosophy and concept of *miyo-wicehtowin* today involves human-nature relationships with the ‘Land’ and the environment or ‘Mother Earth’ more broadly” (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 121). Here, Land is viewed beyond colonial views of Land as an economic resource and instead personifies Land as “Mother Earth”, a living Land that gives and provides for life. As Hatala et al., (2019) emphasized, “relationships to Land and nature have long been recognized globally as a central Indigenous determinant of health” (p. 122) that therefore influence wellness experiences. To illustrate, in Hatala's et al.'s (2019) research with Indigenous youth, “youth interpret nature to extend everywhere and encompass

everything natural, nature and the land are not conceived of as a totalizing and imposing ecological presence. Here, land-making becomes situated and relational” (p. 125).

Prior research has often limited Indigenous Peoples' associations with "Land" and "nature" to rural or remote settings, disregarding urban environments as sources of health and wellness (Hatala et al., 2019). In contrast, Hatala et al.'s (2019; 2020) research with urban Indigenous youth highlighted how urban Indigenous youth negotiate and construct a contemporary sense of themselves as being in-relation to Land and nature within urban contexts. Hatala et al.'s (2019) research found “notions of reciprocity, spirituality, Indigenous knowledge, and sentience to characterize human-nature relations implicated during processes of Land-making, resilience, and wellness” (p. 127) which brought forth the cultural distinctness of relationship in Indigenous experiences of nature in urban contexts. As such, Hatala et al., (2019) advocated it is crucial to better understand how these nature relationships are maintained or function within urban spaces, where increasing numbers of Indigenous Peoples reside.

In summarizing Indigenous wellness from the review of literature, equitable access to urban land in the form of park, trail and bike and nature experiences may offer ways of experiencing wholism while nurturing the spirit through cultural Land-based activities. Wellness-promoting urban trails and parks may offer a place for cultural continuity where the whole Indigenous community's wellness is supported through relationships with the Land, and specifically with nature. Identifying aspects of urban trails and parks and bike experiences (e.g., a place for community connection, a place for connection to nature) that may support Indigenous women's wellness is central to this inquiry. This study aims to build upon this literature by drawing from Indigenous women's knowledges of wellness.

Indigenous Women, Gender and Wellness

The role of gender is positioned within social determinants of health frameworks denoting the significance of gender, health and wellness (Greaves, 2012; Halseth, 2013; Spagnolo et al., 2020). Spagnolo et al., (2020) defined gender as “a continuum of socio-culturally constructed roles and behaviors associated with men, women, and gender-spectrum diversity” (p. 385). Gender is interrelated to a “web of influences on health and well-being” (Greaves, 2012, p. 4), that include ethnicity, culture and race-related factors, age, ability, income, education, housing, and literacy, “affecting the lives and bodies of people and being affected by them on micro to macro levels” (Greaves, 2012, p. 4). Gender is a key social determinant of health and wellness for Indigenous women (Halseth, 2013). From a gendered lens, Métis women surmised wellness arises within the person that requires emotional control and acceptance with an emphasis on spiritual practices (Bartlett, 2005). Indigenous women's wellness is also supported through matrilineal social kinship and intergenerational knowledge exchange systems among women (Jones et al., 2020). Reclaiming culture is also an important facet of Indigenous women's wellness practices (Brown, 2016; Jones et al., 2020b). In particular, cultivating identity, which is viewed by Indigenous women as “inseparable from their family, history, community, place and spirituality, and understood in the context of their whole lives” is integral to wellness (Wilson, 2004a, p. 9).

Indigenous Women, the Land, Nature, and Wellness

Indigenous women and their relationships to the Land are foundational to their wellness which points to significance of women's access to urban land for wellness activities. Indigenous women traditionally held gendered roles within community that encompassed Indigenous women's unique relationship with the Land (MACIW, 2023a). For example, Métis women described how meeting on the Land together and visiting in each other's homes to share cultural

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

knowledge and spirituality was integral to their wellness (Flaminio et al., 2020). Fostering connections to the spirit through ceremony on the Land is also integral to decolonizing wellness promotion for Indigenous women (Brown, 2016). These findings are reflective of research with Indigenous women where relationships with the Land was identified as integral to wellness (Jubenville et al., 2022). Experiences on the Land are also ways to connect with nature that fosters wellness. As Radu et al. (2014) described:

The constant interaction with the Land, by knowing it with all five senses, guides individuals and provides what is needed to live in harmony with the environment, with each other, and with oneself. The reciprocal and dialogic relationship with nature provides not only the material needs but also the ethic, moral and spiritual underpinnings of living a good life. (p. 93)

Here again, the significance of nature experiences as part of being on the Land for Indigenous Peoples contribute to meaningful cultural relationships that contributes to wellness and directs living a good life founded on healthy relationships.

Barriers to Indigenous Women's Wellness

Drawing on a justice perspective, identifying barriers to equitable access to urban trails, parks, biking and nature experiences that support Indigenous women's wellness is a key focus of inquiry in this current study. This current study about Indigenous women reflects other research that emphasizes the colonial context whereas Indigenous women have been targeted based on their racialized and gendered identity that produces significance barriers to health and wellness (NIMMIWG, 2019a; MACIW, 2023a). The B.C. Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) (2023a) detailed important historic facts about the role of race and gender as a tool used by the colonial state in the lives of Indigenous women:

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

- Prior to the confederation of Canada in 1867, over 80% of Indigenous communities were matriarchal.
- With the creation of Canada and enforcement of European values and governance and the creation of the Indian Act in 1876, Indigenous women have been subject to colonial-based and gender-based violence.
- Violence experienced by Indigenous women is linked to the colonial violence that was created and perpetuated by the creation of Canada and the federal policies that govern every aspect of Indigenous Peoples life (i.e. the Indian Act).
- Many legislative policies within the Indian Act are targeted at displacing Indigenous women from their inherent and rightful roles as matriarchs.
- The Indian Act codified and enforced Indian Band Elections that made it illegal for Indigenous women to run for positions of Chief or Council as well as it was illegal for them to vote in these elections until 1951.
- Indigenous women were the last ethnic group in Canada to have the right to vote in federal, provincial, and municipal elections. This right was granted to them in 1960.
- Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men lost their Indian Status which meant they no longer were a member of their Indian Band. This also meant that they could not live in their communities, receive Indian Band programs or services and general displacement from their traditional territory, culture, lands, language, etc. An amendment was made to the Indian Act in 1985 to overturn this decision, however, the legislation has not been inclusive and holistic so there are many Indigenous women who are still not included in this amendment.

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

- It is estimated that approximately 2 million Indigenous women since the Indian Act was created have been displaced across Canada (MACIW, 2023a, p. 11).

From these colonial tools against Indigenous women, a substantial barrier to Indigenous women's wellness are experiences of structural and personal racism and misogyny based on intersections of social classifications of gender, class and race in the colonial state (MACIW, 2023a; NIMMIWG, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). Urban Indigenous women's experiences of racism were reported to impact self-determination in achieving socioeconomic stability in urban contexts (Benoit et al, 2019). Racism combined with socioeconomic barriers also contribute to poverty for many Indigenous women which greatly impedes wellness. Poverty is identified as a cyclical process where poverty contributes to women's low income, low educational attainment, fewer career options, substandard housing, social stigma, and barriers to healthcare access that challenges women's mental health and wellness while eroding self-esteem and producing chronic stress (Gill et al., 2010). Women in poverty are also more threatened by experiences of gender-based violence (Benbow et al., 2019).

Gender-based violence is embedded in gender norms and unequal gendered power dynamics, perpetrated against someone based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender. It takes many forms, including physical, economic, sexual, as well as emotional (psychological) abuse (Government of Canada, 2021). Gender-based violence has both short-term and long-term health consequences such as mental health challenges (Bani-Fatemi et al., 2020). For women experiencing gender-based violence, poverty and unstable housing, they also experience the added weight of stigma which can have a profoundly damaging impact on identity (Benbow et al., 2019). Stigma results in discrimination and barriers to acquiring assistance that contributes to women's experiences of unsafe spaces through the

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness process of societal marginalization (Benbow et al., 2019). As Reid et al., (2021) emphasized, "understanding and addressing GBV demands an understanding of its complex socioeconomic and demographic correlates" (p. 1298).

Gender-based violence toward Indigenous women has been overtly ignored over decades, resulting in crisis levels that, with immense advocacy, resulted in the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (NIMMIWG), with reports published in 2019. As the NIMMIWG (2019a; 2019b; 2019c) confirmed, this level of violence against Indigenous women and girls amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples. These substantial barriers to wellness Indigenous women face emphasizes the significance of research that focuses on how Indigenous women's wellness may be supported while also emphasizing the requirement of eliminating barriers Indigenous women face through structures of oppression (NIMMIWG, 2019a; McGibbon, 2012).

Indigenous Women in Urban Land Contexts

There is a dearth in research about Indigenous women and their urban land use experiences of trail, park and biking and nature experiences and their impacts on wellness. Research about urban Indigenous women has focused on health and health services in urban contexts. For example, research about urban Indigenous women includes exploration of cultural security for urban Indigenous women during perinatal periods (Marriott et al., 2019) and experiences of antenatal care programs (Panaretto et al., 2005). Benoit et al., (2019) and Goodman et al., (2017) examined urban Indigenous women's health and health services and the detrimental experiences of racism and discrimination in urban health care settings. The significance of safe spaces where culture can be expressed and shared among Indigenous women adds to the literature about Indigenous urban women (Cooper & Driedger, 2019) and raises the

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

significance of culturally safe spaces for women in urban environments. To illustrate, Indigenous participants in Landry et al.'s (2019) study described how they utilized public parks where physical, symbolic, and spiritual relations to the Land could be expressed. Marcale et al., (2020) focused on Indigenous female leaders in urban environments detailing the significance of gendered cultural knowledge transmission. Drawing on the sparse research about Indigenous women and urban trail use, from an exploration of First Nations women's perspectives of healthy body weight and body image, First Nations women suggested that the development of safe and accessible walking trails in their communities would be a helpful contributor to health (Poudrier & Kennedy, 2008). Overall, the majority of research about Indigenous urban women is representative of how urban Indigenous women's research has focused on urban health and health services, pointing to a gap in research about the role of urban environments and trail, park and biking use in wellness with Indigenous women. There is a body of research examining the urban land environment and wellness, and although lacking an Indigenous lens, contributes to knowledge about wellness in urban environments and is further discussed in the following section.

The Urban Land Environment and Wellness

As research suggests, urban trails and parks are an important aspect of the urban built environment that can foster wellness. Building on evidence from the relationship between the urban environment and wellness, Renalds et al., (2010) described the built environment as “a foundation for health and wellness” (p. 68) which encompassed greenspaces and parks, the presence and condition of sidewalks, traffic flow, bike lanes, cleanliness and maintenance of public spaces, along with perceptions of safety, community, and security. Drawing from O'Campo et al.'s (2009) community research, neighbourhoods that experience violence, crimes,

vandalism, and illegal drug activities negatively impact health and wellness. These issues are compounded by neighbourhoods that are experiencing clusters of low-income and high unemployment that produces poverty at the neighbourhood level (O'Campo et al., 2009).

McCormack (2010) concluded "attributes including safety, aesthetics, amenities, maintenance, and proximity are important for encouraging park use" (p. 712). Winters et al., (2018) focused on equity in spatial access to bicycle trail infrastructure in Canadian cities and found social inequities may be exacerbated if urban infrastructure is not targeted in lower income or disadvantaged neighborhoods. Equity in urban land use therefore requires targeting of these neighbourhoods to address inequities in urban land use (Winters et al., 2018). Winters et al., (2018) brought attention to the importance of equitable trail and biking investment in North End neighbourhoods in Winnipeg which have the characteristics of urban neighbourhood inequities including lower income (i.e. high rates of poverty) and high population density, coupled with issues of safety (e.g., high crime rates) embedded in oppressive poverty.

Although these findings are important, these studies lack a deeper exploration into equity from an Indigenous gendered perspective, which would provide a more nuanced cultural account of equity in urban spaces, which this study aims to address. There is a dearth of research focusing on the role of gender and Canadian urban land environments and the impact of urban land-based activities on wellness, particularly with Indigenous women. The following research details inquiry into gender and urban land use, which highlights the significance of gender while pointing to a dearth in research about Indigenous women in this context.

Gender and Urban Land Use

As Spain (2014) detailed, the study of space and gender has been multidisciplinary including sociology (Spain, 2014), architecture (e.g., Ahrentzen 2003), geography (e.g., Bondi &

Rose, 2003), history (e.g., Flanagan, 2002) and urban planning (e.g., Malaza et al., 2009).

Drawing from this literature, it is emphasized space and place are socially constructed and influenced by gender norms within society. From a gender lens, Jalalkamali & Doratli (2022) describe how:

Urban public spaces are the spatial nexus of social interactions, activities, and expressions. Society manifests itself within these spaces through different lenses such as cultures and norms. The framework and restrictions related to gender-based behavior play a central role in the discourse about inclusivity and equity in urban public spaces when viewed through these lenses (p. 1).

Adding to the inquiry about gender and culture in urban spaces, Mushkani and Ono (2021) concluded examining gender and the urban setting should include an understanding of gendered cultural values. Spain (2014) underlined women in urban environments must challenge the prevailing gender norms influencing where women are invited within the urban landscape. Thus, the roles of gender and culture are important aspects of inquiry in understanding Indigenous women's urban land use. Specifically, these findings are reflective of how within Canada, colonial values are imbedded within urban structures and design that influence women's access to socially constructed urban spaces. As the review of literature discussed, Indigenous women experience specific barriers due to the intersection of gender, race, and culture, among other intersecting categories of identity that impact both access and experiences of wellness in urban spaces. These barriers are coupled with neighbourhood characteristics such as rates of poverty and crime, pointing to the importance of contextualizing the study in the socioeconomic neighbourhood context. These findings also accentuate the value of incorporating the B.C. Minster's Council of Indigenous Women's (MACIW) (2023a) Indigenous Gender Based

Analysis Plus (IGBA+) lens into a study with Indigenous women in urban Canada, further described in chapter three.

Study Purpose

This study explores Indigenous women's experiences of urban trails, parks, biking and nature experiences from Indigenous wellness perspectives and knowledges viewed from the Minister's Advisory Council of Indigenous Women's (MACIW) Indigenous Gender Based Plus analysis (IGBA+) lens (MACIW, 2023a). From this lens, Indigenous women's experiences are positioned in the context of settler colonial Canada, whereas settler colonialism is founded upon racism and misogyny. The purpose of this study is to identify how Indigenous women can be supported in their use of urban trails, parks, and biking with a focus on nature experiences that in turn contribute to wellness from these cultural and gendered perspectives. Identifying barriers to trail, park, biking and nature experiences and how these barriers can be addressed are also a predominant focus of this study. From a decolonizing aim, the study purpose focuses on examining factors that contribute to Indigenous women's equitable access to these urban land-based activities from a justice perspective, founded on the fact that Indigenous women have been resisting and fighting for reclaiming their access to their lands since the onset of colonial land dispossession.

The study has the following objectives:

- 1) To identify how Indigenous women can be supported in their urban trail, park and bike, and nature experiences to foster wellness.
- 2) To determine how the role of gender, as an intersection of Indigenous women's cultural identity, impacts experiences.

- 3) To identify the barriers to urban trail, park, bike and nature experiences and provide recommendations to address these barriers.

Guiding Research Questions

The research is guided by the following questions:

- 1) What are Indigenous women's experiences of urban trails, parks, and biking in Winnipeg neighbourhoods and how do these experiences impact wellness?
- 2) How does urban nature experiences contribute toward Indigenous women's wellness?
- 3) What role does gender have for Indigenous women's equitable access and use of urban trails, parks and biking and nature?
- 4) What are the barriers to Indigenous women's urban trails, parks and biking that impact Indigenous women's wellness?

The following chapter details the methodology and methods used in the study, drawing from decolonizing aims in research guided by the MACIW (2023a) Indigenous gender-based analysis plus lens.

Conclusion

This introduction sets the premise for this study with Indigenous women about their wellness drawn from urban trails, parks, biking and nature experiences. Situating the study in the context of colonial Canada brings forth the important emphasis of barriers to wellness Indigenous women face embedded in misogyny and racism that is also examined in this study. The significance of drawing from Indigenous knowledges throughout the study sets the foundation of inquiry, bringing forth cultural, multidimensional aspects of wellness in relationship with the Land. The introduction of MACIW's (2023a) Indigenous gender-based analysis lens used throughout the analysis and discussion of this study points to the importance

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

of understanding Indigenous women's experiences from a cultural and gendered perspective in the context of colonial Canada.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

The methodology and methods for this study are embedded in a socially constructed interpretivist epistemology whereas I view truths as interpreted by each individual, and that knowledge is produced through our interactions with the world and each other through relationship. Social constructionism is the worldview that reality is socially constructed by each individual and therefore reality can be different for each person (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). From this premise, reality is understood as influenced by cultural, historical, political, and social norms (Darlaston-Jones, 2007) which is an important aspect when conducting research with Indigenous Peoples whereas the colonial and cultural aspects of experience must be taken into account. From this premise, each individual actively interprets their world in the context of their society (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000). According to Jacobs and Manzi (2000) a constructionist epistemology challenges the positivist view that research produces descriptions of “concrete realities or material truths” (p. 36). Instead, Jacobs and Manzi (2000) described social constructionism as a reflexive process where the researcher must acknowledge the importance of subjectivity (i.e. the researcher's assumptions, perceptions, experiences) that may influence the research process which importantly aligns with Indigenous methodologies that focus on the researcher as self-in-relation throughout knowledge production. Interpretative inquiry is based on the perspective that individuals produce and reproduce meanings of their social world, and that these meanings are a fundamental aspect of their lives (Willis, 2007). The goal of interpretative inquiry is to understand the unique meanings held by individuals in a social context (Willis, 2007). For instance, this paradigm recognizes that I as the researcher hold my own interpretations of the social world, as does each participant in the study. In other words, we together (researcher and participant) co-construct knowledge about the studied phenomena (Willis, 2007). As Margaret Kovach (2009), a Pasqua from Saulteaux First Nation and Plains Cree researcher elaborated, an

interpretive approach aligns with the relational quality of Indigenous worldviews (Kovach, 2009) which aligns this approach of this study with Indigenous ways of knowing.

From an epistemological standpoint drawing from Indigenous knowledges outlined by Kovach (2009), drawing from an epistemology that centres understanding as self-in-relation is an important alignment for research with Indigenous Peoples and reflects how this research was developed with Indigenous participants through relationship, as being in-relation to the participants. Thus, a social constructionism epistemology fits this study as it aimed to interpret the personal meanings that individuals ascribed to their experiences from the positioning of researcher and participants as in-relation to one another drawing from their own worldviews.

Decolonizing Approach

This study utilized a decolonizing approach to research. Smith (2010) described a decolonizing approach as that aims to divest colonial power. Chilisa (2014) described a decolonizing approach as both a process that brings forth the worldviews of those who experience oppression. Key aspects of a decolonizing approach also include respect for Indigenous Peoples and their knowledges and value systems, inquiries that are relevant to those being researched, an approach that seeks reciprocity (e.g., giving back to those involved in a meaningful way) and maintaining accountability to the whole Indigenous community (Kovach, 2009). To illustrate, a decolonizing approach challenges dominant belief systems and in turn creates space for marginalized understandings of wellness (Gamby et al. 2021). As Kovach (2009) advocated, in bringing in Indigenous knowledges into western academic discourse ethically requires a decolonizing perspective that includes the influence of colonial relationships within the research, drawing from participatory research frameworks. Hence, this study focuses

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness on the colonial context of Indigenous women's lives while incorporating a community-based participatory research approach.

Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Approach

This study applied a CBPR approach in the design and implementation of the study. As Wallerstein et al., (2018) elaborated, CBPR is based on collaboration that focuses on the strengths and priorities of the community that contributes to equity. This study included an Indigenous Women's Study Advisory Committee consisting of two women who also participated in an interview and the sharing circle as part of a CBPR approach. The committee consisted of Mary Burton and Sharon Janakas who encompassed the study as Indigenous women's Knowledge Keepers for the community. I, the graduate student researcher, met with the Mary and Sharon on several occasions over a meal to develop the study collaboratively. This committee was also invited to review the findings, discussion and recommendations. Mary and Sharon, although able to develop the study and provide cultural protocols for the sharing circle, did not have available to time to review the findings in detail. The committee review of the final study and recommendations were also restricted by time availability by the committee. The remainder of the study findings, discussion and recommendations were developed based on trust Mary and Sharon granted me in finalizing these aspects of the study. This trust was founded on the Indigenous research processes of respect for what the women throughout the analysis process to ensure interpretations were drawn from Indigenous women's knowledges through the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ lens. In following CBPR principles, it was acknowledged that community members available time to commit to a project may be limited and must be respected (Wallerstein et al., 2018). We planned for a community research dissemination gathering of the study where feedback about recommendations from the community would be incorporated into

the advocacy reports. For those women interested in participating, findings were also shared with these women that enabled participants to review how their quotes were discussed in the findings and to provide any feedback or changes to this aspect of their data (i.e., member checking). Two participants chose to review the findings at this stage. Participants were offered the opportunity to also meet together to review the findings of the study however a second study meeting was declined by participants (aside from one participant who was then invited to a community study dissemination gathering).

An important recognition discussed by Minkler et al., (2012) is how CBPR community partnerships often involve community members from historically marginalized groups, whereas the researcher comes from an 'outsider' perspective from a privileged background. To counter this positioning, Wallerstein et al. (2018) explained that the researcher must practice cultural humility which requires self-critique and self-reflection and acknowledgement of one's own social positioning, while acknowledging potential power imbalances in the research process. Thus, from the onset of the study personal awareness of researcher positionality was embedded through ongoing reflections and journaling, while acknowledging participants are their own experts in the study of Indigenous women's experiences.

Reflexive Position

As Kovach (2009) detailed "reflexivity is the term often utilized within a variety of research approaches to reference the relational. Reflexivity is the researcher's own self-reflection in the meaning-making process" (p. 32). Reflexivity is an indicator of validity within qualitative research whereas the researcher acknowledges their own subjectivity may influence the research findings (Kovach, 2009). In following a CBPR approach and aligning with Indigenous ways of research, it is important that I identify and acknowledge my own positioning in this study. At this

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

point in my life, I have extensive university education, and I understand that my opportunities for education were provided by a more accessible path compared to Indigenous students because of my racialized difference in being white. I did not have to confront constant racism in pursuing my education nor in my daily life. My access to education has also improved my socio-economic status, and I see the strong link of access to education and financial security. These pathways are met with barriers for Indigenous Peoples, embedded in racialized colonial institutions. My racialized difference must be met with humility toward Indigenous women and their communities. As a white Canadian who was born in Canada, my family was provided with the opportunity to settle on Indigenous Lands in a town that was centred on resource extractions in the area (e.g., mining, forestry). My years growing up were privileged with access to land where my health and wellness benefited from land-based activities such as camping and canoeing. Growing up, we were not taught why there were Indigenous Peoples in the community who were forced into homelessness and who were suffering from the impact of colonizers who took over the land for resource extraction.

In my privileged position I seek to understand and disrupt intersections of gender and race and other aspects of identity in colonial Canada that form levels of privilege and oppression. From my position, I understand I cannot become an “expert” about Indigenous women’s wellness, for I am not an Indigenous woman. Rather, I work toward allyship in supporting Indigenous women as a fellow woman, with the intent of applying my related experiences as a woman with my education in ways to support Indigenous women. From a reflexive position, I maintained a process of reflection with the findings and analysis, reviewing my interpretations with the words shared by the participants, to ensure they were reflective and captured what the women shared with me through refining my own interpretations.

Study Methodology

This study incorporates western qualitative and Indigenous methods, often referred to as “two-eyed seeing” (Iwama et al., 2009). Incorporating a two-eyed seeing approach offers both “ways of seeing” from western and Indigenous worldviews and knowledge for improved overall methods while contributing to interpretive understandings (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017). Specifically, from western methods, this study utilizes interpretative phenomenological methods which Indigenous researcher Margaret Kovach (2009) described as a useful methodology for Indigenous research to make meaning from lived experience and stories.

This qualitative study draws upon a relational worldview that views the researcher in relation to the participants and community of research which is reflective of Indigenous methodologies and knowledge sources (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2004b). This Indigenous form of inquiry “finds an ally in qualitative approaches that assume the relationally constructed aspect of knowledge production” (Kovach, 2009, p. 34). Relational research focuses on “doing research in a good way” such as to benefit the community being researched (Kovach, 2009, p. 35). This study is guided by the Indigenous research values of respect (e.g., respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and doing), relevancy (e.g., ensuring the research is relevant to the community involved in the research), reciprocity (e.g., honouring time and knowledge shared by providing an honorarium), and responsibility (e.g., being responsible in the ethical treatment of knowledge) (Kovach, 2010).

This study includes western research components of a literature review, recorded and transcribed qualitative interviews and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methods (Smith & Osborn, 2012). Interpretive phenomenological research aims to describe, understand, and interpret a phenomenon (Tuohy et al., 2013) influenced by social, cultural, and political

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness contexts (Flood, 2010) which are important contexts in research with Indigenous Peoples. As Kovach (2010) stated, reflexive analysis contributes to an Indigenous contextual presentation of knowledge making IPA a complementary method for this research.

Target Population and Sample

The target population was self-identified Indigenous adult women, who had urban experiences (i.e., either from visiting or residence) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The type of sampling was purposeful to ensure a “more closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant” (Smith & Osborn, 2012, p. 56) which equates to recruitment in Winnipeg, Manitoba. As Smith and Osborn (2012) noted, IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes and “the aim of the study is to say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of this particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims” (p. 55). The sample was nine participants for interviews, which Smith and Osborn (2012) deemed a comprehensive sample size for in-depth and detailed information on the phenomenon under study, advising a smaller study sample that enables depth in findings rather than breadth. Ten participants participated in the sharing circle. Two of the participants took part in an interview and the sharing circle. All women who expressed interest in the study in the recruitment process participated. No participants refused to participate at any time, and no participants dropped out of the study.

Recruitment

Recruitment was first assisted by Mary Burton, the Executive Director of Zoongizi Ode, a dedicated non-profit organization supporting Indigenous families, located in the North End of Winnipeg. Zoongizi Ode means "strong hearts" in the Anishinaabe language. Recruitment first involved sharing a poster on the Zoongizi Ode social media sites. This was followed by attending

an Zoongizi Ode monthly meeting to talk about the study with community members. After a month of recruiting, the recruitment was opened up by adding posters in the broader neighbourhood and with other organizations. Recruitment at the downtown library also took place, by posting the poster on the community information board. One participant was a University of Manitoba graduate student who was interested in the study after learning about the study from another graduate student, and the final participant was a colleague of the primary researcher, who was interested in participation. Recruitment for the sharing circle was completed using a social media poster shared on social media sites with several Indigenous women's organizations in the North End, including Zoongizi Ode.

Participants received an introductory email or information over the phone that outlined the study along with an attached poster that included the study details. The poster included the researcher's contact details (phone and email) so that potential participants could contact if they were interested in the study. For those who were interested in the study, they were asked their email or other preferred way to receive a consent/study information form for review and to arrange a date and time for the interview. This contact information was retained and stored separately to ensure confidentiality and to contact the participant later to review the findings, if they so chose. This contact information was deleted and destroyed (digitally and paper copy) after the findings review. Prior to the interview and sharing circle, the consent process was reviewed to answer questions. Only consenting participants participated in the study.

Overview of Participants

The Grandmothers who are Sixties Scoop Survivors

Mary, Sharon, Shayla and Kerri are all Indigenous grandmothers who are survivors of the Sixties Scoop. In response to their Sixties Scoop experience, these women are committed to

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

breaking the cycle of cultural fragmentation within their families and communities. As the findings will show, the women's roles as mothers and grandmothers are paramount, and the women are dedicated to fostering cultural continuity through cultural knowledge transmissions of teachings. Mary is a Cree Indigenous grandmother from the North End. Mary is also an advocate for improving the lives of Indigenous families, who has been a powerful advocate for over 40 years. She is the Executive Director of Zoongizi Ode. Sharon is an Indigenous grandmother who lives in the North End with her daughter and grandchildren. Sharon also has a son who has children. Sharon is also a dedicated advocate with Zoongizi Ode with a background in social work. Sharon is a pow-wow dancer, as are other members of her family, after reclaiming her Indigenous culture after experiencing cultural severing due to her Sixties Scoop experience. Kerri is a First Nations woman. She is also a proud grandmother. Kerri was an RCMP officer for 29 years. She has led a very physically active lifestyle, that aided in her recovery after she became disabled from a leg amputation due to a tumor growth. Kerri lives in a small city near Winnipeg. She visits Winnipeg often and she has family who live in the North End. Shayla, like the other women, emphasize the healing that needs to take place for Sixties Scoop survivors. Her and her children live in the North End neighbourhood.

The Mothers

Cheryl, Josephine, and Skylar are all Indigenous mothers. As mothers, the women emphasized the significance of protecting and caring for their children, often discussing barriers to safe accessible urban spaces for their children. Josephine is a stay-at-home mother. She is enrolled in a course to become a pharmacy assistant, which she looked forward to accomplishing. She lives in the North End neighbourhood. Skylar lives in the North End neighbourhood. She is pregnant and therefore she is extra cautious of her safety to protect her

child. Skylar is a strong advocate for supporting single mothers in the neighbourhood who are experiencing poverty. Cheryl is Métis and lives in the south side of Winnipeg. She has four adult children, three young woman and a young son. She works in the field of early childhood education.

Young Indigenous Women Participation

The final participants in the study were representative of the younger generation of participants. Samara is an Indigenous woman from Australia who lives in a south neighbourhood in Winnipeg. She is attending graduate studies at the University of Manitoba. Avalon has lived in the North End neighbourhood the majority of her life. Avalon is engaged to her fiancée and passionate about supporting her extended family to meet their health and wellness needs. Like the other women, Samara and Avalon are strong advocates seeking change to the conditions that bar women and their families from wellness experiences.

The Women who Participated in the Sharing Circle

The Indigenous women in the sharing circle all lived in the North End neighbourhood. Several women were grandmothers and several were mothers, with their caregiving responsibilities at the forefront of their responses regarding the role of gender in women's lives. The women in the sharing circle focused on the barriers they experience to wellness promoting activities on urban land, bringing attention to the realities of their lives in the North End neighbourhood with wellness barriers due to substantial economic and social disparities in the neighbourhood as a result of colonial urban city-making. All the women in the sharing circle were strong advocates for change to support their personal, family and community wellness.

Data Collection Methods

This study employed an informal, flexible, semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A), with questions posed in a conversational manner which is reflective of Indigenous methods (Kovach, 2010). As Smith and Osborn (2012) outlined, semi-structured interviews are an ideal way to collect data whereas “this form of interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants’ responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise” (p. 57). This type of interviewing “facilitates rapport and empathy, allows a greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel areas, and it tends to produce richer data” (Smith & Osborn, 2012, p. 59). The semi-structured interview method also incorporated a conversational method of inquiry. As Kovach (2010) stated:

The conversational method is a means of gathering knowledge found within Indigenous research. The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It involves a dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core. (p. 40).

See Appendix A for the semi-structured interview guide that guided conversations. The interviews and sharing circle were guided by the interview guide and departed from this guide based on what the women to share. There was one sharing circle followed by the option for the participants to meet for a second circle to discuss the findings. Participants did not volunteer for a second sharing circle, reflecting how participants do have limitations in participation and participant time in participating in research must be respected.

I began the first interview using the interview guide, and as the interviews progressed the interview guide was adapted to include emerging themes. Several women began the interview by stating there were topics they wanted to discuss, and in these cases, the women's topics dictated interview questions and guided the conversation. Eight interviews took place in person at a library. One interview was conducted using Zoom, an online platform. The sharing circle took place at a North End neighbourhood community centre. The sharing circle was facilitated by Mary Burton, who provided Indigenous protocols for the sharing circle. The sharing circle began with a meal, followed by a smudge as part of Indigenous protocols for the sharing circle. An honorarium was provided for participation in the study.

The interview and sharing circle were digitally recorded using an audio recorder. All data was removed and downloaded to a password protected computer accessed only by primary researcher. The interviews were approximately 30 to 90 minutes in length and the time of the interview was dictated by the participant. The interviews were transcribed, and the transcription were saved on the primary researcher's password protected computer. Each participant was offered the opportunity to review the findings with their quotes (member checking) to ensure findings accurately reflected what they shared (Auger, 2021; Creswell, 2009). No changes to the findings were requested by the two participants who reviewed the findings.

Interview Consenting Process

Those individuals interested in the study received a copy of the informed consent form as noted above. The informed consent form detailed how participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (i.e., they will receive the honorarium if they withdraw during the study at any time). The consent form was reviewed with the participant prior to the interview and sharing circle. The forms electronically scanned and saved to a password protected

computer. The forms included the primary researcher contact information to enable potential participants to ask questions or clarification about the study and study process. The forms were kept in a locked cabinet that only the primary researcher had access. These files were destroyed at the finalization of the study (i.e., when the dissertation was approved as completed).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was first guided by Smith's and Osborn's (2012) Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) framework, which involves the researcher engaging interpretatively with the transcripts. The focus of the analysis is about participants' meanings, while the researcher learns about their mental and social world "obtained through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation" (Smith & Osborn, 2012, p. 66). IPA aims to explore personal experiences from the perspective of the individual as opposed to aiming to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself (Smith and Osborn, 2012). IPA emphasizes analysis is a dynamic process with an active role of the researcher in the interpretation process (Smith and Osborn, 2012). However, challenges arose in utilizing this analysis framework in terms of interpreting the life worlds of Indigenous women, when I, the researcher, is a non-Indigenous woman. Questions arose of how can I actually interpret or know what these life world experiences are from my own positioning? These questions that arose through the process produced data analysis as an ongoing, iterative process of analysis, interpretation, and reflection on the interpretation. Drawing from the point that I am not an Indigenous woman, who therefore cannot not draw from my worldview or my own experiences in interpretation because I do not have the same culturally derived experiences, I questioned if the interpretations accurately reflect the words and experiences shared by the women from their

quotes. This meant the analysis was revisited and re-analyzed several times through this learning and reflection process over several months.

The final analysis was derived from returning to the raw data of quotes after a period of time had passed to engage in interpretation from a different analysis framework. The final analysis framework was informed by the MACIW's (2023a) IGBA+ lens. Interpretation of the quotes was filtered through the knowledge of Indigenous women's experiences that was discussed in the broader MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ toolkit. This alignment enabled interpretation to be informed by other Indigenous women's experiences and knowledge derived from MACIW's (2023a) toolkit, rather than focusing on my own interpretations that were drawing from my non-Indigenous positioning. The final analysis framework was guided by the question, what does the women teach us from the words they shared about their experiences? This questioning shifted interpretation to focus on the words the women shared as a way of teaching, refocusing interpretation to centre on women's knowledge as experts and as educators. The analysis was maintained as a reflection of what the women shared in the context of their lives that was shared with me in conversations. My analysis aim was to determine what was important to the women as a point of insight and significance in the context of women's lives, and to focus on these aspects as the key findings drawing from MACIW's IGBA+ lens.

Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women's Indigenous Gender Based Analysis Plus Lens

The analysis was viewed through the lens of the B.C. Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women's (MACIW) Indigenous gender-based analysis plus (IGBA+) lens, which is pivotal in analyzing Indigenous women's engagement with urban trails, parks, biking and nature experiences and the barriers that are faced in equitable access, drawing from Indigenous

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

women's knowledges. It is important to clarify MACIW's IGBA+ lens was created by Indigenous women. In partnership with MACIW, Chastity Davis, member of Tla'amin Nation, and Dr. Natalie Clark, with interconnected identities including her kinship with Métis and Secwepemc Nations, co-created the IGBA+ toolkit that provides the lens. The MACIW IGBA+ lens was developed through gatherings with Indigenous women who created the IGBA+ lens drawing from their own knowledges and experiences. As described by MACIW (2023a), applying the IGBA+ lens meaningfully contributes "to achieving Indigenous women's social justice, equity, and optimal health and wellness which will lead to an overall increased quality of life for Indigenous women" (p. 8). The IGBA+ lens begins with focusing on Indigenous women prior to colonial contact. As Indigenous women's advocate Sarah Robinson stated:

Prior to contact, the impression that I have from families and communities is that our women were loved, held up, respected, honoured as life givers. And honoured beyond life giving – honoured for who we were and who we are outside of our ability to give life to the future generations which is an important part and aspect of woman hood but isn't the only thing. — Sarah Robinson, 2019 (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9).

The IGBA+ lens is founded on understanding the impact of colonialism upon Indigenous women in stating:

The dominant narrative in Canada, is largely negative when it discusses Indigenous women. The dominant narrative is informed by colonial, Euro-Christian ideologies that have been woven into Canada's Constitution through legislation in the Indian Act and subtly and overtly informs Canadian's perspectives on Indigenous women. However, prior to the confederation of Canada over 150+ years ago, Indigenous women were

perceived very differently and held a variety of leadership roles in their communities (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9).

This statement emphasizes the traditional roles Indigenous women hold and the significance of their roles in community in resistance to colonial rule. The imposition of gendered racism through the Indian Act, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and embedded in the Child and Family Services (CFS) welfare system, was fundamental to the colonization process in Canada (MACIW, 2023a). As MACIW (2023a) emphasized:

It is equally important to understand the gender-binary that patriarchy and colonization imposed on Indigenous communities. “The imposition of patriarchy and racism through the Indian Act and residential schools was key to colonization in Canada. The Indian Act legislated Indigenous rights through a gender binary which replaced culturally distinct understandings of gender, erasing gender diversity from legal and policy frameworks while imposing a hierarchy which devalues women and girls” (Barkaskas & Hunt, 2018, p.3). (p. 9)

The IGBA+ lens incorporates the view of how, “before contact, many Indigenous communities were matrilineal, meaning that leadership roles and responsibilities were passed through the mother's line. In many communities, although the Chiefs and leaders were male, they were often chosen by women, who could also remove their titles if misused” (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9). Among the diversity of Indigenous communities, gender roles were largely seen as equal and complementary (MACIW, 2023a). “Indigenous women's roles included the highly revered role of motherhood, which was not always dictated by biological motherhood but was seen as a position of leadership and responsibility for nurturing and providing care for community members and their guests” (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9). Indigenous women's roles and

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

responsibilities were respected and considered equal to those of Indigenous men (MACIW, 2023a). “It is important to understand how Indigenous women were perceived, revered, and respected in their communities. They were integral to the survival and evolution of their communities, and this was acknowledged and respected” (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9). “Indigenous women had important roles and responsibilities that contributed to the overall health, wellness, and prosperity of their people, Lands, and ways of being and knowing” (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9).

To utilize the IGBA+ lens means to “analyze socio-cultural and historical realities resulting from colonization and systemic racism that has resulted in violence toward Indigenous women” (MACIW, 2023a, p. 16). As MACIW (2023a) emphasized:

Indigenous women are the traditional leaders and Matriarchs of their communities. Since contact from Europeans, Indigenous women have been raped, beaten, and killed for the very reason that they are women and leaders. This violence was and continues to be committed against Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people to acquire and control lands (MACIW, 2023, p. 5)

The IGBA+ lens brings acute attention to how Indigenous women's significant gendered relationships with the Land has been the target of violence because the colonial state views Land as something to acquire as a valuable economic resource, while Indigenous women have stood as protectors of the Land. As the IGBA+ lens is focused, it is also important to recognize that Indigenous women and girls have a rich history of resistance and survivance, with their embodied, intellectual, and spiritual practices contributing to thriving communities (MACIW, 2023). The MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ analysis weaved in the following principles of the lens: 1) holistic and intersectional that honours diversity of knowledge, wisdom, ways of being and knowing; and 2) centre Indigenous women's, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse voices,

knowledge, wisdom, and lived experiences at every stage of the process (MACIW, 2023a).

Centring Indigenous women's voices, knowledge, wisdom and lived experiences at every stage of the process means careful reflection of analysis to avoid the centring of my own researcher-positioned interpretations of what was shared. This meant reviewing my interpretations over time, reflecting on my positionality and how my own understandings may influence analysis and how this must be avoided. This meant analysis became a circular process of revisiting the analysis, critically analyzing my interpretations, and drawing back to what the women shared as the focal point of the findings drawing from the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ lens, rather than focusing on my interpretations, which would depart from what the women shared because I am not an Indigenous women and my interpretations are therefore not embedded in Indigenous women's experiences.

The application of the IGBA+ lens in analysis about and with Indigenous women is referred to as entering a berry patch to pick berries. As MACIW (2023a) clarified, "each berry patch is unique and will require you to embody the suggested characteristics of curiosity, openness, adaptability, reciprocity, and relationality" (p. 6). Questions arise in entering the berry patch to ensure work about and with Indigenous women is done in a good way such as what are the protocols, guidelines, and practices that need to be followed when you are there to ensure proper preservation? (MACIW, 2023a, p. 6). "When you are picking how do you ensure that you are walking gently and following protocols to ensure the preservation of the patch after you leave? Is there a certain way to collect the berries—gently so as to not crush the delicate nature or with two hands to ensure they are done deliberately and with care? How are they cared for once picked?" (MACIW, 2023a, p. 6).

In understanding data analysis akin to entering a berry patch while considering these questions, my conversations about data analysis with Mary and Sharon, who formed the study Indigenous women's advisory committee, was at the forefront of my mind. Mary and Sharon met with me throughout the development of study. However, as the study progressed, Mary and Sharon did not have available time to review in detail the findings nor the final draft of the discussion, conclusion and recommendations. In respecting these time constraints, Mary, Sharon and I discussed how best for me to complete the study that honours the women. Mary and Sharon granted me their trust that I would write about the women in a respectful way reflecting what they shared with me. The preservation of what was shared by the women meant my analysis could not stray to my own interpretations, drawing from my positioning. As a non-Indigenous woman, I do not have personal experiences that directly relates to Indigenous women. To ensure the preservation of what women shared for this study, constant reflexive reflections had to be made regarding my analysis. In reflecting on the berry patch questions, further questions arose of: am I straying from the women's words in my own interpretations? Is my western academic analysis training straying from the foundation of Indigenous ways of knowing that honours Indigenous women's voices, as outlined in the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ toolkit? The process of data analysis meant revisiting the analysis over time, seeking to ensure that my interpretations did not stray from the words of the women. To align my analysis with what was shared by the women, I drew from MACIW's (2023a) IGBA+ lens to guide the analysis, drawing from an analysis framework that was created by Indigenous women.

The MACIW (2023a) analysis framework and process is supported by the flexibility of IPA analysis, whereas Smith and Osborn (2012) clarified, "there is no single, definitive way to do IPA analysis" and researchers may adapt methods to their own particular way of working

rather than adhering to a prescriptive methodology (p. 54). As Smith and Osborn (2012) also emphasized, “it is also important to remember that qualitative analysis is inevitably a personal process, and the analysis itself is the interpretative work which the investigator does at each of the stages” (p. 67). Hence, I utilized Smith and Osborn’s (2012) guide for analysis, while also incorporating notes that I took throughout the process as part of my reflexive process and as a form of bracketing (i.e., setting aside of one’s own beliefs and assumptions that may influence analysis). Smith and Osborn (2012) advised taking an individual case study approach where the research takes a detailed account of the transcript of a single interview before proceeding to other cases (i.e., interview transcripts) which is described as an idiographic approach (i.e., focusing on a unique single case). Analysis was an iterative process of reflecting from one interview to the next, using a circular process of analysis. In utilizing a phenomenological approach drawing from Indigenous methods, theme development was centred on the premise that “themes are not interpreted as individual strands; rather, they are braided in keeping with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and worldviews” (Watson et al., 2022, p. 113). In this way, the different themes were braided together (i.e., clustered) as shared clustered themes that arose through analysis. The following table charts Smith and Osborn’s (2012) analysis framework used to analyze the data. Microsoft Word was used to compile and chart the quotes for analysis.

Smith and Osborn’s IPA Analysis Steps (see Smith and Osborn, 2012, p. 67-74)	Overview of Analysis Process
<p>Step 1. Looking for Themes in the First Case (Interview)</p> <p>Smith and Osborn’s Guided Steps: Read and re-read the transcript. Use the margin to note what is interesting and significant.</p> <p>As you move through the transcript, you are likely to comment on similarities and differences,</p>	<p>At this stage, I began with the first interview (case) transcript. I read and re-read the transcript, making notes of points of interest in the data while reflecting on the research questions.</p> <p>I then split the transcript with a column margin. In the subsequent reading of the transcript, I highlighted data into phrases</p>

<p>echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person is saying.</p> <p>There is no requirement to divide the text into meaning units and assign a comment for each unit. At this stage, the entire transcript is treated as data, and no attempt is made to omit or select particular passages for special attention. At the same time, there is no requirement for every turn to generate themes. The number of emerging themes reflects the richness of the particular passage.</p> <p>Then one returns to the beginning of the transcript, and the margin is used to document emerging theme titles. Here the initial notes are transformed into concise phrases which aim to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text. This transformation of initial notes into themes is continued through the whole transcript.</p>	<p>(quotes) and noted in the column emerging themes and subthemes, gathering themes derived from the quotes.</p>
<p>Step Two. Connecting the Themes</p> <p>The emergent themes are listed, and one looks for connections between them. So, in the initial list, the order provided is chronological – it is based on the sequence with which they came up in the transcript.</p> <p>The next stage involves a more analytical or theoretical ordering, as the researcher tries to make sense of the connections between themes which are emerging. Some of the themes will cluster together, and some may emerge as superordinate concepts.</p> <p>The next stage is to produce a table of the themes, ordered coherently. Thus, the above process will have identified some clusters of themes which capture most strongly the respondent’s concerns on this particular topic.</p> <p>The table lists the themes which go with each superordinate theme, and an identifier is added to each instance to aid the organization of the analysis. During this process, certain themes may be dropped: those which neither fit well in the emerging structure nor are very rich in evidence within the transcript.</p>	<p>I engaged in identifying themes directly from the data (quotes). I first identified themes into bundles that aligned with the research questions. I reviewed the list of key themes and identified subthemes within the data, reordering the themes as they clustered together or stood apart. I then created a table, ordering the themes per topic with highlighted subthemes within each overarching theme. Quotes were extracted as part of the table, aligning with the themes and subthemes. This process involved a cycle of drafts of analysis, returning to the raw data (i.e., quotes) and refining the analysis with the purpose of ensuring the interpretation reflected what the women shared from their words by drawing on the principles and framework of the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ lens. These findings were edited through numerous readings, where key overarching themes were refined from reflexive reflections drawing from the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ lens.</p>

<p>Step Three. Continuing the Analysis with Other Cases</p> <p>Once each transcript has been analysed by the interpretative process, a final table of superordinate themes is constructed.</p> <p>Consonant with the iterative process of IPA, as the analysis continued, earlier transcripts were reviewed in the light of this new superordinate theme, and instances from those earlier transcripts were included in the ongoing analysis.</p>	<p>Review of transcripts took place comparing the first analyzed transcripts with following transcripts through an iterative process.</p> <p>Quotes were compiled under themes. A process of a series of reflections on the quotes, while contemplating what the women shared about what was important to them in the context of their lives, over several months of reflection was conducted. MACIW’s IGBA+ lens guided the final analysis process and findings.</p>
<p>Step Four. Writing Up.</p> <p>The final section is concerned with moving from the final themes to a writeup and final statement outlining the meanings inherent in the participants’ experience. The division between analysis and writing up is, to a certain extent, a false one, in that the analysis will be expanded during the writing phase.</p>	<p>In the final stage of analysis, a written account of the analysis findings was compiled under thematic headings. The thematic headings were reviewed and clustered under overarching themes. The overarching themes were charted with associated quotes from the data with highlighted subthemes within the clusters. These overarching themes and associated quotes were written in a final analysis document of the findings drawing from the IGBA+ lens and in the context of the lives that the women shared with me.</p>

Ethics

This research follows the Canadian Tri-Council Policy guidelines for the ethical conduct for research involving humans with particular adherence to research involving Indigenous Peoples. As Kovach (2010) elaborated with research conducted with Indigenous communities, there are specific ethical guidelines that include a mutually respectful research relationship; that the research benefit the community; that appropriate permission and informed consent is sought; that the research is non-exploitive and non-extractive; and that there is respect for community

Indigenous Women’s Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

ethics and protocol which is also outlined in the Canadian Tri-Council Policy for ethical research with Indigenous Peoples. The study was designed to provide individual autonomy, free and informed consent and the right to withdraw from the study and any time without any type of penalty (i.e., participants will receive their honorarium), and provide privacy and confidentiality (e.g., using pseudonyms). The study proceeded when research ethics approval was gained by the University of Manitoba Bannatyne Campus Research Ethics Board.

Principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP)[®] were incorporated into the ethics framework of this study. As Kovach (2009) outlined, OCAP[®] principles were first coined by the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey that focused on quantitative research on on-reserve First Nations communities, with applicability for other Indigenous communities. The following table highlights OCAP[®] principles and how these principles were incorporated into this qualitative study (see Kovach, 2009, p. 144-145).

Table. 1 OCAP[®] Principles Incorporated into Study

Principle	Incorporation of Principle into Study
Ownership. Ownership assumes that a community owns cultural knowledge or data collectively, so a community’s consent is required to use its knowledge.	Consent was required from each participant at the beginning of the interview and the sharing circle, that detailed intended use of the knowledge gained from the study. Each participant was provided with the opportunity to review their data derived from the transcripts and enabled to edit or remove their data at this stage.
Control. The principle of control asserts First Nations people have a right to control various aspects of the research on them, including developing research frameworks, data management, and dissemination.	A Women’s Study Advisory Committee was a part of the study that comprised of participants in the study. I met with the committee at various times throughout the study development to receive feedback on the study framework and analysis stages. Protocols were developed for the sharing circle drawing from Indigenous ways of doing research (e.g., offering of smudging prior to the sharing circle, all participants sharing a meal prior to the sharing circle). Dissemination activities were discussed and determined along with the advisory

	committee. Data management included the review of findings by the advisory committee whereas their feedback was incorporated into the data analysis process.
Access. Access is the ability for Indigenous to retrieve and examine data that concern them and their communities.	Participants in the study had the opportunity to review the findings from the study. All participants will be provided with an access link to the final dissertation stored on the University of Manitoba portal. Participants who are interested will be provided with knowledge dissemination outcomes (i.e., reports).
Possession. Possession refers to the actual possession of data, “although not a condition of ownership per se, possession details a mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected” (Schnarch, 2004, p. 81).	Each participant will be provided the option of receiving a copied dissertation from the University of Manitoba dissertation portal. Each participant who is interested will be offered copies of advocacy reports that were produced from the findings of the study.

CARE principles were also incorporated into the ethical framework for this study.

Drawing on the First Nations principles of OCAP®, Indigenous Data Sovereignty networks in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, as well as Indigenous scholars, leaders, and allies, determined that there was an urgent need to develop global principles for the governance of Indigenous data, and through collaboration CARE (collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, ethics) principles were developed (Carroll et al., 2020). The following chart outlines how CARE principles were incorporated into the ethics framework of this study (see Carroll et al., 2020, p. 6).

Table. 2 CARE Principles Incorporated into the Study

Principle	Incorporation of Principle into Study
Collective Benefit. Collective benefit means inclusive development and innovation, improved governance and citizen engagement, and the realization of equitable outcomes	Inclusive development of this study included a women’s study advisory committee consisting of several participants from the study who hold community leadership roles. The data analysis process included

Indigenous Women’s Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

	<p>opportunities for participants to review how their data was utilized in the findings. Equitable outcomes included the use of data in dissemination activities that aimed to contribute to advocacy for women’s rights for the whole community of women.</p>
<p>Authority to Control. This principal centers on access to data that supports Indigenous governance and self-determination, such as active involvement in data stewardship decisions.</p>	<p>Each participant had the opportunity to access their data by the provision of findings that included how the data was used in study. This member checking stage provided the participants with control over how their data was utilized in the study. Permission to utilize the data in dissemination activities was in collaboration with the study advisory committee.</p>
<p>Responsibility. This principle is premised on nurturing respectful relationships in the research process. Aspects of the relationship include investing in capacity development, increasing community data capabilities, and embedding data within Indigenous languages and cultures. Pursuing these goals fulfills the ultimate responsibility of supporting Indigenous data that advances Indigenous Peoples’ self-determination and collective benefit.</p>	<p>Throughout the research process, respectful relationships were maintained with the participants and advisory committee through meetings. Capacity development included developing reports to support participant advocacy that contributes to the collective benefit of the community of participants.</p>
<p>Ethics. Ethics includes research that is conducted that minimize harm, maximize benefits, promote justice and allow for future use. Paramount to ethics in data practices is representation and participation of Indigenous Peoples, who must be the ones to assess benefits, harms, and potential future uses based on community values and ethics.</p>	<p>The study development was in collaboration with the advisory committee through several meetings, who reviewed and approved the study methodology and methods and analysis of findings. Potential future uses of the data were determined by the advisory committee based on community values and ethics. Indigenous women’s rights and pathways to justice formed the conclusions of the study to maximize participant benefits from the study.</p>

Adding to these ethical principles, the study was guided by Indigenous researcher Margaret Kovach’s (2009) guidelines for ethical research with Indigenous Peoples that encompasses a relational approach that is built upon the collective value of giving back to the

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness community. In this way, the study outcomes focused on honouring the relationships with participants and what they shared as a means to develop a rights-based advocacy of the findings that centred on Indigenous women's justice.

Report of Outcomes

The outcomes will also be reported in the completion of the thesis which will be submitted to the University of Manitoba online thesis portal. Reports will be provided to interested participants and may be shared with Indigenous community organizations and partners who can benefit from the findings, such as Zoongizi Ode for their advocacy work.

Recipients of Outcomes

The recipients of the outcomes will focus on North End neighbourhood organizations and Indigenous women-serving organizations in the inner-city and the women who visit these urban spaces. Recipients may also include academic recipients such as through publications and conferences. Outcomes may also be shared with governments as part of the study advocacy outcomes.

Permissions to Share Intellectual Property and Publish

As part of the consent process, participants were informed of how their intellectual property may be used from study findings, with intentions for study dissemination discussed (e.g., advocacy reports, academic publications, conferences).

Significance of Research and Future Research Potential

The significance of this research is a contribution to supporting the wellness of Indigenous women in urban contexts from a rights-based justice lens. This research also responds to a dearth in research about Indigenous women's urban trail, park bike and nature experiences and how they contribute wellness defined by Indigenous knowledges which is

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

particularly important when considering the growing number of Indigenous women residing in urban centres. The research findings will be applicable across various disciplines with future research potential including health, wellness, recreation, social justice, and urban planning drawing from Indigenous women's knowledges focused on Indigenous women's rights.

CHAPTER THREE

CENTRING THE FINDINGS FROM INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGES

Introduction

The findings presented in chapters four to six are positioned around the guiding research questions: What are the barriers to Indigenous women's equitable access to urban trail, park experiences and bike use (chapter four)? What are Indigenous women's experiences of urban trail, park, biking experiences and how do these experiences impact wellness (chapter five)? How does nature experiences impact Indigenous women's wellness (chapter six)? And what role does gender have for Indigenous women's equitable access and use of urban trails, parks, and biking? With the inquiry into the role of gender in equitable access, the role of gender is weaved throughout the findings, showing how Indigenous women's experiences are inseparable from their gendered roles as caregivers and protectors of their families, communities and the land.

The study's Indigenous women's advisory committee positioned the findings to begin with barriers to Indigenous women's equitable access to urban trail, park and bike use embedded in ongoing land dispossession. The significance of barriers faced by Indigenous women was apparent in the sharing circle where predominant discussions focused on safety and barriers to equitable urban land use that impacts overall wellness experiences. Women who took part in interviews added to the findings about barriers to urban land use, collectively bringing forth the colonial and gendered context of Indigenous women's lives wherein racism and misogyny intersect to form extensive barriers to Indigenous women's wellness and access to land. The resulting structural violence toward Indigenous women and entrenched poverty in the predominantly Indigenous community in the North End neighbourhood reflects the damaging colonial state in Indigenous women's lives. These barriers amplify how gender, specifically being women, intersect with race and culture of being Indigenous, that form the targeting of Indigenous women in the colonial state. The gendered violence toward Indigenous women

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

becomes apparent as an attempt to restrict the power Indigenous women hold as traditional Matriarchs and protectors of the land. The role of gender also arises in Chapter five, detailing how Indigenous women's roles as caregivers and protectors of their children and communities dictate access to urban land centred on being able to ensure safety for their children and grandchildren. Chapter six delves into Indigenous women's experiences of park, trail, and bike use and how these experiences impact wellness. Although this chapter details important findings of the immense value of these urban land experiences, such as how park use provides places for cultural reclamation, findings about the wellness benefits were curtailed by the fact that women stated *safe* trails in the North End is non-existent and park use was often deemed unsafe. This was further compounded by barriers to access due to significant lack of investment in trails and parks in the North End (e.g., lack of safety lighting, lack of maintenance and removal environmental hazards) bringing back the substantial findings related to barriers to urban land use that impact Indigenous women's wellness. Chapters five and six again highlights the role of gender in Indigenous women's lives in that women seek to maintain roles as cultural educators and sources of cultural knowledge transmission, as well as being protectors of their families, pointing to the importance of safe urban sites where teachings connected to the land can take place. Chapter six details the significance of nature experiences for Indigenous women's wellness, revealing the power of nature as a source of protection, a source of emotional, mental and spiritual wellness and founded on significant relationships that honours kinship with the natural world. Here, the role of gender is pronounced in how Indigenous women are protectors and stewards of nature that contributes to wellness from a gendered perspective.

Quotes from the women detailed in the findings bring forth the themes and subthemes that form the chapters of the findings. To honour the women's voices and respect their choice, their names are used with their associated quotes, aside from Skylar who used a pseudonym.

This introduction (chapter four) begins with Indigenous women's concepts of wellness, illuminating multidimensional Indigenous views of wellness. Women's accounts of cultural knowledge transmission are highlighted, revealing how Indigenous knowledge transmission is gendered while bringing forth Indigenous women's roles as cultural educators. This chapter concludes with women's strength-based accounts of the North End neighbourhood, balancing perspectives of the North End in the findings that focuses on the strength of community relationships in the neighbourhood, as Mary detailed as "a true community".

This introduction to the findings begins with a presentation of an overview of organizing categories (i.e., chapters), and supporting themes derived from the use of the IPA analytical approach (see table one below) detailed in the methodology chapter of this thesis. The analysis of findings was informed by the MACIW's (2023a) IGBA+ lens. It is important to also distinguish the findings centre on the words of the women from the presented quotes, rather than focusing on an interpretation of these words shared. Interpretation contributes to the women's words only when reflecting the context of women's lives shared in conversation. Interpretation centred on analyzing the findings drawing from MACIW's IGBA+ lens, created and informed by Indigenous women. The findings presented from the analysis weaved in the following MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ principles: 1) "holistic and intersectional that honours diversity of knowledge, wisdom, ways of being and knowing" (p. 8); 2) "centre Indigenous women's, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse voices, knowledge, wisdom, and lived experiences at every stage of the process" (p. 8) (MACIW, 2023a). A holistic and intersectional lens that honours diversity of

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

knowledge, wisdom, and ways of being and knowing means understanding that what was shared by the women embodies diversity among women who carry their own unique knowledge, wisdom and ways of being and knowing, which points to avoiding generalizations from the findings. Centring Indigenous women's voices, knowledge, wisdom and lived experiences at every stage of the process meant presenting the findings focusing on the words of women in quotes, rather than a focus on interpretation. Interpretation is a supplement to the quotes that emphasize the significance of words shared by the women describing their experiences and lives. The themes arose from key analytical questions of: what can be learned from the women in what they are sharing and what are the implications of what women shared in understanding Indigenous women and their wellness? These questions were guided by drawing from the women's experiences in the context of the settler colonial state, a foundational aspect of the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ lens that focuses on:

- “To implement IGBA+ means to analyze socio-cultural and historical realities resulting from colonization and systemic racism” that contributes to Indigenous women's marginalization (p. 7).
- “Indigenous women are the traditional leaders and Matriarchs of their communities. Since contact from Europeans, Indigenous women have been raped, beaten, and killed for the very reason that they are women and leaders. This violence was and continues to be committed against Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people to acquire and control lands” (p. 5)
- “Prior to contact, many Indigenous communities were matrilineal which means that the leadership roles and responsibilities would be passed through the mother's line” (p. 9).

Indigenous Women’s Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

- “Indigenous women’s roles included the highly revered role of motherhood which wasn’t always dictated by biological motherhood but was seen as a position of leadership and responsibility for nurturing and providing care for the community members and their guests” (p. 9).
- “It is also important that Indigenous women were integral to the survival and evolution of their communities and that was acknowledged and respected” (p. 9).
- Indigenous women “resisted the patriarchy because it threatened to undermine their socio-economic autonomy and because it threatened the socio-cultural cohesion of their communities” (p. 11).

As the berry patch is entered through this presentation of findings, it is important for the words of the women shared in quotes be reflected upon as the source of knowledge of Indigenous women’s experiences.

Table 1. Chapters and Themes of the Findings

<p>Chapter Three: Centring the Findings From Indigenous Women’s Knowledge</p> <p>Recognizing and Understanding the Diversity Among Indigenous Women Blood Memory: Gendered Knowledge Passed Down from Ancestors</p> <p>Indigenous Women’s Wholistic Community Concepts of Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Women’s Wellness Requires Gendered Social Services <p>Strength Based Perspectives of the North End</p>
<p>Chapter Four: Barriers to Indigenous Women’s Equitable Access to Parks, Trails and Biking</p> <p>Structural-Societal Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Women’s Land Dispossession: “We’re not given a place to heal” • The Damage from Colonial Systems Separating Children from Families • Racism: “Racism is out there for sure” • The Impact of Misogyny and Sexual Violence

- The Injustice of Indigenous Women’s Pervasive Safety Issues

Socio-economic Barriers:

- “Poverty is the Number One Barrier” to Indigenous Women’s Wellness
- Barriers to Biking- “Bikes just get stolen”
- Homeless Encampments- “A big concern”
- Lack of Investment in the North End- “There's a huge stigma with people about the North End”
- Biking Infrastructure Barriers: “We don’t have enough bike lanes in the North End”
- Active Transportation Barriers: “You can’t get to them [good parks]”

Chapter Five: Indigenous Women’s Experiences of Trails, Parks, Biking and Wellness

Biking as a Catalyst for Wholistic Wellness

- Biking Empowers Women- “It gives me a sense of freedom”
- Decolonizing Biking- Reclaiming Healthy Lifestyles
- Family Biking a Priority- “Make it More Kid Friendly”
- Gender Specific Community Bike Shops Supports Women’s Biking

Trails: Accessible Trail Use Can Promote Indigenous Women’s Wellness

Reclaiming Urban Land: Parks as Sites of Cultural Reclamation

- Parks as a Place for Sixties’ Scoop Survivor Grandmother’s Family Time
- Rematriation: Parks as Place for Women’s Full Moon Ceremonies
- Parks as Places to Connect with Nature

Chapter Six: Nature Experiences and Their Impact on Indigenous Women’s Wellness

- Nature and Mental and Spiritual Wellness
- Nature as a Wellness Reserve from Urban Life
- Relational Nature Relationships- The Significance of Offerings
- Nature as a Source of Spiritual Protection and Medicines
- Connection with Water-“We honour water as women, we are water carriers”
- Kinship Relationships with Animals Fosters Wellness
- Indigenous Women’s Caring Stewardship with Nature
- Community Gardens as Sites for Cultural Knowledge Transmission

Recognizing and Understanding the Diversity Among Indigenous Women

It is important in understanding Indigenous women’s experiences that although there are similarities among women, there is also great cultural diversity. As Mary described:

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

It's like I tell everybody all the time, every tribe has its own culture, its own teachings, its own traditions. Where I come from in Norway House, our teachings are different than say, people from Sandy Bay. They're all different. Sandy Bay is Ojibwe. Norway House is Cree. So the Cree have different teaching and culture, and Ojibwe have different teachings and culture.

Mary elaborated by explaining the diversity of Indigenous cultures in the North End neighbourhood:

There's Sioux, there's Ojibwe, there's Cree, there's Blackfoot, there's Chippewa from the US, there's people from the US with different types of tribes and cultures and traditions. It's like whenever I go and do talks that have to do with culture and traditions, I always use that as an opening statement because my teachings could be different than someone else's teachings.

Mary's teachings about the diversity among Indigenous Peoples points to the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ principle of understanding Indigenous experiences that is intersectional that honours the diversity of knowledge, wisdom, ways of being and knowing. Mary emphasizes that Indigenous knowledges and teachings are distinct among Indigenous Peoples and this diversity thrives in Indigenous neighbourhoods in the North End community. This distinction among Indigenous Peoples extends to the distinctions among Indigenous women in this study, who each carry their own cultural worldviews, knowledge and teachings. Mary's wisdom about the diversity of Indigenous Peoples guides the findings, although similarities among the women in this study arose, these similarities remain accentuated by personal knowledges and experiences.

Blood Memory: Gendered Knowledge Passed Down from Ancestors

Cultural understandings of Indigenous women's wellness extends to the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission, which previously established as an important facet of supporting Indigenous women's wellness. These findings came forth in women's descriptions of blood memory passed down through maternal lineage with Kerri describing:

I have blood memories. There's things I remember. There's things like when I go to ceremonies, I've never been to ceremonies, but hey, I seem to recall this is what we're supposed to be doing. So yeah, so it's kind of cool.

Mary also described blood memories:

A lot of the times the stuff that I know was never taught to me, for some reason, I just know it's part of my blood memory and my DNA. Blood memory is the way I understand blood memory to happen is that it's your DNA, it's built within you. Our ancestors did all of these things and that memory of what they did is in our DNA. It's a part of us. It's not something that we need to learn because it's already here. We just have to tap into it

Kerri went on to explain that blood memories and dreams are an Indigenous trait whereas ancestral knowledge is passed down through the female lineage:

And I know in my family, it's the firstborn daughters in our line all have these dreams. Just like, just extremely vivid dreams. Like in my dreams, I can smell, I can taste, I can actually know distances. And I'll, and I'll keep having that one dream. Until like I say, until I've figured it out. And my daughter, she has the same recollection, as well. So it's passed down. Just the female line.

Mary and Kerri draw attention to how intergenerational knowledge transmission is a gendered process while knowledge is stored and passed down through ancestral DNA. These

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

gendered positionings of knowledge transmission are reflective of MACIW's (2023a) IGBA+ lens focusing on how historically Indigenous women are the traditional Matriarchs of their communities who possess matrilineal knowledge. The significance of Indigenous women as Matriarchs in society also means leadership roles and responsibilities are passed through the mother's line (MACIW, 2023a). Mary and Kerri bring attention to this significance in their own experiences, being living carriers of knowledge enriched by their matrilineal ancestors. This finding points to importance of gendered gatherings of women where knowledge and teachings can be shared as well as the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission through the mother's lineage.

Indigenous Women's Wholistic Community Concepts of Wellness

When discussing understandings of wellness and how wellness is defined among Indigenous women, important themes arose that highlights how wellness definitions are culturally informed from wholistic models. As Mary described:

Well, the thing is you're talking about green space, you're talking about bike trails and all of those things that affect a person's physical health. But what that also affects is their mental health as well. It also affects their spiritual health. It's not just physical. It affects the physical, the emotional, the mental, and the spiritual. Those things affect all four quadrants of who you are. And if there isn't enough of those things, you're going to be ill.

Mary's reflection emphasizes the multidimensional aspects of Indigenous models of wellness that encompass the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Mary premises that although physical health is important, they are interconnected with other aspects of being, extending to the spiritual realm. Spiritual wellness is often disregarded as an aspect of urban land activities that contribute to wellness, as Mary pointed out, with dominant perspectives typically

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

focuses on the physical realm. Mary distinguished that often exploration into the wellness benefits of using green spaces focuses on physical wellness benefits, yet emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of wellness are interconnected with the physical dimension of wellness. Mary drew attention to Indigenous understandings of wellness from this reflection. Mary also emphasizes that there must be a balance between these realms of wellness where each aspect is nurtured in maintaining wellness, if not illness will follow. Adding to Indigenous women's cultural understandings of wellness from a gendered perspective, Mary also incorporated the significance of how women's wellness also encompasses the wellness of family and community wellness in stating:

I think from a woman's perspective, I find that it is, my wellness is not as important me as my grandchildren's wellness or as my community's wellness. Making sure that my grandchildren know the medicines, know how to find them, know how to pick them, making sure that they know how to take care of their mental health and physical health.

Here, Mary centres Indigenous women's wellness as interrelated with family and community wellness. Mary brings forth traditional Indigenous women's roles of mothering and caring from a position of leadership and responsibility which reflects MACIW's (2023a) understanding of these roles, whereas teaching younger generations about medicines is a foundational aspect of Indigenous women's cultural responsibility. Mary's inclusion of teaching medicines to her grandchildren signifies the importance of Matriarchal land-based teachings in Indigenous women's wellness models. Mary is reinstating MACIW's (2023a) perspective whereas Indigenous women are Land-based educators as essential for the survival and evolution of their families and communities (MACIW, 2023a). The focus on community reflects how Mary is maintaining traditional Indigenous women's roles and responsibilities that continue to

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

contribute “to the overall health, wellness, and prosperity of their people, Lands, and ways of being and knowing” (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9).

Sharon added, “for me, wellness is having my diabetes under control, living a healthy life, exercise, healthy relationships, financial security is all part of that.” Sharon’s aspects of wellness drew attention to how wellness includes managing health conditions where a healthy lifestyle and exercise contributes to this management. The importance of exercise brings attention to the importance of physical wellness that contributes to a healthy life. The importance of healthy relationships reflects Indigenous cultural significance in that relationships are foundational for personal and community wellness. This focus on relationships reflects what the MACIW (2023a) lens highlights in stating Indigenous women’s mothering responsibilities includes nurturing community members through healthy relationships. Sharon’s focus on healthy relationships reflects this nurturing role of Indigenous women. Healthy relationships are particularly important among the women, including Sharon, who are Sixties Scoop survivors whose family relationships were harmed from family separation. Sharon’s addition of financial security as part of wellness points to the importance of socio-economic aspects that impact wellness. Financial security is a way to lower emotional and mental burdens that financial insecurity produces. The inclusion of financial security is particularly significant for Indigenous women, whose financial security was greatly disrupted by colonial tactics against Indigenous women to marginalize Indigenous women in society (MACIW, 2023a). The Indian Act was a powerful tool to marginalize Indigenous women economically and socially. Indigenous women today continue to be marginalized, structured by misogyny and racism in colonial society that produces conditions of oppressive poverty among Indigenous women (MACIW, 2023a).

Indigenous Women's Wellness Requires Gendered Social Services

Adding to gendered models of wellness, the women in the study also emphasized the importance of gendered social services to support their wellness. For example, Skylar described how in her area of the North End neighbourhood there is a particular lack of mother's resources, women's resources, low-income resources, women's shelters, walk in clinics, food banks and community fridges, that all impede women's wellness. Skylar stated, "there needs to be more centres for women that want to go back to school, but also have access to child care, all in one. With a lot of single parents, single moms want to go back to school, but then they have to wait for child care. But then the waiting lists are two years long." As she explained, "we need more of these resources to support women, there is nothing where I live." Josephine also added this sentiment, stating where she lived "in that area we have nothing, no women's centres. We need more support for women." Josephine advocated, "we need a community centre in the Northern part of the North End, near Inkster, past Mountain Avenue, there's nothing." Shayla also added, we have nothing, no women's centres, nothing." The women's addition of gendered social services to support wellness brings attention to how social support is a vital aspect of supporting Indigenous women's wellness. Social services that provide social support to women again counters wellness models that focus on how wellness is centred on individual behaviours.

The importance of child care cannot be understated, with the majority of women in the study being mothers or grandmothers caring for children. For example, Josephine is a mother of three children, she is currently on social assistance however she is enrolled in educational classes to become a pharmacy assistant. Access to child care provides women with the ability to pursue these educational goals that leads to improved socio-economic status and greater financial security. As Sharon emphasized along with other women, financial security and moving beyond

poverty conditions is a fundamental aspect of wellness. Supporting Indigenous women's wellness in the North End therefore requires women's social service investment. A wholistic understanding of wellness that views women's wellness as interconnected with social service provision that contributes to socio-economic pathways beyond oppressive poverty is responsive to the women's advocacy for wellness supports.

Strength-Based Perspectives of The North End- "A True Community"

In closing this introduction to the findings, the context of the findings that focuses on women's experiences in the North End neighbourhood is situated on strength-based perspectives of the North End neighbourhood that Mary emphasized in stating:

Well, a lot of people look at the North End like it's bad. And a lot of that is perception because of media. The media, they don't really celebrate any of the good things that happen in the North End but they're quick to talk about all the bad things that happen in the North End. I mean end as far as I'm concerned is a multicultural melting pot. There's all kinds of different people who live in the north end. On my little block alone I have Indigenous people, I have Asian people, I have East Indian people, I have white people. In that little block right where I live, and they're all friendly people, we all get along, you know, and it's a community is what it is. It's a true community where everybody knows everybody. My husband laughs because we can't walk down the street anywhere in the North End without somebody saying hi to me.

Here, Mary counters the often-stigmatized view of the North End neighbourhood, describing the neighbourhood as a place where there is a true community of support. Mary went on to describe the neighbourhood relationships:

The North End is mostly Indigenous and its mostly people who are living modestly. They're either working poor or they're poor. And they know what it's like to be an outcast. And they don't want to treat anybody else like that. So they treat everybody the way that they want to be treated. My mother always used to tell me, it's a golden rule, you treat people the way you want to be treated and you're going to get treated that way. And so, you know, and then I think a lot of people who are my age or close to my age were raised the same way back in the day by our parents. We were raised to respect others. We were raised to respect where we live, where we work, and who we are with. And today's generation, they weren't raised that way.

Mary described how residents of the North End are often stigmatized, an issue that resurfaces through the discussions with women. Mary counters these stigmatized views by describing how residents in the North End actively denounce these perceptions through acts of treating others as they want to be treated. Mary adding that her mother taught her the importance of respecting others reflects cultural values and again points to the importance of the women's cultural teachings taught to younger generations that instills respect for others, a foundation for Indigenous relationships that contributes to community wellness. Mary's focus on community is reflective of the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ lens that reflects how caring for community is part of Indigenous women's motherly caregiving attributes that extends to the whole community, with motherly caregiving being a fundamental aspect of Indigenous women's lives far before colonial disruption to these gendered roles in community. Mary's focus on community reflects Indigenous women's significance in caring for their community that contributes to the overall health, wellness and prosperity of their communities (MACIW, 2023a).

Conclusion

This introductory chapter brings forth the cultural diversity among Indigenous communities, emphasizing that although there are some cultural similarities among different Indigenous communities, each community maintains distinct cultural understandings and teachings that produces findings that may not be applicable to all Indigenous women. Cultural understanding of women's wellness has a focus on how the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission with women holding ancestral knowledge through blood memory. Women emphasized that this ancestral knowledge is often passed down through maternal lineage, pointing to the significance of women's roles as cultural educators. Women's concepts of wellness encompass wholistic multidimensional aspects of wellness, bring together the balance of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical wellness. Women's concepts of wellness also incorporate socio-economic components with an emphasis on the importance of financial security to support wellness. Women also discussed the importance of family and community wellness as a fundamental aspect of their personal wellness, showing how Indigenous women's wellness is embedded in the wellness of all their relations. Women discussed the importance of having spaces where they can teach children about culture in relation to the Land, emphasizing women's gendered roles as cultural educators. Cultural education shared across generations is an important aspect of cultural reclamation particularly for families who endure colonial family separation. Adding to women's wellness models is the incorporation of gendered social services that would support Indigenous wellness from the place of social support. Women advocated for social service support that would aid in overcoming oppressive poverty, drawing attention to the importance of child care that contributes to access to education and training. The introduction importantly concluded with strength-based perspectives of the North End that contrasts

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

stigmatized views of the people who live in the North End neighbourhood with Mary emphasizing the North End is a true community.

CHAPTER FOUR

**BARRIERS TO INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TRAILS,
PARKS, AND BIKING EXPERIENCES**

Introduction

This chapter details barriers to Indigenous women's equitable access to trails, parks and biking in urban spaces. Themes about structural-societal barriers to equitable access to urban land wellness activities included: a) Indigenous women's land dispossession: "We're not given the place to heal"; b) The damage colonial systems separating Indigenous children from the families; c) Racism: "Racism is out there, for sure"; d) The impact of misogyny and sexual violence; and e) Indigenous women's pervasive safety issues. The category of socio-economic barriers generated these themes: a) "Poverty is the number one barrier"; b) Barriers to biking- "they just get stolen"; and c) Homeless Encampments- "a big concern"; e) Lack of investment in the North End- "There's a huge stigma with people about the North End"; f) Biking Infrastructure Barriers- "We don't have enough bike lanes"; and g) Active transportation barriers- "You can't get to them [good parks]." The findings emphasize substantial barriers Indigenous women face in equitable access to urban land and urban land activities of biking, park and trail use embedded in Indigenous women's racialized and gendered positioning in the context of settler colonial society. Barriers to equitable urban land use was the predominant point of discussion among the women in the sharing circle, who all live in the North End neighbourhood, which is reflected in the findings.

Structural-Societal Barriers

Indigenous Women's Land Dispossession: "We're not given the place to heal"

Barriers to Indigenous women's wellness begins with understandings of how colonialism worked to dispossess Indigenous Peoples from the Land. Relationships with the Land are foundational for Indigenous wellness and colonial acts attempting to dispossess Indigenous Peoples from their Land was described by Mary as brutal acts to "break" Indigenous Peoples:

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

The reason that they started taking kids away from Indigenous people during the residential school era is because they wanted the land, they wanted the resources from the land, so what's the best way to break somebody, take away their future. Our children are our future. And it was all about assimilation and cultural genocide. And that's basically what the government wanted to do. They wanted to assimilate us and kill our culture.

Mary brings attention to the historical aspects of colonialism that impacts Indigenous women and their families in current day. The deliberate colonial tactics of severing Indigenous women's relationships with their Land equated to attempting to sever Indigenous Peoples from their culture. This issue is reflected in MACIW's (203a) lens, whereas these types of violence were deliberate in attempting to acquire and control lands. The attack on Indigenous cultures is a part of the socio-cultural and historical realities Indigenous women endure that greatly impedes wellness. Attempts of cultural genocide brings attention to the course of violence enacted by the colonial state, as Mary said, to "kill our culture". This killing of culture forms an understanding of the deep violence Indigenous communities endure, that require healing.

Kerri added a gendered lens to understanding these early colonial acts imposed on Indigenous Peoples, explaining:

Women are so strong, but they don't realize how strong they are, in Indigenous culture historically, we're the ones who made the rules, we were a Matriarchal society until the church came in, and the church changed everything backwards.

Kerri's statement brings forth several important facets of Indigenous women's lives. Firstly, acknowledging the strength of Indigenous women as a foundation of who Indigenous women are. Secondly, Kerri brings attention to the traditional Matriarchal positioning of Indigenous women. This statement reflects the MACIW (2023a) lens, in that:

The dominant narrative in Canada, is largely negative when it discusses Indigenous women. The dominant narrative is informed by colonial, Euro-Christian ideologies that have been woven into Canada's Constitution through legislation in the Indian Act and subtly and overtly informs Canadian's perspectives on Indigenous women. However, prior to the confederation of Canada over 150+ years ago, Indigenous women were perceived very differently and held a variety of leadership roles in their communities (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9).

MACIW (2023a) echoes Kerri's sentiments in that the colonial historical positioning of Indigenous women were brought forth by Euro-Christian ideologies, referred to as the church by Kerri. As Kerri emphasized, Indigenous women are rightly strong Matriarchs in their traditional positioning. This Matriarchal positioning counters the colonial positioning of Indigenous women that aimed to marginalize and devalue Indigenous women (MACIW, 2023a). Kerri's recognition of Indigenous women as strong reflects how Indigenous women have continued to resist and fight back against marginalized positionings that aimed to strip Indigenous women of their power.

The Damage from Colonial Systems Separating Children from Families

In understanding how colonial assaults on Indigenous women impacts wellness, the women in this study emphasized that the damage of colonial systems separating children from their families must be brought to acute attention. As Mary explained:

And so the government's always been saying how children should be taken care of, but it's different with Indigenous people because one of the things I tell people, is the system has never been broken. The system is working exactly the way our government wants it to. And it's always worked the way that our government wants it to work. It's always been

about family separation. It's always been about separating children from their families, right from the residential school system until now.

Mary detailed the extent of violence from the colonial state in systems of family separation that was deliberate. This violence profoundly negatively impacts the wellness of Indigenous families, resulting in trauma, and emotional and spiritual harm. Mary brought attention to the legacy of colonial systems that extend from history into present day. Several women in this study discussed their determinantal experiences as Sixties Scoop survivors where they were forcibly removed from the families and adopted out to other families. For Sharon's family, both her and her mother were removed from their biological homes and adopted out to non-Indigenous families, with Sharon describing her mother's life and the impacts on her wellness:

She didn't have the greatest life growing up either. She was, I don't know if I can say, she was fortunate she didn't do Day School or residential school but she ended up in a sanatorium for tuberculosis. And then once she's cleared from there, she went into a German foster home. So there was again no traditional teachings. She didn't have any of the teachings or anything.

Sharon explained how these colonial adoptions severely impacted cultural wellness by severing intergenerational and familial knowledge transmissions. Because her mother was adopted out, there was no opportunity for cultural teachings to be passed down to her mother. Since Sharon's mother did not have the cultural teachings, this equated to Sharon also missing the opportunity to learn cultural teachings from her mother which deeply impeded Sharon's cultural wellness. This family cultural disruption disconnected intergenerational gendered Matrilineal knowledge transmissions. As Sharon elaborated, "being a Sixties Scoop survivor,

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

I've always had, I guess you could say, identity issues, you know, not knowing for sure who I really was." Sharon's experiences of cultural fragmentation deeply impacted her cultural identity. These forms of identity fragmentation impede cultural wellness from the place of spiritual and emotional wellness. For Shayla, her constant moving to different places as an adoptee severed Shayla's ability to form deep relationships with the Land of her family's origin, in describing:

I'm a cross-cultural adoptee, like Sixties' Scoop. My birth mother is from Cross Lake and I was born in Edmonton. I was in foster care for three months and then adopted by Dutch Canadians, ended up in Calgary. And then when I was two, we moved to BC, and in 1997, I moved here to Winnipeg.

Shayla's experience brings attention to the cultural fragmentation that occurs through colonial systems of family separation that prevented Shayla from forming relationships not only with her biological family, but also relationships on her familial Lands. For Kerri, her experiences of being a Sixties' Scoop adoptee equated to being forced into a foster home where she endured abuse, "I grew up in a crappy house. My adoptive family was very abusive, both physically and mentally. We grew up poor and I would run away." Kerri elaborated, "in my adoptive family, I was always waiting for that boot to drop, always living in fear, waiting, if I did something remotely wrong, I got beaten, I would get hit if I came home late." For Kerri, the abuse she endured contributed to assaults on her spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental wellness from a young age, forcing Kerri to have a need for healing from a young age. From the women's experiences of family separation, it is shown how colonial systems of family separation produced enduring emotional pain, cultural fragmentation and the breaking of familial bonds among children and their families.

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Kerri also recounted the enduring legacy of emotional harm to Indigenous children in her story of the ghosts of young Indigenous girls who were victims of the residential school system. She described her experience when she received a call from a man on reserve who said he had ghosts of girls in his home:

When we asked the ghost girls what they wanted in Ojibwa, the ghosts responded they were hungry and they ran away from residential school.” Kerri explained, “the residential school in Portage has been shut down for a very long time. And then, I seem to recall hearing there was a rumor of three girls that go through this area that they see on occasion. They were murdered.” Kerri helped these young ghost girls, telling the person of the house, “how about you tell them we'll feed them, I'll feed you, and then we'll smudge the house, and then you tell them that they have to be gone by morning.” And so I cooked up some food, you know, ate some food for him, and I set out three plates for these three girls. And then the next morning, he called me. He says, “they're gone.”

Kerri's story pronounces the severely harmful legacy of the residential school system and the violence toward Indigenous girls and women. This colonial violence toward Indigenous women endures to present day, producing a crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women. This enduring violent harm produced by colonial systems of family separation upon Indigenous girls was further described by Kerri, who explained many Indigenous girls and young women “fall through the cracks” when wards of the CFS system, resulting in high suicide attempts and high suicide rates among these girls and women due to the subsequent sexual assaults they experience due to no protection from a misogynistic and racist colonial society that aims to sever Indigenous women's revered power. Mary elaborated on this crisis situation:

A lot of the young women who are aging out of care are aging out and being sexually exploited, or drug addiction and homelessness. They're getting into gangs; they're getting into all kinds of bad things because they've aged out of the system and the system doesn't give a shit.

Mary's emphasis on how these colonial systems of Indigenous child apprehension produces severe harm to the young Indigenous women. These young women are forced into colonial society where sexual exploitation is rampant. From what women shared, these young women are entrenched in oppressive conditions that lead to further harm from exploitation, drug addiction, gangs and homelessness. Mary explaining that this colonial system "doesn't give a shit" points to these colonial systems as one of complete disregard for the well-being of the children forced into these systems. This crisis issue is particularly common for young women who live in the North End neighbourhood where oppressive poverty produces extensive gang activity, drugs in the community and predators that seek to sexually exploit young Indigenous girls and women. Involvement with the CFS system also takes an emotional and mental toll on mothers and families. A woman in the sharing circle described how she had been fighting to regain custody of her children for many years, resulting in feelings of emotional and mental exhaustion with this woman stating, "I'm so tired, sometimes I feel like giving up." These damaging experiences of being involved in the CFS system also equates to a depletion of spiritual wellness from deep wounds of family separation.

Racism: "Racism is out there, for sure"

Adding to colonial society that harms Indigenous women is the prevalence of racism. Kerri described at length her experiences of racism both in her professional life as an RCMP officer and in her personal life, "Newfoundland was a challenge. I was the only minority there. I

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

was the only First Nation person there. I took flack and then I had supervisors that didn't understand the culture.” When clarifying Kerri's experiences of racism she responded she experienced racism “big time, big time.” Kerri added:

My husband never realized how much racism happens until he met me. He's a white guy and he never realized what I actually go through in general as a First Nations. Racism is out there, for sure, I've had people yell at me while outside. I've dealt with racism throughout my career.

Kerri further elaborated that when she went to the Caribbean, “and I get treated like gold down there for some reason. And yet here, I come here and it's like, oh, I'm back into that second-class citizen kind of thing... because they're brown, I'm brown. And so the racism isn't there.” Kerri's experiences of racism show how racism permeates the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Beyond communities of Indigenous Peoples where Kerri is positioned as a minority leads to a proliferation of racism. Her experiences in the Caribbean where the racism isn't there and she is treated with respect brings attention to the racism within colonial Canadian society. The impacts of racism on wellness takes a toll on emotional, mental and spiritual wellness while negatively impacting positive Indigenous identity. As MACIW (2023a) lens focused, racism is a colonial tactic to disempower Indigenous Peoples. As MACIW (2023a) emphasized, “IGBA+ acknowledges that colonialism, racism, and sexism cannot be separated from each other in their impact on Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people” (p. 38). This points to the aspects of gender that interrelate with racism as a barrier to Indigenous women's wellness that invades their every day lives.

The Impact of Misogyny and Sexual Violence

Adding to the societal barriers to Indigenous women's wellness is the impact of misogyny and sexual violence that is an epidemic crisis in colonial Canadian society. Coupled with racism in the workplace that Kerri experienced, she added "there's a lot of misogyny happening there." Misogyny in society also contributes to extreme rates of sexual assaults experienced by Indigenous girls and women. Kerri explained:

When I was out in Newfoundland, I actually had a friend of mine, she's a social worker, she and I put together a group of teenaged girls that were falling through the cracks.

They'd gone through court through their... they went to court with all their sexual assault stuff, but because they're older teenagers, they fell through the cracks with CFS. And we had a huge suicide rate. Like massive. And so Diane and I, we got together and we started realizing that all these girls that were committing suicide, either attempted or succeeded, were all victims of sexual assault.

Kerri's description of this crisis issue, embedded in misogyny, first emphasizes how the colonial CFS system that fails to protect Indigenous children and youth leads to sexual exploitation and assaults. Kerri explaining that "there's a huge suicide rate" brings attention to the extensive harm sexual assaults cause in the lives of those girls and women who are sexually exploited from assaults. The high suicide rate as a consequence of these assaults shows the deep emotional and spiritual harm produced by these attacks. Wellness is therefore deeply impeded through the emotional despair experienced from sexual assaults. Kerri went on to detail that the RCMP did not provide support for her group that helped young Indigenous women overcome sexual assault, pointing again to how misogyny in society produces a complete disregard for the well-being of Indigenous girls and women. Kerri elaborated, "this is a proactive group and

they're complaining about this? Jeez. That goes to show you what the mentality was. You know? Just no support.” This lack of support and complaining about Kerri's support program shows the complete disregard for the well-being of Indigenous girls and women that permeates society. The MACIW (2023a) lens points to how “since contact from Europeans, Indigenous women have been raped, beaten, and killed for the very reason that they are women and leaders” (p. 5). This statement highlights the role of gender in this colonial violence, targeting Indigenous women and girls to disempower their leadership positioning. The crisis of sexual assault among women was also detailed by Samara who stated:

It's like four out of five women have been sexually assaulted at some point in their life.

That's mostly by men, so I know for me like when I get on public transport if there's free seats, I'm trying to get one that's next to a woman.

Samara's account of how she seeks spaces next to women to protect herself brings attention to how misogyny in society and the resulting prevalence of sexual assaults contributes to women's restrictions on freedom in society, limiting where a woman goes as a form of self-protection.

The Injustice of Indigenous Women's Persistent Safety Issues

The implications of misogyny in society and the racism that compounds these implications is detailed by Indigenous women's pervasive safety issues. A prominent, reoccurring theme of women's safety issues was pronounced in discussions with the women. As Mary described:

Women have more of a safety issue in the North End than anyone else, women and young children and young girls. It has gotten really bad over the last three decades. And I think a lot of that has to do with the economy, our young people aging out of care into

gangs and criminal activity, and homelessness. I think women in particular are more than likely are going to get hurt because they're viewed as the weaker sex. You have to choose fight or flight.

Mary's explanation of safety issues in the North End draws forth how oppressive poverty due to economic marginalization, coupled with being involved in a child apprehension system (i.e., CFS) produces targeted violence toward Indigenous women, children and girls. Mary adds a gendered lens in that women are viewed as "the weaker sex" which produces targeted gendered violence. Sharon also described this gendered issue, stating, "I personally think that it's worse for women. As women and youth, our youth are at great risk because they're younger and vulnerable." The extent of women's pervasive safety issues was detailed by Avalon about her extensive tactics to keep herself safe:

You have to be very visual, diligent, and very much pay attention to your surroundings. It's always super important to go with someone, especially if it's late. So like, normally the precautions I would take, because my sister also used to live in the North End, I mean she still does, but like, she used to live on Charles, and we would walk to each other's houses and I would always text her, I'm leaving my house at this time, I should be there in like, this amount of time, like 10-15 minutes. If something was weird, like we'd have a code word together, and I'd instantly call her, and I'd be like, um, our code word was like, don't forget to come over tomorrow, we had a code word for that. And she would stay on the phone with me. After I got robbed, I would make sure that I would not have my wallet on me, nothing that could be stolen. I wouldn't listen to music on the walk home. I wouldn't, I'd be very alert.

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Avalon's experiences highlight that safe urban land in the North End is essentially non-existent for fears for safety pervades every day life. The constant threat to safety directly impedes emotional and mental wellness from the stress caused from fears for safety. Women also discussed how the trails in the North End in particular are not safe to use. Mary described, "there's one [a river trail] and it's by the Red River and it goes from Burroughs Avenue right into the Forks. And that's the only one I know of. I've been on it lots of times. You don't want to go near it at night." Mary added, "I would love to use trails, but there are no safe trails for us women and our children to use." Josephine echoed this issue, stating, "it's not safe along those trails when you have children. For safety concerns, crime is high, people don't want to use the trails." For Skylar, she did not use the trails at all, emphasizing, "I don't go on those trails. It's too dangerous." The safety barriers to trail access means women and their children do not receive the wellness benefits of trail use, such as exercise from walking or connecting with nature along the trails. Kerri highlighted the barriers to trail use as a gendered, women's issue, stating:

I know there's some trails in Winnipeg that woman just shouldn't go on. The Hart Trail is not a safe place for woman to use. The Hart Trail is a trail, especially if you're running, because its so remote, I know that there has been women in particular have been harassed there. I know that's a trail that women shouldn't use by themselves, its too isolated.

Kerri brings attention to how women's trail safety issues extends to all trails in the city, particularly trails that are deemed remote. Kerri detailed how women are harassed on trails, preventing any wellness benefits from trail use. These safety issues also mean women do not have access to individual solitude in nature on trails because of safety issues. As Cheryl stated, "safety that's a whole other issue too. So usually when I'm walking on those trails, I'll only walk if my daughter or my husband will come along with me because there is safety issues to it." The

issues of safety in trail use extends to issues of safety in using parks. Samara elaborated this point:

I'm not going to go walking in a park alone near sunset and sunrise, when it's getting dark. That kind of thing. In general, unless it's a park I know really well, or it's a neighborhood that I know really well. So, like, Kildonan Park, for example, because I've been told that that area is...well, just the North End in general, and like, North End, Winnipeg is a bit more sketchy. Like, I went there with a friend during the day. I wouldn't go walking through there, like, in the evening as the sun's setting, because I wouldn't necessarily feel safe to do so.

The constant need for confirming safety by women was reflected by Samara in stating, “as a woman it's always something that you just kind of do instinctively and subconsciously sometimes.” This constant confirming of safety can take a mental toll on women, depleting a sense of wellness while outdoors using these spaces due to safety issues. Cheryl elaborated on this point:

St. Vital Park is a very public park. And there's always a lot of people there, but the trails are kind of hit and miss. At certain times of the day, it's busy, like this time of the day it'll be busy, but if I would go in the afternoon, you know, four o'clock-ish, not so much. So that would be the other thing. I would tend to try to go when there's more people, when I think there is more people or when I've seen more people at certain times, I tend to pick those times to go.

Cheryl emphasized how she has acute worry for her daughters while accessing these urban spaces that spans all city park spaces:

I have three daughters so you're always worried about, you know, things that are happening in the world and in the neighborhood and I don't think you can say that there's any part of our city that's safer than another. You know, stuff happens no matter where you live. So I was always a little bit nervous when the kids were out and I didn't hear from them. We also had a good connection with the families that our children hung out with, so it was more comfortable knowing that they were at somebody else's house, but if they were, you know, playing at the park or things like that it was a little bit different because you never know who's going to be, you know, who's going to be hanging out at the park.

The issue of park safety was deemed a societal issue that needs to be addressed, with a sharing circle participant advocating “the city needs to make it safer for us to use parks.” The women continued to emphasize these pervasive safety issues, particularly in the North End, as Skylar explained:

It's not really safe to come out at night anymore. I remember I was going for a walk to my mom's house and about four guys in different cars, they were different cars, different people, they approached me and tried to ask me to get in the car in the same walk, so I don't go out at night.

Drawing from Skylar's experiences, the limitations of outdoor urban land use is prominent, detailing how male predators target these women in their everyday lives. When confirming that dangerous surroundings forces women inside and off the land, Avalon responded, “exactly.” The numerous accounts of women's pervasive safety issues not only bars women from urban land where wellness can be fostered through Land engagement, the ongoing stress from worries about safety depletes women's mental and emotional wellness. These issues

with safety point to MACIW's (2023a) guiding principle of safety, whereas "special attention must be made to ensure that all services and supports for Indigenous women and girls are provided in ways that support their physical and emotional safety" (p. 15). Supports includes safe neighbourhoods where Indigenous women can foster relationships with the Land. These safety barriers point to how the violence toward Indigenous women is rooted in colonial tactics that ultimately aimed in the acquisition of land and the control of lands (MACIW, 2023a), barring women to safe access to their Lands.

Socio-Economic Barriers

Poverty is "the Number One Barrier" to Indigenous Women's Wellness

As the women previously highlighted about how oppressive socio-economic conditions produces issues of gangs and violence in the neighbourhood, these socio-economic conditions also produces poverty conditions among women and their families. Poverty was described by women as the primary barrier to women's wellness with women in the sharing circle stating, "it's the number one barrier." Mary elaborated on this issue:

It's very difficult, poverty is very stressful. It is. And you can't eat healthy food because it's expensive, generally. Especially these days. There's just a lot of stress that comes from poverty. So, you're already at a deficit, and it has nothing to do with what you're doing.

Mary emphasized how poverty produces an emotional and mental toll on women, adding significant stress to their lives. In stating "it has nothing to do with what you're doing" Mary pinpoints poverty as a societal construct that forces conditions of poverty that are not due individual behaviours. Women in the sharing circle described how poverty was very stressful, with worry of being able to pay their bills and support their families. Mary added, "and then a lot

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness of the people in the North End who are in poverty with children who have the extra added stress of CFS getting involved in their lives." The added stress women experience who are also subjected to the CFS system further impacts emotional and mental wellness among women, showing how Indigenous women endure extensive barriers to wellness.

Poverty also limits wellness opportunities for the women's children and grandchildren. Shayla recounted these family limitations to wellness due to poverty:

I was never able to do that with my girls. We don't really have that, you know, family history, memory, picnics and stuff because it was always like, you need a car because they were little or I never had the bus fare. And then I didn't have, like, enough money to even do a nice picnic for lunch. So, yeah, a lot of it was poverty because I was on disability and trying to heal.

Shayla's experience highlights how poverty experienced by the women creates barriers to wellness opportunities for her children. As Shayla said, the positive family memories that could be produced through being able to afford recreational activities like picnics in the park was severely limited due to oppressive poverty experienced by mothers. Shayla highlighted how transportation costs also impedes access to wellness-promoting urban spaces, forcing women and their children to be confined to the North End neighbourhood where safe spaces are severely limited. The combined issue of disability and the need for healing shows how for some women, their wellness is deeply limited from the trauma and violence that invades their lives, including the stress and trauma of oppressive poverty. These barriers fragment opportunities for cultural continuity that could be derived from family park use on the Land.

Women repeatedly discussed how oppressive poverty also inhibited the purchase of bikes for the women and their children. As Shayla stated, "when I was on disability, there was just

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

never enough money. I never could buy my girls bikes at the same time.” Kerri added, “its also hard, because a lot of First Nations people can't afford a bike, that's the big thing. Buying a bike is really hard for a lot of people.” Many women really enjoyed biking and saw value in higher quality bikes however these bikes were simply too expensive. As Shayla described, “now we're suddenly looking at like three, four hundred dollars, and I'm like, I don't have that right now. I'm in between jobs. And everything's expensive anyway. You know, like, trying to buy food these days. It's crazy, very expensive.” Shayla draws in the structural-societal issues of the high cost of living and how in these economic conditions women can not afford to invest in their wellness through biking. Structural-societal issues that impede biking opportunities extended to the issue of community members who were struggling with poverty and drug addiction creating barriers to bike use with Shayla describing:

The reason I didn't bring my bike today was that last spring meth heads thought it was funny to just break glass on the sidewalk. I literally came out of a corner store and someone was throwing down a bottle in front of me. So anyway, I have two flat tires and I'm in between jobs.

Sharon elaborated on these societal issues related to oppressive poverty:

We do have the alcohol and, well, I should just say addictions issues, period, because drugs and, they're basically all over the place. And then, of course, you've got gang issues, but all of that kind of goes hand in hand. People say if you really dig into it, it's really the poverty. Gang issues goes hand in hand, definitely linked to poverty, definitely.

Sharon emphasizes that the community members issues related to drug use and gangs is embedded in oppressive poverty. Not only are women oppressed in their personal lives, but they also oppressed while accessing urban spaces in the community. As Mary stated, “gangs and

sexual exploitation are an issue for young Indigenous women in the North End....gangs and sexual exploitation are an issue for everyone in the North End.” Skylar added, “I’d say the drug problems, like the meth is a big problem, it’s causing a lot of issues.” These experiences show how social issues related to poverty extends to the whole community. Sharon added, “and then you come into the problems of not enough rehab, not enough addictions programs or access to it if you don't have the right money. There again, there's barriers too. It weighs on the whole family.” Here again, the women emphasized the importance of social services to support wellness and recovery for women as well as their community members. As Sharon stated, the outcome of oppressive poverty impacts the whole family, taking away opportunities for wellness for women, their children, and communities. The poverty Indigenous women endure are markers of the marginalization women face due to colonial processes that aimed to marginalize Indigenous women to restrict women’s powerful place in society as leaders (MACIW, 2023a).

Homeless Encampments “A big concern”

Oppressive poverty also produces issues with homelessness in the community with women identifying homeless encampments in parks and along trails as a “big concern” with Cheryl explained “I’ve noticed some homeless encampments around those forest areas and it just makes me a little bit concerned for my safety.” Josephine described this issue and how it impedes use of community gardens:

We have one community garden that's on Selkirk Ave. But that one went to like crap right away. Because people were like just littering and again, we have all these people that are actually living there. So it's hard for us, like moms, around the North End, to take the kids out and go actually use community gardens as nutrition for us, right? And it's

hard because just that one [community garden] was on Selkirk Avenue, and it was in a place where there was a lot of traffic, and a lot of people known for squatting are there.

The issue of homeless encampments impeding community gardens use was also detailed by Mary:

So, a lot of homeless people, they'll go and hang out in this garden space. And then people don't want to go in there and look after the gardens because they're finding needles, they're finding beer bottles, empty beer bottles, empty liquor bottles, garbage, feces, and they just don't want to have anything to do with that. So it's really hard because there's no actual real green space to do community gardens where we can plant those natural medicines and those natural herbs so we can teach our children.

Mary and Josephine bring attention to how the barriers to community gardens impedes wellness opportunities such as wellness gained from nutritional plants growing naturally, and opportunities for Land-based education where women can teach their children about medicinal plants and herbs growing naturally in the environment. Women in the sharing circle explained used needles and garbage littered the trails where encampments are set up, which is particularly dangerous for young children that limits children's opportunities for Land-based cultural experiences and connection with nature. Mary concluded "a lot of homeless people who live along that trail, the homeless population and their issues needs to be addressed as well" which draws forth women's caregiving for the whole community and how individual wellness is interconnected with community wellness for Indigenous Peoples.

Barriers to Biking: "Bikes just get stolen"

The societal issues embedded in oppressive poverty also equates to issues of high bike theft in the neighbourhood. Women in the sharing circle explained many women do not own

bikes because “bikes just get stolen” and that “we can't own nice bikes” due to bike theft. Shayla described how she was offered an expensive bike but she declined because it would be targeted for theft, responding “thanks for the offer for a really good bike but I'm going to have to just keep my stripped-down North End version.” She explained how one of her bikes were stolen:

They probably just grabbed it put it in the back of a truck. I just put brand new tires on it at the last Bike Dump visit. They cost me a few dollars. I'm like, you know what? I'm not going to even get decent tires from now on. My bike looks like a junk bike....“if my bike's outside, I'm just asking for it to be stolen, so not a neighborhood for a good bike. I don't want to have a really good bike and then have it stolen within twenty-four hours.

Kerri added to this issue; “That's just it. I don't think of using my bike in the North End. It doesn't matter what kind of lock you get; someone will come with bolt cutters.” Sharon detailed extensively the issue of bike security in the North End:

You pay for the bike and you got to make sure you got a damn good lock or you stay on your bike the whole time you're out, you know there's nothing worse than you go park and then you come back to your bike and your lock's laying on the ground you know and there's no more bike, yeah, you know, I've lost too many bikes that way. I think one thing that should be is, yes, okay, they need bike lanes, but what about bike parking. There needs to be more safe places for us to lock up a bike. I'm not saying that they have to build bike cages all over the city, but they need more solid bike stands. Like you go downtown, they've got bike stands, right? You don't have as many of that in the North End, so you end up chaining your bike up to the street sign, and somebody comes along and pulls the street sign out and there goes your bike anyway. At least when they have the proper stands that are secured and everything else, it takes them a little bit more work.

Sharon draws attention to how there is a complete lack of biking infrastructure to support biking in the neighbourhood. Not only is there a lack of protected bike lanes, but there are no infrastructure that ensures people can safely secure their bikes. This pronounced lack of investment in the North End was a detailed theme among women as barriers to wellness-promoting urban spaces and activities.

Lack of Investment in the North End- "There's a huge stigma with people about the North End"

Barriers to women's access to wellness-promoting urban spaces was also identified as an issue of lack of investment in the North End neighbourhood embedded in stigma. As Sharon stated, "the way the city operates, they're just building on the outskirts and the core gets neglected." This neglect is apparent in the lack of maintained trails in the neighbourhood compared to other affluent neighbourhoods in the city. In referring to these well-maintained trails, the women in the sharing circle stated "there's none of that" in the North End. Mary elaborated, "my main challenge with raising them [her grandchildren] is finding good, safe places to play. I mean like going on walking trails, there's none where we live. There are absolutely no walking trails where we live." Mary concluded, "the North End could use more lighting, it could use more green space, it could use more of everything." A lack of parks particularly for children was noted among women with Josephine explaining:

The best parks are the ones in the school grounds. It's hard to go in during the day, because I am a stay-at-home mom, I have my granddaughter with me most of the time. It's hard for me to go enjoy the park with her because it's on school grounds and we're not supposed to be on school grounds when there's school.

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Skylar emphasized this issue, stating, "because I'm a parent and that's the only reason why I go to a park. So we need more playgrounds." These issues cause extensive barriers to cultural wellness with Mary describing how:

There's nowhere I can teach our children about our cultural medicines. Or our herbs, or how to use these things, or where they are in their natural habitat because there's nothing there. When you talk about community gardens, there's no funding investment in that.

When talking with Avalon about these issues, she ascribed this issue to the stigmatized view of people living in the North End:

I just feel like they don't want to put money or effort into that area because they think people won't take care of it. So there's a huge stigma with people about the North End, right, because they think that people, one, don't care about it, or two, don't think it's important enough, to have those things.

The lack of investment in the North End extends to issues with sidewalks in disrepair, leaving even fewer safe spaces for people to access urban spaces:

I like to rollerblade, I like to bike, but there's barriers for people who aren't as able-bodied. So people who have walkers, wheelchairs, canes, and like the sidewalks go from like kind of straight to being like this, like protruding at an angle, and then just all over the place, and it's never, they never get fixed. So if people want to ride more bikes or have different forms of transportation that doesn't cost money, it's extremely hard because of the condition of the sidewalks and roads. I see young kids trying to constantly learn to rollerblade and bike ride on those sidewalks and it's just so hard. That's a huge barrier. It really discourages them. I've seen it, they've just stopped trying.

Women in the sharing circle discussed these types of environmental hazards, particularly the issue of broken glass littering the neighbourhood. Avalon detailed:

There were so many times where I'd have to change my route just in my own area of walking my dogs because there was so much broken glass everywhere, there was nails, like I'd have to suddenly go on the road and then back on the sidewalk, down the alleyway, back up, like it was just, there were so many parts where there was just hazardous material. It's particularly worse when it hits spring, because people will break stuff and then stuff will be thrown on the ground and then the snow piles up and then it just melts.

The lack of infrastructure to support outdoor activities in the neighbourhood reflects racialized divisions in neighbourhood investment. Women are seeking safe places for their children and themselves and with the stigmatized lack of investment restricts women's urban land use. These issues create barriers to wellness-promoting outdoor spaces, limiting opportunities for Land-based recreation for the women and their children. The stigmatizing views of people in the North End also contributes to embedding negative aspects of identity for those stigmatized. The constant issues of safety that result in a lack of safe infrastructure compounds stress in women's lives that negatively impacts emotional and mental wellness. In considering how relationships with the Land fosters Indigenous women's wellness, the barriers to wellness are further entrenched in women's daily lives in trying to access safe urban spaces. These issues point to issues of rights to land and rights to wellness, whereas neglected neighbourhoods produce barriers to these rights. Addressing the issue of hazardous urban environments is fundamentally a matter of environmental justice in the equitable access to land.

Biking Infrastructure Barriers: “We don't have enough bike lanes in the North End”

The issue of a lack of infrastructure is pronounced when reviewing women's experiences of biking. Josephine also detailed these issues, explaining:

Down Salter Ave. we don't have trails, like you know, the biking lanes? There's no biking lanes down that way. We have to stay on the sidewalk.” We don't have enough bike lanes in the North End. There's a lot of safety concerns.

Adding to barriers, is the lack of trail connections, a pronounced issue in connecting the North End to other neighbourhoods:

The bike trail system in Winnipeg just isn't well connected, compared to places like Vancouver and Calgary. In Calgary they have so many trails and you can take it on transit. Here its so hard to go from one place to the next.

Skylar said she likes biking but there is a lack of bike trails and lanes, and she is pregnant so she is avoiding anything that may be dangerous, such as biking in the neighbourhood due to the safety concerns, impeding physical activities that could support wellness while pregnant.

Shayla described how she saw numerous protected bike lanes in other areas of the city, and stated, along with other women, “this would be a really good idea in the North End.” Instead, Shayla described this lack of safe biking opportunities in the neighbourhood:

They run over people, like there's been deaths that just passed. I mean, on Higgins Avenue, past the underpass there. So now I ride on the sidewalk. Or I can do routes that have bike signs on them or, you know, I can take less traveled routes where there is less traffic. Again, you know, drivers don't care about cyclists.

This issue was reflected in Sharon's comments:

You've got a lot of ignorant drivers that don't think we should have our own special lane.

Yeah, and you don't belong on the road. And then they tell us to go on the sidewalk. Then you get the people on the sidewalk that tell us get off the sidewalk.

These biking barriers extend to biking barriers for children, limiting wellness as children grow, as Josephine described:

Usually my granddaughter, like, we'll all bike, but there's safety concerns for them to pass cars. So instead of going on the sidewalk, because you can get ticketed, right? In North End, you have no choice but to bike on the sidewalks. It's harder. So, it's harder for us to go out and about.

The benefits of protected bike lanes was pronounced by Sharon's comments, who concluded:

They're starting to get more, like we have another street there, there's a certain section that's completely blocked off to traffic now. If you live there in that area, you can use it to go into your area, but it's for bikes. I love it, so it's just starting in the North End.

Hence, investment in biking infrastructure would have a profoundly positive impact on women's biking in the neighbourhood. Colonial urban disinvestment in the North End produces few options for safe spaces for women and their families to bike. Although biking has numerous wellness benefits, these benefits are rarely enjoyed, particularly when women are attempting to bike with their children.

Active Transportation Barriers: "You can't get to them [good parks]"

Adding to barriers to wellness activities and urban spaces, is the issue of transportation to get to places where there are biking opportunities and safer park spaces. Kerri explained:

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

There are not a lot of bike trails where my family lives in the North End. It's not really that safe to ride a bike on the streets there because the roads are relatively narrow, we usually pack up the bikes and go biking in other places.

Kerri brought attention to how North End residents have to leave the neighbourhood to find and use safe trails for both walking and biking. As Kerri explained, when it comes to family biking, this equates to needing a vehicle to transport bikes to safer spaces. Many people in the North End do not have access to vehicles, highlighting again how North End residents are restricted to unsafe spaces that lack supportive infrastructure for outdoor activities. As Cheryl added, "so yeah, there are a lot of barriers to us getting out and enjoying the weather unless you're gonna hop in a car and drive somewhere that is a park like setting." This common theme was also discussed by Mary, stating, "almost all the good parks are far away, the buses connect, but it takes a long time to get to from where I live. If you don't know the bus service, you can't get to them. Getting to them is hard if you don't have a vehicle." Shayla, Avalon, and Samara all advocated for more buses that had bike storage capacity which would enable them to explore other parts of the city, enabling wellness activities by bike. Women desired opportunities to explore other trails and parks by bike, with Shayla describing how bus and bike options would enable her to explore these wellness areas in other parts of city, "I could actually take my bike and check out some of the trails because they're always usually in the south of the city. And it'd be almost worthwhile to take two buses and bus down there and then bicycle around in nice trails and then you know bus back kind of thing." These barriers women face to access other wellness-promoting spaces in the city further confines the women to spaces where wellness activities are limited due to safety concerns and a lack of transportation options. The lack of bus options to enjoy these other urban spaces points to how the North End community is restricted in equitable

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

access to urban sources of wellness. In analyzing these barriers drawing from MACIW's (2023a) IGBA+ lens, these barriers point to the "socio-cultural and historical realities resulting from colonization and systemic racism" that contributes to Indigenous women's marginalization. The barriers women face prevent access to urban sources of wellness.

Conclusion

The chapter about barriers to Indigenous women's wellness begins with emphasizing how colonial tactics sought to dispossess Indigenous Peoples from their Lands. With relationships to Land as foundational for Indigenous women's wellness, this barrier is profound. Women drew attention to how colonial tactics aimed to disempower Indigenous women as Matriarchal leaders in society, with this restriction compounding issues of a positive cultural identity. Women described the damage of colonial systems separating children from their families as a profound wellness barrier that impacts the whole family as well as the community. For women who were Sixties Scoop survivors, they described how some suffered abuse as well as cultural fragmentation that impacted a sense of cultural identity. Colonial society imparted racism and misogyny in society whereas Indigenous girls and women became targeted for violence, with aims of severing women's rights to Land as protectors of these Lands. The injustice of women's profound safety barriers points to colonial society that produces extensive barriers to urban land access preventing women from forming relationships on the Land that would foster cultural wellness. These barriers to safe urban land also disrupts their children's opportunities for cultural wellness practices on the Land. Oppressive poverty also restricts women's wellness, barring them from opportunities to provide wellness activities such as picnics in parks or the purchase of bikes that would provide wellness recreation. Oppressive poverty extended to issues of homeless encampments in urban parks and trails that creates safety issues

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

and avoidance of these areas, again limiting opportunities to create relationships with the Land in these spaces. Women also described how oppressed socio-economic issues in their neighbourhood resulted in issues of high bike theft, limiting women's opportunities for wellness from biking. Women also described how there is a complete lack of investment in the North End that is embedded in stigma toward residents. This stigma and neglect equates to a lack of investment in park maintenance, maintained sidewalks and biking infrastructure that contribute to barriers to accessing urban land, particularly when women are with their children. Women also detailed that they experienced active transportation barriers that restricts women to their neighbourhood, with few opportunities to enjoy other neighbourhoods where investment in parks and trails is high. These limitations impose further wellness opportunities for women and their families. These extensive barriers to women's wellness are embedded in colonial tactics that target women in order to disempower women as Matriarchal leaders in society while aiming to sever their relationships with the Lands as protectors of these Lands (MACIW, 2023a). However, women continue to oppose these restrictions of colonial society, with continued advocacy for safety for women and their families, while challenging these barriers by seeking spaces and utilizing urban spaces they deem safe for cultural reclamation.

CHAPTER FIVE

**INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF TRAILS, PARKS, BIKING AND
IMPACTS ON WELLNESS**

Introduction

This chapter provides findings about Indigenous women's experiences of trails, parks, and biking and how these relationships impact wellness, with a focus on North End neighbourhood experiences. Themes regarding biking includes a) Biking as a catalyst for wholistic wellness, b) Biking Empowers Women: "It gives me a sense of freedom", c) Decolonizing biking: Reclaiming movement, d) Family Biking a Priority- "Make it more kid-friendly", and d) Gender specific bike shops contribute to women's biking. For trail use, the findings highlight how there is a significant lack of safe accessible trails particularly in the North End neighbourhood although women advocate for the importance of trails, prompting the theme of: e) Accessible trail use can promote Indigenous women's wellness. The chapter concludes with findings about park use, generating the themes of f) Reclaiming urban land- Parks as sites for cultural reclamation, g) Parks as a place for Sixties Scoop grandmothers' family time, h) Rematriation: Parks as place for Women's Full Moon ceremonies and i) Parks as places to connect with nature.

Biking as a Catalyst for Wholistic Wellness

For women who biked in the study, they referred to biking as a way to support wholistic wellness. Shayla described these benefits:

Well, I happen to totally believe in that exercise. It helps everything. It helps depression, it helps anxiety, it helps all sorts of mental health conditions and then being able to eat healthfully. So yeah, like when I'm able to bike, even just for trips to the library or so, like three or four times a week, I'm like, you know, it's at least 15, 20 minutes one way. And I'm like, all right, I'm getting exercise and then I got to come back. This is a cheap mode of transportation. It's great for exercise.

Shayla's emphasis that exercise contributes to mental health is an important finding when considering the mental health harm the women experience from oppressive conditions that take a toll on mental health. Biking enables Shayla to take control of her wellness practices that contributes to both physical and mental health benefits. Shayla's experiences show how women are utilizing biking as a form of active transportation that they can incorporate into their daily activities. Shayla's comment about how biking is a cheap mode of transportation is particularly important for women who are financially restricted due to oppressive poverty they experience. These wholistic benefits of biking was also recounted by Kerri in stating "its just feels good, everything, emotionally, physically, after a tough ride it leaves me feeling positive." Feelings of positivity is a significant mental health outcome that can counter the feelings of negativity women experience, such as racism that Kerri recounted is a pervasive issue for Indigenous Peoples. Biking can also contribute to managing physical health conditions particularly for Sharon who manages her diabetes condition. As Sharon described:

With the diabetes, it's just there's so much connected to it. And unfortunately being Aboriginal, that just puts up my risk of being a diabetic to begin with. It runs in the family. So my mother, as I said earlier, I lost her to complications to diabetes.

Sharon draws attention to how diabetes disproportionately effects Indigenous Peoples. Sharon's biking contributes to managing her diabetes, such as from weight loss from exercise that contributes to diabetes management. As Sharon elaborated, "the weight loss has been a definitely helped with health. I am able to do more, I can dance a full song now, with the added weight I didn't have the stamina for pow-wow dancing." The physical benefits of benefits for Kerri also contributed to her recovery from a leg amputation. She described:

I had only been an amputee for seven weeks, and I was walking so well. It's probably because I was really active throughout my teenage life, I played volleyball. I was really good in the back row. I was a bike training partner for a friend of mine, a triathlete. I rode my bike all the time.

Here again, the benefits of biking for physical health is extenuated with Kerri describing how her active biking lifestyle contributed to her physical recovery from a leg amputation. These wholistic benefits of biking shows that biking is more than active transportation, biking is a catalyst for wholistic wellness that spans mental, emotional and physical benefits. That biking can be considered a cheap form of exercise is important for the many women who experience oppressive poverty. However, biking is relatively cheap, owning a bike remains a challenge for many women due the cost of investing in a bike while being oppressed by poverty.

Biking Empowers Women: "It gives me a sense of freedom"

Biking is also empowering for women who bike. Biking enables women to utilized biking for their daily activities and is an empowering form of taking personal control of health and wellness. Biking also fosters a sense of skill mastery, with Kerri describing:

So that's the one sport that I really miss is biking. I really miss biking. Because I was really good at it. I like just to go- I love road biking. Before my leg [being amputated], I was really good with biking, being a road bike partner. We would bike all week, and when we bike in the wind, we could sustain a hard pace. I was really good at it...I like biking because it gives me a sense of freedom. And when I'm in that zone, then I can feel things and it just feels good.

Kerri's experiences of biking brings forth how biking is a form of skill mastery with Kerri being "really good at it." Adding that biking contributes to a sense of freedom is

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

particularly valuable for women who are restricted by oppressive conditions of safety issues and restrictions due to poverty. Shayla added physical movement is an important aspect of biking “because that's what humans are meant to do.” Biking also contributes to self-determined wellness practices, with Sharon explaining:

If my bike's working, I would rather ride my bike somewhere than take a bus any day. It's exercise, it's you know fresh air, helps clean out the lungs and all of that stuff, gets everything flowing properly, I find it very peaceful, it's definitely more relaxing than being on a bus.

Sharon brings attention to how biking enables active transportation as opposed to taking the bus, which does not provide the wellness benefits that biking does. Here again, the theme of biking as a form of wholistic wellness resurfaces, with an added emphasis of mental wellness from biking that produces feelings of peacefulness and relaxation. Biking also contributes to a sense of personal agency in wellness practices, that fosters a sense of freedom of choice for transportation.

Decolonizing Biking: Reclaiming Cultural Healthy Lifestyles

The women discussed how biking activities that have a cultural component is an important way for cultural connection and reclamation by bike. Shayla described a cultural biking event that she enjoyed:

The Urban Shaman did try to do like a bike and a language thing. There was two bike rides. So they were trying to do like different little art installations along the trail. And they had a bench that if you pressed a certain part, like it was public art, and they would speak in Inuit Cree or Ojibwe, Anishinaabemowin. The thing is that... Okay, the first one, we were by the upper Fort Garry, so if you had the app on, you could hear sort of the

history and I think it was supposed to be Inui and Anishinaabemowin and maybe English and French.

Several women advocated for biking with a cultural component. Samara proposed the following cultural biking activity:

I've more just had an idea I was, like oh, if they were doing like a cultural tour on bikes that would be amazing. I definitely would participate yeah like a cultural tour of Winnipeg, done by an elder who's obviously capable of riding a bike. Yeah, that would be really fun. So that kind of activity would help foster cultural connection.

Samara's idea for a cultural bike group shows a vision where people can come together to learn about culture by bike. Her enthusiasm for this idea brings forth how Indigenous women seek cultural activities in their recreation pursuits. Including elders show how women's views of positive recreational biking opportunities is for the whole community that incorporates Elders as a fundamental aspect of cultural activities. As Samara stated, these types of biking events would foster cultural connection for Indigenous participants. Kerri added to this idea of cultural biking, stating, "it would be cool to have a bike ride with Indigenous people, First Nations People as a group, because exercise is healing." Here, Kerri is adding how exercise can also contribute to healing among Indigenous Peoples through exercise and also through social community support of bringing Indigenous participants together to share these wellness benefits. These Indigenous group biking activities also enables groups of Indigenous participants to gather on the Land, exploring the Land by bike. Adding a cultural lens and the cultural benefits of biking was how Kerri described by being outside by bike also connected her with animals when asked if biking contributes to cultural wellness:

Yeah, it does actually. It was always funny because when I used to ride my bike from St. Andrews Airport to Headingly, it was always at the same time, and I always had a robin that would meet me at one post and then would fly with me and I would always talk to them too. I would always talk to birds. I would say, hey Robin, how are you doing? It's good to see you again and they would blip blip blip blip, chirp back at me and then and then that Robin would like, stop at a certain spot and then another bird, you know, sometimes it was a crow, sometimes it was a raven and they would fly with me. It's weird. I have this knack with animals.

Connecting with animals and nature by bike shows how Indigenous women maintain relationships in all activities, including biking. When asked how biking may contribute to Indigenous cultural practices Sharon added, "in ways yes, there's that care for Mother Earth, when we cycle, we're not polluting as much or using resources, so that saves Mother Earth too." Here again Indigenous women are incorporating cultural perspectives of biking, contributing to cultural connection and reclamation by bike.

Family Biking a Priority: "Make it more kid friendly"

Women also incorporated family biking in their biking advocacy. In particular, Josephine suggested a "Bike and Me" program that would bring together parents and their children as a biking activity. She described:

"Bike and Me" where you can take your kids, join a group and then just go biking, you know that'd be nice. Because like its kind of scary out there, so what I'm saying there should be like a formed woman's group, like a formed group of mothers with kids. so I think it'd be safer if we had a joint group to all bike together so we can all look out for one another.

Josephine's advocacy for group and family biking opportunities brings in the social wellness benefits of these activities, adding safety where "we can all look out for one another." Josephine is solving the issue of safety in advocating for group biking activities. Bringing women together provides gendered support for women, while also supporting their children's sense of community care and safety. Several women emphasized the importance of children's biking opportunities, with Josephine advocating "make it more kid-friendly, there's not really a trail to use in the North End, there's a trail by the river but it's kind of like a rough trail so hard for kids to go down." The importance of initiating children's biking opportunities in the community was also described by Shayla:

We had a meeting at Rosanna's place one time and she was talking to her neighbours, they had started a sort of like a group of the neighbourhood kids, Indigenous kids, and they go for little bike tours and rides and stop in the North End.

These Indigenous-led children's biking initiatives show how women envision biking as a family and community opportunity, while bringing forth women's emphasis on social wellness for their whole communities. The women's biking advocacy reflects MACIW's (2023a) guiding principle of centring Indigenous women's voices at every stage, which shows how women's voices form significant advocacy for creating more safe, inclusive urban experiences that extends to their families and communities.

Gender-Specific Community Bike Shops Contribute to Women's Biking

Several women also discussed the value of gendered community bike shop opportunities to support their biking activities. As Avalon described a community bike shop:

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

The Wrench is cool because they have two spirit and trans night as well. So like, if you don't feel comfortable, like if you're a woman or anything and you're worried about stuff, you can go on those nights, and then they help you with that. So there are places like that.

Shayla explained women-specific bike sessions and community bike shops have “just a different energy”, reflecting Avalon's sentiments about the benefits of gendered biking session opportunities. Shayla advocated for more of these community bike shops, “what I would like to see more, is more of the Bike Dump in areas like the William White neighborhood, like at the Pritchard Park.” The women's affinity and advocacy for gendered community bike shops bring into the role of gender and how women seek gender-specific supports to support their biking. The women show there is great value for community bike shops through their advocacy.

Trails: Accessible Trail Use Can Promote Indigenous Women's Wellness

This section explores Indigenous women's experiences of trails and how trail use impacts wellness. To start, women often surmised about trails in the North End by stating the question, “what trails?” This question of “what trails” emphasizes how, unlike other areas in the city, the North End neighbourhood is devoid of wellness-promoting, safe, maintained trails. Although the city of Winnipeg boasts an extensive, well maintained trail network, this investment in urban trails does not extend to the North End. Although women discussed many barriers to trail use due to lack of trail infrastructure and maintenance the women shared many benefits could be derived from safe trail use. As Mary stated about safe trail opportunities, “I'd be using it every day and I'd be encouraging other people to use it.” Avalon echoed this sentiment, stating, “I like hiking and stuff, too, like me and my fiancée and my friends we go to like Bird's Hill Park and do the trails there. And yeah, so like, I would definitely use trails if they were accessible and there [in the North End].” In Sharon's discussion of a river path on the river in winter that served as a trail

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

she said the benefits of this trail was “you've got that view of the river, you've got the greenery” pointing to how trails have benefit of connecting with nature and the Land, strengthening cultural connection in this engagement with nature. Cheryl also described the many benefits of trail walking:

Being outside in the fresh air, like today I'm gonna go out for a nice walk, it just rejuvenates you, it energizes you, it makes you feel good. It's so nice to see the change you know in the scenery where things are starting to get a little bit greener. I see the trees are starting to bud. So yeah, it just it makes me feel so good and it's energizing.

Here again, women are connecting benefits of trail use as a way to connect with nature by exposure to the changing seasons and scenery, forming a bonded relationship with the Land that fosters cultural wellness. Cheryl's description of engaging with nature as nature cycles through the seasons intimately connects women with nature through appreciation. Her addition of how trail walking is energizing and makes one feel good shows how trail use can contribute to holistic wellness benefits. Specifically, the energizing aspects of nature experiences while using trails contributes to emotional and mental wellness. Josephine expressed how trail use could also provide social benefits if done with a group, suggesting “we should all meet up, like hike and walk, walk and coffee afterwards, that'd be cool, like go for a nice walk. Have a hiking class as a group, because when you're in a group, if you get a lot of women together, it's like an activity, right?” Here again, women are advocating for community togetherness in their outdoor activities, bringing forth the significance of community togetherness in Indigenous women's wellness models. Josephine's emphasis on women-specific groups shows how women seek opportunities to come together with other women, that forms a support network while fostering social and emotional wellness. Yet, in seeking to understand Indigenous women's urban trail use,

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness premised that trail use promotes wellness, what became apparent is there are no safe trails in the North End neighbourhood, preventing Indigenous women, their families, and communities from the many benefits of safe trail use in urban settings.

Reclaiming Urban Land: Parks as Sites of Cultural Reclamation

The women's use of safe parks brought forth the theme of parks as sites of cultural reclamation. When talking about parks and culture, Sharon discussed there are several parks that hold cultural significance where cultural activities take place

St. John's Park, that one area. There's a few different places, like the Forks, an organization that's called Founding Nations of Manitoba. And well not so much this year, not so much since Covid, but we used to run the pow wows at the Forks. So yeah, the Oodena Park down there, that was our pow-wow area. "I absolutely love St. John's Park, especially the one section that they have there, the Native Circle., with a place to have a fire.

Parks as places for pow-wows and the benefits of pow-wows was detailed by Sharon, with benefits including "regular exercise, connection with community, connection with Aboriginal language, there's healing songs, honour songs, all contributes to my Aboriginal spirituality, and being in contact with Elders." In this statement, Sharon brings forth how pow-wows on the Land in park spaces provides regular exercise, which is a foundational aspect of physical wellness benefits. Adding that this activity connects one with community again highlights the importance of social community activities among women to support their wellness. An opportunity to connect with Elders on the land is an important way cultural knowledge transmission can be passed on from one generation to the next while engaging with the Land, while fostering cultural continuity among the community. The importance of

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

communal cultural activities in parks from a gendered perspective was shared by Josephine, stating “we need women's support groups, like, women's support circles where we can come together and like teach those traditions to our neighbouring friends, neighbouring people.”

Josephine's focus on teaching traditions is an important facet of park use that would contribute to cultural knowledge transmission and cultural continuity among Indigenous communities. In discussing the benefits of having medicinal gardens in parks, Mary also added to this sentiment of how park spaces could be utilized for cultural knowledge transmission and Land-based learning:

Oh my God, that would be so amazing if we could do that, because then people like myself would be able to go into these parks and tell our kids, sit down with our kids and say this medicine is used for this, this herb is used for this, this grass was used for this and to be able to have that ability to teach our next generation about our cultures and our teachings, our medicines and our herbs would be astronomically amazing. That would be something I would love to see.

Mary's profound enthusiasm of the prospect of medicinal gardens in parks shows how women desire opportunities for Land-based education to the younger generations. Teaching children about medicinal plants in park spaces is a value contribution to intergenerational knowledge transmission that contributes to cultural continuity across generations. The teaching of plants while on the land is a significant opportunity to foster children's cultural and spiritual wellness, while undoing the harms of cultural fragmentation from colonial acts on Indigenous culture across generations. Adding to these benefits, is how these cultural activities on the Land also fosters spiritual wellness by connecting with the Land and with other community members, with spirituality being a fundamental aspect of wellness for Indigenous Peoples. Sharon added

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

how she participated in other cultural activities at parks “different gatherings for different reasons. And again that area in St. John's Park, I've had feasts there. We've had a memorial fire there. My daughter's cousin had passed away, so on his one-year anniversary we gathered there.”

By participating in these cultural activities while on the land, Indigenous Peoples are also reclaiming land for cultural reclamation while strengthening community wellness for Indigenous communities. Parks as places for ceremonies shows how Indigenous Peoples are reclaiming urban land for cultural resurgence through ceremony. Ceremonies on the land hold deep spiritual and emotional benefits that supports cultural wellness. The women emphasized parks are important places for family time, as Cheryl described:

As a family we often would go to St. Vital Park and then Kildonan Park too and just, you know, find a barbecue. Sometimes we even brought our own little portable propane barbecue and set up some games and just enjoyed a meal and being outside. If we could find something closer to the pool and the kids would enjoy a little bit of swimming as well. Yeah, and just have a picnic and spend the day outdoors in the sun.

Kerri also reflected parks as places for family time from a community perspective:

I think everybody at Kildonan Park is there just to have a good time too. And you know, there's usually a lot of kids, so you're kind of looking out for your kids and you're looking out for other kids that are there too.

Mary added to this focus on parks as family and community time on the land:

I've had a couple of the kids' birthday parties there in the summer. Met with family and community members there for meetings and stuff like that. So yeah, there's a lot of times where I've met people in the limited green space that we have in the North End.

Community gatherings are important.

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Public cultural activities also connects Indigenous Peoples with their culture that may have been fragmented through colonial systems of cultural genocidal tactics. For example, Sharon reconnected with her traditional culture by passing by a community centre where a cultural activity was taking place:

I was actually walking down the back lane behind Broadway Neighborhood Center. And at that point in time, they had powwow practices. So we heard the drum and stopped and listened at the door. One of the ladies came and introduced herself and invited us in. And I've been a part of the circle ever since.

The importance of cultural representation in public spaces was echoed by Kerri, who elaborated on this point:

In the city, where there is a huge First Nations population comparatively, we don't have a lot of parks named after First Nations people. We have roadways named, but parks we don't really have, other than the Forks, which is still insignificant, it would be nice to have more understanding of the culture in parks. Winnipeg is still very colonial, changing the name of Bishop Grandin is one thing, but we need more parks with cultural awareness. At the Forks they have some, but it doesn't really go into the people that were actually here. Like the Cree, Ojibwe, the many different communities.

To address this issue, Kerri added:

I would like to see more placards about things in parks. Like, there was a lot of places that were taken over, like Assiniboine park, was an old Métis settlement. We're so underrepresented in parks, they have parks named after, there is Sinclair park because he was killed by a police officer, we need to have parks with some significance.

Kerri's advocacy points the importance of Indigenous cultural representation in parks. As Kerri described, park spaces are still viewed as colonial spaces. Advocacy to rename parks and include cultural representations in park settings challenges colonial urban landscapes, promoting a shift towards more culturally inclusive urban environments that welcomes Indigenous Peoples.

Cultural representation in parks could also include Indigenous languages, with language being an important aspect of Indigenous culture. As Sharon explained:

I don't have the language, so that was a big barrier just in getting to know my family. Learning language, that'll also make it easier for the dancing too because you know sometimes if you don't know what they're saying you don't know what that song is about, because there's healing songs there's honor songs, and like I said when you don't know the language, I know the beat, but I don't know what is being talked about.

Adding to the theme of cultural representation in parks, Samara surmised, “literally just protecting the space because it is a space that Indigenous people use and has sacred links to it as well. It is preserving Land and space for Indigenous people that they have a cultural link to.” Here, Samara brings attention to sacredness of the Land and the significance of this Land for Indigenous cultural wellness. Protecting these spaces speaks to how Indigenous women in particular are traditional caregivers and protectors of the Land (MACIW, 2023a). The health and wellness of the Land is intricately linked to the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples where protection of the Land means the protection of what is sacred for Indigenous Peoples.

Parks as a Place for Sixties' Scoop Grandmothers' Family Time

A significant finding of Indigenous women's experiences of park use was how parks were sites for Indigenous grandmothers to have family time, fostering wellness for the whole family. This is significant to highlight considering numerous women in the study are also Sixties

Scoop survivors who are now grandmothers. Mary highlighted how family recreational park use contributes to mental wellness, “it saves my sanity it also helps me get some fresh air the kids get to get some energy out and play.” Kerri added about family park use:

We love going to the parks. I'm their favorite grandma...In the summertime we'll walk to the parks. One park has a splash pad, we go as a family. If we go anywhere as a big group, we go to Kildonan Park. And there we will usually do a lot of walking there. That's what we do. We usually have a barbecue.

Sharon added to the benefits of park use for grandmothers, stating, “being able to have areas where I can chase after the grandchildren”, showing how park space creates opportunities for grandmothers to bond with their grandchildren, while contributing to cultural continuity. Kerri, Sharon, Mary and other women emphasized how parks are sites for family time, significant for these women in particular, who are all grandmothers battling the impacts of being Sixties Scoop survivors that fragmented their cultural identity. These activities contribute to healing for these women, particularly for Kerri who suffered childhood abuse from her adoptive family. Parks as sites for family time for these survivors enables the women to reestablish traditional maternal roles, benefiting both the women and their children. The mental health benefits, such as Mary describing how these playful opportunities with grandchildren “saves her sanity” shows how these activities contribute to many facets of wellness. Adding to these benefits, is a spiritual strengthening for the women who are reinstating their maternal roles while on the Land. Through these family experiences, women are maintaining the “highly revered role of motherhood” which is “a position of leadership and responsibility for nurturing and providing care” (MACIW, 2023a) for their families that extends to community care.

Rematriation: Parks as Place for Women's Full Moon Ceremonies

Adding to Indigenous women's cultural activities that can take place in park settings, several women discussed attending Full Moon Ceremonies, which is a gender-specific Indigenous woman's ceremony. As Avalon described:

I go to Full Moon Ceremonies. Yeah, me and my mom and my sister, we used to go to a place for the ceremonies, they would have a fence so no one can get in. But it would still not be the safest because we'd sometimes get people yelling or screaming at us. But sometimes there is like, my mom's friends with a person who does Full Moon Ceremony out of her own house. So we'll like, meet at the West End Women's Center, have a knowledge keeper there, we'll either have it at the West End Women's Center or we'll have it at her house. And then we'll eat, and then we have a fire in her backyard and stuff, and then we'll be sharing a circle and stuff like that. So it's either at the West End Women's Center or at her house. But when it's at the West End Women's Center, we like stay together, we all are aware of our surroundings, we're all like, like we all talk about the stuff before we go out, because when it's the moon, is when its dark.

Full Moon Ceremonies are vital gendered cultural practices for many Indigenous women that connects directly with the Land and nature, following the lunar cycles. Safe urban parks could provide a space for Indigenous women's spiritual renewal and connection to natural cycles through the practice of Full Moon ceremonies. As MACIW (2023a) detailed, rematriation "is an approach that centres Matriarchal knowledge, ceremonies, leadership and connections to the Land" (p. 23). This rematriation of urban land supports gendered and culturally relevant communal spaces that contrasts colonial ideas of urban land use. From a gendered perspective, Full Moon Ceremonies also place Indigenous women in Matriarchal leadership roles, enabling

women to guide and lead spiritual practices. This empowerment is significant in asserting Indigenous women's roles as cultural and spiritual leaders within their communities. These ceremonies strengthen Indigenous women's Matriarchal roles, significantly detailed by Kerri when she stated traditional Indigenous culture was led by Matriarchs prior to colonialism. Engaging in these gendered ceremonies reestablishes Indigenous women's gendered cultural identity and provides a sense of belonging and unity among women, countering the devaluation and marginalization Indigenous women experience in the settler colonial state. Ceremonial practices may also offer therapeutic benefits of contributing to mental and spiritual wellness that is strengthened by connecting to the Land and nature. The practice of Full Moon Ceremonies can also contribute to Indigenous women's healing from gendered and racist attacks as a result of colonial positioning of Indigenous women in settler colonial society.

Despite the multidimensional benefits of practicing Indigenous women's ceremonies, the practice of Full Moon Ceremonies in the North End is fraught with barriers, as Avalon described. To have accessible and safe Full Moon Ceremonies, Avalon suggested having a fenced in area for Full Moon Ceremonies stating, "I would say, maybe if there were parks for Full Moon Ceremonies that maybe there could be like a like a fenced area for ceremonies and stuff, and the person can book it, something with a key to lock in the area." Avalon points to the issue of safety in participating in women's cultural activities in urban settings, highlighting this pervasive issue in Indigenous women's urban experiences.

Parks as Places to Connect with Nature

Parks are important sites for connecting with nature, with nature experiences fundamental to wellness experiences on the Land. Sharon detailed the benefits of park use in supporting wellness such as being "exposed to the greenery, the air, that you're not surrounded by cement

and glass.” Sharon detailed a park she visits, “it's right by kind of a creek. So, in the summertime you get all the ducks and everything there. They've got the flowers and little paths in there.”

Here, Sharon introduces how urban park space connects with nature elements. Mary advocated for nature elements in North End parks, stating:

If we could do some kind of trail stuff, have different types of medicine growing, different types of plants growing. Like the Forks, for instance, they planted that grove where there's a bunch of trees that produce fruit and they produce flowers and they produce all kinds of things that anybody is, you're able to go and get them. So if we could do something like that in a North End park where there's a garden and there's fruit trees and you know, I think that would go a long way.

Mary also advocated for the inclusion of lilac bushes and flowers in urban settings to support community wellness, highlighting the cultural and therapeutic importance of nature. Mary's advocacy for incorporating nature elements like medicinal plants, flowering plants and fruit trees in parks highlights a view of park space that is not restricted by parceled-off urban land development. Ideal park space is viewed as including gardens, forests, and fruit-bearing trees as part of thriving ecosystems. These thriving park spaces where nature abounds would contrast the congested feelings associated with the “concrete and glass” of urban living that Sharon detailed. The impact of nature experiences on Indigenous women's wellness experiences is detailed in the following chapter.

Conclusion

Women's discussions about the benefits of biking was founded on how biking can contribute to wholistic wellness. Women emphasized biking was a relatively inexpensive exercise opportunity that helped with managing health conditions and contributed to fitness for

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

cultural activities such as pow-wow dancing. Biking also contributed to women's sense of freedom which is particularly beneficial when considering the restrictions women face from oppressive poverty and access to safe Land. Women shared their visions of biking as a way to connect culturally with other Indigenous community members, such as cultural bike rides that included Elders. The premise that biking with other Indigenous Peoples as healing points to the significance of biking opportunities for Indigenous women who seek healing from colonial harm. Women advocated for biking opportunities with their children as a group with other women, pointing to social wellness benefits these activities would provide. Women added the value of community bike shops with gender-specific sessions as a way to support women's biking, pointing again to women's advocacy for social wellness opportunities. In discussing trail use and benefits, the women advocated for safe trail use as a way to support wellness opportunities on the Land. Women described how trails are sites to connect with nature that would support cultural wellness through relationships with nature. Nature experiences offered by trails produces energizing mental and emotional benefits, that contributes to a sense of peace and cultural connection. Parks were places for women's cultural reclamation with a focus on family time that strengthened family bonds while undoing the harms of family separation many of the women experienced throughout their lives. Women described cultural activities in parks such as pow-wows, feasts, and ceremonies that instilled cultural reclamation on the Land for the whole community. Women's visions of parks included medicinal gardens that provide sites for Land-based education, enabling women to enact their gendered roles as cultural educators. The importance of cultural representation on parks was advocated by the women, who sought urban spaces where Indigenous culture can be celebrated, while undoing the harm of stigma and discrimination experienced in broader society. Importantly, women described how parks were

sites for grandmother's time with their children and grandchildren, which is substantial in the lives of grandmothers who are Sixties Scoop survivors who experienced familial cultural fragmentation. Women also utilized urban parks for gendered ceremony, enabling women to reinstate their roles as Matriarchal leaders in community in the practice of gendered cultural activities that contributes to rematriation. Parks were also sites where women and their community could develop relationships with nature, a foundational relationship that supports women's cultural wellness.

CHAPTER SIX

**NATURE EXPERIENCES AND THEIR IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S
WELLNESS**

Introduction

In this chapter, findings extend from the previous chapter with a focus on nature experiences and how nature experiences contribute to Indigenous women's wellness. The following overarching themes arose in the findings: a) nature and mental wellness, b) nature as a sanctuary from urban life, c) relational nature relationships, d) nature as a source of medicines from Mother Earth, e) spirituality and protective nature elements, f) connection with water- "we honour water as women", g) relationships with animals fosters wellness, h) Indigenous women's caring stewardship with nature, and i) community gardens as sites for knowledge transmission and cultural continuity.

Nature and Mental and Spiritual Wellness

In discussing the benefits of nature for women's wellness, the theme of nature supporting mental and spiritual wellness was prominent. For Samara, she described how viewing nature and its changing seasons reflected mental health:

In the spring there was no greenery yet, but the snow had also melted. So it was that in-between brown phase. Which looked a bit depressing. But I think within a week, like, everything was sprouting, you know, leaves were popping up, and it was really beautiful. Samara concluded, "being outdoors is a big thing that I do for my mental health." Samara's reflections of how the brownness of nature is a bit depressing and was contrasted when nature was in bloom, providing a sense of beauty and renewal contributes to improved mental health status. This sentiment was also reflected by Cheryl, who also saw the changing nature cycles to spring and summer fostered a sense of mental wellness through the appreciation of nature renewal. Mental wellness benefits from nature experiences was a common theme expressed by women in the sharing circle. As one woman described, being able to care for plants, gardens and

animals brings calm and peace. Another woman added, "nature is a stress reliever." These outcomes from nature experiences that support mental wellness is significant when considering the many harms to mental wellness the women experience such as the stress from oppressive poverty and constant fears for safety. Another woman in the sharing circle described spending time in nature as "very, very healing." The healing properties from nature experiences is a significant wellness outcome when considering how many women have been harmed and traumatized by colonial societal conditions of racism and misogynistic assaults toward women. Healing from adverse childhood experiences is also needed among women, particularly those who are Sixties Scoop survivors. Shayla added to the benefits of nature experiences particularly in winter, describing how she would like to visit indoor gardens that are in the city:

Well, the whole idea of like plants, you know, like in the middle of winter, that greenery and just feeling the oxygen. I thought that would be awesome to go check that out. But yeah, just a chance to walk about and have a quiet meditation, like a walking meditation maybe in the middle of winter. But even now in the spring, I just like to see what they have there, the way it plants, and the butterfly gardens or something.

These indoor gardens would provide nature experiences that contrast the barren concrete of urban settings. Avalon reflected this sentiment:

Because in the city you're just stuck with like grey buildings and stuff and like it just takes a toll on people's mental health. I've watched my uncle; he had a beautiful garden and then his friend died and he couldn't live with his friend anymore. So I had to find him a new place. So the place he's at right now, there's like no greenery around him. It's just it's taken him from like a place of happiness and better mental health, better physical health, to way low, like mental health at the bottom of the barrel, physical health also at

the bottom of the barrel, because it's not safe enough for him to walk or ride around in his area.

Avalon draws in the significance of gardens in urban settings, and how gardens provide a profound mental health benefit. The value of gardens was a common theme expressed by the women in this study, showing how gardens offer nourishment physically from the harvest of plants, as well spiritual benefits by intimately connecting with plants, while caring for plants fosters emotional and mental wellness. The spiritual and mental wellness benefits of gardening was further discussed by Avalon drawing from her uncle's experience:

It was a huge part of his mental health. He would go out and tend the garden. He'd have like so many different plants, like anise, licorice, poppies, irises, sumac, sage, cedar, like, kanik-kanik, tobacco. He had everything. And then he used to be so full of light and happiness, and moving to this new place, just... it's soul-crushing, he obviously misses being out in nature, it's just really draining him. It's like he used to be the full rainbow spectrum and now he's just like dark grey.

Avalon's description of how the loss of gardening is "soul-crushing" shows that gardening has deep spiritual benefits through the intimate connection to nature that gardening brings. The women were strong advocates for gardens in urban spaces which points to value gardens have in supporting wellness for the whole community that enables connection with nature.

Nature as Wellness Reserve from Urban Life

The women discussed how nature provides a wellness reserve from urban life. As Samara elaborated:

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

I think modern life, and like living in the city, it's like it's very loud, right? Like things are constantly going, there's constantly noises around, and it's like when you go out to nature, it's like that volume's turned down, and it's a sense of peace. Even if you're with a friend chatting, but it's like because the only other thing you can really hear is maybe the wind rustling through the trees or the birds or something. So it's like the volume's turned way down, and I think cultivates this inner sense of peace, which I think is really grounding. Because I think, yeah, when the volume's turned up, it can be more prone to kind of feeling anxious and that kind of thing.

The way nature can ground a person with the Land was also discussed by Kerri, who often sought to ground herself in nature to support her wellness. Samara's reflections centre on the quietness of nature instilling a sense of peace. This sense of peace contributes to emotional, mental and spiritual wellness in profound ways, such as reducing feelings of anxiety from loud city noise. The determinant to wellness that the city noises produces was also recounted by Cheryl:

Oh, you know it's it recharges, relaxes and recharges, yeah, it's amazing, I don't know maybe it's the noise too right, it's different noises. Well and at home like in the city you almost become immune to the noise, like we're on a path almost to St. Boniface Hospital so we always hear ambulances and there's a fire station not too far away too so ambulances and fire trucks and you don't even really think about it anymore it's like, oh a siren yeah, but when you're out at the lake and you don't hear that very often.

Further adding to these points about nature as an urban reserve, Samara added:

I think it's important for well-being in the short term, I think sometimes you feel down because you focus so much on... like internally and so it's kind of like it [focusing on

nature] allows you to focus externally and sort of take that focus away, there's other things going on in the world. You know the world might be burning but this little bird is still eating away you know living life, it can kind of almost draw down the beautiful raw simplicity of life in a way that can be comforting.

With this reflection, Samara brings attention to how nature experiences provide a place to focus away from any inner turmoil that may be impeding mental wellness. Internal worry can be all-consuming when stress is high, and nature offers a break from internalized difficulties. That nature brings forth “the beautiful raw simplicity of life” that provides comfort shows how a person can reflect on life through nature that offers comfort, balancing out feelings that may be causing mental and emotional strife. Mary described an urban wellness reserve in describing one of her favorite urban parks in the city:

It's like having a forest right in the middle of the city. It's beautiful, you can see, there's owls, there's deer, there's eagles, you know, all of these beautiful woodland creatures and there's medicine right there, um, there's cedar trees, there's sweet grass that's growing wild, there's sage that's growing wild.

A forest in the city contrasts the “concrete and glass” of urban living. This urban nature reserve provides home for animals in which Indigenous women can forge a more intimate relationship with animals in their natural settings. Mary's points about cedar, sage and sweet grass growing wildly denotes the value of these spaces as a way to connect Indigenous Peoples with their traditional plants that offer medicines while strengthening relationships with the Land. The women also detailed the value of nature experiences outside of the city, with Shayla exclaiming:

So, it's just awesome to be outside of the city, away from the sirens and away from the bad drivers and the smell of gasoline and exhaust and everything and just, you know, be out in nature and smelling good air. And it's just so restorative.

The restorative aspect of nature is particularly profound for Indigenous women, as many women seek healing from colonial harms. The restorative aspect of nature experiences also counters all the stress caused by oppressive poverty and worries for safety that pervades women's urban experiences. Despite these benefits from nature experiences beyond the city, barriers in access persist among women. As Cheryl stated:

We don't see a lot of that offered especially to get out of the city. You know even paying a fee if they had to charter a bus and, you know, take you out to Bird's Hill or Selkirk in the forest areas around there to medicine pick, like sage or sweet grass.

Cheryl and Shayla bring attention to the value of nature experiences that exist beyond the city limits, as places where city noises fade and emotional, mental and spiritual wellness are fostered through the restorative properties of nature. Being able to pick medicines is a way to foster cultural relationships with the Land. These experiences contribute to stories of medicines in women's lives, which the MACIW (2023a) IGBA+ lens acknowledges as important sources of cultural knowledge.

Relational Nature Relationships: The Significance of Offerings

For several women, their relational relationship with nature included providing offerings to nature. For Kerri, the practice of giving offerings was a constant aspect of her nature experiences, detailing:

Everywhere I go, I always have tobacco with me and I always leave a bit wherever we go. We go canoeing and I always, every lake we go into, I leave a little package. I have

sage, sweet grass, and cedar, and then I always put in like a jelly bean, a dime, and nail clippings.

Sharon also provided offerings by feeding the river, “I know when I was living on Luxton there, twice a year I would go down and feed the river. We have a feast and then we take a bowl down and specifically for the river itself.” These cultural practices show how women form a relationship of giving back and giving to nature. This reciprocal aspect of women's relationships with nature is in stark contrast to colonial relationships that view nature as part of an extractive resource, with few if any considerations of giving back from what was taken. Rather, women are replenishing nature through offerings, showing the caregiving nature of women's relationships with nature. With Sharon feeding the river as part of her community feast, it is also shown that for Sharon, she sees the sentient living quality of the river, once again in stark contrast to colonial views of water as nothing more than an extractive resource. These relationships with nature are centred on kinship.

Nature as a Source of Spiritual Protection and Medicines from Mother Earth

Drawing from Sharon's view of nature as a sentient being this understanding was also apparent in Sharon's discussion about nature as a source of medicines from Mother Earth. As Sharon stated:

We're a Land connected culture, right? So you know, so without the connection to Mother, we're not going to get our medicines. Because of my tradition, nature is a big part of it. We use different things as medicine come from Mother Earth. We honor Mother Earth. The four directions. Grandmother Moon, Grandfather Sun. It's all connected.

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Here again, Sharon shares the view of nature as part of sentient being of Mother Earth. Nature is discussed as deeply connected to cultural life. Nature as a source of medicines shows how nature is much more than something of viewing pleasure. Rather, nature provides essential cultural medicines that have a profound impact on women's wellness. As the women previously highlighted, medicinal plants carry spiritual properties and from growing and harvesting these plants a spiritual relationship is fostered. Sharon's emphasis that "we honour Mother Earth" again starkly contrasts colonial views of nature as an extractive resource devoid of spiritual life. For Mary, she emphasized the connection between medicinal plants and fostering her spirituality:

My spiritual wellness is connected to my cultural teachings and my medicines-tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass. Coming to spring, I will have my medicines growing in my yard. So my spiritual wellness is tied to nature. It's tied to me being able to grow my own vegetables. It's tied to me being able to pick and grow my own medicines. It's tied to being part of a thriving community.

Mary's discussion brought forth important themes of nature and spirituality and how growing her own vegetables and medicines contributes to her personal agency in directing her healthy practices. These traditional practices reinstates cultural practices in relationship with nature and the Land. Being able to pick and grow one's own medicines also contributes to self-determination that counters colonial rule imposed on Indigenous women that eroded Indigenous women's self-determined cultural practices (MACIW, 2023a). Mary's addition that her spiritual wellness includes the wellness of her community that may also thrive brings forth again how women view their personal wellness as interrelated with their community's wellness.

The theme of spirituality and nature was pronounced particularly with Kerri's experiences. Kerri often detailed the spiritual world as part of her life. Kerri explained her experiences of a spiritual issue, "there was always someone trying to get in to our house, with someone constantly at the window." Kerri explained she could sense non-living people walking by her house, "so we had to ground our house especially hard when we were there. We had crystals and we had rocks and we had a cup of water in every window, for protection." Kerri's use of nature elements as a form of protection from spiritual attacks pronounces the spiritual quality of nature that is ignored in western colonial perspectives. Rather, Kerri's cultural understanding of nature as imbedded with spiritual protective qualities shows the power of nature in women's lives. Nature elements, including rocks that are often seen as unliving in colonial constructs, are transformed within Indigenous cultural understandings, revealing a valuable resource that provides protection.

Cheryl also described the importance of experiences with medicinal plants to support health and wellness:

Plant walks, like nature walks, things like that. I would enjoy, I did go on one like maybe four years ago where medicine picking because it's really neat to be out on the land with somebody that is very skilled with knowing about plants and medicines and just talking about those different types of plants and medicines, and how what their use is and how it could be helpful for your health. So, I would like to do something like that.

Cheryl's reflections about the significance of cultural Land-based education from a knowledgeable cultural teacher point to the added values of medicine picking. Medicines from the Land are a traditional Indigenous source of health valued by the women in this study. Samara added Indigenous ceremonies use native leaves and plants, and the importance of these native

plants for ceremony and spiritual practices, pointing to the need for access to plants for ceremonies for Indigenous women and their communities.

Connection with Water: "We honor water as women, we're water carriers"

A gendered perspective of nature in women's discussions arose about the significance of water. For Kerri, water was very grounding and supported her holistic wellness. Kerri elaborated:

If I need to be grounded, I go to the water. Water is very grounding. And like, I love water. Absolutely love water. We go canoeing all the time. We go backwards canoeing. And I'll be in the water from like nine o'clock in the morning until nine o'clock at night. And I'll be in the water all the time. I can sleep on the water. Water for me is so beneficial and I just have such a good relationship with water because it's very grounding.

Kerri's affinity for water was pronounced, describing water as "so beneficial" while also highlighting experiences of water as a relationship. The grounding power of water aids in mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellness. This relationship with water was also pronounced by Sharon who included the river as part of her community feast. Samara also described her affinity for water, explaining she grew up near water sources. She added:

I like seeing water features when I'm hiking. I think too, just because that, like, just the sound of water, even if it's very like a slow trickle or whatever, like if there's any sound as well, it's pretty nice, very peaceful.

Samara's addition of that the sound of water can evoke a sense of peacefulness denotes the mental and emotional benefits of being around water. From a gendered lens, Sharon contributed to women's relationship with water in stating, "we honor water as women, we're water carriers." This honouring of water shows a sacred relationship with water. Adding to this

sacredness is how women indeed carry water in their wombs, bringing attention to how women's sacred roles in giving birth is deeply connected to water. As MACIW (2023a) added a gendered connection to water, stating, "thus, when we speak of women, we consider this to be inclusive of, but not limited to, children, family, community, nation, wellness, justice, land and water" (p. 14). With this statement, water is understood as a fundamental aspect of Indigenous womanhood.

Kinship Relationships with Animals Fosters Wellness

Women also discussed the value of engaging with animals as part of their cultural understanding. Sharon discussed her appreciation for animals in the following way:

Well, when I was living on Scotia, it was absolutely excellent because, well, one, I was able to look out my window and I'd see the river. It was amazing how many animals we see come up from the river, we've seen birds, we've seen deer. One morning I woke up to my street, there was at least 20 geese. Because it's really got lots of trees and everything. There's an eagle that's right by that place.

Here, Sharon shows how natural places in the city become homes for animals, connecting with people in urban settings. Sharon expressed how seeing animals was ideal and produced a sense of appreciation and amazement. For Mary, she reflected cultural teachings about animals in stating, "I have a little rabbit that keeps coming into my yard every now and then. I try to leave vegetables up for the rabbit so the rabbit's not starving. But I don't eat rabbit. So I don't kill rabbits. I don't eat deer, so I don't kill deer." Mary explained she was taught how to hunt when she was younger, and she abided by her cultural teachings about animals. Kerri also maintains a strong connection to animals in urban settings:

Wherever we go, its funny, we see eagles and golden eagles all the time. The little birds always like me, so I'm good with that. And like I say, robins, yeah, I see robins all the

time. We have a robin's nest in our apple tree right now, so it's kind of cool. For some reason, I've got this thing with animals.

Kerri's "thing with animals", in other words a deep relationship with animals, reflects Indigenous values toward animals and how Indigenous Peoples often have a kinship bond with animals. Kerri's connection with animals was illustrated in her experience where she helped a yearling moose who was stuck in a town centre:

He comes right up to me and he just looks at me and he's really tall, right? Because he's still just a yearling, but he's, you know, they're still pretty tall. He's like 7 feet, you know. And he's like, just looks at me, and he puts his nose onto my face, and then he puts snot on me, and then I said, oh, thanks, you know. And then he walked away, and then I jumped down. He looks back at me, and I said, yeah, yeah. And then he jumps the fence, and I jump the fence, you know, and then climb down. And he's waiting for me. And I said, you know, this would be so much easier if you just walked with me. And so we walked out of town with him. I walked right down town and just talk to him like he was a horse or something, you know, and he was butting my head, you know, and all this. And so I just walked him, talking to him just like anything, just talk, talk, talk, talk.

Kerri reiterated, "I have a strong connection with animals, completely." Kerri's care for the moose shows the cultural caregiving qualities women have with animals. Samara elaborated on these cultural relationships:

Animals are a central thing in Indigenous culture, like seeing animals actually as relations. And I think just, even if you don't necessarily see them as a relation, just spending time outdoors. Like the other day, sitting in Birds Hill Park and just watching the little birds, because we put some little seeds on the table as we were having our

barbecue. Just watching them fly down, pick one up and fly away. I think it helps build that appreciation and care for nature, which I think is really important.

As Samara stated, animals are a central aspect of Indigenous culture, highlighting how relationships with animals form a foundational aspect of cultural wellness. Samara's emphasis that care for animals is "really important" shows the caregiving values Indigenous Peoples hold for animals. As many of the women detailed, outdoor activities include fostering relationships with animals, denoted as an integral part of Indigenous life. Connecting with nature is a connection with the Land's inhabitants, reflecting the principle of re-matriation that centres Matriarchal connections with the Land (MACIW, 2023a).

Indigenous Women's Caring Stewardship with Nature

The caregiving value women expressed for nature was pronounced in discussions. Cheryl's reflection shows how caring for nature impacts emotional wellness in stating:

You know, I feel sad in a lot of situations when I walk in trails and green spaces because of the litter. I feel, you know, like what's becoming of our planet. There's so much litter and garbage around. You know, we have to take care of it for it to be, to continue to exist, right? So, that makes me really sad.

The fact that Cheryl has feelings of sadness when nature is not cared for and treated with disrespect reflects a deep emotional connection with nature, point to how the well-being of nature impacts the well-being of those who have an appreciation for nature. Cheryl also reflected concern about the challenges animals have in urban habitats, stating:

And the other thing that I think too is, you know, our trails sometimes seem to condense because there's so much building going on. And that pushes the wildlife, you know, out of their habitat and into like public roadways and streets.

Cheryl challenges colonial urban development that disregards the negative impact that development has on animal populations. Samara added to this sentiment:

I think it's also important, just in the sense of having an appreciation for nature, I think, is something that we really need, given the impact that capitalism is having on the globe, which will ultimately impact us. And I think we're so disconnected from nature, which is why we've gotten to this point, that we need that connection with nature. So yeah, I think it's important for well-being, but also for fighting for sustainability.

Samara draws conclusions from a cultural perspective of caring and protecting nature, and how important nature is for human well-being. Adding that she sees caring from nature as part of a fight for sustainability brings attention to Indigenous cultural views of caring for nature as part of a long-term view of sustainability. These views of nature sustainability are not considered when urban development continues to encroach on natural areas, forcing animals out of their homes, and limiting nature's ability to thrive in urban settings. Samara's reflections also bring in a gendered lens in caring for nature, with Indigenous women holding traditional roles as caregivers and protectors of the Land and its inhabitants (MACIW, 2023a).

Community Gardens as Sites for Knowledge Transmission and Cultural Continuity

Nature experiences derived from community gardens was advocated by several women in the study. When asked about the importance of vegetable gardens, Mary responded, "it's very important. With the rising cost of food today we need to be able to have some type of a way to grow our own food." She added, "wellness to me is being able to have access to healthy foods." Community gardens were emphasized as important sites for Land-based cultural teachings, with Mary advocating "there needs to be these gardens to teach about Indigenous medicines to the next generation." Josephine added to this sentiment, stating it would be nice to get out of the

house with our kids to pick fruits and vegetables, a “take and replace” way, to replant and have the gardens each season.” Josephine concluded “showing our kids how to garden, to have a support circle for women to teach their children gardening, we could have a support circle like that.” Here again, women’s vision of wellness activities is founded on social togetherness.

Women focusing on gardens as sites to teach children brings forth women’s desires for being cultural educators to younger generations and to their community. Importantly, community gardens offer sites for cultural knowledge transmission in direct connection with nature, on the Land. These activities would reinforce cultural reclamation for the whole community. The women’s desire to be leaders in this education would also reestablish women’s Matriarchal roles in community that was assaulted by colonial attacks (MACIW, 2023a).

Conclusion

Women’s experiences with nature and impacts on wellness is profoundly related to mental and spiritual wellness. Women reflected on how viewing the changing seasons of spring renewal fostered feelings of reenergizing mental and emotional benefits while engagement with nature brought healing. The benefits of nature connection through gardening was an often-discussed wellness benefit for the whole community. Gardens often women sites to maintain their roles as cultural educators through land-based education with nature. Nature experiences provided a wellness reserve form urban life, contrasting the unliving “cement and glass” that permeates urban environments. Women’s relationships with nature also encompassed a relational quality through women’s provisions of offerings back to nature. Women viewed nature as sentient which is in stark contrast to colonial views of nature as an extractive resource. Nature was also a source of spiritual power and medicines, providing women with elemental protection of the spiritual world. The profound gendered relationship women have with water was

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

pronounced, with an understanding that water is honoured with women being water carriers in their wombs. Women also maintain a kinship relationship with animals, and through their relationships with animals their cultural wellness is supported. Women also maintain a gendered caregiving support of nature, reflecting on how damage from encroaching urban development on nature impacts their emotional and mental wellness. Nature experiences are therefore a fundamental aspect of supporting women's wellness embedded in cultural understandings of nature as kin.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION- INDIGENOUS WOMEN RECLAIMING BIKING, TRAIL AND PARK

USE FOR CULTURAL WELLNESS RESURGENCE AND NATURE AS KINSHIP

Introduction

In this chapter, the results of this research and its contribution to the literature are discussed, weaving together findings from both women's interviews and from the women's sharing circle. Collectively, study findings emphasize how urban Indigenous women's wellness may be better supported to address the substantial barriers Indigenous women face in their wellness experiences and equitable access to wellness-promoting urban land activities. The value of park, trail and bike use to promote wellness from a gendered perspective was emphasized, responding to the research questions. Building on these findings, the resulting themes are synthesized with additional relevant studies and reports. The discussion emphasizes Indigenous women's reclaiming biking, trail and park use to foster wellness for all community members through cultural resurgence and reclamation. Women's nature experiences were centred on how nature is kinship that forms significant cultural relationships. The overarching theme of justice for Indigenous women prevails through analysis and discussion of findings. Recommendations are provided to support Indigenous women's biking, trail and park use and access to nature drawing from recommendations in the literature and informed by the findings of this study.

Barriers to Indigenous Women's Urban Wellness Experiences

A significant finding from this study is Indigenous women's active and current Land dispossession that takes form in various barriers (e.g., safety issues, violence, poverty) to Indigenous women's equitable access to urban land. This discussion centres on understanding this Land dispossession from the premise of settler colonialism, that produces gendered racialized poverty. Racism is understood as an oppressive tool that contributes to Indigenous women's Land dispossession that is embedded in society, creating barriers to wellness and safe

access to urban land activities. Poverty also acts as a mechanism of oppression, limiting Indigenous women's access to urban land and wellness-promoting activities.

Indigenous Women's Land Dispossession and Settler Colonialism

As the women in the study emphasized, an examination of barriers to Indigenous women's equitable access to urban land must focus on colonial Land dispossession tactics with a focus on gender. It is significant to highlight that, for Indigenous Peoples, Land dispossession greatly disrupts cultural continuity (MACIW, 2023a; NIMMIWG, 2019a) that Indigenous women fight to reestablish. The overarching barrier to Indigenous women's equitable access to urban land is how the colonial state shapes urban centres in Canada embedded in racism and misogyny that produces targeted violence against Indigenous women. As the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) (2023a) accentuated the gendered targeting of Indigenous women in colonial society to control lands:

Indigenous women are the traditional leaders and Matriarchs of their communities. Since contact from Europeans, Indigenous women have been raped, beaten, and killed for the very reason that they are women and leaders. This violence was and continues to be committed against Indigenous women and girls to acquire and control lands (p. 5).

This statement reflects many of the women's sentiments of how gendered colonialism works to eliminate Indigenous women's traditional roles as Matriarchs in society as a way to acquire and control lands. The fact that Indigenous women have been raped, beaten, and killed because they are women and leaders points to the misogyny in colonial society that Kerri, Mary and other women detailed as a significant source of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Martin & Walia (2019) elaborated on the role of gender in settler colonial state land acquisition, stating "settler-colonialism intentionally targets Indigenous women in order to

destroy families, sever the connection to land-based practices and economies, and devastate relational governance of Indigenous nations” (p. 16). Simpson (2016) argued that Indigenous women's bodies “in settler regimes such as the US, in Canada is loaded with meaning - signifying other political orders, land itself, of the dangerous possibility of reproducing Indian life and most dangerously, other political orders” (p. 7). Sikka (2010) and De Finney (2017) elaborated that Indigenous women and the land were viewed as colonial property. The view of Indigenous women as property was reflected by the women in the study, who explained how Indigenous women are commodified for sexual exploitation. This was apparent in the stories shared by the women who explained young Indigenous women have been trapped in convenience stores in the North End by male predators attempting to sexually exploit women and girls while preying on their oppressive conditions (e.g., poverty). To emphasize, “for Indigenous girls and women in contemporary Canadian society, exploitation and violence are disturbingly relentless brutal social norms” (Bourgeois, 2015, p. 1428). As Kerri emphasized, sexual exploitation and violence produces crisis levels of suicide and suicide attempts of Indigenous women and girls who are survivors of sexual violence. The profound emotional pain and spiritual harm from sexual violence also contributes to many health and wellness inequities experienced by Indigenous women and girls (McKinley & Knipp, 2022). McKinley and Knipp (2022) reported the sexual violence Indigenous women face impact wellness from a spiritual aspect of lower spiritual-well-being and life satisfaction as well as disrupting psychological resilience often due to post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health challenges. The source of this violence against Indigenous women and girls is rooted in colonial attempts to sever women's power and relationship with the Land through colonial land dispossession (NIMMIWG, 2019a).

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

In an urban context, examination of Indigenous urban land dispossession in Winnipeg has been analysed through the lens of settler colonialism. *Settler City Limits: Indigenous Resurgence and Colonial Violence in the Urban Prairie West* (Dorries et al., 2019) focused on urban land development in Winnipeg and other prairie cities that extend across borders into the U.S.A. Dorries et al., (2019) distinguished “the mythic separation of the city from its surrounds in settler colonial discourse- which imagines the city and the reserve/reservation as completely disconnected spaces- renders invisible the violence upon which settler city-building relies” (p. 2). The women in this study who shared the violence they experience as well as violence experienced by their broader community members counters this invisibility, showing that the violence of settler city-building remains active in present day, as Dorries et al., (2019) clarified not something “that happened back then and out there” (p. 3). Further, Dorries et al., (2019) distinguished that “settler cities are built on lands that always already belonged to Indigenous Peoples” (p. 4). These lands extend across the border into the U.S.A., whereas Dorries et al., (2019) emphasized “the profound brutality that has animated projects of settler accumulation and territorialization in both countries” (p. 5). Dorries et al., (2019) described how “theorists define settler colonial societies as sites where settlers have come to constitute a sizeable demographic majority independent of ties with any metropolitan sponsor and assert sovereignty distinct from that of the metropolitan core” (p. 9). Further, “resettlement enables settler communities to develop, facilitates the commodification of the land, and creates extractive economies” (Dorries et al., 2019, p. 10). Dorries et al., (2019) explained “settler colonial urbanism is a socio-spatial formation that is grounded in an inequitable relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples” (p. 10). These inequities are founded on how “resettlement enables settler communities to develop, facilitates the commodification of land, and creates extractive economies” (Dorries et

al., 2019, p. 10). This commodification of land is in stark contrast to the relational understanding Indigenous Peoples have with the Land, as a relation. Dorries et al., (2019) cautioned “inquiries into the violence of settler colonialism also necessitate examining other forms of violence and domination, including capitalism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, gender binarism, and ablism” (p. 13). Dorries et al., (2019) elaborated that “settler colonialism is theoretically distinct from colonialism. While both are motivated by capital accumulation, settler colonialism is distinguished by that fact that the colonizing force does not leave but rather seeks to replace Indigenous society within settler colonial society” (p. 27). Elimination of Indigenous Peoples is a cornerstone of settler colonialism embedded in violence and racism (Dorries et al., 2019).

Dorries et al., (2019) cautioned:

It is important to maintain distinction between interpersonal and systemic racism, as locating systemic racism within social practices and government policies reveals how racist violence against Indigenous Peoples is not only sanctioned by but also intentionally produced by settler colonial governance (p. 28).

Just as Kerri in this current study explained, racism permeates Canadian society, as Kerri explained, she experienced racism in broader society as well as in her place of employment. Further, “in Canada, settler colonialism is enacted through laws and policies that deploy racist and sexist logics in order to produce settler colonial spaces through legal and physical elimination of Indigenous Peoples” (Dorries et al., 2019, p. 28). The barriers to safe urban land that the women in the study discussed, such as structural racism and violence in the forms of sexual harassment and pervasive safety issues, are representative of this elimination of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Additionally, settler colonialism's “forced implementation of patriarchal, western versions of governance and family-making, contributed to the historic and

contemporary marginalization of Indigenous women, girls in specific ways” (MACIW, 2023a, p. 7). Specific ways include immense barriers to safety that act as a way to eliminate Indigenous women from the use of the land, which impedes the ability for Indigenous women to foster relationships with nature and the Land as part of their cultural practices. These barrier-enforcing results of colonial city-making was pronounced in the experiences of women in this study. By interrupting Indigenous Peoples connection to Land, settler colonial land trauma from Land separation has disrupted Indigenous Peoples' spirituality related to place, impacting wellness (Baskin, 2016). As Baskin (2016) elaborated “within Indigenous worldviews and spirituality, there is no separation between people and the land” (p. 52). As the women in this study emphasized, their spiritual wellness is deeply interconnected with their relationships to the Land and nature. Settler colonialism is therefore an assault on Indigenous women's spiritual wellness.

Settler colonialism encompasses discussion about the role of The Indian Act as a primary tool of Indigenous women's land dispossession across time and into present day. The Indian Act has forced Indigenous women to migrate to urban centres after losing their Indian status and subsequent loss of Land in their home communities, forcing Indigenous women's land dispossession whereas “ownership of land was defined along racial and gendered lines” (Bhandar, 2016, p. 2). Approximately 2 million Indigenous women have been displaced from their traditional lands through the Indian Act, resulting in disconnection to both traditional Lands and community (MACIW, 2023a).

The devaluation of Indigenous women, coupled with colonial land dispossession of Indigenous women, takes many forms and is most insidious as violence toward Indigenous girls and women. Violence toward Indigenous women extends to men of different cultures, including Indigenous men who have experienced the break down of Indigenous relationships from colonial

violence that aimed to sever community bonds. The devaluation of Indigenous women that the participants in the study discussed, including the targeting for sexual harassment and sexual exploitation, is representative of the devaluation of Indigenous women and girls. The colonial state has worked to devalue Indigenous women as less worthy while the violence and social inequities they experience are not met with public condemnation or policy reform to address these injustices (de Finney & Saraceno, 2014). The significant issue of Indigenous girls and women being sexually assaulted and exploited in the North End of Winnipeg is representative of the devaluation of Indigenous girls and women, commodified in the sexual exploitation trade because they are not protected or valued by the colonial state, and seen as expendable. Further, Indigenous women are being blamed for the violence they experience which assaults wellness. As Indigenous grandmother Leslie Spillet described the blaming of Indigenous women in Winnipeg:

We know that they've been called prostitutes, drug addicts. And then there's always the polite terminology, which is coded, racially coded, like 'at-risk,' or those kinds of things. The ways of people washing their hands as if to say, "Well... that has really nothing to do with us. They've caused their own disappearances." (NIMMIWG, 2019a, p. 44)

This blaming of victims of violence contributes to the crisis of violence toward Indigenous women. The crisis of violence toward Indigenous women in Canada is reflective of the expendability of Indigenous women in the settler colonial state (Razack, 2016). Barkasakas and Hunt (2017) added the interrelated aspects of sexual violence that must be considered, connecting the individual with community, systems, and history, where "sexual violence must be viewed as interrelated with other forms of violence, including interpersonal and systemic marginalization. The individual needs of survivors are, consequently, understood as inseparable

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness from community, systemic, and historic factors" (p. 6). This statement reflects the women in the study who centre their individual experience in connection with that of their community, showing the inseparableness of these relationships. Razack (2016) also proposed that a framework of disposability must be used to understand the violence toward Indigenous women, focusing on the Indigenous woman's expendability in settler colonialism. As Razack (2016) detailed:

Sexualized violence is key to disposability, and flesh is the site at which racial and sexual power are both inscribed. I emphasize the excessive violence that is meted out to Indigenous women as evidence of colonial power imprinted on their bodies (p. 285).

Razack (2016) added that the colonial goal, "is to destroy the figural unity of the body of the Indigenous person and to transform it into waste" (p. 291). Razack (2016) detailed how the extreme violence toward Indigenous women imprints the devaluation of the women and their bodies in society whereas as sexualized violence is key to Indigenous women's disposability. The violence Indigenous women endure, such as the women in the North End who are sexually targeted by predators, act as barriers to healthy urban life in urban spaces. As the women described, sexual harassment and fears for safety create conditions where women seek safety indoors, off the land.

Adding to the violence Indigenous women face, the brutal separation of Indigenous families, with Mary explaining this is a colonial tactic to break Indigenous Peoples to then acquire their Land. As a woman in the sharing circle described, her years-long battle to regain custody of her children from the CFS system had left her exhausted to the point of giving up her battle, with the system causing a continuous separation of a mother and her children. In fact, "the gendered colonialism of family trauma, child welfare, homelessness, policing, the welfare

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness system, and the opioid crisis all contribute to targeted insecurity and violence" (Martin & Walia, 2019, p. 16). This gendered colonial targeting is apparent in the lives of women in the study, whose experiences of family trauma through the enduring legacy of the residential schools, their Sixties Scoop experiences, and CFS involvement all contribute to lasting emotional pain and trauma that requires healing. The family trauma the women discussed from forced family separation that persists into current day shows how settler colonial tactics remain active in society. In Manitoba, 35.8 per cent of First Nations children in Manitoba had a file opened by CFS by the time they were one year old, compared to 8.5 per cent of non-First Nations infants (Kenny et al., 2024) showing the racialized division among children involved in the CFS system. This injustice of family separation directly impedes the wellness of Indigenous women and their children with serious wellness implications such as profound stress and trauma. The children involved in the CFS system are also assaulted with trauma and stress. As Mary explained, and as many women in this study shared, young Indigenous women who are aging out of the CFS system are abandoned by a system "that doesn't give a shit", forcing them to survive in a society where sexual predators seek to exploit the young women's oppression (e.g., poverty). Sexual exploitation is a marker of unprotected and unsupported young Indigenous women's lives in the colonial state. The damage from the CFS system that Indigenous families experience cannot be overstated. The women in the study emphasized the profound trauma for families and mothers involved in the CFS system.

The issues in the community that the women discussed, including homelessness and issues due to drug addictions, and how these issues act as barriers to urban land use, reflects these specific ways settler colonial city-making marginalizes Indigenous women and their families. Pointing to systemic barriers of settler colonial city-making, the infrastructure barriers

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Indigenous women experience in the North End neighbourhood—such as unsafe park spaces, no safe trails to use, sidewalks in disrepair, and a lack of biking infrastructure—all point to settler colonial urbanism with a “socio-spatial formation that is grounded in an inequitable relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples” (Dorries et al., 2019, p. 11). This urban settler formation is apparent in the North End, where economic insecurity, enduring poverty, and a lack of investment all work to benefit settler colonial societies where investment is high in affluent neighbourhoods and primarily Indigenous neighbourhoods are starkly neglected (Dorries et al., 2019). The women's discussions about the issue of disinvestment due to a stigmatized view of people living in the North End is reflected in literature (Dorries et al., 2019). As Dorries et al., (2019) elaborated:

Thus, while these descriptions of life in the North End suggest their social problems are common among residents, they also suggest that the reverse is true: the neighbourhood is a dark and dangerous place because of the people who live there. Consequently, the North End is constructed as both a deviant and Indigenous urban space, placed in contrast to predominantly white, middle-class neighbourhoods. (p. 32).

This negative portrayal of the North End was discussed by several women in the study, who echoed the same issue of the negative portrayal of the North End and how this image impacts community and personal identity, whereas community members are viewed as outcasts. Avalon also discussed how the lack of investment in the North End is embedded in stigma toward the residents, a result of settler colonial tactics to devalue Indigenous Peoples. As Avalon and the other women challenged, this stigma does not align with the women who seek investment in their neighbourhood and who care for their neighbourhood whereas the stigmatized views are not truthfully reflective of the residents of the North End community.

Adding to these social and structural barriers, racism is pervasive, with Kerri reflecting the sentiments of all participants in explaining how there is an invasive racist view in Canada that aims to enforce Indigenous people are racially devalued. In *Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* (Toews, 2018) racial capitalism is positioned as a marker of settler colonial city-making. Toews (2018) elaborated:

As Winnipeg's past and present demonstrate, racist thinking is used to excuse capitalist inequality in many different ways, from straight-up vilification of oppressed groups to more cunning ways of feeling that promote the sense that oppressed groups, perhaps through no fault of their own, are not quite ready to enjoy self-determination or a humane standard of living. The persistence of colonial activity in Winnipeg therefore not surprising, given how essential racism is to capitalist development everywhere. (p. 18)

Kerri's discussion about how in Canada, compared to the Caribbean, she experiences a stark difference in how she is respected and treated based on her Indigenous identity, reinforces the current state of racism in Canada. As Toews (2018) stated, dispossession, captivity, and genocide, which are by-products of racial settler colonialism "are still with us the task, then, is to figure out how they've survived in new times, what exactly they have become, and what they are doing now" (p. 19). The women in this study make it abundantly clear what has become of racial settler colonialism—neglected neighbourhoods, violence and safety issues so great women are forced off the land and indoors, and the chronic poverty linked to gangs, sexual exploitation, and drug issues in the neighbourhood, compounded by systemic neglect of social services for women. McGibbon (2012) framed racism as a social determinant of health, whereas racism negatively impacts access to health services, employment, and housing, among other health contributors, that compounds poor health. This racist oppression also causes stress which further

exasperates poor health outcomes (McGibbon, 2012). The social exclusion (e.g., economic exclusion), that comes from racist spaces, is a resulting determinant of poor health among Indigenous Peoples (McGibbon, 2012).

Gendered Racialized Poverty- A Key Barrier to Indigenous Women's Wellness

Racism also takes form as racialized poverty, with women in this study stating poverty is a primary barrier to Indigenous women's wellness. Poverty in Winnipeg has been described as spatially concentrated racialized poverty where a much higher proportion of those who live in Winnipeg's inner city, including the North End, are poor (Silver, 2010). As McCracken and Plante (2024) detailed, "Manitoba has consistently had higher average poverty rates than the rest of the country. In 2021, the child poverty rate in Manitoba was 39 percent in the north and 30 percent in Winnipeg's inner city" (p. 5). As Mary explained, people in the North End neighbourhood are most often the working poor or poor and this is reflected in statistics on poverty. As Silver (2010) observed in 2010, which remains applicable today:

Poverty has been a constant presence in Winnipeg throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. No adequate understanding of historical or contemporary Winnipeg is possible without understanding the remarkable persistence, on a large scale, of this damaging and often soul-destroying phenomenon (p.332).

Here, Silver brought attention to the immense negative implications of poverty—not only material loss, but from the deep place of the soul—pointing to negative impact on emotional, mental and spiritual wellness. In evaluating poverty in Winnipeg, Silver (2010) described how poverty has been a long withstanding issue whereas Winnipeg's poverty remains disproportionately concentrated in the city's North End and is still closely linked to a deeply ingrained racism, associated with and exacerbated by substandard housing, stigmatisation,

stereotyping, and social exclusion of the poor (Silver, 2010). This stigmatization, stereotyping and social exclusion were all detailed by the women in the study, with Mary specifically explaining how many people in the North End who are living in poverty are viewed as outcasts and Avalon stating there is little investment due to the stigmatization of the residents. De-industrialization in Winnipeg's inner city, which equated to a loss of employment opportunities, combined with job discrimination also produced a structural reality that has contributed to gangs, narcotics, and street-level violence in Winnipeg's inner-city as significant aspects of ongoing poverty (Silver, 2010). This is seen in the discussion from Indigenous women in the study, who described the issue of gangs, drugs and violence in their community that invades the neighbourhood and park spaces. Silver (2010) elaborated poverty conditions in the North End "typically, these conditions were blamed on the moral failings of the poor" (p. 334). This blaming reflects what Avalon and other women in this study talked about regarding stereotyping and stigmatizing people who live in the North End, resulting in little, if any, investment in the North End. This lack of investment was apparent in the issues women had with park use, with environmental hazards such as needles and trash, and gang activity in parks deterring women and their families from park use. The lack of park maintenance, few lights to add to safety, and the issue of gang activity are all representative of systemic stigmatized neglect of residents of the North End neighbourhood that further entrenches poverty in the community.

The issue of poverty and its implications on Indigenous women's health, wellness and safety was emphasized in the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report* (NIMMIWG, 2019a), stating "many reports have documented that people experiencing poverty, lack of housing, food insecurity, unemployment, and other conditions that make it difficult to meet one's basic needs are at a much higher risk of being targeted for violence" (p. 114). From a

rights perspective, the NIMMIWG (2019a) emphasized “state-imposed poverty due to underdevelopment on reserves, in education and in employment services, meant that many families – and women in particular – were stigmatized, not as a result of their own actions, but of those structural factors that bound them in impossible situations” (p. 280). These structural factors such as a lack of supportive social services that would contribute to pathways out of poverty are the realities of Indigenous women in the North End.

Doris Young, an Ininiw iskeiwrom woman, reflected these poverty issues Indigenous women faced with inadequate health services, and lack of employment and decent housing were conditions that caused the women “pain as they were unjust and demeaning” (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 134) which emphasizes the mental toll oppressive poverty conditions have on women. As the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba. (2005) described, the impact of poverty resulting in despair, resignation, anger, and hopelessness reinforces the cycle of poverty. These feelings of despair, resignation, anger, and hopelessness are outcomes that deplete mental and emotional wellness, while taking away the emotional energy needed to fight such oppression. Adding to the barriers to wellness that poverty produces, the women in the study explained they were unable to afford wellness activities for their families, such as picnics in parks, transportation to other parts of the city, or bikes and recreational items.

McGibbon (2012) brought attention to how these poverty conditions are forms of oppression. Interconnected mechanisms of oppression include genocide, cultural genocide, policy-related poverty, and actions and inactions that maintain systems of dominance through structural power (McGibbon, 2012). The poverty conditions the women in the study experience reflect this oppression, with the ongoing prejudice and discrimination they face from oppressive gendered racism. Gender also shapes distribution of resources and opportunities that impact the

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

health status of women (McGibbon, 2012). Recognizing oppression as a barrier to Indigenous women's health and wellness is essential in addressing the root causes of barriers to Indigenous women's wellness. The inequality, social deprivation and stress associated with oppression is a key determinant of Indigenous women's health and wellness and must be addressed as a justice issue (McGibbon, 2012). In addressing oppression and the poverty that comes from oppression, long-time Winnipeg Indigenous activist and economic planner Louise Champagne provided an Indigenous lens by emphasizing the importance of traditional economies that focus on a sharing and caring culture:

I recognize that, historically, that sharing and caring culture at one time, before the introduction of commercial trade- before the fur trade- that the sharing and caring culture was based on an economy that was all about people, involved in producing for the wellbeing of the community. Everybody was involved: women, children, men, were involved in producing for the wellbeing of the community. That was the kind of economy that existed here-they were healthy economies, even though we didn't have economists running around, writing the GDP. (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 100)

Here, Champagne refocused solutions to economic disparities by centring Indigenous ways of supporting community from a collective, caring perspective, which stands in stark contrast to colonial economies that force conditions of poverty. Supporting community from a collective, caring perspective is what the women in the study advocated for in discussions about wellness, with the women linking their wellness to the care of their communities. To illustrate, a collective, caring perspective is reflective of how the women in the study advocated for the care of people experiencing homelessness in their community. Women in the study also advocated the provision of child care is fundamental in supporting women's opportunities to seek education,

training and employment that would provide pathways out of poverty, yet access to child care remains a barrier for women.

From these perspectives, addressing the sustained and oppressive poverty Indigenous women endure is a human rights and justice issue (NIMMIWG, 2019c). As the NIMMIWG (2019c) emphasized, “social security is directly linked to the reduction of poverty, and the reduction of poverty intersects with the rights to health, culture, security and justice” (p. 32). McCracken, M. & Plante (2024) added a “gender-based analysis and an intersectional lens are crucial to poverty reduction strategies so that any government response supports the empowerment of people systematically marginalized from the economy and society” (McCracken & Plante, 2024, p. 7). Hence, an IGBA+ lens is an important view when seeking to understand and address the implications of barriers that impede Indigenous women's wellness.

Challenging Settler Colonialism City-Making

Countering the stigmatized view of urban Indigenous communities, Dorries et al., (2019) highlighted how Winnipeg is home to extensive Indigenous-led grassroots community organizations that resist the racism, disinvestment, and colonial practices that produce racialized poverty. In challenging settler colonialism, Dorries et al., (2019) advocated for contextualizing racism and violence as a mode of settler colonial city-making while directing focus on the vibrancy and resilience of Indigenous communities. Focusing on the vibrancy and resilience of Indigenous communities would de-naturalize racist violence while constructing a view of Indigenous people as resilient and resistant to colonial violence (Dorries et al., (2019). As Métis and Anishinaabe Saulteaux woman, Nicole Lamy, focused on the vibrancy of the North End she explained she “‘felt rich in other ways’, explaining that as a ‘North Ender’, the feeling of being rich in other ways is something that seems to be ‘in the air’ in the North End, and it’s part of the

reason why Indigenous people feel at home here” (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 12). Lamy added to the focus on vibrancy, stating “there is a beautiful Indigenous community in Winnipeg that is full of love, life, and support” (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 13). Lamy provides a rich contrast to the stigmatized view of the North End that centres on community strengths that was reflected by women in the current study.

Dorries et al., (2019) advocated for an anti-racist and anti-colonial standpoint that would reframe problems of racism in urban Canadian cities:

Taking seriously the city as a site of anti-colonial struggle means confronting these multiple and intersecting forms of settler colonial violence. As an alternative to a politics of urban inclusion that fails to fundamentally transform the murderous logic of settler colonialism, recasting the city as anti-racist and anti-colonial space in both discourse and policy requires understanding the city as space where Indigenous life can flourish and subverting the logics that underlie settler colonial place making (p. 41).

To further challenge settler colonialism, multi-faceted interventions are needed, “including examining the causes of violence against Indigenous women while also foregrounding the role of women in making Indigenous space” (Dorries et al., 2019, p. 41). As Dorries et al., (2019) emphasized, cities are places where Indigenous resistance against settler colonialism is strong and this is apparent in the advocacy among the women in the study. As the women in this study demonstrated, and as reflected by Dorries et al., (2019), Indigenous Peoples continue to reclaim their traditional Lands through relationships despite the onslaught of attempted settler colonial land dispossession. While settler colonialism may be presented as highly stable and entrenched (Dorries et al., 2019), Indigenous women continue to resist and break down these racist urban structures, forming pathways liberated from the oppressive

colonial state (Dorries et al., 2019). Corntassel and Bryce (2012) distinguished that urban Indigenous resurgence is founded on daily existence centred on place-based cultural practices, pointing the importance of urban land that provides space for such place-based cultural practices, which women in this study strongly advocated for. As a way of justice, Indigenous women should be given their Land back, given back safe urban spaces on the Land where culture can be practiced and shared among family and community. Land-back justice for Indigenous women is intricately linked to the wellness of the women, their families, and communities. Sterritt (2007) concluded that “a de-colonized and de-assimilated view and value of Indigenous women needs to be reclaimed so that all Indigenous people can be on the same page and united against the current state of colonization and oppression” (p. 22).

Conclusion

The following Table 2 provides recommendations for addressing Indigenous women’s barriers to equitable urban land use to promote wellness derived from the discussions shared by the women in this study and from the review of literature.

Table 2. Recommendations for Addressing Barriers to Indigenous Women’s Urban Land Use and Wellness

Equitable Access to Urban Land Barriers	Recommendations for City and Provincial Planners
Indigenous Women’s Urban Land Dispossession	<p>That governments use the findings of what Indigenous women have spoken about, along with the British Columbia Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women’s Indigenous Gender-based Analysis Plus Toolkit, in the development of urban neighbourhood development and city planning.</p> <p>That governments respond to Indigenous women’s urban land dispossession by focusing on making real change to the structural and societal barriers that impede Indigenous women’s access to safe urban land, including:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Racism: Anti-Racism campaigns, and Indigenous cultural education campaigns across the city and province. Re-design park and urban spaces that highlight Indigenous culture in ways that teach about Indigenous culture.b) Misogyny: Bring hate against women to the forefront of gender equity frameworks, recognizing that women continue to experience hatred toward women that is embedded in society and is racialized, and which produces crisis levels of violence toward women.c) Poverty: increased employment, training and education opportunities for Indigenous women that include child care that is accessible in their neighbourhood. Increased gendered social services provided in areas of the North End where there are currently no social services provided.d) Gangs: provide recreational and mentoring programs for children and youth, girls and young women who are threatened by gang involvement; provide more safe community spaces where these targeted individuals can go for protection-a place where they won’t “fall through the cracks”.e) Unsafe Housing: invest in social housing, supportive housing and shelters.f) Homelessness: invest in greater support and a range of housing for people who experience homelessness. Provide programs with wrap-around supports to address social and health needs.g) Drugs and Drug Addiction: greater investment in support programs, drug rehabilitation programs and services, specifically family support programs offered in the neighbourhood.h) Media: include content that shows the strength and honour of Indigenous cultures, include a far greater number of positive stories of the North End and the people who reside in the neighbourhood. <p>Re-commit to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action with a pointed focus on addressing the calls about Indigenous women and their children by developing a Manitoba-wide and a city-specific action plan.</p>
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Indigenous Women’s Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

	Respond to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s Calls for Justice by developing a neighbourhood specific action plan focusing on the North End and core Winnipeg neighbourhoods.
No healing places provided for women	In the development of urban spaces, urban land must be provided that are specifically designed and infused with Indigenous culture in ways that promotes healing from the perspectives of Indigenous women-who are survivors.
No safe places for Full Moon Ceremonies	In the development and re-development of urban spaces, provision must include spaces that are specifically designed for Indigenous women’s Full Moon Ceremonies and other gendered cultural practices.
More safety needed in park spaces for families	Invest in park safety features including a neighbourhood park safety patrol, increase lighting, invest in park maintenance and regular park cleaning, provide community washrooms that are cleaned and maintained. Provide park programming that creates opportunities and activities for Indigenous families to come together and use park space for its actual intention. Park design should include the voices and recommendations of Indigenous women from a family lens in all urban city planning.
Parks Unsafe for Women	Provide women-specific park programs that invite women to come together in park settings more safely.
Trails Barriers	
Unsafe for women and families	Increase safety features along trails including emergency call buttons and increased lighting. Provide trail safety crews along trails in the North End that can accompany women while using trails. Design and re-design trails from a family lens. Invest in trail maintenance and clean up. Invest in greater community outreach patrols to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness who live along trails. City recreation programming needs to include trail groups for women and families to bring women together that would provide greater safety, women’s social support and community involvement.

Biking Barriers	
Bike Theft	Being a societal issue of crime activity, crime reduction initiatives need to be increased. Bike theft is a city-wide issue but concentrated in the North End.
No Bike Security Stands/No Place to Safely Secure Bikes	Invest in bike security options in the North End neighbourhood. This includes racks on streets and in the neighbourhood and also innovative ways such as a protected bike storage place for women to store their bikes.
Few Protected Bike Lanes	Invest in protected bike lanes in the North End.
Unsafe Roadways for Biking	Invest in critical roadway infrastructure in the North End with safety designs featured in the infrastructure that supports groups and families.
Bike Cost	Invest in community bike shops that provide quality inexpensive bikes, with bike shops including gender-specific night options. Invest in poverty reduction strategies such as training and education that leads to stable, secure employment.
Lack of biking community	City recreation programs need to create more family biking and community biking programs. Indigenous-specific community biking programs also needs to be a focus in recreation programming. Provide grants to communities to invest in their own biking events.
Unsafe for family biking	Design and redesign bike paths for family use particularly in the North End.

Women’s Experiences of Biking, Trail and Park Use, Nature and Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

In discussing women’s experiences of trails, parks, biking and nature and the impacts on wellness, the women’s concepts of wellness must centre the discussion. To reiterate, the women brought forth a multidimensional, Indigenous way of understanding wellness, defined at times uniquely along with similarities among different Indigenous women (e.g., Cree, Métis) founded

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

on the interrelationship of the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical, and how these aspects are all related. These Indigenous multidimensional concepts of wellness shared by the women in this research reflect other Indigenous concepts of wellness in the literature (Auger, 2019; Brown, 2016; Flaminio et al., 2020). The women described how their spirituality is connected by relationships they have with all living things—from animals to plant life, to water—which was described in other research where spirituality is bound to traditional knowledge, kinship ties and cultural connectedness (Auger, 2019; National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2008). The women's discussions of wellness were also similar to First Nations and Native American concepts of the Red Road, representing both the individual as well as communities as interconnected with physical, mental and spiritual dimensions (Weaver, 2002). The women added cultural practices, such as pow-wow dancing and Full Moon Ceremonies as part of their wellness models, a conclusion also drawn from research with Indigenous Peoples highlighting the importance of cultural practices for health and wellness (Graham & Martin, 2016). The women emphasized the significance of relationships for their wellness—with people, the animal, plant and nature world, the spiritual world, and more broadly with Mother Earth. The women also emphasized the importance of community wellness as part of their own wellness. A focus on community wellness as part of Indigenous women's personal wellness reflects the literature about Indigenous wellness, emphasizing the connectedness of Indigenous people with their community (Auger, 2021b; Flaminio et al., 2020). These cultural understandings of wellness contrast western models of wellness that focus on the individual, contrasting some participants views of wellness where family and community wellness takes precedence over personal wellness. The women's discussions about the importance of Land access where they can pass on their cultural, Land-based teachings to the younger generations was pronounced when discussing

their urban land activities and wellness. This focus on family and cultural continuity is also a resurfacing theme in research about Indigenous wellness (Auger, 2021b; Oster et al., 2014). The women reinstated that transmission of traditional knowledge, language, and cultural identity is foundational for wellness that is experienced through their gendered roles as cultural educators. These concepts of wellness inform the discussion about Indigenous women's cycling, park and trail use and nature experiences and impact on wellness, while also discussing the role of gender and culture in these experiences.

Women's Experiences of Biking and its Impact on Wellness

Several women in the study were passionate about biking, detailing various ways biking contributed to their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellness. Studies about the benefits of biking discussed the common attribute of biking as a pleasurable, positive experience (Clayton & Musselwhite, 2013) with Taylor (2003) adding cycling offers the "sense of exhilaration, or pure delight" (p. 1617). In Russell et al.'s (2021) study, women brought forth "a powerful association of cycling with pleasure" (p. 3). Women cyclists in Le et al.'s (2019) study reported cycling contributed to feelings of joy. As Le et al. (2019) elaborated, joy is an aspect of well-being, positively effecting physical and mental health. These sentiments about the joy of biking were echoed by participants in this study, which is a significant finding in how biking can support women's wholistic wellness by enhancing positive emotional and mental wellness. Bringing joy to women's lives in this study is particularly valuable as the women counter the ongoing impacts of poverty, racism and other barriers to their mental and emotional wellness. Marques et al., (2020) concluded active commuting by bike can contribute to lowering depressive systems, which was echoed by the women in the study who emphasized biking contributes to mental wellness when they are able to lead an active lifestyle. For the women in

this study, biking also contributed to a sense of freedom, which is particularly important to counter the restrictive oppression they endure.

Green et al., (2021) advocated “active transportation, particularly cycling, is a convenient way to meet physical activity targets, reduce risk of disease and all cause mortality, and derive mental health and social benefits” (p. 739). Adding to these benefits, Green et al., (2021) added cycling benefits the environment. The positive effect of cycling on the environment extends further with women in the study. As Sharon described, cycling equated to caring for Mother Earth, reflecting cultural significance and wholistic wellness. Beyond protecting the environment, Sharon is in relationship with Mother Earth as she treads by bike, pointing to the cultural aspects of biking experiences among women who hold this relationship with Mother Earth.

Women's cycling experiences also highlighted the overall physical healthiness of biking. Several women detailed the health benefits of physical activity and exercise that cycling provides, that in turn also helps with managing health conditions, such as Sharon's management of diabetes. It is important to emphasize that impacts of settler colonialism has caused historical trauma and contributed to corresponding health disparities such as diabetes and obesity (Schell & Gallo, 2012). The relationship between biking as physical activity and exercise and the positive impact on health is well documented in the literature (Bauman & Rissel, 2009; Garrard et al., 2012b; Oja et al., 2011). For example, Garrard et al. (2012b) detailed how biking has numerous health benefits such as physical fitness. These health benefits were also detailed by the women, such as Sharon who explained physical activity from biking enabled her to dance her pow-wow dances. Adding to the physical benefits of biking is the contribution to management of weight (i.e., reductions in obesity) (Garrard et al., 2012b) which Sharon explained was a key contributor

to improving her physical fitness. These biking benefits were highlighted by other women in reports about women's cycling, such as one woman describing how she started biking for transportation and lost 35 pounds, stating "biking is your own two-wheel gym!" (Jones, 2015, p. 13). Women in Russell et al.'s (2021) study that included Māori Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women compared biking favourably to other travel modes such as vehicles or buses whereas biking was 'green' or good for the environment compared to cars, and more flexible and reliable than waiting for the bus. This reflects a commonality in the findings of this study, such as Sharon commenting how she would prefer biking compared to the bus, giving her agency and a sense of freedom. The relative inexpensiveness of biking as a form of exercise was pointed out by the women in the study, while many women could not afford a bike, others pointed out that cycling is a relatively inexpensive way to lead a healthy lifestyle. Other research with women also highlight this benefit, with a female cyclist in Jones et al.'s (2015) study stating, "bicycling isn't just healthy, inexpensive and efficient — it's fun, too" (Jones et al., 2015, p. 4) which echoes the sentiments about biking from women in this study.

Biking also supports the wellness of people living with disabilities. Kerri represented a woman who lives with a disability and whose experiences show the importance of biking accessibility for people with disabilities. Kerri was an avid cyclist prior to her disability, and she continues to enjoy biking using modified bikes. Supporting cycling for people with disabilities is important to provide significant health benefits to people with disabilities by improving fitness and mental wellbeing (Clayton et al., 2017). This sentiment was reflected by Kerri, who listed emotional, physical, spiritual and mental benefits of biking. Kerri's positive experiences were reflected by other people with disabilities in Clayton's (2017) study with people with disabilities who described biking as fun and exhilarating. As Clayton et al., (2017) advocated, "to consider

cycling for those of all abilities, it is necessary to define the obverse – what a disability might comprise of – in order then to ensure that planning and design covers all needs” (p. 2). This means listening to people with disabilities and learning about their experiences which provides practical considerations in designing bike paths for people with disabilities (e.g., wide paved paths). Clayton et al., (2017) advocated for further considerations in the design of adapted bikes and the required adaptations to biking infrastructure required for these bikes. Clayton et al., (2017) concluded biking is a “very possible” way to provide a route for people with disabilities to improve their health and wellness, and this is reflective of Kerri’s experiences as a biker with disabilities. Including the biking needs of Indigenous people with disabilities will respond to how disability is higher among Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people and disability rates were reported higher for women than for men (Hahmann et al., 2019).

The Role of Gender in Women's Biking Experiences to Support Wellness

Understanding the role of gender to support Indigenous women's biking is paramount. There is a body of literature about gender and biking that uses a binary conceptualization of gender comparing the female experience to male experiences. The majority of these articles examined gendered risk and cycling by comparing male and female responses and found female respondents identified safety indicators as greater barriers to cycling (Pearson et al, 2023; Van Bekkum et al., 2011; Wittman et al., 2015), perceived roads or existing infrastructure as less safe or satisfactory than did male respondents (Manton et al., 2016; Nelson & Woods, 2010; Stronegger et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 2023), or described greater concern over safety indicators (e.g., vehicular traffic and lack of bicycle infrastructure) than did male respondents (Akar et al., 2013; Pearson et al., 2023). In Mosquera et al.'s (2012) study, female participants stated that they felt more vulnerable to personal attacks, injuries, and theft while cycling than did men. This

finding is reflective of the women in this study whose fear for personal safety extended to trail biking use. Another frequently discussed theme with a gender-binary comparison focused on male–female differences in trip characteristics. Several articles focused on how men and women use bicycles for different activities (Brey et al., 2017; Damant-Sirois & El Geneidy, 2015). Research suggests many women experience a disproportionate burden of the “mobility of care” (the responsibility to transport children and other dependents) as a result of gender norms (Garrard et al., 2012a; Sánchez de Madariaga & Roberts, 2013). Sersli et al., (2022) added leisure cycling may conflict with mothering responsibilities of balancing work, childcare, and household duties. These points are important considerations particularly for women who manage single-parent caregiving responsibilities.

With a focus on family biking, Clayton & Musselwhite (2013) concluded that providing playful space for biking would enhance family biking. while creating infrastructure for playful biking on bike paths would reduce barriers to family biking. Changing the infrastructure can “legitimize space for family cycling, improving confidence of cyclists through the placing of signs, bars, and ramps– inviting cyclists to use the route” (Clayton & Musselwhite, 2013, p. 59). Clayton & Musselwhite's (2013) added the importance of developing bike skills among parents and children, suggesting learning skills and gaining confidence from parents contributes to children's cycling. This finding points to the importance of the women's advocacy for family bike groups for mothers with their children. The importance of learning bike skills and gaining confidence in biking was also a finding in Pearson et al.'s (2023) study to support women's biking, pointing to the value of community bike shops where women can gain biking skills that contributes to confidence in biking.

Biking infrastructure and its influence on women's cycling was a focus in the literature indicating cycling infrastructure influences women's likelihood of cycling more than men (Mitra & Nash, 2018; Graystone et al., 2022). Garrard et al., (2008) found traffic safety concerns were a major constraint on cycling particularly among women. Le et al., (2019) reported that experienced and skilled women cyclists were also concerned with safety and interactions with motorized traffic. Research with mothers commonly reported women not feeling confident enough to navigate unprotected bicycle lanes next to motorized traffic due to fears of collisions with motor vehicles, forcing women to seek other places to cycle (Sersli et al., 2020). These safety concerns were echoed by the women in the current study, highlighting the important role infrastructure has in supporting women's biking. Le et al., (2019) added biking design planning and policy strategies could target different groups of women who have varying comfort levels and needs as cyclists. This recommendation would be responsive to the diverse group of women in the study who have different biking experiences.

A United States report *Engaging More Women in Bicycling: Key Steps and Best Practices to Improve and Advance Women's Specific Bicycle Advocacy* (Jones, 2015) brings forth important considerations for women's biking that reflects women's advocacy in this study. As Jones (2015) insisted:

When discussing closing the gap in women's ridership, it's critical to understand that gender equity is linked to access to healthcare, affordable childcare, and economic and political power and must incorporate aspects of the health, environmental justice, social justice, education, and economic development sectors. (p. 6)

Jones (2015) reflected the women in the study's wholistic and comprehensive understanding of factors that impact women's cycling opportunities, bringing together access to

biking as a way of justice. As Jones (2015) stated in the report, “for too long, planners and bike advocates have ignored the intersectional lives women lead. The landscape for bicycling has been predominantly constructed from a male point of view” (p. 4) pointing to the significance of an IGBA+ lens in analysing Indigenous women's biking. Jones (2015) advocated for the importance of seeking out, involving, and making bike groups accessible to groups of underrepresented women, pointing to the importance of involving Indigenous women in biking advocacy, and listening and applying what women advocated for in this study.

Contributing to a women's view of biking, Jones (2015) detailed how women are more likely to travel with passengers, often small children, and these factors can make choosing to bike feel inefficient, impractical and in some cases unsafe for women. This statement is reflective of the literature and of women in the study, who often reported the challenges they had biking safely with their children, where safety is paramount. In the report, a female cyclist described the significance of family biking in promoting biking for women “as a necessary step in raising the next generation of riders” (p. 10). The cyclist elaborated, “my children see bikes as transportation” (p. 10) and that she believes policymakers will take more interest in bicycling “when they realize it's entire families out there riding, and that getting more families on bikes will encourage better infrastructure to make cycling safer for everyone” (p. 10). This point is also emphasized by the women in the study, who advocated for cycling opportunities with their children such as a family bike group. Jones (2015) also accentuated the importance of partnerships in promoting biking for women, which echoes the value of gendered community bike shops that women in the current study discussed that supported their biking. Jones (2015) concluded that to support women's biking, group biking that is responsive to skill level can

encourage women to ride. As a female participant in a bike group described her group biking experience:

The tone of Women & Bicycles is one of compassion, understanding, and support, which fosters a really incredible community. I love that it's a non-competitive atmosphere, and where ladies will "cheer" for your accomplishments, whether that's riding to work one day a month or riding across the country. I've gained so much from having a supportive community that I can reach out to for bike-related or non-bike-related questions and concerns. (p. 21)

This gendered social aspect of biking was reflective of the women in this study who advocated for community and family bike groups. Benefits derived from women's group biking also includes empowerment (Jones, 2015). A sense of empowerment is a particularly beneficial outcome from biking for Indigenous women as a way to challenge the disempowerment experienced from oppressive colonial society. The importance of a supportive biking community also includes women's bike sessions at community bike shops where women receive social support, empowerment and bike skill development.

In the brief *Women and Cycling: A Canadian Picture* (Wicken et al., 2023) cycling rates among women in Canada were highlighted with women underrepresented in cycling in Canada, comprising 34% of people commuting by bicycle (Branion-Calles et al., 2021). Wicken et al., (2023) noted the proportion of women cycling in Canada is much lower than in countries with strong cycling cultures, such as Germany and the Netherlands, where women and men have similar rates of bicycle use (Heesch et al., 2012). Wicken et al., (2023) and Le et al., (2019) detailed how women cycle for many of reasons, such as practicality, sustainability, pleasure, and health. Wicken et al., (2023) and Le et al., (2019) also emphasized women face many barriers to

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

cycling, focusing on concerns around personal and child safety, poor cycling infrastructure, and gendered caregiving responsibilities. As previous literature also highlighted, women are more likely than men to report personal safety, risk of injury from collisions, and environmental factors, such as weather, as barriers to cycling (Heesch et al., 2012; Goel et al. 2021; Le et al., 2019; Ravensbergen et al., 2019; Ravensbergen, 2022). It was also reported that many women won't cycle at night or will only cycle with friends and in well-lit areas (Sersli et al., 2022). The avoidance of activities at night and the importance of well-lit areas for safety was also advocated for by the women in this study, emphasizing these key barriers. Resurfacing themes of sexual harassment from male motorists (Higgins & Ahern, 2021), misogyny in the form of patronizing comments while cycling, and other forms of harassment from men due to intersecting identities (e.g., racialized, young) (Sersli et al., 2022) were also reported. These studies emphasize the issue of misogyny and issues of women's safety within Canadian society that permeated discussions with participants in this study. Additionally, it was noted that equipment for cycling can be costly, which may dissuade women from biking with their children (Sersli et al., 2020). The cost associated with biking was a noted barrier described by many women in this study, pointing to the relationship between bike accessibility and socio-economic status.

Drawing on Ravensbergen et al.'s (2019; 2022) studies, Wicken et al. (2023) argued research into biking as a form of women's mobility could be strengthened by engaging with feminist theories such as performativity, intersectionality and embodiment to advance a more complex understanding of how gender and other axes of identity are intertwined with cycling. As Ravensbergen et al., (2019) explained, performativity is a concept that western philosopher Judith Butler developed to explain how gender is socially constructed rather than biologically based. Butler viewed gender as a normative ideal that is primarily made up of the regulatory

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness practices that shape gender throughout the course of a person's life. Ravensbergen et al., (2019; 2022) suggested the concept of performativity might be helpful in cycling research to understand how the bicycle fits into the identity performances of some people, and not others. As Ravensbergen et al., (2019) stated, it may be difficult for some people to perform the identity of a "cyclist" or to perform their own identity while they cycle. Caution is noted in applying these western theories of performativity that may diminish the experiences of Indigenous women as *being* who they are, rather than the theory of *performing* an identity of who they are.

Russell et al. (2021) added that women who are not white and who represent ethnic minority populations contend with cultural associations of cycling with maleness and whiteness, producing a 'heightened sense of visibility' when cycling, because they have "defied the stereotype of a white male cyclist" (p. 2). As Māori women elaborated, they saw "cyclists were mostly men, and both Older Māori Women and non-Māori teenage women had a specific image of 'a cyclist' as being a Pakeha (white) man" (Russell et al., 2021, p. 4). Steinbach et al. (2011) reported how a cultural, gendered differences of feminine positioning impacts cycling uptake by women.

Intersections of Culture and Gender in Indigenous Women's Cycling

Exploring intersections of Indigenous culture and gender in Indigenous women's cycling reveals a dearth in research on the topic. From a New Zealand perspective, Russell et al., (2021) took a feminist intersectional approach to explore cycling among women who were Indigenous to New Zealand (Māori) and non-Indigenous women. In this research, it was pointed again that a barrier women had with cycling was the greater vulnerability of women to street violence and harassment (Frater & Kingham, 2020; Steinbach et al. 2011). This is a parallel finding in how participants in this study were often barred from being on the street outside due to the threat of

violence and harassment. Russell et al., (2021) brought forth the consideration of ethnicity and how ethnic differences could influence women's cycling participation. As Russell et al. (2021) reported, ethnicity has been considered an influencing factor in cycling participation in countries where there is both low and high cycling participation (Fishman et al., 2015; Gao et al., 2017; Law & Kamilowicz, 2015; Lugo et al., 2017; Lusk et al., 2017; Steinbach et al., 2011) suggesting ethnicity is an important determinant of travel across different transport systems.

Russell et al., (2021) added to the exploration of culture and cycling with New Zealand Māori women, developing themes of family time and the positive benefits of cycling. As one older Māori woman recollected:

Getting a bike for my grandson, and seeing him and teaching him... and they don't want you to let go... until they get their balance and just seeing the joy on their face brings... a nice memory, wow, yes I did it and then I felt free, riding, and such a lovely feeling, just balancing. (p. 3)

This recollection is reflective of the grandmothers and mothers in this study, who sought to bring joy to their children from family biking activities.

The theme of how cycling supports mental wellness also resurfaced in these findings, with a Māori participant summing up her cycling experiences as "good for the wairua' [spirit]" (p. 3). Here, we see inclusion of cycling for spiritual wellness, which was highlighted by participants in this study when they connected with birds while biking while caring for Mother Earth, distinguishing a cultural spiritual benefit of cycling. Additionally, women in Russell et al.'s (2021) study saw cycling as good for the environment compared to cars, and more flexible and reliable than waiting for the bus, while many women spoke of cycling as good exercise or healthy; increasing women's stamina; and contributing to weight loss and flexibility. These

benefits are highlighted by the women in this study denoting that these benefits span different cultural groups of Indigenous women. As well, safety barriers including drivers and roads, personal safety as women, and women's responsibility for children reported in Russell et al.'s (2021) study suggests more universal (i.e., spanning countries) concerns women have when cycling, making it "difficult for women to integrate cycling into the valued mobilities of care that shape their life experiences" (Russell et al., 2021, p. 5).

As with the women in this current study, Māori women also discussed issues with access to bikes, such as costs of owning a bike and the need for biking accessories (e.g., helmets, locks, reflective gear) with a Māori mother stating cycling "can be expensive if you take it seriously" (p. 4). Yet, another Māori mother said, "if someone [in the whanau/extended family] gets interested in... a sport or something, it's a priority and the money gets found" (p. 4). Also reflecting the participants in this study, Māori women explained for many Māori women "having a good bike was a luxury rather than a necessity" (Russell et al., 2021, p. 4) pointing to the financial barriers Indigenous women face in owning a bike that spans Canadian and New Zealand colonial contexts.

An Indigenous community perspective of cycling was also brought forth by Māori mothers, who discussed supporting those who bike, "my mum wants to go for a ride, usually we wouldn't go for a ride but because we were supporting her... then everybody jumped on board because that's the kaupapa [principle] – to support" (Russell et al., 2021, p. 4). Here, parallels across different Indigenous women comes forth with the principle of supporting community, echoed by participants in this study. From a cultural lens, Russell et al., (2021) noted differences between Māori and non-Māori women particularly in access to bikes, and women's comments on solo or group cycling which they attributed to differences in material conditions as well as in

cultural values. Māori women spoke of the importance of cycling with others, a group, mother, daughter or grandchildren. As one Māori woman stated, “it was ‘more fun’ biking with family and friends” and also important for safety (p. 5). By contrast, “many non-Māori women talked more about cycling alone; for some non-Māori mothers in particular, their ride was ‘me- time’: time alone, specifically away from family” (p. 5). In contrast, Māori women “recognised that the exercise was good but felt cycling was better – more social and safer – with a friend or group encouraging each other” (Russell et al., 2021, p. 5). For example, Māori mothers stated, “you’re brought up with not doing individual activities, it’s always whanau, for the good of the people, Māori never do it for themselves, they do it for whanau” (Russell et al., 2021, p. 5). These sentiments echoed what participants shared in this study, with their advocacy for group and family biking, bringing forth cultural values in cycling. The women’s program ideas for a mother and children’s bike group again signifies the importance of group biking opportunities for Indigenous women centred on family. The women’s advocacy for Indigenous group biking experiences in the current study also aligns with these findings. For example, a First Nations-specific bike group and biking with Elders was advocated, pointing again to the cultural significance of community bike groups that brings Indigenous people together in a good way that strengthens cultural ties and wellness. These culturally informed ways to support Indigenous women’s cycling serve as recommendations for city and recreation planners, drawing on the cultural values of Indigenous women.

Improving Biking Equity for Indigenous Women

In advocating for biking equity for Indigenous women, the premise of bicycle justice comes into account. Based on how some bikers are neglected in bicycle related policies, a body of research in ‘bicycle justice’ has emerged premised on how North American cities are

recognizing economic and racial discrepancies among cyclists but failing to take action (Golub et al. 2016). Golub et al. (2016) advocated for “an inclusionary social movement and practice based on furthering material equity based on a recognition that a diverse range of qualitative experiences should influence public investment in transportation” (p. 9). Firth et al. (2021) also focused on biking inequities across different populations in Vancouver, British Columbia and examined whether areas with larger populations of Indigenous people (at least 5% of the population) had differential access to bikeways than neighbourhoods with fewer Indigenous Peoples. According to Firth et al. (2021), “we did not find any significant associations between access to bikeways and areas with more older adults, low-income households, household median income, or Indigenous populations” (p. 4). These findings contrast the findings in this current study, with Indigenous women counting numerous barriers to biking with less access to bike paths that are embedded in racial divides in cycling access in the urban colonial context. These contrasting findings that suggest there is no significant association between Indigenous populations and access to bike paths is a questionable conclusion considering the numerous sustained inequities (e.g., neglected investment in socio-economically oppressed neighbourhoods) that Indigenous Peoples faces across Canada, including the women in the current study.

From the concept of bicycle justice, Steinmann and Wilson (2022) also promoted the use of an equity lens, where “cycling is just one part of a broader project aiming to support equal access to transportation, as well as other necessities like social services, housing, and food” (p. 883). This equity lens in bicycle justice brings forth how women in the current study advocated for greater access to transportation, as well as social services, safe housing and access to healthy foods in their wellness models to support Indigenous women. The women experience these

aspects as all interconnected and are facets of justice for Indigenous women. As Steinmann and Wilson (2022) noted, “when considering cycling’s relationship to these other necessities, it is easier to see cycling as much more than a lifestyle choice” and related to equity, access and justice (p. 883).

Research about cycling equity has focused on the provision of bicycle infrastructure in relation to gender, place of residence and employment, and the income levels of both advantaged and disadvantaged population groups (Fuller & Winters, 2017; Kent & Karner, 2019; Pistoll, 2014; Jahanshahi et al., 2021). These studies have suggested that disadvantaged populations, those living in lower-income neighbourhoods, those from minority population groups (e.g., women, the elderly, and immigrants) typically have lower access to bicycle infrastructure and facilities, and experience lower bicycle usage rates. These findings are reflective of what was found in this study, where the North End low-income neighbourhood lacks biking infrastructure that contributes to lower bicycle usage rates. These studies advocated for increased biking infrastructure in these neighbourhoods.

In McCullough et al.’s report (2019) *Making Bicycling Equitable: Lessons from Sociocultural Research*, they provided guidance for how planning, policy, and advocacy may better account for complex sociocultural forces, including gender, class, and race. The authors reviewed sociocultural research on bicycling from diverse fields such as anthropology, sociology, geography, communications, and cultural studies that seek an intersectional understanding of identity, the innerworkings of power in society, and the nature of inequity. McCullough et al., (2019) focused on findings that aimed to address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in bicycling transportation and concluded with the following recommendations:

1. Extend what it means to embrace difference. This includes recognizing and challenging situations when decisionmakers do not reflect the demographics of those affected by

<p>decisions made. Remedy such situations by including and prioritizing the perspectives of marginalized communities (p. 11).</p>
<p>2. Recognize that the streets are not equally safe for all and that street safety encompasses more than traffic crashes. Prioritize policies and practices that make streets safe for the most vulnerable users. Account for the complexity of race, gender, class, and other social factors affect bicycling safety (p. 11).</p>
<p>3. Engage in a meaningful way with marginalized communities and share decision-making power. This means including local communities in leadership structures for planning, policy, and advocacy. Provide compensation for their expertise and time (p. 11).</p>
<p>4. Understand how local and national histories of injustice influence and relate to current bicycling planning processes. Planning, policy, and advocacy processes and practices should seek to address and rectify past inequalities, or at minimum does not exacerbate power differentials. In assessing patterns of inequality, the knowledge of marginalized communities and residents should take precedence (p. 11).</p>

These recommendations are responsive to Indigenous women in that advocacy includes understanding local and national histories of injustice that influence biking participation.

Focusing on gender equity, Wicken et al., (2023, p. 4) suggested ways to improve gender equity in biking for women in a Canadian context:

<p>1) Build protected cycling infrastructure that will connect women to the places they need to go including shopping, childcare, and recreation opportunities associated with mobility of care.</p>
<p>2) Include the diverse lived experience of women in technology, program, and infrastructure design, such as designing bike paths for cargo and carrying capacity for children and groceries</p>
<p>3) Cycling culture should be assessed by local governments, including social norms and rhetoric around cycling.</p>
<p>4) Consider the risk that cities focused on sustainability and urban development may simultaneously exacerbate gentrification and displacement of low-income and racialized communities through urban development tactics. (see Doran et al., 2021).</p>
<p>5) City planners and policymakers must consider the social, economic, and historical implications of cycling design and provide time and resources for ample community feedback on cycling infrastructure & its equity considerations (see Dorran et al., 2021).</p>

Women in Russell et al.’s (2021) New Zealand study advocated for the following recommendations to support women’s cycling equity:

1) Specified separated bike lanes – to deal with conflict between drivers and cyclists – of sufficient size for bikes to travel in both directions; fully-connected; separated from cars by a grassed strip and maintained in good condition.
2) More bike lanes that get people from A to B (for example, for commuting) rather than just for recreational biking.
3) Bring down the number of cars through fuel pricing.
4) Sufficient bike racks or spaces in trains and on buses.
5) Good lighting on cycle ways.
6) Showers and drying facilities at schools, workplaces, and public institutions, and prioritised bike parking.
7) Supporting cycling as a whanau (extended family) requiring cycleways wide enough for families or groups cycling sociably together.

Women in this study added the following recommendations to support their biking, while contributing to biking equity:

Table 3. Participants Recommendations to Improve Indigenous Women’s Bike Equity and Access

1) Investment in biking infrastructure, including protected bike lanes, bike security stands, and bike storage options.
2) Investment in community bike shops that provide women-specific sessions while also providing more affordable bikes for purchase.
3) Investment in bike paths that provide for family biking (e.g., wider paved paths, safe and away from traffic).
4) Investment in family bike programs that bring women and their families together.

5) Investment in safety features such as bike trails that have lighting.
6) Provision of programs that provide group biking opportunities (e.g., paths that are wide that support groups of bikers).
7) Indigenous specific bike group events, connecting Indigenous people together. 8) Investment in biking programs that include Indigenous cultural education, connecting bikers with cultural heritage and the land.

Conclusion

The discussion about how biking contributes to Indigenous women's wellness brought emphasizes biking can contribute to physical, mental, emotional wellness. The women also brought forth how biking can contribute to spiritual wellness from the connections with animals, nature and Mother Earth by bike. The exploration of gender and women's experiencing of cycling centered on barriers to cycling with an emphasis on safety issues, infrastructure, the influence of gender roles such as caregiving and household responsibilities, and broader structural impediments including racism and misogyny. A gender lens brought forth advocacy for cycling equity that is linked to access to healthcare, affordable childcare, and economic and political power and advocated as incorporating aspects of the health, environmental justice, social justice, education, and economic development sectors. The discussion brings to point that biking accessibility for Indigenous women, their families, and communities is linked to justice. Supporting biking equity for women means considering what type of biking the women pursue (e.g., recreational, exercise, active transportation) who they bike with (e.g., young children), and where they want to bike (e.g., trails, other parts of the city requiring bike-racks on buses). With the strong advocacy for more biking infrastructure the women in this study add the importance of maintenance and keeping paths and lanes cleared of environmental hazards, a persistent issue in the North End neighbourhood, that contributes to issues of Indigenous women's Land justice.

Cultural Resistance, Reclamation and Resurgence: Indigenous Women's Experiences of Trails and Parks and Impacts on Wellness

It is important to emphasize few women had access to safe urban trails, particularly in the North End neighbourhood. The women talked about the issue of safety on all urban trails, particularly trails that were remote were identified as a danger for women. Women talked about how there would need to be lighting along trails, safety call buttons, and safety patrols to ensure women's safe access to trails. The women referenced the beautiful urban trails that are maintained in other areas of the city that offer greater safety, with a network spanning neighbourhoods, although not connected effectively with the North End. The women also discussed the foot paths along the river in the North End that ideally connected with nature; however these trails were described as a danger. However, the women emphasized these trails could offer many connections to wellness if they were safe. The women described how the trails link to animals that make their home along rivers, while connecting to nature such as the trees and plants, and significantly with the river itself, which Sharon imbues with a spiritual, living essence. Trails offered potential sites for exercise, family and community social outdoor activity, and connection with nature. Safe parks also provide places on urban land for the women to have their cultural ceremonies, host feasts, and revitalize Indigenous culture on the Land through Land-based teachings. The women's descriptions of park use benefits included exercise, places for ceremonies, being outdoors where there is fresh air and nature that contributes to mental wellness, and relationships of togetherness with family, community and the Land.

In contrast to multifaceted potential benefits of trail use the women described, western literature about the benefits of trail use predominantly focuses on physical activity benefits (Dunton et al., 2009; Fitzhugh et al., 2010; Orstad et al., 2016; Starnes et al., 2011; Smiley et al.,

2020) rather than a more comprehensive vision of healthy social lifestyles the women presented. For example, Smiley et al. (2020) focused on building new trails in neighbourhoods to increase physical activity through trail use while reporting the higher the walking, the higher self-rated wellness and health. Dunton et al. (2009) suggested trail use for health and exercise resulted in higher levels of trail-related recreational activity than individuals using the trail for other reasons (i.e., social interaction, pet walking, and enjoying nature). Dunton et al.'s (2009) findings contrast the women's discussions that centred on trails as an important aspect of social activity and connecting with nature, bringing forth Indigenous models of wellness. Sanders et al. (2013) added to a more multidimensional model of wellness reporting that trail use encompassed aspects of six dimensions of wellness benefits that included physical, emotional, environmental, mental/intellectual, social, and spiritual benefits. Other researchers emphasized evidence suggested physical activity carried out in natural environments is associated with greater positive effects on psychological, emotional and mental well-being (Sanders et al., 2013; Barton et al., 2009; Larson et al., 2016; Tzoulas et al., 2007). Thompson Coon et al., (2011) elaborated exercising in natural environments was associated with greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement, decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression, and increased energy. Reflecting sentiments from the women in this study, Keith et al.(2018) reported that resting, relaxing and escaping city life, spending time with friends and family, and experiencing nature were the most discussed benefits of trail use.

The broader research about park use and wellness also has a focus on physical activity benefits, with McCormack et al., (2010) advocating that urban parks have an important role in promoting physical activity. Similar to research about trails, parks and natural settings were associated with improved mental health (Sugiyama et al., 2008; Payne et al., 2005). The benefits

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

of park use noted in research includes exposure to healthy air quality combined with nature, as one woman stated, "the park is, you know, just being outside and being surrounded by trees. And the smell—you know, the greenery, and flowers when the flowers are in bloom, but even just grass" (Krenichyn, 2006, p. 636). This statement reflects what participants in this study highlighted with the wellness qualities of being outdoors, breathing fresh air induced with nature. Research also emphasized the benefits of park use for children, with Lloyd et al., (2008) reporting children's social experiences in parks provide spaces to explore and develop their social and individual identities. Veitch et al., (2007) added parks offer important sites for children's physical activity and free play. These benefits of park use for children and youth were echoed by the participants in this study, who also emphasized that their park use was centred on the benefit to their children.

Although there are some common findings about the benefits of trail and park use across western-dominant studies that may be relevant to Indigenous women's experiences, this prior research is not contextualized in colonial land contexts nor does this research include a gendered, cultural lens focusing on the experiences of Indigenous women. For example, Smiley et al.'s (2020) participants were predominately white (92%) and although the findings noted differences in trail activity among women compared to men, the role of gender and race were not explored, pointing to a gap in research. As the research about Indigenous women's biking highlighted, a more nuanced IGBA+ lens is needed to understand Indigenous women's experiences of trail and park use that centres these activities as relationships with the Land.

The Role of Gender in Indigenous Women's Trail and Park Use

Just as there is a body of literature about intersections of biking and gender, there is also a body of literature about women's trail and park use that draws from a gender lens. For example,

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Keith et al. (2018) reported, compared to men, women were more likely to visit trails to exercise and experience nature, and women were more concerned about trail safety and accessibility.

Here again, the common theme among women is trail safety, highlighting a more universal issue of safety among women. Research also identified trail maintenance as a key factor in trail use (Keith et al., 2018; Johansen et al., 2020), reflecting an issue the women in this study advocated for because trail maintenance contributes to trail safety, particularly for their young children.

This finding again reflects the advocacy of women in this study who emphasized trail maintenance was an essential aspect of safe trail use for their families. A comparison of men and women in Troped et al.'s (2005) study noted that women reported trail use more often as a social activity with others compared to men, but did not further explore this relationship. The importance of social activity among the participants in this current study emphasized social activity was a way to support and strengthen community, while reflecting their culture of caring for one another. Socializing is more than a social event for Indigenous women, it is reclaiming Indigenous culture of community togetherness on the Land. Research about gender disparities in park use and physical activity among residents of high-poverty neighborhoods emphasized neighborhood poverty level has a strong negative association with park use (Cohen et al., 2012; Derosé et al., 2015). Poverty impacts of park use in low-income communities was reported as affected by crime and poorly maintained facilities (Stodolska et al., 2011). These issues of poverty, crime and park use, and poorly maintained parks were a common issue discussed by the women in the study, who attributed these issues to neglect and discrimination toward the residents, while issues of crime and poverty were linked to oppressive socio-economic conditions. Foster and Giles-Corti (2008) reported women often feel more physically vulnerable than men in impoverished neighbourhoods and have more concerns about personal safety,

whereas crime-related safety restricts park use. These issues are compounded when women are using parks with their children, whereas protection of children adds another layer of dangers of park use. This reoccurring finding points to the injustice Indigenous women face in protection from violence that bars their access to positive urban land experiences.

Intersections of Culture and Gender in Indigenous Women's Urban Trail and Park Use

The findings in this study bring attention to how understanding intersections of culture and gender in Indigenous women's trail and park use centres on how these activities are fundamentally about relationships with the Land in urban settings. The value of trail and park use extends beyond recreation to opportunities for Indigenous women to foster wellness through their cultural connections with the Lands and with their community. It is important to emphasize that previous research discussed provided no historical-cultural context of the Land.

Acknowledging the trails and parks as Indigenous Land focuses attention the significance of Indigenous women's time spent using trails and parks.

As explored throughout this research, Indigenous women hold a gendered, cultural bond with the Land, and through caring relationships women are fostering their wellness and the wellness of the Land. In the context of settler colonialism, women's barriers to equitable access to trails and parks are embedded in colonial tactics to disempower Indigenous women and sever their powerful, protective relationship with the Land (MACIW, 2023a). As women in the study reflected and as reported in research, the significance of Land is more than a physical place, rather women experience an interrelationship with the Land "who is an animate, living entity—a mother" (Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020a, p. 4). This sentiment was particularly shared by Sharon who described how her relationship to nature and the Land is one of caring for Mother Earth. This understanding points to the importance of relationships with the Land founded on kinship

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

and a reciprocal relationship of caring. Trails and parks provide connection with the living, natural aspects that make up the Land, with the trails and parks providing a place for kinship relationships to unfold. This means parks and trails, with being part of the Land, offer places to strengthen Indigenous culture and identity. This is apparent from the women's use of parks as places to have cultural activities with their children, families and communities. This family and community togetherness on the Land strengthens women's identities as caregivers while reflecting back a culture of family and community unity on the Land. Family and community togetherness on the Land, where cultural teachings are shared and cultural activities take place, deeply cultivate cultural continuity which is essential for Indigenous women's wellness. To illustrate, the women detailed how they hosted feasts in parks, not only providing nourishment for their families and communities, but also reestablishing cultural practices and healthy cultural identity. This family time is integral for healing families from the harm of colonial attempts of separation, whereas family time transmits cultural values and strengthens identity that contribute to wellness (Richmond & Ross, 2009). Practices of cultural continuity include a sense of cultural identity (i.e., being proud of who you are), a positive personal identity, and strong self-esteem (Lucero, 2014; Oster et al., 2014; Wexler, 2014). Cultural continuity through the experiences of cultural practices with other Indigenous Peoples contributes to a sense of community, empowerment, belonging, and social purpose (Iwasaki et al., 2005; Lucero, 2014; Wexler, 2014) while also strengthening relationships, which is foundational for Indigenous women's wellness. Cultural continuity was also described as a fundamental aspect of Indigenous Peoples' healing journeys from colonial trauma (Auger, 2016; Iwasaki et al., 2005; Lucero, 2014). Lucero's (2014) research with American Indian urban women explained cultural identity required personal

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness and/or public spaces within the urban environment and with other American Indian people who share cultural knowledge, with a woman describing:

Just my family explaining, bettering my knowledge of my culture... And then my friends, connecting with them even if they're from a different tribe. Just doing stuff with them to figure out the different things, going places with them for cultural reasons. (p. 15)

This reflection relates to the women in this study, who described the importance of being with family, being with community, and together sharing cultural knowledge. The emphasis of “going places with them for cultural reasons” brings forth the intersections of Land, place, and cultural continuity and points to the women's advocacy for group and community cultural recreation activities in urban land spaces. Also similar was how an American Indian woman described she attended pow-wows (a source of both cultural involvement and social interaction), where she “could share with others knowledge of her tribe's history and traditions, and practice traditional spirituality” (Lucero, 2014, p. 15). As Lucero (2014) elaborated, “these activities all gave her a sense of connection to her culture, and in addition, she saw practicing traditional spirituality as a way of resisting assimilation and cultural dislocation” (p. 15). These sentiments about pow-wow dancing reflects Sharon's experiences from the current study whereas pow-wow dancing produces a strong relationship with her Indigenous culture and cultural identity. Hence, Indigenous women's cultural practices on the Land are essential for fostering cultural continuity through a process of colonial resistance and cultural reclamation, that in turn supports wellness.

Parks as Places for Feasts and Gardening

The women in the current study also detailed how they used park spaces for cultural feasts and gatherings. The importance of feasts as way of Indigenous Peoples reconnecting with food, place and culture was presented as matter of justice, premising that “one of the damaging

impacts of Canada's colonial policies and practices is that they aim to disconnect Indigenous Peoples from their Land, their foods, and their medicines, which feed not only the body, but the heart and spirit" (Bagelman et al., 2016, p. 7). As Bagelman et al. (2016) elaborated, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that within Canada's residential schools, food policies played a particularly violent role. In fact, this process of culinary acculturation was a key feature of colonialism" (p. 7). Further:

In addition to being separated from their families and their Land, children were denied access to their traditional diets. In their home communities, many students were raised on food that their parents hunted, fished, or harvested. As well as being denied traditional foods, in many cases children were denied food to the point of severe malnutrition and starvation where thousands of children died of malnutrition as a result of such colonial policies (p. 7).

Food access used as a colonial weapon signifies how important traditional Indigenous feasts are for Indigenous Peoples (Bagelman et al., 2016). This finding reflects Mary and the other grandmothers as hosts of community feasts, passing along cultural teachings as they share the food—again pointing to the importance of Indigenous women having access to safe Land to host feasts. As an active member of the feast working group in Bagelman's (2018) study emphasized:

There is so much knowledge and story in the communities. Many people just need a venue to share this with their community. And the youth are just as excited to learn how to pick berries, harvest seafood, build a pit, barbecue salmon, and celebrate their families, culture, and foods (p. 10).

This statement highlights how feasts provide community and relationship building and cultural education that fosters cultural continuity, while nourishing the body and spirit, which the women emphasized as foundational to wellness. From Bagelman et al.'s (2016) study, First Nations community members shared the following statements about the value of community feasts, "it was so nice to have the families and friends together and having good times around our food" and "I have never seen Indigenous people showcased in such a loving and family-focused way. The media never does that" (p. 13). As the women echoed, Indigenous community feasts not only strengthens community relationships on the Land, but these activities also challenge stereotypes and stigma experienced by Indigenous communities that counters media representations of Indigenous Peoples that focus on the negative, as several women in this study described as a barrier to positive cultural identity.

Women also advocated for food gardens in parks to further support their community's access to healthy foods, adding that gardens can also provide place for cultural education to children, such as the "take and replace" gardening philosophy the women discussed, while connecting the children with nature's healthy food sources. Research about the benefits of gardening with Indigenous children and families found that gardening programs "fulfilled a critical need among Indigenous youth and their families, who reportedly suffered from food insecurity and access" (Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020b, p. 871). Johnson-Jennings et al., (2020b) reported the family gardening program produced numerous benefits, including increased healthy food awareness and perceptions, cultural resources, and ancestral food knowledge skills through activities, mentorship, and multigenerational engagement. In advocating for food gardens, Indigenous women are reimagining and reconstructing urban parks as places of Indigenous community gatherings for nourishment of the mind, body and spirit derived from accessing

natural food sources on the Land. Moving beyond narrow Western construction of park space as sites for physical activity and recreation, the women's vision includes access to Indigenous cultural teachings about food from nature's offerings that sustains the whole community. As Wilson (2003) summarized with their research with Anishinabek participants, the nutritional properties of food are vital for First Nations health and wellness that is supported by relationship with Mother Earth, which is reflective of the participants' perspectives in this study.

Parks as Places for Ceremonies and Rematriation

Women also emphasized conducting ceremonies in park spaces is a fundamental aspect of wellness for the whole community that contributes to cultural resurgence and healing. As NIMMIWG (2019c) explained, "in many examples, people looked first to ceremonies, distinct systems of spirituality, and to traditional knowledge to find healing. Traditional teachings and working with Elders were particularly important, as well as attending and participating in ceremonies" (p. 44). This finding points to the significance of the grandmothers in the study, who are Elders, committed to passing on their traditional teachings across generations by conducting ceremonies for their communities in park spaces. A place for ceremonies is a foundational way to support Indigenous women's wellness, particularly when considering colonial attacks on Indigenous culture included the banning of ceremonies. Women in this study detailed how park space was used for memorial ceremony, bringing everyone together as a person passed over from the living, through ceremony. During a time of mourning, ceremonies on the Land contribute to healing while strengthening community during emotionally challenging experiences. Brown (2016) advocated those fostering connections to the spirit through ceremony on the Land contributes to decolonizing wellness promotion for Indigenous women. Indigenous women in Brown's (2016) study outlined the importance of participating in local water ceremonies

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

organized by tribal communities to pray for water, connecting participants spiritually with Indigenous sacredness of water. In Flaminio et al.'s (2020) research with Métis women, the research included two full moon ceremonies, "the effect of which is having something important 'in common' with Métis women" (p. 59). This unifying force among Métis women is salient in how colonial tactics aimed to cause separation among Indigenous communities through the banning of ceremony. Flaminio et al., (2020) highlighted Métis women's reflections of the benefits of women's ceremonies includes learning from other women, adding to confidence as Métis women, while "building a sisterhood" (Flaminio et al., p. 61). A younger Métis woman pointed out that Métis women gathering together brought her "a sense of peacefulness and hope especially when seeing local Métis women come together in a ceremonial way" (Flaminio et al., 2020, p. 61). A sense of peacefulness and hope is a profound result of women's gatherings, countering the attacks to peace that comes from colonial violence against Indigenous women, with hope being foundational in addressing trauma that extends to future generations. To illustrate, the reflections by Métis women highlighted how gendered ceremonies that unite women in "building a sisterhood" (p. 61) contributes to emotional, mental and spiritual wellness. In Wabie's (2011; 2019) research about the benefits of ceremonies for Indigenous young women, they drew from Decontie's (2014) description of the young Indigenous women's Berry Fast Ceremonies:

Berry Fast duration is a full year (four seasons). A young girl lives a strict disciplined lifestyle to role model herself after Mother Earth, to prepare to be like her when she is a woman giving life in the future...The Berry Fast is viewed as an honourable spiritual calling, a life stage journey. It is also a time for young girls to begin learning important lessons such as giving and receiving, and the different spiritual meanings of life,

including passed down oral teachings of their ancestors. The choice the young girls make in giving up the berries for all of life creations and future generations remains important in continuing on Anishinaabe culture (Decontie, 2014, p. 8).

As Wabie (2019) reflected, “the Berry Fast also enhances Algonquin and Ojibwe female adolescents’ understanding of their role as Anishnaabe kweg (Aboriginal women), and culturally constructs a path upon which they follow, and strengthens their connection to Mother Earth and Creator (Wabie, 2011, pp. i)” (p. 59). These points about the gendered cultural value of ceremony for Indigenous women brings an emphasis of gendered ceremony connecting to Mother Earth and Creator, strengthening spirituality. Indigenous women’s resurgence of ceremonial practices are reflective of the British Columbia’s Minister’s Advisory Council of Indigenous Women’s (2023a) guiding principles of the IBGA+ lens: “re-matriation: This principle is an approach that centres Matriarchal knowledge, ceremonies, leadership and connections to the Land” and “re-clamation: This principle is about reclaiming of Indigenous women’s ceremonies and practices across the life span” (p. 23). To emphasize, women’s ceremonies represent Indigenous women reinstating and reclaiming their traditional gendered roles in broader society as cultural educators and Matriarchal leaders, these acts resist the onslaught of misogynistic racism Indigenous women experience. Significantly, women are spiritually strengthening themselves through reclaiming and reinstating gendered cultural practices on the Land.

Additionally, the benefit of ceremonies in parks for the broader community was recounted by an Indigenous youth in Morton et al.’s (2021) study, who hosted a recurring event to share drum songs, food, and smudge the city park area to bring about healing, they described:

We started singing at the [park]. And we didn’t realize what the group was bringing to [the park]. We didn’t realize it at first. We’re just jamming, whatever, and where else to

jam. We started noticing that the crowds were getting bigger. More and more people started to come. I always remember this one lady she told us boys...she came to the top of that hill [at the park]. She gave us a cigarette [a form of sacred tobacco offering] while her granddaughter said, "You know, my grandmother wants to tell you something." They gave us a tobacco and she said, "Do you guys know what they call this hill?" We're like, "No." She's like, "They call this Gangster Hill... because there's so much fighting, there's so much drinking, there's so much bullying, and just negative stuff happen on this hill at night-time and during the daytime. I'm scared to come out here with my grandkids." She said, "I'm scared someone is going to come hurt us or rob us or something like that." She said, "But what you boys are doing—you guys are balancing out that feeling. It's not just bad people who are making poor choices... So, you guys are going to change this neighborhood," she said. (Morton et al., 2021, p. 137)

From this reflection and adding the experiences of women in this study, it is obvious that Indigenous gatherings in parks for ceremonies has the power to challenge the negative attributes associated with park use in socio-economically oppressed neighbourhoods, reinstating parks as a place of Indigenous community wellness. The importance of Indigenous women reclaiming Land, where Indigenous women can live their lives as cultural leaders in their community, was emphasized by a Winnipeg Métis and Anishinaabe Saulteaux woman, Nicole Lamy (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023). Lamy discussed how there are certain places in Winnipeg "where I would prefer to be because I know that other Indigenous people gather in these spaces" (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 8). She explained these Indigenous spaces offer Indigenous people a greater sense of belonging and pride. Lamy explained how in her research with Indigenous Peoples a common theme was an internalized feeling of shame that detracts from feeling proud about being

Indigenous. Contributing to strengthening Indigenous identity in the face of racism, Lamy described how her connection to the Land gave her the strength to deal with the racism that she felt in the city. This reflection signifies the importance of access to parks as places to connect with the Land that brings Indigenous Peoples together. Lamy added Indigenous women leaders “were particularly strong and inspiring, tirelessly and bravely supporting each other as they stood up against colonial institutions and systemic injustices, often without pay and while caring for their families” (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 13). Learning from Indigenous women leaders inspired Lamy and provided “a new perspective on my responsibility as an Indigenous woman” (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 9). Lamy detailed the significance of strong Indigenous women as central to the development of Indigenous spaces in Winnipeg. She described how the women “were focused on working in a relational way to create places for people to gather and to challenge oppressive systems to ensure that future generations would not experience the racism that they knew all too well” (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 11). Lamy’s reflections highlight the significance of Indigenous women’s leadership in land-based community cultural activities as integral to decolonizing spaces for Indigenous Peoples in Winnipeg, where their activities strengthen Indigenous Peoples from the examples women set as cultural leaders and educators. In talking with Indigenous leaders, Lamy found that they reminded her “of the importance of creating space for our Indigenous cultures and traditions to flourish in the community” (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 13). These reflections show the power of Indigenous women using trail and park space for cultural activities, offering Indigenous communities healthy, supportive ways to engage with their Indigenous culture while offering a place to connect with other Indigenous Peoples in a good way. Through Indigenous women’s relentless dedication to restoring community cultural practices on the Land, urban Indigenous spaces that are welcoming

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

and supportive of Indigenous culture in Winnipeg continue to expand, providing cultural connections that profoundly support wellness for all community members.

Strengthening spirituality is also a powerful result of women's cultural activities on the Land in park spaces. Rice (2005) emphasized the significance of spirituality among Aboriginal people and relationships with Land whereas "everyone is given natural power; spiritual power is available through ceremonies and other activities" (p. 22). Rice (2005) linked spirituality with sacred spaces on the Land, describing:

The Gitksan in British Columbia are connected to spiritual power of their ancestral Lands. This is represented through their clan songs, stories and totems, which link people to the spirit power so that 'man, spirit power and the Land...form a living whole' (Knnudtson & Suzuki, 1992)" (p. 24)

Rice (2005) brought attention to the wholistic nature of Indigenous spirituality in relation to the sacredness of the Land, and the relationship between cultural practices in fostering spirituality in relation with the Land. Women in this study emphasized this relationship, discussing how their spirituality is intricately linked with their relationships with the Land and how their cultural practices on the land fostered spiritual wellness.

The women also shared how park space could be utilized for medicinal gardens, offering a place for women to pass on their cultural teachings about medicinal plants while also fostering a spiritual connection with the plants themselves that fosters wellness. Metis woman Christi Belcourt (2007) described the historic relationship the Métis have with medicinal plants, although with barriers to reconnecting in colonial, urban environments:

At one time, the Métis used only plants for our medicine. We relied on our collective knowledge and our intuition to help guide us on how to use these plants. Plants were used

in conjunction with healing and spiritual ceremonies. We used to be very connected to the land, the plant world, the Spirit World, and to the animal world. A lot of us have lost that now to modern lifestyles. I was raised in the city, and it took me a long time to get reconnected again, yet I still have a very long way to go! (p. XII)

Belcourt (2007) brought attention to the importance of Indigenous medicinal gardens in urban settings, denoting the value of medicinal plants in the health and wellness of Métis people as tied to their ancestral cultural knowledge. Women from the current study, particularly Mary, strongly advocated for places for medicinal plant gardens for teachings, reflecting the value of medicinal plants among Cree women. It is important to emphasize the gendered relationship in cultural knowledge transmission through land-based education, which Johnson and Ali (2020) described:

In thinking through land-based education through an Indigenous lens, then, we must consider how gendered constructions of the “wilderness” are connected to colonial objectives that attempt to disappear Indigenous Peoples from the land, which is driven through violence against their women. (p. 208)

This statement highlights the significance of Indigenous women's land-based teachings, which are in resistance to the colonial acts that aim to sever Indigenous women's roles as cultural educators on the Land. In contrast, Indigenous women are advocating for medicinal gardens as ways to re-connect Indigenous communities with their ancestral knowledge of plant life through Land-based cultural knowledge transmission, while contributing to wellness by strengthening connection to culture and identity through a living relationship with the natural world. Indigenous relationships with the natural world, spanning the stars, mountains, waterways, landscapes, airways, animals, and plants, are all a part of Indigenous relations that are instilled

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness with spirituality, and these spiritual relationships with nature are foundational for wellness (Morton et al., 2021). As the women emphasized, the teaching of Indigenous medicinal plants is not only sharing ways to support health and wellness, but it is also a direct connection to the natural world, infused with spiritual elements. The teaching of plant medicines offers learners Land-based Indigenous knowledge and ways to care for their health and wellness in relation with the Land. To elaborate, "a reconnection to Indigenous culture through land-based education can be effective in reclaiming spiritual, physical, and psychological health, while aiding in the restoration of cultural and community characteristics such as strength, harmony, respect, and peace" (Johnson & Ali, 2020, p. 208). These profound benefits of Land-based cultural education contribute to multidimensional wellness for the whole community.

Parks and Trails as Places for Cultured Mothering While Connected to the Land

Adding to Indigenous women's intergenerational cultural transmissions that fosters wellness is women's ability to mother (i.e., to care, teach, and protect) their children and grandchildren, as well as their communities, on the Land. To emphasize, "Indigenous women assert that 'we have historically, and continually, mothered in a way that is different' from the dominant culture" (Lavell-Harvard et al., 2006, p. 3). As Indigenous woman Natalie Clark and Chastity Davis-Alphonse elaborated:

Indigenous women's roles included the highly revered role of motherhood which wasn't always dictated by biological motherhood but was seen as a position of leadership and responsibility for nurturing and providing care for the community members and their guests (MACIW, 2023a, p. 9).

The women in the study show how their mothering care is for all their relations, from family and community to the plants and animals, the water and the Land, extending into the spirit

world. In contrast, western culture emphasizes individualism, where community and environmental issues are an optional concern. As Indigenous woman Leanne Simpson emphasized the significance of Indigenous mothering:

Reclaiming Indigenous traditions of pregnancy, birth, and mothering will enable our children to lead our resurgence as Indigenous Peoples, to rise up and rebel against colonialism in all its forms, to dream independence, to dance to nationhood. (Simpson, 2006, p. 33)

Hence, reclaiming cultural mothering is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous women's identity and a source of cultural strengthening for children and their families, all contributing to family wellness. Brant (2014) added the significance of Indigenous mothering in the colonial context whereas Indigenous mothering rights are attacked and repressed, yet "mothering traditions that are still alive is testament to the love, strength, and resiliency of the grandmothers who nurtured them, as cultural carriers, to ensure that they could be revived today" (p. 37). The colonial assault on the sacredness of Indigenous mothering was further explained by Simpson (2006), adding, "when colonialism hijacked our pregnancies and births, it also stole our power and our sovereignty as Indigenous women. And when colonialism stole that power from us it undermined our sacred responsibilities as life-givers" (p. 28). Women in the study also described how their mothering care includes acts of protection, where protection of children is a prominent factor in women's decision as to where to venture outdoors, with safety being paramount. This equates to the essentialness of safe urban trails and parks for women to mother their children, grandchildren, and broader community while engaged on the Land.

Adding to understandings of the significance of enacting Indigenous motherhood, is the substantial role many women hold as Indigenous grandmothers who are survivors of the Sixties

Scoop. As the women in the current study who are Sixties Scoop survivors and grandmothers emphasized, passing on cultural knowledge to grandchildren is paramount to undo the intergenerational familial and cultural damage these grandmothers and their families experienced due to the colonial state's genocidal tactics to separate Indigenous families. An Indigenous woman, Autumn Varley, accounted the power of her grandmother's education, a grandmother who survived the Sixties Scoop, in ensuring family ties:

Despite how upset I may have been, Grandma would not allow me to be ungrateful for my family, particularly my relationship with my mother. She shared part of her story with me to make me appreciate the many gifts in my life. (Varley, 2016, p. 71)

Varley described many stories her grandmother shared, that was instrumental for the grandchildren's cultural, healthy upbringing. She shared how her grandmother taught her important cultural lessons of healing from intergenerational colonial harms:

As Grandma says, "you don't just get over what has happened to you." However, as Indigenous people, this is often what we are told to do. When we are told, "it is in the past, move on," we are denying the truth of the intergenerational effects of colonial systems. Although healing and reconciliation with self can happen, it does not mean that we forget. Grandma's assertion that "you just don't get over what has happened to you" reflects this process of healing. (Varley, 2016, p. 71)

These stories of grandmother's education to children highlights the significance of teachings from Indigenous grandmothers that creates pathways into the future of resilience and strength for the children they teach while undoing the colonial harms of family separation and cultural fragmentation. It is important to emphasize Indigenous grandparent caregivers are more often single and female (Fuller-Thomson, 2005) which brings attention to how Indigenous

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

grandmothers should receive greater supports from a gendered positioning. In McKenzie et al.'s (2010) research with Indigenous grandmothers, the grandmothers reported a complete lack of services and supports for Indigenous grandmothers which is reflective of disparity in supports for Indigenous women caregivers that the participants in the current study described. The grandmothers in McKenzie et al.'s (2010) study advocated for a range of programs and supports ranging from affordable and safe housing, respite services, counseling services, services for children with behavioural issues and cognitive limitations (e.g., depression, anger issues, FASD, ADHD), mentoring programs, social support services, transportation services, and parenting skills programming and support (McKenzie et al, 2010). This advocacy is reflective of the women in the current study, who advocated for a range of women's services to support holistic wellness. Additionally, the women's advocacy for park spaces where they can teach their children cultural knowledge while connected to the Land was emphasized by the women, pointing to the relationship between wellness and intergenerational gendered knowledge transmission on the Land. Brant (2014) discussed the significant importance of Indigenous women knowing their maternal histories and reconnecting new generations of women with their cultural traditions in their roles as mothers, elaborating "the belief that we need to know where we come from in order to know where we are going is integral to contemporary visions of empowered Indigenous motherhood" (p. 35). Brant (2014) emphasized teaching the younger generations with their maternal histories "is essential in strengthening Indigenous families and communities" (p. 35). Brant (2014) explained the blood memories passed through maternal ancestors holds strength and resilience for future generations of women. This sentiment is reflective of how Kerri and Mary in the current study discussed the importance of blood memories passed through the maternal line that provides women with strength and resilience.

Brant (2014) connected Indigenous motherhood and cultural knowledge transmission with the mothering of Mother Earth, explaining:

It is often said that land is our first teacher, much like mothers are the first teachers to their new born. Connecting both of these expressions, land is mother, and indeed our first teacher, and therefore to understand the historical maternal teachings of this land we must go back to this very basic sentiment. (p. 37)

These sentiments speak to the significance of the mothers and grandmothers in the current study who dedicate their lives to passing on the cultural teachings and love to the younger generation. These sentiments were also reflected among Māori Peoples where “many discussed the importance for their health of passing on stories and knowledge through waiata (singing), whakapapa (genealogy), awhi (care and respect), manaaki (hospitality), te reo (language), akoranga (learning), whenua (land) and wairua (spirit) of tūpuna (ancestors)” (Marques et al., 2021, p. 9) as part of therapeutic environments that support health and wellness. Supporting Indigenous women as mothers and grandmothers means providing wholistic wrap-around supports with access to safe, cultural programs and services, housing, as well as *safe* Land for their children and grandchildren for cultural education and family togetherness, as a pathway to wellness and a matter of cultural reclamation and resurgence for Indigenous families.

Centring Trails and Parks as Connection to Traditional Indigenous Lands

Centring trails and parks as sites of traditional Indigenous Lands brings forth the significance of how trails and parks are a living history of Indigenous Peoples, as way of connecting to ancestral relations embedded in the Land. A connection to ancestors is profound in the lives of Indigenous Peoples, who endured the attempted severing of intergenerational relations throughout colonial history, that extends into present day. Teillet (2019) recounted how

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

The Métis Nation is founded by their identity as tied to their homelands. Teillet (2019) provided the detailed histories of Métis communities with a history of Métis life unfolding on their homelands, where they battled resistance to colonial powers to establish their place as distinct with their own histories connected to the Land. The significance of connecting with the Land for wellness was described by an Ininiw iskeiwrom woman, Doris Young:

Our medicines came from this land, as did our economy, our livelihood, as well as our language, our laws, and our governing systems. This amazing area provided everything we needed to live a good life. We practiced Midewewin (a medicine society) before contact; we did ceremonies like the goose dance which no one hardly remembers now. It is a ceremony to welcome the geese back each spring and fall. Everyone loved spring and fall when the geese returned to our land. Other ceremonies healed the sick and blessed the new babies that arrived. This land is very special. This land gives us life. (MacKinnon & Mallet, 2023, p. 132).

Here, Young connects the Land as sources of medicine, culture and of life, where ceremony links Indigenous people to the Land in celebration of the changing seasons and with appreciation of nature. The Land and nature are therefore intricately linked to the wellness of Indigenous communities. Fernandez et al., (2021) explored Indigenous women's experiences of Land by focusing on trails from Indigenous notions of place on a historic Indigenous trail in the U.S.A. Fernandez et al., (2021) research focused on relationship to place among Indigenous women who participated in Yappalli: Choctaw Road to Health, an experiential, land-based intervention that involved walking the physical path of the Choctaw Trail of Tears (Walters et al., 2018). As Fernandez et al. (2021) recounted, the Trail of Tears involved forced removal of five tribal nations under a federally mandated Indian removal policy in the 1830s in the U.S.A. On

the Choctaw Trail of Tears, over 12,500 Choctaw people were forced to walk 500 miles from their traditional homelands or face losing their tribal sovereignty (Barnett, 2012). A participant in the study reflected as she walked the trail, “I really feel pain in my heart....I feel shock....We hurt...I hurt” (p. 129). Her response highlighted how, “the impact of trauma from a place is more than symbolic—the sunken path was a powerful, physical reminder of the thousands of men, women, and children whose footsteps literally shaped the Choctaw Trail of Tears” (Fernandez et al., 2021, p. 129). This trail experience emphasized how trails are sites of Indigenous traditional Lands, where history and the present come together imprinted on the Land. As an Indigenous women reflected, “we’re still recovering from colonial processes, and this walk is part of that decolonizing work” (p. 131). Hence, trails are ways for Indigenous women to connect and reconcile the past, with steps taken in the present, while those who walk reclaim the trails as places where the ancestors walked as a source of resilience (Fernandez et al., 2021). This was described by women as a “shared path of resistance”:

This is, this will be my life's work... to shift this, to transform this.... the new Trail of Tears as the health disparities we're all dying from.... Just the fact that we were there doing this, that you were all doing this especially meant that it was changing (p. 131).

It was suggested that these walks as forms of cultural and spiritual practices “create and reinforce a connection to place and considered an antidote to contemporary traumas (Fernandez et al., 2021, p. 131). The participant further explained how this act of resistance in walking the trail represents fighting for Indigenous health and wellness:

There is a fierce resolution to be who we are regardless of where we get pushed to be...our cultural traditions; our cultural symbols have changed over time and history, the essence is still the same...this way that we maintain ourselves, our spirits, despite,

colonial processes is what keeps us alive. We're fighting for our health and wellness (p. 131).

This example exemplifies Indigenous women taking back Land, in this case a trail with colonial history, and reinstating these places as sites of resistance and decolonization that promotes health and wellness for Indigenous women. Schultz et al., (2016) added to this point whereas traditional knowledge derived from places of historical and spiritual significance can serve as places of traditional health promotion. Walking the trail contributed to participants health and wellness promotion through connection with their tribal ancestors' strength and resilience, with participants reflecting on how their ancestors who first walked the trail were traumatized yet persevered described as "resisting in place" (Fernandez et al., 2021, p. 131). Choctaw participants walked on the Choctaw Trail of Tears as a vision for the health of future generations, "we were trying to create more of a path that was healing versus remembering it as a path of trauma and trying to make it different for the next generations and the younger people" (Fernandez et al., 2021, p. 132). Walking the Trail of Tears in support of the Choctaw women also "evoked a sense of empathy and solidarity" (Fernandez et al., 2021, p. 132) among Indigenous Peoples, with shared historical and contemporary trauma, which points to the unifying power of a shared walk on a historical trail for Indigenous Peoples. The importance of the walk and being with other Indigenous Peoples is an aspect of trail use that the women in the study emphasized, advocating for programs that bring Indigenous Peoples together. The women who walked the Trail of Tears viewed re-tracing their ancestors' footsteps, metaphorically, as their "life's work" as their personal commitment to health and wellness. These trail walks point to how trails that are recognized as historically and culturally significant by Indigenous women are an important facet of designing trails on traditional lands that honour the historic Indigenous

significance of the Land (Fernandez et al., 2021). Similarly, in another study with Indigenous people connecting with historically and culturally significant land-based sites, these spaces were places of being brave, “seeing their ancestral histories embodied in place” while connecting to other relations during this process (Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020a, p. 10). In supporting wellness, “being at these sites ‘felt like family’ and provided a sense of collectivism, with a focus on social relationships past, present, and future” (Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020a, p. 10). Here, the significance of relationships with the Land comes forth as kinship ties that connects Indigenous Peoples with situated cultural history and the Land that spans generations.

Trails and Parks as Places for Indigenous Women's Healing on the Land

The women in the study emphasized they are not given the place to heal, with safe access to urban land fraught with barriers. Indigenous women's healing is a profound and significant reason why women should have access to safe urban land where healing can take place. Wilson (2003) elaborated on this premise, describing the Land as a place of therapeutic landscapes for Anishinabek Peoples (Ojibway and Odawa) whereas “the land does not just represent a physical space but rather, represents the interconnected physical, symbolic, spiritual and social aspects of First Nations cultures” (p. 83). Indigenous women's wellness must be supported through paths to healing from trauma as defined by the women, which is centred on access to safe urban land where their culture can be practiced. Healing experiences are essential in addressing the deep trauma experienced by Indigenous women and their communities. Indigenous communities experience intergenerational trauma, with historical, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma defined as:

The collective emotional, spiritual, and psychological pain people endure as a result of traumatic events stemming from historic and current policies, such as surviving

residential school or the violent loss of a loved one. This trauma can affect family members across different generations and be passed down to the next generation.

(NIMMIWG, 2019c, p. 21)

To reiterate, “settler colonialism has severely disrupted Indigenous ancestral ways of healing and being, contributing to an onslaught of health disparities” (Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020a, p. 1). In Johnson-Jennings et al.’s (2020a) study “the land was referred to at least twice as an active agent in the healing process and actively influenced participants ideas of place and wellbeing” (p. 10) pointing to the significant role Land-based cultural activities have in supporting Indigenous women’s healing. Fernandez et al., (2021), adding to Evans-Campbell and Campbell’s (2019) research, found that historical Indigenous trails “can be sources of healing and resilience where micro, communal and political acts of resistance are merged to transform trauma to healing” (p. 132). Trails that hold cultural and historical significance, as do trails on traditional Lands, could lead women to paths to healing, because the interconnectedness between Indigenous Peoples and their environment on the Land forms a healing relationship (Dobson & Brazzoni, 2016; Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020a; Radu et al. 2014). An example of healing attributes of walking the Land was found in Schultz et al.’s (2016) study where some participants walking a trail saw it as engaging in ceremony. Approaching the walk as ceremony recentred the walk as a way to connect it to the Land, a higher significance, and a form of teaching (Schultz et al. 2016), pointing to the cultural aspects that extend beyond simply “going for a walk.” Instead, Indigenous forms of Land-based healing is a longer-term, unfolding journey, that contributes to healing and wellness from relationships formed with the Land through time (Johnson-Jennings et al. 2020a; Karanja, 2020). Environments, including natural outdoor spaces contribute to healing for Indigenous women where physical and spiritual health becomes a blended, holistic

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness experience (Benoit et al., 2003). For participants in Johnson-Jennings et al.'s (2020a) study, connection to Land as traditional Indigenous sacred land evoked deep meaning:

These connections included seeing their ancestral histories embodied in place, as well as well as connecting to other relations during this process. Being at these sites "Felt like family" and provided a sense of collectivism, with a focus on social relationships past, present, and future. (Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020a, p. 10).

Drawing from this understanding, women's feasts and ceremonies, and cultural education, while caring for family and community in park settings, all contribute to women's healing on the Land through Indigenous family connections, spanning ancestral history. Park spaces, such as the Indigenous circle the women discussed that provides a cultural place to gather together, is an important aspect of healing spaces. For example, the women in the study discussed their affinity for a park that had Indigenous cultural features, the circle, a firepit and Indigenous artwork, providing an Indigenous space for cultural activities on the Land. The healing properties of connecting with the Land for Indigenous women cannot be overstated, for "when the women heal, the family will heal. When the family heals, the nations will heal" (Kenny, 2004, p. 1). This means *safe* land access and culturally specific spaces are essential for Indigenous women's healing on urban Land.

Trails and Parks as Places of Land Protection by Indigenous Women

As Samara from the current study also emphasized, for Indigenous women, trails and parks are sites for women's protection of the Land as an extension of their caregiving responsibilities. This protective approach to trails and parks as way of protecting the Land is founded on Indigenous women's gendered relationship with the Land, with some women having views of Land as Mother Earth, a being who they honour and respect. It is important to

emphasize Indigenous women hold a distinctive, protective relationship to Land, described as embodying resistance to settler colonialism as an ongoing, gendered process (Arvin et al., 2013).

The women in the study emphasized parks and trails are places that are to be protected, reflecting the women's traditional gendered roles of environmental stewards (Bennett & De Vries, 2020).

From Indigenous women's views of the relationship to gender and Land protection, Aurelie Arnaud, a Quebec Native Women, stated:

You need to bring the women to the table because they won't protect the same things as men and it is equally important. We need the women to bring the issues of families and the water and children and to be able to say no to a development project on those grounds and then the community will decide (KAIROS, 2014, p. 6).

This statement draws attention to the importance of Indigenous women being part of the design of lands converted to trail and park space. Trail and park development should include the expertise, gendered knowledge and cultural perspective of Land development envisioned by Indigenous women, that centres trails and parks as traditional Indigenous Lands. The women in the current study held strong advocacy for protecting the trail and park spaces by ensuring the spaces were maintained, regularly cleaned and removed of environmental hazards. Women suggested adding trash receptacles and on-going removal of environmental hazards in these spaces to contribute to healthy, cared-for Land. Caring for trails and park spaces also meant for the women caring for the people who were living there, who have no other place provided to live, addressing the wellness of all community members as interconnected with caring for the Land. As MACIW (2023a) pronounced, "Indigenous women are often on the front lines of protection of land and water and these acts of resistance must be honoured" (p. 23). Honouring Indigenous women's resistance should translate into empowering women to be heard through

consultations in the development of urban parks and trails from the gendered, cultural lens of Indigenous women’s protection and preservation of Land responsibilities. The following table outlines opportunities to invest in Indigenous women’s land-based cultural activities, that could be viewed as programs designed by the women, to support Indigenous women and their community’s wellness.

Table 4. Recommendations to Support Indigenous Women’s Park and Trail Use for Wellness

<p>Include Women’s Leadership and Consultation in the Design of Trails and Parks It is fundamental to include the knowledge of Indigenous women in the design of urban parks and trails. Improving access to these spaces and addressing the barriers women face in access requires women’s input and leadership to culturally inform urban space development from a gendered lens. This includes incorporating women’s advocacy for the following:</p> <p>a. Maintenance of Trails and Parks The women explained the parks and trails, particularly in the North End neighbourhood, are neglected, poorly maintained, and littered with hazards. Maintenance of trails and parks is essential in creating wellness-promoting urban spaces for women.</p> <p>b. Investment in Safety Features The women’s safety is paramount and unsafe trails and parks are not used. This means supporting Indigenous women’s trail and park use requires increased safety measures. As the women suggested, increased lighting, safety patrols, and safety call buttons will contribute to safer spaces.</p>
<p>Indigenous Ceremonies (e.g., full-moon ceremonies) As the women detailed, safety was an issue for their Full Moon ceremonies that happen at night. The women advocated for a designated space for these ceremonies, an enclosed space they could lock for added safety. Lighting in this space would be required.</p>
<p>Community Feasts As the women described, the majority of families in the North End are experiencing poverty that creates limited healthy food choices. Investing in community feasts would not only nourish the physical body but feasts also offer community gatherings of support and cultural education, providing additional wellness benefits while connecting with the land.</p>
<p>Memorial Fires Women discussed hosting memorial fires in parks. Providing women with the wood and materials used in memorial fires supports a significant cultural practice during times of mourning. Women described memorial fires can span days, from day to night. This means</p>

sustenance should be provided, such as food, water and medicines, for those taking part in the ceremony. Added safety measures at the ceremony would also be supportive when it becomes dark at night.

Indigenous Women's Trail Walking Groups

The women advocated for women's group trail walking. Investing in women's programs that bring women together on trails provides physical, emotional, spiritual, and social benefits. The women pronounced the significance of Indigenous women supporting each other. Trail walking groups require safety for children who also join women in these walks. This means there needs to more safe trails for women to access, that support group walks (i.e., wide trails).

Nature-Focused Educational Walks

The women emphasized the value of nature-based cultural teachings, particularly when passed down to children. Nature trails that host the Indigenous traditional plant life and medicines are needed. Investing in nature trails with Indigenous plant life in the North End would provide cultural educational opportunities and connection with the land.

River Walks

The women emphasized the importance of water as a spiritual force and an intimate aspect of womanhood. The women discussed how the river is also home to many animals. Investing in river walks means investing in the trails that follow the river. The women explained these footpaths are a danger. There is no maintenance of these trails, and there is an issue of trash and environmental hazards. People experiencing homelessness have been forced to live along these river trails. Investing in river trails means investing in the people forced to live there, there is a need for greater social housing and access to mental health and addictions services. Investing in the maintenance of river trails means investing in women's wellness by providing important connection with the water, while offering immersion into nature.

Medicinal Gardens

The women strongly advocated for medicinal gardens. Medicinal gardens were seen as sites for cultural knowledge transmission with the passing down of teachings to children. Investing in medicinal gardens in the North End equates to health and wellness benefits for the whole community. Not only do the plants offer medicine, but the plants are also infused with a spiritual connection to the land.

Food Gardens

The women advocate for food gardens. Food gardens would contribute to addressing food insecurity. Women also detailed that food gardens would sites for cultural teaching of gardening to children and community. Investment in food gardens is linked to justice, whereas as access to healthy food should be a fundamental human right.

Conclusion

In concluding with the Minister's Advisory Council of Indigenous Women (MACIW) (2023a) philosophy, Indigenous women's wellness is situated as follows, "when we speak of women, we consider this to be inclusive of, but not limited to, children, family, community, nation, wellness, justice, land and water" (p. 14). This philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of Indigenous women with their family and community, while also linking wellness to water, land and justice. The exploration of Indigenous women's experiences of trails and parks and impacts on wellness show that these experiences must be culturally understood as relationship with the Land. Indigenous women have intimate connections with the Land, and trails and parks provide these places of connection. The women's experiences highlight that their trail and park use is far more than recreation and physical activity. Recreational time with family and community are resistive acts of reclaiming traditional family togetherness against the brutal colonial Indigenous family separation tactics. Indigenous women highlighted how they were reclaiming Land from sources of urban trails and parks as places for cultural ceremonies and activities, supporting women's wellness by enabling the enactment of these cultural, gendered activities. These cultural activities in park spaces challenge racism and stereotypes in urban spaces, while providing place for Indigenous communities to gather, support each other, and pass on knowledge and teachings. Connections with the spirituality of nature and the teachings that come from nature, particularly medicinal gardens, was advocated by the women as essential for community wellness and a key benefit to urban land use. For Indigenous women and their communities, trails and parks are part of traditional Lands, requiring the specific protection offered by Indigenous women, who understand their wellness as intricately linked to the wellness of the Land. In exploring Indigenous women's trail and park use and impacts on wellness

important aspects of resistance to colonialism, reclaiming culture and reclaiming Land, that contributes to a resurgence of Indigenous women and their culture in urban settings. Indigenous women's acts of resistance to colonialism imparts spiritual, emotional, and mental strength that contributes to wellness. In this way, Indigenous women's relationship with the Land is founded on reciprocal caring for one another, a relationship that is imbued with spiritual wellness.

Further, "everyday interactions, structured by relationality and reciprocity, continue to produce distinct Indigenous forms of community and urban space. Indigenous presence is itself of manifestation of Indigenous survival, resistance, and resurgence" (Dorries et al., 2019, p. 7).

Hence, reclaiming urban land for the resurgence of cultural activities further strengthens women as they reinstate their roles as Matriarchal leaders and protectors of Land in community and broader society, contributing to Indigenous women's wellness in profound ways. Indigenous women's access to urban trails and parks is a matter of justice, for Indigenous women should have access to safe urban land as a fundamental right of Indigenous women as part of their traditional Lands, whose rights extend to rights to protect the Land.

Relationships with Nature and Indigenous Women's Wellness

Throughout this discussion, themes of the significance of relationships with nature to support Indigenous women's wellness emerged in discussions of biking, trail and park use.

Women discussed how biking connected them with birds and other nature elements, while trails and parks were home to many animals and nature elements that the women honour. Women discussed their profound relationships with birds, animals, and water, extending appreciation for nature beyond just viewing, instead the women are *in relation* to these nature elements, honoured as women's kin, imbued in spirituality. Nature as way of spiritual strengthening, a source of medicines and cultural teachings that support wholistic wellness were pronounced among the

women. These women's relationships with nature stand in stark contrast to settler colonial positioning of nature as part of the land as a commodity (Hatala et al., 2020).

Indigenous Cultural Understandings of Nature

The women in the study brought forth cultural understanding of nature as *in-relation*, where women learned from nature, with care and protection as part of their relationship. Nature was not something separate from the women, rather nature was a part of their kinship family. For example, urban Indigenous youth experienced nature as extended across geographies where “nature and land are not abstract, but rather lived places that are experienced, embodied, and cultured” (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 125). These descriptions of interrelationships of embodied nature contrast non-Indigenous perceptions of nature as something outside of oneself, rather nature is a part of the person. From a Métis perspective, Adese (2014) elaborated, “this Métis way of being is exercised through a practice of living in accordance with the seasons, respecting the life cycles of those in the natural world” (p. 54). Cultural understandings of nature were also situated as part of Mother Earth for several women in the current study. For example, Sharon viewed the river as a sentient being, in which the river was part of her family's feast where Sharon also fed the river. Understanding nature as part of Mother Earth reinforces the sentient views of nature among some Indigenous Peoples in which a relationship is formed from one living being to another. To illustrate, for several Indigenous youth Mother Earth was “conceived as having a female, sentient, and spiritual presence signifying care and interconnectedness” (Morton et al., 2021, p. 135). From these cultured living relationships, several Indigenous women in the current study described how they offered gifts back to nature in a reciprocal giving relationship. For Kerri, she held the practice of offering gift bundles (i.e., food, spiritually imbued nature elements, her own nail clippings to provide her physical essence) in each body of

water she entered while canoeing. These gift-giving relationships with nature was reflected among other Indigenous Peoples, such as several Indigenous youths who noted nature's own gift-giving, such as giving oxygen "to support the life and wellness of human society" (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 126). In return, these youth provided offerings and gifts back to nature (Hatala et al., 2019). This gift-giving among Indigenous Peoples reflects a profound gratitude for nature imbued with Indigenous cultural spiritual-material relationships that span generations. Gift-giving in urban spaces also contributes to experiences where urban meanings of sacred spaces strengthens culture (Hatala et al., 2019). Specifically, "as a value system, the gifts and offerings are thus an expression of sacred reciprocity with the land and nature, reflective of a form of human-nature relations built on interdependence, reciprocity, humility, and respect" (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 126). As Hatala et al. (2019) emphasized, "these gift-giving practices are not a romanticization of a traditional past. Rather, they are an ongoing practice of a contemporary cultural and spiritual relationship with nature" (p. 126). As a central principle within many Indigenous worldviews and philosophies, gift-giving is based on a perception of the natural environment as a living entity with relationships, including kinship ties (Wilson and Peters, 2005). These relationships with nature, with an emphasis on kinship relationships, form a foundation of wellness among many Indigenous Peoples, and these relationships were often described by the women in the current study. For example, Kerri in particular described her kinship relationship with animals, offering animals guidance, companionship and protection, and from these relationships Kerri's wellness was supported.

Nature Supports Indigenous Wholistic Wellness

The women in the current study described many wholistic wellness benefits they receive from their relationships and experiences with nature. For example, Cheryl described the positive

and re-energizing aspect of nature walks in that “it just rejuvenates you, it energizes you, it makes you feel good”. Cheryl also ascribed viewing the changing seasons when trees begin to bud as something that “makes me feel so good and it’s energizing.” This positive benefit of nature was also described by several Indigenous people, who explained spending time in nature is a positive and re-energizing experience (Bélisle et al., 2021; Hartmann et al., 2024). Other Indigenous communities responded how nature provides a place of rest (Vizueté et al., 2019), tranquility and happiness where one can “feel alive” (Reyes-Arroyo et al., 2021, p. 93), and where one can daydream (Pearson et al., 2019). Barton et al., (2009) added “contact with nature improves psychological health by reducing stress, enhancing mood and replenishing mental fatigue” (p. 261). These benefits of nature experiences were reflected in the experiences of women in the current study whereas nature was a sanctuary from urban life, providing a place of rest and tranquility. As Samara elaborated, “it's like when you go out to nature, it's like that volume's turned down, and it's a sense of peace.” Mental wellness benefits of nature was pronounced among the women in the current study, with women describing how being able to care for plants, gardens and animals brings calm and peace. Shayla described how nature experiences counter the noise and pollution of urban life as “so restorative”. The mental wellness benefits of nature experiences have been expressed by other Indigenous Peoples, such as Indigenous youth from Hatala et al.'s (2019; 2020) studies who expressed how going for walks in nature and being near the river as places of appreciation had a calming effect. The restorative and mental wellness benefits of nature are reflected in other research with Indigenous Peoples whereas “processes of relating with nature were described to either reduce and replace negative emotional states (e.g. depression, anger, stress, sadness, disconnection, hopelessness) or enhance and compensate for positive emotional states (e.g. happiness, calm, balance, well, relaxed,

motivated, clearheaded, silly)” (Hatala, 2019, p. 127). The women in the current study also advocated for access to nature to support their healing, with nature providing a soothing place for healing to take place as connection to the Land. The healing quality of nature experiences brings attention the significance of nature experiences in Indigenous women's lives to heal from colonial traumas. The value of soothing places where nature interactions can occur was also identified in research with Indigenous youth as a way to create distance from stressors (Hatala et al., 2019), and this points to importance of safe access to trails and parks that is conducive to soothing nature experiences. The beauty of nature was also noted as conducive to wellness by the women in the current study. Other Indigenous Peoples had responded that the beauty of nature fosters a sense of wellness while contributing to sense of peace and harmony (Constant & Taylor, 2020).

Nature as Sacred and Spiritual- Supporting Spiritual Wellness

Women in the current study emphasized the spiritual connectedness they had with nature that profoundly impacts their wellness. To illustrate, Mary explained, “my spiritual wellness is connected to my cultural teachings and my medicines-tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass. Coming to spring, I will have my medicines growing in my yard. So my spiritual wellness is tied to nature”. Mary connects her teachings of spirituality with that of her relationships with medicinal plants, which are understood as having their own spiritual qualities. This spiritual understanding of medicinal plants that contributes to wellness in profound ways was emphasized by several Elders in Martin Hill's (2003) study who clarified the use of traditional medicines, such as plants, encompasses a way of life derived from Indigenous knowledges. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) added medicinal plants are an important aspect of traditional healing. Among Indigenous Peoples, healing plants are both therapeutic and

preventative of other health ailments, and a resurgence in the use of healing plants could greatly contribute to the health and healing of Indigenous Peoples (Obomsawin, 2007). As NIMMIWG (2019c) added from the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, “in their understanding of culture, practicing ceremony and using traditional medicines have been and continue to be important ways of fostering relationships that centre respect and reciprocity” (p. 25).

The women in the current study also described the significance of being able to teach younger generations medicinal plants, providing cultural transmissions and continuity while connecting younger generations with the Land. As the women described, medicinal plants are also imbedded with spiritual ancestral knowledge, and the teachings of medicinal plants to children was strongly advocated as a way to sustain the health and wellness of future generations. Vegetable gardens also held significant importance for Indigenous women in the current study, offering multiple benefits that span spiritual connection, nutrition, food security, wellness, and a site for knowledge transmission, which promotes cultural continuity while fostering community wellness. The women in the current study often emphasized the spiritual aspects of nature, such as Kerri who described the different spiritual attributes of water, rocks and other nature elements that provided her with protection from spiritual forces. For Kerri, rocks, water and other nature elements hold great, spiritual force that offers Kerri spiritual protection. Here, nature elements are far more than inanimate objects for viewing pleasure, they are living, spiritual, and imbued with powers of protection from negative spiritual entities. Kerri's understandings of these spiritual attributes of nature elements is reflective of First Nation Anishinabek worldviews that includes the existence of “other-than-human beings” (Wilson, 2003, p. 90). As Wilson (2003) described, Anishinabek beliefs of the Land as alive with spirits supports positive mental and emotional health. In this study, several Anishinabek participants

explained they “communicate with the spirits of rocks and trees when dealing with problems and/or conflict” (p. 90) which contributes to a positive mental meditative process interconnected with spiritual nature elements. This spiritual understanding of nature is reflective of other Indigenous Peoples cultural understandings where nature is described as symbolic, sacred, peaceful and spiritual (Hatala et al., 2019; Hatala et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2018) that supports wellness. To illustrate, Indigenous youth viewed nature as endowed with sacred and spiritual meanings “that served as powerful embodied metaphors that helped youth to mitigate distressing life experiences” (Hatala et al., 2020, p. 10). As an Indigenous participant in Landry et al.'s (2019) study described, “the land is nature, it is a spiritual land” (p. 4). This relationship with the Land and spirituality is apparent in the experience of Indigenous women in this study.

Nature Fosters Familial Relationships

As the women in the current study emphasized, healthy relationships are foundational for wellness. “Centring relationships is consistent with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing and being. In this world view, we are each our own person, but we are also defined by our relationships to others” (NIMMIWG, 2019c, p. 10). The women's views of healthy relationships extend to relationships with the natural world as kinship. To illustrate from the current study, Sharon's view of the river as part of her family meant the river was included in her family feast, being fed along with other family members. Mary described how she cared for the animals in her yard, feeding the animals and caring for them as part of her family. As Samara elaborated, “animals are a central thing in Indigenous culture, like seeing animals actually as relations”. Kerri described many examples of her kinship relationships with animals, who were understood as companions. The women emphasized nature was a part of their family that nurtured familial relationships. This understanding reflects the concept of kincentricity (Salmon,

2000). As Salmon (2000) described, many Indigenous Peoples hold “kincentric” relationships with nature:

Indigenous people view both themselves and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. It is an awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin. The kin, or relatives, include all the natural elements of an ecosystem. Indigenous people are affected by and, in turn, affect the life around them. The interactions that result from this "kincentric ecology" enhance and preserve the ecosystem. (p. 1327)

The power of nature to nurture familial relationships was a resurfacing theme in research with Indigenous Peoples. For example, Hatala et al. (2020) detailed nature experiences positively impacted youth's wellness by making them “feel a deeper connection with their loved ones” (p. 5). Taylor et al. (2021) emphasized these kinship social benefits of nature experiences, stating, “as members of families and in friendships, nature can help heal interpersonal issues, as time in nature strengthens relationships between children and caregivers, and relationships between friends” (p. 27). These views of nature are reflective of the women in the current study who emphasized gatherings of Indigenous Peoples accentuates nature experiences shared together. Nature as a relationship for fostering familial relationships speaks to Indigenous women's models of wellness that are founded on healthy relationships among family, community as well as nature—understood as kinship relationships. To illustrate this understanding among Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous youth in Hatala et al.'s (2019) study also outlined human-nature relations as reflective of familial love and reciprocity. Here, “nature and land here became relations, as an embodied and differentiated network of feminine presence, exhibiting the capacity to sustain, care, and nurture belonging and safety” (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 126). The

significance of these nature relationships among Indigenous youth was pronounced, as a youth expressed, “it's kinda like that's the nature showing me that unconditional love that wasn't shown to me through my family or through my parents” (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 126). This unconditional love is of deep value to contribute to the healing of fragmented Indigenous families due to colonial harms of separation. For another young woman in Morton et al.'s (2021) study, “the river has shown her love in ways that her family has not” (p. 136). Rivers also connect Indigenous people across lands and intergenerationally, as one youth explained:

It's the same river that flows in my reserve that flows through the city here ... my own reserve land and my grandma's land is also here and it means a lot to me, because I know it. If I go down the river or I head up, where it takes me up north and it goes to my grandmother's land, like either way, this is the road for me and I know this river, this water, and this place (Hatala et al., 2019, p. 125).

Adding to the sentiment, Katrina Walters, of the Choctaw Nation, described how “the waters we interact with in the present are the same waters our ancestors experienced, and the same ones that may be experienced by future generations” (McGregor, 2015, p. 72). Other research with Indigenous participants connected their nature relationships with hopes of their ancestors, “I think they would have wanted us to know how to use that, not just the animals or fishing, but like the plants, the remedies, the just being at peace in nature. I think that's what they would have wanted” (Johnson-Jennings et al., 2020a, p. 10). In this reflection, the power of nature to connect with familial ties among diverse Indigenous Peoples is apparent as a way to fulfill their ancestors' hopes for future generations. Experiences of nature, including being near water and with animals, also induced a sense of mindfulness among Indigenous Peoples with

reflections of ancestral narratives of place and nature that contribute to healthy contemplative practices inspired by nature (Johnson-Jennings, 2020a).

Nature as a Teacher- Guiding Wellness

The women in the current study also described how nature offered lessons and guidance on how to live life. As Samara described:

Focusing on nature allows you to focus externally and sort of take that focus away, there's other things going on in the world. You know the world might be burning but this little bird is still eating away you know living life, it can kind of almost draw down the beautiful raw simplicity of life in a way that can be comforting.

Women also emphasized that nature, and particularly medicinal plants, were enriched with many teachings and lessons for life, and the women advocated for places where these teachings could take place. From an Anishinabek perspective, natural laws are derived from experiences and observations of the natural world, deriving a great source of cultural land-based knowledge (McGregor, 2015). To illustrate, Hatala et al.'s (2020) study with Indigenous youth "the youth also learned through the seasons that change is a natural part of life, and therefore, in the face of change and difficulties, they have to adapt and move on to accomplish a goal" (p. 10). Indigenous youth in Morton et al.'s (2021) study described how animals were teachers that transmitted personal and cultural teachings, as a young Indigenous woman reflected:

When I was observing two lovebird ducks I noticed they were swimming zig-zaggy. It reminded me of a teaching because I eventually want to dance jingle [a form of powwow dance and prayer]. When you're dancing jingle you're supposed to dance like zig-zag. (Morton et al., 2021, p. 135).

The significance of teachings from birds was emphasized by Kerri in the current study, with Kerri describing how birds helped her navigate her destinations in the outdoors by following her travels with her, as companions. Kerri described a profound relationship with animals, in which Kerri was their protector, while animals offered her guidance and companionship. The view of animals as companions contrasts non-Indigenous views of animals, without recognition that animals hold great spiritual, kinship significance. To contrast, Indigenous participants in Johnson-Jennings et al.'s (2020a) study reflected animals were a part of Indigenous ancestry whereas a personal, caring relationships with animals strengthened their cultural wellness while animals provided lessons about life.

The Role of Gender in Indigenous Women's Experiences of Nature

The discussion about the role of gender and relationships with the Land extend to relationships with nature as a reciprocal relationship of care, nurturing and protection. In previous decades, a body of feminist literature focused on the relationship between gender and nature (Jacobs, 1994; Nash, 1994; Nesmith & Radcliffe, 1993; Rose, 1993) with theories centred around ecofeminism, nature and ties to the body, spirituality, fertility, and female reproduction (Biehl, 1991; Shiva, 1988). Wilson (2005) contributed to this body of literature with Anishinabek (Ojibway and Odawa Peoples), drawing in an Indigenous cultural lens. In this study, an Anishinabek woman explained, "we associate Mother Earth as being our Mother and that we have to take care of her and give her thanks" (Wilson, 2005, p. 342). This sentiment is reflective of the women in the current study, who emphasized their caring relationship with Mother Earth. For example, Cheryl lamented about the issue of garbage in natural areas, and how these natural areas should be taken care of and cleaned, and through this care are offerings of thanks back to nature. Wilson (2005) emphasized a gendered perspective, elaborating "the strong connection

that Anishinabek women have with the earth comes from their abilities to give birth—to be mothers” (p. 343) with an Indigenous woman Elder explaining, “Mother Earth was the first mother, the first giver of life, the rocks, the trees, and the animals. The Creator passed on the ability of giving life from Mother Earth to women” (p. 343). Adding to gendered understandings of women's nature relationships, an Anishinabek woman elaborated:

It's so wonderful that out of a woman's body comes creation. Like the seed grows and you nurture and Mother Earth, she nurtures us everywhere, in the air we breathe, the plants that we eat and the food that we take to eat . . . that's how the little children grow in our wombs. So there's a very important relationship there between the earth and women. (Wilson, 2005, p. 343)

This sentiment emphasizes the gendered aspects of nature and the Land, and how relationships with nature for many women is a shared journey of a motherhood of caring and nurturing, which speaks to how women in the current study emphasized their mothering care for nature as a sacred role. The women's discussions about nature, such as Mary who is deeply connected to medicinal plants as a source of cultural knowledge and teachings to support her wellness, is reflective of how nature is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous women's cultural knowledge in relation to the Land. As Sharon from the current study emphasized, water in particular has great gendered significance for Indigenous women in recognizing women as water-carriers in their wombs, and this finding was expressed by other Indigenous women. As an Indigenous woman described women's ceremonial water relationships:

There is the full moon ceremony that women do . . . There is the water purification with water is always done by women because without water we would be nowhere. I mean you start off in your mother's womb in water and it continues for the rest of your life

when you cry when you are happy it is water, when you cry when you are sad it is water. When we sweat to get rid of toxins it is water. Water plays such a very strong and enduring role in our lives all the time . . . You know so women do the water ceremonies all the time. (Wilson, 2005, p 345)

As part of this mothering, nurturing and caring, women in the current also advocated for the protection of nature as part of their gendered responsibilities. As Samara emphasized, caring and protecting nature is about “fighting for sustainability”. Women in the study advocated for caring for nature areas by cleaning up the garbage and hazards. The women in the study also emphasized the health of the river was also important to care for, viewed as a sentient being. Drawing from the Indigenous perspectives of water as sentient, it is also important to highlight how water has also experienced colonial trauma (McGregor, 2015). McGregor (2015) elaborated:

Understanding water as having experienced historical trauma requires a different approach to restoration and healing, including recognition of the waters as sentient. It certainly involves recognizing that water injustice has had devastating impacts on the well-being of many Indigenous communities in Canada. (p. 73).

This understanding reinforces Indigenous women's understanding of the sentience of water that Sharon in the current study emphasized and women's cultural roles of protectors of water while emphasizing the interconnectedness of nature's wellness with that of Indigenous Peoples wellness. For example, The Mother Earth Water Walks were initiated by Anishinaabe women in the Great Lakes area in Ontario, and led by Grandmother Josephine Mandamin, to raise awareness of the sacred connection between people, especially women, and the waters

derived from love for the water (McGregor, 2015). The walks were grounded in enacting Anishinaabekwe responsibilities to care for and speak for water:

By literally walking around each lake, Grandmother Mandamin and the water walkers retrace the steps of the ancestors to reclaim the ancestors' vision of Mnaamodzawin.

Enacting Mnaamodzawin involves establishing loving and personal relationships with the waters: *coming to know* them (McGregor, 2015, p. 75).

Here again, the theme of connecting with ancestors' vision through relationships with nature resurfaces in discussing Indigenous women's relationships with nature elements, drawing forth how relationships with nature are experienced as familial connection. As with topics of access to parks and trails that are pronounced as an Indigenous justice issue, water justice is also a part of Indigenous Land rights. As McGregor (2015) advocated, Anishinaabek's understandings of water justice incorporates the trauma experienced from water contamination from the view that water is sentient and in need of healing from colonial traumas. With Indigenous women's roles as protectors of water, water justice is a fundamental aspect of supporting Indigenous women's wellness and the wellness of Indigenous communities.

Access to Nature as a Way to Justice for Indigenous Women

In Taylor et al.'s (2021) report *Justice in Access to the Outdoors* they provided strong advocacy for access to nature focusing on unjust barriers to nature that Black, Indigenous and people of colour experience. Taylor et al. (2021) elaborated that nature is a significant contributor to health, however barriers to nature for racialized communities includes the violence these communities experience in urban nature areas. These barriers to access to nature are viewed as a justice issue:

Nature is an established social determinant of health with clear benefits to physical, mental, and social health, yet it continues to be used as a setting for violence against Black, Indigenous, and people of color. The right to be physically active outdoors, to play, and to gather in community is essential for health and well-being, and as such, the ongoing incidents of violence outdoors have the potential to widen the health disparities gap. While the movement to bring nature and health together has gained traction, this movement cannot succeed unless violence against communities of color outdoors ends. (p. 23)

As a way of justice, Taylor et al. (2021) emphasized racism and structural violence prevents Black, Indigenous and people of colour accessing outdoor recreation that enables nature experiences that support health and wellness. Taylor et al.'s (2021) report referred to issues in the U.S.A., however, the findings of their report are applicable to the women's experiences in this study who are also barred access to urban nature experiences due to racism and violence in urban settings. Taylor et al. (2021) advocated for working toward the eradication of racism and its impacts on health and wellness whereas "nature has the potential to help individuals heal from trauma through stress relief, increased physical activity, access to fresh air and sunshine, and by building resilience" (p. 27). As Taylor et al., (2021) advocated, "access to nature is more than simply creating space for people to stand in parks" (p. 29). They elaborated that people must be able to experience their presence in nature as valued, supported, and culturally relevant. Access to nature, as part of access to Land, is therefore a justice issue that requires the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be upheld in access to nature. The right to access to nature is founded upon Indigenous People's rights to their ancestral Lands and is supported by human rights to health and wellness.

Conclusion

The impact of nature experience for Indigenous women's wellness comes through as a powerful cultural kinship relationship. These relationships are strengthened as spiritual relationships whereas nature holds great protective, spiritual power. Nature is also a teacher and a guide; through relating to nature, nature teaches ways to live life and manage challenges. These experiences are through kinship cultural understandings, whereas nature as kin spans generations, connecting Indigenous people with their ancestors while strengthening visions of healthy futures for the next generations. Understandings of the sentience of nature, such as the rivers, further emphasizes the kinship bonds Indigenous Peoples have with nature. Nature is also a source of medicines that are honoured by Indigenous women, and through the teachings of medicinal plants Indigenous women are strengthening culture and connecting those being taught with the Land. The women's advocacy for parks that have an abundance of medicines and homes for animals and other nature elements speaks to the significance of access to nature as a right as an extension of right to access safe Land, which is ultimately a right to health and wellness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Policy

Important implications for theory, practice and policy come forth from the findings and discussion of this study. Drawing from MACIW's (2023a) Indigenous gender-based analysis plus (IGBA+) lens, Indigenous women's experiences of trail, park, bike use and nature experiences must be analyzed in the context of settler colonial Canada. This equates to recognizing the lands in which these urban activities take place are the traditional Lands of Indigenous Peoples. The dominant western research about urban trails, parks and biking and impacts on wellness predominantly ignores that the urban lands in which these activities take place are on the traditional Lands of Indigenous Peoples. This ignorance obscures the relationship between Indigenous People's wellness and relationships with the Land. As this study demonstrated, Indigenous women, their families, and their community's wellness could greatly benefit from biking, trail and park use that provides nature experiences, as founded on relationships with the Land and kinship with the natural world. These experiences that form relationships on the Land are also ways Indigenous Peoples connect with their ancestors which contributes to cultural continuity while fostering wellness.

To understand and support Indigenous women's wellness, theories, practice and policy must be founded on Indigenous knowledges and cultures to inform understanding of how trail, parks, biking and nature experiences impact Indigenous women's wellness. Indigenous knowledges of these experiences brings forth the foundation of being *in-relation* while engaging in these activities. As the women emphasized, biking was in-relation to caring for Mother Earth, trails and park use were ways to be with the Land founded on stewardship and care, and nature experiences were ways to strengthen relationships with kin. Theories of Indigenous wellness experiences are therefore strengthened when the focus is upon relationship and kinship with the

natural world. Spirituality must also be incorporated into theories of how these urban land-based experiences impact Indigenous women's wellness, which contrasts dominant western theories of health and wellness that focus on physical aspects of being. As the study brought forth, the women's understandings of spirituality extended beyond their personal experiences, whereas the natural world was imbued with its own spirituality that connected with the women. The consideration of fostering spirituality in the design of urban parks and trails is not a practice in settler colonial city-making. This points again to the requirement of listening to Indigenous women and having women be a part of designing park and trail spaces, particularly in their neighbourhoods.

The significance of the intersecting role of gender in Indigenous women's urban activities is apparent from this study, and points to the importance of developing policy from the voices and experiences of Indigenous women from an IGBA+ lens. The role of gender extends beyond Indigenous women's roles as caregivers, for Indigenous women also hold positions of protectors of Land and nature, and cultural leaders in their communities who hold a key role in cultural knowledge transmission across all generations. In utilizing park space for cultural ceremonies, Indigenous women are reconstructing and reclaiming settler colonial urban spaces for cultural resurgence. These acts of cultural reclamation and resurgence in urban parks show how Indigenous women are using these urban spaces for far more than recreation, rather women are engaging with their traditional cultures on their traditional Lands while reinstating their roles as Matriarchal cultural leaders.

Incorporating the role of gender and culture from the MACIW's (2023a) Indigenous gender-based analysis lens into theories and practices to support Indigenous women's wellness also emphasizes Indigenous women are subject to immense oppression. The numerous barriers to

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

biking, trails and park use Indigenous women face are embedded in colonial constructions of race and gender that have, throughout colonial history and into present day, worked to eliminate Indigenous women's power and place as leaders in society and protectors of the Land (NIMMIWG, 2019a). These findings indicate how racism and misogyny in society must be brought to the forefront of inquiry about Indigenous women's wellness experiences from a justice lens. Theories of settler colonialism afford a view of this justice issue and extends the view of urban city-making as one of oppressive exclusion. Research that focuses on urban Indigenous experiences from theories of settler colonialism counters western research that ignores the impact of settler colonial city-making as a key barrier to urban Indigenous wellness. Further, urban Indigenous wellness research that draws from settler colonial theories refocuses attention on the social determinants of health and wellness (e.g., access to social services, child care, education), contrasting dominant behavioural research that emphasizes health and wellness are obtained through individual behaviours. The societal oppression Indigenous women face that contributes to barriers to access to land for biking, trail and park use must be viewed through the rights of Indigenous women being accosted by colonial systems. Indigenous women's biking, park and trail use and nature experiences are much more than recreation, it is representative of Indigenous rights to cultural practices that support wellness, as part of their right to traditional Lands. From this study, recommendations for theory, practice, and policy to support Indigenous women's wellness are founded on human rights and more specifically Indigenous women's rights as a justice issue.

Limitations and Strengths

It may be viewed that this study had a small sample size as a limitation, however, the sample size was by design of an interpretive phenomenal study seeking in depth knowledge from

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

a select group of participants. Strengths of the study include a diverse range of participants that included Indigenous women from south and north neighbourhoods providing a comparison of findings per neighbourhood, while also providing an understanding of the shared experiences Indigenous women have regardless of neighbourhood residency. A strength of this research was the use of the B.C. Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women's Indigenous gender-based analysis plus lens, that was created by Indigenous women for the use of research and policy development with and about Indigenous women that brings into focus the intersections of race, gender and cultural in the context of colonial Canada.

Dissemination of Findings and Knowledge Translation

Advocacy reports will be compiled that will be distributed among community stakeholders (e.g., women's organizations, North End neighbourhood organizations) who may use the reports for further advocacy and to support proposals for investment in urban spaces that support Indigenous women and their community's wellness (e.g., funding for safety features in parks and on trails, biking infrastructure). Dissemination includes academic publications and may include presentations at academic conferences and community gatherings.

Directions for Future Research

This study brought forth important directions for future research with the advocacy for research with Indigenous women that utilizes the B.C. Minister's Advisory Council of Indigenous Women's (MACIW) (2023a) Gender-Based Analysis Plus toolkit, and it is advocated that this toolkit be utilized for further research with Indigenous women. Research that focuses on increasing safety for urban Indigenous women that includes eliminating violence toward Indigenous women is an essential research direction about Indigenous women's wellness. Research that continues to challenge in its exploration settler colonial aspects of society such as

oppression and exclusion that permeates geographically and racially divided cities is another important direction for research that can contribute to supporting urban Indigenous wellness. The role of gender in biking can be further explored with the inclusion of an intersectional cultural lens that would be strengthened by contextualizing research in the context of settler colonial city-making. Further research on park spaces that draw from an Indigenous cultural lens that aim to address barriers to park use due to neighbourhood crime and gang activity in these spaces is an important aspect of research that could be further explored. Further research about Indigenous women's trail use can be expanded, and this could equate again to examining and addressing the barriers to urban trail use that pervades women's experiences. Wellness research that focuses on the interconnectedness of wellness experiences for Indigenous families and communities in relation to their urban Land-based activities is an important aspect of potential future research. Research that focuses on Indigenous women's cultural activities in urban settings drawing from positions as Matriarchs from a gender lens is also an important research direction. Further exploration into urban access to nature among Indigenous populations would contribute to wellness research drawing from Indigenous knowledges of wellness.

Recommendations

Throughout the discussion of the findings from this study, several recommendations were put forth that would contribute to supporting Indigenous women's biking, park, and trail use and nature experiences (see Appendix B). These are important recommendations derived from the women's advocacy and supporting these recommendations would contribute to Indigenous women's self-determination. The concluding recommendations from this study centre on justice in addressing the root cause barriers to wellness Indigenous women face that are embedded in settler colonial societal structures and policies that perpetrate racism, misogyny, and violence

Indigenous Women’s Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness toward Indigenous women. Indigenous women’s wellness cannot be supported by just simply adding more parks and trails in their neighbourhoods— rather, the violence toward Indigenous women must be addressed to enable women to safely access urban spaces. As this study detailed, Indigenous women’s access to these spaces will continue to be denied due to the ongoing violence toward Indigenous women that is supported by oppressive conditions. This colonial violence, racism and oppression is apparent in the lives of the women from this study, particularly the women who are further marginalized in racialized neighbourhoods where colonial city-making produces its greatest abuses toward human rights, apparent in how Indigenous women do not have access to safe urban land as part of their right to their traditional territories.

The following recommendations in supporting Indigenous women’s wellness are derived from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice (NIMMIWG, 2019c) founded on the truth that “Indigenous women are the heart of their Nations and communities. Their distinctive roles and responsibilities are crucial to helping communities thrive” (p. 13). Indigenous women lead their communities with love, healing and support, and in turn, Indigenous women must also be supported with love and support that fosters wellness with all their relations- from family, community, to the rivers, to the Land, reaching into the spirit world. Centring Indigenous women and girls as sacred is a fundamental positioning of women and girls that reinstates their rightful place in society (NIMMIWG, 2019a).

Table 5. NIMMIWG Calls for Justice: Health and Wellness Recommendations

Call for Justice	Supporting Recommendations
3.1 We call upon all governments to ensure that the rights to health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples, and specifically of	Ensuring Indigenous women’s rights to health and wellness that are recognized and protected means recognizing women’s Land-

<p>Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, are recognized and protected on an equitable basis.</p>	<p>based activities in urban areas have a profound impact on their health and wellness. In this recognition, the inequitable barriers to urban land Indigenous women face requires addressing the structural barriers of racism and misogyny that produce violence toward Indigenous women and unsafe urban spaces. Protection also means investing in safety features Indigenous women advocate for in urban spaces, such as increased lighting on trails and parks, safety patrols on trails and in parks, and safety call buttons.</p> <p>Equitable access equates to government investment in wellness-promoting activities means investing in trails, parks and biking in oppressed neighbourhoods, while also addressing barriers due to safety. Addressing safety issues equates to addressing the oppressive societal conditions of poverty that result in crime and violence in oppressed neighbourhoods.</p>
<p>3.2 We call upon all governments to provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate and meet the health and wellness needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The lack of health and wellness services within Indigenous communities continues to force Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people to relocate in order to access care. Governments must ensure that health and wellness services are available and accessible within Indigenous communities and wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside.</p>	<p>Funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness needs to include funding for Indigenous women’s Land-based ceremonies, feasts and community gatherings. Investing in these land-based programs contributes to cultural education and continuity. Understanding that Indigenous women provide health and wellness services by hosting ceremonies, feasts and gatherings on urban land should equate to investment in these services women provide. Investment in community gardens would also serve as a community service that would support Indigenous community wellness.</p>
<p>3.3 We call upon all governments to fully support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to call on Elders, Grandmothers, and other Knowledge Keepers to establish</p>	<p>Supporting Indigenous Grandmothers in their cultural activities is fundamental in supporting women who are survivors of trauma and violence. Support could include funding Full Moon Ceremonies and other</p>

<p>community-based trauma-informed programs for survivors of trauma and violence.</p>	<p>gendered ceremonies and cultural activities for Indigenous women led by Elder women and Grandmothers. To be fully supported governments must rectify societal harms of violence toward Indigenous women, that includes creating and providing safe urban land where women can connect with the land and foster culture, which would contribute to healing. Supporting Elders also equates to the provision of social services and financial security to support Elders from a wholistic perspective.</p>
<p>3.4 We call upon all governments to ensure that all Indigenous communities receive immediate and necessary resources, including funding and support, for the establishment of sustainable, permanent, no-barrier, preventative, accessible, holistic, wraparound services, including mobile trauma and addictions recovery teams. We further direct that trauma and addictions treatment programs be paired with other essential services such as mental health services and sexual exploitation and trafficking services as they relate to each individual case of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.</p>	<p>Investing and supporting Indigenous women requires wrap-around supports that extend to funding and support of Indigenous women’s health care and social services. Social services (e.g., women’s centres) are advocated by Indigenous women as a fundamental component in supporting Indigenous women’s wellness. Governments must shift their understanding of Indigenous women’s activities as not only strengthening community wellness but also contributing to healing from trauma that impacts substance use and addictions. Indigenous women’s cultural activities must be seen as a cultural “treatment” for addictions and trauma from an Indigenous wholistic lens.</p>

Conclusion

Investing in Indigenous women’s biking, trail and park use and nature experiences can contribute to a myriad of wellness benefits. As the women discussed, biking contributes to physical, emotional, spiritual and mental wellness. Biking also provides opportunities for Indigenous communities to come to together in healthy, social ways by bike that fosters cultural wellness. Adding to this, women saw biking as a way to care for Mother Earth, treading lightly on her Land. Trails and parks offer connections to nature that cultivates kinship relationships imbued with spirituality and culture. As the women described, they hold a kinship relationship

Indigenous Women's Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness with nature, while nature provides lessons for life as guidance and spiritual power that fosters relationships among Indigenous families and communities. As part of relationship with the Land, trails and parks also provide places for Indigenous women to come together with their families and communities, strengthening cultural kinship relationships through intergenerational cultural activities such as feasts and ceremonies. As the women demonstrated, they are reclaiming urban Land for the benefit of their families and communities, including conducting cultural ceremonies that reinforces gendered cultural roles women hold, strengthening their identity while contributing to healing.

Trails and parks that are safe may provide women places for healing from colonial trauma and violence, particularly through ceremony on the Land as a community. Understanding these benefits for Indigenous women requires an Indigenous gender-based lens, contextualizing women's experiences in that of colonial Canada where settler colonial city-making is prominent that is embedded in misogynistic racism. From the context of settler colonialism, the many barriers Indigenous women face is brutally apparent, embedded in oppressive poverty for many women. Women described extensive barriers to wellness in urban spaces, including persistent poverty that restricts Indigenous women's movements (e.g., unable to afford transportation to safe wellness-promoting areas) and activities (e.g., affording picnics and recreation for children). The extensive safety issues, high crime rates and ensuing violence toward women are results of settler colonial city-making that is embedded in racist misogyny is also apparent in the lives of Indigenous women. Hence, barriers to urban wellness are more than a lack of infrastructure for biking, trail and park use— these barriers are an issue of rights and justice. Women can not fully enjoy wellness when their wellness is under attack from structural and societal violence toward Indigenous women that violates their rights and intimate aspects of their being.

The findings from this study brings attention to how the rights of Indigenous women are being violated. NIMMIWG (2019c) described how understanding the violence Indigenous women endure is “in relation to their positions as rights-bearers reveals significant Indigenous and human rights violations in four areas: the right to culture, the right to health, the right to security, and the right to justice” (p. 11). NIMMIWG (2019c) specified, “cultural rights are inseparable from human rights, and within the international rights context, are defined as the right of access to, participation in, and enjoyment of culture” (p. 23). The findings from this study bring attention to Indigenous women's violation of these rights in that their right to safe land where cultural practices on the Land, including family time on the Land, is accosted by safety issues embedded in violence toward Indigenous women, limiting their security and pathways to health and wellness.

As the NIMMIWG (2019c) final report elaborated, Indigenous women's rights also manifest through women's roles as “teachers, leaders, healers, providers, and protectors” (p. 14). The women in the study exemplified these roles, pointing to how these gendered roles require full support if Indigenous women's rights are to be experienced that would contribute to both wellness and justice. In recognizing these rights, it is fundamental Indigenous women are supported in self-determination to “construct solutions that works for them, according to their own experiences” (NIMMIWG, 2019c, p. 11). This finding points to the significance of what was learned from the women in this study in how to address the barriers Indigenous women experience and how best to support their wellness. As the women in the study emphasized, they are oppressed and marginalized by conditions of poverty and women described financial security as a key aspect of supporting their wellness. Significantly, NIMMIWG (2019c) explained “social security is directly linked to the reduction of poverty, and the reduction of poverty

intersects with the rights to health, culture, security and justice” (p. 32). NIMMIWG (2019a) provides a vision for supporting Indigenous women and girls as one of healing and wellness that contribute to an empowering experience, that preserves dignity, fosters love and kindness, while inspiring hope. In supporting Indigenous women, participants from NIMMIWG (2019c) also “spoke about the significance of Land, languages, and cultural teachings as sources of strength, healing, and guidance that should inform work in all sectors” (p. 50) whereas family and community members were critical sources of support and safety. Here, parallel understandings of how to support Indigenous women's wellness surface from the findings of this study, whereas the significance of the Land, languages and cultural teachings were advocated as sources of wellness by the women in the study, with a focus on cultural practices on the Land with family and community, that contributes to healing. Further, as participants from NIMMIWG (2019c) discussed, “justice must be redefined in Indigenous terms, and in terms of how people kept each other safe, cared for one another, and ensured that the laws and rights were upheld and related responsibilities were followed” (p. 52). This definition of justice speaks to the women's advocacy in this study who emphasized supporting their personal wellness also meant ensuring the protection and care of their children, families and communities' wellness. To reinforce, drawing from NIMMIWG (2019a; 2019b; 2019c) reports, supporting Indigenous women's wellness must be centred on supporting Indigenous women in reclaiming their power and place, embedded in the truth that Indigenous women are sacred.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide Questions:

1. Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself, and what interests you about this study.
2. Can you describe what wellness means to you?
3. How can Indigenous women's wellness be supported in your neighbourhood?
4. Do you use different trails, walking/biking paths, parks, or cycling lanes in the community?
5. How does your trail use contribute to your wellness?
 - a. Prompt: what aspects/features of trails contribute to your wellness?
6. How does your park use contribute to your wellness?
 - a. Prompt: what aspects/features of parks contribute to your wellness?
7. How does your biking contribute to your wellness?
8. From the perspective as a woman, how would you describe your experiences of trails, paths or cycling in the community?
9. How does your biking, park and trail use connect you with nature?
10. What role does connecting with nature have for your wellness?
11. What are the barriers to nature experiences in urban spaces?
12. Can you describe some of the challenges that limit your use of biking, parks and trails?
 - a. Prompt: Environmental factors such as the weather, transportation to the trails, or challenges with accessing or using equipment? Possible issues of safety, gender, discrimination, cultural barriers, etc.?
13. What do you think can be done differently to trails, parks and biking to support women's use?
 - a. Prompt: Family trail use features, safety

Appendix B

Compilation of Recommendations from this Study

Recommendations for Addressing Barriers to Indigenous Women’s Urban Land Use and Wellness

Equitable Access to Urban Land Barriers	Recommendations for City and Provincial Planners
<p>Indigenous Women’s Urban Land Dispossession</p>	<p>That governments use the findings of what Indigenous women have spoken about, along with the British Columbia Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women’s Indigenous Gender-based Analysis Plus Toolkit, in the development of urban neighbourhood development and city planning.</p> <p>That governments respond to Indigenous women’s urban land dispossession by focusing on making real change to the structural and societal barriers that impede Indigenous women’s access to safe urban land, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Racism: Anti-Racism campaigns, and Indigenous cultural education campaigns across the city and province. Re-design park and urban spaces that highlight Indigenous culture in ways that teach about Indigenous culture. b) Misogyny: Bring hate against women to the forefront of gender equity frameworks, recognizing that women continue to experience hatred toward women that is embedded in society and is racialized. c) Poverty: increased employment, training and education opportunities for Indigenous women that include child care that is accessible in their neighbourhood. Increased gendered social services provided in areas of the North End where there are currently no social services provided. d) Gangs: provide recreational and mentoring programs for children and youth, girls and young women who are threatened by gang involvement; provide more safe community spaces where these targeted individuals can go for protection-a place where they won’t “fall through the cracks”.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Unsafe Housing: invest in social housing, supportive housing and shelters. f) Homelessness: invest in greater support and a range of housing for people who experience homelessness. Provide programs with wrap-around supports to address social and health needs. g) Drugs and Drug Addiction: more support programs, drug rehabilitation programs and services, specifically family support programs offered in the neighbourhood. h) Media: include content that shows the strength and honour of Indigenous cultures, include a far greater number of positive stories of the North End and the people who reside in the neighbourhood. <p>Re-commit to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action with a pointed focus on addressing the calls about Indigenous women and their children by developing a Manitoba-wide and a city-specific action plan.</p> <p>Respond to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s Calls for Justice by developing a neighbourhood specific action plan focusing on the North End and core Winnipeg neighbourhoods.</p>
<p>No healing places provided for women</p>	<p>In the development of urban spaces, urban land must be provided that are specifically designed and infused with Indigenous culture in ways that promotes healing from the perspectives of Indigenous women-who are survivors.</p>
<p>No safe places for Full Moon Ceremonies</p>	<p>In the development and re-development of urban spaces, provision must include spaces that are specifically designed for Indigenous women’s Full Moon Ceremonies and other gendered cultural practices.</p>
<p>More safety needed in park spaces for families</p>	<p>Invest in park safety features including a neighbourhood park safety patrol, increase lighting, invest in park maintenance and regular park cleaning, provide community washrooms that are cleaned and maintained.</p> <p>Provide park programming that creates opportunities and activities for Indigenous families to come together and use park space for its actual intention.</p> <p>Park design should include the voices and recommendations of Indigenous women from a family lens in all urban city planning.</p>

Indigenous Women’s Urban Park, Trail, Bike and Nature Experiences and Impacts on Wellness

Parks Unsafe for Women	Provide women-specific park programs that invite women to come together in park settings more safely.
Trails Barriers	
Unsafe for women and families	<p>Increase safety features along trails including emergency call buttons and increased lighting.</p> <p>Provide trail safety crews along trails in the North End that can accompany women while using trails.</p> <p>Design and re-resign trails from a family lens.</p> <p>Invest in trail maintenance and clean up.</p> <p>Invest in greater community outreach patrols to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness who live along trails.</p> <p>City recreation programming needs to include trail groups for women and families to bring women together that would provide greater safety and community involvement.</p>
Biking Barriers	
Bike Theft	Being a societal issue of crime activity, crime reduction initiatives need to be increased. Bike theft is a city-wide issue but concentrated in the North End.
No Bike Security Stands/No Place to Safely Secure Bikes	Invest in bike security options in the North End neighbourhood. This includes racks on streets and in the neighbourhood and also innovative ways such as a protected bike storage place for women to store their bikes.
Few Protected Bike Lanes	Invest in protected bike lanes in the North End.
Unsafe Roadways for Biking	Invest in critical roadway infrastructure in the North End with safety designs featured in the infrastructure that supports groups and families.
Bike Cost	<p>Invest in community bike shops that provide quality inexpensive bikes, with bike shops being gender-specific night options.</p> <p>Invest in poverty reduction strategies such as training and education that leads to stable, secure employment.</p>
Lack of biking community	City recreation programs need to create more family biking and community biking programs.

	<p>Indigenous-specific community biking programs also needs to be a focus in recreation programming.</p> <p>Provide grants to communities to invest in their own biking events.</p>
Unsafe for family biking	Design and redesign bike paths for family use particularly in the North End.

Participants Recommendations to Improve Indigenous Women’s Bike Equity and Access

1) Investment in biking infrastructure, including protected bike lanes, bike security stands, bike storage.
2) Investment in community bike shops that provide women-specific sessions while also providing more affordable bikes for purchase.
3) Investment in bike paths that provide for family biking (e.g., wider paved paths, safe and away from traffic).
4) Investment in family bike programs that bring women and their families together.
5) Investment in safety features such as bike trails that have lighting.
6) Provision of programs that provide group biking opportunities (e.g., paths that are wide that support groups of bikers).
7) Indigenous specific bike group events, connecting Indigenous people together.
8) Investment in biking programs that include Indigenous cultural education, connecting bikers with cultural heritage and the land.

Recommendations to Support Indigenous Women’s Park and Trail Use for Wellness

<p>Include Women’s Leadership and Consultation in the Design of Trails and Parks It is fundamental to include the knowledge of Indigenous women in the design of urban parks and trails. Improving access to these spaces and addressing the barriers women face in access requires women’s input and leadership to culturally inform urban space development from a gendered lens.</p>
<p>Indigenous Ceremonies (e.g., full-moon ceremonies) As the women detailed, safety was an issue for their Full Moon ceremonies that happen at night. The women advocated for a designated space for these ceremonies, an enclosed space they could lock for added safety. Lighting in this space would be required.</p>
<p>Community Feasts</p>

As the women described, the majority of families in the North End are experiencing poverty that creates limited healthy food choices. Investing in community feasts would not only nourish the physical body, but feasts also offer community gatherings of support and cultural education, providing additional wellness benefits while connecting with the land.

Memorial Fires

Women discussed hosting memorial fires in parks. Providing women with the wood and materials used in memorial fires supports a significant cultural practice during times of mourning. Women described memorial fires can span days, from day to night. This means sustenance should be provided, such as food, water and medicines, for those taking part in the ceremony. Added safety measures at the ceremony may also be supportive when it becomes dark at night.

Indigenous Women's Trail Walking Groups

The women advocated for women's group trail walking. Investing in women's programs that bring women together on trails provides physical, emotional, and social benefits. The women pronounced the significance of Indigenous women supporting each other. Trail walking groups require safety for children who also join women in these walks. This means there needs to be more safe trails for women to access, that support group walks (i.e., wide trails).

Nature-Focused Educational Walks

The women emphasized the value of nature-based cultural teachings, particularly when passed down to children. Nature trails that host the Indigenous traditional plant life and medicines are needed. Investing in nature trails with Indigenous plant life in the North End would provide cultural educational opportunities and connection with the land.

River Walks

The women emphasized the importance of water as a spiritual force and an intimate aspect of womanhood. The women discussed how the river is also home to many animals. Investing in river walks means investing in the trails that follow the river. The women explained these footpaths are a danger. There is no maintenance of these trails, and there is an issue of trash and environmental hazards. People experiencing homelessness have been forced to live along these river trails. Investing in river trails means investing in the people forced to live there, there is a need for greater social housing and access to mental health and addictions services. Investing in the maintenance of river trails means investing in women's wellness by providing important connection with the water, while offering immersion into nature.

Medicinal Gardens

The women strongly advocated for medicinal gardens. Medicinal gardens were seen as sites for cultural knowledge transmission with the passing down of teachings to children. Investing in medicinal gardens in the North End equates to health and wellness benefits for the whole community. Not only do the plants offer medicine, but the plants are also infused with a spiritual connection to the land.

<p>Food Gardens</p> <p>The women advocate for food gardens. Food gardens would contribute to addressing food insecurity. Women also detailed that food gardens would sites for cultural teaching of gardening to children and community. Investment in food gardens is linked to justice, whereas as access to healthy food should be a fundamental human right.</p>
<p>Maintenance of Trails and Parks</p> <p>The women explained the parks and trails, particularly in the North End neighbourhood, are neglected, poorly maintained, and littered with hazards. Maintenance of trails and parks is essential in creating wellness-promoting urban spaces for women.</p>
<p>Investment in Safety Features</p> <p>The women’s safety is paramount and unsafe trails and parks are not used. This means supporting Indigenous women’s trail and park use requires increased safety measures. As the women suggested, increased lighting, safety patrols, and safety call buttons will contribute to safer spaces.</p>

MMIWG Calls for Justice: Health and Wellness Recommendations

Call for Justice	Supporting Recommendations
<p>3.1 We call upon all governments to ensure that the rights to health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples, and specifically of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, are recognized and protected on an equitable basis.</p>	<p>Ensuring Indigenous women’s rights to health and wellness that are recognized and protected means recognizing women’s land-based activities in urban areas have a profound impact on their health and wellness. In this recognition, the inequitable barriers to urban land Indigenous women face requires addressing the structural barriers of racism and misogyny that produce violence toward Indigenous women and unsafe urban spaces. Protection also means investing in safety features Indigenous women advocate for in urban spaces, such as increased lighting on trails and parks, safety patrols on trails and in parks, and safety call buttons.</p> <p>Equitable access equates to government investment in wellness-promoting activities means investing in trails, parks and biking in oppressed neighbourhoods, while also addressing barriers due to safety. Addressing safety issues equates to addressing the oppressive societal conditions of poverty that</p>

	<p>result in crime and violence in oppressed neighbourhoods.</p>
<p>3.2 We call upon all governments to provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate, and meet the health and wellness needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The lack of health and wellness services within Indigenous communities continues to force Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people to relocate in order to access care. Governments must ensure that health and wellness services are available and accessible within Indigenous communities and wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside.</p>	<p>Funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness needs to include funding for Indigenous women’s land-based ceremonies, feasts and community gatherings. Investing in these land-based programs contributes to cultural education and continuity. Understanding that Indigenous women provide health and wellness services by hosting ceremonies, feasts and gatherings on urban land should equate to investment in these services women provide. Investment in community gardens would also serve as a community service that would support Indigenous community wellness.</p>
<p>3.3 We call upon all governments to fully support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to call on Elders, Grandmothers, and other Knowledge Keepers to establish community-based trauma-informed programs for survivors of trauma and violence.</p>	<p>Supporting Indigenous Grandmothers in their cultural activities is fundamental in supporting women who are survivors of trauma and violence. Support could include funding Full Moon Ceremonies and other gendered ceremonies and cultural activities for Indigenous women led by Elder women and Grandmothers. To be fully supported governments must rectify societal harms of violence toward Indigenous women, that includes creating and providing safe urban land where women can connect with the land and foster culture, which would contribute to healing.</p> <p>Supporting Elders also equates to the provision of social services and financial security to support Elders from a wholistic perspective.</p>
<p>3.4 We call upon all governments to ensure that all Indigenous communities receive immediate and necessary resources, including funding and support, for the establishment of sustainable, permanent, no-barrier, preventative, accessible, holistic, wraparound</p>	<p>Investing and supporting Indigenous women requires wrap-around supports that extend to funding and support of Indigenous women’s health care and social services. Social services (e.g., women’s centres) are advocated by Indigenous women as a fundamental</p>

<p>services, including mobile trauma and addictions recovery teams. We further direct that trauma and addictions treatment programs be paired with other essential services such as mental health services and sexual exploitation and trafficking services as they relate to each individual case of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.</p>	<p>component in supporting Indigenous women’s wellness. Governments must shift their understanding of Indigenous women’s activities as not only strengthening community wellness, but also contributing to healing from trauma that impacts substance use and addictions. Indigenous women’s cultural activities must be seen as a cultural “treatment” for addictions and trauma from an Indigenous wholistic lens.</p>
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