

Learning From Each Other, Together: Exploring Red River Métis Youth Experiences in Cultural  
Activities Through Relationality

by

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## **Abstract**

For far too long, the Red River Métis have either been excluded from health literature or represented only in Pan-Indigenous research, contributing to considerable underrepresentation and misrepresentation. This project seeks to contribute to distinctions-based Red River Métis health research literature by examining the benefits and impact of Red River Métis youth engaging in Métis cultural activities on health and well-being during Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) Culture Camps.

This work embodies relationality by upholding the 6 R's of Indigenous Research (Relationship, Relevance, Respect, Representation, Reciprocity, and Responsibility) through a decolonizing Red River Métis methodology inspired by the work of Dr. Judith Bartlett. A narrative literature review was conducted in to summarize the existing research and silences on the impacts of engaging Indigenous youth in cultural activities in Canada. Various culturally oriented arts-based methods (mural painting and sharing circles) and other Western-developed data gathering tools (surveys, camp evaluations, field notes) were analyzed using an adapted Reflexive Thematic Analysis guided by our Red River Métis Methodology.

In a Kitchen Table Talk we bring together the interrelated thematic results from Work that has Come Before (literature review) and What We Learned (analysis results) from the MMF Culture Camps. Relationality is identified as a connecting factor between youth, the land, peers, family, and Elders, as positively beneficial to one's well-being by participating in cultural activities that contribute to personal development and cultural continuity.

Relationality is a value, a lived and practiced concept that youth experience when participating in cultural activities that influence well-being. This project connects relationality as a dominant theme and embodied value in this study to uphold Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Representation, Relevance, and Relationship.

This project is intended to contribute to the community and the Red River Métis Nation by bringing a distinct Métis project into the health research and academic space. By documenting and sharing findings with the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), there is hope that this research can support program development by the MMF for Red River Métis youth inspired by the experiences of study participants.

## With Gratitude (Acknowledgements)

I want to begin by acknowledging the lands that have been part of my thesis journey. I began this journey on Treaty 1 territory, the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeeg, Cree, Oji-cree, Dakota, Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation. I also spent time on Treaty 2 territory in the Métis communities of Duck Bay and Winnipegosis. I am currently a guest in Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal, where this thesis was written. Tiohtiá:ke is situated on the traditional unceded lands of the Kanien'kehà:ka, and historical meeting place of First Nations, including the Kanien'kehà:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg Peoples.

Marrsii to my thesis advisor, Dr. Michelle Driedger, who, with great patience, encouraged me and offered tremendous amounts of expertise and guidance throughout this project. Thank you, Dr. Julianne Sanguins and Dr. Cindy Jardine, for your helpful advice and unwavering support as my thesis committee. Thank you, Ryan, for helping me organize data in the lab when I could not be there. Thank you, Janice Linton, and Miriam Unruh, for supporting the literature review search and writing process.

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## A Note to the Reader

Tannshii kiya. I am writing this note to you, the reader, as an introduction to the radical decolonizing efforts of this thesis. I am a Red River Métis (Michif) woman from Treaty 1 territory (now living in Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal). I am using a Red River Métis methodology to position and reframe the Western approach to writing a thesis.

If I am honest, I have spent weeks sitting at my desk writing a thesis to meet a hard deadline and have often experienced strong feelings of self-doubt. With this deadline looming, I now write this note with increased clarity and a sense of peace. While the teachings and my relationship with this project feel genuine, writing this thesis has been challenging. Perhaps this is because of my time constraints, but I think it is more than that. I now realize that writing this thesis to fit a Western academic framework has been difficult. To help me, I finally remembered to take out my smudge kit (which I have not used for a long time) and smudged. I also walked to the Lachine canal to see the ducks, a reminder of the Red River near my childhood home.

But as in all things in life, some moments bring clarity, and sometimes these moments are only possible through a chance occurrence that brings inspiration. In the final stages of writing and revising this work, I was gifted a journal article from Janice Linton, the Indigenous Liaison Librarian at the University of Manitoba. This article flipped me upside-down, or rather, right-side up. Kitchii-marsii to the two (ab)Original scholars Lauren Tynan, a trawlulwuy woman from tebrakunna country in northeast lutruwita/Tasmania and Michelle Bishop, a Gamilaroi woman, grown up on Dharawal Country, Australia for writing *Decolonizing the Literature Review: A Relational Approach*. This article made me feel understood and inspired me to stay faithful to my beliefs and the relational teachings of this work.

With guidance and support from my Red River Métis advisor, Dr. Michelle Driedger, I am reframing this thesis to uphold relational teachings, knowledge, and values by challenging the “typical” thesis format. This shift better suits the epistemology, ontology, and axiology of the Red River Métis methodology that underpins this work. In doing this, chapter titles are renamed from a more Western vocabulary to a descriptive relational title that better fits the Red River Métis axiology. The term “I” will be used concerning this thesis project, and myself, Josée, and the word “we” will refer to the knowledge generated within this project. The “we” that I am representing in my writing comes from the conversations, reflections, and stories from participants, community members, Elders, and mentors, like my advisor and thesis committee members, whose contributions support the knowledge generated in this research. We are discouraged from using “we” in a thesis because it has to be an individual's work, even when supported by an advisor and a committee. But this goes against my Red River Métis axiology that insists that this work is relational, not individual. I include reflective writing in *italics* at various points within this work. These reflections allow me to pause for points I wish to consider and reflect upon in conversation with what is being discussed. I consider these reflections part of the relational structure that best suits the flow of this work.

While I will do my best to decolonize western-academic hierarchies, I will likely slip up in my language and the terms I employ. However, I fully embrace this opportunity to try at least to decolonize the academic norms and expectations for what makes a good thesis while staying true to myself.



## **A Note About Me**

I am a Red River Métis woman (she/her/elle/wiya) with European settler ancestry born on Treaty 1 Land. I have benefitted and been nurtured by this land and the water from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation. Treaty 1 lands are the original ancestral lands of Anishinaabeeg, Cree, Oji-cree, Dakota, Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation. The names of my maternal family are Fox, Rousseau, Gunn, and Brown. The lands of these kinship ties are that of York Factory and Bissett on Treaty 5 land. The northern Manitoban lands are also the ancestral territory of Inuit Peoples. My paternal family names are Lavallée, Lagimodière, Belanger, and Bruneau with ties to Saint Boniface, Saint Vital, and Selkirk on Treaty 1 land. I am a citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation and the elected Youth Representative of the Bison Local community.

The forced assimilation of both sides of my Métis family into a dominant Eurocentric society took our language, stories, and pride. In turn, this has placed me in a position of privilege where I have benefitted from the same systems that have oppressed my family and continue to oppress Indigenous Peoples today. While many parts of my family's Michif culture have been hidden or forgotten, the Métis values, such as the importance of kinship, relationality, reciprocity, and perseverance, have remained strong within my family and me. As I continue my journey, I hold the strength of my ancestors with me in all that I do. In honour of their spirit, I am committed to building relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities and decolonizing health systems and health science education through research, policy, and curriculum reform. I live with gratitude for the opportunities I have had and choose to use my privilege to raise the voices of Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of community, collaboration, reciprocity, and reconciliation. As an Indigenous nurse pursuing a Master's degree, it is my honour, privilege, and obligation to my community to work toward decolonizing healthcare and health research. I approach this work

knowing that my ancestors have been walking this path for hundreds of years to be able to place me here. I also honour the power and importance of Indigenous women that have walked before and alongside me in this work.

The Red River flows north from the bordering American states of Minnesota and North Dakota to Lake Winnipeg. Along the way, the Red River crosses paths with various rivers and streams, such as the Assiniboine River. The Red River has been used for transportation, trade, and nourishment for centuries. Along with First Nations communities of Treaty 1 Territory, the Red River Métis have significant ties to this waterway. It is, after all, how we identify with our Nation as *Red River* Métis and our unique culture that was birthed in and around these waters. Spending much of my youth in a home directly beside the Red River, I have a deep connection to this river that is not only my home but is an extension of myself and my ancestors that continue to flow and exist despite colonial attempts at eradication. I picture myself in this project paddling in a canoe on the Red River. I am accompanying Red River Métis youth steering the canoe for themselves and their community. I am in this canoe to paddle with and alongside the youth on their journey. I am using my strengths (experiences, worldview, education, and privilege) to keep the canoe moving in the direction the youth desire. Although I am a Red River Métis youth, I do not come from the communities this project visits. However, I am connected to these communities through various waterways that have been connecting our ancestors for generations. I feel proud to be on this journey while honouring those who came before me in a relational way.

## **A Note on Terminology**

Notes on Terminology is created to address, define, and clarify important terms that are frequently used in within this work. This section begins with my interpretation of Indigenous Peoples, well-being, youth leadership, and resilience. I include brief descriptions of important Indigenous research principals of relationship, reciprocity, respect, relevance, representation, responsibility, and relationality. There is more meaning, depth, and words to be said beyond the brief descriptions I provide. However, I hope that the introduction of the concepts behind the words can help orient the reader to the relational and interconnected ways these terms speak to each other within this thesis.

*Indigenous Peoples:* In Canada, Indigenous Peoples include three distinct groups, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Within these groups, hundreds of unique communities across Canada share or have varying beliefs, languages, and cultural practices. These Peoples are the first inhabitants and land stewards of what is now called Canada. For this project, the term Indigenous encompasses all self-declared Indigenous Peoples unless otherwise specified. The intent is not to impose generalizations or to take a pan-Indigenous approach but to reflect the rich and diverse cultures in a broader context.

*Well-being:* Well-being can be defined as a state of when one's life is in harmony with their values. For this project, well-being will be informed by using the Métis Life Promotion Framework. In this framework, well-being is the holistic balance of a person's physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of health (Martens, Bartlett, et al., 2010).

*Resilience:* Resilience is the capacity to do well despite adversity (Luthar, 2006; Kirmayer et al., 2011). Sometimes resilience is used interchangeably with resiliency. The term resiliency differs from resilience by focusing on an individual personality trait (Luthar, 2006). This

individualized definition often does not consider the systemic factors of resilience that family, community, and systems influence. Solely focusing on an individual capacity can lead to deficit-based perspectives on resilience. Most literature on resilience and Indigenous youth misses the mark on critical cultural factors contributing to individual and community resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2011). For this project, the term resilience moves beyond the individual and considers relational strengths that can empower an individual to live their truth (Luthar, 2006). The purpose is not to evaluate someone's likelihood to respond to adversity but to look at how social, individual, and cultural factors can intersect to support an individual or community to collectively resist the systems that contribute to and uphold adversity and oppression (Njeze et al., 2020; Toombs et al., 2016).

*Youth Leadership:* Youth Leadership is an internal and external ability of responsibility, teamwork, and vision (Edelman et al., 2004). Specifically, youth leadership can look like the internal ability to understand one's strengths and areas for growth. In addition, taking the initiative to address a goal and actively participate in a group or community demonstrates external competencies of youth leadership (Edelman et al., 2004).

*Relationship:* Indigenous realities and worldviews are shaped by relationships (Kovach, 2009; Tsosie et al., 2022; Tynan, 2021). The interrelated nature that informs Indigenous knowledge and worldviews is the belief that everything exists in relationship (Kovach, 2009; Tsosie et al., 2022; Tynan, 2021). Relationship in research is being accountable to your relations and the knowledge they share (Kovach, 2009).

*Reciprocity:* Reciprocity is the intentional relational exchange within relationships (Tsosie et al., 2022). Reciprocity is the practice of being accountable to your relations through giving

and receiving in ways that are mutually beneficial (Tsosie et al., 2022). Reciprocity does not only exist between humans but reciprocity is lived and practiced with all creation (Kovach, 2009; Tsosie et al., 2022). In research, reciprocity breaks down power imbalances and gives both sides equal and dynamic responsibilities within the relationship (Tsosie et al., 2022)

*Respect:* Respect is the necessary regard for a relationship with oneself, others, and all creation.

Respect acknowledges the interrelated ways we exist with and value one another in mutually beneficial relationships for both individual and community agency (Tsosie et al., 2022). Respect is a commitment that fulfils relational ethics and obligations that are necessary to maintain meaningful research practices (Tsosie et al., 2022)

*Relevance:* Relevance ensures that thoughtful research decisions are made that consider the desires expressed by the Indigenous community and its members are involved (Tsosie et al., 2022). Relevance ensures the inclusion of community voices to ensure that community values and protocols are respected throughout the entire project (Tsosie et al., 2022)

*Representation:* Representation embodies a relationship with relevant voices within the research work, bringing Indigenous voices outside the margins (Kovach, 2009). Representation is not limited to having researchers that are reflective of the community involved, but also it includes research decisions on how participant voices are presented (Kovach, 2009; Tsosie et al., 2022). Consideration for representation means that participant voices are presented in a way that benefits the community (Kovach, 2009). Maintaining good relationships with community members who choose what is relevant maintains

community representation and research participation (Kovach, 2009) – bringing Indigenous approaches and voices outside the margins.

*Responsibility:* Responsibility is to be accountable to your relations and the knowledge they share (Kovach, 2009). We have an ethical responsibility toward others, the land, our cultural knowledge, and ourselves. Relational responsibilities provide an ethical guide on decision-making and accountability that benefits Indigenous knowledge and communities (Tsosie et al., 2022).

*Relationality:* Relationality embodies relationship, reciprocity, respect, relevance, representation, and responsibility. Relationality brings together Indigenous ways of knowing and cultural and ethical practices in all forms to maintain Indigenous sovereignty, agency, and self-determination (Tynan & Bishop, 2022).

## **Chapter 1: A Starting Place (Introduction)**

This thesis project is an effort to contribute to decolonizing health systems through health research. We are using this thesis project to advance the growing body of research that prioritizes Indigenous knowledge and worldviews in a discipline that has historically infringed on Indigenous communities.

Research has a harmful history in Indigenous communities across Canada (Anderson, 2019). Since the first contact in Canada, European settler researchers have historically taken, exploited, and appropriated Indigenous peoples and communities through research (Anderson, 2019; Morton et al., 2017). Cumulative harmful effects and broken promises have contributed to distrust and apprehension toward participation in research (Anderson, 2019). Settler researchers have historically inserted their racial biases and furthered cultural stigma through their power and privilege to perpetuate colonial ideologies toward Indigenous Peoples, thereby causing harm. Today, updated research policies like the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS): Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans seek to discontinue the harmful research ways of the past by dedicating a chapter that refers explicitly to research involving Indigenous Peoples. With the shift to prioritizing Indigenous knowledge in research, principles such as Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) have been a guiding tool supporting self-determination, data sovereignty and ownership, and governance over research involving an Indigenous community (Anderson, 2019). Research methodologies such as Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) seek to create meaningful and collaborative partnerships in research and can prioritize Indigenous knowledge, capacity building, and community ownership (Absolon, 2011).

We acknowledge the positive efforts and contributions of settler researchers who work in respectful partnership with Indigenous communities and use their power and privilege to amplify

Indigenous voices in space that historically caused harm. While CBPR, OCAP principles, and policies like the TCPS can be used as appropriate tools and guiding principles for engaging in mutually beneficial and meaningful work between Indigenous communities and settler-allied researchers, Indigenous researchers advance fundamentally relevant perspectives through decolonizing research projects that are rooted in the researcher's 'tribal' or community epistemology, ontology, and axiology (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009).

Indigenous Peoples have a long history of research through observation and learning from their surroundings, such as the plants, animals, and the land (Absolon, 2011). This history has not only served as knowledge for survival, but it informs the basis of the interrelated nature of Indigenous cultural knowledge and worldviews rooted in ecological systems (Absolon, 2011).

*First, I wish to acknowledge the traditional ways of inquiry that Indigenous Peoples have used for generations and are not necessarily in writing or explicitly cited. Second, I look to present-day Indigenous scholars who have paved the way for decolonizing relational research. With gratitude, marrsii to Anishinaabekwe scholar Kathleen Absolon (Minogiizhigokew), Red River Métis scholar Judith Bartlett, Plains Cree, Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach, Lauren Tynan, a trawlwulwuy woman from tebrakunna country in northeast lutruwita/Tasmania and Michelle Bishop, a Gamilaroi woman, grown up on Dharawal Country, Australia, for inspiring us in this relational work. While we have not named all, we thank these scholars and their influence on the work we present in this thesis.*

Indigenous researchers embody the cultural values that have guided Indigenous research and inquiry for generations within current decolonizing Indigenous methodologies and research



paradigms (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009). Absolon (2011) describes the history of Indigenous research as follows:

Indigenous paradigms are fundamentally different, in that they are built on the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all Creation. (p.30)

The “R’s” of Indigenous methodologies are frequently cited sets of ethical values that underpin this work. The R’s of Indigenous methodologies are often reflected as 4 R’s (Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility), and 5 R’s (Respect, Relationship, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility) (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Carjuzaa & Fenimore-Smith, 2010). Within this work we choose to use the “6 R’s” of Indigenous research methodologies to uphold our ethical responsibilities through good Relationships, Reciprocity, Respect, Representation, Relevance, and Responsibility (Tsosie et al., 2022). No matter the number, upholding the R’s of Indigenous research methodologies is a decolonizing ethical imperative that supports Indigenous self-determination and social change within research practices (Carjuzaa & Fenimore-Smith, 2010). The goal of the R’s is to disrupt harmful past research practices by using these strong Indigenous values that address community needs appropriately and practically that benefit the community (Tsosie et al., 2022).

The harmful legacy of research on Indigenous Peoples not only perpetuated colonial harms and stereotypes, but the research itself did little to address the health needs and wants of Indigenous Peoples. (Anderson, 2019). Because colonization sought to erase Indigenous cultures, little attention was paid to cultural influences on health and well-being (Barker et al., 2017). The interconnected, relational, ecological, and holistic nature of Indigenous beliefs and worldviews makes it impossible to separate health from culture (Ahmed et al., 2022; Nightingale &

Richmond, 2022). Indigenous perspectives on health consider a person's mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional aspects equally essential and interrelated (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk et al., 2017). Western approaches to health have often separated these aspects of a person and problematically defined “health” as only an “absence of disease” (Boorse, 1997). Continuing Indigenous cultural practices and sharing Indigenous ways of knowing can counteract the cultural loss, increase health outcomes, and maintain Indigenous self-determination and pride for generations to come (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2014; Wexler et al., 2014).

A growing body of scholarly work supports culture as an essential component of health for Indigenous communities and Nations (Cherry & Helm, 2022; Kirmayer et al., 2003). However, few studies consider the health and well-being of Indigenous youth in Canada, and even fewer studies have specifically explored the impacts of participating in cultural practices for health and well-being (Ahmed et al., 2022; Dubnewick et al., 2018; Hatala et al., 2019, 2020; Hirsch et al., 2016; Sasakamoose et al., 2016). In addition to this critical research gap is a significant underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Red River Métis in health research (Furgal et al., 2010).

We aim to address that critical research gap in the contemporary health literature by using a distinctions-based approach to examine the impacts of Red River Métis youth engaging in Métis cultural activities for health and well-being to help guide future health policy and programming decisions. There are two objectives in this research project:

*Objective 1:* To document existing bodies of work and silences on the impacts of engaging First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth in cultural activities for health and well-being in Canada; and

*Objective 2:* To explore the impacts of Red River Métis youth engaging in cultural camps for health and well-being.

The central position we advance in this thesis is that Métis youth experience positive benefits when engaging in cultural activities and practices supporting their growth, confidence, and pride as Red River Métis. However, it is not merely engaging in an activity that brings these benefits. Using a Red River Métis methodology, we advance the position that the Indigenous principle of *relationality* holistically embodies the individual practice of the 6 R's of Relationship, Respect, Relevance, Responsibility, Representation and Reciprocity. Relationality is more than each of its parts and certainly more than an expansion of relationships. It is an organizing principle for how *respect* for *relationships* keeps us mindful of our responsibilities to ensure that research is *relevant* and brings value and benefit through *reciprocity* to participants and the nation. As Métis women, we are *responsible* for *representing* the Red River Métis in the research space, especially within this work specific to our Nation. In this project, we demonstrate not only the cultural value of relationality at the methodological level but also as a recurring value expressed by Red River Métis youth as they participate in cultural activities that contribute to their sense of health and well-being.

## **Thesis Journey Road Map**

### ***Chapter 1: A Starting Place (Introduction)***

The beginnings of this project provide a brief history of research with Indigenous Peoples in Canada, Indigenous values in research, and the importance of including Indigenous values and voices in the health research literature. We justify the critical need for Red River Métis specific health research regarding Métis youth health and well-being. Finally, we introduce the project objectives and central position in this work.

## ***Chapter 2: Connecting to Our Past (Red River Métis)***

We look back upon the history of the Red River Métis Nation in Manitoba to contextualize the dynamics of present-day Métis health. Métis resistance is discussed in relation to the stolen lands and forced displacement of the Métis, which the Federal Government enacted. We discuss the Indian Act as a dismissive assimilation tactic, which failed to recognize the Red River Métis while noting historical and ongoing impacts experienced through colonization. Finally, we discuss the Manitoba Métis Federation's important role in advocating, addressing, and advancing Métis needs in Manitoba while upholding Métis self-determination. The Manitoba Métis Federation Health and Wellness Department is introduced as a pivotal department for addressing the health needs of Métis citizens through Métis specific programming, services, and research.

## ***Chapter 3: Work That Has Come Before (Literature Review)***

Addressing the first objective of this project, we visit the existing literature on the impacts of Indigenous youth participating in cultural activities for health and well-being in Canada. The literature search methods, article criteria, and table of the final 24 articles are shared. A substantive finding across these articles is how relationships connect youth to culture for health and well-being. For example, relationships to the land and relationships with others are identified as impactful bonds that youth build from participating in cultural activities that can benefit their well-being. In addition, research silences across these articles are identified, such as an underrepresentation of youth involvement in research decision-making processes.

## ***Chapter 4: How This Work Has Been Approached (Methods)***

We use a decolonizing Red River Métis methodology, an extension of the Holistic Métis Research Model developed by Red River Métis scholar and physician Dr. Judith Bartlett. In this

section, we expand the discussion on this methodology by introducing the sixteen Métis Determinants of Life which are used as guiding principles throughout the project. A youth study described within this project relates to a more extensive project entitled: *Participatory Risk Communication: Indigenous Youth-Generated Messages for Community Health Promotion*. The participatory risk communication youth study seeks to generate Indigenous youth perspectives on health for their community through cultural and arts-based methods to develop sustainable participatory processes for youth involvement in health risk communication messaging specific to the Indigenous community. This youth project involves three case studies which will be shared in greater detail within the chapter. Red River Métis scholar Dr. Driedger of the University of Manitoba collaborated with the Manitoba Métis Federation to plan the Red River Métis youth case study. The MMF expressed the desire to create seasonal Culture Camps as the primary health intervention in this research. The culture camps were designed to weave Red River Métis history into weeklong Métis youth camps involving Elders and community members to engage youth in seasonally-based cultural activities. There have been nine Culture Camps organized by the MMF, which created opportunities for research activities to take place. The research methods used in the Culture Camps include but are not limited to: sharing circles, field notes, surveys, camp evaluations, and a photobook activity. This section also describes how the above research methods are brought together using an adapted reflexive thematic analysis.

#### ***Chapter 5: A Kitchen Table Talk on What We Learned (Results and Discussion)***

In this chapter, we share in a Kitchen Table Talk findings from What We Learned (results) and reflections on Work that has Come Before (discussion based on our literature review). What We Learned explores insights from an adapted reflexive thematic analysis that assisted in bringing together teachings and experiences from the MMF Culture Camps. Within

the MMF Culture Camps, we learned that the sentiments of relationality were expressed and experienced by youth participants, contributing to an increased sense of health and well-being. This section begins with results on the importance of Elders and the relational ways they can assist in fostering and connecting social relationships within the community. Then, we reflect on the Work that has Come Before in discussing Intergenerational Relationality.

Next, personal development and skills such as communication are presented as positive benefits youth experience from engaging with the community and Elders in mutually respectful relationships. We also discuss the personal skills that youth value in social relationships and wish to build upon. We bring together learnings from Work That Has Come Before by discussing how social relationships can provide support and a sense of belonging.

Finally, the role of cultural continuity is highlighted based on three key aspects: 1) the continuation and participation in cultural activities for cultural continuity should involve the role of Elders as facilitators; 2) the positive influence of language reclamation and revitalization can strongly influence and contribute to cultural continuity; and 3) the influence and priority of cultural continuity within family systems. We weave What We Learned on cultural continuity with Work that has Come Before in discussing how cultural activities nourish us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually for health and well-being. Photos and pie charts are used to show visual examples throughout this chapter. We conclude this chapter with pages from a photobook that will be shared with Métis communities and participants as a form of knowledge translation to uphold Métis values of relationality, expressed through respect, responsibility, relationships, reciprocity, representation, and relevance.

## *Chapter 6: Final Reflections*

In this chapter, we share our final considerations on this work by reflecting on the teachings we learned from objective 1 and objective 2. Next, we share Thoughtful Considerations that bind this work. We discuss and reflect on how relationality was honoured within the MMF Culture Camp project. We share Our Hopes for This Work, including our desire that this work can assist in continuing and expanding youth-specific policy and funding decisions by the Manitoba Métis Federation that directly supports Métis youth needs and strengths. We also discuss how we plan to share this knowledge with Red Rive Métis citizens. We intend on collaborating with community members/Elders to translate the Photobook into Michif and Saulteaux, honouring Métis youth desires for Métis language revitalization. We commit to writing an executive summary that will be emailed or sent by mail to MMF governance, the community/youth centres of participating communities, and with Métis citizens at the MMF AGA in September 2023.

We anticipate publishing this work in academic journals that prioritize Indigenous health and ways of knowing in our effort to contribute to Red River Métis specific work in the health research literature. The publishing of this work will inform and possibly inspire future work with Red River Métis. We envision publishing two articles. The first article will speak to the teachings of this work on the Red River Métis youth Culture Camps. The second article will focus on the Red River Métis methodology that was used within this work and our efforts to write in a relational way that is reflective of the Red River Métis axiology.

## **Chapter 2: Connecting to Our Past (Red River Métis)**

*We connect to our past by beginning where it first began, the Red River Métis. We wish to situate the project with a brief, meaningful, current, and historical account of the Red River Métis Nation in Manitoba. While this section touches on many aspects of Red River Métis life and history, it is not meant to represent all the rich Métis history, unique identities, and experiences of Red River Métis Peoples in Manitoba.*

Winnipeg, which exists on the land known as the Red River settlement, is the birthplace of the Red River Métis Nation. Emerging in the early 17th century, the Red River Métis are an Indigenous group with a distinctly unique culture birthed from First Nations and European Settler relatives. Importantly, the Métis are not merely the artifact of births between European settlers and First Nations women (Shore, 2017). They developed into a distinct nation on existing land and territory (Shore, 2017); not the result of *Doctrine of Discovery* or the expansion of colonial empires (Shore, 2017; Miller et al., 2010). Our Red River Métis ancestors established themselves economically and within their culture while maintaining good relationships and partnerships with neighbouring First Nations communities. Though the word “Métis” is directly translated to mixed blood, to be a Red River Métis citizen, one must possess a specific ancestral lineage with ties to the Red River Métis culture, identity, land, and practices (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2022). At the center of the Red River Métis cultures are the languages and various dialects of Michif, French, Cree, and Saulteaux. Our Red River Métis ancestors are the leaders behind the formation of the province of Manitoba, we are also artists, educators, athletes, politicians, and health care providers who continue to be leaders while resisting colonial systems that have attempted to suppress our culture (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2022).



## **Matrilineal Kinship and Values**

The Red River Métis have historically been firmly rooted in the principles of matrilineal kinships. Matrilineal societies mean one's ancestry is tied to maternal rather paternal heritage. This undoubtedly has influenced the history of the Red River Métis and the leadership roles many Métis women occupy (Doiron, 2003). Much like other Indigenous Nations in Canada, matrilineal principles are lived and honoured equally by males, females, and two-spirit individuals (Boyer, 2006). This goes against the European patriarchal lens that colonization brought to Indigenous communities of male dominance and power (Doiron, 2003). These values brought from European societies were then institutionalized in Canadian policy and systems, such as the Indian Act, which will be discussed below (Boyer, 2006). Under this influence, much of the matriarchal respect and acknowledgment has been forgotten in communities and societies colonized and socialized by the patriarchy (Boyer, 2006; Doiron, 2003). The Eurocentric patriarchal voices and values have strongly influenced historical accounts of the Red River Métis by leaving the stories of Métis women unheard and undocumented in history books and research (Doiron, 2003).

In 2021, the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG) featured a female Métis artist, Tracy Charlotte Fehr, who used the stories of her matrilineal ancestries seven generations back to be created and represented in various clay bowls (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2021). This work is essential to bring light to the strength and value of Métis women in history to current-day society (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2021). Having this work displayed at the WAG broadly shares the matrilineal values of the Métis with diverse audiences in an approachable way. We honour this representation of Métis culture and history because it is vital to who we are as a matrilineal society.

## **Land and Location**

The Red River Métis have faced dispossession and displacement through forced relocation, residential schools, and stolen lands, and we remain an underserved group within colonial policy and systems. As Métis Peoples, we are widely dispersed among rural and urban centers within Manitoba. The historical and current dispersal of our Red River Métis is integral to the Métis story. Our Red River Métis were considered neither “white” enough for settler communities nor “Indigenous” enough to live on Treaty reserve lands. The Manitoba Act of 1870 transferred Hudson Bay Company (HBC) lands to the Dominion of Canada, creating the province of Manitoba (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022). The Dominion Lands Act excluded us Métis from obtaining land until an amendment was made in 1879, which slowly initiated the Métis Scrip system (Tough & McGregor, 2007).

The Métis Scrip was a flawed and convoluted system of individualized land or monetary certificates for our Red River Métis (Tough & McGregor, 2007). The idea behind this colonial scrip system was to assimilate and eradicate our Métis by offering land or money scrip coupons for Métis Indigenous identity (Tough & McGregor, 2007). Our Métis ancestors were not necessarily entitled to scrip and had to go through several steps to apply, including travelling long distances and navigating unfamiliar western legal processes (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022). Land scrip was non-transferable, unlike money scrip (Tough & McGregor, 2007). Many of our Métis opted for the transferable money scrip, but for those who chose land scrip, the scrips were often bought out from these Métis at a low price, leaving our Métis with little to no land (Tough & McGregor, 2007). Creating a separate scrip system from settler land distribution processes (e.g., the Dominion Land Grants) and Treaties highlights the Crown's views and assimilation tactics for our Red River Métis (Tough & McGregor).

As Red River Métis, we are also known as the Road Allowance People. This name was coined by settler government officials who purposefully created barriers to obtaining land (Campbell & Farrell Racette, 2010). Without scrip, this intentional displacement of our Métis relatives from their lands left them with nowhere to settle aside from undeveloped crown land designated for future roads (Campbell & Farrell Racette, 2010). Many of these Métis communities were burned down and destroyed, forcing our Red River Métis relatives to find another road allowance to settle (Campbell & Farrell Racette, 2010). Our Red River Métis have demonstrated strength and perseverance to protect the Nation and culture through years of hardships, displacement, and cultural denial. Federal recognition of the Red River Métis as a distinct Nation did not occur until the 1982 Canadian Constitution Act (Martens, Bartlett, et al., 2010).

### **The Indian Act**

The Indian Act has long served as a barrier for many Métis and non-status First Nations Peoples who do not fall under the government-imposed definitions of Indigeneity (Allan & Smylie, 2015). Even though the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes the Métis, the Indian Act failed to follow suit (Allan & Smylie, 2015). Effectively, this translates to the exclusion of the Métis from federal health funding and benefits given to status First Nations and Inuit communities, thereby undermining their rights and potentially exacerbating health outcomes (Allan & Smylie, 2015). Without Federal recognition in the Indian Act, provincial governments and health systems have the power to support or not support Métis-specific health needs. There was an obvious need for Métis health to be addressed without relying on the provincial health system and policies. Métis health would be a main priority in what would become the Manitoba Métis Federation.

## **Manitoba Métis Federation**

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) was formed in 1967 and has maintained the collective capacity to uphold Red River Métis government structures in the spirit of self-determination (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2022). In addition, the MMF has been integral in advocating for and advancing Métis rights at both provincial and federal policy levels.

The MMF and its strong partnership in western provinces created the Métis National Council (MNC) in 1992. The intention behind creating the MNC was to unite all Métis Peoples in Canada. The Métis Nation Accord solidified the partnership with provincial Métis groups, and the MNC defined Métis Peoples as: “...Métis are an aboriginal person who self-identifies as Métis and is a descendant of those Métis who were entitled to land grants or scrip under the provisions of the Manitoba Act of 1870 or the Dominion Lands Act” (McMillan, 1995). The MNC comprised three provincial organizations, including the MMF (Manitoba), Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The MNC later welcomed British Columbia and Ontario (Martens, Bartlett et al., 2010). The Métis National Council has played an essential role in advocating for federal funding and programming to be accessible for the Métis in Canada (Martens, Bartlett, et al., 2010).

However, in 2021, the Manitoba Métis Federation withdrew from the Métis National Council to preserve the unique identity of the Red River Métis due to growing concerns over how our Métis identity was being exploited (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2021). Over time, the requirements of self-declaration have become more relaxed in some provinces, which blurs the lines on Métis identity (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2021). The MMF continues to advocate for the geopolitical roots of the Red River Métis and the Métis Nation Accord that requires connections to scrip and the Dominion Lands Act. The Manitoba Métis Federation no longer aligns its priorities with the Métis National Council (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2021).

The geopolitical context between the MMF and MNC is relevant to this project as it is part of our Red River Métis story. Including this information is not to take a specific political position but to acknowledge our past and current relationships between the MMF and the MNC. Even though the MMF withdrew from this collective, the MMF continues to demonstrate its autonomy and self-determination by advancing Red River Métis interests.

### ***MMF Health and Wellness Department***

The MMF Health and Wellness Department (HWD) was formed in 2005 to understand and support the health needs of the Red River Métis. “The HWD aims to improve the quality of life and well-being of Red River Métis through prevention, health service delivery, research, and innovation through a distinctions-based approach” (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2022). This department has played an essential role in ensuring that research is beneficial and relevant to the Nation using Red River Métis specific research models and health frameworks (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2022). The Indian Act may have added some barriers in healthcare by not including the Métis, but the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Health and Wellness Department has stepped up to address our Métis health needs.

**Red River Métis Research.** Aside from the health services that the MMF HWD offers, the Manitoba Métis Federation Health and Wellness Department research program is the first for distinction-based Red River Métis health research. A distinction-based research approach is vital because within the existing health literature involving Indigenous Peoples, the Red River Métis are both underrepresented and misrepresented (Andersen, 2016; Martens, Bartlett et al., 2010; Gabel, 2019).

There are many reasons why this has occurred. One reason for the absence of Red River Métis research is due to the colonial agenda attempting to assimilate and erase us Red River

Métis by purposefully not documenting the health and social status of Métis Peoples (Andersen, 2016; Gabel, 2019). In addition to the lack of documentation, research involving Indigenous Peoples has predominantly taken a Pan-Indigenous approach, grouping First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples as a single entity. Rather than distinguishing Indigenous Peoples by group or Nation, pan-Indigenous research loses the historical context and distinction between groups causing misrepresentation. The existing nations-based health literature is predominantly First Nations, leaving a gap of underrepresentation of Métis and Inuit-specific research (Furgal et al., 2010; Andersen, 2016). Finally, much of the misrepresentation found within the existing literature regarding Red River Métis Peoples is tied to colonial-embedded assumptions and racial biases that continue to attempt to eradicate and minimize us Métis (Andersen, 2016).

### **Chapter 3: Work That Has Come Before (Literature Review)**

To address the first thesis objective, we explore the existing literature on the impacts of Indigenous youth participating in cultural activities for health and well-being in Canada.

*I must admit that the work reported in this chapter was created following a traditional Western literature review search approach. I created this literature search strategy following accepted Western parameters and standards. After reading Decolonizing the Literature Review: A Relational Approach by Lauren Tynan, a trawlulwuy woman from tebrakunna country in northeast lutruwita/Tasmania and Michelle Bishop, a Gamilaroi woman, grown up on Dharawal Country, Australia, I was moved by my new realization that the decolonizing methodology fell short in this component of the research study, and represented an area for reflective growth. While my intentions in using a Western literature review approach were good, I now reflexively acknowledge that more attention could have been paid to practicing a relational literature review that would be more representative of our methodology. Nonetheless, the research process is fraught with making decisions, and only time and hindsight allow us to reflect on a better way. It would be hubris to think otherwise. The reflection provides valuable learnings for the next time while acknowledging I also must honor what I did given my earlier decisions. I believe that this chapter containing Work That Has Come Before still provides fruitful insights on the existing academic literature that I present in a decolonizing and relational way.*

#### **Literature Search Methods**

In undertaking this literature review, I began by developing the search keywords in collaboration with the University of Manitoba Indigenous Liaison Librarian, Janice Linton, who

has over 20 years of experience in Indigenous health. The search used the following keywords: Canada, Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Youth, Adolescent, Well-being, Health, Culture, Cultural Activities, and Cultural Practice. Scopus, Ebsco-host, and Google scholar were the databases used to search for articles from 2010 or later. I allowed for the inclusion of any research design to permit as many articles as possible, understanding that there could be a limited number of articles available on this subject in Canada. I focused on Canada because I wanted to keep the work geographically close to the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation and to document that work before envisioning any future projects that may search internationally.

I evaluated the titles and abstracts for each of the keyword search string outputs based on the inclusion criteria for this part of the research: conducted in Canada, published in 2010 or later, and involving First Nations, Métis, or Inuit youth participating in a cultural activity or practice. Once articles had gone through the initial screen for appropriateness, I did a full-text review of articles that fit the criteria. From that full-text review of identified articles, I eliminated a handful of articles I previously missed, such as a commentary and an article that included American and Australian Indigenous youth. I also eliminated articles that lacked detail in a crucial area. For example, I eliminated an article that only briefly mentioned that youth participated in a cultural activity, without elaborating or providing relevant details on youth experiences with the cultural activity.

To be included in the review, articles had to provide more detail in the description and context of the impacts of youth participating in a cultural activity. A total of 24 articles were included in this literature review. I created an initial excel spreadsheet in a table (Appendix A) to organize these articles by authors, title, year, research design, community/Nation/location, cultural activity or practice, and results/themes. Once I had identified the 24 articles and placed



them alphabetically in the excel spreadsheet, I highlighted words from common themes, or cultural activities across the articles, such as “relationship with Elders” or “land-based activities”. Next, I used a Synthesis Matrix organizing framework to create a second spreadsheet organized horizontally by theme. A Synthesis Matrix is an organizing chart to assist in sorting and categorizing themes and arguments across articles for a literature review (Ingram et al., 2006). I followed the NC State University Writing and Speaking Tutorial, which recommended organizing the chart by theme horizontally and by article vertically. For my project, I used the far-left column for labelling themes and the top row of columns I labelled by author(s). Below is a simple visual example of how the chart was organized.

***Table 1 Synthesis Matrix Example***

	Article 1 Author	Article 2 Author
Theme 1		
Theme 2		

*Note.* Example of how synthesis matrix was used to organise articles and help identify themes.

I indicated in the “theme” rows under the article author(s) name whether the article touched on that theme, which helped me to see how often these themes were discussed across the included articles. Next, I went back into every article to evaluate the extent and depth that each theme was discussed. For example, one article mentioned land-based activities, which I identified as a cultural activity related to the relationship to the land theme. Next, I re-read the article to examine how the land-based activity was described in the study. For example, was it only mentioned as a research method, discussed through researcher interpretation within the

results or if the activity was discussed in more details with youth perspectives on connection to the land. This Synthesis Matrix was a helpful reference point that allowed me to connect articles in developing the write up of the themes.

### **What We Learned from Work That Has Come Before**

Within the 24 articles chosen for this literature analysis, two articles were published earlier than 2015. Most articles included studies that were based on qualitative research designs, except for one mixed method and one quantitative study design. Of the 24 articles, 20 involved First Nations youth. Four studies involved Métis youth, and two of these articles were based on the same study. The articles that included Métis youth as participants also involved First Nations and Inuit youth participants. Four articles involved Inuit youth participants.

The remainder of this Chapter provides a narrative literature analysis on Work that has Come Before by briefly introducing Relationships in Indigenous worldviews and culture. The articles identified two priority relationships (or themes): relationship to the land and social relationships. It is important to remember that any discussion of culture in the synthesis below reflects the many aspects of Indigenous culture(s) as opposed to a desire to generalize First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures. Discussions about culture are intended to highlight common strengths emerging across articles in various unique communities, geographies, and Indigenous cultures. Through this literature analysis, I aim to identify what research has been done and consider how findings might be transferable to other Indigenous contexts. Transferability refers to identifying findings from one study or across studies that might be applicable or fit in other contexts (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). My motivation is to provide an up-to-date relational summary of this body of literature and offer insights for future research by pausing for reflection on silences within the 24 selected articles.

### ***Relationship to Culture***

The representation of Indigenous culture and knowledge was apparent in several ways across the included studies. For example, in one study, an Indigenous researcher used an Indigenous methodology involving their community and cultural epistemology (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2013). Another study's research team consulted a tribal council on desired research methods (Ahmed et al., 2022), whereas an additional study discussed Indigenous culture as an important finding in their results (Quinn, 2022). The identification of 'culture' across the studies is perhaps not surprising given that the search parameters included "culture" as a keyword. However, what did stand out was the importance of "relationship," identified as a significant cultural priority within the 24 selected articles that contributed to Indigenous youths' health and well-being in some way.

Indigenous Peoples and communities honour relationships as necessary for one's well-being (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2013; Ferguson et al., 2021; Hirsch et al., 2016). Many Indigenous Peoples and communities foster strong relationships to reclaim, maintain, and strengthen cultural identity and community well-being (Freeman et al., 2020; Hossain & Lamb, 2019). These relationships can exist between all beings, such as plants, animals, humans, and spirit. Colonization has disrupted relationships within and between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in Canada. However, communities continue to demonstrate their resistance against harmful colonial ideologies through continuing cultural practices and by sharing the cultural importance of building reciprocal relationships with one another and with the land for the well-being of their community (Freeman et al., 2020).

Reciprocity is a fundamental value for healthy relationships within Indigenous cultures and worldviews. Reciprocity refers to the give and take within relationships that benefit

everyone. For example, an Elder might ask that the knowledge they share to be shared with others in the community so that cultural knowledge continues for generations. In this case, giving back to the Elder is by sharing their knowledge with others. Other times, one might offer tobacco in return for cultural teachings or help an Elder by providing a service of labour (e.g. raking the leaves). These are general examples of how reciprocity can contribute to mutually meaningful relationships and cultural continuity.

An Anishinaabe philosophy mentioned in two articles called *mino-bimaadiziwin*, which translates to “the good life”, is acknowledged as the foundational principle of relationships with others (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2014; Nightingale & Richmond, 2022). The philosophy describes that to experience *mino-bimaadiziwin*, one must live well and in balance through relationship with self and other beings (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2014; Nightingale & Richmond, 2022). Hatala and colleagues (2019; 2020) similarly discuss the relational priorities using the Cree word, *Miyo-wicehtowin*, which means “having or possessing good relations”. Indigenous languages and knowledge of relationships are not limited to *mino-bimaadiziwin* and *miyo-wicehtowin*; they are an example from these bodies of literature on Indigenous knowledge and belief systems that are rooted in relationships. The following sections will discuss the relationship to the land and other people as a source of health and well-being for Indigenous youth in Canada.

### ***Relationship with the Land***

*We begin with relationship to the land because “Mother Earth is our first Mother” (My apologies, I do not recall where I first heard this teaching). This teaching remains a constant reminder of our relationship to the land that has been here long before we*

*existed. As a decolonizing project, we follow this teaching, to begin with the land, our first Mother.*

The land and its significance within Indigenous cultures is described in relationality by Tynan (2020):

However, land does not exist on its own, as with everything, land only exists in relationship, for many Aboriginal Peoples, she is our Mother. Therefore, to begin with land is, in fact, to begin with relationships, a slow and patient process through which we are invited into relationships of knowledge with land. (p.166)

Indigenous relationships to the land have been necessary for sustaining physical and cultural nourishment for generations (Mikraszewicz & Richmond, 2019). Indigenous Peoples in Canada have taken care of the land and built strong relational ties and belief systems rooted in the land (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2014; Tsuji, 2019). The land provides nourishment and healing among many Indigenous communities that harvest animals and plants for sustenance and medicine (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2014). Connection to land is more than existing in a physical space. A relationship between health and well-being also holistically touches on a person's mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional parts (Ahmed et al., 2022). Unfortunately, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have faced forced removal and relocation from their traditional lands, disrupting their respective communities and cultural ways of life (Ahmed et al., 2022; Hatala et al., 2019; Mikraszewick & Richmond, 2019).

*The Red River Métis road-allowance and land scrip system are two examples of how the Government attempted to control Métis rights and connection to the land. First Nations and Inuit communities also faced these disruptions in various ways. Rather than focus on*

*land-based harms from colonization, I want to focus on the strong relationship between land and culture as a source of strength for health and well-being.*

For many Indigenous Nations, the land has always been a place for learning, sharing, giving back, and connecting to culture (Mikraszewicz & Richmond, 2019). Indigenous communities are working to continue cultural knowledge and relationship with the land by engaging the younger generations (youth) in land-based activities (Ahmed et al., 2022). Within the past ten years, a growing body of Canadian scholarly articles on land-based activities and camps have sought to connect youth to their culture through on-the-land learning. Though these articles vary in Indigenous Nations, communities, and geographic locations, the results of these studies similarly describe the positive benefits youth can experience from participating in land-based activities and learning.

Waterways are an extension of the land, equally crucial for cultural connection as their solid counterpart. Waterways have served many purposes for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, such as travel, connecting with others, and facilitating fur trading for economic purposes (Ahmed et al., 2022; Victor et al., 2022). No matter the weather, waterways have always remained a source of physical, social, and cultural connection (Victor et al., 2022). Mikraszewicz and Richmond (2019) discuss findings from a study that connected Anishinaabe youth to their culture and ancestors through a canoeing journey on traditional waterways. Canoe journeys can be an impactful way to connect youth to the cultural practice and skills for canoeing. Equally important is how the canoe, as a vessel, can serve as an intergenerational space for knowledge sharing and learning between Elders and youth. (Marshall, 2010; Mikraszewica & Richmond, 2019). Youth who participated in this journey felt a profound impact from the knowledge they learned because it was embedded in their experience on the land (Mikraszewica & Richmond,

2019). Mikraszewica & Richmond (2019) describe how one youth described their perspective of being on the land after the canoe journey:

I think to me land means life. Like, without the land, there would be nothing, like literally. And like it can bring happiness, sadness, every emotion. It's just a huge influence that I don't think a lot of people realize, like they take it for granted. And I think that land means, I know it means a lot to my culture, and it probably means a lot to so many different cultures that I just don't know. And it's just a really important part of life, a part of everything and anything. (p.7)

This youth identified how land and life exist in an interconnected relationship. Through cultural activities such as the canoe trip, youth can form a relationship and connect to cultural belief systems rooted in the land.

Much of the literature described using arts-based research methods and activities with great success for engaging Indigenous youth in expressing their perspectives and relationship to the land in a visual way. Arts-based methods allow youth to express themselves creatively, encouraging fruitful discussion and sharing (Bagnoli, 2009). Photovoice projects capture lived experiences through youth perspectives in an engaging way that prioritizes youth voices (Gabel et al., 2016; Pawlowski et al., 2022). Among other arts-based methods within this body of literature, photovoice activities were used to connect youth with the land, capturing their experiences, perspectives, and strengths with the land. These activities showed links that youth made between their connection to the land and their well-being, and they also served to understand youths' health priorities for their community (Lines & Jardine, 2019; Hatala et al., 2019; 2020 Pawlowski et al., 2022).

Pawlowski and colleagues collaborated with Inuit youth in Nunavik in a photovoice activity to identify “What in your community makes you feel healthy?”. Youth identified twelve areas for health and well-being in their community, such as spending more time on the land for cultural well-being and participating in land-based activities for socializing (Pawlowski et al., 2022). Victor and colleagues also employed a photovoice project with Woodland Cree youth in Saskatchewan, where youth were asked to take photos of their everyday lives. The photos showed a connection to the land and cultural activities, contributing to a sense of belonging and identity. For example, fishing was identified as an activity for physical nourishment while being identified for the health benefits of being on the land and having fun (Victor et al., 2022). Both photovoice activities provided a visual way for youth to identify existing personal and community strengths and relationships to the land.

**Land Stewardship.** For many communities and Nations, part of having a relationship with the land is to take care of it in a respectful way. The Omushkego Cree of Fort Albany in Northern Ontario created a beaver harvesting program where youth went out on the land and learned from Elders about traditional beaver harvesting and dam removal. Not only did this program bring youth out on the land, but it also showed youth the importance of tending to the overpopulation of beavers. The increased number of beavers and beaver dams combined with heavy rainfall and warmer temperatures from climate change caused higher water levels leading to frequent flooding events and water contamination in the community (Ahmed et al., 2022). Researchers joined this community to evaluate how participating in the cultural program activities impacted youths’ health and well-being. Mixed research methods included measures of youth salivary cortisol pre- and post-beaver programming activities(quantitative), semi-structured interviews (qualitative), and a photovoice activity (qualitative, arts-based). The



authors identified in their results how the well-being of youth could extend to their community's well-being when engaged in a land-based activity that can contribute to a positive benefit in their community (Ahmed et al., 2022). Illustrative in that study is how youth engage in a relationship with the land and their community. Participating in land-based activities that preserve and care for the land and their community contributed to a personal sense of cultural pride and identity (Ahmed et al., 2022).

One project involving Yellowknives Dene First Nations youth, used multiple arts-based methods such as mural paintings and photovoice to engage youth, who identified land-based health risks, such as swimming in contaminated water and associated these risks with their desire to take care of the land and waters for community health (Lines & Jardine, 2019). The researchers used a photovoice activity to engage youth in a deeper reflection of their photos, which led to a youth-initiated discussion on the importance of taking care of the land (Lines & Jardine, 2019). Youth identified that protecting the land is vital because it takes care of them, which speaks to the value of reciprocity within relationships between humans and the land (Lines & Jardine, 2019). A major finding from the mural painting activity in this study is that youth collectively identified having a good relationship with the land as a key determinant of health (Lines & Jardine, 2019). “Youth agreed that culture encompassed many traditional ways, customs, knowledge, and skills that were based on a harmonious relation with the land as depicted in mural images.” (Lines & Jardine, 2019 p.8). Connection to land as a determinant of health conveys how youth understand the interconnected relationship between all beings that contribute to one’s health and well-being. Therefore, to take care of oneself is also to take care of the land.

**Relationship to Land in an Urban Context.** While some of the literature focuses on Indigenous youth living in communities in rural geographies, other articles focus explicitly on Indigenous youth living in urban centres. Hatala and colleagues (2019, 2020) explored Indigenous youths' perceptions and connection to land, nature, and wellness living in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Photovoice, in-depth interviews, and sharing circles offered a space to discuss youth connections to the land within city limits. In this study, youth participants described that having a relationship with the land is not isolated to rural spaces or community boundaries (Hatala et al., 2019; 2020). Although city life varies in landscape and lifestyle from rural community living, the land remains a connection to culture and spirit for participating youth, contributing to urban Indigenous youths' health and well-being (Hatala et al., 2019; 2020). Youth described their connection to the land in the city with a sense of flexibility. Hatala and colleagues (2019) describe the re-imagining as:

Re-imagining rural/urban conceptual boundaries as porous and relational, therefore, can facilitate youth connections with nature and land in diverse ways within urban spaces.  
(p.125)

Hatala and colleagues describe how the Cree word of *miyo-wicehtowin*, which is to have good relations, can exist and be part of youth's experiences in re-imagining the land within an urban context. *Miyo-wicehtowin* guides youth in maintaining their personal and cultural human-nature relationships in the city (Hatala et al., 2019). Urban living Indigenous youth can experience an impactful relationship with the land by observing its teachings (Hatala et al., 2019). For example, one youth talked about seeing a couple of ducks swimming near the river, which reminded them of a teaching about life flowing and zigzagging around, like how the youth observed the ducks (Hatala et al., 2019; 2020). Spending time in nature also serves as a consistent place for youth to

visit when experiencing difficult times to feel soothed and at peace (Hatala et al., 2019). Being in nature can offer hope and feelings of safety for urban Indigenous youth when they are experiencing a challenging time or are seeking cultural/spiritual connection (Hatala et al., 2019; 2020).

In another project, Indigenous youth in Winnipeg and Brandon, Manitoba, were able to participate in creating and documenting their experiences with urban gardening. Planting and tending to the gardens were done with Elders who shared traditional ways of gardening and harvesting (Moscou, 2022). Not only did this activity prompt youth to build a relationship with the land in an urban landscape, but it also served to build a relationship with community members and provide access to food for the community (Moscou, 2022). Traditional medicines were also planted in the boxes, with instructions for use in traditional healing. Tending to the medicines with newly acquired knowledge of the medicines' healing properties and uses was identified as a connecting factor to culture for health and well-being (Moscou, 2022). These garden boxes exemplify how youth can connect to the land by giving to the land, such as planting food and medicine and then receiving its gifts (bounty) in an urban landscape (Moscou, 2022). This urban gardening project describes an impactful way for youth to have a cultural connection within city limits, where there are often barriers to cultural, community, and land connection (Moscou, 2022). This work shows how a relationship with the land does not need to be an individual endeavour but can be done in good relationships with others and the community in any landscape.

### ***Social Relationships***

The social supports from personal relationships with friends, family, and community contribute to establishing and maintaining healthy behaviours (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2013).

There are numerous benefits to having personal relationships. In this body of literature on youth participating in cultural activities, the shared experiences of learning traditional practices contributed to meaningful relationships and a sense of community for health and well-being (Hirsch et al., 2016; Mikraszewick & Richmond, 2019; Njeze et al., 2020). Many youth described a sense of belonging through these shared cultural experiences, which most often occurred on the land (Nightingale & Richmond, 2022; Pawlowski et al., 2022). While many youth explored building a relationship with the land, doing so in a group setting brought more value to the experience and their personal relationships because it was a shared experience with others (Ahmed et al., 2022; Mikraszewick & Richmond, 2019). Some cultural activities brought youth out of their comfort zone by interacting and being open with others (Ritchie et al., 2015; Victor et al., 2022). In turn, many participants described a greater sense of purpose and increased self-confidence from being open to new experiences with others (Ritchie et al., 2015; Victor et al., 2022). Some youth also described the benefits of developing personal skills like communication and being a good friend as essential skills that contribute to their overall confidence and well-being (Dubnewick et al., 2018; Petrucka et al., 2016).

Having strong connection to others can also be protective and supportive when youth experience challenging times (Petrasek et al., 2015; Quinn, 2022). Healthy relationships are a safe place for youth to turn to in times of need and can contribute to a youth's capacity for adapting to change (Ritchie et al., 2014; 2015). Strong relationships not only contribute to personal well-being but also can contribute to community well-being because community members feel a strong bond to the community, and are more likely to contribute and participate in the community some way (Pawlowski et al., 2022; Quinn et al., 2022; Saskamoose et al.,

2016). A strong network of relationships within the community act as a supportive network when community members are going through a tough time (Pawlowski et al., 2022)

**Intergenerational Relationships.** Intergenerational relationships provide an environment for learning and sharing between generations that can sustain cultural ways of living and knowing while nurturing human connection (Freeman et al., 2020). Indigenous communities and cultures have historically relied on intergenerational relationships to preserve and continue cultural practices and ways of being (Freeman et al., 2020). In many Indigenous cultures, knowledge is shared through oral storytelling (Njeze et al., 2020). Cultural continuity relies on oral storytelling within intergenerational relationships between community members, especially with Elders (Freeman et al., 2020). Elders are regarded with respect and importance as facilitators for sharing cultural knowledge and contributing to cultural continuity within a community (Dubnewick et al., 2018; Freeman et al., 2020).

Many articles captured the building and maintaining of intergenerational relationships between Elders and youth who learned and shared while participating in a cultural activity or practice (Dubnewick et al., 2020; Freeman et al., 2020; Good et al., 2020; Mikraszewick & Richmond, 2019; Nightingale & Richmond, 2019; Njeze et al., 2022). For example, youth participating in a land-based activity like hunting would receive multiple teachings on certain hunting or trapping skills and cultural protocols on respecting the animal and the land (Ahmed et al., 2022; Hirsch et al., 2016). In some articles, authors described the reciprocal exchange between Elders who shared personal stories and experiences, which creates a greater personal connection between youth and Elders, making it more likely for youth to share personal stories (Freeman et al., 2020; Hirsch et al., 2016).

Within a youth and Elder relationship, a youth learns the value of being respectful while also gaining responsibility, possibly carrying, and sharing the knowledge for future generations (Ahmed et al., 2022; Freeman et al., 2020). Many youth felt empowered after experiences where they learned cultural activities and practices and were often enthusiastic about sharing with other youth or family members about their experiences (Ahmed et al., 2022; Dubnewick et al., 2018 Hirsch et al., 2016). Sharing cultural skills and teachings with others is how culture has continued in Indigenous communities for generations. In many Indigenous communities, learning cultural teachings often brings the responsibility to share this teaching with future generations. Cultural knowledge-sharing relies on establishing and maintaining relationships with the younger generation. Indigenous youth are shown the importance of building personal relationships for cultural continuity, which, for many youths, is a priority for their sense of well-being (Nightingale & Richmond, 2019; Mikraszewick & Richmond, 2019; Quinn, 2022; Petrsek et al., 2016).

Intergenerational relationships are not limited to Elder and youth connections but can also exist between youth and children. Ferguson and colleagues describe a peer mentorship program with Indigenous youth in Winnipeg created to build relationships between young adults, high school students, and elementary school students for a community-led health promotion program. This program was based on building relationships between young generations for health and well-being, including cultural teachings/practices, physical activity, and healthy eating (Ferguson et al., 2021). One youth mentor took what they learned from being a mentor in the program and applied it outside the program by reaching out and spending more time with younger siblings and existing friendships (Ferguson et al., 2021). This participant noticed the positive impact that their mentorship and relationship had on the elementary school mentees and became more intentional

about reaching out to others because they knew it would be meaningful (Ferguson et al., 2021). Mentorship programs allow youth to connect and take on leadership roles within their community (Petrucka, et al., 2016). In another article, youth who actively built a mentorship program in Standing Buffalo First Nation expressed a sense of empowerment, increased self-confidence, and cultural pride when taking on leadership roles within the project (Petrucka et al., 2016). Indigenous youth mentorship programs allow youth to take on leadership roles that nurture relationships while learning new skills and contributing to their community (Fergusone t al., 2021; Petrucka et al., 2016). Mentorship programs build on youth strengths and help them recognize their valuable contributions and roles within their community, improving their well-being and confidence (Ferguson et al., 2021; Saskamoose et al., 2016).

### **Silences Within Work That Has Come Before**

*Searching for and reading these studies initially relied on a traditional western literature review guide to identify gaps in the existing literature. I am inspired by Tynan & Bishop (2020) article on Decolonizing the Literature: A Relational Approach and I agree that finding gaps and criticizing these bodies of work does not fit within my commitment to a relational and decolonizing methodology. Following the leads of Tynan & Bishop, I hope to shift the perspective on the following four ideas from research gaps to silences. The following research silences provide pause for reflection and engage in thoughtful dialogue on the larger picture of research with Indigenous Peoples.*

First, we identify the need for increased focus on distinctions-based research involving Indigenous youth rather than using a pan-Indigenous research project approach. Not all Indigenous communities have the same cultural practices, knowledge, and protocols, underscoring the need for nation-specific engagement. Studies that used a pan-Indigenous

sample have us reflecting on the silences these studies can leave. Is there cultural benefit to using a pan-Indigenous approach? A distinction-based project can offer culturally specific and relatable interventions and activities. We consider the historical dismissal and undermining of research on Indigenous Peoples that swept us (Indigenous Peoples) under the same rug as a general disservice to the Indigenous peoples and communities involved.

For this reason, we contend with increasing and normalizing Nation or community-specific research that recognizes a community's unique strengths and culture which contributes to Indigenous self-determination. However, we reflexively negotiate with the understanding that there will be circumstances when pan-Indigenous studies are unavoidable. For example, urban Indigenous research highlights the cultural diversity of Indigenous communities and nations residing in a city. In the case of an unavoidable pan-Indigenous study in an urban context, we believe greater emphasis on explicitly discussing the nuances, benefits, and limitations within the study design and results would offer transparent accountability to all Nations involved and the reading audience. Often these nuances are swept up in broader conversations about balancing the importance of Nation-distinct research while searching for strengths in pan-Indigenous work.

The second silence lies in the duration of research projects. Many articles described research projects as either one-offs, summer/school programs, or periodic activities. We believe there would be value in documenting the impacts of youth engaging in cultural programming over extended periods to understand some longer-term impacts on youth. We reflect on the possibilities and value that longer study durations might provide for capturing youth evolving through their life journey while participating in cultural activities for health and well-being. Nonetheless, as we write this reflection, we acknowledge that some individual studies might occur within a growing research program within a distinction-based Indigenous community.



Therefore, it may be unfair to judge all individual studies similarly. Some studies included in this review were one-offs, whereas others may be part of a larger body of work that we have not yet had the opportunity to see additional publications from those research teams.

*We pause to acknowledge to work of Yellowknives Dene Doctoral scholar Laurie-Ann Lines and Dr. Cindy Jardine and their ongoing work with YKDFN youth. Their work sets a great example for building and maintain long-term community and youth relationships.*

Third, we reflect on the engagement process with youth during a research study. Increased engagement opportunities with youth throughout an entire research project might offer new insights into youths' connection to the study, skills learned, and perceptions of participating in decision-making. For example, some articles within this reflexive reading of the literature involved youth in the planning and as facilitators for some of the activities. These articles described the leadership roles that youth took on that helped them learn new skills and build on existing strengths. We believe it is imperative that youth voices are evident beyond the study results; that their role is embedded throughout the project.

Finally, we continue the conversation on the overall need for more Indigenous-led research and where those research leads represent the Indigenous research population. While we can admire the efforts and respect the work of allied researchers engaging in appropriate community consultations, Indigenous health scholars remain underrepresented. Reflecting on this imbalance and the silences mentioned earlier, we urge for continued dialogue on these topics to involve youth in the research process. We believe this will benefit all by engaging and mentoring future Indigenous researchers by teaching and building research skills for future generations.

## **Summary and Lessons Learned**

We understand this body of literature on the impacts of youth participating in cultural practice for health and well-being as centred on the importance of developing relationships with the land and others, positively influencing health and well-being. The benefit of youth participating in cultural activities goes beyond the activity itself. Instead, the benefit lies in the relationships built with the land and others by sharing the cultural experience of the activities themselves. Building and maintaining relationships with the land and community members is not new for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The value of relationships has been embedded in Indigenous culture, teachings, and ways of living for generations. Relationship acknowledges the connecting factors for health and well-being between living beings (humans, animals, land, and spirit) for one's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. The studies identified through this literature discussion provide a promising starting point for more research on the impacts of youth participating in cultural activities on health and well-being in Canada.

We have shared many great teachings from Work That Has Come Before, and our reflections on silences across these articles. We must also acknowledge the limitations of our research decisions during the literature review search and analysis. First, we did not include grey literature, likely missing some relevant articles from other sources. Second, in reflecting on how this literature search could have been done more relationally, we believe that having additional conversations between the thesis committee and other experts within the field might have provided valuable insights and the possibility of highlighting relevant articles missed in the search. Conversations with community members, Elders, youth, and knowledge holders would have added important insights. We understand that knowledge does not only exist within academic databases but also comes from sharing through conversations. Last, despite efforts to

include all relevant articles, as the analyst, I may have made errors in undertaking my keyword searches across the databases or during the assessment phase in applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Consequently, some relevant studies may have been inadvertently excluded.

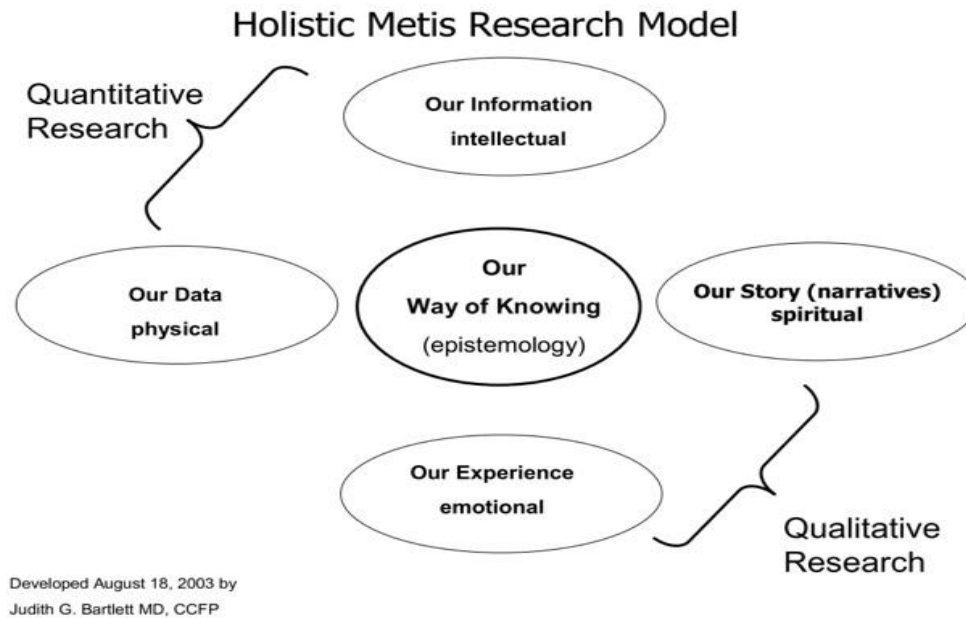
## **Chapter 4: Our Approach in this Work (Methodology and Methods)**

In this chapter, we outline the methodology that guides us, paying close attention to our epistemology, ontology, and axiology before providing a background description of the larger project to which this thesis contributes. We then describe some of the Sources of Knowledge (methods for data collection) we drew from, followed by How We Learned (analysis), to provide details from a reflexive thematic analysis journey.

### **Methodology**

This project uses a decolonizing Red River Métis methodology that extends the Holistic Métis Research Model (Figure 1) and is informed by the Determinants of Life (Figure 2), both developed by Dr. Judith Bartlett, a Red River Métis physician and the first Director of the MMF Health and Wellness Department. Dr. Bartlett's Holistic Research Model is an extension of an earlier model developed by Burton Jones (1999 as cited in Bartlett & Carter, 2010). Burton Jones' model described an epistemology that treated Western knowledge in opposition to, and separate from, Indigenous knowledge, effectively privileging one against the other. However, Dr. Bartlett contended that this oppositional nature and artificially separate distinctions about what constitutes knowledge was inconsistent with a Métis culture and philosophy (Bartlett & Carter, 2010). Therefore, she developed the Holistic Métis Research model to depict a more inclusive circle of knowledge creation that honoured aspects of our many ways of knowing as Métis (spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual).

**Figure 1 Holistic Métis Research Model**



*Note.* From Bartlett, Judith G & Carter S.; Chapter 2: Manitoba Métis Federation: Knowledge Translation through a Wellness Lens - How We Are Using the Study; in Martens J. and Bartlett J. et. al.; Profile of Métis Health Status and Health Care Utilization in Manitoba: A Population Based Study (2010). Available at Manitoba Centre for Health Policy ([info@cpe.umanitoba.ca](mailto:info@cpe.umanitoba.ca)) or at Manitoba Métis Federation - Health and Wellness Department (<http://www.mmf.mb.ca>). Reprinted with permission.

Figure 1 developed by Dr. Bartlett, uses western terms and Métis Determinants of Life within the Holistic Métis Research Model. The Métis Determinants of Life can be found within the Métis Life Promotion Framework, also developed by Dr. Judith Bartlett. The Métis Life Promotion Framework brings together sixteen Métis-specific determinants of health (Determinants of Life) that can be visualized in an infinity symbol. Placing the determinants of health in the infinity symbol shows the relational ways one can connect with or experience each determinant of health (Bartlett & Carter, 2010). The Determinants of Life can be used to show that health is a balance among sixteen areas to help understand how life unfolds (Bartlett & Carter, 2010). The sixteen Determinants of Life are interrelated and illustrate the relationality

between a person and their health through the relationship between the Determinants of Life. This moves beyond the individual and physical body but also considers community and cultural factors. (Martens, Bartlett, et al., 2010). Within this framework, we experience physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual (or mental) health as a child, youth, adult and Elder. For example, even if we are in the adult phase of our life chronology, we can still have moments that allow us to experience one of these dimensions of health as we did when we were a child or when others may turn to us for guidance like they might an Elder. In addition, health is experienced at the individual, family, community, and Nation levels. It can influence how we relate or draw strength from our culture, social environment, economy, and politics (e.g., governance structures, policies, programs, etc., through our Nation's government). We understand these determinants of health as bringing together Métis values, culture, community, and strengths to intersect with one's health and well-being.

***Figure 2 Métis Determinants of Life***



*Note.* From Bartlett, J. 'A Métis Woman's Journey of Discovery'; in "Métis Rising; Living Our Present through the Power of Our Past" (2022) edited by Yvonne Boyer and Larry Chartrand. pg. 234-256. Reprinted with permission.

The Red River Métis Methodology used in this project has been designed to build on Dr. Bartlett's model, including specific aspects left implicit in her earlier work. The epistemology of our methodology uses both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing and reflects the distinct Red River Métis Nation, which intentionally speaks to the First Nations (Indigenous) and European (Western) ancestries that initially birthed the Red River Métis. Embedded in this epistemology is the prioritization of community partnerships, self-determination and authentic representation of Métis voices that is currently and historically significant for the Red River Métis Nation. Our ontology is rooted in Red River Métis history and values of culture, relationality, and reciprocity. Our axiology is respect, integrity, and relationality.

Figure 1 developed by Dr. Bartlett uses western terms and Métis Determinants of Life and our methodology seeks to emphasize the relational ways quantitative and qualitative research approaches can work together to uplift Métis voices. A strengths-based narrative means that we focus on positive attributes that speak to the perseverance of the Red River Métis, who have actively resisted the denialism and attempts at erasure brought about by colonial policies. A strengths-based narrative does not ignore areas for growth and improvement but also does not position these areas as deficits. Positioning areas for growth as deficits would seek to blame and stigmatize Red River Métis for adverse health outcomes borne out of historical trauma and colonial legacies. Strengths-based approaches seek to recognize individual, community, and cultural assets contributing to overcoming challenges (Lines et al., 2021; Saskamoose et al., 2017).

Relationality is a value that is embedded within our Red River Métis Methodology is embodied by ensuring the project is *relevant*, that it is done with *respect*, that it continues and builds *relationships*, and that data and results are shared back with participating youth and Métis

Citizens in a *responsible* and *relevant* way. Relationality is also demonstrated through *reciprocity* with participants, community, and research partners such as the Manitoba Métis Federation.

The Holistic Métis Research Model and the Métis Determinants of Life helped me (Josée) to reflect on my values and intentions of doing this project and my desire to serve the Red River Métis by embarking on this journey. In addition, these models helped me clarify my perspective when I struggled to conceptualize certain aspects of the data or became frustrated in the reflexive process. Although Dr. Bartlett states that the Holistic Métis Research Model and the Métis Life Promotion Framework do not represent all Métis ways of knowing or beliefs, for me, using these Métis models brought me “back home” to myself, my worldviews, and my motivation for embarking in this work. In other words, this helped me identify my axiology embedded in this Red River Métis methodology more clearly.

### **Youth Study Project Background**

This thesis is an extension of an ongoing research project entitled: *Participatory Risk Communication: Indigenous Youth-Generated Messages for Community Health Promotion* (Jardine, et al., 2016. CIHR PJT-148890). The broader project seeks to generate Indigenous youth perspectives on health for their community through cultural and arts-based methods. The project aims to develop sustainable participatory processes for youth involvement in health risk communication messaging specific to the Indigenous community using community-based participatory research (CBPR) as the overarching methodology. ACBPR methodology is increasingly used in Indigenous communities to dismantle power relationships between researchers and the community (Baydala et al., 2015). Mitigating the often-overbearing power imbalances offers respectful collaboration and relationship-building opportunities. Importantly,



CBPR builds on the community's strengths rather than emphasizing its deficits. This approach encourages collective resilience to counteract the often-negative implications of historical trauma narratives that can frame Indigenous health issues within a narrative of pathology, victimization, and disparity (Baydala et al., 2015, Christopher et al., 2008).

This broader project comprises three case studies: Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) youth, Northwest Territories (Jardine, Lines (a Dene woman and member of the YKDFN), YKDFN Community Wellness Program, K'alemi Dene School, Govt. of the Northwest Territories Dept. of Health & Social Services); Inuit youth of Nunatsiavut (Furgal, Boyd (a Dane-Zaa woman and member of the Métis Nation), Department of Health, and Social Development); and Red River Métis youth in rural Manitoba (Driedger (a Red River Métis woman and Citizen of the MMF), Chartrand (a Red River Métis woman and Minister for Health and Wellness MMF), Sanguins, Carter, Manitoba Métis Federation). All three research projects have similar goals but are specifically designed in partnership with each respective Indigenous Nation using specific and feasible activities pertaining to the geolocations of each study, the desires of the community, and participating youth. To date, two case studies have developed nation-specific Indigenous research methodologies.

### ***Seasonal Culture Camps with Red River Métis Youth***

The Manitoba Red River Métis youth project is led by Red River Métis Scholar Dr. Michelle Driedger of the University of Manitoba in partnership with the Manitoba Métis Federation's Health and Wellness Department. The MMF identified four-seasons "Culture Camps" to engage with youth, the community, and cultural activities as a preferred way of research engagement. The Manitoba Métis Federation coordinated participant recruitment and

the camp schedule, leaving room for research activities. Nine Culture Camps with the Red River Métis cohort existed between 2018 and 2022.

Camp locations have varied between MMF Northwest and Southwest regional lands in Manitoba. The benefit of conducting research in different seasons allowed for various land and water-based cultural activities for the youth to experience. The unique geolocations of Red River Métis communities naturally encouraged the need to visit different communities. The broader geographic reach means that there were instances when youth from various neighbouring communities would come together for the camps. The seasonal camps have included various research tools and methods to complement the cultural and historical priority of the camps. We made iterative modifications to the camps and activities following youth feedback from camp evaluation surveys. Further, in December 2019, we conducted a formal sharing circle with youth, MMF staff, and researchers to get youth perspectives on the camps. We made relevant modifications for subsequent camps based on those activities the youth wanted to see promoted more. These efforts served to engage youth better in the research process.

Below is a table presenting the locations of the camps, the season, the year, and the number of participants. There was a 9<sup>th</sup> camp that is not included in the table nor will it be included in this project due to privacy commitments for a camp held with Red River Métis youth in care. Several camps were held during the summer, rather than being more evenly split between seasons. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the planning and timing of the camps due to the health guidelines and restrictions in place. The number of participants in the far-right column of the table represents the total number of youth who participated throughout the week. There were a few instances where some youth had to leave partway through the week for personal or professional reasons. Other times, some youth missed the beginning of the Culture Camp and

joined later in the week. This means that while these youth were present for some activities during the week, they were not necessarily present for activities that are included in this project. The locations of the camps represent the general gathering place for the camps and do not represent the home communities of all youth participants. Also, some activities did not occur in the camp's primary location, such as medicine picking, which sometimes took place outside of town.

***Table 2 Cultre Camp Details by Location, Date, and Participation***

<b>Location</b>	<b>Season</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b># Participants</b>
Winnipegosis	Summer (August 20-25)	2018	12
Boissevain	Winter (January 17-20)	2019	9
Boissevain	Autumn (October 16-19)	2019	10
Swan River	Winter (January 30-February 2)	2020	12
Winnipegosis	Summer (August 10-13)	2020	12
Duck Bay	Summer (August 9-13)	2021	10
Winnipegosis	Summer (August 8-12)	2022	10
Duck Bay	Summer (August 15-19)	2022	15

*Note.* I was present for the Duck Bay 2021, Winnipegosis 2022, and Duck Bay 2022 camps.

### **Sources of Knowledge (Data Collection Methods)**

The Sources of Knowledge used for this project includes various culturally oriented and arts-based methods such as sharing circles and a photobook activity. Other Western-developed data-gathering tools, such as surveys, camp evaluations, and field notes, are also used. The

Sources of Knowledge are not limited to the activities described below. We acknowledge the Sources of Knowledge found within personal conversations or in passing moments of observation that are not captured in “written data”.

### ***Sharing Circles***

Sharing circles were a large part of the camps, allowing researchers to build relationships with youth and the community. These discussions often occurred during cultural, art, and land-based activities such as beading, fishing, and making Bannock. Discussions spanned a variety of topics, including youth-identified health priorities, community needs, and what it means to be Métis. These discussions were done informally, allowing youth to guide the conversations naturally. For example, topics on culture have often led to discussing the importance of the Red River Métis languages, Michif (Red River Métis language of Cree and French), and Saulteaux. These discussions involve youth engaging with Elders and community members to share knowledge, stories, and traditions. The discussions were sometimes captured as audio recordings or handwritten field notes by researchers. Field notes were often condensed to bullet point remarks from the conversation to be developed more narratively later. Audio recordings from a few discussions have been transcribed, and the field notes have been entered digitally. This information is saved to a secure digital folder that requires a special allowance to access the data.

The following is an example of a discussion group from the Duck Bay camp held in the summer of 2021. This conversation involved the youth brainstorming community priorities without budget constraints. This community visioning exercise was continued by youth being able to vote on the priorities they identified as most important. This activity was written up and summarized youths’ community desires and common themes, using transcription from audio recordings, field notes, and photos. This summary was shared with youth by email for feedback.

Once feedback was received, the written summary was sent to the MMF government and local leaders. The discussion, documentation, and summary could assist in steering the MMF government to fund community activities based on youths' expressed desires and needs.

Many conversations with youth regarding personal matters were often held during private moments. These conversations have not been recorded or written down to respect the privacy of youth. Although these conversations will not be explicitly written or shared directly, the meaning behind many of these stories has contributed to the reflexive practice of the analysis. I recognize it is a privilege to be a guest in the community and have built relationships with youth who feel safe sharing personal stories. It is not my intention to exploit or use these stories for my gain, but rather it connects me on a deeper level to some trials and triumphs that youth have personally experienced, which has given me important insights during the analysis.

### ***Arts-based Activities***

Many arts-based activities took place during the Culture Camps. Arts-based methods can be a variety of art forms that seek to engage participants and communities by evoking reflection and meaning-making in a highly personalized way (Ward & Shortt, 2020). An important benefit of using arts-based methods is that they can assist in expressing personal and community-lived experiences without recreating harm or exploiting participants (Unger, 2019). Personal stories and messaging through arts-based methods have the potential to influence and initiate social, economic, and political change (Hammond et al., 2018). Arts-based methods can be appropriate for research involving Indigenous Peoples as the emphasis is on partnerships, prioritizing Indigenous knowledge, and addressing community needs in a way that embraces Indigenous worldviews in research rather than driving a western research agenda (Hammond et al., 2018).

Arts-Based methods also foster creativity without constraints and are an active way to engage with youth in self-expression.

Throughout the Culture Camps, the youth collectively painted a mural at each camp that was inspired by questions such as “What does it mean to be Métis?”, “What is important to me as a Métis youth for my community?”, “How can I express my Métis culture?” and “What makes me happy and brings me joy in my Métis culture?”. In-depth and fruitful conversations often occurred during this activity as youth expressed their desire to contribute to the mural and why. These murals have been shown and admired at the MMF Annual General Assembly and then sent back to the community to be displayed on the wall at the local governance or youth Centre where these culture camps took place.

### ***Field Notes***

The University of Manitoba research team took field notes for each culture camp. Sometimes the notes were more descriptive about some of the group discussions or would contain a detailed account of each day. Field notes were transcribed to Microsoft Word documents after each Culture Camp. The field notes were helpful for me to get a better sense of the camps in which I did not participate. The notes also showed how camps were modified and how the activities differed by season throughout the project.

### ***Surveys***

The Culture Camps involved a few surveys distributed to youth to better understand their perceptions of health, their relationships with others, their relationships with themselves, and their relationships with their Métis identity and culture. I chose to focus on two surveys that were done at all Culture Camps. First, I chose the Youth Adult Resiliency Measure (YARM), a widely used survey developed to measure the self-assessment of social and ecological resiliency factors

(Resilience Research Centre, 2022). The second survey used in this project is the Youth Leadership Assessment, a self-assessment of leadership behaviour and life skills (Dormody et al., 1993; Seevers et al., 1995).

Researchers and MMF staff have modified the Youth Adult Resiliency Measure and the Youth Leadership Assessment as appropriate for Red River Métis youth in Manitoba (Appendix B and C). Making modifications to fit the unique Indigenous context in which these surveys were initially developed is a feature of these specific instruments that seek to recognize the importance of individual self-determination of different Indigenous Nations. The survey items use a Likert scale format. The Likert scale is a rating system that scales responses, going beyond a simple “yes” or “no” question (Qualtrics, 2022). This type of measurement is often used to evaluate the perception, attitudes, and sentiments toward a chosen topic (Qualtrics, 2022). The survey results do not yield a mean measure but can be analyzed based on the most frequent response (Qualtrics, 2022). I had chosen the YARM and Youth Leadership surveys for this thesis project as they document a youth’s self-perception of their resilience and leadership skills at one point in time.

A total of 84 Leadership surveys and 77 YARM surveys were completed by youth and used for this project. These differences in the number of completed surveys reflect how youth may come or go throughout the week, where they might not have an opportunity to complete all the surveys. Surveys were completed on paper or using iPads, depending on availability and youth preference. The total number of each survey includes repeat participants who participated in multiple Culture Camps. For example, one youth participated in six Culture Camps, while another two participated in three camps. A total of eight participants were involved in two camps.

### ***Photo Activity- Adapted Collective Consensual Data Analytic Procedure***

Throughout the Culture Camps, photos of youth engaging in different activities with Elders and community members have been taken. For my project, a photo book activity was initiated to obtain a collective youth perspective of how the cultural and arts-based activities throughout the camps can impact the life and well-being of youth and their communities. This photo activity was adapted from the Collective Consensual Data Analytic Procedure (CCDAP) developed by Dr. Judith Bartlett and modified using the Determinants of Life. CCDAP was designed as a research method that collects data by open-ended questions and real-time transcription and then follows a process for collective analysis (Bartlett et., al, 2007). The analysis can be done with study participants, researchers, and community members and uses random symbols on cards as categories where analysis participants would collectively assign quotes or single words that had been condensed to the symbols. This process would eventually lead to theme development and naming. The CCDAP method was created to break down the power imbalances that often exist with knowledge production and the analysis phase of research projects. It also was created to credit Indigenous knowledge and to prioritize data ownership, control, access, and stewardship (Bartlett et al., 2007).

The photo activity occurred at the Winnipegosis and Duck Bay Culture Camps in August 2022. The activity began by placing a card for each of the sixteen Determinants of Life in a circle. The Determinants of Life were used instead of symbols on cards that the CCDAP method would use. Instead of quotes or words from transcriptions, the youth were given printed photos from previous camps which showed a variety of cultural and on-the-land activities, communities, and community members. Some background to the activity or storytelling about the photo would be shared with youth when images were not immediately self-evident without context (e.g., an



Elder sharing stories with youth about Métis culture or Métis ways-of-doing while standing beside a museum display in one of the communities).

During the activity, the youth would discuss which Determinant of Life they thought the photo could represent and why. Often, the youth would associate the photo with multiple Determinants of Life, making connections between the activities in the photo and the well-being of Métis Peoples and communities. The youth could create or brainstorm other categories or ideas not represented in the photos, or the Determinant of Life that they felt were important. Sticky notes were also used to write down important words, phrases, and meanings from youth and placed with photos or Determinants of Life categories. The photobook activity was created as a broader analytic tool to assist in the reflexive process of the analysis and as a way to involve youth in an activity that would produce knowledge translation materials that will be shared back with the community and the Manitoba Métis Federation.

### ***Camp Evaluations***

Camp evaluations were initially held in a sharing circle environment where participants responded to questions and offered feedback in a group setting. The research team and MMF staff noticed an imbalance of youth participation in these sharing circles. As a result, we changed the format of these evaluations to an open-ended questionnaire on paper consisting of fourteen questions to ensure all youth had an equal chance to share (Appendix D). Therefore, the camp evaluation data is a mix of audio transcriptions from the earlier sharing circles and individual responses to the questionnaire.

### ***Camp Summary Reports***

The Camp Summary Reports were written up after each camp. These documents included information on the camps, where they occurred, and what activities were done. The Camp

Reports were created to be a brief overview of the camp and did not include any specific details on discussions or contain Red River Métis youth perspectives. The Camp Summaries from earlier camps I did not attend were a great way to situate and contextualize the camps' activities. Further, these Camp Summary Reports have contributed to the relational and accountability aspects of the ongoing Métis Youth Study. These reports were written to provide Red River Métis Citizens and participants at the Manitoba Métis Federation Annual General Assembly information about the camps and to share a little bit about the research study.

### **How We Learned (Adapted Reflexive Thematic Analysis)**

Bringing the knowledge together for this project was done using an adapted reflexive thematic analysis. A Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) strives to identify, analyze, and report patterns/ themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The reflexivity of this model expects and encourages a researcher's active role in analysis and decision-making (Braun & Clarke, 2014). This model is intended to be used as a tool rather than a constricting method that assists the researcher in generating themes rather than assuming themes will emerge in the data (Braun & Clarke & Hayfield, 2022). There is no code book or prevalence for determining a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Instead, it is an analysis deeply connected to the researcher's interpretation, which is explicitly shared (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

An adapted Reflexive Thematic Analysis was chosen for multiple reasons. First, the reflexive nature of this analysis does not require further Western tools and measures to validate the process or outcomes. Second, this approach works well with an Indigenous-centered project as it does not recreate, question, or deny Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (Heke, 2021). Third, a Reflexive Thematic Analysis allows for a strengths-based narrative to shine through as the researcher can intentionally position the analysis in a strengths-based way. A strengths-based

position does not deny or ignore areas for growth but seeks to shift the attention to strengths rather than deficits. This contributes to a larger strengths-based picture for social change that centres on Indigenous autonomy rather than the historical ways research placed stigma onto Indigenous Peoples and communities (Kana'iaupuni, 2004). The following table is an adapted and brief version of the 6 steps in a Reflexive Thematic Analysis from Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke published work in 2006.

***Table 3 Adapted Reflexive Thematic Analysis Steps***

Phase	Description
1	Getting familiar with the data
2	Generating initial codes
3	Search for themes
4	Review themes
5	Define and name themes
6	Produce the report

*Note.* Adapted from Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

I imported data from the camp evaluations, field notes, discussion transcriptions, and surveys into a qualitative analysis software tool called NVivo. When I imported the data, I could label and organize the datasets by location, year, and location. The NVivo software gave me the technological capability to add memos, annotations, and create diagrams in a centralized program that helped me stay organized during the analysis. I also used Microsoft Excel to assist

with the survey data analysis. I created basic bar charts and pie charts to help visualize patterns across the data which I will explain later.

### ***Details on How We Learned***

*The following refers to “I” many times. This is to share my (Josée) process in detail for bringing together knowledge in a centralized way. The high level of description within this section keeps me accountable to all my relations and to the knowledge itself.*

The first step of embarking on a Reflexive Thematic Analysis was to get familiar with the data, which involved reading over the field notes, camp evaluations, discussion transcriptions, surveys and reviewing through photos. After looking through a set of data, for example, a sharing circle transcript from one of the camps, I wrote down some notes to capture my first impressions. After reviewing each data set, I did this initial notetaking, repeating the process until I had read through all the data. In addition to these initial notes, I read through and wrote down extra information from the Culture Camp Summary Reports that helped me better understand how each camp unfolded.

The second step outlined in Braun and Clarke’s approach is to code the data systematically. I did this by developing annotations, writing memos, and colour coding/highlighting words or phrases for each data set before moving on to the third step. For example, I would write an annotation for a positive sentiment made by youth about themselves in a Camp Evaluation. An example of a youth’s positive response could be, “It feels good to share my feelings with others. You can learn from others when they share too”. I would add an annotation that would be no longer than a sentence like, “Introspective, identified lessons learned from others and oneself”. A memo on this statement by youth would contain more detailed thoughts on the main ideas of sharing feelings and building mutually meaningful relationships. I

specifically chose to make notes on positive sentiments from youth to reflect the strength-based intention of this project and to counteract the human nature tendency to engage in predominantly negative self-talk. The cumulative effect of focusing on youth-expressed sources of strengths lends to narrative reflection focusing on youth empowerment. Therefore, I set the project up to include an analysis with a clear strengths-based tone. I also wanted the analysis to make sense in relation to the Métis Youth Study, which uses a strengths-based approach.

After the second phase of going through the data and writing memos and annotations, I was able to generate initial themes for the third step, which I wrote down in my notebook. These themes were developed by working upward from the individual topics I wrote within the annotations and memos. To continue the annotation example from above, I would have captioned words such as “Introspection”, “Self-development”, and “Relationships” as topics and possible themes. My process entailed writing down (by hand) words such “Introspection” and “Self-development” for each memo or annotation across datasets on pages in my notebook. I managed to fill two pages with individual words that I captured in the annotations and memos. Sometimes there would be repeated or words with similar meanings, such as “Introspection” and “Self-reflection,” that came up in different parts of the data.

*It is interesting to reflect on my choice to do much of this work by hand in a journal.*

*While I was doing this step, the writing felt more natural, and I felt more connected to the data I was working with. NVivo could have certainly assisted in this step but my instinct was to write by hand.*

Within this same step in the analysis process, I used Microsoft Excel to generate charts for the two surveys. First, I made one bar chart that included all questions for each survey. This “first glance”/ “big picture” helped me visually identify areas of strengths and areas for growth

in both the YARM and Leadership surveys by simply looking at and comparing the different colours and sizes of the bars on the chart. The length of a bar on a chart would signify the relative support youth assigned to different items; a longer bar would reflect more youth feeling a certain way and a shorter bar would signal that fewer youth identified with the item that way. I also created stacked bar charts for each survey for areas of strengths, areas for possible growth, and areas of growth for both YARM and Leadership survey results. (A complete output of these different survey results are located in Appendix F and Appendix G.)

Identifying an area for growth is an example of how I use a strengths-based approach to reflect on areas where youth may feel they could benefit from more support instead of reflecting it as a weakness. Identifying areas where youth did not express the same amount of confidence helps identify areas of strength without dismissing other areas where participants felt less confident. I also sought to identify response areas that stood out, either expressing positive or negative sentiments of the surveys by looking at the highest and lowest number of responses for each question.

The possible answers for the Leadership survey are Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Sometimes, Agree, Strongly Agree, and I don't know. The YARM survey included the following possible answers, Not at All, A Little, Somewhat, Quite a Bit, A Lot, and I don't know. I cross-checked the nature or theme of the individual questions to see if any sentiments matched the themes emerging in other data sets. I chose to do this because it provided further support and links to themes I had already identified. This step also gave me some new ideas on potential themes or topics. For example, many youth participants wrote in the camp evaluations about wanting to share what they learned during the Culture Camp with family members. In the surveys, questions that included the word "family" were also identified as some of the more

robust/ more positive responses in both the Leadership and YARM surveys. Therefore, I created a simple bar chart for the family-specific questions to be easily visualized when presented in the Results chapter.

The fourth and fifth step of developing, redefining, and naming themes was done by identifying commonalities or repeating words that I had written on a separate page, including those from the surveys. I did this often until I could identify the main themes and their related topics. For the survey questions, I created single and thematic group bar charts and pie charts to provide visual examples for the identified themes to be presented in the results chapter. In addition, I often referred to the 16 Métis Determinants of Life to find any commonalities or differences. Throughout this process, I used my journal to reflect on the project and write down any thoughts that came to mind on the emerging concepts and decisions.

I also shared preliminary themes and findings with Dr. Driedger, who helped me engage in additional reflections and think through some decisions on how to proceed in presenting the findings. For example, we brainstormed on how to present the results and discussion together in conversation, which better reflects our Red River Métis Methodology. Dr. Driedger also helped me nail down the key message/theme that connected all the final themes and topics.

**Notes on Decision Making.** Camp Summary Reports documents were not treated the same as other sources of knowledge, such as the Camp Evaluations. I chose to do this because the Camp Summary Reports served more to contextualize what took place during the camps. Further, as a knowledge translation tool for Red River Métis Citizens, the content was kept relatively high-level and descriptive. For example, these reports did not include youth perceptions such as those captured in Camp Evaluations. Although I did not directly use these documents for the reflexive analysis of this project, the information in the documents is still

“data” that were helpful for me to see what was similar or different between camps, especially the earlier camps that I was not part of.

The photobook activity was a helpful visual tool that connected much of the camps' activities to the 16 Determinants of life during the analysis. I had initially anticipated that the analysis would follow some clear pattern from the 16 Determinants of Life for organizational purposes, like the photobook activity. However, as themes were being generated through reflections across the data, it felt restrictive and reductive to match these potential themes to a specific Determinant of Life. By contrast, because I organized the photobook activity around the 16 Determinants of Life, it was easier to connect those ideas in the analysis for that activity; yet here, too, it felt reductive.

For example, an image of youth fishing or fileting fish with a community member or Elder could be described as physical (i.e. the action itself), emotional (i.e. the joy in catching a fish or fileting a fish to provide nourishment), spiritual (i.e. connection to traditional ways of Métis survival on the land), community (i.e. how it is common to share food with others in the community who might be in need or can no longer undertake the task of gathering food themselves), culture (i.e. fishing is a vital part of the Métis culture), individual/family/social (i.e. activities one does alone and with others, how we learn from adults in our family or community), economic (i.e., acknowledging the ongoing history of commercial fishers in the Métis community or how Métis families live off the land to supplement their own food stocks) and so forth.

Consequently, I decided to use some photos from the photobook activity as visual representations for the themes generated from my analysis. I also compiled these images in a photo book as a knowledge translation product to give back to the youth and participating



communities as a gift of thanks. Giving back in this way symbolizes my relationality and accountability in the project and my commitment to fostering good relationships and reciprocity.

As previously mentioned, the survey data includes all surveys, including those from repeat participants. Although I did link unique survey codes to participants in attendance across the camps to identify those participants who attended two or more camps, I chose not to look into individual responses to the YARM and Leadership surveys over time. This decision has two main implications. First, the same youth participants are counted more than once, over time, if they participated in multiple camps. However, I felt it would result in an arbitrary decision to pick only one survey contribution. Second, while examining shifts in perceptions experienced by repeat participants and potentially yielding valuable insights, I decided to leave that for future research. The Culture Camps are ongoing even though my time with the project ends with completing this thesis. Consequently, I felt it best to leave that type of analysis for when the formal research project ends, as some of these same participants could be attending future camps.

### **Upholding Ethical Priorities**

Ethical approval for the MMF Culture Camp Youth Study Project was obtained and approved by the University of Manitoba Health Research Ethics Board #H2018:246. Ethical approval is renewed annually since the first version in 2018 (Appendix H). As a distinct Red River Métis project, the Manitoba Métis principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Stewardship (OCAS) were honoured. This Métis-specific protocol can be found in the University of Manitoba's Framework for research involving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples (University of Manitoba, 2022). The principles of OCAS go beyond simply giving back results and sharing with the Manitoba Métis Federation, participants, and community members. I see OCAS as a moral and unwritten approach to how a researcher/outsider engages with community

members, participants, and leadership understanding the responsibility of collaboration and respect necessary to do research in a good way.

The OCAS principals ensure that this project was done in an ethical and meaningful manner that is relevant to the Red River Métis Nation. This speaks to how the 6 R's are embedded within the relationality of our Red River Métis Methodology, introduced above. Relationality is a critical value to embody the 6 R's that establish trusting, two-sided, and meaningful relationships with participants, community members, and the data. The values of relationship and reciprocity are often directly unspoken and are done through small actions with intention. This can look like positively encouraging participants, listening, responding to personal stories, and sharing personal stories when appropriate. Another example is the photobook that will be shared back with the MMF and participants who contributed to the photobook activity. It is our responsibility to ensure that our writing of this thesis and the dissemination of its findings are done in a relational way that is relevant, respectful, and representative of the teachings of this work and our Red River Métis Methodology.

I completed the required modules of the Tri-Council Policy Statement, Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans certificate CORE 2022-TCPS 2. This widely used course provides ethical guidance and is highly recommended to complete before undertaking research that involves humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2022). I refer to Chapter nine of the TCPS 2 on research involving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.

Consent forms were distributed at the beginning of each Culture Camp (Appendix E). Participating youth and if necessary, their caregiver, provided consent, including consent for photos to be taken and used. There are photos used within this thesis and consent has been given for the photos. The photos within this thesis were specifically chosen as they do not directly

show youth faces. For camps during the COVID-19 pandemic, an extra consent form was provided and outlined the precautions the research team put in place to ensure the camps followed Public Health guidelines and rules. For youth who attended more than one camp, they completed a consent form each time to underscore that consent in research is an ongoing process and to remind youth of their rights throughout the research process.

## **Chapter 5: A Kitchen Table Talk on What We Learned (Results and Discussion)**

For generations, we Métis sit around the kitchen table to talk, share, sit in stillness, and listen. In this Kitchen Table Talk on What We Learned; we weave the teachings from what we have learned in this project with the Work That Has Come Before. We reflect on the relationality of this work, our relations who sat with us, talked with us, and guided us to this moment. In keeping with a relational approach to thesis writing, we have blended the “results” and the “discussion” chapters. We honour this work best by discussing while sharing what we learned, much like we would if we were sitting around a kitchen table, staying true to our Nation. Mattes & Farrell-Racette (2019) describe a Métis Kitchen Table Theory as the following:

Métis Kitchen Table Theory is the practice of learning through sharing around a kitchen table while eating, drinking, and making from an Indigenous (and specifically Métis) worldview. This practice is not expressly Métis – or even Indigenous – as many non-Indigenous communities gather in similar ways.

However, Métis Kitchen Table talks are focused in Métis methodologies, and work from Métis worldviews. (p.1)

*Here, have some tea. Let's sit together and we'll tell you a story.*

To begin this story, we share documents that supports the positive impacts Red River Métis youth experienced through participating in the Culture Camps for their health and well-being. The Reflexive Thematic Analysis assisted in identifying key factors and values that youth shared and experienced at various points during the Culture Camps that contributed to their sense of health and well-being. Although youth participants are on an individual path, there are many instances where youth identified the value of *relationality* within their lives and how participating in the camps contributes to their well-being. Relationality is lived and learned from

watching, listening, and practicing the values of the 6 Rs - Respect, Relationship, Relevance, Reciprocity, Representation and Responsibility with all creation. We intentionally positioned this project to embody relationality using a decolonizing Red River Métis Methodology.

*Within this work, we recognize the relational ways we exchange and share knowledge.*

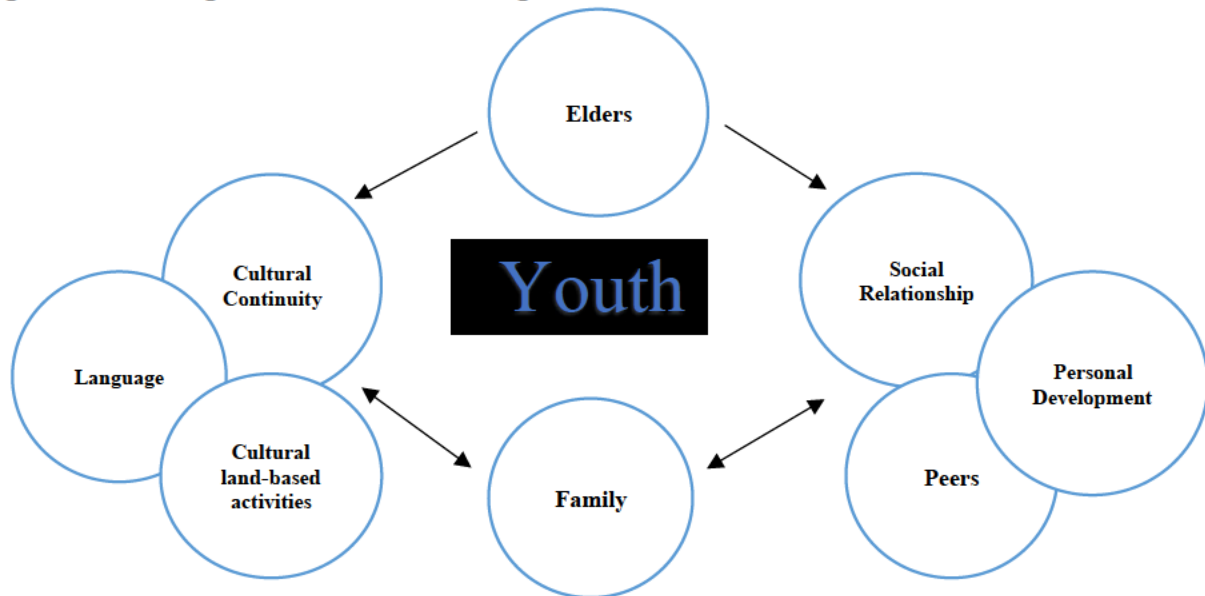
*For this reason, we decided to share the page with work that has previously been done.*

*This chapter brings together multiple ways of learning (mural paintings, sharing circles, surveys etc.) in conversation with existing literature we explored in Chapter 3. What is not included are the personal conversations between researcher and youth, researcher and Elder, researcher and researcher and so on, which were imperative to the evolving of themes and understanding of the deeper meanings of how relationality was lived and experienced during the Culture Camps. Through upholding the 6 R's, we trust and believe in dynamic forms of knowledge exchange that might not always be seen, written, or heard but are nonetheless experienced.*

Figure 3 visually depicts What We Learned by bringing together the main teachings (themes) from the MMF Culture Camps. *Elders* connect youth to *cultural continuity* by sharing wisdom and cultural teachings on *land-based activities* and teaching Métis *languages*. Youth also identified that relationships with Elders encourage youth *relationships with self, with others, and with family*. Elders assist youth in building *personal skills* by interacting in *social and cultural environments* such as the Culture Camps. Youth prioritize relationships with *family and kin* to support *cultural continuity* and to maintain strong and supportive family ties. Youth are placed in the middle of Figure 3, and this displays the interconnected nature of how Red River Métis youth engaged and prioritized the value of relationality for health and well-being during

the Culture Camps. Figure 3 visually acknowledges the holistic attitudes that youth attach to concepts of health and well-being.

*Figure 3 Learning From Each Other, Together*



*Note.* This figure represents the interconnected themes from the adapted Reflexive Thematic Analysis on the impacts of Red River Métis youth participating in Culture Camps. Own work.

The following sections of this Chapter expand on teachings(themes) from Figure 3 and include reflections from the reflexive analysis process and weave in Work That Has Come Before (literature review) into this Kitchen Table Talk. To showcase the teachings of this work, we use various data sources from the MMF youth Culture Camps such as: survey questions, camp evaluations, field notes, audio transcriptions of sharing circles, photos, and artwork to explore these teachings.

*In gratitude and respect for our Elders, we place them first.*

## **Elders**

Elders have historically played a significant part in Métis culture and community and remain highly respected individuals in Métis culture today. Throughout the Culture Camps, Elders shared wisdom, stories, cultural knowledge, and relationships with youth who credit these teachings for personal and community well-being. By design, the Culture Camps included Elders in most aspects of the camps, including cultural and arts-based activities, discussion groups, adapted Leadership survey questions, and Camp Evaluations. For this reason, there are many insights into youth attitudes toward Elders throughout the Culture Camps. We use a Leadership survey question, two camp evaluation questions, and an audio transcription from an Elder during a sharing circle to illustrate how youth and Elders respected and engaged with one another during the camps.

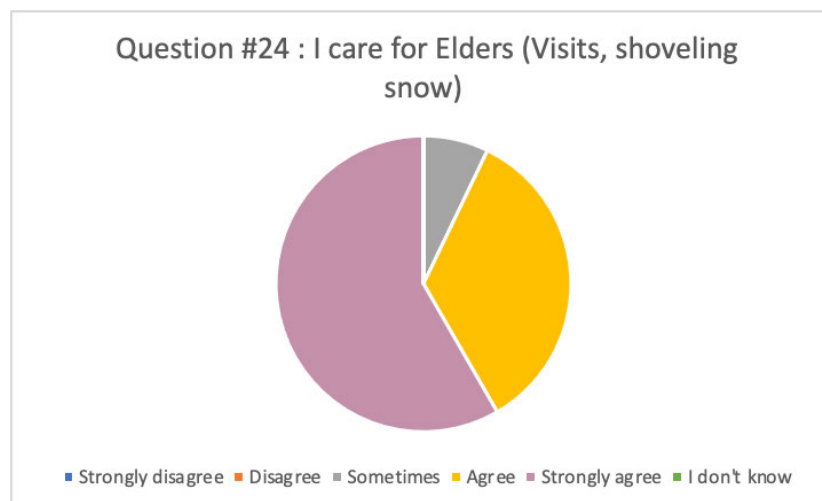
Some youth had relationships with participating Culture Camp Elders or Elders in their home community (i.e., were a member of their family or well-known to all in the community). In contrast, other youth had never met a particular Elder before coming to a specific Culture Camp. The culture camps provided an environment for youth to continue establishing relationships and build new ones with Elders. The involvement of Elders in the Culture Camps offered many opportunities for youth to express their attitudes and feelings towards the presence of Elders.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that Elders can be of any age. Elders are given that title because they share their knowledge and stories with others through their roles as teacher, healer, and respected guide. While many Elders were present at the camps, community members also shared their knowledge of traditional skills. Therefore, some youth might refer to a community member as an Elder within the data as the youth might not make the distinction between an Elder versus a community member. In future Culture Camps, conversations on how

Elders become Elders and the distinction between community members and knowledge holders would offer beneficial knowledge and history for youth to deepen their understanding of the role of Elders within the community.

Figure 4 presents one item from the Leadership survey about youth sentiments toward Elders. **Question 24** states: “I care for Elders (Visits, shovelling snow)”. Over 50% of youth selected the “Strongly Agree” option. This question scored the highest “Strongly Agree” response across the leadership survey. Further, no youth involved in the study selected any of the response options “Strongly disagree”, “Disagree”, and “I don’t Know” in this item. Question 24 captures not only youths’ positive perception towards Elders but also matches research observations from fieldnotes of youth interacting with Elders at the Culture Camps. For example, Elders were always warmly greeted and acknowledged by every youth, no matter what was happening during the camp.

**Figure 4 Question 24 from Leadership Survey**



*Note.* This figure represents a pie-chart of Red River Métis youth responses (n=84) to question 24 in the Youth/Adult Leadership Assessment Survey.



In other discussions, the youth would share repeated mentions of prior experiences and existing relationships with Elders in their community and how they give back by participating in MMF programs designed to help Elders. For example, some of the activities in the Elder Support program include tending to gardens, shovelling, and raking leaves. Participating in these volunteer activities made the youth feel like they were positively contributing to their community and felt a sense of belonging. The engagement from youth in giving back to Elders speaks to the active participation in reciprocity within relationships. Reciprocity refers to the give and take involved in mutually meaningful relationships. For example, reciprocity could look like, in a direct sense, learning how to fillet a fish from an Elder and then later delivering some filleted fish to the Elder who provided the filleting teachings. While this example is specific to Elders, there were many instances throughout the camps where community members and youth shared knowledge with other youth. Regardless of the nature of the relationship between individuals (Elders and youth; youth and youth etc.), youth learned how to give and receive gifts of knowledge and service by participating in Culture Camps. In personal conversation and discussion groups, youth expressed motivation for engaging in reciprocal actions within their relationship with Elders to learn new skills and to feel a sense of community. These motivational sentiments expressed by youth exemplify that relationality is learned and embodied through relationships, respect, and reciprocity with Elders.

Camp Evaluations included two questions that referred to Elders. The response from youth in sharing their experiences with Elders captured expressions of respect, learning, and listening. The following are some youth responses to the two Camp Evaluation questions regarding Elders. The first of these two questions, **Question 9** states: “You have engaged with a lot of different Elders as part of the camp. Has this been easy for you to do?”. Many youth

responded on how they appreciate listening and learning from Elder's stories and teachings.

Youth feel that they demonstrate respect towards Elders and that Elders reciprocate respect back to youth. One youth described how they were initially nervous when interacting with Elders but that it became easier over time.

- “Yes, it was, I have a lot of respect for my Elders, and I take time to listen and pay attention when talking to me and/or us.”
- “It was very easy, it was exciting.”
- “It was very interesting to hear their stories.”
- “Very, I’m very respectful of my Elders and always listen to what they gotta say.”
- “I honestly really enjoyed hearing the Elders talk, because they talked about their own home experiences, and that helps a lot, because we’re all human. They’re here because they respect us too. They share their stories which are not always easy to share.”
- “Very, I know the Elders, I respect them and pay attention when they speak or need anything.”
- “.. I was very nervous at first, but I opened up as the days went by.”
- “Yes, it has been easy for me to continue.”

The second question regarding Elders from the evaluations is **Question 10** which states: “What about back home in your community, are there many Elders that you could maybe talk to like you have done here at camp? Do you think that could also be helpful for other youth? What might you do to help make that happen?”. Youth responded with ideas on how to get other youth involved with Elders in their community such as having events at the local MMF Friendship Centre. Other youth described the importance of connecting to Elders because they can be a role model for how to give and receive respect in a relationship. One youth described how their involvement in community helps them maintain respectful relationships with Elders who are

more willing to share their knowledge because of the trusting relationships that they have built with each other.

- “I think it’s important that the Elders are involved with this because they have so much knowledge.”
- “Well, they’re all in my family. And if they’re not in my family and I know them then they’re very approachable, that’s one thing. I feel that I play a big role in the community, I sit on all the Boards so I meet a lot of different people, it makes it easier for me to talk to them and they respect me better, just because they know I give back, so I feel like, you give and you get, and I feel like if some other kids approach it who are not as involved or like a little more disrespectful, they wouldn’t be as approachable. But if you build a good relationship then the Elders here are very helpful and offer a lot of wisdom”.
- “Every cultural event should have an Elder present because some people do not know what it means to be respected or how to respect one another because of a lot of development blocks and abuse, to have an older person model respect to youth could inspire someone who is a youth to aspire to be a respected Elder one day.”
- “To my knowledge there is a few, I believe it would be really helpful and to make it happen maybe give the Friendship Centre some ideas.”
- “Yes, I engage with my Elders quite a bit at home, helping them and taking in their knowledge.”
- “I would set up a day when youth can talk to Elders.”
- “Maybe encourage other youth to talk to Métis Elders in the community.”

What makes the responses to these two questions interesting is the timing of when youth respond. As camp evaluation questions, youth can reflect on their experiences with Elders after having spent a week at Culture Camp interacting with Elders. The responses from youth demonstrate their positive experiences and attitudes toward Elders. Not only do the youth desire to continue their relationships with Elders, but they feel encouraged to share their experience with other youth who could benefit from having a relationship and learning from Elders. Youth

responses within the Camp Evaluation highlight the high levels of respect in relationships between Elder and Youth. The respectful relationship and interactions help build youth self-respect because they can see how others respect them.

Figure 5 shows an Elder picking sweetgrass from a Culture Camp held during the summertime. This Elder brought youth out on the land to teach youth how to identify sweet grass and how to pick sweetgrass in a respectful way so that it can continue to grow for generations to come. Youth were able to braid the sweetgrass and bring it home for themselves or their family.

***Figure 5 Elder Picking Sweetgrass***



*Note.* Photo of an Elder holding sweetgrass during one of the Culture Camps.

During one of the sharing circles, one participating Elder shared their perspective on engaging with youth during the Culture Camps and the vital role Elders play in Métis culture. This Elder also expressed their experience of feeling respected by the youth at the Culture Camps and the importance of continuing these intergenerational relationships for generations to come.

Very important. And I like to spend time with the youth and they're very respectful, volunteering. I'm so happy for them. They are the future, our youth. And it's important for them to know all the cultural stuff that we lived. And since I was young, I always went with my Mom to the Elders, wherever. I knew a lot of Elders. When I used to walk, I used to visit the Elders, help the Elders, and things like that, because I knew them. Even though there was 13 of us in the family, I always followed my Mom to all the places where she went. So that's how I got to respect the Elders and talk to them. They'd tell me stories, teachings. And like I said, my Dad, he had friends and they'd take turns telling us the stories, the legends. And it's good that, you heard it, and when in doubt, it feels really good. So, after you realize when you were young, if you had helped an Elder, and you give back, it's so rewarding. It's very, very, a big blessing. And I'm very proud of the youth here for respecting me that way, and I respect them all. And I thank you for inviting me. I feel fortunate enough to have told the things that I've shared. And all the helpers, the doctors, I'm very happy. Thank you.- Elder

### ***Intergenerational Relationality***

We weave What We Learned from the Culture Camps in relationship With Work That Has Come Before to explore the idea of *Intergenerational Relationality*. We have shared many examples that describe learning, sharing, respecting, and giving back between generations. The Elder-youth relationship stands out as a clear and vital relationship that benefits both Elder and Youth. Relational exchanges within this relationship provide opportunities to be vulnerable by sharing personal stories, being humble and learning from one another, respecting, giving back, and learning and appreciating the land. Elders connect youth to cultural knowledge and ways of the past for youth to carry forward.

Intergenerational relationality is not limited to Elder and youth but continues between youth and younger children too. Youth participants of the Métis Culture Camps expressed enthusiasm to share what they learned during the Camps with younger siblings and community members. Ferguson and colleagues (2021) describe a youth mentorship program where relationships between youth and younger children continued after the mentorship program was over. One youth recognized how they could positively guide younger generations and became more intentional in reaching out to other youth in their community more often (Ferguson et al., 2021).

Intergenerational relationality is also experienced with the land. Ahmed and colleagues (2022) document the experiences of youth participating in a traditional beaver harvesting program in *Omushkego* Fort Albany Cree Nation, in Northern Ontario. The youth experienced intergenerational relationality through the teachings from Elders on land stewardship and mindfully removing beaver dams that were causing water pollution and flooding in the community. In this example, the youth practiced relationality with Elders and the land. The land has supported us for generations, and we take care of it so it can support generations to come. Lessons of the land and being on the land have connected Indigenous Peoples to our cultures for generations. When we think of land, we do not see it only as an object. The land is a foundational partner supporting Intergenerational Relationality by providing space for experiences of relationality to unfold between all creation.

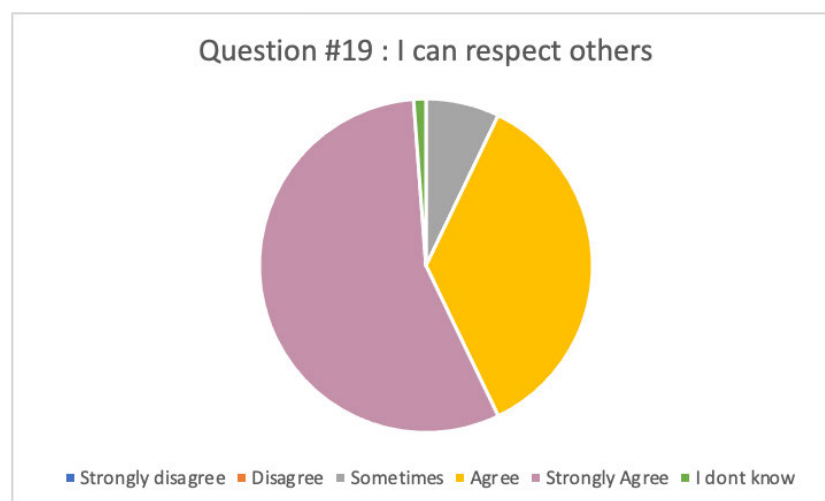
### **Social Relationships**

Building relationships and creating personal connections with others was expressed as highly important by Red River Métis youth who participated in the Culture Camps. The Culture Camps provided the environment for youth to make new friends, reconnect with peers, spend

quality time with Elders and other Métis community members, and build connections with MMF staff. Participants spoke of two priorities regarding social connections during the Culture Camps. First, the youth expressed the desire to make new friends and meet other youth in neighbouring communities or have a chance to see old friends and relatives from their community. Second, youth identified the personal benefits and life skills they develop in social settings such as the Culture Camps that contribute to their overall well-being and relationship to self.

A contributing factor in creating and maintaining positive relationships is the value of respect required from both sides engaged in the relationship. Figure 6 below shows **Question 19** of the Leadership survey: “I can respect others”. This question had one of the highest positive sentiment responses by participants. Of the 84 surveys, 77 youth chose “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. The strong self-perception of youth for being respectful towards others provides support that an ability to show respect for others can contribute to healthy relationships. Likewise, the sentiment of respecting others was strong when youth shared in camp evaluations on their interactions and experiences with Elders.

**Figure 6 Question 19 from Leadership Survey**



*Note.* This figure represents a pie-chart of Red River Métis youth responses (n=84) to question 19 in the Youth/Adult Leadership Assessment Survey.

## Personal Development and Self-Expression

Participating in the Culture Camps had some youth reflect on how the camp and its activities positively influenced personal skills such as communication and sharing their emotions with others. These self-reflections highlight how youth think about self-development and the importance of learning skills to help them in their future and well-being. We present two camp evaluation questions, two survey questions, one mural painting, and an excerpt from researcher field notes to illustrate how youth prioritize and reflect on the benefits of engaging in social relationships for personal development and self-expression.

The Camp Evaluations captured how youth benefitted from the social and relational aspects of the Culture Camps to build confidence and communication skills. For example, **Question 1** asks: “How important is it for you to be involved in a camp like this?”. Youth responded to the camp evaluation question with personal reflections on how participating in the Culture Camps can help youth growth their personal skills like communication and teamwork. Other youth reflect on the importance of learning about Red River Métis culture and reclaiming their cultural identity alongside other youth.

- “It builds strength and builds character, whether it be like communicating with other people, or learning new skills, having teamwork, exposing yourself to the elements.”
- “It’s important for me to be involved with cultural camps/events because it helps me learn how to work with people, and it helps me develop mentally and emotionally and also spiritually. I feel like I’ve been here before, and I’m finding my way back home with youth like me.”
- “Builds and strengthens your character, whether that be in communicating or learning new skills.”



- “I think it’s important because this whole experience lets the youth understand their culture in a way from the stuff they did. It lets the youth connect and build up their character.”
- “It is very important to join in events like these, you learn things from others and from yourself.”
- “Yes, because I learned some people-skills.”

Similarly, **Question 2** asks: “Do you think the skills that you are learning here will be things you can use after the camp is over?”. Youth share how they can benefit from being open and sharing about themselves with others during the Culture Camps. One youth describes the importance of accepting oneself and how they value learning and growing with others for their well-being.

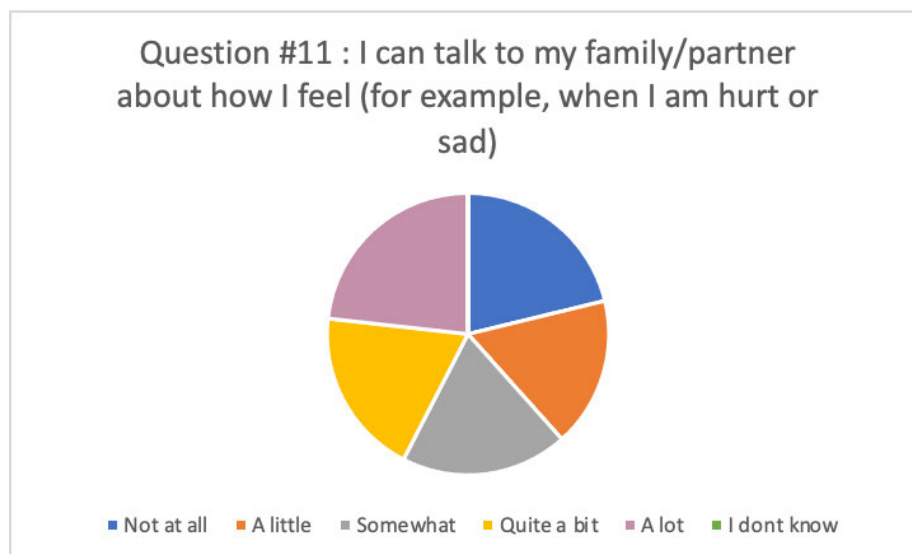
- “Yes, because it will help me not to be so shy when communicating with other people and being more open.”
- “Dealing with people and supporting each other because everyone is totally different, yet we are all on one walk home. Growing with people and learning about people, and accepting others and yourself will be something I will take from this experience.”
- “Don’t be afraid to tell a little about yourself.”
- “To have respect for others when communicating.”

Building and expanding communication skills require gathering and social interaction with others which participating youth recognize as a valuable life skill. The second response above, to Question 2, speaks to the relational experiences we have with one another during our life’s journey. This participant captured sentiments of empathy towards others and themselves in

this response. Sharing and being open to others invites deeper conversations and connections that several youth participants identified experiencing during the Culture Camps. The Culture Camps offered a safe space for youth to learn from and share their knowledge with others, which is part of a relational exchange within personal relationships.

The youth responses in the Camp Evaluations show that youth value personal growth but can equally identify skills they wish to build. For example, the following survey questions show that while some youth feel comfortable talking about their feelings to loved ones, many do not feel they can be vulnerable and share with others. Question 11 had the highest “Not at all” and the third highest “A little” responses across the YARM survey. **Question 11** in the YARM survey states: “I talk to my family/partner about how I feel (for example, when I am hurt or sad).

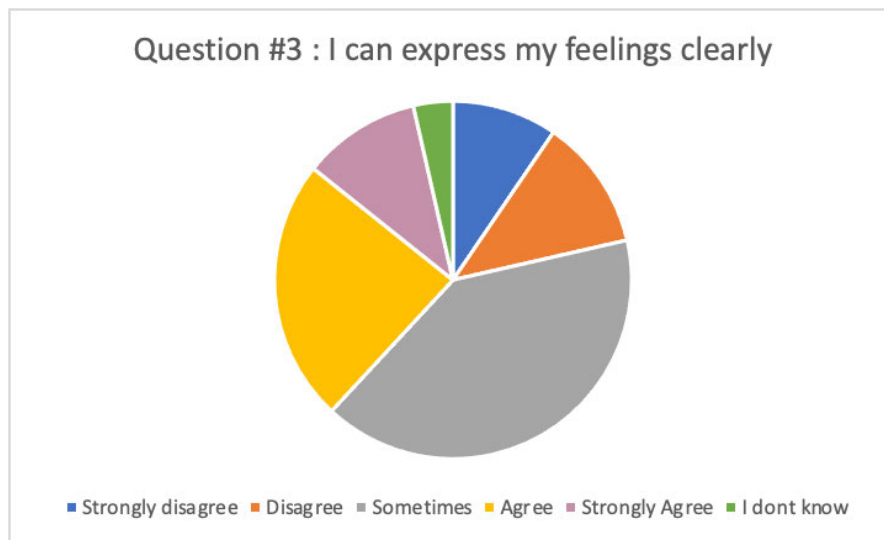
**Figure 7 Question 11 from YARM Survey**



*Note.* This figure represents a pie-chart of Red River Métis youth responses (n=77) to question 11 in the Youth/Adult Resilience Measure Survey.

Below, **Question 3** from the Leadership survey states: “I can express my feelings clearly”. Again, this response has mixed answers, with almost half of the participants choosing “Sometimes”.

**Figure 8 Question 3 from Leadership Survey**



*Note.* This figure represents a pie-chart of Red River Métis youth responses (n=84) to question 3 in the Youth/Adult Leadership Assessment Survey.

Question 11 in the YARM survey and Question 3 in the Leadership survey highlight that many youth participants do not feel they can share feelings and be open with others, even close family members. Several reasons for these sentiments could extend beyond what the surveys or sharing circles could capture.

*I reflect on personal conversations with youth who were experiencing difficulties at home with family members. Youth described feeling a sense of kinship and trust with friends and friends' family members. This is an example for how family systems can have different meanings to youth who lean on friends or community supports in time of need rather than biological family members.*

It is interesting to reflect on how the camps unfolded when looking at the Personal Development and Self-Reflection results and reflections. The camp surveys were often filled out on the first or second day, and the camp evaluations were completed on the last day. Interestingly, youth cited the desire and value of sharing more openly in the camp evaluations after a week together.

Youth participants always showed respect to peers, MMF staff, Elders, and researchers during the Culture Camps. However, the respect displayed does not necessarily mean that youth were comfortable sharing personal feelings and being vulnerable with others. It often took participants a few days to warm up to deeper conversations with peers and researchers. Mural paintings were a helpful way for youth to participate in the conversation without necessarily “saying” anything while still contributing their perspectives.

The mural shown below in Figure 9 was painted by youth participants while holding space for a discussion on what health, happiness, and pride meant to them and their community. The mural includes Métis symbols like the infinity symbol, MMF flag, and sash. In addition, flowers, a tree with a swing, a butterfly, and animal prints indicate strong values and connection towards nature. Music notes and a guitar were also painted and captured how youth feel connected to themselves and their skills, such as playing instruments. “We are spiritual beings, having a human experience” is part of a quote by French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin that youth identified for the title/caption of the mural. These words exhibit how youth collectively identify and reflect on life and the relationality between living beings and the spiritual world.

**Figure 9 Youth Mural(a)**



*Note.* Photo displaying a collective Red River Métis youth painting on a mural during one of the Culture Camps.

Painting murals allowed youth participants to express their feelings, hopes and wishes for health creatively and visually. In addition, arts-based activities gave insight into youth perceptions as they responded differently to specific activities. For example, while some youth found it easier to express themselves with words during discussion groups or in surveys, others were more comfortable expressing themselves through visual art.

The following field note entry shows researcher reflections on engaging youth during the Culture Camps and how mobile devices and social media can connect youth online but also contribute to feelings of disconnect from others in the community. Some youth shared that they desired more family time with less distractions like sharing a meal with their family without cellphones at the table. This field note also describes how it took additional effort to engage youth in painting the mural. Overall, once the youth were engaged, the mural activity was a good opportunity for youth to create and share without the distraction of cellphones.

Youth talked about stories and how difficult it is these days for people to come together to talk, share, and experience things in real life. So many people stay in their houses, play on devices, and interact in virtual ways, creating disconnections from each other. One

community member shared a story about how there had been a power outage in their community during the summer that lasted about 2-3 days. It was described as a positive experience because it forced people out of their houses, away from their devices, to connect and interact in real life. It was a great bonding experience that was short-lived. As part of this discussion, it came up that people would use their devices even at meal times. I piped up in a smaller group of youth and shared that “I am a ‘mean’ Mom because I refuse to allow devices at my dinner table. I want my kids to grow up knowing that we talk when sharing food and not have our faces buried in our devices”. One of the youth I was sharing this with said they thought that was a wonderful way to approach things and wished they could do that in their own family. Likewise, we observed throughout the camp that youth valued moments inside the Youth Centre because it had wifi, and they could connect to their ‘socials’ online and communicate with others. Elders also did this in a wifi environment, but they never had trouble putting their phones aside when it was time to talk, share or do an activity. Elders worked at modelling how to use devices responsibly, and Elders, research team members or MMF staff would remind the youth to put their phones away because it was time to do something else, and they always did without complaint. Youth also would talk about how it was sometimes challenging to connect with other youth, and it was nice they could do this during the camp. Part of the mural exercise was also to get youth to work at expressing themselves differently through painting. At times, it took some encouragement, cajoling, and gentle pushing to get them to lay down their ideas on the mural.

### ***Peer Relationships as Support***

In reflecting on our learnings from Red River Métis youth with Work That Has Come Before, Petrasek and colleagues (2015) explore youth experiences participating in land-based activities in five communities in Nunatsiavut. Inuk youth participants expressed how social relationships with family and peers create a strong sense of support they can turn to when facing difficult times (Petrasek et al., 2015). One participant in that study shared that strong family and kinship ties are important factors that keep one healthy (Petrasek et al., 2015). Social relationships not only provide support during a difficult time, but they provide a sense of belonging and community. In a separate photovoice activity in Nunavik, Indigenous youth participants identified how a sense of community belonging could impact their well-being (Pawlowski et al., 2022). Some youth participants who shared Inuit and First Nations heritage expressed difficulty in feeling connected to their First Nations community when they spent more time in the Inuit community and culture (Pawlowski et al., 2022). Youth desired to belong in both communities but found maintaining friendships and kinship connections challenging (Pawlowski et al., 2022).

These sentiments can also reflect the shared experiences of Red River Métis youth. For example, because of colonial laws and policies, Red River Métis youth may have First Nations relatives living in a nearby or adjacent reserve community. In another example, depending on the community in which they live, some Métis youth leave their community to attend school. The options available to them might be attending a school on a nearby but commutable reserve community (if the education system on reserve goes to a higher grade than in their community), attending a school in a nearby but commutable adjacent community, or being required to live as

a border at the school or billeted in someone's home to attend school many hours away from their home.

Red River Métis youth spoke of the challenges in making these decisions. For some, their experiences at the nearby First Nations reserve community did not provide a consistent education. For example, one youth said, "it's almost like they would pull someone in off the street and say, today you are going to be the math teacher." For others attending school at a commutable distance (using school buses), they described experiences of racism in the school, where First Nations or Métis kids would be punished more harshly for lesser infractions than White kids. Stories like this were also shared by different youth living in different communities attending different camps. Consequently, some chose to live away from their friends and family because they felt the educational opportunities were better for their development. However, this choice also left them feeling disconnected during the school year when they were away. While these participants can make new friends, they are still away from their community supports.

We reflect on our conversations with Métis youth who leave their community for school. While these youth felt a loss of support, they relied on their strengths and activities they enjoy (playing basketball and playing guitar) to stay motivated and "out of trouble". In speaking to personal motivation and leaning on personal strengths, one Métis youth created the painting below after a sharing circle on "what makes you happy and healthy?". This youth painted statements and quotes they admired and found inspiration. Statements such as "Strive for progress, not perfection" and "Only an open heart can catch a dream" convey this youth's evolved understanding of some of life's big lessons. The above phrases capture positive messaging on not being hard on oneself but being open to enjoying life's experiences. These



quotes are profound in their meaning because they show that this youth has faith in themselves and can turn to these words when faced with difficult times.

**Figure 10 Individual Youth Painting**



*Note.* Photo of an individual Red River Métis youth painting from one of the Culture Camps.

### **Cultural Continuity and Cultural Pride**

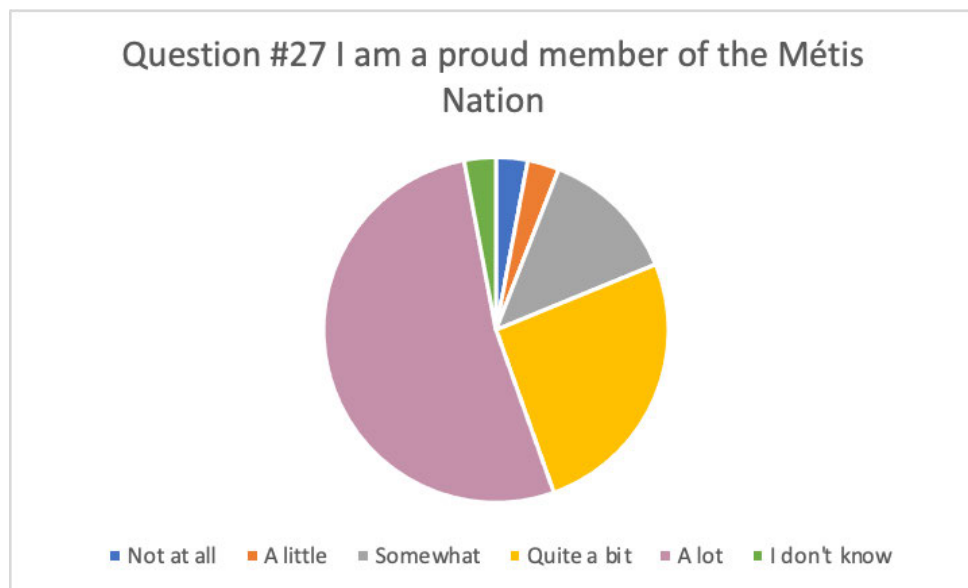
Learning, preserving, and sharing the Métis culture is a priority for Red River Métis youth. Youth identified that Elders help with cultural continuity by sharing knowledge on cultural activities and the Red River Métis languages of Michif and Saulteaux. In addition, Culture Camp participants identified the importance of continuing cultural practices and sharing them to preserve the rich Métis culture in their family and community.

## *Cultural Pride*

Red River Métis youth are proud to be Métis and appreciate participating in the Culture Camps, which contributed to their sense of cultural connection and pride. We present one survey question, one camp evaluation question and one word cloud to illustrate youth perspectives on cultural pride and participation in the Culture Camps.

Figure 16 shows **Question 27** from the YARM Survey: “I am a proud member of the Métis Nation”. Over half of the youth participants indicated “A Lot”. Some youth responded with “Not at all” and “a little” indicating growth areas. Because the surveys were often completed on the first couple of days of the Culture Camps, youth responses might change over the week after being immersed in Métis culture and history.

*Figure 11 Question 27 from YARM Survey*



*Note.* This figure represents a pie-chart of Red River Métis youth responses (n=77) to question 27 in the Youth/Adult Resilience Measure Survey.

Unlike the Survey questions, the Camp Evaluation captures youth sentiments at the end of the week. Red River Métis youth had many positive reflections and insights to share on their experiences in **Question 1** of the Camp Evaluation, which states: “How important is it to you to be involved in a camp like this?” Many youth identified the relational aspects of self, others, and the land that are important from participating and learning about their culture. This question highlights youth perspectives on involvement in the Culture Camps, capturing a strong desire to continue learning and practicing their Métis culture.

- “Coming into this camp I did not know much of what it was about, but after being here I am glad to be involved and find it important to learn more about my culture.”
- “It’s pretty important, it helps keep the Métis culture alive by participating.”
- “It is very important to join on events like these, you learn things from others and from yourself.”
- “I think it’s important because you learn more about yourself and your culture.”
- “Very important because we get to learn about our culture, and we get to socialize with other people.”
- “Very, for my culture and the stuff I learn can teach some others.”
- “Pretty important, it’s important for the fact that Métis youth know their heritage, language, music.”
- “It’s important for me to be involved in a camp like this because it involves my culture and my community.”
- “Very important because I want to be more involved in helping the Métis community and helping the Earth.”

- “I always wanted to learn more about the Métis culture.”
- “I think it’s important to learn about our history and where we come from, and where we will be in the future.”
- “It was very important for me to learn my Métis culture because I hardly ever do anything with my culture; to carry the tradition to the younger youth.”
- “So that we can teach our children and other children how it was done by our Elders, and to help them understand who they are.”

Figure 17 presents a word cloud created using NVivo software to visually capture the strengths-based words within the participant responses for Question 1 in the camp evaluation on youth experiences in Culture Camps. The size of the words depicted in the word cloud indicates their frequency in use. The importance of culture and learning that culture is strongly evident in youth responses.

**Figure 12 Word Cloud**



*Note.* Word cloud created of Red River Métis youth responses to question 1 of the Camp Evaluation

Weaving in Work That Has Come Before, participating in cultural activities helped youth connect to their cultural identities and cultural pride (Ahmed et al., 2022; Good et al., 2020; Hatala et al., 2019;2020, Njeze et al., 2020; Petruka et al., 2016; Victor et al., 2021). Njeze and Colleagues (2020) share how youth suggested that cultural identity and pride are associated with openly showing affiliation with their Indigenous community. For example, one youth spoke of her strong cultural connection when participating in traditional song and dance. This youth felt safe, supported, and connected to her cultural identity when wearing her jingle dress during powwows. The more this youth felt connected in the powwow environment, the more she felt comfortable showing her culture in other areas of her life.

Similarly, Ahmed and Colleagues (2022) discuss how youth reported increased cultural connection and pride after learning from Elders and participating in traditional Beaver Harvesting. Actively learning and engaging with others in cultural practices gave youth a sense of cultural belonging. With the strong foundation of cultural connection and identity made through the beaver harvesting activity, many youth chose to continue to learn and participate in cultural activities on the land, solidifying and growing their cultural identity.

Victor and Colleagues (2021) describe an adapted photovoice storytelling project with youth in a Neehithuw community in Saskatchewan capturing youth perspectives of cultural connection and belonging. Youth shared photos of *kituskeenew* (our land) and explored how their relationship with the land is associated with how culture is lived (Victor et al., 2021). Through photos, youth illustrated how *kituskeenew* is embodied by locating oneself within physical and social environments (Victor et al., 2021). Cultural continuity and knowledge inform selfhood, which can orient youth toward feeling self-worth, social belonging, and purpose in life as they journey into adulthood (Wexler, 2014, as cited in Victor et al., 2021)

*In reflecting on Work That Has Come Before and my experiences with youth at the MMF Culture Camps, I reflect on my experiences and journey of cultural connection and identity. I can relate in many ways to youth identifying their connection to culture, as I feel most connected when surrounded by community members, sharing, and being on the land. I spent most of my teenage years hiding my identity to fit in and avoid (somewhat) discriminatory comments from peers. It was not until I embraced my culture, with the encouragement of my brother, that my identity felt whole and made sense to me. I realize that I am lucky to have my family and a strong Métis community that continues to seek opportunities to share and celebrate Métis culture.*

### **Cultural Activities**

Many Culture Camp activities took place outdoors, no matter the season. The youth who participated in the camps appreciated this time on the land, learning from the Elders different traditional skills and taking a break from modern technology like social media. We present audio transcriptions from a sharing circle, and one camp evaluation question that provide insights into youth experiences and perceptions on cultural activities.

The following quotes are some youth perspectives that were captured during a sharing circle discussion about learning land-based traditional skills like ice fishing. During this sharing circle discussion, youth describe how they feel it is important to get out on the land like the generations before them did. One youth reflected on a conversation with her mother on how people used to go outside no matter the weather. The mother explained how many people relied going out on the land for food and selling their catch (from ice fishing) to provide economic means for their family.

- “...Like me, second time ice fishing. Caught nothing, besides losing my minnows. But it just gives you an insight of how back in the day, like, what did I say to my mom? ‘Mom, it’s going to be -50, there’s a warning.’ And she said ‘Oh yeah, like you think back in the day they would listen to the radio in the morning and say, like ‘OK, it’s too cold, we’re not going to go get the nets today.’? No, they wouldn’t because then they would not be getting any money or food from the catch.’ And I responded with, ‘Okay, you got a point, but I live in the day where I work Monday to Friday, and we don’t go outside after -25 with the kids.’ And she laughed and said ‘nope, you’re going to learn like it’s back in the day...’ And it puts you in that perspective where, yeah, they had to go out, they had to layer their bodies up and go on that lake regardless of how cold it was outside.” (This quote is from a conversation between a youth participant and her Mom about not wanting to go ice fishing due to the cold weather during the Culture Camp)
- “I think it’s really important because it brings us back to the land, I guess, and those ways we lost with all the technological advances and whatnot...”
- “It was fun, and you learn how to do things like our Elders did before. That is why it is important to be involved.”

While most Culture Camp participants identified enjoying this time on the land, the Camp Evaluations captured the strong desire expressed by youth to continue learning land-based skills. For example, **Question 13** asks: “Please tell us something you wish you would have learned about during the camps?”. Youth responses focused many of their responses on traditional skills like medicine picking, trapping, and everything involved in harvesting as illustrated by the following:

- “A lot more traditional stuff. Like cooking, trapping, and setting them.”
- “How to skin animals.”
- “How to stretch a beaver.”
- “About life in the bush.”

- “Gathering and learning about herbs and traditional medicine.”
- “Where to go if we wanted to pick medicines, more about medicines.”
- “Wildlife identification classification.”

Figure 11 is a photo of youth and a community member with freshly caught fish during one of the winter Culture Camps. Youth learned how to catch, fillet, and cook the fish that they caught. Many youth were excited to continue fishing because it contributed to a sense of independence when performing land based-skills.

***Figure 13 Youth and Community Member Fishing***



*Note.* Photo of Red River Métis youth and community member holding freshly caught fish at one of the Culture Camps.

### ***Cultural Activities that Nourish Us***

Work That Has Come Before speaks to many lessons learned about health, cultural activities, and the land. Like Red River Métis youth, Yellowknives Dene First Nations (YKDFN) youth felt enthusiastic about spending time on the land, learning from Elders/knowledge holders,



and practicing fun outdoor activities such as preparing fish (Lines & Jardine, 2019). Yellowknives Dene First Nations youth associated considerable pride in their culture and connection to health in survey questions on participating in cultural activities, eating and preparing traditional food, and land-based cultural activities (Lines & Jardine, 2019). Through arts-based methods such as mural paintings and discussions, YKDFN youth frequently associated links between the land and health, leading to the identifying connection to the land as a determinant of health (Lines & Jardine, 2019). Much like Red River Métis youth's desire for opportunities to be on and learn from the land, YKDFN youth envisioned future health research initiatives taking place on the land for health, developing personal skills, and continuing cultural practices (Lines & Jardine, 2019).

Similarly, Hatala and colleagues (2019, 2020) explore youth experiences with the land and connecting to their culture within an urban city context. Using photovoice activities, Indigenous youth participants (First Nations and Métis) identified nature as a source of resilience and a place of safety to turn to when facing difficult times (Hatala et al., 2019, 2020). Within this reflection, we acknowledge examples from various Indigenous communities and contexts that similarly capture how cultural activities involving the land can nourish us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, contributing to youth health and well-being.

Red River Métis youth were enthusiastic about participating in traditional cooking and baking with Elders in indoor and outdoor settings at the MMF Culture Camps. Participants identified the desire to learn more cooking skills to help them become more independent. They also wanted to share their cooking and baking with others in their family and community. The desire to gain independence and share through cooking and baking indicates motivational factors

that encourage youth to learn from Elders. In addition, youth think about what they might offer within a relationship by sharing their cooking accomplishments with loved ones.

We share two camp evaluation questions where youth shared about their new cooking skills that they learned from the Culture Camps. **Question 2** from the camp evaluation asks: “Do you think the skills that you are learning here will be things you can use after the camp is over?” Youth share about how they learned new cooking skills and techniques like cooking Bannock on the fire rather than in the oven.

- “Yes, bake for my mom; be able to fish if need be.”
- “Oh yeah, now I can take my pie making skills to the test.”
- “Yes, because it’s good to know these things and it could be passed on to future generations.”
- “The skills learned on these camps can be used for daily living and outdoors.”
- “I would like to continue fishing because it is fun, and I would like to continue baking because I know how to now.”
- “Bannock. Definitely making the Bannock over the fire. I’ve cooked fish over a fire before but never actually cooked Bannock over a fire. But I can definitely go do it now. I’ve cooked fish outside, but I’ve never actually... Bannock I usually just chuck it in the oven while I cook the fish..”

Figure 12 shows youth making fruit pies during a Culture Camp. Many youth had never baked pie before the camp and were excited to share their pie and new skills with family members.

**Figure 14 Youth Making Pie**



*Note.* Photo of Red River Métis youth making fruit pies at one of the Culture Camps.

Baking pies for family members was not the only skill the youth learned and wanted to share with others back home. Youth expressed the desire to continue land-based skills like hunting and fishing, taking care of the land and making traditional foods. In the Camp Evaluation, **Question 7** asks: “What do you think you would continue to do from camp back when you are at home in your community?”

- “There’s not a lot I can do in the community, but I’ll continue to hunt and trap.”
- “Help save the planet.”
- “Trapping and knowing about animals for hunting.”
- “I think I’ll do more ice fishing and try make Bannock on my own.

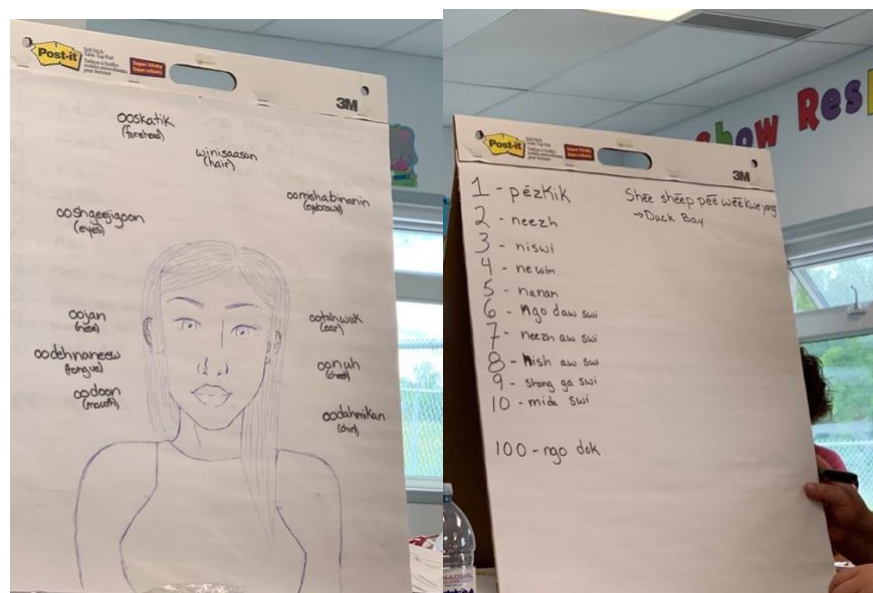
## **Language**

Red River Métis youth recognize the importance of continuing Métis ways of being and knowing, and they identified language as an essential skill/knowledge for cultural continuity.

The Elders participating in the Culture Camps often spoke Southern Michif or Saulteaux and could share stories and teach the language to the youth. We share reflections from field notes and youth responses across camp evaluation questions on learning Métis languages.

Field notes from this Culture Camp describe how an Elder had joined the camp to share traditional stories in Saulteaux. The youth were engaged in the stories and enthusiastic about learning more about the language because Saulteaux was the dominant Métis language spoken in that community. Youth participants asked the Elder to share foundational words they wrote down in their notebooks, pictured below in Figure 13. Some youth were familiar with speaking Saulteaux and could make jokes in the language, contributing to a rich discussion on language.

**Figure 15 Michif Words**



*Note.* Photo of youths drawing when learning Saulteaux from an Elder during one of the Culture Camps.

The following quotes, captured across the different Camp Evaluations, are based on several questions where youth spoke about their appreciation and desire to continue learning and sharing Métis languages.

- “I will try and get people to learn Michif”.
- “The language and history is slowly dying out, we need to preserve and nurture our knowledge of our past, present, and future, as well as our culture.”
- “It’s important to know because it’s going away like the way we used to talk.”
- “I’ll try and continue my learning of our languages.”
- “I enjoyed the language, stories, and the food.”
- “I learned a lot more about medicine and our language.”
- “I learned how to say some words in my language.”
- “Cool Michif.”

## **Family and Kinship**

Youth identified their relationships with family at multiple points during the camps. Some youth participants were related to one another at the camps and shared experiences learning cultural activities and knowledge from Elders. We provide two camp evaluation questions, one mural, and three survey questions where youth spoke of family.

Youth responses from **Question 2** and **Question 3** of the camp evaluation on how youth might want to share the skills/knowledge they learned during the Culture Camp and who might benefit from participating in these camps. Many of the youth identified the vital role of the family in sharing and continuing the Red River Métis culture and chose to identify family members who might benefit from participating in the Culture Camps.

- “Yes, I will teach it to my younger siblings and tell it to my daughter when she’s old enough to understand a lot more.”
- “So that we can teach our children and other children how it was done by our Elders, and to help them understand who they are.”
- “My nephew.”
- “My cousins/ brother.”
- “Yes, I would, I would tell my dad.”
- “I will show my younger siblings some of the baking and show them how to tie a different style fishing knot.”
- “Yes, like my father back at home.”
- “Teach younger kids them (nieces and nephews).”
- “Just yesterday I was telling my brother what we were doing, and he said he would like to go do something like that. He’s younger and he never went fishing on a boat or been to a camp and stayed there that long, for a week.”

During a mural painting activity and discussion on what makes youth feel happy and healthy in their community, youth contributed the word “Family” to express that family relationships can be a source of health and well-being.

**Figure 16 Youth Mural(b)**

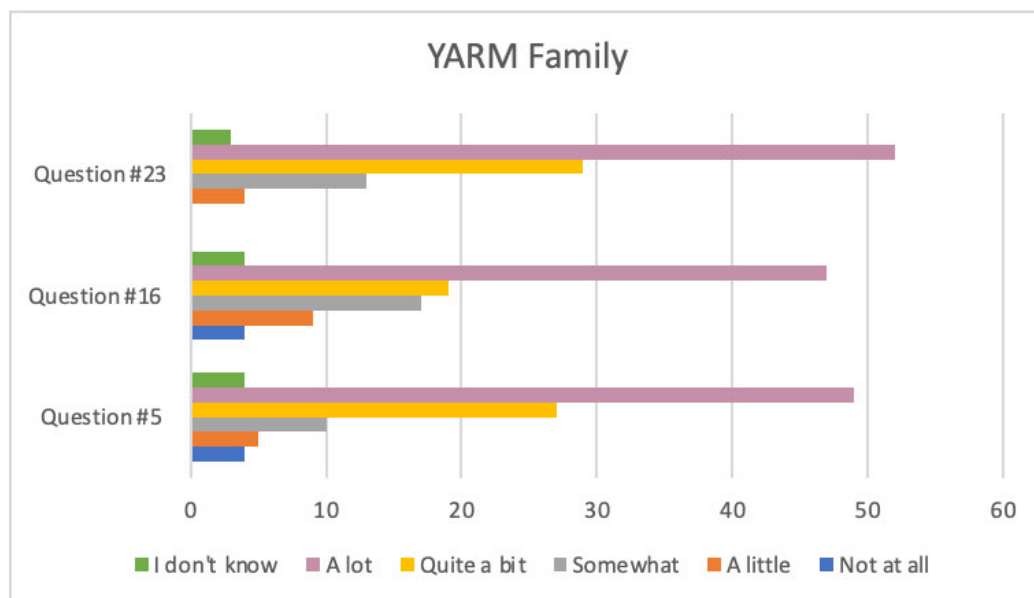


*Note.* Photo of mural painted by Red River Métis youth at one of the Culture Camps.

The YARM survey contained questions that touched on family and well-being, where many youth indicated strong family bonds. Figure 15 includes three questions within the YARM Survey that include family. The questions are:

- **Question 23** “I feel safe when I am with my family.”
- **Question 16** “I think my family cares about me when times are hard (for example, if I am sick or have done something wrong).”
- **Question 5** “My family have usually supported me through life”.

**Figure 17 Questions about Family from YARM Survey**



*Note.* Figure contains Red River Métis youth responses (n=77) to questions on family within the Youth/Adult Resilience Measure Survey.

In response to these different questions, most youth chose positive choices such as “A lot”, “Quite a bit”, and “Somewhat” for these questions that relate to family, indicating that most youth participants feel safe, supported, and cared for by their family. These healthy connections with family members could be why many youth desire to share Culture Camp teachings with family members.

Weaving in Work That Has Come Before, Njeze and colleagues (2020) discuss how family and cultural identity are tied to youth resilience. Six youth case study participants felt strongly about the impacts of sharing freely about their culture through participating in cultural activities like dance and dressing in traditional clothing (Njeze et al., 2022). In addition, youth felt that outwardly showing pride in their culture helped them feel and reclaim a sense of connection to their cultural identity (Njeze et al., 2020). For example, one youth in this study shared how a family member helped him realize his strengths when he was facing a hard time. The encouragement from this family member helped this youth get in touch with his Cree culture, eventually leading to behavioural changes such as sobriety and making positive goals for himself, like getting his driver's license (Njeze et al., 2020).

*We pause to reflect on family systems and how they can sometimes be difficult to navigate. While the examples we provide include positive sentiments toward family and positive experiences with culture and family for well-being, we are also mindful that this is not everyone's reality. Earlier when we reflected on Personal Development and Self-Expression, we discussed Métis youth stories on connection to friends and community members as sources of strength and support over biological family. We wish to honour all varieties of kinship ties that youth experience. Perhaps the benefit youth are expressing is more about sharing in cultural activities with those you love and care for, rather than "biological family".*

### **Summary of the Culture Camps**

In documenting our journey about What We Learned from the Culture Camps we explore the role of Elders in teaching and sharing their wisdom to help connect youth to their culture as a dominant theme. The youth value these opportunities and benefit by creating social relationships,



helping them practice personal skills such as sharing their emotions with others. In addition, the youth demonstrate how they practice relationality with the land when they learn, give and receive its gifts. Relationality is also practiced through Michif and Saulteaux language lessons and conversations. The MMF Culture Camps provided space for Red River Métis youth to learn, share, experience, and practice their culture, build meaningful connections, and embody relationality in the everyday.

### ***Photobook***

In closing this chapter, focusing on relationality in all its forms, we showcase one page from the photobook created in homage to the sixteen Determinants of Life. This photobook was inspired by the Culture Camps and was developed with Métis youth who participated in the photobook activities during the Summer of 2022 Culture Camps. The remainder of the photobook will be presented to the communities and participants involved in the Culture Camps. The photobook will also be gifted to the Manitoba Métis Federation in the spirit of self-determination and repatriation of Métis data to manage further distribution of the book and its contents.

### ***Figure 18 Photobook Page***



Learning how we  
benefit (*physical*) and  
respect (*spiritual*)  
from the land is  
important for our

Note. Photo of Bison from Culture Camps with caption to be used in a photobook.

*We reflect on the process of putting together the photobook and the interconnected nature of the Métis Life Promotion Frameworks determinants of life. Youth identified the physical, spiritual, and cultural determinants associated with this photo, while the teachings that were given at the time this photo was taken acknowledge additional Determinants of Life. This photo of a bison was taken at a Culture Camp where youth visited a museum where they learned the laws of the buffalo hunt and how those same democratic principles are tied to the nature of the MMF self-government. While this photo is used in relation to the bison and the land, it also represents the political and Nation determinants of health as well.*

In this Chapter, we have brought together many sources of data, personal reflections, and work that has come before to present teachings from the adapted reflexive analysis in a relational way. We believe that our approach in writing from a Kitchen Table Talk perspective not only incorporates Métis ways of knowledge sharing but combining the “Results” and the “Discussion” chapters best honors the teachings by sharing them together in a holistic and relational way.

## **Chapter 6: Final Thoughts (Conclusion)**

What an honour this journey has been to receive numerous teachings throughout this work. We share this work and its teachings as a gift to the ongoing Métis story. We aimed to challenge the dominant Western norms of a thesis by writing in a relational way that tells a story rather than trying to claim or discover knowledge. We acknowledge the dichotomy of trying to challenge the academic status quo of a thesis while adhering to academic standards of organization and formatting. We give ourselves grace knowing this work is a “beginning”, a starting point. This work is not simple. We navigate tensions in murky waters by pleasing academic standards while balancing to uphold our relational values and commitments to our community. We work through the pushing and pulling between worlds and choose to occupy space in both, with no apologies and no need to justify the space we take. Tynan (2021) describes ways that she has navigated the academy to incorporate relationality within her work:

Relationality is not easy, especially when living in a settler-colony. It means sometimes we are out of practice or taught by the university to research in non-relational and extractive ways, using strict time frames, restrictive academic writing styles, hierarchical notions of expertise and colonial discourses of ‘discovery’, ‘finding the gap’ and ‘collecting data’. (p. 599)

Within this final chapter we share the teachings we learned from Objective 1 and Objective 2. We provide some thoughtful considerations for how this work is bound in terms of its own strengths and opportunities for growth. Finally, we pause to reflect on the relationality within the MMF Culture Camps and share our hopes for this work, including how we will share this knowledge.

## **Teachings from Objective 1**

Objective 1 required us to identify what lessons could be learned from published research projects that engaged Indigenous youth in cultural activities for health and well-being in Canada. That process identified 24 articles documenting positive connections between youth and cultural activities for health and well-being. We identified and explored several themes across these studies: the relationship to the land, taking care of the land, and how the land can connect Indigenous youth to their culture in an urban landscape. We also explored how social relationships naturally encourage youth to practice personal skills like communication and how relationships with Elders and younger children can connect youth to their culture and feel a sense of belonging. We valued the strengths of these teachings from this collective body of work while at the same time identifying a need for engaging the voices of Métis youth, which was largely silent in this earlier published research. It was equally helpful to reflect on the experiences of other youth in these earlier published studies were similar or different from the experiences of our Red River Métis youth documented in this thesis.

We share our reflections on the silences across these bodies of work, such as the need for more distinctions-based work, especially as all studies involving Métis youth were within a pan-Indigenous focus. We discuss how this might not be possible or always appropriate, but the conversation of distinctions-based work should continue even within pan-Indigenous research. We reflected on how a longer duration of studies might provide valuable insights into how youth are impacted by participating in cultural activities over time. We understand that the nature of publishing articles might delay the sharing of research projects, as we are aware of other researchers who have had long-term community engagement with youth. We continue the conversation on the need for more Indigenous researchers to lead this work. We acknowledge

and appreciate the work of allied researchers, but Indigenous researchers continue to be underrepresented, even within research Involving Indigenous Peoples.

We used the teachings from Objective 1 to help us reflect on our work and our responsibilities for transparency in our process and how we plan to continue engaging and sharing this work. Reflecting on the silences within Work That Has Come Before helps us realize the strengths of our work and the MMF Youth Study Culture Camps. We are proud of the distinctions-based work using a Red River Métis Methodology, which we realize is novel within this area of research.

### **Teachings from Objective 2**

To address Objective 2, we explored the impacts of Red River Métis youth participating in cultural activities for health and well-being. The most substantive teaching we learned was how practicing and experiencing relationality when engaging in cultural activities during the MMF Culture Camps benefitted youth. To visualize our analysis, we presented a thematic map (Figure 3) of the connection between youth, Elders, social relationships with others, and the importance of cultural continuity came through. Elders were identified as mentors that modelled and facilitated relationality by sharing cultural knowledge. Elders shared this knowledge through stories and teachings about relationality, its value, and how to practice relationality within relationships. Social relationships with peers, Elders, and with family assist youth in identifying their strengths and life skills that they value and wish to build on, such as sharing personal feelings. Elders play a crucial role in cultural continuity when teaching youth about Métis knowledge and stories. Youth highlighted that Métis languages and land-based activities were essential to their culture, which they will continue sharing with family.

Youth shared how the Culture Camps are important to them and how they hope to continue immersing themselves in Métis culture. Many youth were new to the Métis activities and history that was explored during the camps. Youth wanted to bring family and friends to future Culture Camps because they wanted to share the benefits of connecting to their culture and the personal benefits of connecting with Elders and peers while exploring Métis culture.

We reflected on the benefit of using multiple methods to capture youth voices, such as using arts-based mural paintings to engage with youth who might not have shared as much during sharing circles. Providing details on how youth have engaged in the methods might give helpful insights or inspiration for other researchers in this field. We believe that sharing youth perspectives using various strategies (surveys, sharing circles etc.) shows a holistic picture of youth voices.

### **Thoughtful Considerations that bind this work (Limitations)**

It is important to revisit some of our earlier reflections in *Work That Has Come Before* (literature review). When we first read *Decolonizing the Literature Review: A Relational Approach* by Indigenous scholars, Lauren Tynan, and Michelle Bishop, we had already gone through the literature and written our analysis. While we adopted some lessons from this article, like identifying research silences as opposed to research gaps, we wish to be transparent in the unfolding of this work. We do not wish to overinflate the relationality process we have used. We use this as an opportunity to be accountable for our integrity within this work. We reflect on the lessons we learned by shifting how we structured and wrote this thesis. We believe this shift in structure and writing adds strength to this project because we put relationality into practice rather than reporting results on relationally.

In reflecting on how the literature review could have been done relationally, I would have included members of my thesis committee and other research experts in more detailed discussions on the literature and the search strategy. Had I done that, I may have benefited from their knowledge, different understandings, and knowledge of articles that might not have been captured in my results. I believe it is equally important to acknowledge that knowledge on this subject does not only exist in academic spaces but also lives in community where Elders, community members, and youth might offer valuable information that could have been generated in a sharing circle. If given a second opportunity, I would have intentionally brought many voices to the table in discussion to expand my learning and engage in relationality during the literature review process. This shift in process may also have informed the strategies I used to explore the datasets to identify relevant literature (e.g., keywords may have changed).

Additionally, I reflect on the search strategy I used and how it likely does not include all articles on this topic. Depending on the keywords used (or not), and in which databases I searched, there could be instances where articles on work that fit the criteria were missed. I made the research decision to include only peer-reviewed articles in Scopus, Ebscohost, and Google Scholar, leaving out grey literature. In hindsight, I can see how this might have limited the scope of articles for this project. This is where the conversations with my committee and other field experts could have captured any holes within the search strategy or searching process, as more eyes are often better at pointing out errors or needs. For example, there was an instance where one of my committee members identified an article that fit the search criteria but was not included in the literature review. I had attempted to go back through my literature searches to find this article when I realized that two of the initial search lists were not saved. Therefore, I was not able to go through the lists to see how I would have missed the article identified by my

thesis committee member. It is important to remain transparent and acknowledge that I have learned from this mistake. I will use this valuable lesson to ensure that any future literature search results are saved and that I reach out to others for input and assistance.

Second, we wish to discuss details within the Culture Camps in Thoughtful Consideration. First, I (Josée) have participated in only three of the nine Culture Camps. This means I was not present for much of the survey data collection and activities conducted during camps between 2018-2020. However, I attempted to counter this as best as possible with my access to rich field notes and discussions with Dr. Driedger, who was involved in all but one camp I led on behalf of the research team.

A third consideration for this project involves the survey analysis for Objective 2. There were instances where some youth participated in multiple culture camps and would fill out a survey at each camp. The survey analysis for this project included all surveys, even from repeat participants. I decided not to look at individual repeat participants for this project because I felt it would result in an arbitrary decision to pick only one survey contribution. A separate analysis for the repeat participant surveys would offer new insights into how youth responded to the surveys over time. My work with the MMF Culture Camp Youth Study will end once I graduate. However, the Culture Camps will remain ongoing, providing opportunities for continued engagement with repeat participants. For example, there might be an opportunity to engage repeat participants in sharing circles or mural paintings surrounding discussions on leadership and resilience.

Lastly, the primary data collected for this project through the MMF Culture Camps was done in various communities, often with new participants rather than returning participants. The unique dispersed locations of Red River Métis means that participants came from many



communities. This variety with mostly new participants might be seen as a “limitation”. We argue that the dispersed nature of communities is ultimately a strength because it highlights the distinct reality of doing research with Red River Métis communities. Acknowledging the unique geography represented by different communities and participants will contribute to the transferability of this research because it is likely to fit in contexts outside of this study (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The transferability of this project is a strength because concepts and findings might fit within different Métis, First Nations, and Inuit communities and contexts.

As a Red River Métis youth, I have been able to showcase other Métis youth voices through my writing, offering power, importance, and relevance as an overall strength to this thesis. However, I approached this project as an expert in my own experience, not the experiences of other Red River Métis youth. Therefore, I continue to be cautious not to impose my personal experiences and ideas into this work on behalf of other Métis youth. Instead, I use my personal experiences and worldviews to bring the project together with integrity. Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach describes the role of a researcher’s integrity as a validating factor in the research project (Kovach, 2009). A researcher’s integrity as a validating factor speaks to the role of ‘the researcher as instrument,’ and to the power a researcher holds in presenting their work (Kovach, 2009). One way I upheld my integrity during this project is by reflexive journaling during the reflexive analysis and throughout the entire process to document my thought process on decision making, for documenting my daily thoughts and developing insights. I also sought guidance from Dr. Driedger, who offered valuable advice and held me accountable for writing this project without dominating the discourse with personal opinions. I needed to engage in the reflexive process to avoid recreating harmful environments or perpetuating colonial violence through research. We practice *relationality* in our writing

throughout the project, which is not only a response to the historical harms research has played in Indigenous communities but our attempt at creating culturally *relevant* and meaningful work that prioritizes *respect, representation, relationship, responsibility, and reciprocity*.

### **Reflections on Relationality Within the MMF Culture Camps**

In this research, we document the positive benefits Métis youth experience when engaging in cultural activities and practices during the MMF Culture Camps. The Manitoba Métis Federation, in partnership with Red River Métis scholar Dr. Driedger at the University of Manitoba, provided an optimal setting for youth to learn about Métis culture through the camp intervention. In addition, culture camps foster a safe environment that prioritizes building relationships and personal skills that will continue to benefit Métis youth and their communities. This MMF/UM partnership lays the foundation for a collaborative approach embodying relationality in research and Métis culture by upholding the 6 R's of Indigenous research (Respect, Relationship, Responsibility, Relevance, Representation and Reciprocity).

The Culture Camps were designed with the 6 Rs based on principles of relationality between the individuals representing the two partners in this research: the MMF and the U of M. Speaking specifically to *relationships, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity*, individuals from either partner did not want the Culture Camps intervention to end when the research project ended. Initially, it was funding provided through Dr. Driedger's research project, which represented a funding transfer to the U of M from the larger collaborative project led by Dr. Cindy Jardine at the University of the Fraser Valley, that paid the majority of the costs associated with holding these camps. However, over the lifespan of these nine camps, the Northwest Region of the MMF, under the leadership of Minister Frances Chartrand, has been using more long-term sustainable funding sources such as the Urban Indigenous Programming through the MMF

employment and training program (UPIP) to cover the costs of the Culture Camps, and Dr. Driedger's research project has covered the costs of the research team and research activities embedded in the camps. Undoubtedly these camps will continue after the research ends, and hopefully, it will sustainably expand into other MMF Regions of the province beyond the Northwest Métis Council. Efforts towards securing sustainable funding by the MMF epitomizes *responsibility*. Having documented benefits from the research supports *relevance*. None of this would have been possible without *relationships* and commitments to *reciprocity*.

This partnership also represents a commitment to *representation*. It is Métis led throughout. Through the Department of Health and Wellness, the MMF decided what would occur at the camps, identified the appropriate Elders and community members to bring in, and recruited the Métis youth to attend. The U of M research team was led by a Red River Métis scholar Michelle Driedger, supported by a Red River Métis Master's student Josée Lavallée, and involved, when possible, Red River Métis project assistants (Kirsten Fleury, Justin Langan).

### **Our Hopes for this Work (Implications and Significance)**

Relationality is a connecting factor that youth experience and practice, contributing to a sense of health and well-being. The lessons and knowledge we learned during this research project do not belong to "me" or "we"; they belong to the Red River Métis. We hope this work can be a learning opportunity for you, the reader like this journey has been for us. We sincerely thank all involved because it could never have been done alone. To conclude, we share Our Hopes for this Work and how we give back through Knowledge Sharing.

This project can help to support continued opportunities for youth to engage in cultural activities by sharing the findings with the MMF government. Within this work we have used multiple methods that support youth strengths and perspectives on participating in the MMF

Culture Camps for health and well-being. We hope that this work can assist in continuing and expanding youth-specific policy and funding decisions by the Manitoba Métis Federation that directly support Métis youth needs and strengths. Youth perspectives and voices should be prioritized when deciding on specific programming for youth populations. The hope is that this project can be a starting point for those conversations and that the MMF continues to engage youth as active partners in research and program design done *with and for* the youth. We provide a summary of previously published studies that might offer useful insights into research conducted in other Indigenous communities for the MMF Health and Wellness Department to consider when planning future research projects on Métis youth health and well-being. Finally, with the success of the Culture Camps in the Northwest Region, we have witnessed commitments to continue this program by Minister Frances Chartrand for seeking sustainability in funding such as UPIP. We hope other MMF regions can follow suit in creating sustainable opportunities for youth to learn and participate in cultural activities within their respective regions.

I can envision three articles being published on this work. The first article will be on the Red River Methodology used in this work. This paper will discuss the Métis-specific methodology used for this thesis and connect to the existing Red River Métis theory. I can envision this distinctions-based methodological article including lessons that I learned from writing this thesis and the efforts made to write in a relational way that challenges the dominant and “typical” writing of a thesis. Much like how the *Decolonizing the Literature Review: A Relational Approach* by Lauren Tynan and Michelle Bishop has inspired me, this article might inspire other Indigenous students during their thesis journey. An article published on this work's

relational and decolonizing efforts can inspire other Indigenous students and researchers who struggle to write in a way that feels authentic while still meeting Western standards.

The second article I anticipate publishing will relate to the Red River Métis Culture Camps, the interventions used, and the analysis of this project. This article will also describe the Red River Métis methodology used in this work. This brings distinctions-based Red River Métis work regarding the Métis participants and at the methodological level. We believe this to be a novel contribution to health research literature and our Nation. Publishing content from this thesis on the MMF Culture Camps can potentially assist grassroots organizations with evidence and support for grant applications for organizations like Waterways Canada, whose programming seeks to connect Indigenous youth to cultural activities like canoeing in Manitoba.

The third article I envision publishing would be on Work That Has Come Before (literature review), which was done to understand the existing bodies of literature on the impacts of engaging Indigenous youth in Canada in cultural activities for health and well-being. This up-to-date summary will bring together the existing work into a centralized article that researchers can reference or draw inspiration from. This article will also continue to draw inspiration from the work of Lauren Tynan and Michelle Bishop to continue the conversation on writing a literature review in a relational way. This article will include reflections on how I navigated writing the literature review within this thesis and will also be an opportunity to incorporate relational approaches to literature reviews that were not done within this thesis.

There are many journals that would be appropriate choices for submitting the three articles we plan on writing about this work. *Pawaatamihk: A Journal of Métis Thinkers* is a new Red River Métis specific journal set to publish an inaugural edition in Fall of 2023. We hope to share the teachings of this work in one of the subsequent biannual issues. Journals specific to

Indigenous health, such as the International Journal of Indigenous Health, Turtle Island Journal of Indigenous Health, and Journal of Indigenous Well-being: *Te Mauri Pimatiswin* are other appropriate journals to consider publishing this work.

The cultural practices and activities during the Culture Camps could contribute to continued traditions and Métis ways of knowing among the Red River Métis participants who chose to continue the activities in their home or community or participate in future Culture Camps. In addition, the Culture Camps allowed youth to connect with peers, community members and Elders. We hope these youth can continue building these relationships with others and with their relationship to Red River Métis culture to preserve and share with future generations.

### **Knowledge Sharing Within the Nation**

In the spirit of relationality, reciprocity, and adhering to the OCAS principles of ownership, control, access, and stewardship, we will share the findings of this research project with youth participants, community members, and the MMF government. The learnings of this thesis will be shared back with the communities and local governance offices and youth centres where the Culture Camps took place so that youth participants, Elders, and MMF staff can have access to the project's results. This will be done by writing a summary of findings and then sending this document by email and/or by mail to respective MMF offices, and youth centres. The project will be shared with the MMF Health and Wellness Department and MMF governance offices by email. As youth representative for the Bison Local, I will bring these findings forward at youth events and share them with other youth representatives from various MMF locals across Manitoba.

Pages from the photobook shared in What We Learned, inspired by the photobook activities in Duck Bay and Winnipegosis in the Summer of 2022 will be used as a knowledge translation tool. This photobook will be created in a digital format. Copies will be sent to the MMF Health and Wellness Department to provide any feedback or suggestions. Physical copies of the photobooks will be distributed to governance offices and distributed to the two friendship/MMF community centres of Duck Bay and Winnipegosis. We will also provide a digital version of the photobook to the MMF so that they can distribute the photobook as they see fit. The full version of the photobook is not provided within this thesis by design as we wish to offer the MMF complete control over its privacy and distribution as a commitment to self-determination and data repatriation.

We also see this photobook as an opportunity to engage with community members and Elders who speak Michif and Saulteaux to possibly provide translations of the photobook in these two Métis languages. This consultation is a way to continue to build relationships outside of this work while addressing youth desires for more opportunities to learn Métis languages. This photobook is intended to uphold this thesis project's relationality and reciprocity. Finally, the photobook is a way to say “thank you” for the knowledge shared in the Culture Camps.

Additionally, a brief project report will be written-up and printed to share at the next MMF AGA in September 2023. Every year the MMF holds an Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Winnipeg where Métis citizens meet from all over Manitoba to be informed on what each Government department has been up to and to resolve any amendments to the constitution. The AGA also hosts a tradeshow where citizens can visit booths to learn more about MMF programming, Métis businesses, and projects. For active research projects, Dr. Driedger sets up a booth annually, where camp reports, painted murals, and research findings done in partnership

with MMF can be shared directly with Citizens. Camp reports from the Culture Camps are written with photos and printed so youth, Elders, and community members can take copies with them when they visit the booth. This booth also offers the chance to engage in person with a broad range of Métis citizens on the purpose and successes of the Culture Camps. I am not certain that I will be able to attend the AGA in person in September, but I will be sure to have all documents prepared and sent to Dr. Driedger for the booth.

Once we share the teachings of this work back with the MMF and the community through the strategies described above (e.g., written summaries, in-person engagement at the MMF AGA, and gifting the photobook) we will consult the MMF HWD for any additional wishes for knowledge translation. If there is a desire for further knowledge translation initiatives, they will be done by following the vision and direction provided by youth.

*Métis youth are the future leaders of our Nation, and our voices need to be at the table. I am grateful for the mentorship and support that I have received in doing this work that helped me find my voice in this academic space. The encouragement that I have received has helped me identify my strengths and abilities and realize the powerful impacts mentorship can have. It is now my turn to give back by through mentorship and uplifting Red River Métis youth voices. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my journey in this work. As my thesis journey comes to a close, I bring forth the knowledge that was shared and learned from this experience with me in all that I do moving forward.*

*In peace, with gratitude, Kitchii-marsii!*



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## Appendices

### Appendix A- Literature Review Articles

Source	Research Design	Community/ Nation	Cultural Activity/ Methods	Theme/ Main Points	Keywords
Ahmed, L., Solomon, D., & Sutherland, T. (2022). Indigenous Land-Based Approaches to Well-Being: The <i>Amisk</i> (Beaver) Harvesting Program in Subarctic Ontario, Canada	CBPR, two-eyed seeing	<i>Omushkego</i> Cree of Fort Albany, Northern Ontario	Beaver harvesting, Cortisol levels through salivary samples pre/post cultural activity	Learning from Elder's on traditional practices, helping to address climate concerns affecting the community.	Land, knowledge, healing, identity
Big-Canoe & Richmond (2013) Anishinaabe Youth perceptions about community health: Toward environmental repossession	Indigenous Methodology, CBPR	<i>Begetekong</i> , Pic River First Nation, Ontario	Interviews that spoke directly of participating in cultural practices and activities	Youth are worried about community health, social relationships are strong, Community to refocus on Indigenous Knowledge	Land repossession, social relationships, well-being
Dubnewick, Hopper, Spence, & McHugh (2018). "There's a Cultural Pride Through Our Games": Enhancing the sport experiences of Indigenous youth in Canada through participation in traditional games.	CBPR	Multiple communities, Northwest Territories	Interviews, sporting activities, traditional games	Promoting cultural pride, youth interacting with Elders, supports connection to the land, develops personal skills, foundation for movement.	Cultural continuity through organized sport
Ferguson, Girolami, Thorstad, Rodgers & Humbert (2021). "That's what the program is all about, building relationships." Exploring experiences in the urban offering of the Indigenous youth mentorship program in Canada	Social constructivist interpretive framework	Winnipeg, MB	Indigenous youth mentorship program, community led (University and high school students as mentors for elementary school children)	Fostering - physical, emotional, and mental wellness; strengthening meaningful connections; growing culture; exploring leadership	Wellness, Meaningful connections, Culture, Leadership
Freeman, Martin, Nash, Hausknecht & Skinner (2020). Use of a Digital Storytelling Workshop to Foster Development of Intergenerational Relationships and Preserve Culture with the Nak'azdli First Nation: Findings from the Nak'azdli Lha'hutit'en Project	CBPR	Nak'azdli Whut'en, BC	Creation of digital stories with Elders on traditional stories/legends, medicines, and personal stories	Personal, community, and cultural benefits for participants (Youth + Elders)	Cultural continuity, relationships with Elders
Good, Sims, Clarke & Russo (2020). Indigenous youth reconnect with cultural identity: The evaluation of a community-and school-based traditional music program	Mixed methods	First Nations community in Yukon	Traditional song and dance	Happiness and well-being, cultural development, cultural identity, social development, cultural continuity	Well-being, Cultural continuity, Cultural identity, Social skills
Gray, Richer & Harper (2016). Individual and community-level determinants of Inuit youth mental wellness	Quantitative	Nunavik	Nunavik Inuit Health Survey	Association between mental well-being and the land/ connection to culture, healthy relationships	Mental well-being, Culture, Land, Community Relationships, Education
Hatala, Morton, Njeze, Bird-Naytowhow & Pearl (2019). Re-imagining <i>miyo-wicehtowin</i> : Human-nature relations, land-making, and wellness among Indigenous youth in a Canadian urban context	Indigenous methodology, modified grounded theory	Saskatoon (urban Plains Cree and Métis youth)	Storytelling interviews with urban Indigenous youth	Reimagining nature as familial and kinship relationships. Nature as soothing place to regulate emotions.	Connection, Land, Well-being

Source	Research Design	Community/ Nation	Cultural Activity/ Methods	Theme	Keywords
Hatala, Njeze, Morton, Pearl & Bird-Naytowhow (2020). Land and Nature as a source of health and resilience among Indigenous youth in an urban Canadian context: photovoice exploration	Grounded Theory, Two-eyed seeing, Photovoice	Saskatoon (urban Plains Cree and Métis youth)	Photovoice projects with urban Indigenous	Decolonizing urban environments. Nature as calming place, building metaphors of resilience, giving sense of hope.	Resilience, Land, Well-being, Health
Hatala, Njeze, Morton, Pearl & Bird-Naytowhow (2020). Land and Nature as a source of health and resilience among Indigenous youth in an urban Canadian context: photovoice exploration	Grounded Theory, Two-eyed seeing, Photovoice	Saskatoon (urban Plains Cree and Métis youth)	Photovoice projects with urban Indigenous	Decolonizing urban environments. Nature as calming place, building metaphors of resilience, giving sense of hope.	Resilience, Land, Well-being, Health
Hirsch, Furgal, Hackett, Sheldon, bell, Angnatok, Winters & Pamak (2016). Going off; Growing strong: A program to enhance individual youth and community resilience in the face of change in Nain, Nunatsiavut	CBPR	Nunavik	Lnad based activities (e.g. harvesting), Community activities with Elders (e.g. preparing traditional food )	Social and culture capitol to promote youth resilience. Youth perspectives and involvement in community programming in future	Social, Culture, Resilience, Mental health
Liebenberg, Reich, Denny, Gould & Hutt-Macleod (2022). Two-eyed Seeing for youth wellness: Promoting positive outcomes with interwoven resilience resources	PAR, two-eyed seeing	Eskasoni First Nations, Nova Scotia	Photovoice projects	Connection to culture for youth well-being. Interconnected mental and physical health.	Resilience, Culture, Role models
Lines & Jardine (2019). Connection to land as a youth identified determinant of health	Strengths based CBPR, Indigenous lens	Yellowknives Dene First Nations	Photovoice activity, mural paintings.	Connection to land as determinant of health.	Land, Health, Cultural continuity
Mikraszewick & Richmond (2019). Paddling the biigtig: Mino biimadisiwin practiced through canoeing	CBPR	Biigtigong Nishnaabeg, Ontario	Canoe journey	Learning practice of Indigenous knowledge, fostering social relationships, connection to traditional lands	Land, Social relationships
Moscou (2022). Planting seeds of change: Voices of Indigenous youth on holistic health	Indigenous Holistic Theory	Brandon and Winnipeg Manitoba (First Nations, Métis, Inuit youth)	Photovoice of urban garden project	Medicine wheel used to present findings from youth participating in the garden box project on spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing. Addressing food security in urban community	Culture Connection, Elder, Land, Physical, Emotional, Mental, Spiritual

Source	Research Design	Community/ Nation	Cultural Activity/ Methods	Theme	Keywords
Nightingale & Richmond (2022). Reclaiming Land, Identity, and Mental Wellness in Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Territory	Environmental repossession as theory and methodology	Biigtigong Nishnaabeg, Ontario	On the land camp	Environmental repossession shifts attention from Indigenous survivance and adaptation to the revitalization of self-determination over land. Camps offer intergenerational connectedness. Community led camps seek to address the impacts of intergenerational trauma, and displacement on relationships to the self, the family, the community, and the land. Displacement more than the physical sense.	social relationships, sharing and practicing traditional knowledge, restoring community pride.
Njeze, Bird-Naytowhow, Pearl & Hatala (2020). Intersectionality of Resilience	Indigenous methodologies, case study	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (Plains Cree, Métis, and Dene youth)	Seasonal sharing circles with ceremony on resilience and wellness, and photovoice activity.	Strengthening cultural identity and family connections for youth resilience.	Culture, Family, Resilience, Relationships
Pawlowski, Riva, Fletcher, Lyonnais & Arsenault-Hudon (2022). Youth perspectives on community health in Nunavik: a community-engaged photovoice project	CBPR, strengths-based approach	Nunavik	Photovoice activity for personal and community health	Youth identified 12 areas for community health. (Family, food, culture, language, sense of community belonging, land, housing, services, community, connection, caring and somewhere to go)	Family, Culture, Belonging, Community, Connection
Petrusek et al., (2015). Protective factors for mental health and well-being in a changing climate: Perspectives from Inuit youth in Nunatsiavut Labrador	Qualitative Case study	Nunatsiavut	Semi structured interviews with participants who had previously participated in on the land and cultural activities.	Protective factors for mental health and wellbeing: being on the land, connecting to Inuit culture, strong communities, relationships with family and friends, staying busy.	Mental health, Well-being, Relationships, Culture, Land
Petrucka et al., (2016). Positive Leadership, Legacy, Lifestyles, Attitudes, and Activities for Aboriginal Youth: A Wise Practices Approach for Positive Aboriginal Youth Futures	CBPR	Standing Buffalo First Nation, Saskatchewan	Youth involvement in planning and leadership for school-based culture camp	Developed mentor mentee relationships and youth leadership skills.	Identity, Culture, Community, Relationships, Leadership
Quinn (2022). Experiences and wellbeing among Indigenous former youth in care within Canada	Grounded theory, Two eyed seeing, Retrospective	First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth previously in care	Semi structured interviews with Indigenous participants previously in care	Cultural and spiritual practices influenced sense of purpose. Connection to siblings, families, communities, and culture were protective mechanisms.	Culture, Spirituality



Source	Research Design	Community/ Nation	Cultural Activity/ Methods	Theme	Keywords
Ritchie, Wabano, Russell, Enosse & Young (2014). Promoting resilience and wellbeing through an outdoor intervention designed for Aboriginal adolescents	Mixed methods	Wikwenikong Reserve, First Nations, Ontario	Outdoor Adventure Leadership Experience (OALE), resilience scale	Outdoor interventions for short term resilience and well-being	Well-being, Resilience, Land
Ritchie, Wabano, Corbiere, Restoule & Russell Young (2015). Connecting to the Good Life through outdoor adventure leadership experiences designed for Indigenous youth	CBPR, critical ethnography	Wikwenikong Reserve, First Nations, Ontario	Outdoor Adventure Leadership Experience (OALE) land based cultural activities	Connecting through experience with creation, connecting through reflection with self.	Well-being, Culture, Land
Saskamoose, Wabano, Russell, Enosse & Young (2016). First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives on Health: Qualitative Study	Indigenous methodology, PAR	Cree, Saulteaux, Métis, Dakota, Lakota, in Saskatchewan	Sharing circles, Interviews, Essays, Presentation	Youth identified interconnected and holistic nature of health and well-being.	Neuro-decolonization, Holistic health, culture, Sports, Mental health.
Victor, Goulet, Linds & Eninew (2021). Storyscapes of place: First Nations youth's photographic depictions of home	Qualitative, Indigenous storytelling	Neehithuw, Saskatchewan	Photovoice project on the land and storytelling	Belonging on the land, being with spirit through kituskeenuw (locating oneself and one's identity within social and physical surroundings)	Wellness, Social connection, Land, Belonging.

## Appendix B

### Youth Adult Resiliency Measure (YARM) Survey

### Youth/Adult Resilience Measure (YARM) – 27 item

#### DIRECTIONS

Listed below are a number of questions about you, your family, your community, and your relationships with people. These questions are designed to help us better understand how you cope with daily life and what role the people around you play in how you deal with daily challenges.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please be sure to fill out both sides of this paper!

#### SECTION A:

**Please complete the questions below. You may leave a question blank if you prefer not to answer.**

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What community are you living in (Dauphin, Brandon, or other)? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your ethnicity (Métis, First Nations, Inuit, other)? \_\_\_\_\_

#### SECTION B:

**To what extent do the sentences below describe you? Circle one answer for each statement or check 'no response' if applicable or preferred.**

		Not at All	A Little	Some- what	Quite a Bit	A Lot	No response
1.	I have people in my life I want to be like	1	2	3	4	5	
2.	I work well with people around me (e.g. share or cooperate)	1	2	3	4	5	
3.	Getting an education is important to me	1	2	3	4	5	
4.	I know how to behave/act in different situations (such as school, home, work, community events, and cultural gatherings)	1	2	3	4	5	
5.	My family have usually supported me through life	1	2	3	4	5	
6.	My family know a lot about me (for example, who my friends are, what I like to do, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	
7.	I try to finish activities I start	1	2	3	4	5	
8.	Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me (for example, believing in God, believing in my Métis spirituality, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	

9.	I am proud of being Métis (for example, I know where my family comes from or know about my family's history)	1	2	3	4	5	
10.	People think I am fun to be with	1	2	3	4	5	
11.	I talk to my family/partner about how I feel (for example, when I am hurt or sad)	1	2	3	4	5	
12.	When things don't go my way, I can fix it without hurting myself or other people (for example, hitting others or saying hurtful things)	1	2	3	4	5	
13.	I feel supported by my friends	1	2	3	4	5	
14.	I know where to go to get help	1	2	3	4	5	
15.	I feel I belong in my community	1	2	3	4	5	
16.	I think my family cares about me when times are hard (for example, if I am sick or have done something wrong)	1	2	3	4	5	
17.	I think my friends cares about me when times are hard (for example, if I am sick or have done something wrong)	1	2	3	4	5	
18.	I am treated fairly in my community	1	2	3	4	5	
19.	I have chances to show others that I can act responsibly	1	2	3	4	5	
20.	I know what I am good at	1	2	3	4	5	
21.	I participate in spiritual activities (for example, attending a place of worship, ceremonies, Métis spirituality, etc)	1	2	3	4	5	
22.	I think it is important to help out in my community	1	2	3	4	5	
23.	I feel safe when I am with my family	1	2	3	4	5	
24.	I have opportunities to apply my abilities in my life (like cooking, bush skills, working, or helping others)	1	2	3	4	5	
25.	I like the way my family's/partner's celebrates things (like holidays, Métis culture, family gatherings, graduations)	1	2	3	4	5	
26.	I like the way my community celebrates things (like holidays, feasts, Métis culture)	1	2	3	4	5	
27.	I am proud to be a member of the Métis Nation	1	2	3	4	5	

	For Office Use Only
Participant Number:	
Site ID:	
Data number:	
Date of administration:	

## Appendix C

## Youth Leadership Survey

### Youth/Adult Leadership Assessment

For the following assessment about your leadership skills put an x under the heading that best describes how you feel about your leadership skills. Please be sure to fill out both sides of this paper.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response
1.	I understand my own needs (e.g. I'm hungry, need to sleep, need to work)						
2.	I think positively about myself						
3.	I can express my feelings clearly						
4.	I can set goals for myself						
5.	I can be honest with others						
6.	I can use information to solve problems						
7.	I can give tasks to others to share responsibilities						
8.	I can set priorities (e.g. set one task as more important than another task)						
9.	I am sensitive to other's feelings						
10.	I am open-minded and will try new things						
11.	I care about what might affect others						
12.	I am responsible						
13.	I am friendly						
14.	I consider ideas from everyone in a group						
15.	I can listen and understand others						
16.	I can select backup options (e.g. a trip to Winnipeg didn't work, so go to Brandon or Dauphin instead)						
17.	I recognize other people's abilities or talents						
18.	People feel accepted around me						
19.	I can respect others						
20.	I practice my Métis culture						
21.	I can handle mistakes						

22.	I can be flexible (e.g. willing to compromise)						
23.	I can get along with others						
24.	I care for Elders (visits, shovelling snow)						
25.	I understand my own values (Métis values)						
26.	I think logically (e.g. a plan that makes sense)						
27.	I am open to change						
28.	I encourage others						
29.	I trust other people						
30.	I share my knowledge with others						
31.	I have a healthy vision for my community						
32.	I show appreciation for other's work						
33.	I share my thoughts with others						
34.	I take responsibility for my actions						
35.	I have creative ideas for solutions						

	For Office Use Only
Participant Number:	
Site ID:	
Data number:	
Date of administration:	

**Appendix D**  
**Culture Camp Evaluation**

Camp Evaluation:

1. How important is it to you to be involved in a camp like this?

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2. Do you think the skills that you are learning here will be things you can use after the camp is over?

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3. Do you think there are skills that you have learned here that you might share with other youth in your community?

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4. How important has it been to learn about some of the Métis history and culture?

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5. Was some of this Métis history and culture new to you or were you already pretty familiar with it?

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6. How new do you think some of this Métis history and culture might be to other youth in your community?

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7. What do you think you would continue to do from camp, back when you are at home in your community?

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8. Would you share any of what you learned with others in the community?

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9. You have engaged with a lot of different elders as part of the camp. Has this been easy for you to do?

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10. What about back home in your community, are there many elders that you could maybe talk to like you have done here at camp? Do you think that could also be helpful for other youth? What might you do to help make that happen?

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11. Please tell us something new that you learned from this camp.

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12. Please tell us something that you really enjoyed from being in this camp.

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13. Please tell us something you wished you would have learned about during this camp.

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14. Who else do you think would benefit from coming to a camp like this one?

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## Appendix E

### University of Manitoba Youth Study Consent Form



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Health Sciences

Department of  
Community Health Sciences  
750 Bannatyne Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3E 0W3  
Telephone: (204) 789-3473  
Fax: (204) 789-3905

#### INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM – Parental/Guardian Consent for Youth Participation

**Title of Study: Participatory Risk Communication: Indigenous Youth-Generated Messages for Community Health Promotion – a focus on Manitoba Metis Youth**

**Principal Investigators:** Dr. S. Michelle Driedger, Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Manitoba, phone (204) 789-3936 or e-mail: [michelle.driedger@umanitoba.ca](mailto:michelle.driedger@umanitoba.ca); Dr. Cindy Jardine (Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Fraser Valley) phone (604) 702-2614 or e-mail [cindy.jardine@ufv.ca](mailto:cindy.jardine@ufv.ca); Dr. Chris Furgal (Indigenous Environmental Studies Program, Trent University) phone (705) 748-1011 #7953 or e-mail [chrisfurgal@trentu.ca](mailto:chrisfurgal@trentu.ca).

**Manitoba Metis Federation Partners:** Minister Frances Chartrand (VP Northwest Region), Minister Leah LaPlante (VP Southwest Region), Dr. Julianne Sanguins (Health and Wellness Department)

**Sponsor:** Canadian Institutes of Health Research

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#### Invitation for Youth to Participate in a Research Study

Since your child is under 18 years of age, and we are asking if they can participate in a research study, we require parental/guardian consent for their participation. Please take your time to review this consent form which describes what is involved in your child's participation and discuss any questions you may have with the study staff.

#### Purpose of Study

This study is being conducted with three of Canada's Indigenous groups (First Nations, Metis and Inuit). We are asking for your consent for your child to participate in the Manitoba Metis study involving Metis youth and Elders. The other two groups involved are the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and Inuit youth living in Nunatsiavut. In partnership with the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), we are looking at the role that Metis youth can play in promoting wellness for themselves and in their community while taking part in a Metis Culture Camp. While taking part, Metis youth may learn about cultural traditions, life and other valuable communication skills that are shareable and lead to community health and cultural benefits for Metis people. The Metis Culture Camp is intended to promote Metis youth wellness, voice, confidence, capacity, leadership skills, and self-

efficacy through their participation. This study is intended to formally evaluate how well the Metis Culture Camp can meet those objectives.

### **What participating in this research study means (study procedures)**

Youth will participate in a Metis Culture Camp, developed and run by MMF Staff and youth leaders. The camp will last from 3, 4 or 5 days, where youth will take part in a number of traditional on-the-land based skills, as well as have a wide exposure to Metis culture and history – all things that are considered as promoting Metis cultural identity and community well-being. The MMF will incorporate into the camp a wellness-workshop using the Metis Life Promotion Framework. The MMF is interested in evaluating these culture camps as a strategy for building confidence, leadership, and cultural skills in Metis youth contributing to overall health and wellness.

The MMF's interest in evaluating these camps is where this research study comes in. Research staff will be attending the camp at the same time, participating and observing many of the activities that take place. While youth participate in all of the activities developed by MMF staff, they will also take part in some individual and group discussions with research staff. We will have short individual or group interviews about youth's experiences at the camp and what wellness means to youth. We are going to use a lot of different strategies in this research: interviews, filling out short surveys about what youth think about different aspects of wellness, activities involving leadership/elders, and some arts-based activities (e.g. painting, videos, drawing pictures, conversations around different photos that youth might be asked to take during the camp, etc.).

Interviews will be audio-recorded for analysis. Also, if you agree, copies of your child's arts-based work will be shared with the research staff.

### **Risks and Discomforts**

Youth should not experience any risks for participating in the research activities involved in this project. But, if any topics are discussed that bring up any concerns for your child, there are MMF staff and resource people here that can further assist them.

Any risks about participating in the MMF-led Culture Camps will have been described by them to you already. The research study is not involved in what activities are developed for these camps.

### **Costs and Benefits**

We hope that if your youth shares their opinions and experiences about participating in these Metis Culture Camps, that doing so will help to more broadly benefit the Manitoba Metis, and in particular Metis youth, as well as the Manitoba Metis Federation Health & Wellness Department, health decision-makers, healthcare providers, and others by helping all to understand the issues, concerns and perspectives of Metis youth regarding wellness. Study results will directly inform future health research with Metis Youth in partnership with the MMF in the future. Also, for participating in research activities (such as completing surveys and being interviewed), youth will receive some gifts as part of their participation (e.g. gift cards, bags, cultural gifts, etc.). There are no costs to you or your child to participate in this research study.

### **Confidentiality**

Any research data (interview transcripts, copies of photos, journals, etc) may be used for public presentations and writing up papers for publication or reports. But any identifying information will not be used. We will only use your child's first name (with their permission) or a fake name (whatever they prefer). Interview data (without any identifying information) may be used by students as an educational tool in their courses.

But because this research study is being conducted with a group of youth participating in a specific Metis Culture Camp, we ask that each youth be respectful of others and not talk about what is discussed at these camps with others without permission, particularly if it might be very personal stories being shared in the Camp setting.

While any of the data housed at the University of Manitoba will be kept confidential, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Personal information may be disclosed if required by law. The University of Manitoba Health Research Ethics Board might also review our records related to the study to make sure that we are protecting all data that is kept by us at the University of Manitoba. All data collected in this study (audio-recordings of individual or group discussions, transcripts, surveys, copies of visual images, etc) will be kept in a locked office, on a password protected hard-drive. All data will be stored in a way that doesn't identify you or your child personally or uses only your child's first name or a fake name. Only the main research team will have access to the data. We will hold onto this data for seven (7) years after the completion of the study. We will destroy this data after that time.

### **Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study**

Your consent for your child's participation in this research study is voluntary and it won't affect their ability to participate in the Metis Culture Camp. You can have your child refuse to participate in some activities or withdraw from the study at any time. Everything your child says will be treated as confidential information and their name will not be used.

If you consent to your child's participation, we will use your data as described above.

If you do NOT consent for your child's participation, you need to be aware that study staff will not collect any personal information about you, but because we have been invited by the MMF, we will be present at the Camp. We will be observing all the activities in which youth are participating, but we won't make specific observations about your child. We will do our best to not use things that your child says (and that we hear while attending the camp) in our research. Your children will still be allowed to participate in arts-based activities (painting, etc) but we won't use their material in our study.

### **Questions**

Feel free to ask any questions that you may have about your child's rights as a research participant at any time. You can ask study staff directly before, during, and after the Camp is held, and you can contact Professor Michelle Driedger at 204-789-3936 or by email: [michelle.driedger@umanitoba.ca](mailto:michelle.driedger@umanitoba.ca). You might also contact the Study coordinator, Ryan Maier by phone (204-272-3106) or by email at [ryan.maier@umanitoba.ca](mailto:ryan.maier@umanitoba.ca). If you have any concerns about your child's rights, or concerns about things we as study staff have done, you may contact the University of Manitoba, Bannatyne Campus Research Ethics Board Office at (204) 789-3389.

## **Statement of Consent**

I have read this consent form/it has been explained to me.

I know that I can discuss this study with Dr. Michelle Driedger or her study staff if I want to.

I understand the risks and benefits involved in this study.

Even though my child is participating in a Metis Culture Camp run by the MMF, they don't have to participate in this research study if I do not want them to. Even though I am consenting to my child's participation in this study, I know that if I change my mind it does not affect my child's ability to attend the Metis Culture Camp. Regardless of my decision to consent to my child's participation in the research, I know that study staff will still be at the Camp participating and observing the activities that my child is also doing with the other Youth.

I have no relationship with the research study staff (they aren't my employer or my family) that is influencing my decision to participate.

I will get a copy of this consent form after I sign it (or if I give verbal consent, I will still be able to keep a copy of this form).

I know that all of my information will be kept confidential, but that confidentiality is not guaranteed. The University of Manitoba Health Research Ethics Board may inspect any of my records related to this study for quality assurance purposes.

By signing this consent form, I have not waived any of the legal rights that I have as a parent/guardian for my child's participation in a research study.

**Parent/Guardian signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
(day/month/year)

**Parent/Guardian printed name** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Statement regarding photos taken at Camp:**

During the Metis Culture Camp, research staff will be taking photographs and videos of activities of youth. If you are opting-out for your child to participate, study staff will do their best to not take any photos of your child (i.e. no individual photos). However, MMF staff may include your child in photos that they take. Study staff will do their best to not use any photos with your child, but will not be able to avoid a photo where your child is part of a group. Researchers will obscure your child's face in such instances if those groups photos are used for the purposes of communicating about this project (e.g. presentations, reports, etc.). All photographs/videos will not be linked to any identifying information and will be stored confidentially in the same manner as all other data described above.

I'm aware of how researcher study staff will aim to protect against any images of my child.

☐ YES

☐ NO

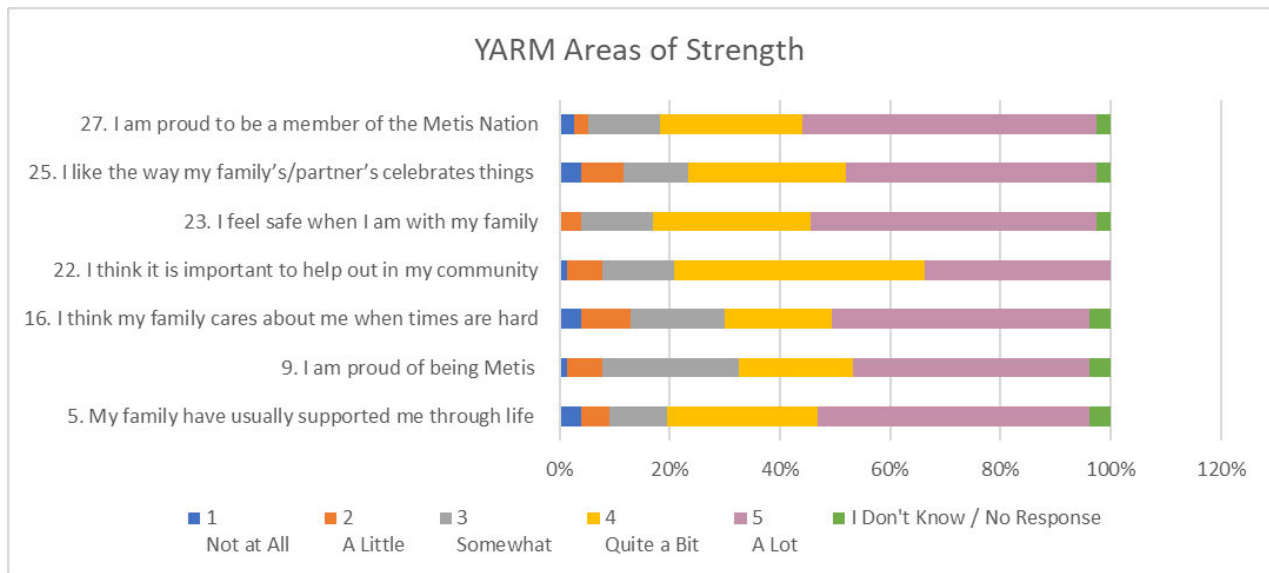
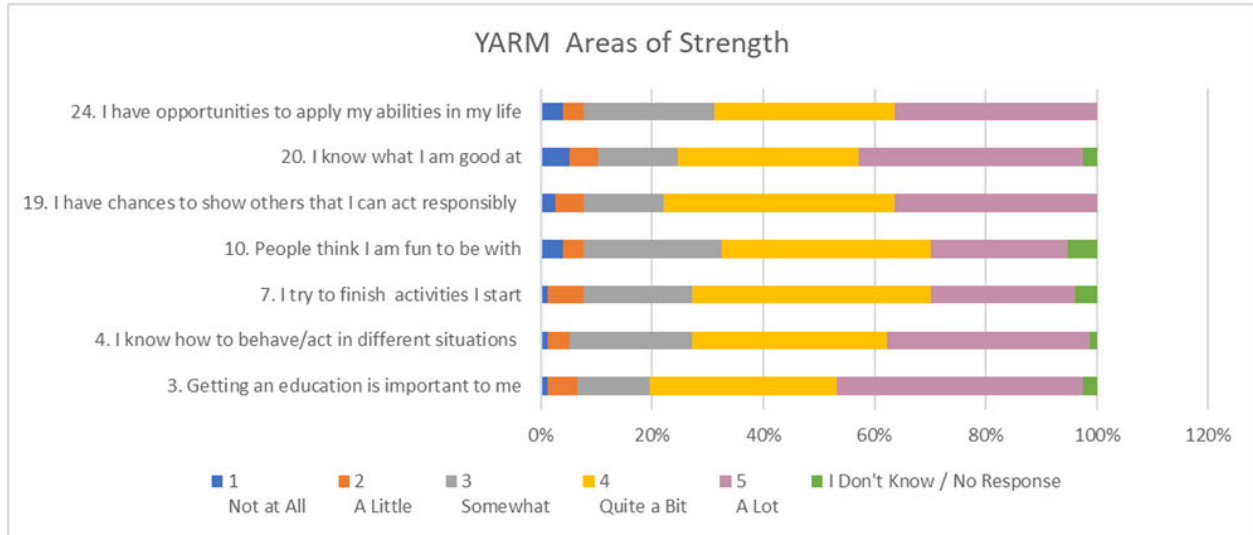
Parent/Guardian signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(day/month/year)

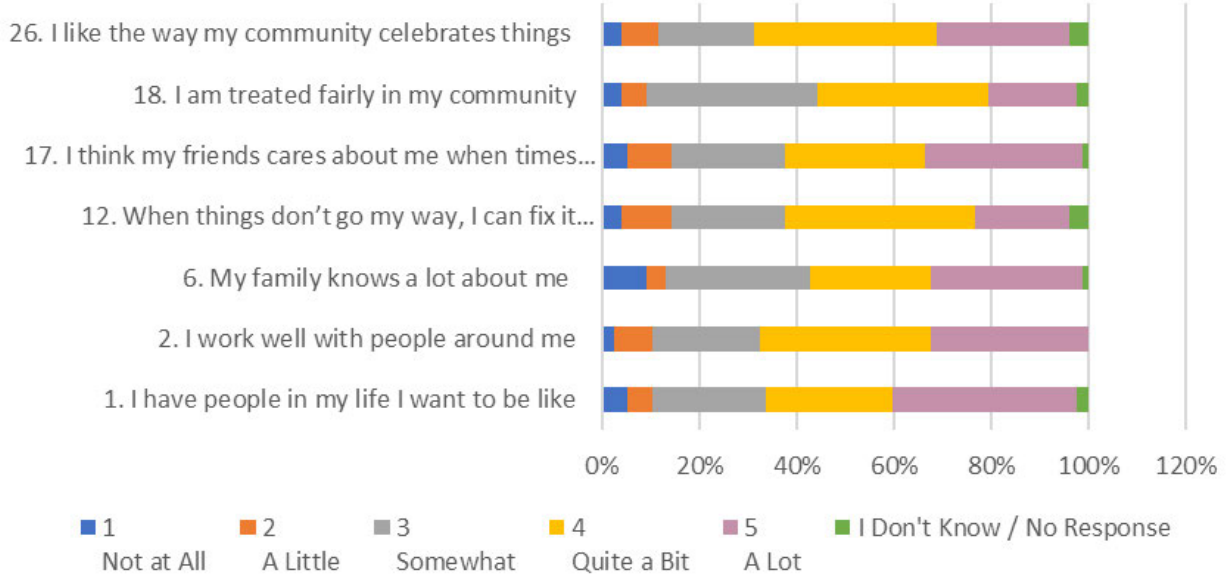
Parent/Guardian printed name \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

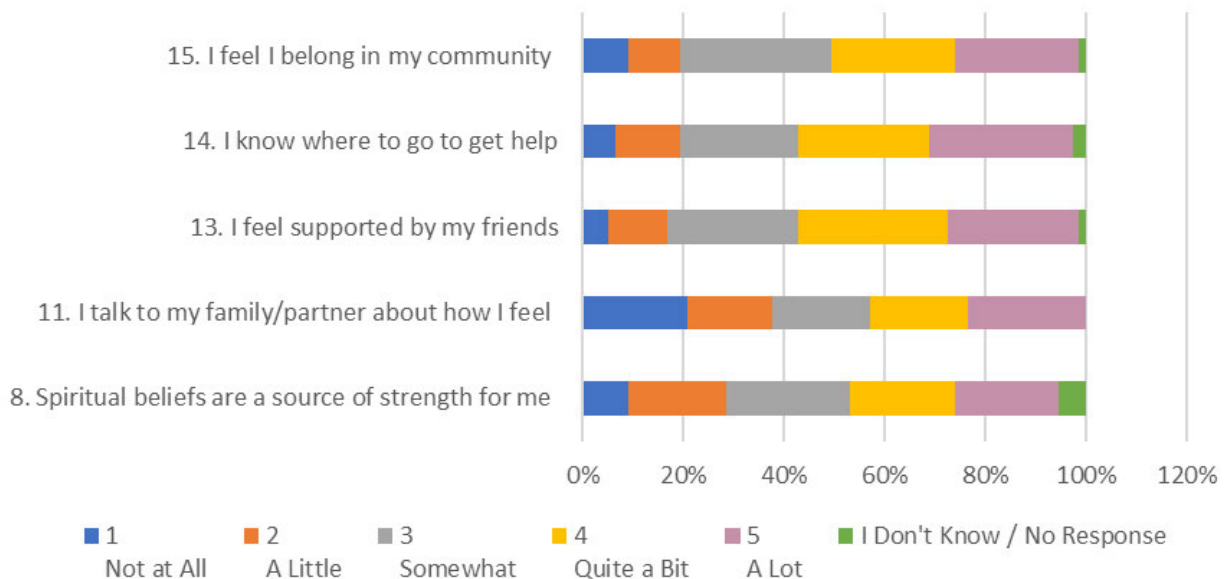
### Youth/Adult Resilience Measure (YARM) Survey Responses



## YARM Areas for Possible Growth

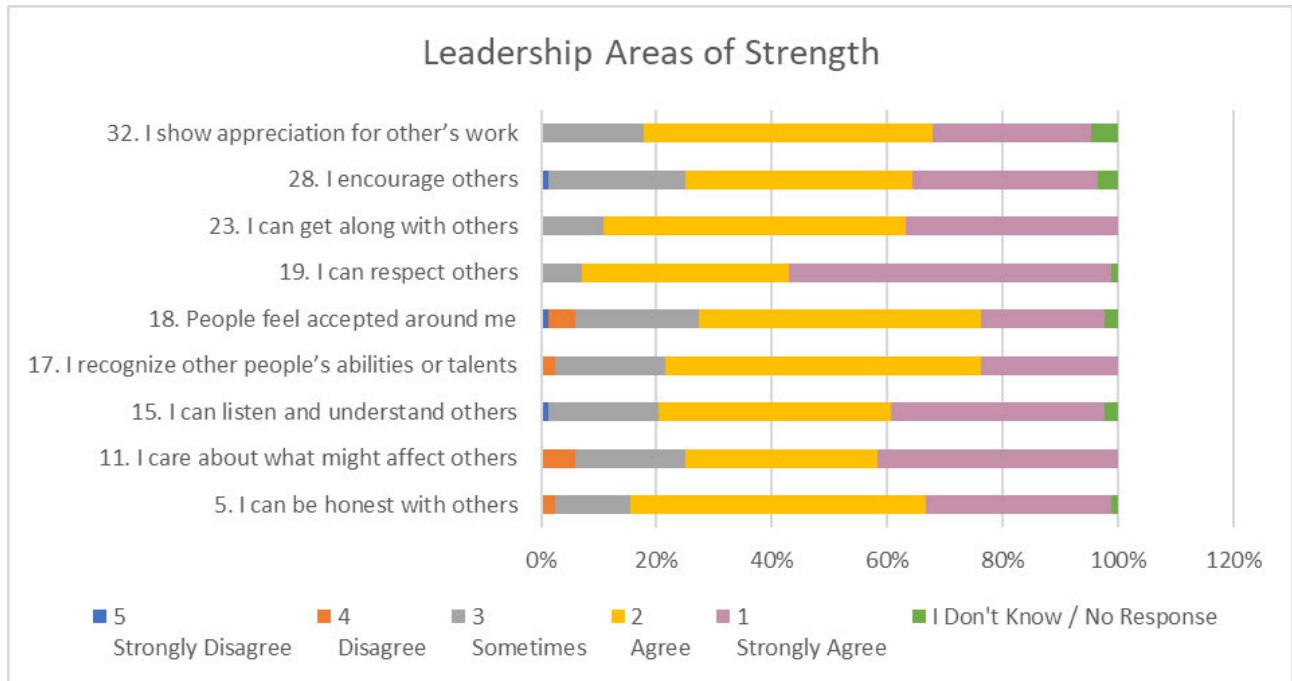
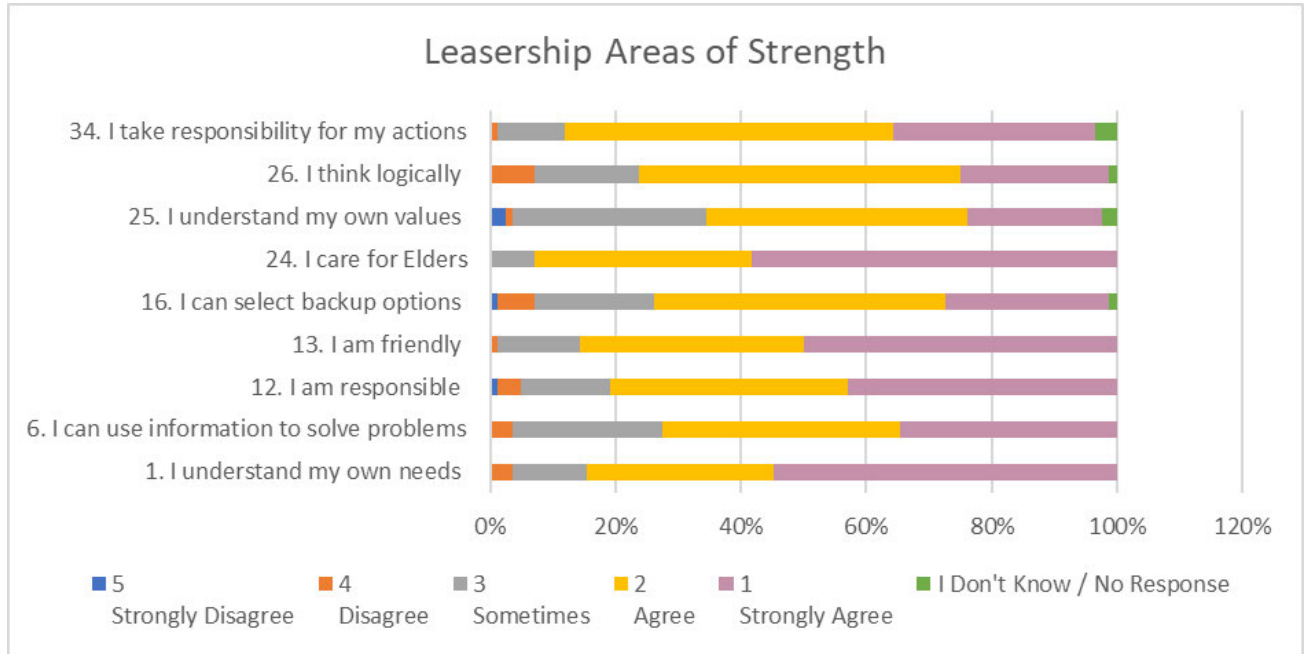


## YARM Areas for Growth



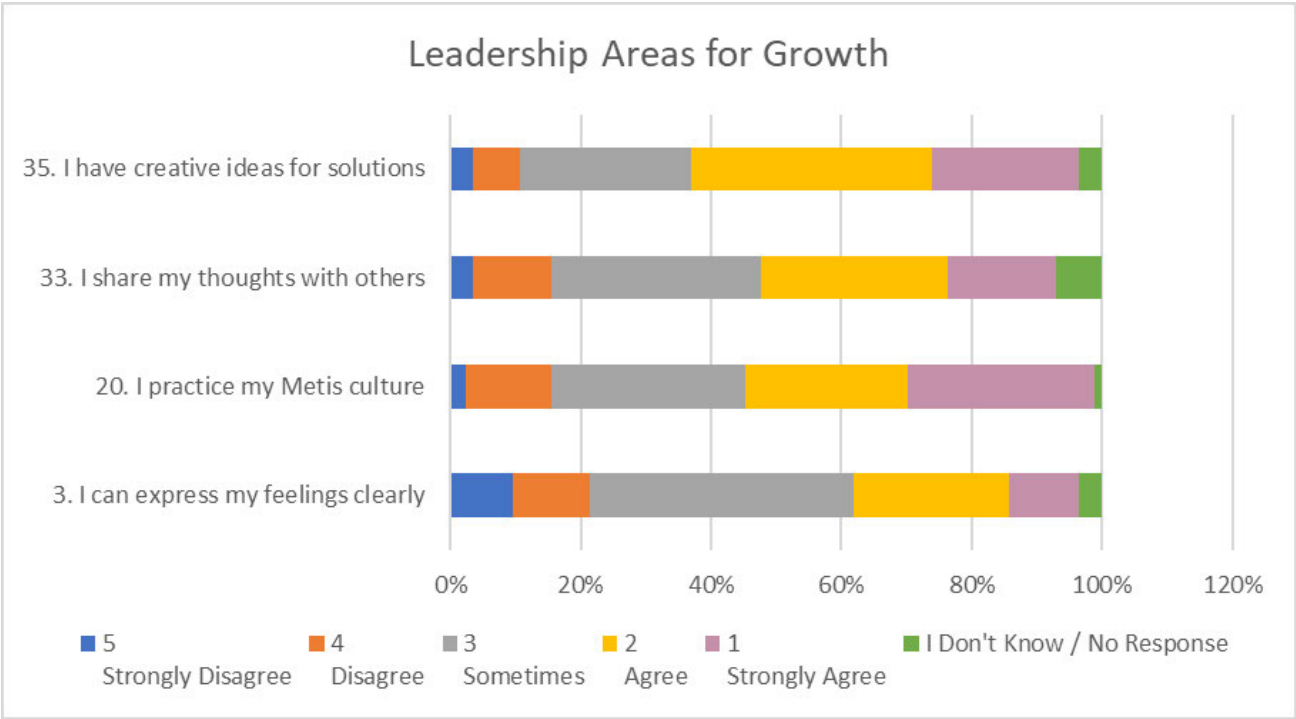
## Appendix G

### Youth/Adult Leadership Assessment Survey









## Appendix H

### Original Ethical Approval Certificate



Research Ethics  
and Compliance

Research Ethics - Bannatyne  
P126-770 Bannatyne Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB  
Canada R3E 0W3  
Phone +204-789-3255  
Fax +204-789-3414

#### HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD (HREB) CERTIFICATE OF FINAL APPROVAL FOR NEW STUDIES Full Board Review

<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</b> Dr. Michelle Driedger	<b>INSTITUTION/DEPARTMENT:</b> U of M/Medicine/Community Health Sciences	<b>ETHICS #:</b> HS21892 (H2018:246)
<b>HREB MEETING DATE:</b> May 28, 2018	<b>APPROVAL DATE:</b> June 22, 2018	<b>EXPIRY DATE:</b> May 22, 2019
<b>STUDENT PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SUPERVISOR (If applicable):</b>		

<b>PROTOCOL NUMBER:</b> NA	<b>PROJECT OR PROTOCOL TITLE:</b> Participatory Risk Communication: Indigenous youth-generated messages for community health promotion
<b>SPONSORING AGENCIES AND/OR COORDINATING GROUPS:</b> CIHR	

<b>Submission Date(s) of Investigator Documents:</b> May 7 and June 14, 2018	<b>REB Receipt Date(s) of Documents:</b> May 7 and June 14, 2018
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#### THE FOLLOWING ARE APPROVED FOR USE:

Document Name	Version(if applicable)	Date
<b>Protocol:</b> Protocol including Clarifications as per Letter dated June 14, 2018		September 29, 2016
<b>Consent and Assent Form(s):</b> Participant Information and Consent Form	V. 2	June 14, 2018
<b>Other:</b> Youth Health Research Priorities Survey - Metis	V. 1	June 14, 2018
Questionnaires/Scales/Instruments Appendix	V. 1	May 7, 2018
Cover Letter to Accompany Consent Form Information Package	V. 1	May 7, 2018
Draft Schedule for Youth Summer Camp	V. 1	May 7, 2018

#### CERTIFICATION

The University of Manitoba (UM) Health Research Board (HREB) has reviewed the research study/project named on this **Certificate of Final Approval** at the **full board meeting** date noted above and was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human participants. The study/project and documents listed above was granted final approval by the Chair or Acting Chair, UM HREB.

#### HREB ATTESTATION

The University of Manitoba (UM) Health Research Board (HREB) is organized and operates according to Health Canada/ICH Good Clinical Practices, Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, and the applicable laws and regulations of Manitoba.

- 1 -

Research Ethics and Compliance is a unit of the Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

umanitoba.ca/research

In respect to clinical trials, the HREB complies with the membership requirements for Research Ethics Boards defined in Division 5 of the Food and Drug Regulations of Canada and carries out its functions in a manner consistent with Good Clinical Practices.

#### QUALITY ASSURANCE

The University of Manitoba Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this research study/project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba Policy on the Ethics of Research Involving Humans.

#### CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. The study is acceptable on scientific and ethical grounds for the ethics of human use only. ***For logistics of performing the study, approval must be sought from the relevant institution(s).***
2. This research study/project is to be conducted by the local principal investigator listed on this certificate of approval.
3. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to the research study/project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to governing law.
4. **This approval is valid until the expiry date noted on this certificate of approval. A Bannatyne Campus Annual Study Status Report** must be submitted to the REB within 15-30 days of this expiry date.
5. Any changes of the protocol (including recruitment procedures, etc.), informed consent form(s) or documents must be reported to the HREB for consideration in advance of implementation of such changes on the **Bannatyne Campus Research Amendment Form**.
6. Adverse events and unanticipated problems must be reported to the REB as per Bannatyne Campus Research Boards Standard Operating procedures.
7. The UM HREB must be notified regarding discontinuation or study/project closure on the **Bannatyne Campus Final Study Status Report**.

Sincerely,



John Arnett, PhD., C. Psych.  
Chair, Health Research Ethics Board  
Bannatyne Campus

- 2 -

Please quote the above Human Ethics Number on all correspondence.  
Inquiries should be directed to the REB Secretary Telephone: (204) 789-3255/ Fax: (204) 789-3414