Mino-pimatisiwin: The Stories of Mentorship

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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Abstract

Initiated in 2010, the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program[1] (IYMP) is an after-school program, which focuses on living a healthy life through physical activity, healthy eating, relationship building, and culture. The program is overseen by Young Adult Health Leaders (YAHLs) and Indigenous mentors ranging from grades 7-12 who mentor Indigenous mentees (elementary-aged students). This program is designed to improve the wholistic[2] health (emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual) of Indigenous youth through physical activity and games, healthy snacks, and relationship building. My research explored the following questions:

- How does the mentorship program (IYMP) promote mino-pimatisiwin[3] amongst all levels of participants (YAHLs, mentors, mentees)?
- How does IYMP help participants live life in a good way wholistically?

Using semi-structured interviews as my approach to generate stories and knowledge, I explored how IYMP participants in Thompson, Manitoba lived in mino-pimatisiwin in mentorship and if and how mentorship contributed to living their lives in a good way. Using the interviews as a guide, I worked with the participants, also known as co-researchers, to create two stories: the story of the YAHL and the story of the mentor. A symbol of a blue wapikwani (flower) was created to show the many connections between mentorship, mino-

[1] The Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program is often referred to as the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program as well. In the community I am working with, the young participants also refer to the program as Rec and Read. For the simplicity of the term, the program will be referred to as the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) throughout this thesis.

[2] I include a W in w(holistic) health as I am considering the whole person.

[3] The teachings of mino-bimaadiziwin (living in a good way) are also considered in the research. Mino-bimaadiziwin is an Anishinaabe word and teaching for living in a good way and has connections to the Cree word mino-pimatisiwin.

pimatisiwin/mino-bimaadiziwin, and the medicine wheel. I believe that my study contributes to moving forward in reconciliation as I am sharing the stories of Indigenous community members and Indigenous youth. These stories can be shared with the next generation of program participants and can help in reclaiming our Indigenous culture and traditional knowledge systems. The stories and research shared also contribute to moving physical activity program analysis to a wholistic model that honors the participants' physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program members from Thompson, Manitoba. I would like to thank Barb Carlson, Madeline Ponask, Alexis Halverson, Danessa Beardy, and Kya*[4] for their trust, participation, sharing, collaboration, and support in my research.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Dr. jay johnson, and my committee members Dr. Daniel Henhawk and Dr. Kate Storey, for supporting me throughout this process. Thank you for your guidance, encouragement and positive support. jay, thank you for your ongoing support as my advisor, for answering every email and phone call, and for making the trips to Thompson with me to ensure I always felt supported. Kate, thank you for your knowledge, your amazing positive energy and your guidance. Dan, thank you for constantly encouraging me to continue to decolonize my mind and my ways of knowing and being, for asking the tough questions, and for continually encouraging me to have patience with myself as an Indigenous woman reclaiming her culture, identity, and finding her way.

I would like to thank Dr. Jonathon McGavock for hiring me as a Student Research Assistant in 2018 and allowing me to be involved with such an amazing program. Thank you to Tamara Beardy and Nika Klaprat and all the staff at the Children's Hospital Research Institute for your ongoing support throughout my research process and for helping me when I needed it.

To Dr. Heather McRae, my mentor and friend. Thank you for your guidance and support throughout my master's degree and for being a strong, hard-working Indigenous woman that I could constantly look up to. Your dedication to your work and the people you work with is

[4] For individuals who desired them, pseudonym names are followed by an asterisk to identify persons throughout this thesis

inspirational. Thank you for the many talks, books, and for walking this journey with me. Our friendship will forever hold a special place in my heart. Kinanâskomitin.

Thank you to everyone in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management Qualitative Lab for the critical discussions, caring support, and for simply asking how my day was going. It was small gestures of kindness like this that made my master's experience something extremely special. Thank you to my Migizii Agamik family for welcoming me into the circle and being for welcoming me into a place I could call home. You all helped in allowing me to feel a sense of belonging and have a safe space to reconnect to my culture.

Thank you to my parents Gail and Roger, sisters Janelle and Brittney, partner Braden, and all our family and close friends for their ongoing support, encouragement, and love. Words will never be able to explain the love and gratitude I feel for these people.

Finally, I would like to thank the University of Manitoba, Research Canada, and Indspire for providing funding during my degree.

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Appendix B: Rec and Read Theoretical Model

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Appendix C: Grounded Theory Framework for how AYMP supports well-being and reduces T2D risk among Indigenous youth

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Chapter 1: Where We Begin (Introduction)

The Beginning of my Story

Before delving into my thesis, I would like to first situate myself within my own research. I am a Métis woman, my Anishinaabe ancestry coming from my father's side. I was born at St. Boniface hospital in Manitoba but spent the early years of my life in Northwestern Ontario. Along with my father, mother, and sisters, we moved to St. Clements, Manitoba, when I was seven years old. Here, I grew up on eighty acres outside of the small village of Garson. Between my life in Ontario and rural Manitoba, my deep connection with the land was strong, and I found comfort and enjoyment in fishing, gardening, and going for walks in the bush. Throughout my life, I always identified as Indigenous and Métis when asked, "what are you?" but never fully understood my culture. When I was attending high school in Selkirk, I started to attend Indigenous ceremonies like the school's Pow Wow, where I began to learn about my culture from Elders and community Knowledge Keepers. Despite the insight over time of learning about my culture and the sense of identity this instilled, I still felt a sense of disconnect to my Anishinaabe/Métis heritage.

In May 2018, while I was taking a year off between my bachelor's degree and starting my Master's, I was hired as a Research Assistant for the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP). Through the development of relationships with Indigenous youth, community members, and Elders, I began to better understand Indigenous cultures, and it is then that I began my personal journey to become deeply connected with my cultural identity as an Indigenous woman. In September 2018, I returned to the University of Manitoba to complete my Master of Arts degree with the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management. I intended to do work similar to that of my research position with IYMP as I had a passion for the qualitative

community-centred work we were doing with Indigenous communities. While completing my course work over my first year, I read extensively about Indigenous ways of knowing and being and focused on research that aimed to decolonize the western system and my western-dominant mind and current knowledge. I was encouraged by my Indigenous committee member, Dr. Henhawk, to reflect not only on what I was reading but how this made me feel and how I was experiencing the decolonized foreign knowledge. At the time, I was not fully aware of why I was encouraged to do this, but throughout my process of growing, I now understand that he wanted me to interpret the knowledge wholistically. While working closely with Dr. Henhawk, I was encouraged to complete autoethnographic reflections of how I felt being immersed in my culture more than I had ever been before. Autoethnography is an approach within ethnographical research that, "brings together the study of the self (auto) in relation to culture (ethnography)" (Kovach, 2009, p.33). Kovach identifies that the self-reflection of autoethnography moves past the superficial method of field notes and has a significant position in the process and construction of knowledge. I was encouraged to move past the superficial, past the westernize-norms of knowledge and research process and go to the center of myself for answers. My personal preparations and reflections involved *miskâsowin* - a Cree word that means to go to the center of yourself to find your own belonging (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p.21).

From the beginning of the research process, I have reflected on the knowledge that was obtained from readings, Indigenous scholars, community members, and Elders, and reflected on my experiences as a Métis woman conducting research in a westernized institution. I reflected on my process of attempting to decolonize my mind, find space for Indigenous knowledges and ways of being, and implementing this into not only my research but my everyday life. The process of decolonizing my mind did not just happen from reading articles and books written by

Indigenous peoples. Learning occurred through weekly teachings from Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers from Dakota, Anishinaabe, Ojibwe, Métis, and Cree backgrounds, from sitting with community members and hearing about their life experiences, through ceremonies such as smudging, and through attending culturally relevant programming like the University of Manitoba Pow Wow Practice Group. Knowledge was all around me during this process, and I knew to do my research in a good way, I needed to immerse myself in my culture and begin my personal journey of reclamation. At times, an anti-oppressive approach was used where my self-reflection was critically reflexive, and I had to examine my location and privilege. I had to identify that I came from a place of privilege and that I was visibly white. Although I proudly identify as Indigenous and Métis, I knew that because of my light skin, people could not discriminate against me based on the color of my skin. I had to identify that I came from a family who supported me, who spent money on sports, recreation, and educational opportunities throughout my life and that I was amongst the smaller percentage of Indigenous peoples completing a graduate degree. All of these things, which I so blindly accepted as the norm before, were now labelled in my mind as privilege. All preparation and choices that needed to be made regarding my thesis were now grounded not only in the vast knowledges I was obtaining from Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community members and scholars, but in my own personal experiences of being a developing person, reclaiming her lost culture.

Although many reflections, thoughts, and feelings were written over the past two years, many of the feelings I expressed in my first year of learning came in the metaphor of water. I expressed what it felt like being exposed to this new knowledge and ways of being that had never been incorporated into my life before. Knowledge lost due to assimilation, colonization, and intergenerational trauma. A knowledge and way of being that involve my peoples, our

traditions, and our culture. A knowledge that I felt was minimal if not completely absent in my previous life and academic experiences. The way I felt, and the battles I had to overcome to get to the stage of my thesis proposal are expressed below. This metaphor was not written in a single day, but over several months where learning, reclaiming my culture and finding my new self occurred.

I have always feared water. What lies beneath the surface? What might suck you under if you go too deep? Will you ever be able to come back up for air, or will you drown because you were too confident? Too curious? You went too far under. You went too deep.

Being exposed to Indigenous knowledges, ways of being, and perspectives – it felt like an ocean — a body of water too big to swim across and navigate. At times, I felt as though I had been taken to the center of this ocean and dropped in, surrounded by nothing but water. Trying to swim. Trying to survive.

And that is what it feels like - like waves hitting you. Each chapter, each reading, each time someone says that this westernized colonized society needs to be recognized and grappled with. Each time someone talks about decolonizing the colonized. It is like a wave, a wave that hits you, sucks you under, takes your breath. Drowning, silent to the world, screaming underwater. All these thoughts stuck inside my mind. The answer. Where is the answer? Is there an answer, or am I just drowning?

My head is above water. Today I am not struggling. But how much longer can I be here and tread while others swim? How much longer can each wave hit me before I sink under? A life float? No, a turtle with a back so big I can rest and be carried. Relief has come. I no longer have to swim. I finally get a break from treading in these waters…at least for today.

While I rest on its back, the turtle talks to me. He tells me about his shell and its meanings. The story of Turtle Island. Our history, our peoples, and what others are doing to reclaim our cultures. He tells me why he took me out of the water for now. To rest. To refocus. "This is a process," he says. "Have patience."

Once I am back in the water, the waves continue to hit. At times, I am pulled under, reaching for the surface. At times, I am strong enough to overcome the waves. I am getting stronger. I am learning. I am changing. I am becoming who I was meant to be. I know I am.

The water is calm, clear. The sun beams down on me and warms my face. This is the first time I feel as if I am floating without struggle, without help. I am surviving. No, I am thriving in the water. The storm is over, and the waves have settled. The water is calm, and my mind is clear. I know that this isn't the end, that there will be days when the water is more challenging, where I have trouble staying afloat. When times of trial like these come, I must remember my friend, the turtle, and the support he lent me in a time of needed strength and guidance. Chi-Miigwetch.

This was the process and the journey I went through to get to October 2019, when I went before my committee and colleagues to propose what I was going to do with my research. This presentation not only outlined how I was going to work with community, but how I had changed over the past year, and how I walked through life differently as an Indigenous woman reclaiming her culture. At this time, I knew my journey was only beginning and that I had to continue to work at decolonizing my mind and understand a new way of knowing and being. At times throughout the process, the task felt almost impossible as I was being pulled in two directions – one way by the decolonized Indigenous knowledges and ways of being and another by the westernized colonized world that was all once too familiar.

It was not until I read "Two-Eyed Seeing: Physical Activity, Sport, and Recreation Promotion in Indigenous Communities" by Dr. Lynn Lavallée and Dr. Lucie Lévesque that I understood my position as an Indigenous person completing research in a westernized context. Two-eyed seeing is a term coined by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013). With two-eyed seeing, a person can see the world through two perspectives, an Indigenous perspective and a Western or European perspective (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013). Lavallée and Lévesque identify that the term Western refers to "the dominant ideology of the Western Hemisphere," and the term Indigenous refers to "the ideology traced to the earliest known peoples of a geographical region" (2013, p.206). Through two-eyed seeing, researchers incorporate the strengths of both Indigenous and Western perspectives and create a hybridized understanding of how to address issues without one perspective dominating the other (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013). By using this framework in my everyday life and in my research, I was able to integrate both Indigenous and Western perspectives to understand the world around me. This

allowed me to navigate the waters of Indigenous and Western research more smoothly, not allowing one knowledge system to overtake the other.

In my research, the framework of two-eyed seeing allowed me to understand how Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples participating in IYMP experience mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin (live in a good way/live the good life) while acknowledging and understanding the colonial impact on Indigenous peoples' health and well-being. While there are many variations of this concept in other languages and cultures, mino-bimaadiziwin is an Anishinaabe term that means "living in a good way" (Debassige, 2010) and mino-pimatisiwin is a Cree word with a similar meaning translating to "the good life" (Hart, 2002). These concepts incorporate a wholistic approach that involves the mind, body, and spirit of an individual and is the reason I have also incorporated the medicine wheel teachings into my research framework.

Introduction to the Research

Since 2010, the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) has been implemented in various Indigenous communities across Canada. Beginning in Garden Hill First Nation, Manitoba, IYMP has rippled to 21 communities across Canada (Alberta Mentors, 2018; IYMP Community Newsletter, 2020). IYMP was created with a focus on the reduction and prevention of type 2 diabetes (T2D) and obesity in Indigenous communities (AYMP, 2016). The program also focuses on many aspects of living a healthy life such as Indigenous language and culture, healthy choices and coping skills, education, life-long learning, the social environment, one's identity, mentorship, reciprocal relationships, and healthy child development (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016). The program is delivered by Indigenous high school mentors to Indigenous elementary-aged students, and mentorship is viewed as multi-directional and circular within the program (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016). This means that in the mentorship

program, everyone has something to teach and learn from one another and mentorship and learning are not defined by a hierarchy. The program is overseen by at least one community or teacher champion who is identified as the Young Adult Health Leader (YAHL). This program is designed to improve Indigenous youths' wholistic health through specific program components that target their physical, emotional, spiritual and social (mental) health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016). IYMP is guided by the Circle of Courage® and the 4 R's of child education (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1990; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The Circle of Courage® includes belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity (Brendtro et al., 1990) while the 4 R's include respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

Throughout the many years that the program has been running, the focus of the research has shifted from the quantitative measures of the reduction of T2D and obesity, to mixed methods approaches (Eskicioglu, 2015), to components that now focus on the qualitative experiences and assessment of the program (Canadian Institute of Health Research, Pathways 3 Grant, 2019-2024; Rusnak, 2018). As stated earlier, I began my position as a Research Assistant with the program in May 2018. My community-centred research has focused on the areas of mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin (living in a good way/living the good life) with Indigenous youth in various communities through the method of photovoice. Exploring mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin with IYMP communities was identified as a priority in our Pathways 3 grant, which was approved by the Canadian Institute of Health Research in 2018 for funding (CIHR, 2019-2024). Over the past two years, I have worked with three IYMP communities (Sagkeeng First Nation, Sandy Bay First Nation, and Thompson) on photovoice projects that are centred around mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin. Using photovoice as their

approach to storytelling, mentors were encouraged to take pictures representing the mentorship program in their community and take pictures that they felt reflected living a good life/the good life. Sharing circles were held, which gave mentors a chance to share their favourite photos and stories of mentorship with each other and us. The discussions in the sharing circles were centred around mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin, and youth discussed their health beyond the reduction and prevention of T2D and obesity. Throughout our time of sharing, mentors discussed their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health and how they felt they were living their lives in a good way.

My thesis work expands on the stories of the mentors in Thompson and incorporates the stories of the YAHLs. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my original plan to incorporate the mentees' voices with the YAHLS and mentors did not occur. My inability to recruit mentees was due to the Province of Manitoba's state of emergency regulations including travel restrictions to and from the North, as well as the inability to secure any virtual participation in the study from the mentees whom I had not been able to interview at that point in my study yet. Although I was unable to incorporate the thoughts, perspectives and stories of the mentees, by including the mentors and YAHLs, I was able to gain perspectives from two of the three main types of participants in IYMP. The study is unique to Pathways 2 and 3 (CIHR, 2019-2024), in comparison to earlier studies with IYMP, which focused only on one subset of program participants (Eskicioglu, 2015; Rusnak, 2018). The research I have conducted has gone beyond analyzing the reduction and prevention of T2D and obesity and explores the wholistic health benefits of the program in a culturally relevant and respectful way. Throughout the process, I incorporated wholism into my research, which considered the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health of the program participants. By considering all three types of participants in my

research and being able to include two of them in the research study, my research gives a wholistic perspective of the program. My research also shows the impact on each level of participant and helps tell parts of the collective story of IYMP in Thompson. My previous involvement in IYMP as a research assistant allowed me to build relationships with Indigenous youth, community members, teachers, and Elders over the past two years. Carpenter, Rothney, Mousseau, Halas and Forsyth (2008) identify that relationship building is extremely important when working with Indigenous communities. Therefore, throughout the research process, I ensured that I was building my research with a community that I had previously worked with and built reciprocal relationships with. This allowed a level of comfort with many of the participants and a sense of familiarity and belonging to be felt by both myself and the participants I was working with.

Objectives

In my research, in collaboration with IYMP participants in Thompson, Manitoba I have explored the benefits of IYMP and if and how it promotes mino-pimatisiwin/mino-bimaadiziwin. As previously stated, these words come from the Cree/Anishinaabe language and mean to live a good life and live life in a good way. Living in a good way is often defined by a balance within the health of an individual, including their mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical health. The four areas of health listed above also link to the four directions and the medicine wheel teachings, which will later be explained. Living in a good way also involves relationships with others, including but not limited to family, friends, Creator, and the land.

To explore the wholistic impacts of the program, I felt it was important to understand the lived experience of its participants. As stated previously, much of the prior research on the program has focused on the reduction of obesity and T2D. Through my research, I intended to

extend the focus of health and analyze the impacts of the program from a wholistic health perspective. In collaboration with IYMP participants in Thompson, the YAHLs and mentors participating in the program identified that they wanted to be able to express how they felt the program has affected their lives and how it promoted living their lives in a good way. Using the framework of two-eyed seeing, westernized and Indigenous methodologies and methods are used in my research design, which gave IYMP members the opportunity to share their experiences in a culturally relevant, inclusive, shared, and respectful way. To be inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing, dreams, visions, and intuitions were considered valid forms of knowledge, and the semi-structured interviews were open-ended to promote storytelling and sharing (Lavallée, 2007; 2009).

Research Question

The research questions I pursued were, “how does the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) promote mino-pimatisiwin amongst all levels of participants in the program (YAHLs, mentors, mentees)?” and “how does IYMP help participants to live life in a good way wholistically?" The two-part question enabled me to not only examine how the program in promoted living in a good way or living a good life but how it also helped the Thompson program participants to live life in a more wholistic way. Living wholistically is important in various Indigenous cultures as it focuses on the individual's physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being. By focusing on more than the physical health and the reduction of obesity and T2D, I explored the mental, spiritual, and emotional benefits of the program for all types of participants and further explored if there was an impact on the greater community. Note that due to COVID-19 restrictions, I was unable to include the mentee in the first research question listed above, and the participants in this study included the YAHLs and high school mentors.

I believed that by understanding the lived experience of the IYMP participants that this would offer a better, more wholistic understanding of the Indigenous participants' experiences and the impacts the program had on the individuals and their community. Studies on the lived experience allow the researcher to understand how an experience emerges based on material, social, economic and cultural conditions for various perspectives (Olesen, 2005 cited in Parry & Johnson, 2007). Throughout the research process, the personal experiences of participants had no claim to universality. By having no claim to universality, Indigenous peoples are respected for who they are, what their experiences are, and how their culture contributes to how they walk through life (Brant Castellano, 2000). Going into the research, it was anticipated that the program promoted wholistic health benefits in various ways, encouraged and supported relationship building, promoted a sense of community, and encouraged the program participants to live in a good way/live the good life.

Rationale

In discussions with IYMP members, including the YAHLs, high school mentors and researchers, mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin were identified as significant wholistic concepts that wanted to be explored with participants in the program. IYMP has been running in Thompson since 2014, and previous research on other Northern mentorship programs have shown that the program reduces Indigenous youths' risk of obesity and T2D (Eskicioglu et al., 2014; Eskicioglu, 2015). Now, the participants in the programs are interested in exploring the wholistic benefits of the program, not only at the individual level but at the community level as well.

By focusing on mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin, the perceived mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health benefits of the program were expressed by the participants. I believe

my study is important because I moved past the western paradigm of health and focused on the culturally relevant wholistic health outcomes for IYMP participants. By using Indigenous languages and incorporating the concepts of mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin in my research, participants were able to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions and link this to their Indigenous cultures and self.

I define the western paradigm of health through the World Health Organization (WHO), which states, “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1946). It should be noted that this definition of health, one in which I define as the western paradigm of health, has not been amended since 1948. The dated definition of health fails to include emotional and spiritual health in its definition, and it also neglects the community impact (e.g. family and friends) on one’s health in the description. This takes away the community's impact on an individual’s health and fails to acknowledge the supportive surroundings that can impact an individual’s health. Before defining wholistic health and its meaning, it is essential first to define the concept of (w)holism[5]. (W)holism can be described as, "coming to know the whole through learning as much as possible about the parts" (Throne, 2004, p. 261). Johnson & Halas (2011) outline that wholistic health involves internal aspects such as the body, mind and spirit as well as external aspects such as family support and community connection. Hawks (2004) identifies that in a wholistic model of health, spiritual health, emotional health, and social health affect physical and intellectual health. Within wholistic health, the four areas of health including the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical are considered and a balance between these areas must be achieved.

[5] Thorne (2001) as well as other authors in this section spells wholism without a W. To ensure proper referencing, wholism has been written as (w)holism in certain areas of this section.

Reflexivity – my place in this study

My place in this study is unique as an Indigenous person because throughout the research process I have been on my own journey of self-discovery and cultural reclamation. Over the past two years, I have continuously worked on decolonizing my mind, my thoughts, and my ways of being. I have learned about my culture from other Indigenous peoples and through ceremonies. I have learned what it feels like to be an Indigenous person in a westernized context, trying to reclaim her culture, and to face life situations and my research with two-eyed seeing. I bring an open mind and heart to my study and have positioned myself as a learner of and as a messenger for the Indigenous peoples who facilitate and participate in the program in Thompson. Throughout this time, I have come to know that keeping stories intact and sharing them orally is an important tradition for Indigenous peoples. Therefore, I chose a method of data collection that promoted storytelling and allowed the participants to express themselves more openly. Through the sharing of experiences and knowledges, I told the stories shared with me and interpreted the stories in a culturally relevant way in the discussion section. The stories written remained as close to the stories shared as possible which allows the results section of this thesis to act as a legacy for the program participants in Thompson and for the greater IYMP family. It is my hope that my research will teach individuals in other communities and institutions about wholistic health and what it means to live in a good way from an Indigenous perspective. It is also my hope that the sharing of stories in this thesis will promote more storytelling amongst IYMP members and youth programming. Youth, especially youth from marginalized backgrounds, should be given the opportunity to voice their story in a safe space. By sharing their story, youth will feel important, valued, and build a greater sense of belonging to programs and people.

IYMP and its wholistic benefits were analyzed from a two-eyed seeing perspective, which allowed for both Indigenous and Western benefits of the program to be highlighted. I believe this is a step in the direction of decolonizing our minds and practices as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples when thinking about health and health promotion programming. I believe that this thesis contributed to our understanding of what it means to live in mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin and be able to come together as peoples under *etuaptmumk* or two-eyed seeing (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013). By using two-eyed seeing, both Indigenous and Western knowledges and ways of knowing are valued, and I was able to see and value the world from both perspectives equally (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013).

Chapter 2: Gaining Knowledge (Literature Review)

With guidance from my thesis committee members, I conducted the following literature review search using the University of Manitoba Library's One Stop Search Database. Keywords that were used during the search were *Indigenous, Aboriginal, Colonization, Mentorship, Youth, Mentor, Wholistic Health, Medicine Wheel, Mino-bimaadiziwin,* and *Mino-Pimatisiwin*. Years of publication ranged from 1946 to 2020. All literature was written in English, and some of the literature incorporated Cree or Anishinaabe language. Although the University of Manitoba Search Database was used in my search for literature, I also consulted with Indigenous community members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and academics to see if they knew of any literature that would contribute to my research study. Through the sharing of books, teachings, and wisdom, I gained knowledge on topics relevant to my research, but also on lessons relevant to my cultural reclamation journey as an Indigenous woman.

To begin my literature review, I first wanted to understand the history of Indigenous peoples. I looked towards literature that discussed the colonization of Indigenous peoples, the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), and how Indigenous peoples are still affected by acts of attempted genocide today. I knew that before understanding Indigenous peoples and their various ways of knowing and being, that I had to understand the history that affected our peoples and that continually causes intergenerational trauma, injustices, and disparities to this day. Once I understood the history and current effects of colonization, I immersed myself in literature discussing Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. Growing up in a westernized and colonized context, I had to read literature that would decolonize my thoughts and promote my understanding of the various Indigenous ways of living and walking through life. As an Indigenous person, I was aware of some of these ways of

walking through life in a good way but turned to transformative literature, Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and educators to become fully immersed and engaged. During this time of cultural discovery, I also learned Indigenous ways of knowing and being from Indigenous Elders, youth, and community members.

I then read studies involving westernized health promotion programs involving Indigenous peoples and also culturally relevant research and programs that were put in place to improve Indigenous peoples' wholistic health. Some of these resources were directly related to programs such as IYMP, while others were from other Indigenous health-based initiatives across Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. There were also studies not related to specific programs, but initiatives that guided researchers to the conclusion of a need for culturally relevant programs for Indigenous peoples. Some of these programs were desirable for Indigenous youth for various reasons, such as to excel in sport, education, to overcome addiction problems, and to live a healthier life (Mohajer, Bessarab, & Earnest, 2009). The two Indigenous-based mentorship programs in Manitoba, Rec and Read Mentorship Program for all Nations (Rec and Read) and the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) were studied, and discussions on how and why the programs were developed, the positive effects associated with the programs, and the need for the programs' long-term sustainability are included. Research studies involving both programs are also included in the literature review. Due to the nature of my study and its focus on mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin, I also focused on literature and teachings about what each concept meant. To further support my focus on living the good life and living in a good way, I have also incorporated literature involving teachings on wholistic health and medicine wheel.

Colonization

To understand Indigenous peoples, it is important to understand the history of Indigenous peoples and the various forms of assimilation and colonization in which Indigenous peoples went through and still deal with today. To many people, colonization links closely to residential schools, but there are many other forms of colonization which impacted Indigenous peoples. Gandhi defines colonialism as the historical process whereby the 'west' attempts to systematically cancel or negate the cultural differences and value of the 'non-west' (Gandhi, 1998 as cited in Hart, 2009, p.26). Researchers further identify that the current realities are shaped by the historical past (Courchene, Robillard, Carpenter, & Halas., 2018).

In 1857, the *Act for the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in the Canadas* was implemented. Under this act, Indigenous men in Ontario and Quebec who were fluent in English or French, who were free of debt, and of 'good character' could receive full citizenship, 50 acres of reserve land, and a share of band funds (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). This act was termed 'enfranchisement' although it did not give these individuals the right to vote. Since the enfranchised person would not be deemed an Indian[6] in legal terms, the federal government expected that with each enfranchisement, the number of Indigenous peoples identifying would decline, and the reserve size would be reduced (TRC, 2012). Just over two decades later, the *Indian Act* was established in 1876. Under this act, the federal government took control over Indigenous peoples' government, economy, religion, land, and education (TRC, 2012). This hurt Indigenous farmers as they were not allowed to sell their products without the approval from an Indian Agent. Indigenous peoples were prohibited from participating in sacred ceremonies such as the Potlatch and the Sun Dance, they could not own their own land, and they

[6] In the document, Indigenous peoples are referred to as Indian as this was the term used for our people during this time.

could not take advantage of any property opportunities offered to other Canadians (TRC, 2012). The TRC identifies that the links between enfranchisement and residential schools were made evident in 1920 when the federal government amended *the Indian Act* to allow for Indigenous peoples to be enfranchised without their consent and require Indigenous children to attend residential school. Residential schools were established to meet the federal government's obligations to provide schools, but they were ultimately established to further the government's long-term goal of ending Canada's treaty obligations by assimilating Indigenous peoples (TRC, 2012). Put simply, residential schools were put in place to train Indigenous youth to work in a white man's economy.

Residential Schools

In 2012, the TRC published a document titled *They Came for the Children: Aboriginal Peoples, and Residential Schools*. This document was one of the many ways in which the Commission informed the world about what happened in residential schools in Canada. The document and other documents that followed, allowed people to read about the history of the residential schools and understand their legacy, and to participate in the work of reconciliation. The TRC identified that residential schools caused multiple forms of damage to Indigenous children, their families, culture, as well as on their Indigenous self-governance and self-sustainment (TRC, 2012). Residential schools began in 1883 when Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald moved a measure through the cabinet authorizing the creation of three residential schools. Throughout the residential school history, there were over 150 schools, with the last residential school closing in 1996 (TRC, 2012). The TRC states, "the purpose of the residential school system was to separate children from the influence of their parents and their community so as to destroy their culture" (2012, p.1). The schools formed were operated by religious

organizations (TRC, 2012). The government and church officials thought that the role of residential schools was to civilize and Christianize Indigenous children, which resulted in the assault on Indigenous cultures, languages, spiritual beliefs, and practices (TRC, 2012). These schools and the system they functioned under were central to the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Along with First Nations and Inuit children, Métis children also attended residential schools. The Métis children, defined as coming from mixed ancestries, played a role in bridging the two cultures (TRC, 2012). Although the churches often accepted Métis children into residential schools, the federal government was more reluctant and preferred to limit its support to children that were defined as status Indians. Funding for Métis students was soon deemed unnecessary as they were described as 'sufficiently civilized' and ultimately not the federal government's responsibility (TRC, 2012). Métis students that were enrolled in the residential school system were being replaced by First Nations students, and by 1934, representatives from the federal government identified that no Métis student could be admitted to a residential school (TRC, 2012). Indigenous children were assigned names that reflected a new Christian identity with a corresponding number that assigned them to their clothing, bedding, and locker. The children were stripped of their home-clothing, and braids that are symbolic of Indigenous culture were cut off. Female and male students were strictly segregated regardless if they were family. The lives of the students were highly ordered and disciplined. Some students involved in sports, music, drama and dance expressed that these activities helped them maintain a sense of their own value and were identified as a source of strength later in life (TRC, 2012).

Until the 1950s, the schools ran under a half-day-system (TRC, 2012). This allowed older students to spend half their day in the classroom while the other half of the day was spent on 'vocational' training. This was free labour for the school as female students prepared meals,

cleaned and repaired clothing, while the male students farmed, raised animals, conducted repairs, and fixed shoes. Sexual abuse and physical abuse were prevalent in residential schools. The TRC (2012) states, “in an underfunded, under-supervised system, there was little to protect children from predators” (p.45). Students running away from residential schools was not an uncommon act. Out of the students that were successful in their escape, many died on their journey. For those students that were caught, the punishment was harsh, and students were often made an example of in front of the entire school through repercussions such as violent strokes with a whip (TRC, 2012). Death rates were high at residential schools. The TRC identified that the reasons for high death rates included poor and crowded accommodations, and the disruption of the child's relationship with the environment, increasing the child's stress levels. Reports indicate that between 1888 and 1905, 1537 students had been admitted to schools, and nearly 25% had died, with one of the schools reporting that 69% of their students had died (TRC, 2012). The most common cause of death among residential school students and the staff was tuberculosis (TRC, 2012).

The TRC explained that perhaps if the schools only operated for only one or two generations, that the system’s impact would be far less destructive (TRC, 2012). The longstanding cultures, belief systems, laws, economies and social organizations created by Indigenous peoples were stripped by the residential school system, causing not only trauma among the residential school students but intergenerational trauma among their descendants. Residential school survivors have come forward expressing their challenges of showing love to others, even immediate family members. Other residential school survivors have discussed their inability to successfully parent as the abuse they received in residential schools was perceived as the norm (TRC, 2012). The intergenerational trauma associated with residential schools was

highlighted in the ‘sixties scoop’ when there was a significant increase in the number of Indigenous children apprehended by child welfare agencies. In 1970, when the Indigenous population only accounted for 4% of the total population, 30-40% of children in care were of Indigenous status (TRC, 2012). This shows that the legacy of residential schools continued long after the schools had closed. The impact of abuse continued for Indigenous peoples long after the abuse of residential school children had stopped. Children of these residential schools were denied proper recovery, as support from their family and community were taken away because of residential schools. The reality of residential schools provides a horrific example of what happens when individuals and moreover entire groups are disconnected from their culture and their ancestral stories. Children in residential schools were not allowed to speak their traditional language or practice their culture; therefore, they lost the ability to understand their ancestral past through the stories of their traditional peoples (Davis, 2014). Lavallée (2007) further identifies that historical trauma as a result of colonization and acts of assimilation has also created a void in Indigenous peoples’ respect for their culture and racial identifies and has affected their overall ability to become healthy.

The last residential school closed in 1996, and it is estimated that there are 80,0000 residential school survivors presently living in Canada (CBC, 2015 cited in Johnson & Ali, 2019). It is important to highlight this as it relates to our understanding of why approximately more than fifty percent of all foster children under the age of four identify as Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2018). In the 2016 Statistics Canada census, less than 40% of Métis peoples earned a university or college degree, and 18% did not complete their high school diploma. This is significant to highlight, as it showcases that under half of my people have had the opportunities that I have had. This situates me in a place of Indigenous privilege compared to my

kin. I share this information not to boast about my education, but to show the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples when it comes to access to post-secondary education.

In 1986, the United Churches of Canada issued an apology for its attempt to impose European culture and values on Indigenous peoples (TRC, 2012). Starting in the mid-1990s, former students of residential schools began making claims for compensation for abuse experienced while attending residential school. By 2002, over 12,000 former residential school students had filed claims (TRC, 2012). In 2006, the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement*, which was the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history, was formed. Sanctioned in 2007, the settlement resulted in the compensation payment for any former residential school resident that could verify their attendance at one or more of the schools listed in the settlement agreement. On June 11, 2018, Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada at the time, publicly apologized to all former residential school students on behalf of Canadians (TRC, 2012). In his statement, Harper acknowledged that the primary purpose of the residential schools was to remove Indigenous children from their homes and families and to assimilate them into the dominant (Eurocentric) culture (TRC, 2015a).

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

When the (TRC) was established, its mandate and tasks were as follows:

> Reveal to Canada the complex truth about the history and ongoing legacy of the church-run residential schools, in a manner that fully documents the individual and collective harms perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples and honors the resilience and courage of former students, their families, and communities. Guide and inspire a process of truth and healing, leading towards reconciliation within Aboriginal families, and between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal communities, churches, governments, and Canadians generally (p.27).

The TRC held seven national events and gathered documents and statements about residential schools and their legacy; recommended commemoration initiatives to the federal

government for funding; set up the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) at the University of Manitoba that permanently houses the Commission's records, documents and acts as a living legacy of the Commission's work; and issued a report with recommendations (TRC, 2015a). It was and still is the TRC's responsibility to guide a process of national reconciliation. The TRC states, "the appointment of this Commission marks not the end of the residential school story, but recognition by a growing number of Canadians of the need to address the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canada" (2012, p.83).

In 2015, the TRC published the report *Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*. This document highlighted many aspects discussed in the 2012 document, but further expanded on the future of reconciliation (TRC, 2015a). The TRC identifies that reconciliation is established and maintained through mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. For reconciliation to occur, there needs to be an acknowledgment of the past and what happened, understanding of the harm that has been inflicted on Indigenous peoples, and changed behaviour towards reconciliation (TRC, 2015a). The TRC states, "reconciliation is not about 'closing a sad chapter of Canada's past, but about opening new healing pathways of reconciliation that are forged in truth and justice" (2015a, p.12).

The document titled *Calls to Action* was published by the TRC in 2015. Within this document, there are 94 Calls to Action urging various levels of government (federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous), churches and organizations to work in conjunction to change policies and programs currently in place with the intention of repairing the intergenerational trauma and harm caused by the residential school system (TRC, 2015b). The document outlines the steps needed to be taken to move forward in reconciliation. In the document, the TRC stresses that reconciliation cannot be left to a single group and that reconciliation must be in the form of

dialogue and action in all communities across Canada and be prevalent in each sector of Canadian society (TRC, 2015a). Through all three documents outlined, the TRC urges Canada and its citizens to move forward with Indigenous peoples in the spirit of reconciliation.

There are various TRC Calls to Action that link to my research, including Calls to Action that fall within the section of Education, Language and Culture, Health, Youth Programs and Sport and Reconciliation (TRC, 2015b). Under the Education section, Calls to Action #10 and #12 relate to IYMP through their program framework and implementation. In IYMP, although there are not curricula as stated in Call to Action #10, the program content and framework are culturally appropriate and significant. Although not a course credit, many mentorship programs across Canada incorporate traditional Indigenous languages where possible in the program. Regarding Call to Action #12, IYMP aids in providing culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Indigenous families, especially to the youth and high school mentors. Under the Language and Culture section, Call to Action #14 calls upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal language act that incorporates the preservation, revitalization and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures and is stated that it is best managed by Aboriginal peoples and communities (TRC, 2015b, p.2). IYMP is a program run by the Indigenous community for the Indigenous community. In the program, each community follows the underlying framework of the Circle of Courage® and 4 R's but there is not a one size fits all approach and each community is different in their program implementation. As previously stated, language is incorporated in the program by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members. Under the Health section of the TRC Calls to Action, I feel that #19 and #20 link to the mentorship program. Although IYMP is not linked to the federal government, the program focuses on the reduction and prevention of T2D and obesity. It has been proven that the program

helps reduce weight gain and contributes to the overall prevention of T2D (Eskicioglu et al., 2014; Eskicioglu, 2015). This helps close the gap in health, especially health-related issues linked to chronic disease. Call to Action #20 links to programs that are in urban areas such as Thompson, where there is not one specific nation but a mixture of nations. In the *Calls to Action* document, what I do question is under the section titled Youth Program. In this section, I question why there is not a call to action related to culturally relevant and accessible community programming. I believe that this is a gap within the Calls to Action and I think that this is something that could be added to future calls to action to promote culturally relevant community programs that honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Call to Action #89 under the Sport and Reconciliation section is partially about supporting reconciliation by ensuring that policies promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being (TRC, 2015b, p.10). This strongly links to the mentorship program as it promotes physical activity and encourages participants to be active and eat healthy.

Corntassel (2009) states that meaningful reconciliation must confront not only the history of colonization but also confront the ongoing process that continues to impact present generations of Indigenous peoples. Corntassel critiques the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreemen*t and states that it was designed to fit within a Western model of justice. In this system, Indigenous peoples have been able to seek compensation, predominately financially for their losses, but have a harder time reclaiming their traditional culture and sovereignty. Lavallée (2007) identifies that trauma associated with Indigenous peoples' histories has disconnected them from their traditional beliefs and value systems. Due to colonization, Indigenous peoples were forced to give up their languages, and because of this, many Indigenous peoples in Canada now have English as their first language (Kovach, 2009). Although some people may see this as

a benefit as English is the common language amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of today, it is disheartening to say that the similarity in language has not increased the communication and cultural understanding of Indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2009). Fitznor (1998) states, “our youth need to be re-integrated into the Aboriginal circle of life with pride and honor while living without the pain of racism, rejection and alienation they experience from conflicts in the dominant culture” (p.33). Absolon (2011) identifies that colonization, assimilation, oppression, and racism have disremembered individuals, families, communities and nations. She further states that wholistic worldviews can reconnect Indigenous peoples as these worldviews can foster and facilitate healing searches and relationships (Absolon, 2011).

Lavallée (2007) explains that the damage of colonial research frameworks extends beyond research and the academic setting and further states that research is an extension of the colonized system and has the ability to remit trauma onto Indigenous peoples. This settler-colonial knowledge system of ideals is enforced and reinforced in the education system by privileging Eurocentric knowledges, ideals and scholarship. This delivery of materials diminishes Indigenous ways of knowing, being and truth-telling (Johnson & Ali, 2019). A study by Silver and Mallet (2002) showed Indigenous cultures and realities were not present in the high school curriculum and that Indigenous students experienced overt displays of racism. There has been and continues to be long-standing exploitation of Indigenous peoples in research which shows the need for participatory elements and decolonizing research processes (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Simonds and Christopher (2013) highlight that Indigenous communities and researchers have voiced various concerns with research and that Western methods and theories are characterized as ‘true science' which categorizes Indigenous methods and theories as the other and less superior. Simonds and Christopher (2013) identify that research with Indigenous

peoples should be centred around Indigenous values and protocols. For decolonized research to occur, Indigenous views and epistemologies must be at the center of the research process. Indigenous perspectives are distinct as they show a cultural group's way of knowing that is rooted in their history (Benham, 2007). Benham states that although practices and protocols came before colonization, that they have been, to some degree, "diminished or decimated by the encroachment of a colonial power; hence, they have undergone redefinition over time by an Indigenous collective" (2007, p.513). Indigenous peoples have faced a history of being researched unethically and for the benefit of the researchers, not the Indigenous peoples or their communities being researched (Bishop, 1997). "The term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism… 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary…it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.1). For this reason, self-determination for Indigenous peoples required the Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) research principles to be created (Kurtz, 2013). OCAP research principles ensure that the community or group involved in the research has ownership of the traditional collective knowledges shared, the right to control all stages of the research process and that they have access to all the research data regardless of who holds possession (Kurtz, 2013). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) identifies that research is an important part of colonization because it is centered around defining what legitimate knowledge is. To decolonize research, we must engage with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states that throughout the decolonizing research process, researchers must have "a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values which inform research practices" (p.20).

A Need for Culturally Relevant and Community-Centered Programs

Informal mentoring has had a long history in Indigenous cultures due to the shared societal values (Klinck, Cardinal, Edwards, Gibson, Bisanz, & da. Costa, 2005). Prior to contact with the European culture, many Indigenous peoples had tribal practices that involved raising the children and youth as a whole tribe or community, and each person played a role in teaching the young peoples (Klink et al., n.d.). Research has identified that incorporating cultural practices in mentorship programs for Indigenous youth is important (Chisan, 2001 as cited in Klinck et al., 2005). In a mentoring context, sharing circles allow Indigenous youth to build respect and trust between their mentors and mentees as the circle allows all individuals to be equal (Chisan, 2001, as cited in Klinck et al., 2005). The medicine wheel views can also have relevance in mentorship programs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth as it teaches the youth to live in a wholistic way and focuses on the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of health (Klinck et al., 2005).

The use of culturally relevant health promotion is an essential component in the creation of programs for Indigenous youth. Research has identified that there is a lack of culturally relevant health promotion programs in Indigenous communities (Mohajer et al., 2009). Historically, the health promotion programs implemented in Indigenous communities neglected to consider each specific context, and the social causes of the communities diminished health status (Mohajer et al., 2009). Instead, the health promotion programs attempted to “fix” the unhealthy behaviours or targeted the specific symptoms (Mohajer et al., 2009). Craven and Dillon (2013) state that due to the diversity of Indigenous peoples and their needs, a one size fits all approach is not appropriate. Indigenous youth living in rural and remote areas will have different social and cultural needs than Indigenous youth living in large centres (Mohajer et al.,

2009). Mentorship and peer support have been identified as one method of addressing the social, cultural, and educational needs of Indigenous youth (Mohajer et al., 2009). Klinck et al. (2005) identify that when creating mentorship programs for Indigenous peoples, it is key that community members are included from the beginning of the process, that collaboration occurs, and that the strengths of the community are built upon.

Sinclair and Pooyak (2007) state, "mentoring is becoming a human resource tool in recruiting and retaining the current and future Indigenous population" (p.4). In their study, Sinclair and Pooyak (2007) interviewed 35 participants, including youth, professional, and community members, to gain a better understanding of Indigenous mentorship and how to develop a culturally appropriate mentoring framework for community organizations in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Youth participating in the study expressed their desire to have access to Indigenous mentors who could provide cultural teachings, and the youth were also concerned with the personality characteristics of their mentors (Sinclair & Pooyak, 2007). When creating an Indigenous mentorship program, Sinclair and Pooyak (2007) outlined the following recommendations, "partner with an existing Aboriginal program…, create a culturally appropriate mentoring culture…, and mentoring training needs to include cultural awareness…" (p.5). The report also recommended that specific training including aspects such as cultural protocols should be included, that the program development and evaluation needed to be conducted by Indigenous peoples and include Elders in the process, that partnerships should be developed with other mentorship programs to learn best practices and lessons learned, as well as seeking funding and resources to develop culturally appropriate programs (Sinclair & Pooyak, 2007). The results of the study highlighted the importance of situating the creation and decision making of the mentorship programs in the Indigenous communities, that Elders should be

included in the development and evaluation of the mentoring program, that cultural awareness should be a core component of mentorship training, and mentorship practices should be developed in organizations that allow for informal mentoring strategies to occur (Sinclair & Pooyak, 2007). Alfred (2009) contributes to the call for culturally relevant mentoring and stresses the importance of disrupting the colonial processes in education by "revitalizing the mentoring and learning-teaching relationships that foster real and meaningful human development and community solidarity" (p.56).

In their study, Kirby, Lévesque and Wabano (2007) used an ecological lens to gain insight into how community members perceived their access and involvement in physical activity opportunities in their community. To inform an intervention design and the implementation strategy for physical activity promotion in the Cree community, a multi-dimensional lens was used to capture both the personal and environmental descriptions of the participants' physical activity experiences. Kirby et al. (2007) identify that type 2 diabetes largely affects Indigenous peoples in Canada which has caused health care professionals and health promotion researchers to turn towards primary prevention strategies through increased healthy eating and physical activity. Their study identified three physical activity challenges a) "lack of culturally relevant opportunities," b) "economic disparities," and c) "lack of gender specific opportunities" (p.11). In addition, three physical activity recommendations were also identified, a) "increased physical activity through a reconnection to the land via traditional activities…", b) "increased access by decreasing cost, and c) "provide opportunities to appeal to both men and women" (p.11). The qualitative data in their study suggests that the shift in lifestyle and socio-economic conditions is linked to the low levels of physical activity in the community. Kirby and colleagues' study showed the interest that Indigenous peoples have in

both traditional and non-traditional forms of physical activity. This can be representative of the experience Indigenous peoples are having between the two different ways of living and the mixture of Indigenous and Western forms of physical activity present in their lives. Their study highlighted that it is important that there is community involvement in the design and implementation of the program. A lack of community involvement could contribute to the lack of sustainability of the programs. This showcases the importance of community members being involved and running the programs in their communities. This has been shown to improve the overall framework, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability of the community program (Halas et al., 2017a). Kirby et al. (2007) provided physical activity recommendations such as reconnecting to the land through traditional activities. They believed that making these activities accessible in the community would allow for a wholistic approach to healthy living to be embraced. Kirby et al. note that Eurocentric forms of physical activity did not provide the cultural connection to the land and traditional forms of survival like hunting. By promoting physical activity that highlights a renewal of cultural practices, community members would be able to not only participate in physically exerting activities, but they may also potentially form deep spiritual healing throughout the process. Kirby et al. (2007) stress that physical activity that respects traditional ways must be integrated into intervention programs in Indigenous communities. They identify that the intervention implementations need to consider the cultural relevance of the program, be of low cost to the participants, and be engaging towards the needs and interests of all genders (Kirby et al., 2007).

A study by Ballie et al. (2016) showcased how First Nation youth's participation in physical activity is influenced by many environmental factors on various levels. Using the socio-ecological model, the researchers and co-researchers showed the many opportunities and barriers

to physical activity at the policy, community, organizational, interpersonal and individual levels. This study contributes to our understanding of First Nation youth's perspectives on physical activity and how the environment affects this. The work by Ballie, colleagues, and the First Nation co-researchers shows the importance of engaging Indigenous peoples in all stages of the research process and demonstrates that Indigenous knowledges should be used in research involving First Nation peoples to better understand their perspectives on physical activity in a culturally significant way (Ballie et al., 2016). Their study showed that when youth could walk or bike to a physical activity opportunity, it made the activity more accessible (Ballie et al., 2016). Further, their study, and other studies have shown that when physical activity programs are organized by community members and First Nation schools that they are more successful (Ballie et al., 2016; Halas et al., 2017a). That being said, sometimes the physical activity programs have participation challenges as there are often smaller populations of First Nation communities which can cause youth to go to urban centres to participate in organized teams (Ballie et al., 2016). In Indigenous communities, family and social networks were shown to have an influence on the youth's participation in physical activity. When support was given from their family and friends, youth were more likely to participate in physical activity. Indigenous youth have also identified that having an Indigenous role model is crucial to their participation (Ballie et al., 2016; Carpenter, 2009). The study also showed that spiritual influence had a role to play in Indigenous youths' physical activity. The youth discussed the positive feelings they felt with connecting to the land of their peoples and animals. Along with environmental influences, the First Nation youth identified personal characteristics that enhanced the likelihood of participation in physical activity. These personal attributes included "skills and knowledge in physical

activity, motivation, enjoyment, good intentions, and using their imagination" regardless of the physical and environmental opportunities given (Ballie et al., 2016, p.21).

Brant Castellano (2000) identifies that an objective for non-Indigenous peoples should be to open spaces for Indigenous initiatives in institutions, organizations, and workplaces. If this objective is identified as a priority and is implemented in these sectors, Indigenous ways of knowing and being can be shared, understood, and used appropriately (Brant Castellano, 2000). Brant Castellano identifies that Indigenous knowledge is, "experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language" (2000, p.25). To respect Indigenous knowledges when working with Indigenous peoples, the personal experiences of the people should be respected and have no claim to universality (Brant Castellano, 2000). This means that Indigenous peoples should not all be seen as the same and that individuals need to understand the different cultures and experiences that Indigenous people have. The Coalition for Advancement of Aboriginal Studies (CAAS) states, "there is no single, unified Aboriginal perspective, history or culture just as there is no one history or culture among European Peoples" (p.75). By having no claim to universality, Indigenous peoples will begin to be respected for who they are, what their experiences are, and how their culture contributes to how they walk through life. These aspects should be considered when creating mentorship programs for Indigenous youth as it would promote Indigenous youth to experience belonging and to be able to participate in a program in their community that is relevant to their culture and identity. Courchene et al. (2018) identify that given Canada's colonial history, Indigenous knowledges must be cared for and that people need to ensure that they are infused respectfully and ethically into health and physical activity curriculum. They identified that it is essential that young people see themselves in their schools, classrooms and curriculums, including their health and physical education settings (Courchene et

al., 2018). Further, Courchene et al. (2018) stated that due to the deep and long-term history that Indigenous peoples have on Turtle Island, that it is crucial that Indigenous knowledges, cultures, and ways of being in the world are incorporated in all aspects of society.

Culturally Relevant Mentorship Programs

Although the number of culturally relevant physical activity and mentorship programs for Indigenous youth are increasing in the areas of sport, recreation, and education, there are still areas that require more resources and programming for Indigenous youth. When researching culturally relevant mentorship programs, it was evident that Australia and Canada had various mentorship programs for Indigenous youth. Due to the nature of my research, the two programs I will be focusing on in this literature review are the Rec and Read Mentorship Program for all Nations (Rec and Read) and the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP). I will outline the reason for the creation of both programs, the core elements of the programs, the outcomes from each program, and studies involving the programs.

Rec and Read Mentorship for all Nations

Started in 2004, Rec and Read is a culturally based after-school program hosted in various areas of inner-city Winnipeg (Indigenous Sport History, 2019). It is a communal, relationship-based physical activity, nutrition and education after school program that was developed with Indigenous youth (Halas et al., 2017b). In the program, young adults and teacher champions work with high school mentors to create and deliver an after-school program that focuses on nutrition, physical activity, education for early years students, and culture (Johnson & Halas, 2011). Each program that is implemented is unique and is tailored towards the needs and desires of each school and community. In the program, the young participants are recognized as teachers and are also seen as mentors who can help adults rediscover how to play, be a good role

model, and to practice humility, kindness and patience. Shown in Appendix B, in the Rec and Read program, the Medicine Wheel is overlapped with Maslow's hierarchy of needs to understand a blended view of healthy development that respects both Indigenous and Western ways. Within this current theoretical model, there are three overlapping circles. The inner-circle represents the four R's: respect, relevance, responsibility and reciprocity by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), the middle circle represents the Circle of Courage: belonging, mastery, independence/interdependence, and generosity by Brendtro et al. (1990), and the outer circle represents an adapted version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: safety and stability, social bonds, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose (Halas et al., 2017b). Within the medicine wheel, the Rec and Read program begins in the East (physical) where high school and early year students are celebrated simply for 'showing up' and being physically present in the program. Respect is emphasized in this area so that everyone can achieve a sense of belonging in the program. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this is seen as a key component of safety and stability (Halas et al., 2017b). The social and emotional is in the South. Here, participants are encouraged to develop their competencies in activities in a meaningful and relevant way. High expectations remain throughout this quadrant while still respecting the unique stage that each person could be at. The mental component is housed in the West quadrant. Youth are encouraged to work together to make the program, their community, and the larger society a better place for everyone. In the North, the "core of our being" is present within the spiritual quadrant (Halas et al., 2017b, p.12). Here, an individual examines who they are as a person and reflects on their sense of purpose in the world. The symbolism of the medicine wheel in the Rec and Read theoretical model shows the present reality of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada. The blending of western and Indigenous knowledges within the theoretical model shows the need for Indigenous and non-

Indigenous peoples to build intercultural understanding through all areas of life (Halas et al., 2017b).

There have been many benefits to the Rec and Read program outlined including increased knowledge about healthy nutrition and how to get access to healthy foods, increased opportunities to participate in moderate to vigorous physical activities, to learn and develop literacy skills and practices, to build intercultural relationships, to play, and to promote career and educational pathways (Indspire, 2019). Since its inaugural year, over 2,250 high school and elementary students and 184 post-secondary students and community mentors have participated in the program (Indspire, 2019). Although the numbers listed clearly show the program's success, the sustainability of the programs remains challenging as the health dollars are often spent on intervention programs as opposed to prevention programs such as Rec and Read and IYMP (Halas et al., 2017b).

A thesis study conducted by Zhou (2018) explored the experiences of mentorship in Rec and Read. A qualitative interpretative inquiry was used to explore the multiple meanings of the adult mentors' experiences of mentoring. Zhou (2018) desired to answer the research question, "how do adult mentors from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds, both male and female, understand their experiences of the Rec and Read mentorship program?" (p.8). Within this question, Zhou explored four detailed research questions which involved the adult mentors understanding their leadership role as a role model in the program; how the adult mentors understood the mentorship program, its purposes, philosophy, worldview and values; what were the intercultural relationships that were developed; and what the adult mentors perceived as benefits of the mentorship program (Zhou, 2018). Seven adult Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors took part in the study. Adult mentors were defined in this study as Rec and Read

mentors who attended university or were community members. Semi-structured focus groups and one-on-one interviews were conducted with the participants. Results from this study showed that Rec and Read provides a culturally affirming space where young peoples from diverse backgrounds can build relationships and experience multiples cultures. Relationship building and experiencing various cultures was said to occur in an environment that differed from the dominant western culture and accepted all cultures. In his research, Zhou identified that profound benefits were had in terms of promoting intercultural competency and the social determinants of health (Zhou, 2018). Adult mentors identified that through the mentorship program, their intercultural competencies and knowledge of Indigenous cultures were developed and strengthened, which aided in their ability to lead the program and mentor others. The study's findings contribute to knowledge regarding intercultural leadership development and Indigenous approaches to mentorship (Zhou, 2018).

In her master's thesis on the Rec and Read program, Amy Carpenter interpreted the mentorship program from her own perspectives as a Métis woman and community-based researcher. In her role as a community-based researcher, and having the opportunities to have been a part of Rec and Read, Carpenter (2009) states that she believes the 4 R's "can be adapted to articulate the guiding principles for how we interact, build relationships, and recognize the responsibility/accountability we have to one another and our communities" (p.122). In her thesis, Carpenter uses traditional teachings to analyze her experiences in the Rec and Read program. Through this, she maintains a circular view which she describes is often not recognized in the dominant Western research institutions. In these spaces, she describes that linear worldviews are often accepted as the norm.

In her research, Carpenter links the 4 R's and the Circle of Courage in the following pairs: belonging and respect, mastery and relevance, independence and reciprocity, generosity and responsibility. When discussing respect, Carpenter highlights that this is not about confirming and assimilating to a certain way of thinking, but to recognize that there are multiple ways of knowing and being. In the program, Carpenter highlights that the debriefing sharing circles at the end of program are a place where everyone can share their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives in a welcoming and safe space. In these circles, youth can connect and reaffirm their sense of belonging to each other and the program. Carpenter's (2009) study found that the sense of community that was created at mentorship contributed to the participants' continuous commitment to the program. In the Rec and Read program, mentors felt that they were needed as they were asked to contribute to the planning of activities, preparation of snacks, cleaning up, and participating (Carpenter, 2009). This reinforced the mentor's sense of belonging and commitment to the program. When analyzing independence and reciprocity, Carpenter identified the importance of reciprocal relationships being formed through mutual respect of people's independence. Through her work, she saw that mentorship was a reciprocal and relational activity. In the program, there was no hierarchy in mentorship, and the participants had the opportunity to "walk, share, and learn together" (2009, p.186). Carpenter highlighted the significance of reciprocal relationships being developed through laughing together. She paired generosity and responsibility as she felt that when an individual's generosity was recognized, the individual realized their commitment and accountability to the program, further understanding their responsibility. In the program, the high school mentors recognized their responsibility as role models and leaders within their communities, and they were said to have carried a sense of pride and belonging with them outside of mentorship. This prompted them to call attention to

injustices that occurred around them and made them more willing to join school teams and initiatives outside of mentorship (Carpenter, 2009). Carpenter identified that the Rec and Rec mentorship program, “offers a respectful space where everyone belongs” (2009, p.207). In the program, people are welcomed for who they are as a whole person and are not just accepted for their strengths. Carpenter explains that the Rec and Read model goes beyond a strength-based approach and is a whole-person approach that highlights individual strengths. Carpenter feels that it is more than creating a sense of belonging in the program. It is about relevance, responsibility and a sense of purpose. She felt that the program had created a space where all individuals could feel connected and that people could be celebrated for their diversity and uniqueness. Carpenter states, “it is up to us to work together, to learn from, respect, and rely on one another’s independence while nurturing our interdependence” (2009. p.209). Carpenter identifies that by using a cultural approach to urban Indigenous physical activity and recreation, youth can meaningfully be engaged and fully contribute to the dynamic community.

Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program

Started in 2010, the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) is an afterschool peer-mentoring program that aims to reduce obesity and T2D risk factors in Indigenous youth and increase Indigenous youth’s overall well-being and quality of life (AYMP, 2016). The program also aims to promote wellness, resiliency, overall positive mental health and mino-bimaadiziwin (Alberta Mentors, 2018). In the program, which in some communities is called the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program (AYMP), urban, rural, and remote high school students plan and deliver the afterschool program to elementary-aged students. The afterschool program, like Rec and Read, focuses on physical activity, nutrition, and the incorporation of culture. Core elements of IYMP are physical activity, nutrition and healthy eating, cultural teachings and

relationship building (AYMP, 2016). Youth are encouraged to participate in 90-minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity that promotes inclusivity and play. Each day of the program, youth are given a healthy snack, and the YAHLs are encouraged to incorporate cultural teachings that are relevant to the community (AYMP, 2016). At the end of the program day, YAHLS, mentors, and mentees gather together in a sharing circle to debrief on the program and their feelings of the day which further encourages a sense of belonging, equality, and responsibility. Outcomes of IYMP demonstrate the achievement of decreased waist circumference, improved healthy living knowledge, and increased self-efficacy (Eskicioglu et al., 2014). Due to the continued success of the program, IYMP has expanded from Garden Hill First Nation to six more Manitoba communities including Sagkeeng First Nation, Sandy Bay First Nation, Wabowden, Thompson, Cross Lake First Nation, and Split Lake First Nation, and has more recently expanded across Canada into more Indigenous communities (AYMP, 2016).

Eskicioglu (2015) conducted a two-part study that investigated the health benefits of IYMP in relation to risk factors for T2D on children and youth. The study specifically focused on youth's interpretation and thoughts towards diabetes. In the qualitative piece of the study, IYMP mentors from Wabowden, Manitoba used the method of photovoice to focus on what diabetes meant to them and what affects mentorship had on their health. The high school mentors in the study identified their definition of diabetes, their thoughts regarding the disease and its impacts, and how the disease could be prevented. Findings from the study show that IYMP had a positive influence on the high school mentors, including the education, maintenance, and prevention of T2D and improving their social determinants of health (education, employment, social supports). The youth believed that participation in the program helped motivate school attendance and taught participants skills such as being responsible and being a role model for

children (Eskicioglu, 2015). The high school mentors discussed the health benefits that mentorship provided in relation to physical activity and healthy eating for both themselves and the children that took part in the program. The participants identified valuable skills that they learned from the program that would enhance their employment opportunities within the community, such as improved communication skills and having the responsibility to care for children. The development of social bonds among high school mentors and with the children in the program were also discussed. The study linked to the Circle of Courage® in that the high school mentors described cultural aspects such as belongingness through their social networks, mastery through their enhanced skills and knowledges from the program, independence through exercising their leadership skills in the program, and generosity through giving of themselves in support of their younger peers and community (Eskicioglu, 2015). This study made valuable contributions to Indigenous youth's perceptions of health, T2D, and peer mentoring as a cultural approach to diabetes prevention in Indigenous youth. Eskicioglu highlighted that future IYMP studies should use culturally relevant tools to measure self-efficacy. It was also expressed that follow-up qualitative research studies on IYMP should include early year mentors, teachers, and parents, as this would enhance the understanding and impact of the IYMP in relation to health and educational outcomes (Eskicioglu, 2015). Although IYMP has proven to prevent weight gain and improve self-efficacy among Indigenous youth (Eskicioglu et al., 2014; Eskicioglu, 2015), research has also focused on how the theory of the program works in the community (Lopresti, 2020). Halas et al. (2017b) identified that each community has its own cultural orientations and approaches to their program and that they adapt the mentorship guiding principles according to their own sovereign traditions. This means that the program is unique to each community and

respects and honors the traditional Indigenous knowledges and ways of being in each community.

Rusnak (2018) used principles of Indigenous community-based participatory research and the method of photovoice to work with IYMP high school mentors in Pimicikamāk (Cross Lake) First Nation. Starting with photography as her means of data generation, Rusnak also conducted semi-structured individual interviews and one focus group discussion with researchers from the University of Manitoba and young adult health leaders (YAHLs). In the study, high school mentors received teachings from a local YAHL about the concept of mino-pimatisiwin, and then were given cameras and were instructed to take pictures that represented what mentorship meant to them, what mino-pimatisiwin meant to them, and how they felt that the mentorship program helped them or their friends live in mino-pimatisiwin (Rusnak, 2018, p.1) Once the semi-structured interviews and photovoice sharing circle were complete, Rusnak used the method of thematic analysis informed by grounded theory to thematize the results. Three major themes emerged from the interviews that Rusnak conducted with the high school mentors. These themes included “happiness, growth, and living good” (2018, p.3). Participants identified ways in which the program allowed them to experience the emotions and feelings of happiness, and they identified being happy as a core component of living a good life. Mentors also identified that helping others be happy contributed to living a good life (Rusnak, 2018). The second theme that emerged was growth. Rusnak (2018) states, “the mentors identified that being in the program changed them in some way that helped them grow as an individual” (p.4). The program was said to facilitate growth through experiences of role modelling, learning, and feeling responsible for the children (Rusnak, 2018). One specific mentor identified that her mentorship role not only occurred during program hours but also at home with her siblings.

Mentoring others, inside and outside of mentorship, was identified as a way to improve one's overall well-being (Rusnak, 2018). A final theme identified was "living good." Rusnak (2018) identified that living in good ways linked to "culture, land, physical activity, and nutrition" (p.4). A participant in Rusnak's study identified that living in a good way did not just occur in mentorship, but it occurred in spaces such as Indian Days or Winter Festival and youth reflected on the impact that land and culture had on their ability to live in a good way. Mentors connected this back to their mentorship program and expressed their desire to "take children outside, and teach them about being on the lake, canoeing, and other land-based activities" (Rusnak, 2018, p.5). The mentors also identified that staying active, eating healthy, and maintaining a healthy weight were also important components of living a good life. Throughout her discussions with youth, barriers to mino-pimatisiwin were also touched on. Specifically, the youth discussed the social barriers to health and well-being. These factors included poverty, trauma occurring from youth suicide, and access to nutritious foods (Rusnak, 2018).

Rusnak's study not only showcased the voices of IYMP youth mentors, but it also reinforces the theoretical framework for the program that, "fostering resilience and supporting wholistic interventions is an important aspect of health and well-being for youth" (Rusnak, 2018, p.5). The research also suggests that beyond diet and exercise, there are different pathways to how the program leads to improved health outcomes among Indigenous youth. The study also contributes to the reader's understanding of the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and how they are obstacles that are needed to be overcome in the journey to living a good life (Rusnak, 2018). Rusnak further showed how the mentorship program helps reduce the risk for T2D and connects the themes of happiness, growth, and living good to wholistic health. The researcher identifies that although the elements of wholistic health are not in the western models of diabetes

prevention, they are core components of the Indigenous medicine wheel teachings (Rusnak, 2018). Rusnak identified that for Cross Lake First Nation, incorporating more land-based activities is a significant goal for the future of their program, which would further increase the relevance of the program for their Indigenous youth. To my knowledge, this study was the first of its kind to show that there is an alternative framework for conceptualizing T2D prevention among Indigenous youth. In Appendix C, I have included the figure that Rusnak created, which shows the grounded theory framework for how the mentorship program supports well-being and reduces T2D risk among Indigenous youth and highlights the three themes described above.

The 4 R's and the Circle of Courage®

Both Rec and Read and IYMP's program frameworks are guided by the 4 R's and the Circle of Courage®. The Circle of Courage®, was created by Brendtro et al. (1990) while the 4 R's were created by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991).

The 4 R's created by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) include respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. The IYMP 2017/2018 YAHL Training Manual identifies that both programs encourage all participants to have respect for each person, what they carry, and bring with themselves as people (AYMP, 2016). Respecting others involves trusting that each person will bring their best forward (Johnson & Halas, 2011). Respect is also understanding that there are multiple ways of knowing, being, and understanding the world. Through the mentorship programs, the participants are encouraged and expected to respect one another. Johnson and Halas (2011) identify that relevance is about "creating a stress-free zone for Aboriginal youth to be active while contributing to the health and wellness of children" (p.22). By ensuring relevance in the program, participants can connect emotionally through the activities, have a safe space for physical activity, build on their strengths, and reflect on their experiences and interactions

(Johnson & Halas, 2011). Giving, being generous, and receiving generosity from others is what makes up reciprocity (Johnson & Halas, 2011; AYMP, 2016). The programs focus on reciprocal relationships between community members and adult allies, university mentors, high school mentors, and early year students. In both programs, mentoring goes beyond the traditional western ideas of mentoring, where an older person provides guidance, support, and friendship to a younger person (AYMP, 2016). In Rec and Read and IYMP, mentoring is viewed as circular where each person can work with, teach, and learn from one another regardless of their age (AYMP, 2016; Carpenter, 2009). Johnson and Halas (2011) identify that when mutual respect is achieved and involvement is relevant to the individual, that authentic relationships are formed. When discussing responsibility, both programs strive for participants to be aware and accountable, to develop interpersonal and leadership skills, to share their intercultural strengths, and to become a role model for their community (Johnson & Halas, 2011; AYMP, 2016). Recently, a fifth R, reconciliation, has been added to the program framework, which recognizes the work of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Calls to Action (AYMP, 2016). The fifth R encourages both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to move forward together in collaboration towards reconciliation.

The Circle of Courage®, created by Brendtro et al. (1990), involves belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. This is a model for positive youth development and was first described in Brendtro et al.'s (1990) book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk.* Linking to Maslow's theory of human needs, an individual must feel a sense of belonging before self-esteem and self-actualization can occur (AYMP, 2016). In order to belong, relationships must be established that are based on mutual trust and respect. Once the relationship is formed, motivation for minimal conflict and maximum kinship occurs (Brendtro et al., 1990). Regarding mastery, Native

education strives to develop “cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual competence” (AYMP, 2016, p. 12). This is a wholistic view of learning, that highlights that each student can learn and should be given opportunities to show what they know in different areas. When considering one’s independence, native child-rearing philosophies place high importance on guidance without interference (Brendtro et al., 1990). The responsibility of learning is handed to the child who can make decisions on how they learn through various educational opportunities (AYMP, 2016). To make the child feel that they are in control of their own educational process, empowerment must occur. To reach independence, children must first understand dependence and learn and respect the values and teachings from their Elders (AYMP, 2016). In Indigenous cultures, the highest virtues are generosity and unselfishness (AYMP, 2016). An increase in self-esteem and self-worth occur when helping others. In both mentorship programs, the participants can share their gifts with others. When sharing our gifts and helping others, a sense of pride and joy can be felt by the children and youth. When helping others, program participants are encouraged to be genuine and not focus on the potential personal gain associated with their kind actions. Through the programs, participants are encouraged to become involved in their community, school and various service projects (AYMP, 2016). Through these actions, the spirit of generosity is promoted. By using the 4 R's and the Circle of Courage®, the programs are able to "build on the strengths, energy and talents" of the youth and community (Halas et al., 2017a, p. 9).

Wholistic Health and Medicine Wheel Teachings

Findings indicate that the current methods used in medicine for obesity management are not culturally relevant or significant to Indigenous peoples and their way of living (Bell, Smith, Hale, Kira, & Tumilty, 2017). Bell et al. (2017) highlighted that Indigenous peoples have a

unique sense of connection to each other and their environment. Due to the enhanced significance of relationships and social connectedness, Indigenous participants in their study identified that their health was much bigger than themselves and their bodies. Bell et al. (2017) state, "participants interpretation of health mostly encompassed wider holistic understandings and spiritual dimensions"(p.562), which do not dominate in the western medical model. Participants described a different type of health uncommon in the colonial health care system that involved a balance of physical, mental and spiritual health – wholistic health (Bell et al., 2017). Indigenous participants identified a desire to be more engaged with their culture, expressed their feelings of alienation with the colonized approaches to health care, and expressed a desire for more culturally relevant health care models that incorporate more Indigenous worldviews (Bell et al., 2017). Participants identified that the western model of weight management was not sensitive to their needs and that metrics such as weight or BMI were not considered as metrics for well-being (Bell et al., 2017). The study by Bell et al. suggests the colonial medical model of weight management did not work for the Indigenous participants and that there is a need for a culturally sensitive health approach in weight management. Bell et al. (2017) identify that future weight management programs such as physical activity interventions should be created with a wholistic health model in mind. They state that this will allow for interventions to be created that are inclusive, relevant and respectful to the individual and their culture.

Iseke (2013) explains that when considering health, Indigenous peoples view the total balance of their health, as well as the health of their family, community, society, and spiritual world. Courchene et al. (2018) identify that one example of storied First Nations' knowledge that has been communicated through the generations is the medicine wheel. Consisting of four

interconnected quadrants, each representing one of the four directions, the medicine wheel has teachings that apply to each direction. The medicine wheel has many shared concepts such as "wholeness, balance, connectedness (relationships), harmony, growth, and healing" (Courchene et al., 2018, p.63). That being said, people may carry different knowledge and teachings with the four directions, which allows the teachings to be applied in different ways. Hart (2002) identifies that sometimes, due to trauma, individuals can get stuck in areas of the medicine wheel even though they are physically growing. Although the environment around the individual changes, the imbalance within them remains the same. Until an individual can reach harmony within themselves and heal from the traumas they have experienced, they will remain stuck in their wholistic health journey (Courchene et al., 2018). Halas et al., (2017b) explain that we understand the medicine wheel as a wholistic approach to wellness that holds specific teachings about living in a good way. They explain that to live in a good way, we must honour the interconnectedness of all creation and dimension of being including the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. The medicine wheel provides teachings that everything is interconnected and interdependent and that we must work to maintain a balance within ourselves and our communities (Halas et al., 2017b). Courchene et al. (2018) explain that the medicine wheel teachings tell us that we all work toward mino-pimatisiwin (living a good life).

A study by Lavallée (2007) explored the impact that an Indigenous martial arts program (Oki Chi Taw[7]) had on Indigenous participants' lives and further identified the connection between the individual's wholistic health and well-being. Lavallée's research study occurred in a Canadian urban centre where many different Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples live. Lavallée used the method of sharing circles guided by the medicine wheel teachings to hear

[7] Oki Chi Taw is an Indigenous martial art and warrior style system that is recognized by the World Martial Arts Union as the official Indigenous martial art of Canada (Lavallée, 2007, p.129)

participants' stories regarding their decision to participate in the program and to understand if the program had any impact on their lives. The question Lavallée desired to answer was how the program had an impact on their lives wholistically, which involved their physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health. This links closely to my study as both Lavallée and I explored the wholistic impacts of a physical activity program and are using methods of data collection that promote the sharing of stories from participants. In her study, Lavallée (2007) explains that many Indigenous cultures understand health, wellness and healing through the medicine wheel. In the medicine wheel, there is a required balance between the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual quadrants. The Indigenous researcher identifies that the balance is not only important within us but also with others and our connection with the land. Lavallée states, "an individual's health and wellness are based on maintaining balance between the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual realms" (2007, p.128).

Mino-bimaadiziwin/Mino-pimatisiwin

Mino-bimaadiziwin

Mino-bimaadiziwin is loosely translated to 'living a good life' (Bell, 2016). Bell identifies that mino-bimaadiziwin can be achieved through various life-stages and ceremonies. Anishinaabe bimaadiziwin, translated to 'Anishinaabe way of living,' which involves recognition of oneself as a spiritual being and incorporates one's personal relationship to the environment and its creations (Bell, 2016). Therefore, mino-bimaadiziwin occurs when an individual's spirit and relationship exist in a good and healthy way. Bell identifies that mino-bimaadiziwin is reflected in Anishinaabe peoples' creation story and was given as the original instructions from Creator to the Anishinaabe people. The Anishinaabe people have a relationship with everything around them and are aware that there is something more than themselves – something that is

characterized as very powerful (Bell, 2016). Bell (2016) identifies that the individual, their community connection, and the care and love needed to understand and nurture our personal gifts are connected to teachings in the path of life.

Bell (2016) highlights that within the Anishinaabe culture, the feather is used as a metaphor that shows the potential for branches or divergences from the path of life. Formed by many smaller lines branching off the center, the feather represents the path of life, or 'the good red road' (Bell, 2016, p.13). Bell identifies that although individuals may veer off their paths due to various reasons, that the ability to return to the path always remains. To return to their path, the Anishinaabe person must turn to the sacred medicines and traditional teachings (Bell, 2016). Bell identifies that in the Anishinaabe culture, there must be a balance between the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual health of a person and that individuals all have a spirit, body, heart and mind (Bell, 2016).

Traditional Anishinaabe education continues to be implemented in a wholistic manner (Bell, 2016). Within this wholistic education, the positive development of the child is considered, which incorporates the mind, body, spirit, and emotions of the child. The growth and development of a person are considered a life-long process in the Anishinaabe culture, and it is believed that this growth and development should be nurtured in a positive way through one's education, home life, and involvement in the community (Bell, 2016). To achieve this wholistic education, children must learn on a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level and understand the interconnectedness of their surroundings (Bell, 2016). Development of an individual should be done through the seven sacred Anishinaabe values, which include: "honesty; wisdom; love; respect; bravery; humility; and truth" (Bell, 2016, p. 14). Bell identifies that teachings should be given in relation to the medicine wheel, as the four directions contain

significance regarding the four areas of the individual (mind, body, spirit, heart) and further educates the individual for ‘the good life.' The Anishinaabe worldview and teachings of mino-bimaadiziwin provide insight into achieving a balanced and healthy life (Bell, 2016). The incorporation of the medicine wheel can further these teachings and provide guidance on living a good life that creates wholistic well-being. Wagamese (2019) identifies that the seven grandfather teachings – humility, courage, respect, love, honesty, truth, and wisdom are an Indigenous way of recognizing the principles required to live a good life in a good way. These teachings incorporate all levels of our being, including the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Mino-pimatisiwin

Courchene et al. (2018) identify that mino-pimatisiwin, also known as ‘the good life,’ refers to the balance of our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual self that we all work towards. They explain that medicine wheel teachings tell us that we are all working towards mino-pimatisiwin, which involves finding a balance between the four areas of health identified. The teachings of mino-pimatisiwin have been shared intergenerationally across diverse First Nations peoples and can be further used to enhance the experience of health and physical education for learners of all ages (Courchene et al., 2018). Elder Mary Courchene identifies that mino-pimatisiwin is a balance, and it is about living a good life. She identifies that it is about knowing all parts of ourselves and finding comfort in that knowing. Elder Mary highlights that the teachings related to the medicine wheel provide guidance for how people could live a good life individually and communally. Below, I share the teachings of mino-pimatisiwin and the medicine wheel by Elder Mary Courchene.

> As you move through life, you are born and begin in the East, which is the physical. When you are a little baby, this begins the good life, generally speaking. As you progress,

> by the time you are a teenager, you are in the South direction, which is the emotional. In the South direction, the emotional and social are together; they are not apart. It is a time when social interactions are important. Emotions are overflowing as young people enter this important phase of life. Adolescence is a time for illumination, friendship, exploration, and extremism; where we might see a teenager, for adolescents, it is another world for them. They are not yet fully developed cognitively, and it is a period of real growth and development. The West direction is intellectual, also known as mental or cognitive; the West represents adult life. The North is spiritual; it is a time for Elders to reflect on their lives, allowing wisdom to manifest. It is a time for sharing, a time for spiritual wisdom to emerge. As one Elder taught her, "spirituality is your core being." It is your core, and when you reach the North, it should flourish in a time for sharing (Courchene et al., 2018, p.64).

Michael Hart, a Ph.D. in social work from Fisher River Cree Nation, defines the Cree word mino-pimatisiwin as leading a life of personal healing, learning, and growth: "the good life" (2002, p.44). For many people, mino-pimatisiwin is seen as an overall desire to heal, learn and live (Hart, 2002). An individual's attempt to reach mino-pimatisiwin is not just an individual focus. The family and community are involved in the process of reaching mino-pimatisiwin (Hart, 2002). This is because reaching mino-pimatisiwin is not just a journey that involves the self, it involves others around you as we are all interconnected and interdependent of each other. Indigenous approaches encourage people to reconnect to the land, further allowing the individual to incorporate both the physical and spiritual aspects of mino-pimatisiwin.

Hart (2002) believes that to overcome oppression due to colonization and to reach mino-pimatisiwin, Indigenous peoples must recapture their language, history, and understanding of the world and live through the teachings of Indigenous peoples. Through daily practices and spiritual expressions, Hart identifies that Indigenous peoples must understand their values and beliefs and individually decide which of these values and beliefs they want to internalize (Hart, 2002). Hart states, "our people must use our energy, power and abilities in ways which support and benefit our families and communities" (2002, p.32). It is only then when the balance is found in their relationships that Indigenous peoples can support each other and reach mino-pimatisiwin (Hart,

2002). Actions to overcome oppression can occur at the individual, familial, communal, and national levels (Hart, 2002). Hart identifies that on an emotional level, Indigenous peoples must legitimize their feelings by validating them. Hart (2002) explains that this requires individuals to "internally experience their feelings without inhibitions and to express them on their own terms" (p.32). Regarding an individual's physical self, Indigenous peoples must take pride in their image (Hart, 2002). This involves aspects such as "accepting our appearance, eating properly, taking precautions to protect ourselves from physical harm, including diseases, and staying physically active" (Hart, 2002, p.32). To grow and attempt to reach the good life, an individual must not only focus on themselves but on their family and community (Hart, 2002). Hart highlights that regardless of an individual's gender, all peoples are equal and respect each other. This is another way in which an individual can live in mino-pimatisiwin. To support and reach mino-pimatisiwin, a child's extended family has a significant role to play in situating them at the center of the family, community, and nation (Hart, 2002). To help Indigenous peoples reach mino-pimatisiwin, Hart believes that recreation programs should include activities that reflect Indigenous cultural values, including cooperative games, songs based upon Indigenous languages, traditional dances, and arts (Hart, 2002).

Summary

In the literature review, I focused on the history of Indigenous peoples and the issues related to colonization. I outlined historical events such as the *Indian Act,* residential schools, and discussed the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the *Calls to Action* that came from their work. I also discussed the long-term effects of colonization and how it continues to impact Indigenous peoples today. It is important to highlight the colonization of Indigenous peoples as we must presently understand the intergenerational trauma that occurs and

how the historical impacts presently affect Indigenous peoples. I have highlighted studies and literature that discussed the need for culturally relevant physical activity, health promotion, and mentorship programs. These studies transitioned into my discussions of two mentorship programs in Manitoba, the Rec and Read Mentorship Program for all Nations (Rec and Read) and the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP). It is important to highlight these two programs and the research projects that involve them as my research will be with participants from the Thompson Indigenous youth mentorship program. I outlined the history of both programs, the outcomes of the programs and discussed in detail the philosophical framework of the programs, which included the 4 R's and the Circle of Courage®. I also highlighted studies involving the Rec and Read mentorship program and IYMP to showcase the research that has already been conducted on both programs. As my study focuses on mino-pimatisiwin/mino-bimaadiziwin and poses the question(s): if and how does IYMP promote this, it was necessary to include the meaning of these terms and how they relate to Indigenous cultures and discuss the cultural teaching of the medicine wheel and wholistic health. The goal of my literature review was to inform the reader about the need for culturally relevant mentorship programs, to provide a detailed description of the two mentorship programs in Manitoba and to showcase the research that has already been conducted on these programs. I also want the reader to be aware of the medicine wheel teachings, what wholistic health is, and the meanings of living a good life and living in a good way from Indigenous perspectives.

My research and the sections to follow, fill the gaps in the literature associated with wholistic health and storytelling, specifically in relation to mino-bimaadiziwin and mino-pimatisiwin. My research will explore if and how the mentorship program promotes mino-pimatisiwin in its participants' lives and showcase the intra/interpersonal benefits of participating

in the culturally relevant mentorship program. The physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual feelings of the participants will be explored and highlighted throughout the research as well as their relationship with one another, their culture, with Creator, and the land. By including participants in the study from two of the three roles that form IYMP (YAHL and mentor), I will be able to share stories that highlight their experiences and the connections and feelings they have towards mino-pimatisiwin and mentorship.

Chapter 3: Finding My Way (Methods)

Finding my Paradigm

Markula and Silk (2011) state that, "a paradigm is an overarching set of beliefs that provides parameters" (p.25). Within these parameters, researchers show how they understand reality and truths, how they understand what knowledge is, how they act in their roles, how they understand their participants, and how they disseminate knowledges (Markula & Silk, 2011). When first writing my thesis proposal, I believed that my research fell within the anti-positivist paradigm, specifically within the interpretive paradigm. Sometimes, this paradigm is also referred to as the constructivist paradigm, as it is based on an individual's reconstruction of knowledge (Markula & Silk, 2011). Within this paradigm, the social world is defined as complex, and the individuals included in the research study, including the researcher themselves, can define their own meanings (Markula & Silk, 2011). This paradigm allows the researcher to consider that all individuals construct multiple meanings of reality. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) identify that when using interpretivist and constructivist approaches, researchers have the intention of understanding the personal experiences and suggest that reality is socially constructed. Loppie (2007) believes that both "western constructivists and Indigenous paradigms

generally agree that reality is a product of multiple human constructions, woven from the fibers of individual and collective context, perception, and action" (p.277). Wilson (2001) agrees that an Indigenous ontology is like constructivism where both believe that there is more than one reality, but, the difference between the Western and Indigenous paradigm is that in Western paradigms, knowledge is believed to be an individual entity. In the belief system that Wilson (2001) discusses, the researcher is the individual in search of knowledge, they gain knowledge through the research process, and therefore the knowledge is owned by the researcher. This critique of the Western paradigms could likely be from the seventh moment of qualitative research history in which there was a focus on objectivist epistemology. Although this may not be relevant in a modern-day constructivist paradigm and perspective, it is still worth noting. An Indigenous paradigm is different than this belief as an Indigenous paradigm believes that knowledge is relational and that knowledge is shared with all of creation (Wilson, 2001). Wilson identifies that this goes beyond the interpersonal relationships created during the research and extends to all relationships with creation. Wilson's perspectives contradict Loppie's notion that the constructivist and Indigenous paradigms are the same. Therefore, to be situated within an Indigenous paradigm, relationality and knowledge sharing with all creation had to occur in my research.

To guide my research using an Indigenous paradigm, I needed to understand that my research did not belong to me, it belonged to the community. Furthermore, I had to understand that the stories shared and created belonged to all beings and that the stories linked to our connection with the land and everything around us. Throughout the research process, knowledge came from sitting and reflecting by the water, in the forest, and did not just come from books and other forms of literature. Knowledge incorporated in this thesis came from creation and our

connection to the land. In my research, it is not the concept and teachings of mino-pimatisiwin that are most important, but the relationship we have with mino-pimatisiwin (the good life). This further moves my research into an Indigenous paradigm by not focusing on the concepts but focusing on the relationships and interconnectedness that come with these concepts. The research project associated with my thesis is not just about what is out there in the mentorship program; it is about building for the mentorship community and myself. It is to the participants of this program, past, present and future that I have relational accountability to.

Wilson (2001) identifies that a paradigm is described as a set of beliefs that leads one's decisions and actions. Moreover, he describes an Indigenous research paradigm as "a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that go together to guide your actions as to how you're going to go about doing your research" (Wilson, 2001, p.175). The paradigm in which a person resides is defined by their ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. What you believe in the world and your way of being defines your ontology. Next, your epistemology is how you think about that reality. When one describes their research methodology, they are describing how they are going to use their ways of thinking to gain more knowledge about the reality they discussed in their ontology. Finally, axiology is defined by which set of morals or ethics you follow (Wilson, 2001, p.175). When reflecting on what I believe is real in the world – I believe that people are real, that nature and the environment are real and that we are all living things. I believe that we all have different experiences and meanings that are confirmed in our heads and hearts and that in some way, we are all connected. When I asked myself how I think about reality, my first thought was that we are all connected and that everything has life. I think that there are different ways of knowing and being. When reflecting on the process I have gone through over the past two years; I know that my perception

of reality has changed. What I have come to know has changed a lot, and how I walk through this world has also changed. Things that did not have much meaning to me before now have a significant impact on me now. These things could be something as simple as a gust of wind or as significant as spotting an eagle in the sky. My perception of these things and the meanings that I associate with them have changed based on teachings I have received from Indigenous peoples, such as community members, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders. Through all the teachings and new knowledge that I have received, I still understand that I was raised in a western-dominant society and that this type of knowing still strongly exists inside of me. Therefore, an Indigenous epistemology and two-eyed seeing methodology was the best fit not only for my research but for myself as an individual. With this methodology, I can incorporate both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing to understand and gain more knowledge. In my research, my morals and set of ethics are guided by respecting Indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Throughout this process, I am the listener and learner and the writer behind their stories that are shared with me. In an Indigenous paradigm, researchers and participants collaborate with one another and are recognized as co-researchers and co-participants in the research process (Carpenter, 2009). Throughout my research, I attempted to uphold the Indigenous paradigm and eliminate all hierarchies of researcher and participant. Often, this came with struggle as the academy promotes a researcher-dominant relationship with participants where the researcher ultimately controls the research process. Due to time constraints and geographical distancing between me and the co-researchers, collaboration often occurred over email, phone calls and texts, but an attempt to keep the co-researchers involved in all aspects of my research occurred.

Epistemology

William Ermine (1995), the author of *Aboriginal Epistemology,* identifies that centuries ago, two incomparable worldviews were on courses of exploration and discovery for purposeful knowledge. When these two worldviews collided, repercussions of westernized domination and discounting of Indigenous knowledges occurred (Ermine, 1995). The Western worldview took dominance, and to this day, it is characterized as the only *valid* source of knowledge. Ermine outlines that definitions of ideology are constructed continuously and supported by westernized attitudes, ideas and ways of knowing, which causes a lack or complete loss of insight of Indigenous knowledges, further creating a gap regarding the nature and origin of knowledge as truth. Therefore, Ermine (1995) identifies that the Western world is guided by an invalid and incomplete collection of total human knowledge. Within the Western world context of knowing, Ermine outlines the restriction of wholism in atomistic thinking and further identifies that wholism and total human knowledge are what make up the Indigenous epistemology (Ermine, 1995). When wholism is absent, a moral and spiritual crisis occurs, which further creates a gap in one's knowledge (Ermine, 1995). Ermine centers the Indigenous epistemology in the Cree word: *mamtowisowin* which describes, "the capability of tapping into the 'life force' as a means of procreation" (1995, p.104). During this process, the self and the being are in connection with what is happening, and the experience accumulated is translated into knowledge. Ermine identifies that Indigenous epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit and the unknowns that lie within one's self. Through dreams, prayer, and vision, the inner space and the self are explored, giving meaning to the knowledge.

Absolon (2011) states, "*kaandossiwin* is an Anishinaabe word that describes a process of how we come to know" (p.10). Throughout the process of understanding my own epistemology,

I have related to Absolon in the sense that indigenizing has involved discovering my Métis/Anishinaabe spirit. Through this process, I have worked at decolonizing my mind and creating space for indigenous ways of knowing and being into my mind, heart and spirit. Grumet (1988) defines epistemological knowledge as "that which is derived through relationships: relationships that are forged through some form of narrative experience during which we either express or understand ourselves, and others, through stories told" (as cited in Davis, 2014, p.87). Using stories, individuals express their experiences and memories to understand themselves and others, and relationships can be built through this process. Lavallée (2009) identifies that the interpersonal nature of Indigenous epistemology acknowledges the interconnections, wholism, and the land. Indigenous epistemologies allow people to speak about the wholistic aspects of all living things, including the land. By using an Indigenous epistemology, I am not only able to represent the wholistic feelings and stories of the participants but also make a greater connection to forces outside of them, such as Creator and the land. Lavallée (2009) states that, like other qualitative forms of research, Indigenous research is not objective or unbiased. Researchers are connected to the people being researched, and all the people involved in the research process are connected to living things. She identifies that emotions cannot be separated from our mental process and that each time we think, reason, and analyze as researchers, our emotions are tied to that process. Therefore, in our research, it is impossible to be emotionless and for us to be subjective in research (Lavallée, 2009).

Methodology

My methodology is centred in Lavallée and Lévesque's two-eyed seeing approach. When utilizing two-eyed seeing, researchers must incorporate the strengths of both Indigenous and Western perspectives and create a hybridized understanding of the two (Lavallée & Lévesque,

2013). Lavallée & Lévesque (2013) identify that when analyzing the promotion of physical activity, sport, and recreation in Indigenous communities it is essential and relevant to use a two-eyed seeing approach. A two-eyed seeing approach is relevant as many Indigenous peoples in Canada live and play in a westernized context. The approach is also relevant as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples live amongst each other, and it is common for both types of peoples to work with Indigenous communities. In their study, Ballie et al. (2016) identify that the two-eyed seeing approach enabled the First Nation youth to be engaged in the exploration of their community environment from a First Nation perspective rather than through a Western-only lens. By using two-eyed seeing as my overarching methodology, I was able to incorporate both Indigenous and Westernized methodologies into my research. By using an Indigenous epistemology, a hybrid methodology between the two worlds, and using both Indigenous and Western methods of gaining and sharing knowledge, I was able to bridge both worlds without one dominating the other, which allowed two-eyed seeing to come to life in my research.

Kovach (2009) identifies that Indigenous methodologies can be located within the qualitative landscape as they include characteristics that correspond with other relational qualitative approaches that uphold both the process and content in the research process. Hart (2010) states that Indigenous methodologies are "those that permit and enable Indigenous researchers to be who they are while they are actively engaged as participants in the research process" (p.9). As previously stated, I am not an objective bystander in my research. Throughout the process, I was an actively engaged participant not only in my research but in my spiritual journey of reclaiming my culture. Absolon (2011) highlights that the concept that we are all related informs the wholistic and relational nature of Indigenous methodologies. Within Indigenous methodologies, the search for knowledge considers reciprocity and interdependence.

Absolon (2011) describes that although Indigenous peoples often struggle to learn about their culture and its traditions in the academy, that the collective good of Indigenous well-being and humanity is often a shared goal of Indigenous searchers. Braun, Browne, Ka ‘opua, Kim, and Mokuau (2013) identify that Indigenous methodologies include “a wholistic epistemology, story, purpose, experiential, tribal ethics, tribal ways of gaining knowledge, and an overall consideration of the colonial relationship” (p.124). In my research, I am working under an Indigenous epistemology that is wholistic, and my methods allow for storytelling and symbolism to occur, which is defined as a traditional tribal way of gaining knowledge (Kovach, 2009). Absolon and Willet (2005) identify that explaining your social location is a methodology in and of itself and is significant in decolonizing the research process (as cited in Caxaj, 2015). By doing this, researchers address their power, privileges and representation, which is key in co-creating narratives. This is done through my research by incorporating my own story and situating myself within the research as opposed to identifying myself as an objective bystander.

Nakamura (2009) emphasizes the importance of approaching Indigenous communities from a learning experience during the research process. Nakamura defines Indigenous methodologies as "fluid and dynamic approaches that emphasise circular and cyclical perspectives" (2009, p.98). Although Indigenous methodologies incorporate Indigenous perspectives, the author highlights the diversity of Indigenous peoples and that an Indigenous perspective cannot be defined in a single way. Nakamura identifies that within the research system, individuals are taught in the western paradigm, and most have never learned Indigenous methodologies. Individuals who are not well versed in Indigenous methodologies should approach Indigenous research and Indigenous communities as a learner and understand that the Indigenous people are the experts. If the researcher positions themselves as the learner, this

allows the researcher to be sensitive and open-minded (Nakamura, 2009). By approaching Indigenous research in this manner, this helps the researcher avoid misrepresentation, misinterpreting and exploitation of Indigenous knowledge (Nakamura, 2009). Further, Indigenous methodologies recognize the self-determination of Indigenous peoples and support Indigenous leadership in the conceptualization and carrying out of research (Braun et al., 2013). As an Indigenous person carrying out Indigenous research with Indigenous peoples, I am aligning myself with both an Indigenous and Western methodology.

As my research focuses on the concept of mino-bimaadiziwin, I think it is important to also consider mino-bimaadiziwin as a methodology. Debassige (2010) proposes that incorporating Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin as a research methodology is a step towards enhancing research in a good way. Debassige (2010) identifies that mino-bimaadiziwin is a wholistic way of daily living and should not be reduced to only a research project. Therefore, researchers incorporating mino-bimaadiziwin in their projects must incorporate mino-bimaadiziwin in their everyday life and attempt to promote the continuation of mino-bimaadiziwin in the participants long after the research project is completed. Debassige (2010) highlights that increased usage of bimaadiziwin in research literature allows for the movement towards research frameworks that are based on bimaadiziwin. This type of framework, using bimaadiziwin, re-conceptualizes and conducts spirit-centred research with Indigenous communities. Debassige (2010) highlights that using Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin can contribute to Indigenous scholars' research in at least five ways:

> it contributes to the well-being of the individual who is conducting the research; it revitalizes Indigenous language and culture; it protects Indigenous knowledge; it engages methodology that is distinctly Indigenous which results in good research with Indigenous communities; and it allows for the countering of westernized research and the historical legacy of damaging research practices forced on Indigenous people (p.24).

Debassige (2010) believes that by using Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin, the past, present and future of 'good' and respectful approaches can be active in all aspects of life, including Indigenous research.

Benham (2007) identifies that a methodology should not be seen as an endpoint. Researchers should be engaged in an ongoing discussion to ensure that there is no one size fits all approach and that more dynamic possibilities are necessary to encourage diverse voices and representations. As you can see through the many methodological discussions included in this section, I had to borrow the teachings and perspectives from many scholars to form what I felt was my Indigenous and Western methodology within two-eyed seeing.

Using the approach of two-eyed seeing does not come without some criticism and critique. Some may question why I did not use a decolonizing lens in my research framework and why I chose to use a methodology that partially honors the western world in my Indigenous-focused research. I knew that there would be problems with using a methodology like two-eyed seeing as it could obscure any negatives of either approach. I also knew that there was a chance that two-eyed seeing might privilege western thought simply by including it due to the history of its dominance in the academy compared to Indigenous ways of knowing. At times, I questioned why I chose a methodology that upheld a balance between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. History has shown us that Indigenous knowledges have been dismissed for so long and Western knowledge has been regarded as the only *valid* form on knowledge (Ermine, 1995). I was aware of this during the research process and that is why throughout this document and throughout this journey, the reader will see decolonizing forms of sharing used. Some may define two-eyed seeing as too optimistic and that incorporating both sets of knowledge systems into one document is unrealistic. But to me two-eyed seeing represented who I am as an

individual, both Western (European) and Indigenous, striving for balance (mino-bimaadiziwin) and trying to stay optimistic. Although in this research I chose western forms of data collection such as semi-structured interviews, I transitioned into forms of sharing that honoured Indigenous ways of knowing and being and shared Indigenous peoples' stories about their relationships with their cultures, languages, peoples, and the land. To me, this was how I decolonized my research. I, like many other Indigenous peoples, am on a journey of decolonizing my own thoughts, ways of being, and work. At this point in my life and in my work, two-eyed seeing is how I began that journey.

Methods

In their discussion on qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) identify that many qualitative researchers utilize various methods to study people and their experiences in their natural setting. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) supports the use of qualitative research as a tool for Indigenous communities because of the variety and flexibility of methods and the ability for stories and voices of marginalized and silenced peoples to be shared. Indigenous methods are emphasized through a wholistic process that combines dreams, memories, and other forms of knowledge that extend beyond the Euro-centric boundaries of knowledge.

Weber-Pillwax (2004) identifies that there are two principles of Indigenous research that are key to decisions regarding research methods and are tied to the personal responsibility of the researcher. The researcher must be accountable for the effects of the research project on the lives of the participants, and the purpose of the research must benefit the community and the people in the community (p.80). These two principles and responsibilities were considered when choosing the methods for my research. Loppie (2007) identifies that it is appropriate to use western methods in Indigenous research, but that humility, commitment and connection is required to

carry these methods out in a good way. Loppie shares that this can be a prolonged process and should be engaged in wholistically, which involves one's intellectual, emotional, and social engagement in the project.

Sharing and Gaining Knowledge (Data Generation)

Brant Castellano (2000) identifies that in the past, stories were used as the primary method to covey Indigenous knowledges. Therefore, when deciding which data generating strategies to use for my research, I decided to use semi-structured interviews which allowed for storytelling to occur. I chose this data generating strategy due to the place I was at in my research journey and my confidence in conducting interviews. Although Kovach (2009) identifies that storytelling is open, unstructured, and allows the participant to openly explain their views and stories I felt that I could achieve this with semi-structured interviews that were open-ended to promote storytelling. Ray (2012) identifies that although there are differences in Indigenous and Western knowledges that interviews can be used as a way of explanation. Benham (2007) highlights that stories have the strength to explore people's internal and external relationships, relationships with one another, and the environment. Stories show one's knowledge in such a way that it "connects us to the roots of who we are as individuals and as a community (Benham, 2007, p.512). Benham identifies that narrative recognizes the value of Indigenous knowledges while also connecting to other forms of Western knowledges. To understand Indigenous narrative, Benham identifies that we must understand "where we have been, where we are, and where we need to go" (2007, p.514). For many Indigenous groups, oral storytelling is a primary way life lessons are taught (Benham, 2007; Courchene et al., 2018). Iseke (2013) identifies that Elders suggest that there are many ways Indigenous peoples can reconnect to their traditional Indigenous culture and guide them on their spiritual journey. This can be done through listening

to traditional stories from Elders and Knowledge Keepers and using them as life lessons, learning to speak your traditional language, and learning about your traditional culture and spirituality. This shows the potential impact that stories and sharing can have when connecting an Indigenous person to their culture and traditional language.

Courchene et al. (2018) identify that in Indigenous communities, stories are used to share teachings from one generation to the next. Courchene et al. state, “for Indigenous peoples, oral traditions offer an explanation of who we are and how we have come to be; thus they provide a means to connect to and understand our interconnected worlds” (2018, p.63). In the academy, Indigenous researchers use the methods of narrative and storytelling to support both their research objectives as well as support community goals (Weber-Pillax, 2004). Davis (2014) identifies that although stories were neglected teaching practices in Western classrooms for many years, that stories are an important part of our lives. Storytelling – a practice that Elders have always known is now being integrated into modern pedagogy (Davis, 2014). In a time when technology is weakening our interpersonal relationships, there is a need for stories to connect us as people. Davis identifies that “storytelling can become the ‘eastern door’ through which we come to understand and know ourselves, others, the elements and the universe” (2014, p.90). Davis highlights that when we share stories, we share a part of ourselves and our lives with others. This is displayed through a quote by King who states, “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are (King, 2003, p.2 as cited in Davis, 2014). When Indigenous storied methodologies are used in research with Indigenous communities, rich, local, and relevant insight can be shared, which in turn can help guide an understanding of Indigenous views of health experiences. Caxaj (2015) identifies that Indigenous storytelling, “enables meanings and truths to be heard” and also gives the power to define, “what knowledge is and how is it created” (p.2). Researchers can add

to the co-construction of stories without silencing or distorting community voices by using their analysis a) “as a magnifying lens,” b) “a way to clarify and honor the significance of the telling,” and c) “to unlock the multiple truths… below the surface” (Madison, 2008, p.294). Caxaj highlights that when we identify the fundamental relationships between action and analysis and understand our reflexivity as researchers, that we may honour the voices of the community we are working with. By doing this, we recognize that the truths and meanings shared are valued and important with or without links to the academy (Caxaj, 2015). Caxaj (2015) stresses that we must form spaces where stories can be shared, and conversations can be had outside of academia. In my research, I will be ensuring that this occurs by sharing the stories created with IYMP participants across Canada and by ensuring that all data from the research belongs to the *community.* I italicize the word community here as I defined this word very specifically. Ownership of the data belongs to the five individuals that took part in the study. This is what we consider to be the research community. Each individual would have ownership of their interview transcripts and the stories that were written. Further, a copy of my thesis will be shared with the IYMP members in Thompson to ensure that the research that was done and the stories that were shared can be told in, and conversations can continue outside of the academy, in the community, and in mentorship.

Kovach (2009) identifies that there are two types of stories: stories with mythical elements that are meant to teach or share and personal stories. Although throughout my master’s degree I heard stories from Elders that had mythical elements, my personal research with IYMP members in Thompson involved personal stories both about mentorship and life outside of mentorship. Iseke (2013) expresses that in Indigenous storytelling, a lot of things are left for others to interpret themselves. This is done purposefully so people can put their personal

experiences together and be able to draw on the storytelling to relate to their own lives. I personally felt this while reading *One Drum* by the late Richard Wagemese. As I read the Indigenous stories shared in his book, I reflected on my own life experiences and conceptualized how the stories related to these experiences and my ability to learn and grow. Iseke identifies that when we learn from stories and Indigenous storytelling, that we are in the process of recovering from the effects of colonization. We do this by writing "who we are, our history, our understandings, our belonging, and how we are connected to the world" (Iseke, 2013, p.573). In my research, I do this by writing my own stories into the research and reflecting on my sense of belonging and growth over the last two years. I do this because I understand the importance of listening to and telling stories, and this being a way that we can grow throughout our lifetime (Iseke, 2013).

Wilson (2001) identifies that storytelling and methods like personal narrative fit within Indigenous epistemology because when relating to someone's story, you are forming a relationship with them. Through storytelling, you are able to tell your story, their story, and analyze it (Wilson, 2001). Wilson highlights that when you look at the relationship that develops between the storyteller and the listener, the relationships become stronger. This was significant throughout my research process as existing relationships with IYMP participants in Thompson were strengthened through the sharing of stories. Although the interviews included semi-structured questions, stories were shared both from the participants and me. Through this sharing, relationships became stronger and deeper.

Throughout the research process and during the semi-structured interviews, the research participants (co-researchers) were identified as the experts, and I identified myself as the listener and learner. Following Broken Nose's (1992) recommendations for helpers, as the researcher, I

would sit through delayed pauses and embrace the silence rather than be directive or interrupt the sharing. These periods of silence were important to my research and the participant's emotions and feelings as individuals come to know from moments of silence (Peat, 1994). When conducting my interviews, I thought of the words of Madison (2008) that state, "we do not speak for Others when we can listen while Others speak" (p.16). Keeping this in mind, I listened attentively when participants shared their thoughts, feelings, and stories, and I ensured that I allowed space for pauses and reflection.

The primary source of data used was one-on-one, semi-structured, face-to-face, audio-taped interviews. I conducted interviews with three YAHLS and two mentors from the mentorship program in Thompson. To increase the comfort of the program participants, the youth had the option to have a YAHL join their interview, but no youth had requested this. Therefore, all interviews were one-on-one and face-to-face. The questions asked in the interviews were open-ended to promote storytelling and to allow the participants to share their perspectives and experiences. Two sets of interview questions were created – one for the YAHLs and one for the high school mentors. These interview questions, as well as the interview guidelines, can be found in the Appendices F through I.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Pauses and excessive words such as 'ummm' and 'like' were omitted to avoid reinforcing cultural and social stereotypes of marginality. Sounds such as laughter were added in brackets to tie emotions to words. Once the interviews were in word format, the participants were given the opportunity to clarify, change, or omit any elements of the transcript that they wished. Throughout the interview process, the data generating strategy of field notes was also used. Field notes were recorded after each interview and contained reflections about what was said, ideas for further probing questions

with participants, and preliminary thoughts about the stories that were shared and how they connected to each other.

Co-Researchers (Participants)

Prior to beginning my thesis work with IYMP members in Thompson, I formed a relationship with Barb Carlson at an IYMP National Gathering in Calgary in March 2019, and we talked about what kind of qualitative work wanted to be done with the youth in Thompson. In May 2019, we worked together on a community-based photovoice project that was centred around mino-pimatisiwin and how mentorship helped youth live in a good way. Through this research, relationships building occurred with two YAHLs, Barb and Madeline, and with the high school mentors who wished to participate in the study. Due to the strong relationships and trust formed over time, I approached Barb and Madeline about conducting a similar study for my master's thesis, replacing the methods of photovoice and sharing circles with one-on-one semi-structured interviews that promoted storytelling. I wanted to continue the work we were doing in a different way that would allow the Thompson IYMP family to continue to tell their stories.

With ethical approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba (ENREB: HS23450 – E2019:122), I recruited a variety of research participants from IYMP in Thompson, Manitoba. Although my original plan was to recruit three different types of participants, only two were able to be recruited due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions causing limitations for face-to-face interaction. At the beginning of my research process, I intended to recruit three Young Adult Health Leaders (YAHLs), two grade 8-12 high school mentors, and two grade 4-6 mentees. I was successful in recruiting the three YAHLs and two high school mentors but was unable to recruit any mentees. When COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, the mentorship program in Thompson was cancelled. Although I tried to recruit new

mentee participants virtually through existing participants, colleagues and friends in Thompson, I was unsuccessful. After discussing the future potential of mentee recruitment with the community, it was deemed the appropriate choice to stop recruitment and to write my research with my two existing types of participants – the YAHLs and high school mentors. Six participants were recruited in total, and five participants were interviewed. Two YAHLs, Barb Carlson and Madeline Ponask, both whom I had an existing relationship with from a previous research project, were contacted over email to set up a face-to-face meeting to talk about the research study. Barb and Madeline agreed to take part in the study and help me recruit others to take part. Recruitment occurred through snowball and convenience sampling. Barb helped me recruit the third YAHL, Alexis Halverson, and Madeline helped me recruit two high school mentors, Danessa Beardy and Kya*.

Recruitment.

The participants in my research did not all come from the same Indigenous background. Participants in my research identified as Cree and Métis and had variability in their connection to their culture. Recruitment occurred through in-person announcements as well as through email and texting communication. To be eligible to participate in the study, it was required that the high school mentors identify as Indigenous and have participated in the program in the previous and current year. The reason for this selection criteria was due to the timeline of interviewing the mentors and the potential lack of experience in the program a new mentor would have. Consent forms were distributed and signed by the YAHLs during the face-to-face meeting, and the assent and parent/guardian consent forms were distributed to the mentors the day before the interviews occurred. Consent, assent, and parent/guardian consent forms can be found in appendices D, E, and F. Written or verbal consent was required by all participants and their parent/guardian (if

under the age of 18) before the interviews occurred. Written consent was received from all participants and their parents/guardians' consent where necessary. For individuals who wanted to waive their anonymity and use their real names in the research, a separate Legal Name Release Form which can be found in Appendix J, needed to be signed, and if the individual was under the age of 18, their parent/guardian also had to sign the document as well. One individual wanted to remain anonymous, and a pseudonym was chosen by them to represent their identity in the research. As consent forms were received and meeting times were scheduled, I interviewed the participants. Interviews ranged from 22 minutes to 57 minutes. After completing all five interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim, and member checks were completed with the research participants. During member checking, the research participants were able to make any necessary changes to the interview transcripts and were able to omit areas they were not comfortable with being included. Once I had gained approval from each research participant via email, I began to analyze the data.

Coming to Know (Analysis)

The Dual Role and Honoring Community

Bastien (2005) highlights the significance of Indigenous researchers being involved in research and being able to grow and develop as individuals from their research. Bastien (2005) further explains that the dual role of participant and researcher that a researcher can hold is advantageous to their research, much like being a community member in community-based research is a strength. However, as researchers, we must recognize and reflect on the impact that we have on our research under this dual role (Lavallée, 2007). Lavallée states that the power we carry as researchers and the intimate relationships we have with the community is something we must be aware of through the entire research process. Throughout the process, I had to be aware

of the dual role I held when working with community members. Although we developed meaningful relationships over the year, I had to be aware of the power I held in my role. To ensure I was not the sole holder of power in the research, I tried to involve the community as much as I could in the research process. If it were not for COVID-19 and the restrictions imposed by the Province of Manitoba at the time, I would have been able to involve the participants more face-to-face, but I stayed in communication with them from a distance. As previously stated, I sent interview transcripts via email and asked the participating members to provide feedback on their interviews and to approve my use of them. Once the interviews were approved by participants, analyzed, and the results were written, I again reached out to participants to see if they felt the stories created fit their experiences and if this was the story they wanted me to share. I wish that I could have been in the community more, that I could have done things face to face with everyone, but due to COVID-19, this was out of my control, and I knew that the social distancing recommendations were for all our safety. To keep the participants involved in the process as best as possible, phone calls, text messages, and emails were exchanged over time to talk about the research and to simply check in on one another to see how we were all doing. I want to thank all the research participants for their insights, collaboration, and encouraging words from a distance during the analysis and results writing time of my thesis.

Bishops (1996) stresses that researchers must acknowledge their personal connectedness with the participants and promote knowledge in a way that eliminates distance and separation between the two types of people and promotes commitment and engagement (Bishop, 1996 cited in Benham, 2007). Indigenous researchers must analyze Indigenous narratives from alternative perspectives through Indigenous theorizing. By analyzing alternative perspectives, multiple cultural perspectives, both Western and Indigenous perspectives could be explored. The analysis

described below aligns well with the methodology of two-eyed seeing that values both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, being, and in this case, interpreting the stories shared.

Upholding the Interconnection

In the process of analyzing the interviews and field notes, the thoughts, feelings, and knowledge that IYMP participants shared with me were not separated or broken up into themes. Throughout the analysis, I looked for the interconnection between the stories and the connections the participants had to greater beings such as the land and their culture. This allowed me to highlight the interconnection between all living beings, culture, and how this promoted mino-pimatisiwin. Throughout the analysis, wholistic health, living in a good way, and the interconnectedness of mentorship was explored. Once the analysis was complete, it was shared with the co-researchers for feedback to ensure the stories written and symbol created was done in a way that they felt connected to and that was representative of their experiences. I did this to ensure the results were culturally and community relevant and something the research participants were proud to share. Although my interpretation and analysis of the stories and symbols are expanded on in the discussion section of this thesis, I encourage readers to form their own interpretations of the stories and symbols and to find their own deeper meanings.

In the analysis phase of my research, the analytical tools of creative analytical practice (CAP) of Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection were used. Richardson (2000) created the term CAP to explain the method of gathering and disseminating data that moves beyond the general social science. Many leisure researchers have adopted CAP, which allows for research to be presented in a more creative and imaginative way (Parry & Johnson, 2007). Interpreting and presenting the lived experience is complex to understand and show. Therefore, CAP is used to break the differences between science and literature (Lincoln & Guba, 2005 as cited in Parry &

Johnson, 2007). Parry & Johnson (2007) identify that CAP can be used to go beyond generalizing stories and further represent the personal and social meanings of things. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) identify that the text created through CAP asks that a new relationship be formed between the researcher and participants, with the researcher themselves, and their work. CAP not only allows the researcher to acknowledge multiple meanings and interpretations of the research but also allows the readers to form their own understandings of their work. When using CAP, the researcher is forced to think of who they are speaking for and who they are speaking to (Richardson, 1997). In the short stories created, I am speaking for the IYMP family and for Indigenous peoples.

Lavallée (2007) explains that symbols and the making of symbols and art has significant cultural and spiritual meaning among Indigenous peoples and that the making of these symbols and art is unique and spiritual to each person. Anishinaabe symbol-based reflections are an arts-based research approach that uses the elements of creative arts experiences and is used as a way of understanding (Lavallée, 2007). Anishnaabe symbol-based reflections are an adaptation to the method of photovoice, but instead of using pictures to display one's experiences and perspectives, people use other kinds of symbols such as drawings and stories. By making art and symbols, Indigenous peoples are able to describe their meanings, which can go beyond words. This further allows personal meaning to be expressed in a different way and allows a person’s unique spiritual energy to be put into the (Lavallée, 2007). When creating the symbol to show the interconnectedness of mentorship and how it contributes to living the good life, I thought about the framework of mentorship that is taught to each participant, the three types of participants that are a part of the program, the medicine wheel, the four directions, and the four areas of wholistic health that are all connected.

Richardson (2000) states, “creative arts is one lens through which to view the world: analytical/science is another. We see better with two lenses. We see best with both lenses focused and magnified” (p. 254). This description of interpretation and analysis contributes to my methodology of two-eyed seeing as it showcases that there are many ways to analyze health and living in a good way. The way in which I am sharing stories and symbols whostically is through a creative lens that can reach a community audience. The research that shows the prevention of weight gain and the reduction of T2D, along with my research, creates a wholistic view of the phenomena on the importance of programs such as IYMP. The benefit of using CAP and Anishinaabe symbol making in my results section of this thesis is that the research is told in a way that is relatable and relevant in both the community and academy and honors the words and stories shared by the Indigenous participants.

These forms of dissemination align with Wilson (2008) as he discusses the challenges of presenting Indigenous circular work in a straightforward way. Wilson also states that Indigenous peoples can use metaphors to both analyze and disseminate their intricate ideas that are not easily understood (Wilson, 2008). In my research, I use the metaphor of water to explain what it was like being immersed in Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and further use the symbol of a flower to show the connection of the research and the mentorship program. I feel it is important to discuss this as it informed how I analyzed the interviews and will be disseminating my research in a culturally significant way to Indigenous peoples and their ways of knowing, sharing, and understanding the world.

Limitations

Going into my research, I thought that I would face the limitations of culture and class competency and a lack of knowledge of the Northern lived experience. I thought that because I

was a Métis woman who grew up in a middle-class southern-Manitoba family that I would not be able to understand the lived experience of someone from a First Nation background who came from a similar or different class than me. I knew that I could speak to my personal experiences as a Métis woman, but I would not be able to fully understand the lived experience of the First Nation and Northern participants that I was working with. Although this was a perceived limitation at the beginning of my research, building reciprocal community relationships overcame this potential limitation. By building strong reciprocal relationships with community members and involving them in the research process as co-researchers, I was able to understand the lived experience of the participants on a deeper level and develop trust to carry out the research in a good way. Member checking and collaboration were used throughout the research process to ensure that experiences analyzed, and stories and symbols created were in line with the community members' thoughts and perspectives. I also took the time to attend several Fireside Chat Indigenous teachings on the University of Manitoba campus, which included teachings from Dakota, Ojibwe, Anishinaabe, Cree, and Métis Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This allowed me to understand different Indigenous cultures and to understand different Nations and their cultural protocols better. This also opened my mind to different ways of knowing and being from different Indigenous perspectives.

A limitation that greatly impacted my research and that could have never been accounted for at the beginning of my research process was the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 12, 2020, the first presumptive case of COVID-19 was announced in Manitoba. On March 30th, Premier Pallister announced a state of emergency for the next 30 days. The University of Manitoba closed its doors on Monday, March 23rd, which meant that all our research had to be taken off campus and be done virtually. During this time, all recreation, community, and sports

programming had either been cancelled or postponed. Within these cancellations, the mentorship program in Thompson was put on hold. Further, it was encouraged that you only saw people in your immediate family that you lived with and that if you did have to go out for the essential grocery shop, that you maintained six feet of distance between other customers. It became a different world. One where Zoom calls became the norm, children were not playing outside in public parks anymore, and many jobs were lost. The virus took over, and for some Manitobans, lives were taken. I knew that the pandemic would affect my research in some way, but I tried to adapt to the virtual reality that had become our new normal. Before the pandemic hit our country and province, I planned to go to Thompson in April to visit and be involved in the mentorship program. While visiting, I planned to spend time with the participants that I had developed strong relationships with and further recruit two mentees to the research project and interview them on their experiences. All these plans were now impossible because of the pandemic. On April 16th, Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, announced new health orders that restricted travel within Manitoba and prohibited travel to Northern communities (CTV News, 2020). This meant that virtual recruitment and interviews were going to be the only way to involve the mentees and the only way I could keep in contact with my existing participants. Texts, phone calls, and emails were ways that I kept in contact with my research participants, but I could tell the negative effect this virus was having on everyone emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically, including myself. After two months of trying to recruit mentees virtually, it was decided to stop recruitment and to write my research as it was. This tough decision was not made on my own. I consulted with community members, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, Elders, scholars, and my research committee before making the final decision to stop trying. Although this is a limitation in my own research, and a story that I am

unable to write at this time, I encourage the Thompson mentorship program to write the story of the mentee one day when we are able to return back to the mentorship program.

Delimitations

Self-imposed limitations that I applied to narrow my research included Anishinaabe and Cree teachings of living life in a good way and the selection of five individuals, three YAHLs and two mentors to participate in my research study. There are many Indigenous cultures, languages, teachings, and ways of knowing, and to limit the depth of my research I chose to focus on Anishinaabe and Cree teachings of the medicine wheel, wholistic health, and living the good life due to the demographic I was working with. I limited the number of participant interviews so that I could become strongly familiarized with each individual's story and to build strong relationships with those individuals.

Summary

Since being implemented in 2010, IYMP, an after-school mentorship program for Indigenous youth, has rippled to 21 communities across Canada and is hosted in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec. New research initiatives for the program are shifting focus from T2D and obesity reduction to more culturally relevant wholistic health measures of health, including spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental health. More recently, community members and researchers of the program expressed interested in exploring how the program promotes mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin, Anishinaabe/Cree words that translate to “living in a good way” and “living the good life” (Bell, 2016; Hart, 2002).

To my knowledge, no published studies have explored the experiences, stories, and perspectives of the YAHLS and mentors of IYMP together, and many of those studies that have are unpublished and are still ongoing. Therefore, by interviewing two of the three types of

participants in my research study as well as embarking on my own journey of Indigenous self-discovery, I was able to gain a wholistic perspective of the program and understand how mentorship aids the participants to live in mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin. Throughout this process, I was also able to show the interconnectedness of mentorship and our relationships with each other and the land. Findings from the study outlined in the next chapters will be used to tell the story of the YAHLs and mentors, highlight how the program impacts the participants' ability to live in a more wholistic way and in mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin. The flower symbol and its meanings that follow the stories will show the connections between the program participants, the program framework, the medicine wheel directions and teachings, and its connection to wholistic health and mino-pimatisiwin/mino-bimaadiziwin.

Chapter 4: Telling Their Stories & Interconnecting the Symbols (Results)

I wanted to keep the individual stories shared with me intact as much as possible by writing about the participants as themselves in short story form and using the principles of Anishinaabe symbol-based reflections to develop a symbol representing the collective story of the mentorship program in Thompson. Iseke (2013) identifies that storytelling as an important approach to research among Indigenous scholars. They state, "story is a practice in Indigenous cultures that sustains communities, validates experiences and epistemologies, expresses experiences of Indigenous peoples, and nurtures relationships and sharing of knowledge" (Iseke, 2013, p.559). Expressing my results in the forms of stories is a culturally appropriate method of dissemination, as storytelling is a central focus of Indigenous epistemologies, pedagogies and research approaches (Iseke, 2013). In this results section, I use stories to witness and remember the knowledge and experiences shared with me by three YAHLS and two high school mentors. Benham stresses that Indigenous narrative must be honest, and it must emerge from the voices of

Indigenous peoples through a culturally appropriate Indigenous ontology (Benham, 2007). When discussing authorial privileges and rights, Benham highlights that we need to question who is telling and retelling the stories, how are the stories being told, for who, and for what purposes are they being told (2007, p.517). These are all things that I considered when creating the story of the YAHL and mentor and further the symbol that represented the mentorship program as a whole. Once the stories were created, Lavallée's Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection was used to make sense of the collective story and interpret the results further in a culturally relevant way (2007; 2009). When creating the symbol, I reflected on the stories and experiences shared with me in the interviews, the four quadrants of the medicine wheel, the four areas of wholistic health, the framework of the Indigenous mentorship programs, and the overall concepts of teachings of mino-pimatisiwin and mino-bimaadiziwin. Although I did not realize it until the drawing was complete, I also incorporated colours like blue in the flower petals that represented water which further represents life. Throughout the symbol making process, I put my spirit and energy into the drawing and ensured that each connected line and circle felt 'right' when drawing it. I let my Indigenous spirit and the stories shared with me to guide this drawing to create the symbol of mentorship that shows the interconnectedness of our being.

The Story of the Mentee

At the beginning of my thesis, I had the intention of interviewing each type of participant in the Thompson mentorship program. These types of participants included the Young Adult Health Leader (YAHL), high school mentor, and elementary mentee. Due to COVID-19 closures and restrictions, I was unable to interview any elementary mentees. Therefore, the story of the mentee is unable to be written at this time. I want to highlight the gap that this caused in my research and stress the significance that this story would have had. It is extremely important that

when we work with a community that we are incorporating the voices of the youth. Their thoughts and perspectives will guide us into the future and have an impact on the next generations to come. Although I am unable to write this story on behalf of the Thompson mentorship program, I encourage the group to write this story someday so it can be shared with incoming elementary students in the program.

The Story of the High School Mentor

This story was created using the interviews of Danessa Beardy and Kya*. Thank you both for taking the time to sit down with me and share your stories about mentorship and life.

It's the first day back to school from the Winter Break. The minus 40 temperatures sting my face as I walk into R.D. Parker Collegiate. It's not so bad, though. I don't mind the cold.

I'm looking forward to seeing my friends and hearing about what they did over the break. I was able to go to my home community and see my family. It was nice. I love being able to go there and be out on the land.

We have a mentorship meeting today with Ms. Ponask. A few of my mentorship friends have already talked about coming back this year, but I'm interested to see who else joins. Our group is growing, which is great. It allows us to make the program better and share more responsibility.

Classes went by fast this morning. Now, it's time for our mentorship lunch meeting. My friend Kya and I walked down the hall to Ms. Ponask's classroom, where we will meet in the Youth Aboriginal Council office to talk about mentorship. I'm used to coming into this office because

I'm on the council too. That's actually how I got involved in the mentorship program. Ms. Ponask oversees the Youth Aboriginal Council, so she recruits a lot of us members to the mentorship program as well. This will be my third year in the program, same as Kya. Throughout my time in the program, I've taken on more responsibility and have helped train the new mentors who have come in. Kya joined the same year I did. She's younger than me but started in grade 8. Her confidence has grown a lot. I remember how shy she was when she first joined. Now, she's able to talk more and lead the kids through activities. It's so great to see. She has such a kind softness to her, always thinking of others and is nice to everyone.

I think I've grown since starting the mentorship program too. I came out of my shell and became more comfortable talking to people and being a leader in my community. I've learned how to be with kids, to speak up more, how to have fun and play games, and how to guide them in a good way and ensure they are always safe. I've also learned how to adapt to situations and improvise. I remember last year when we hosted mentorship close to Easter; we had planned to do a big Easter egg hunt with the youth. Well… after two of our mentors went to hide the eggs for the kids, the eggs were taken by people that weren't in mentorship. We didn't know this at the time, so the kids went out to find the eggs and were all looking so hard. When we realized what had happened, we asked the youth to come back inside. I knew this had disappointed the mentees as they were looking forward to the activity. But there is always a lesson with everything we do in mentorship. On this day, we taught the kids about the importance of not littering, and to not take what is not yours. As a group, we didn't dwell on the fact that the Easter egg hunt couldn't happen. We laughed about it and ended up playing a different game outside. I think that's one of

the biggest things I've learned from mentorship – to adapt and to also be able to laugh things off. It feels good to laugh. The youth help me laugh.

As we sit in the Youth Aboriginal Council office ready to start the meeting, I see some familiar friends and some new faces. Mentorship has really allowed me to open up to new friendships. It's made me aware that I don't need to only focus on people that are like me. My mentorship friends are so different from me, but we just click. I think mentorship has allowed a lot of people to come together and make connections. It's allowed us to make more friends and have a group to belong to. Mentorship makes me want to be a better person. It's given me a sense of purpose and a place to belong to. It's always something I look forward to doing after school. It makes me feel… wholesome.

I think the little kids enjoy it too. They always talked about how they're looking forward to coming back the next week. We try to get them outside as much as possible. It's good for them to enjoy the outdoors and create a connection with the land. It helps them also get away from the screens. When they see us, I think it really gives them something to look forward to in the future. They see that they could be a high school student someday and be the leaders running the mentorship program. I think that's why it's so important that we are good role models for them. I've learned that it doesn't take much to make somebody smile. It feels good to help my community and our youth.

In the Youth Aboriginal Council Office, I see the seven teachings on the wall in Cree. In the program, I'm able to connect to my culture through cultural teachings like the seven teachings.

It's a place where other mentors look like me and we are mentoring Indigenous youth together. It feels good to belong to something like this. I think it helps me live in mino-pimatisiwin. This makes me think… mino-pimatisiwin, what does this mean to me? I think it means to have a good life and to have people that love and care for you; that you are not alone. It's having a roof over your head and having food on the table. Mentorship helps me stay active and be able to be with people. I'm able to give back to our community. I think that contributes to me living a good life. I feel connected – there is always somebody there for you, and you are always there for someone. It's helped me trust people, it gives me positive energy, and it makes me happy. When we go outside, I think the connection to the land helps me live the good life too—in the bush with the tall trees, breathing in the fresh air, enjoying nature. I wish we could take the youth out on the land more. I love being on the land. I must remember that this is what I think helps me live the good life, though. Everyone has a different life and a different way. How I live in mino-pimatisiwin might not be how others do. It will not always be the same. But I must remember that we are all connected somehow.

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We have nine mentors this year. We have lots of returning mentors and a few new ones. I am excited for mentorship to start next week! I wonder if we'll ever expand the mentorship program to more schools. Right now, we host at Wapanohk, but I think if we branched out to more elementary schools that the program would have a greater impact on Thompson. I can see the positive impact that the program has on the people that participate. We are like one big family.

The Story of the YAHL

This story was created using the interviews of Barb Carlson, Madeline Ponask and Alexis Halverson. I would like to thank all three of you for your time and sharing and for your

commitment to the mentorship program in Thompson. You have truly made a difference in the lives of these young people.

On a cold day in January in Thompson, Manitoba, an announcement is heard overhead at R.D. Parker Collegiate. “There will be a mentorship meeting in the Youth Aboriginal Council Office at lunch. Anyone interested in joining the mentorship program this year with Ms. Ponask, please attend,” said the announcer. Madeline Ponask smiles as she hears the announcement, excited to see her returning mentors and new mentors in just a few minutes.

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As lunch begins and the high school mentors pile into the Youth Aboriginal Council office, Barb Carlson and Alexis Halvorsen join after a quick walk over from University College of the North. Barb helped start the mentorship program in Thompson and quickly encouraged Alexis and Madeline to join the program. This will be their 7th year hosting the program.

The last time the mentorship group was in this room together, they were sharing photos and their perspectives about mentorship and mino-pimatisiwin. The youth took pictures of mentorship and their lives outside of mentorship and talked about how it related to them living a good life. Barb smiles as she sees the group photo that was taken for the project hanging in the office. She remembers the sense of belonging that was felt in the group when the youth shared so comfortably with each other. This was a space where they felt comfortable sharing their feelings and memories. She remembers the stories, the laughs, and the tears that came from sharing their experiences. It reminded her of the significance of the program and how it has truly touched the lives of these Indigenous youth in a special way. In a transient place like Thompson, where many

people come to live from outlying communities, the mentorship program is a place where a sense of belonging can be fostered, Barb thinks.

She looks at the group of youth sitting in front of her, smiles, and feels excited to begin mentorship again this year.

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They see some familiar faces from last year's program and some new faces who are just starting this year. As Ms. Ponask looks at the returning mentors, she reflects on the memories they have made together. She sees Randy* sitting at the end of the table and waves at him. Oh, Randy…what a committed mentor, she thinks. It has been amazing to see his journey not only in mentorship but in school. He has become so committed to his studies. She flashes back to one day after mentorship when she had dropped him off at his home. As she began to drive off, he was waving at her. She smiled and waved back, thinking he was just saying goodbye. Little did she know she still had his backpack in her car. He proceeded to chase her down the road so he could grab his books. For a child who did not worry about school before, he was now chasing her down the road to ensure he could study that evening after mentorship. Memories like this remind her that mentorship has helped a lot of the high school students and youth commit more to school and their studies and has made them feel an overall greater sense of purpose.

The mentors are all settled in the office, and Madeline, Barb and Alexis begin to give information about the mentorship program. Mentorship will start next week at Wapanohk Community School and will run for twenty weeks total.

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It is the first week of April, and the three YAHLs welcome the high school mentors as they arrive at Wapanohk for the twelfth week of the program. Many of the high school mentors now implementing the program were once Wapanohk students themselves. This opportunity has allowed them to go back to the school they once attended and give back to the community they grew up in.

The mentorship program is centred around the culturally relevant framework of the 4 R's and the Circle of Courage®. In the program, respecting others is the main rule and the YAHLs and mentors continually stress that regardless of who walks into mentorship if it is a YAHL, a mentor, a mentee or someone from the community that they are treated with respect. The program is a place where relationships can be built, and a strong sense of belonging can occur. It is a place where positive role models can be looked up to, and kindness, gratitude, and empathy can be fostered. Mentorship is a place where all these people from different life experiences can come together and learn from each other in a place where there is no hierarchy of teaching and learning.

Here at Wapanohk, the mentorship program runs for two hours once a week. The high school mentors have arrived, and the evening starts with a healthy snack that is prepared by the YAHLs and high school mentors.

The youth eat the snack quickly and are eager to begin the day's activities. While two mentors clean up the snack room and do the dishes, a few mentors take a group of youth to one area of the gym where they read their favourite books from the library while a handful of other mentees

follow other mentors to go play a mathematical game in the corner of the gym. The time in-between snack and play allows the youths' food to digest and for the literacy component of the program to take place. With 45-minutes remaining in the program, Danessa calls out that it is time to play! The mentors and youth all come together to talk about what games will be played for the day and quickly begin running around and playing, filling the room with laughter. Alexis helps the mentors facilitate the game while Barb and Madeline watch from afar admiring the leadership skills of the high school mentors. "It is amazing to see how much some of our mentors have grown and come out of their shell since starting mentorship in January," Madeline says. "Yes, I love watching them flourish as they have. I'm so glad we have this opportunity in our community," says Barb. The youth yell for Barb, and she quickly jumps in to join the youth for a game of Screaming Eagle. Next, the group transitions into their favourite game – Shark Attack. The gym echoes with loud laughter as the youth attempt to pull Barb and Alexis under the parachute. Ms. Ponask laughs as this is the third week in a row that they are attempting this.

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As Madeline watches the group play, she reflects on the benefits of the program. She thinks about how the physical health of the program participants is nurtured but also how their mental, emotional, and spiritual health is fostered in the program too. She thinks about the traditional Aboriginal games and the seven teachings that are incorporated in the program to ensure they are building a space where Indigenous youth can learn about their culture. That through playing, the youth are smiling and laughing and building friendships and connections with each other – fostering their emotional and mental health. She smiles, thinking about the leadership skills and confidence that have developed in the high school mentors that she feels so fortunate to see grow.

Playtime goes by quickly, and the evening is concluded with a talking circle. The youth patiently wait for Alexis to join the circle and start the group off. Here, the mentors, mentees and YAHLs discuss what went well, how they felt during the program, and what they wanted to do for the next week. A talking stick is passed around to give everyone the opportunity to use their voice and share. This method of communication has taught the youth about the cultural aspects of the talking stick and teaches them how to listen and respect the speaker. During this process, not all youth feel like speaking, but everyone is given the opportunity. As Alexis sits and listens to the youth contribute, she thinks about how the young people in the program have so many great ideas and that people need to take more time to sit down with them and listen. She reflects on how much the youth have taught her about how to live and how to laugh and not take life so seriously all the time.

As the youth begin to leave mentorship for the day, the YAHLs and mentors do the final clean up for the night and have some time to chat. While Barb, Madeline and Alexis clean up the gym with the help of the high school mentors, they talk about how mentorship went that day and how the program has grown over the twelve weeks.

Alexis: Today went really well. Lots of good feedback from the youth in the talking circle. I think that’s the most they’ve ever talked!

Barb: You can really tell how comfortable they are getting with each other and sharing their thoughts. It’s nice to see some of the quiet youth speaking up when they are given the talking stick.

Madeline: Our high school mentors are talking more too. I find that they aren't hesitant to jump right into the activities with the youth either. They've learned to support each other very well and have lots of games on hand if the youth want to switch activities.

Barb: I feel like we can learn so much from the high school mentors and the youth in our program. They've given me a better outlook on life and have reminded me to always stay optimistic. I hope they know how much of an impact they have on our mentorship community and how much power they hold for our future. I think that's why it's so important that we help them grow and flourish into the impactful individuals they can be.

Madeline: I agree. It makes me so happy to see them grow. When I see them with the youth like this, I see future educators, social workers, counsellors. They are so good with the Indigenous youth in our community. I think that's the type of people who come out of a program like this. They learn how to interact with each other, how to talk, share, and certainly how to listen. The leadership skills that are developed throughout the program as great and being in the program gives them a voice and control over what they're doing.

Barb: Yes, definitely.

As Madeline and Barb continue to talk about the high school mentors' progress in the program and plan for the following week, Alexis thinks about the impact that the mentorship program has had on her life. She thinks about how good it feels to be a part of a program that tries to facilitate a healthy and active lifestyle and promotes living a good life and being a better human being. She reflects on how the program has helped her overall health and how she must practice what she preaches to the youth about being healthy –physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Mino-pimatisiwin. Helping them live the good life. Many people talk about how mentorship benefits Indigenous youth, which it does… but many don't talk about how it positively impacts us as adults, she thinks. She reflects on how it's a place where she can have fun and give back to her community. She stands taller, thinking of the strong sense of purpose she has felt over the past twelve weeks of the program and is already looking forward to seeing the youth next week again. If only the mentorship program could be year-round, she thinks – wouldn't that be something.

The high school mentors have finished cleaning up the gym and come say their goodbyes to the three YAHLs who are now in the snack room. Once all the mentors have left, Kya* pops her head into the snack room and smiles at the three YAHLs. "Do you have a minute?" asks Kya. All three YAHLs nod and gesture her into the snack room.

Kya: "I just wanted to come in and say thank you for today and for supporting us in the program over the past few months. I feel a lot more comfortable working with the youth and using my voice".

Madeline: "We are happy to support all you wonderful people. You are all doing a great job".

Kya: "Thank you. Hopefully we'll be able to take the kids outside next week. I know how much they love playing outside".

Barb: "Yes! Let's get them outside on the land".

Kya smiles and says goodbye to the three YAHLs.

Madeline, Barb and Alexis finish cleaning up the snack room, say goodbye to each other, and all get in their separate cars to drive home. While driving home, Madeline finds herself thinking about the mentorship program. She thinks about how each person has made a positive impact on mentorship in their own unique way and how everyone has contributed. She thinks about the reciprocal relationships and learning that have occurred over the past twelve weeks and how we can all learn from each other. She reflects on how much she can learn from the youth in the program… how to laugh, let go, and play. She reflects on her own feelings of belongingness in the program and the difference it has made in her own life.

As Alexis drives away from the school, she thinks about the positive difference she was able to make today, even if it was only for one child. She thinks about how the program has positively impacted her health and the ways in which she lives a healthy life. She reflects on how it has made her think about how much exercise she is getting, if she is making healthy food choices, drinking enough water, and taking care of herself and her family. It has made her reflect on how she is feeling, emotionally, mentally and spiritually and reminds her to do things that help her live in mino-pimatisiwin. She feels fortunate that she's able to play again and how nostalgic it feels when you haven't played certain games since you were a child. She smiles, thinking about how good it feels to laugh with the youth and be a part of this program.

The sun is setting as Barb arrives home from mentorship. She turns her car off, but before going inside her home, she sits in her car and is thankful for the evening she's had at mentorship. The program she helped start seven years ago, which has positively impacted her life and the lives of

the mentorship participants. She thinks about how it has contributed to her living the good life as she gets to do one of the things she loves the most – working with Indigenous youth. She smiles and feels good inside as she knows that this isn't just a program; it's a family.

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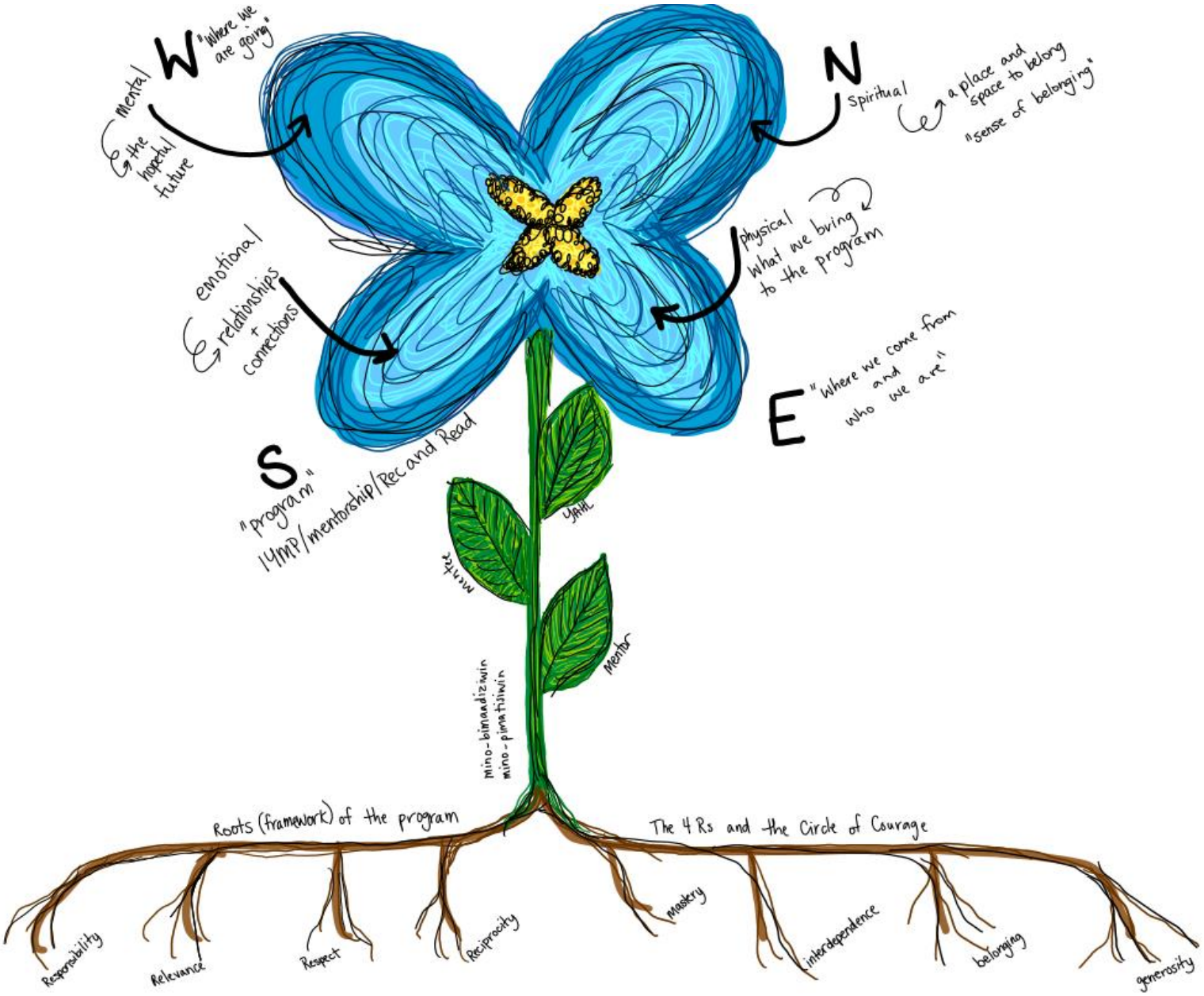
As the sun sets in the West on another day of mentorship, all three YAHLs go to bed thankful for their evening in mentorship and look forward to the following week when the mentorship family can be together again.

The Interconnected *Wapikwani* of Mentorship



Creating the Wapikwani

In the interviews, many participants used the words ‘grow’ and ‘flourish’ to talk about their experiences in mentorship. They talked about how the mentorship program allowed them to come out of their shells, to grow as an individual and the YAHLs often used the word flourish to

describe the social development of the youth and high school mentors. With this word in mind, the symbol of a blue *wapikwani* (flower in Cree) came to life in my drawing (N. Mercredi, personal communication, June 25, 2020). In this flower, I have four petals, which symbolize the four directions and the four areas of wholistic health. At the root of the flower, there are eight roots that branch off from the main root. These roots represent the framework of the program, which is the 4 R's (respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity) and the Circle of Courage® (mastery, interdependence, belonging, and generosity) (Brendtro et al., 1990; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The combined framework of the 4 R's and the Circle of Courage upholds the program and its teachings and links to the cultural relevance of the program. Mino-pimatisiwin and mino-bimaadiziwin are represented in the stem of the flower, where the strength of the flower is upheld. Here, you will find three leaves which present the three different types of peoples in the program (YAHL, mentor, and mentee). It is these three types of peoples outlined who directly contribute and benefit from the mentorship program and have control over their mino-pimatisiwin and mino-bimaadiziwin inside and outside of the program. The four petals are connected, and the fine lines that make up the center of each petal are all connected. When drawing the inside of the petals, the stylist pen was not taken off the screen to ensure the lines in these four directions and areas of wholistic health were all connected. The reason for doing this was to show the interconnectedness between the four directions and the four areas of wholistic health. To live in mino-pimatisiwin, all four areas of one's wholistic health must be nurtured and a balance must occur (Hart, 2002). Each petal is linked to a direction and an area of wholistic health. I have used the wholistic health and medicine wheel teachings from Elder Mary Courchene to pair the areas in a culturally significant way (Courchene et al., 2018).

The Four Directions

Represented in the East is physical health. In this area, I have focused on what each participant brings physically to the program. Here, we focus on 'where we come from and who we are.' We understand the history of our Indigenous peoples and the colonization that occurred in our peoples' past and still occurs to this day for not only Indigenous peoples, but people of all marginalized groups. We understand that the traumas and trials associated with colonization are carried by Indigenous peoples intergenerationally, but here we also recognize the love, respect, and teachings that have also been passed down intergenerationally by Indigenous peoples. We recognize the uniqueness of each person and what they carry with them. For some, this could be a soft-spoken nature, while for others, this could be a loud energy that takes over the room. Regardless of what they bring, we respect each person for who they are. The South is represented by emotional health and focuses on the reciprocal relationships and connections formed through the 'program,' which is defined as the Aboriginal/Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program, mentorship, and Rec and Read in Thompson. Through the program, reciprocal relationships and a sense of interdependence are felt in connection to each person in the program. The program allows youth to show generosity towards others in their community and to form deeper connections with one another. In the West, we have mental health and thoughts of 'where we are going.' Here, the hopeful future for the Indigenous youth is recognized, and the possibility of the mentorship program expanding is considered. The current participants in the program all talked about the positive impact the program has on current members, and all discussed what a greater impact the program would have on the wider community if it were to expand to more schools. These thoughts and the thoughts of mentorship happening the following week give the youth something to look forward to in the future. Finally, in the North, one's spiritual health is hosted.

Here, we reflect on our place and space to belonging and consider ‘where do we feel a sense of belonging?’. The framework of the program and the relevance that it has to Indigenous peoples and their ways of being is highlighted here, and so is the belonging felt when people respect you for who you are. Participants not only felt a sense of belonging when other mentors looked liked them and understood their life experiences but also when they could experience their Indigenous culture in the mentorship program. In this symbol, everything is connected, and many things contribute to living the good life through mentorship.

Chapter 5: What We've Come to Know (Discussion)

Reflecting on the *Wapikwani*

Reflecting on the wapikwani symbol created that depicts the interconnectedness of mentorship, mino-pimatisiwin/mino-bimaadiziwin, and our connection to one another and the land, I see my own spirituality that went into creating the symbol. I reflect on the process of what went into the drawing and the close connection I had to the land before creating the drawing. The weekend before creating the wapikwani symbol, I listened to each interview conducted before going on a 65-kilometre hike out in the bush in the Whiteshell. While on the land, I swam in the water, stood with the trees, sat with the moss, and reflected and embraced everything around me. I sat and reflected on my time in Thompson and thought of the Indigenous peoples whom I had developed a close relationship with through mentorship. I thought of the interconnectedness of the land that I was walking on and the roots that ran under the soil. It was during this time that I knew that the symbol created needed to have a connection to the land. As I hummed Indigenous songs that I learned from a Pow Wow singer, two eagles flew over me, and I felt a deep connection with the land around me and the symbol that I was forming in my mind and in my heart. I felt whole, balance, and centered. Creating the symbol was not analytical or linear, it was spiritual, and it was created in my mind and in my heart out on the land. As I returned home after the four-day hike, I listened to the interviews with the co-researchers from Thompson one last time, and I began to draw. When drawing the petals of the flower, my stylist did not leave the screen of my computer, as I felt that if I took the pen off, the interconnectedness between the four quadrants would disconnect. I chose the petals of the flower to be blue without thinking, but reflecting on the process now, I understand that I chose blue because it represents water, and that water is life. This also made me reflect on my first metaphor shared in this thesis and how it

involved water. Although I chose these things at the time because of dreams, visions, or because they felt 'right,' I know now that these decisions were all made for a very specific reason and are a part of my spiritual journey. The symbol of the flower, leaves, stem and roots not only shows the interconnection between mentorship, wholistic health, mino-pimatisiwin/mino-bimaadiziwin, and the framework of the program but also shows that life is fragile but when in balance, it can be very strong. I thank Madeline Ponask for seeing this in the drawing and reminding me of how beautiful and strong something so fragile as a flower can be.

Meanings within the Stories

Below are significant meanings that were identified through the stories shared and created. Although some of these meanings link to research conducted by other individuals, I would like to stress that these meanings are unique and specific to the Thompson mentorship program. I feel that this is important to highlight as each person's life experiences, interpretations and meanings will vary.

Growing in Mentorship

Carpenter (2009) states, "when Aboriginal youth are respected and find a sense of belonging, they can shine" (p.175). This relates to my research as the high school mentors and YAHLs described that many of them came out of their shells and became more confident being a part of mentorship. Both high school mentors discussed developing themselves as individuals, and although their personalities were different, they both discussed the benefits of personal growth because of the program. Kya* talked about how she was very shy growing up and how mentorship allowed her to find her voice. Danessa talked about how she had always been outgoing and 'out there' and how mentorship made her more grounded and more aware of others around her. Personal growth did not just occur for the high school mentors. Many of the YAHLs

talked about how they learned so much from the youth, including how to have fun, let go, and play again. They described the process of learning from the children as liberating and optimistic.

The YAHLs and mentors learning from the early-years youth also contributes to our further understanding that mentorship is circular and does not require top-down hierarchy of teaching and learning among its members. The YAHLs and mentors identified that being a part of a program that honors their culture allowed them to grow in an inclusive and safe space. This is significant to highlight as Courchene et al. (2018) state that it is crucial that Indigenous knowledges, cultures, and ways of being are incorporated in all aspects of society. Although the mentorship program is only one aspect of these individuals' lives, it is space where they feel respected and welcomed as Indigenous peoples. The connection felt by program participants is important as Carpenter (2009) identifies that the use of cultural approaches allows youth to meaningfully engage and contribute to the community. The cultural approach of sharing circles is used in the Thompson program each week which links to Chisan's (2001) research that shows that sharing circles allow Indigenous youth to feel equal and allow respect and trust to be built between the YAHLs, mentors, and mentees (as cited in Klinck et al., 2005).

Building Reciprocal Relationship

Research has shown the significance that laughter has during the building of reciprocal relationships (Carpenter, 2009). This relates to my research and the story of the Easter egg hunt that both of the high school mentors talked about. Although the Easter eggs were all taken from the schoolyard and the Easter egg hunt could not happen because of this, the high school mentors and the youth found a way to laugh at the situation, learn from what happened, and still make a fun day out of mentorship. As I reflect on my interviews with all the co-researchers, I remember and hear laughter in each one of them. With laughter also came smiling and enjoying the stories

together. This is something I previously got to experience with many of the high school mentors in Thompson during the photovoice project, where the mentors shared their stories in a circle together. While laughing together, you can see the relationships that are formed and the deep connections that are made amongst the program leaders. Through laughter, you can see the joy that the youth have when reflecting on their time in the program and time spent together.

The feeling of joy expressed above links to Rusnak's (2018) work on mentorship where Cross Lake First Nation mentors identified that being happy was a core component of living a good life. Furthermore, helping others be happy also contributed to living a good life. This shows how laughter, happiness, and helping others contributes to one's ability to live in mino-pimatisiwin which further links to Hart's (2002) research identifying that living the good life is not just an individual journey but a communal one. Stories shared by the YAHLs and mentors clearly showed the interconnectedness and relationships formed inside and outside of mentorship and how these relationships affected one's ability to live the good life (mino-pimatisiwin). Stories shared about good relationships and reciprocal relationships building further contributes to Hart's (2002) work that identifies that an individual's attempt to reach mino-pimatisiwin is not just an individual focus and involves the family and community. Danessa identified that giving back to her community and helping others contributed to her ability to live the good life. Barb identified that spending time with Indigenous youth helped her live the good life as she felt she was positively impacting them each week at mentorship.

The Wholistic Health Benefits

The thoughts, perspectives, and experiences shared in the interviews identify that the mentorship program not only filled a physical void and provided the opportunity for youth to be physically active and eat healthy, but it also nurtured their other areas of health. The emotional

health of the program participants is fostered through the creation of a sense of belonging and family. Both the YAHLs and high school mentors discussed how the program felt like a family and that everyone was accepting of each other even though everyone was different and unique in their own way. Their mental health, which they considered their personal feelings, emotions, and cognitive development was fostered through literacy games, planning for the program, and feeling a connection and a sense of purpose during the program. Many of the participants discussed that going to the program helped their mental health and sometimes associated this with being physical activity and the endorphins that came with moving their bodies. Others mentioned that being there for others and knowing that others are there for them also increased their mental/emotional health. This provided them with a sense of comfort and security in the program and with the people they were participating with. Through Indigenous teachings, smudging, traditional Indigenous games, and going out on the land when they were able, the participants identified that their spiritual health was considered and nurtured during the program. These findings link to Rusnak's study which showed that, "fostering resilience and supporting wholistic interventions is an important aspect of health and well-being for youth" (2018, p.5). By focusing on more than just the individual's physical and mental health, one's emotional and spiritual health is considered in the mentorship program which promotes overall wholistic well-being.

It is important to note that the wholistic health of the participants and living in mino-pimatisiwin did not just occur in mentorship. Although each participant identified that mentorship contributed to them living life in a good way and improved their wholistic health, they also identified other areas outside of the program that improved their wholistic health. Many of the participants had other forms of physical activity that occurred outside of mentorship that

they felt improved their physical health. Alexis mentioned that when she's in mentorship, she is reminded more regularly how important it is that she remains physically active outside of mentorship. Kya* identified that she contributed to her mental health by reading books, but also mentioned that it was important to take breaks from her studies and spend time outside. This showed how education and learning contributed to the mental health of the participants, but also that breaks were required from these activities to maintain their good mental health. The many interpersonal connections that the mentorship participants had outside of the program also contributed to their emotional health. Many of the participants described other areas of their lives where they felt a sense of belonging and connection to people outside of mentorship and stressed the importance of being close and connected to their family and friends. The spiritual health of the research participants was fostered by going out on to the land on their own or with others, and participating in activities such as canoeing, walking in the bush, and by participating in cultural activities, ceremonies, and receiving cultural teachings. This is significant to highlight as their spiritual health, one that is closely linked to their indigeneity is nurtured by a connection to the land and a deeper connection to their Indigenous culture.

Furthering our Connection to the Land

The importance of developing and experiencing a connection to the land is significant in my research. As previously stated, although mentorship is not always hosted outside due to various reasons, the co-researchers identified the importance of hosting the program outside when possible and allowing the youth to learn from the land. Many of the co-researchers had their own unique spiritual connections to the land outside of mentorship which further shows the importance of incorporating more land-based initiatives within the mentorship program. In her study, Rusnak (2018) identified that for the Cross Lake First Nation mentorship program,

incorporating more land-based activities was a significant goal for future programming, which would further increase the relevance of the program for their Indigenous youth. This finding is relevant in my study as incorporating more land-based activities is a goal for the mentorship program in Thompson as well. The co-researchers felt that a connection to the land not only allowed youth to be connected to nature but could potentially nurture their spiritual health and allow them to be more connected to their Indigenous culture. Kirby et al. (2007) identify the benefits of participating in physical activity through reconnection to the land through traditional activities. These activities could involve a walk in the forest as Kya* shared in her interview or medicine picking. This allows the Indigenous youth to not only be physical active and move their bodies outdoors, but it also allows them to have a connection to the land and will further nurture their spiritual health. This contributes to Lavallée's (2007) work that identified that a wholistic balance is not only important within us but also with others and our connection to the land. Therefore, when we consider one's health, we as health promotion professionals must also consider an individual's connection to the land and other beings.

Chapter 6: The Start of a New Beginning (Conclusion)

As my thesis comes to a close, I want to share with you all the ways in which we can start a new beginning for Indigenous peoples of today and tomorrow and share thoughts of how we can walk forward together as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. To end this document, I share my story as an Indigenous researcher and the ways in which I will walk forward in this new beginning.

Future Work and Walking Forward Together

Through the medicine wheel and its teachings, individuals can acknowledge the balance between their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being (Lavallée, 2007). Wholistic health needs to be considered in our current medical and health promotion systems and be incorporated into physical activity programs offered to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. Although wholistic health is an Indigenous way of understanding health, I believe that all individuals, regardless of their cultural background, should have a greater understanding of wholistic health and its importance in creating balance within ourselves, our families, communities, and society as a whole. By incorporating the medicine wheel in programs, Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth can be taught to live in a wholistic way and focus on their mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical health (Klinck et al., 2005). It is important that in health, recreation and sports programming that we focus on wholistic health. Due to the impacts of colonization and the dominance of a Eurocentric way of thinking, Indigenous peoples were discouraged from thinking about their health in a wholistic way. Colonization impacted Indigenous peoples' way of living, knowing, and being, and further how they view their health. Wholistic health involves the individual, their community, and their connection to something greater like Creator, God, or the land. It involves the four directions and the four areas of health,

including physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. Indigenous peoples need to be able to reclaim this way of thinking and walking through life in order to be healthy in a wholistic way. As Absolon (2011) states, a wholistic worldview can reconnect Indigenous peoples as these worldviews can foster and facilitate healing searches and relationships.

Indigenous peoples need to have opportunities to reclaim their culture in a safe space through ceremonies, in programs such as IYMP, and by going out on to the land. Johnson and Ali (2019) identify that connecting to Indigenous cultures through land-based education can be an effective way of reclaiming one's spiritual, physical, and psychological health. A connection to the land and learning from the land has also been shown to promote mino-pimatisiwin in program participants (Johnson & Ali, 2019). If it was participating in canoeing, walking in the forest, or simply going outside, the Thompson IYMP participants stated that a connection to the land was important and that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can learn from the land. This links to a future recommendation for Indigenous Youth Mentorship programs to try to incorporate more land-based initiatives within their programming and to encourage youth in the program to connect, respect, and learn from the land.

It is my recommendation that more programs, initiatives and opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth be centred around the 4 R's outlined by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) and the Circle of Courage® outlined by Brendtro et al. (1990). As Carpenter (2009) identifies, this will guide programs in a direction that respects individuals for who they are, make the opportunities more relevant to their varying worldviews, create opportunities to foster reciprocal relationships, and allow individuals to practice responsibility over their lives. Further, incorporating the Circle of Courage® will guide programs and opportunities to foster a sense of belonging with their participants. As stated previously, this should not just be incorporated in just

Indigenous programming, but all programming offered to diverse populations. In agreement with Carpenter, I also recommend that programs outside of Rec and Read and IYMP look at their program framework and guiding principles and analyze if they are truly inclusive for all people (Carpenter, 2009). I echo the recommendation from Dr. Lavallée that it is important that we continue to deliver programs such as IYMP from an Indigenous approach and to continuously involve Indigenous peoples in the delivery, evaluation, and expansion of the program to ensure that cultural values and practices are respectfully incorporated (Lavallée, 2007). This will continue to move programs to be more culturally relevant for Indigenous youth and will help how we evaluate the program benefits – not just physically but emotionally, spiritually, and mentally as well. We need to move beyond measuring programs on a Likert-scale and through physical activity minutes, and transition into evaluating them based on their wholistic impact on participants, how they contribute to living a good life, and how they create a sense of belonging for people.

Future *Calls to Action* should consider cultural relevance in youth programming (TRC, 2015b). I believe that this is something that could be added to future Calls to Action to promote culturally relevant community programs that incorporate and honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being not only in Indigenous specific programming but in all programming offered to diverse populations. This would not only allow Indigenous ways of knowing and being to be incorporated into programs, allowing for a more wholistic framework to be present, but it would also confront the ongoing colonization that continues to impact current generations of Indigenous peoples. By providing culturally relevant youth programming that allows for Indigenous ways of being and knowing to occur, Indigenous youth will feel a greater sense of belonging and

connection to the programs they are involved in and more non-Indigenous peoples will be able to learn about and live by the wholistic Indigenous teachings (TRC, 2015b).

I use the words of Dr. Lynn Lavallée to guide me as she states, *"*the knowledge given to you by participants is a gift" (2009, p.35). I want to stress that this work could not have happened without the community and that throughout this process, I positioned myself as the learner, as many future community-based researchers should do. Reciprocity should be had not only between researcher and participant but also through the advancement of Indigenous ways of knowing. This research was a journey of discovery and reclaiming my culture as a Métis woman. A lesson that I learned which others had learned before me, is that the Indigenous research framework does not always fit with the rules of the academy, which sometimes did not allow my Indigenous framework to grow to the extend at which I hoped it would. Although the methods used were qualitative in nature, the epistemology and overall aim of my research were guided by Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and interpreting the world. My hope for this research is that it allows peoples to think and view health and health promotion programs in a different lens, a wholistic lens, and an Indigenous lens. That we continue to advocate that health is not just the absence of disease and that it goes beyond the physical and mental health and includes the emotional and spiritual health of an individual. That we understand the importance of talking about mino-pimatisiwin and mino-bimaadiziwin with youth so that they can define and share how they will live a good life. My biggest hope is that we continue to share so that the next generation of Indigenous peoples can learn and be immersed in their culture.

To close my future recommendations and walking together section, I borrow the words from Madison's (2008) 'wish list' in stating that "I wish we are generous with each other at every opportunity, and when there are no opportunities, we create them" (p.18). We must be generous

to one another inside and outside of the academy and create a space where Indigenous peoples can come together to share their knowledge, teachings, good hearts, and minds. Future research in this area should contribute to the collective good of Indigenous well-being and humanity and further, allow future graduates and researchers to learn, read, write, and grow in a space that is representative of their cultural, spiritual, and personal locations (Absolon, 2011). I hope that graduate programs continue to work at supporting Indigenous students and allow them to write their research in a way that may not fit within the Eurocentric bubble. I also hope that universities continue to fund opportunities for Indigenous-specific teachings and ceremonies for Indigenous peoples so that more people can join our circle and begin the reclamation of their culture. I now share with you my story as an Indigenous researcher.

The Story of the Indigenous Researcher

Weber-Pillwax (2004) discusses the challenges that some Indigenous researchers may not be well prepared to face, including the topic of what is 'acceptable' scholarly research in the academy. I remember my first fear of my research 'not fitting' or 'being enough.' Sending emails to my committee members saying how hard it was to fit in the academic euro-centric bubble that I was so familiar with before. I remember their advice of continuing, to just let it happen, and let the words come out as they will. If it were not for their support in my process, I do not know if I would have been able to express my research in the way I am – through storytelling and symbolism.

Throughout my journey, I found peace in reading Kathleen Absolon's (Minogiizhigokwe) own experiences in *Kaandossiwin* (2011). This reading guided me to realize that indigenizing has involved rediscovering my Métis/Anishinaabe spirit and that through this process I have worked at decolonizing and creating space for indigenous ways of knowing and

being into my mind, heart and spirit. I knew that if I am going to create positive change and create an impact in the work I was doing, I needed to follow the guidance of Richard Wagemese as he states that we must go inward to affect the outward. I had to reflect on what mino-bimaadiziwin meant to me on my own and how I lived in mino-bimaadiziwin. I had to analyze the imbalances that I was personally feeling during the research process and the reclamation of my culture. I had to learn my story and think of the story that I was going to tell to affect the outward – other Indigenous peoples reclaiming their culture. I reflect on the words from my dear friend Dr. Heather McRae, on her journey of reclaiming her indigeneity

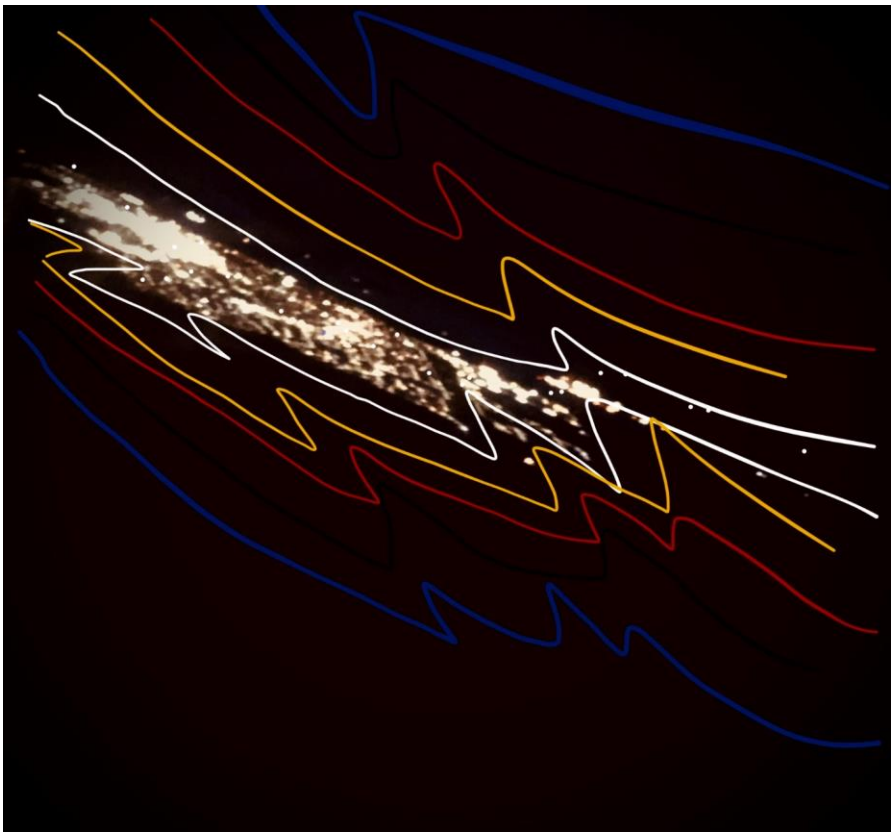
> I have come to understand that the personal journey to reclaim my own Métis/Anishinaabe heritage is set within the context of larger cultural revitalization efforts in communities, schools and universities…To work and live in ways that honour the integrity of who we are and the world we wish to create. (Halas et al., 2017b, p.6).

I understand that my journey to reclaiming my Indigenous culture is also happening in the world around me both inside and outside of the academy. Although my journey began through school, my journey does not stop when I walk out of the qualitative lab, and it is ever-changing through the knowledge and sharing I have been gifted by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members.

Lavallée (2009) explains that it is important when locating ourselves in our research, that we recognize that personal growth is a significant end product. Therefore, I need to stress that this research process not only contributed to my understanding of mino-pimatisiwin and living in a good way through the mentorship program, but also to my personal understanding of what I need to live a good life and continue to grow as a Métis woman. This experience allowed me to receive many teachings from the Indigenous community, explore my identity as an Indigenous woman, and become more aware and connected with my Indigenous spirituality and culture.

Below is a reflection I wrote the day after I left Thompson and accompanied within the text is a picture that I took as the plane was elevating into the sky. As I looked out through my window at the place I was leaving, I could not help but notice the shape that the city lights were forming in the distance—a feather. I saw a feather. Perhaps this is something I only see when I look at the picture and when I reflect on that memory of flying away, but when I saw the feather, I knew that this meant something special and that this place and these people would always hold a special place in my heart.

When I left Thompson that Friday, I felt like a different person. I felt like I learned something extremely different than ever before. That I was immersed in a way of knowing that was new to me. Not thinking about a program like I normally would – programmatically, financially and superficially, but thinking about the underlying effects and deep meanings the program came with. The emotions and feelings that people had put into the program and the lives that were impacted by each other. The feeling of family. A family I now felt adopted in to.



I felt so privileged to be able to have sat across from not one, but five amazing individuals that week. Some new, but most familiar faces whom I had built relationships with. These were people that cared about their community and the positive impacts that they had on the youth. People that cared so deeply for each other and for building a brighter, stronger future for the next generation.

I learned that we have always lived in mino-pimatisiwin, or at least tried our best to and that this is not a new lesson for our people. Although these teachings may have felt like new knowledge in the beginning in my head, I always had a familiar feeling in my heart of what this was. A balance. Nurturing our emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health.

The late Richard Wagemese, an Ojibwe Canadian author and journalist, tells the story of Waabooz, the rabbit, in his final book *One Drum*. In this story, Waabooz, the rabbit, identified that she understood the meaning of leadership, but she did not understand the territory that she was racing on to become the leader of the animals. When the great eagle asked her how she felt after the mighty race where she helped other larger, stronger animals out of dangerous situations, she said, "I understand that when all our energies are directed toward the same goal, there is no need for one to lead. We all help each other complete the journey" (p.61). Much like the rabbit says in the story, there is much I have not seen or learned. I understand that it is in the journey that one comes to understand the territory. It is in the journey that one becomes wise. Waabooz tells the great eagle that she has one more lap to go to finish the race even though she was declared the leader by default. At times, I feel that I am on the first of a thousand laps towards reclaiming my culture and learning about Indigenous ways of knowing and being. But, after reading this story, I know that this is a process and that in life to learn more and see more, we must continue our laps around this earth learning from Creator, from the land, and from each other. I realize that I need to slow down, learn from what is around me, help others, trust the process and continue my laps like Waabooz. Thank you, Richard, for sharing this story and teaching.

Now, as I run in the bush along the river path in Winnipeg, I not only think of the way my body is feeling physically, but how I am… emotionally, mentally, and spiritually? I briefly close my eyes and take a big deep breath, thanking a greater being for the trail I am running on. Knowing that this is one of the many ways I connect to the land and one of the many ways I live in mino-bimaadiziwin. I know that my journey to the good life is only beginning and that throughout this journey, there will be hardships and triumphs, but I must always remember to come to the center of myself, to find balance, and to breathe. This is the start of my journey to reclaiming my culture and understanding who I am as an Indigenous woman. I want to thank all my relatives for teaching me about our culture and for opening a space in the circle for me. I have a hard time finding the words to explain what this journey has been like. I have changed, grown, and become more aware of who I am. I did this through learning about my past and the past of my family,

through sitting with the land, reconnecting with myself as an individual, and through learning from other Indigenous people. This has allowed me to walk more slowly through life, appreciate all the many beings that are around me, and to always strive to live in mino-bimaadiziwin.

As I begin to take a new path and move forward on to the next steps of my life, I reflect on the words of Elder Mary Courchene, “strive for balance across all directions and you will live a good life” (Courchene et al., 2018, p.64). As I walk forward in a good way, I will remember all that I have learned throughout this two-year journey, understanding that this knowledge and my Indigenous ways of knowing and being have only begun to flourish. I will strive for balance and focus on my physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. My wholistic health. Kinanâskomitin to everyone who walked with me through this and who will continue to walk with me through life.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program (AYMP) 2017/2018 YAHL: Young Adult Health Leader Training Manual

The Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program (AYMP)

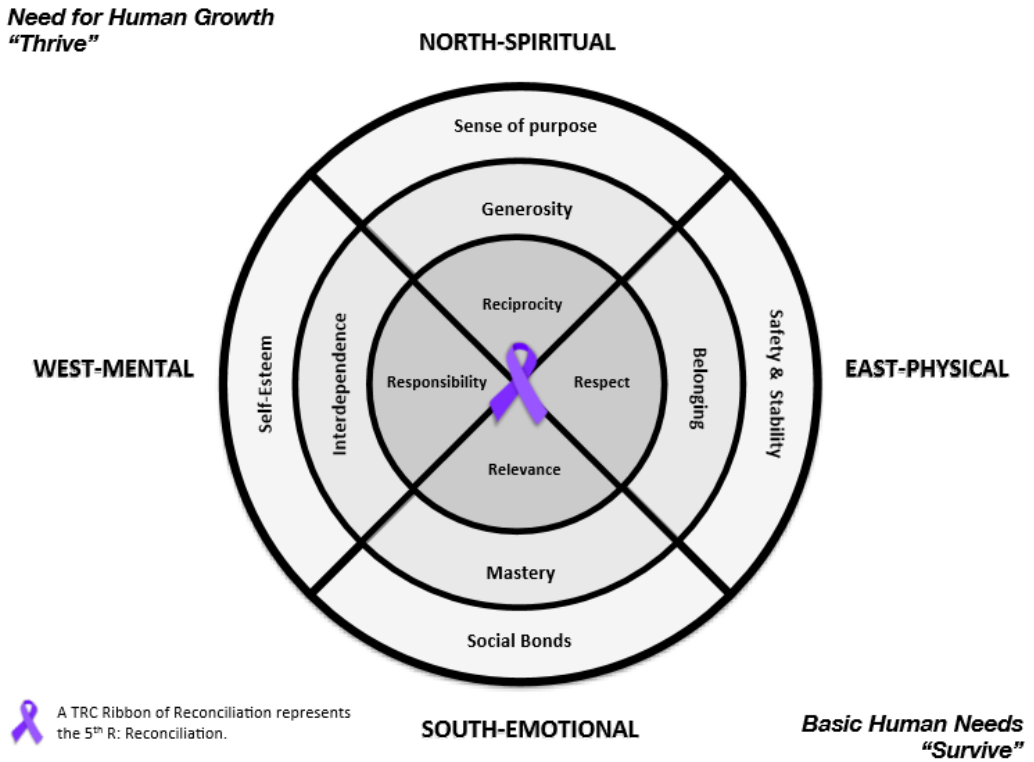
2017/2018 YAHL: Young Adult Health Leader Training Manual

**This document is a result of several years of hard work and heart from the Manitoba AYMP team. Over the years the program has evolved and will continue to do so as it ripples across Canada. As such, this training manual is a living document and will continue to undergo revisions.*

Appendix B

Rec and Read Theoretical Model

Figure 1. Rec and Read Theoretical Model



(Halas, McRae, McGavock, & Carpenter, 2017).

Appendix C

Grounded Theory Framework for how AYMP supports well-being and reduces T2D risk among Indigenous youth

(Rusnak, 2018)

Appendix D
Mentor Assent Form

Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB, Canada
R3T 2N2

ASSENT FORM (Mentor)

Research Project Title: Mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin Through Mentorship

Principal Investigator: Bree Langlais, Graduate Student
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2
Phone: [redacted]

Advisor: Dr. jay johnson, PhD
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
113 Frank Kennedy Centre
Phone: 204-474-8996

This assent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand all the information. You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to review this assent form and discuss any questions you may have with the research team. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision. Please ask the research team to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

What is the study about?

This study is being done to see the effects that the Aboriginal/Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (A/IYMP) has on participants in Thompson, Manitoba. YAHLS, grade 8-12 mentors, and mentees will be invited from Wapanohk Community School and R.D. Parker Collegiate to participate in the study. This study will explore the concepts of mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin and how mentorship contributes to participants living in a good way wholistically. There are many variations of the terms mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin but in my research,

mino-bimaadiziwin is an Anishinaabe term that means "living in a good way" and mino-pimatisiwin is a Cree word with a similar meaning translating to "the good life."

Study Procedures - What to expect?

You will be participating in a semi-structured interview in person, over the phone, or over Facetime/Skype with Bree that will be recorded. You will be asked to talk about your experience in the mentorship program and to reflect on how the mentorship program has impacted your life. You will be asked questions that directly relate to your role as a high school mentor for the program and how you feel your mentoring has made an impact on the program. You will be asked about how the mentorship program impacts your wholistic health, including your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. You will be asked to express what mentorship means to you and discuss how it has contributed to you living life in a good way. You will be asked to discuss your relationship with the mentees, other mentors, and Young Adult Health Leaders.

Please be aware that you can stop participating in the study at any time.

Please be aware that the Young Adult Health Leaders (YAHLs) will likely know who is taking part in this study as they are helping Bree (Primary Investigator) recruit participants to the study and are able to sit in on the interviews if that is what you want.

YAHLs, mentors, and other mentees who are a part of the study, as well as their parents/guardians, and family members may be aware that you are participating in the research study.

Risk of Harm

At times, you may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions that I will ask you. If this does happen, you have the right to not answer. Some of the questions I will ask you will be strongly linked to your personal experiences, and not all these experiences may feel good to think about. You can choose not to answer any questions, and if you are feeling overwhelmed or uncomfortable about anything we are talking about, we can take a break or stop the interview. To make you feel more comfortable, you can request to have a Young Adult Health Leader in the interview with you.

Please note that I am obligated to report any allegations of harm to children.

Benefits

There may or may not be a direct benefit to you from participating in this study. I expect the things learned from this study will benefit A/IYMP and its participants and allow for the research participants to share their stories. By focusing on wholistic health, participants will be able to discuss their health from a physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental perspective. The stories shared from this research have the potential to benefit the participating A/IYMP program and their greater community.

Costs

There is no cost to participate in this study.

Payment for Participation

You will receive no payment for taking part in this study.

You will be able to receive a copy of your interview after it has been transcribed.

Confidentiality

The interview will be tape-recorded, and you can choose to create a pseudonym (fake name) for yourself, or you can use your real name.

The pseudonym needs to be approved by the Primary Investigator (Bree) to ensure it is appropriate.

Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums. Your fake name and the community you participated in the mentorship program will be the only identifying information shared about you. Even though we will try to keep your personal information a secret, we can't 100% guarantee that this will happen. Your personal information may be shown to someone if required by law. All participant data will be stored on a secure, encrypted (password protected) device, that only the Primary Investigator (Bree), her supervisor, and committee members will have access to. Documents containing your identifying information and study identification number will be stored in a separate locked drawer in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board may review records related to the study for quality assurance purposes.

All records will be kept in a locked, secure area, and only those people we said will have access to these records. No information about you, like your telephone number or personal information, will leave the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management.

Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). If you have any questions about the collection of your personal information, contact the Access & Privacy Office (tel. 204-474-9462), 233 Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You don't have to participate, and if you do decide to participate, you can choose to stop participating at any time.

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health (mental, physical, spiritual), welfare, or willingness to stay in this study. Should you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study, your evaluation as a participant will not be affected.

Publications

The stories and perspectives shared from the interviews will be included in the final thesis defence. It is also possible that stories shared from participants may be shared at international and national conferences. You are free to accept or decline this without any consequences on your participation in this study or the treatment you are entitled to receive.

Questions

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact The University of Manitoba, Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Board Office at (204) 474-7122.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions.

Statement of Consent

I have read this consent form. I have had the chance to talk about this research study with the Principal Investigator (Bree). I have had my questions answered by them in language I understand. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I believe that I have not been convinced or tricked by any research team member to participate in the research study by anything they have said. Any relationship I may have with an individual(s) on the research team has not affected my decision to participate. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I understand that my participation in this study is my choice and that I may choose to stop participating at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that information regarding my personal identity will be kept confidential, but that confidentiality is not guaranteed. I authorize the inspection of any of my records that relate to this study by The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board, for quality assurance purposes.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from completing tasks or answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Fort Garry Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant signature_____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E
Consent Form

Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB, Canada
R3T 2N2

CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: Mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin Through Mentorship

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113 Frank Kennedy Centre
Phone: 204-474-8996

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand all the information. You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to review this assent form and discuss any questions you may have with the research team. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision. Please ask the research team to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

What is the study about?

This study is being done to see the effects that the Aboriginal/Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (A/IYMP) has on participants in Thompson, Manitoba. Young Adult Health Leaders, grade 8-12 mentors, and mentees will be invited from Wapanohk Community School and R.D. Parker Collegiate to participate in the study. This study will explore the concepts of mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin and how mentorship contributes to participants living in a good way wholistically. There are many variations of the terms mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin

but in my research, mino-bimaadiziwin is an Anishinaabe term that means "living in a good way" and mino-pimatisiwin is a Cree word with a similar meaning translating to "the good life."

Study Procedures - What to expect?

You will be participating in a semi-structured interview in person, over the phone, or over Facetime/Skype with Bree that will be recorded. You will be asked to talk about your experience in the mentorship program and to reflect on how the mentorship program has impacted your life. You will be asked how you believe the mentorship program has impacted the mentors and mentees that you work with. You will be asked questions that directly relate to your participation as a Young Adult Health Leader (YAHL) and how you feel being mentored has impacted you personally. You will be asked about how the mentorship program impacts your wholistic health, including your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. You will be asked to express what mentorship means to you and discuss how it has contributed to you living life in a good way. You will be asked to discuss your relationship with the mentees, mentors, and other Young Adult Health Leaders.

Please be aware that you can stop participating in the study at any time.

Risk of Harm

At times, you may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions that I will ask you. If this does happen, you have the right to not answer. Some of the questions I will ask you will be strongly linked to your personal experiences, and not all these experiences may feel good to think about. You can choose not to answer any questions, and if you are feeling overwhelmed or uncomfortable about anything we are talking about, we can take a break or stop the interview. To make you feel more comfortable, you can request to have a Young Adult Health Leader in the interview with you.

Please note that I am obligated to report any allegations of harm to children.

YAHLs, mentors, and other mentees who are a part of the study, as well as their parents/guardians, and family members may be aware that you are participating in the research study.

Benefits

There may or may not be a direct benefit to you from participating in this study. I expect the things learned from this study will benefit A/IYMP and its participants and allow for the research participants to share their stories. By focusing on wholistic health, participants will be able to discuss their health from a physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental perspective. The stories shared from this research have the potential to benefit the participating A/IYMP program and their greater community.

Costs

There is no cost to participate in this study.

Payment for Participation

You will receive no payment for taking part in this study.

You will be able to receive a copy of your interview after it has been transcribed.

Confidentiality

The interview will be tape-recorded, and you can choose to use your real name or create a pseudonym (fake name) for yourself. The pseudonym needs to be approved by the Primary Investigator (Bree) to ensure it is appropriate. Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums. Your name and the community you participated in the mentorship program will be the only identifying information shared about you. Even though we will try to keep your personal information a secret, we can't 100% guarantee that this will happen. Your personal information may be shown to someone if required by law. All participant data will be stored on a secure, encrypted (password protected) device, that only the Primary Investigator (Bree), her supervisor, and committee members will have access to. Documents containing your identifying information and study identification number will be stored in a separate locked drawer in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board may review records related to the study for quality assurance purposes.

All records will be kept in a locked, secure area, and only those people we said will have access to these records. No information about you, like your telephone number or personal information, will leave the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management.

Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). If you have any questions about the collection of your personal information, contact the Access & Privacy Office (tel. 204-474-9462), 233 Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You don't have to participate, and if you do decide to participate, you can choose to stop participating at any time.
We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health (mental, physical, spiritual), welfare, or willingness to stay in this study. Should you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study, your evaluation as a participant will not be affected.

Publications

The stories and perspectives shared from the interviews will be included in the final thesis defence. It is also possible that stories shared from participants may be shared at international and national conferences. You are free to accept or decline this without any consequences on your participation in this study or the treatment you are entitled to receive.

Questions

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact The University of Manitoba, Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Board Office at (204) 474-7122.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions.

Statement of Consent

I have read this consent form. I have had the chance to talk about this research study with the Principal Investigator (Bree). I have had my questions answered by them in language I understand. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I believe that I have not been convinced or tricked by any research team member to participate in the research study by anything they have said. Any relationship I may have with an individual(s) on the research team has not affected my decision to participate. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I understand that my participation in this study is my choice and that I may choose to stop participating at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that information regarding my personal identity will be kept confidential, but that confidentiality is not guaranteed. I authorize the inspection of any of my records that relate to this study by The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board, for quality assurance purposes.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from completing tasks or answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Fort Garry Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant signature_____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix F
Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB, Canada
R3T 2N2

CONSENT FORMS – Parent/Guardian

Research Project Title: Mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin Through Mentorship

Principal Investigator: Bree Langlais, Graduate Student
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2
Phone: [redacted]

Advisor: Dr. jay johnson, PhD
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
113 Frank Kennedy Centre
Phone: 204-474-8996

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your child's participation will involve. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand all the information. Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to review this consent form and discuss any questions you may have with the research team. You may take your time to make your decision about your child participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision. Please ask the research team to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

What is the study about?

This study is being done to see the effects that the Aboriginal/Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (A/IYMP) has on participants in Thompson, Manitoba. Young Adult Health Leaders, high school students, and mentees will be invited from Wapanohk Community School and R.D. Parker Collegiate to participate in the study. This study will explore the concepts of mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin and how mentorship contributes to participants living in a good way wholistically. There are many variations of the terms mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin

but in my research, mino-bimaadiziwin is an Anishinaabe term that means "living in a good way" and mino-pimatisiwin is a Cree word with a similar meaning translating to "the good life."

Study Procedures - What to expect?

Your child will be participating in a semi-structured interview in person, over the phone, or over Facetime/Skype with Bree that will be recorded. Your child will be asked to talk about their experiences in the mentorship program and to reflect on how the mentorship program has impacted their life. Your child will be asked questions that directly relate to their participation as a mentee or mentor, and how they feel being mentored has impacted them personally. Your child will be asked about how the mentorship program impacts their wholistic health, including your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Your child will be asked to express what mentorship means to them and discuss how it has contributed to them living life in a good way. Your child will be asked to discuss their relationship with the mentees, mentors, and Young Adult Health Leaders.

Please be aware that your child can stop participating in the study at any time.

Please be aware that the Young Adult Health Leaders (YAHLs) will likely know who is taking part in this study as they are helping Bree (Primary Investigator) recruit participants to the study and are able to sit in on the interviews if that is what the child wants.

YAHLs, mentors, and other mentees who are a part of the study, as well as their parents/guardians, and family members may be aware that your child is participating in the research study.

Risk of Harm

At times, your child may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions that I will ask them. If this does happen, your child has the right to not answer. Some of the questions I will ask them will be strongly linked to their personal experiences, and not all these experiences may feel good to think about. Your child can choose not to answer any questions, and if your child is feeling overwhelmed or uncomfortable about anything we are talking about, we can take a break or stop the interview.

To make your child feel more comfortable, your child can request to have a Young Adult Health Leader in the interview with them.

Please note that I am obligated to report any allegations of harm to children.

Benefits

There may or may not be a direct benefit to your child from participating in this study. I expect the things learned from this study will benefit A/IYMP and its participants and allow for the research participants to share their stories. By focusing on wholistic health, participants will be able to discuss their health from a physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental perspective. The stories shared from this research have the potential to benefit the Thompson A/IYMP program and the greater community of Thompson.

Costs

There is no cost to participate in this study.

Payment for Participation

Your child will receive no payment for taking part in this study.

Your child will be able to receive a copy of their interview after it has been transcribed.

Confidentiality

The interview will be tape-recorded, and your child can choose to create a pseudonym (fake name) for themselves. The pseudonym needs to be approved by the Primary Investigator (Bree) to ensure it is appropriate. Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums.

Your child's name or pseudonym (fake name) and the community they participate in the mentorship program will be the only identifying information shared about them. Even though we will try to keep their personal information a secret, we can't 100% guarantee that this will happen. Their personal information may be shown to someone if required by law. All participant data will be stored on a secure, encrypted (password protected) device, that only the Primary Investigator (Bree), her supervisor, and committee members will have access to. Documents containing your child's identifying information and study identification number will be stored in a separate locked drawer in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board may review records related to the study for quality assurance purposes.

All records will be kept in a locked, secure area, and only those people we said will have access to these records. No information about your child like your telephone number or personal information, will leave the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management.

Your child's personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). If you or your child have any questions about the collection of your personal information, contact the Access & Privacy Office (tel. 204-474-9462), 233 Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Your child's decision to take part in this study is voluntary. Your child does not have to participate, and if your child does decide to participate, they can choose to stop participating at any time.

We will tell you and your child about any new information that may affect your child's health (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual), welfare, or willingness to stay in this study. Should your child choose not to participate or withdraw from the study, your child's evaluation as a participant will not be affected.

Publications

The stories and perspectives shared from the interviews will be included in the final thesis defence. It is also possible that stories shared from participants may be shared at international and national conferences. You and your child are free to accept or decline this without any consequences on your child's participation in this study or the treatment you are entitled to receive.

Questions

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact The University of Manitoba, Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Board Office at (204) 474-7122.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions.

Statement of Consent

I have read this consent form. I have had the chance to talk about this research study with the Principal Investigator (Bree). I have had my questions answered by them in language I understand. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I believe that I have not been convinced or tricked by any research team member to allow my child to participate in the research study by anything they have said. Any relationship I may have with an individual(s) on the research team has not affected my decision to let my child participate. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I understand that my child's participation in this study is my choice and that my child may choose to stop participating at any time. I freely agree to allow my child to participate in this research study.

I understand that information regarding my child's personal identity will be kept confidential, but that confidentiality is not guaranteed. I authorize the inspection of any of my child's records that relate to this study by The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board, for quality assurance purposes.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree that your child is allowed to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your child's legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your child is free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from completing tasks or answering any questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your child's continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your child's participation. The University of Manitoba may look at your child's research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Fort Garry Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or

humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant Signature_____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G
Interview Guidelines

Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB, Canada
R3T 2N2

Mino-bimaadiziwin/mino-pimatisiwin Through Mentorship

Guidelines for all Participants

1. You are the expert.
    - This interview is about YOU and your experiences in the Rec and Read/Indigenous/Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program.
2. There are no right or wrong answers.
    - When I ask you questions, there are no right or wrong answers. It's all about how you think and feel.
    - Answer the question as best as you can and if you need me to say the question again or in a different way you can ask.
3. I will be tape recording the interview.
    - I want to ensure that I capture everything that you are saying, and I don't want to miss anything. By recording the interview this allows me to playback the tape and ensure I have caught everything you have said.
    - I will only identify you by your name if you have said that I can. If you rather use a fake name, I will only identify by that name in your interview.
4. If you have a cell phone on you, please put it on silent mode.
5. If at any time you need to go to the washroom or need a break from the interview, please let me know, and I will pause the recording.

Appendix H

Mentor Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about your self (what's your name, how long have you lived in Thompson, current age, what grade are you in?)
2. Tell me what the mentorship program is like in your community/school?
3. What are your roles and responsibilities as a high school mentor?
4. When did you join the mentorship program? How long have you been a part of it?
5. What made you want to join the mentorship program?
6. What has your experience been like being a mentor?
7. Do you have a specific experience that stands out for you about mentorship?
8. Can you tell me a story about a day of mentorship?
9. What is it like building relationships with the other mentors in the program?
10. Do you think mentorship is important in your community? Why?
11. Do you think mentorship has impacted your health?
    a. If so, how?
    b. Emotional health?
    c. Physical health?
    d. Spiritual health?
    e. Mental health?
12. Do you think mentorship has allowed you to become connected or closer with Indigenous culture?
13. Has mentorship made you feel differently about what you do in your spare time?
14. How do you think mentorship has impacted you as a student?
15. Do you think the mentorship program has improved the wholistic health of the other mentors and Grade 4 mentees? How?
16. Do you feel like mentorship has the potential to positively impact your community? How?
17. What has been the most important lesson you have learned through being a mentor in this program?
18. How would you define mino-pimatisiwin? What does it mean to you personally?
19. What does it mean to you to 'live the good life' or live life in a good way?
20. Do you think the mentorship program has impacted the mentors and mentees' ability to live mino-pimatisiwin? How?
21. How this program helped you to live mino-pimatisiwin?
22. Often in the work I do, we use a lot of common words like data collection, member checking, participants, etc. Can you help me think of ideas to rename these words in our project?
    a. Data collection?
    b. Member checking?
    c. Participants?
    d. Research?

Appendix I

Young Adult Health Leader Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about your self (what's your name, how long have you lived in Thompson, what is your current occupation).
2. Tell me what the mentorship program is like in your community/school?
3. What are your roles and responsibilities as a Young Adult Health Leader?
4. What made you want to join the mentorship program?
5. What has your experience been like being a YAHL?
6. Do you have a specific experience that stands out for you about mentorship?
7. What is your favourite activity or game to play/do in mentorship?
8. Do you think mentorship is important in your community? Why?
9. Do you think mentorship has impacted your health?
    a. If so, how?
    b. Emotional health?
    c. Physical health?
    d. Spiritual health?
    e. Mental health?
10. Do you think mentorship has allowed you to become connected or closer with Indigenous culture?
11. Do you think the mentorship program has improved the wholistic health of the mentors and Grade 4 mentees? How?
12. Do you feel like mentorship has the potential or already has positively impacted your community? How?
13. What has been the most important lesson you have learned through being a YAHL in this program?
14. How would you define mino-pimatisiwin? What does it mean to you personally?
15. What does it mean to you to 'live the good life' or live life in a good way?
16. Do you think the mentorship program has impacted the mentors and mentees' ability to live mino-pimatisiwin? How?
17. How this program helped you to live mino-pimatisiwin?
18. Often in research, we use a lot of common words like data collection, member checking, participants, etc. Can you help me think of ideas to rename these words in our project?
    a. Data collection?
    b. Member checking?
    c. Participants?
    d. Research?

Appendix J

Legal Name Release Form

I, _____ hereby grant Bree Langlais permission to use my legal name/my child's legal name in her research related to her Master of Arts thesis. I further give consent that she (Bree Langlais) can use my legal name when presenting or publishing other materials that relate to her Master of Arts thesis.

Print Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____