

First Nation Educators' Stories of School Experiences: Reclaiming Resiliency

by

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Megwetch

Abstract

This thesis presents the results of a qualitative research study that examined the resilience development with six Anishinabe (Ojibway) women. This study examined from the women's perspectives, "What meaning(s) do First Nation graduates of secondary or post-secondary education make about risk and/or protective factors that may have affected their success in completing their degree/diploma requirements?" In this research, I closely examined the historical accounts and progressive educational changes of six successful Anishinabe women who attended either the residential, provincial or band operated schools. The narrative/storywork voiced by the women was gathered by one in-depth interview and were analyzed in two parts. First, the Western idea of resilience (Benard, 2004) was examined. Second, the development of resilience utilizing Indigenous narrative/storywork (Archibald, 2008; Thomas, 2008; Wilson, 2008) and the cultural framework of the Medicine Wheel teachings (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1988; Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework, 2012) was explored. The findings from this thesis revealed that through protective factors and/or supports of their community, environment, school, and family and restored Indigenous philosophy, maintained culture, language, spirituality and traditional worldviews, a process of resilience emerged and/or was developed and overpowered risk factors, challenges and/or adversities. The amalgamation of findings supports what research suggests that Aboriginal people exist in two worlds, their world and mainstream world (Fitznor, 2005). Co-existence, acceptance, and a balance of both worlds are supports and fundamental keys to resiliency and educational success.

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A quote by Iris Heavy Runner (as cited by Kenny, 2003) defines resilience from a First Nation perspective.

“Resilience is not a new concept to aboriginal peoples. It’s an ancient principle in our philosophy of life. To preserve, to stand strong, to never give up hope. A culture’s world view is the lens through which they learn how to nurture, protect, and dream for future generations.”

Prologue

As a First Nations researcher, I feel that it is essential that one understands the history of First Nations people, and the establishments of reserves and educational facilities. However, it is just as important to understand the overwhelming impact caused by this imposed development. This account has caused much resentment and grief to the Aboriginal people for losing their culture, land and more disturbing the effects of enforced Eurocentric educational schooling, particularly in the residential schools. Section 35(2) of the *Canadian Constitution* 1982 defines Aboriginal people as Indian, Inuit and Métis (Battiste, 2005; Carter, 2007) with each embracing a separate and distinct culture and history. The social media has documented the strong voices of the First Nation leaders and advocates. As they reclaim education, they have struggled to revisit and promote their innate cultural educational values while maintaining, respecting and promoting Eurocentric educational values.

In the course of my educational practices, in a band school, I have witnessed numerous educational challenges which may have caused and/or lead to delayed and/or failed educational achievements. Whether or not these challenges either are equivalent to those confronted by our families when they attended the residential, provincial, or band-operated schools will be determined through this thesis. Through personal and informal discussions, I became aware of two major challenges encountered by my relations. These challenges were colonization and racism; topics that many Canadians believe are issues of the past. However, in spite of policy program and curriculum changes, whether it was intentional or not, the attempts to abolish, disregard and/or to deny the uniqueness of First Nation culture, remains prevalent in the education systems of today (Battiste & Barman, 1995; RCAP, 1996). There are also many other existing issues that are often avoided and disregarded but are clearly present and widespread in

schools. Some of these issues are poverty, trauma, youth suicide, substance abuse, incarceration, teenage pregnancies, high dropout rates, and cultural and social dissonance (Battiste, 2005).

These issues are the very obstacles that deter First Nation students' desire to succeed in the educational field. These deterrents consequently lead to generational learning challenges, increased educational gap, hindered graduation rates and the lowering of the academic and educational attainment of First Nation students.

However, it is just as important to understand the underlying causes for this disparity and the reasons why some individuals become academically successful in the face of adversities and challenges, while others do not. I attempted to understand the reasons for success, in spite of these issues, so I began a systematic development of inquiry. I questioned how and why Anishinabe women of different eras became resistant and succeeded in educational systems and what were the guiding factors that promoted their success. What protective factors, within the community, school, or family, promoted successful individuals? What were some of their challenges, adversities and risk factors? This subject area interested me; it consequently led to the underpinnings and development of this thesis. After a well thought-out reflection, my thoughts directed me to the topic of resiliency.

The investigation of inquiry was set in motion and I prepared my opening draft. Since my methodology focused on narrative/storywork, it was understandable that my central idea was to conduct personal interviews with Anishinabe female educators. I was optimistic that, by this method, I would learn and understand the underlying factors of resiliency emergence and/or development of First Nation women. This study is aimed at encouraging and enriching educational methods that address issues with current educational programs. Restructured

educational methods, with cultural content, can be designed to improve and foster resilient students, particularly in First Nations schools where education remains primary Eurocentric.

As I set the stage for mapping the chapters to follow, it was important to point out that since contact Aboriginal peoples have gone through many labels and names (Fitznor, 2006). The terms, Anishinabe, Ojibway, First Nations, Aboriginal, Indian and Indigenous, have been used interchangeably referring to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The specific terms that were used by participants in the research (Archibald, 2008; Carter, 2007) and other terms such as half-breeds, breeds, mixed bloods, Métis or non-status Indian, are used if they were mentioned in participants' quotations and/or in the research to support this study. However, Aboriginal researchers, such as I, prefer their own Indigenous terms such as Anishinabe or Anishinabe/Ojibway.

In chapter one, I introduce and situate myself in the thesis. Situating self allows me reflexivity to create relationships and understandings. Fitznor (as cited by Kovach, 2010) shared why situating self matters, by saying that it is important to acknowledge whom you are and to ensure that honesty is not compromised by academic research. Personal stories are very influential because of a certain power that is projected and illuminated when one tells a story (Mehl-Madrona, 2007). I hoped that by sharing my personal stories of challenges and adversities, and later those of the participants, the reader would understand why it was so important for me to write about the emergence and/or development of resilience, but more importantly to recognize and appreciate the personal resilience of the participants. The experiences that are shared enhance positive Indigenous growth and development in lives which helps connect the themes of this type of study (Archibald, 2008; Fitznor, 2002; Graveline, 1998)

In chapter two, I set the stage for the context and vision of this research by providing inter-related pieces of contextualized historical accounts of three distinct schooling histories. I included these historical accounts because I felt that it is important to include the background to allow for a better understanding of the issues and implications for Aboriginal students who are educated within the Canadian curricula, which excluded First Nation content. It was crucial that I introduced the historical analysis and the beginnings of the colonial white educational systems that have affected First Nations students. I discussed the history of how educational systems evolved, on the Sandy Bay Reserve, from a one room schoolhouse, to a residential school, to a provincial school, and lastly to a band school. These changes developed in the form of education with a historical backlash. In the early 1970s with united opposition to the government, First Nation leaders developed and introduced the *Red Paper* also referred to as *Citizen's Plus* (Voyageur, 2008) as an oppositional response to Trudeau's White Paper of 1969 which was meant to end all treaties, thus relinquishing the responsibility of education to First Nation people (Milloy, 1999). The *Red Paper* gave First Nation leaders the foundation for the re-establishment of education and strength in reclaiming Indian education (Young, 2005) in band-operated schools. The backlash that occurred during this resistance strengthened the educational desires of First Nations to move forward.

Looking into my own family's educational systems, I decided to write across three different school systems because my mother, my daughters, and I have been educated within three different school systems. My mother is a product of the residential school system, I am a product of the provincial system, and my daughters attended a First Nation administered school referred to, in the usual colonial terms as, a band-operated school. In these three eras, we each had different upbringings, schooling locations, and personal experiences. We also defined

adversities, challenges, and hardships differently although we each faced some form of prejudice, stereotype, segregation, and racism in a comparable manner. Assessing my family's personal and educational experiences it was clear that we overcame difficulties and inadvertently developed and cultivated our resilient traits.

Chapter three is the review of scholarly literature. Some of these reviews in this section propose that resilience is a relatively new concept in the psychological sense. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate a longitudinal study about resiliency on the First Nations of Canada; however, I did include relevant studies that were conducted and written primarily by First Nation scholars, about resilient Aboriginal individuals who attended residential schools (Haig-Brown, et al, 2006; Nichol, 2000; Young, 2005). There is substantial evidence, in several resiliency studies, that reflect on the importance of having an individual in one's life as a mentor, guide, or a caring individual to help one develop one's innate resiliency. The principle of resiliency also suggests that individuals have attributes and it is up to them to take advantage of these attributes to help them cope with adversities. Included in this chapter are the environmental, community, school and family influences that promote the emergence and/or development of resiliency and the risk factors that became detriments to resiliency development.

Chapter four outlines the qualitative methodology of the study. The methodology of narrative/storywork involved framing stories in summaries, making connections to the Medicine Wheel framework for understanding these experiences ensures that the research is grounded in the spoken words of the participants. By describing the inner experiences of participants, I hoped to understand how the participants form meanings of risk and/or protective factors, and to provide evidence of the emergence and/or development of resiliency within the Ojibway culture. Wilson (2008) states that axiology asks, "What part of this reality is worth finding out more

about?ö (p. 34). I believe that the realities of the female participants' life stories are valued and are worthy, and that resilience originates in the truthful life stories of my participants. Without prejudice, and for the purpose of this study, I chose to interview only select Anishinabe female ex-administrators and educators.

One may consider this as a feminist type of methodology where the researcher is encouraged to locate herself and to share personal aspects of her own experience with the research participants to build rapport and trust (Liamputtong, as cited by Kovach, 2010). This may hold some legitimacy however, my decision to choose this gender as my focus group is bound within our collective experiences as First Nations women and is therefore situated in the authenticity of these First Nation women's stories/lives. I believe that First Nation women are powerful and influential leaders, even though they choose to remain silent in their communities. Graveline, (1998) put forward that we are not separate entities and that we are part of the meaning; we look at our subjects with passion because we are our subject.

Historically, in Sandy Bay, males typically held administrative roles. This practice has since declined and women have assumed a huge responsibility for community leadership. Nonetheless, the practice of dominant male leadership is recognised by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal feminist researchers. Very briefly, I will provide two examples that were found in research regarding and concerning the stereotype of women. First, Wallin (2005) who traditionally writes about women's movement within educational leadership structures stated that an administrator must understand the community attitudes and expectations and that females are scrutinized more often than men are and face criticism despite their ability to complete tasks; in addition, women in administrative roles have persisted despite barriers. Second, LaRocque (2007), a supporter for women's issues, highlights the ideology that Aboriginal women are victims of patriarchy and

are the most stereotyped, oppressed, and dehumanized groups. Furthermore, she notes that Aboriginal women are not privileged in the automatic inclusion of leadership roles. This statement is especially true in a First Nation school where the community has and/or demands certain expectations of administrators.

The primary focus of my study is to give female educators an opportunity to tell their stories subjectively. I do not intend to invalidate their voices (Voyageur, 2008) by testing them up against a model nor is the portrayal of their educational accounts meant to be a baseline comparison for studies conducted by other scholars. However, after studying the model of the Medicine Wheel Teachings I learned that the interconnectedness of the stories allowed a clearer understanding of philosophy and pedagogy (Bopp, 1988; Graveline, 1998). Therefore, the framework of the Medicine Wheel teachings was added to analyze and/or comprehend the data.

Chapter five contains the summaries of individual stories, the analysis of linking the coding into the Medicine Wheel framework, and the voices from six Anishinabe female educators. I learned that beauty and power are embedded in the stories, and, as stated by Archibald (2008) that the story *öbecomes the teacherö* (p. ix). Indigenous scholars (Archibald, 2008; Atleo & Fitznor, 2010; Mehl-Madrona, 2007) indicated we could refer to our narrative stories to hear the healing wisdom, to help with emotional healing and wellness, to offset the pain of the past for our present and future well-being. Archibald (2008) also suggests that stories help us identify issues and educational possibilities.

The stories have been slightly edited to remove repetitions, pauses, and non-pertinent stories of other individual activities. I felt it was important to capture and guarantee the exact dialogue of the participantsøsharing: therefore, it remains unchanged. In my local Anishinabe/Ojibway context, the spoken words of individuals are respected and valued. The participants demonstrated

sincere honesty and virtue while telling their chronological stories of experiences. They offered an exclusive interpretation of risk factors, which included challenges and adversities, and they defined protective factors and supports. Vaguely and inadvertently, I detected through the narratives, indications of Medicine Wheel teachings that were deeply embedded in the hearts and minds of the participants. This observation demonstrates that Indigenous people share a unique way of thinking and the occurrence of a common Indigenous epistemology, the nature of knowing or thinking (Wilson, 2008) that allows First Nations to know what realism is embedded within their hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits. The stories of the participants are italicized, to help the reader differentiate between the dialogue, researcher questions, and research evidence.

Chapter six is my epilogue, which summarizes personal viewpoints and concludes the research. This qualitative study was conducted through the Indigenous methodology of narrative/storytelling, which examined the stories from three vantage points as pointed out in the methodology section. As I reflected upon the stories of these women, further inquiry developed and I attempted to provide answers to my research questions based on what I have heard. My personal viewpoints and/or analysis may be declined or accepted by the reader who is entitled to his/her own personal judgement and beliefs. Because I acknowledge that I exist in the two worlds (Atleo & Fitznor, 2010; Fitznor, 2002), the conclusion I draw in this thesis embraces both worldviews of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian philosophy. Wilson (2008) stated that the interpretation of data cannot be thought of as linear, or that one step, leads to another step, but in reality all pieces are considered in the analysis, and a new idea emerges. A linear process can become a problem because objectives and projected outcomes prevent unforeseen conclusions from validating the study (Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework, 2012). In Aboriginal phenomenology, the reader is allowed to make sense and analyse data from this perspective. It is

important to note that Western and Aboriginal scholarly research universally validate and describe the emergence and/or development of resilience. It would be interesting to conduct a comprehensive study to determine whether the õbufferõ protective factors of traditional and cultural teachings are shielding to risk and/or adverse conditions.

I close this chapter with a direct quotation that demonstrates my motivation for conducting this inquiry. The desire that all Aboriginal children come to know themselves and their potential through the history of our culture is expressed in the following words:

Unless a child learns about the forces, which shape him; the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 9, cited by Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 143).

Chapter One: Waynan Nin- Who am I?

In this chapter, I situate myself in this research, through a method of narrative/storytelling (Archibald, 2008; Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2010), so that the reader understands my philosophy and perspectives. Indigenous people in Canada recognize that it is important to pass on their own life stories and experience through storytelling (Wilson, 2008) and being able to interpret the world from the place of our experience (Kovach, 2010; Mehl-Madrona, 2007). I was encouraged by my advisor to situate myself in this thesis. I was apprehensive and I felt ashamed that she wanted me to share my educational experiences because I knew this would be emotionally difficult and challenging. After I began writing, I realized how important this learning stage was and that my positionality was a crucial foundation and a significant piece to this study. As I began to reflect about my schooling, I had to accept the truth that I faced mental, social, emotional, and physical abuses. In school, I encountered resistance and discouragement from those who were entrusted to provide me with guidance and an education. An inadvertent effect was that I unknowingly and gradually, during my developmental stages, developed some form of resiliency to overcome the abuses, educational challenges and other adversities. After this self-reflection and with great determination, courage and willpower I moved ahead with this study with a complete understanding of the psychological challenges. Situating self allows me reflexivity, as I stated previously, Fitznor, as cited by Kovach (2010) shared that situating self-matters because it is important to acknowledge who one is to ensure that honesty will not be compromised by academic research. Thus, through storywork I situate myself in this study (Archibald, 2008; Battiste & Barman, 1995).

I welcome the reader into my extraordinary world of mixed identity, culture and language. I encourage a total immersion of empathy and heartfelt understanding of my worldview as he/she reads my story and walks in my footsteps as an Aboriginal/Métis individual.

I will begin my narrative/storywork by clarifying my identity. My birth certificate recognized me as a Métis, mixed white/Indian heritage. The term *ōMétisö* means mixed and was used by French speakers, referring to the offspring of Indian and white parentage (Peterson & Brown, 1985). Similar is the definition of Métis by Fitznor (2006) as another group of Aboriginals who were born out of the unions of European men and Aboriginal women. All children from this type of union were considered Métis or half-breed (Campbell, 1973; Lerat & Ungar, 2005). The Métis were not considered *ōIndianö* because they were excluded from the treaties but neither were they considered *ōWhiteö* because they were not legitimate *ōEuropean-type settlersö* (Fitznor, 2006, p. 57). Half-breeds were excluded from the *Indian Act*; in practice, the Western Métis were given a choice between a treaty and a script (Carter, 2007; Episkenew, 2009; Peterson & Brown, 1985).

My mother was one of the thousands of Aboriginal women across Canada who lost her inherent rights as a status Indian for marrying my Scottish father. My mother regained her Indian status in 1985. A change made to the *Indian Act*, on April 17, 1985 (Voyageur, 2008) with the amendment of the well-known Bill C 31 was a triumph for many Aboriginal people. This change allowed Aboriginal women, who lost their status by marrying a non-status, to be reinstated (Fitznor, 2006). I am privileged to have gained full Indian status in 1988, and although I inherited the physical features of my father, I honour my inherent Anishinabe/Ojibway heritage.

My life story is comparable to Campbell's (1973) autobiography *ōHalf-Breedö*. I am not writing a biography however, I will make several references to her prestigious work. I was raised near a small Manitoba town and I lived in a log house on a muddy road allowance

(Campbell, 1973). There were many non-status Indians and Métis also living in this area. Our socioeconomic situation was grim and there was very little work available for anyone. Despite these economic hardships, my family always had a roof over our heads and food on the table. All of the food was shared and nothing went to waste. Daily meals consisted of pickerel, perch, suckers, beavers, muskrats, rabbits, deer, other wild foods and bannock. I recall the times when I detested cleaning slime and fish scales off the table and floors; the only way to remove the waste was to go on my hands and knees with soapy water and scrape with a knife or a scrub brush. Also embedded in my mind is the scent of freshly skinned beavers and muskrats; a lingering, musty odour permeated throughout our home as men folk gently stretched the damp hides over iron pelt dryers and hung them around the room to dry and weeks later they were sold to fur buyers. Campbell (2007) also recalls how furs were hung around her home.

Economic Survival

Economic survival was difficult back in the days when there was no welfare or handouts. My mother recalls when the reserve residents first got welfare back in the late 1950s but because we were considered Métis and living off the reserve we were not eligible for a handout. Economic survival was family responsibility. My family humbly and happily joined camp with other Métis and Anishinabe families during the hot summer months. Sometimes the families travelled together or they would meet up at a camp site. Tents, pots, pans, clothing, firewood were some of the basic essentials that families gathered for camping. The reasons for these camping trips were based on financial benefits and family survival. The family income came from digging winisikins (Sennecca Snake Root) and the food sources came from hunting wild game such as deer, prairie chicken, and rabbit. I vividly recall one hot, summer day, when I was

around six, my family prepared for a week long camping trip. We packed up everything we needed, left home in an old panel truck, and drove for what seemed like many, many hours. By the evening, we arrived at our destination and quickly set up our tent. Camp was usually near a pasture and woody area with water sources nearby. Several tents were pitched up in a circular form and a fire was made in the middle of the campsite. Sometimes families had smaller fires near their tent.

When evening came, adults and children retired early to ensure a good rest for the laborious day ahead. Everyone was expected to dig winisikins with only the babysitters with the youngest children being allowed to remain at the camp. Families busily worked side by side throughout scorching hot days. There was no time to stop and visit except to have a bite at noon. Lunch was a meagre bannock sandwiches stuffed with deer meat, lard and salt and water to drink. Towards the evening, the women usually returned to the camp earlier to begin cooking. The aroma of fresh deer and rabbit frying in cast iron pans quickly filled the scorched dry air. Bannock was made daily so it was always fresh. It was either fried or cooked on a stick over a campsite fire. The women did not eat before the men but children were fed anytime. When the men folk arrived, the food was served and enjoyed by all. I remember the camp site was always serene and picturesque. The only sound that could be heard was the laughter of the adults around the campfire and children playing tag. Sometimes the adults sat up late, drinking tea and entertained through storytelling or they would quietly discuss how their day went.

Survival was a communal affair and children were expected to contribute to their society. As a child, I enjoyed digging winisikins even though I was usually exhausted by nightfall. Children were sent to bed early. The legend that Mishomis (my grandfather) spoke of was that a big owl would come and take you away if you were outside after dark. He would say

ōwasidicō meaning ōlook outō as a warning to get inside the tent. I still remember crawling into our big, white canvas tent enjoying the sweet-smelling scent of sweet grass and woody scented winisikins. There were many hand-made blankets and coats spread out on floor of the tent. On occasion, the adults had feathered pillows that were made by my mother but the children used rolled up coats as makeshift pillows. The clear, star filled skies usually meant chilly night-time air so I always piled big heavy blankets on top to keep warm. I always slept beside my Mishomis near the entrance of the tent.

My mother was an experienced seamstress. This was one skill she loved and was pleased to have learned in residential school, although she would likely have learned that skill from her mother too. She cut old clothes and meticulously sewed them together to make blankets and children's clothing such as dresses, bonnets, shirts, pants, and coats. Flour was once sold in white canvas type bags so one time before a camping trip, she cut and sewed the small flour bags together to make aprons for the children. These sacks were to hold winisikins; brown potato sacks were used for the adults. I remember Mishomis tied a little apron around my waist, gave me a small shovel and off we went to go digging. Mishomis was a hardworking man who, because he was skilled, always dug most of the winisikins. I always followed him because he helped me with the digging and he made me feel safe. I proudly dragged a shovel around was too small and scrawny to unearth the winisikins that grew plentiful in the fields. Mishomis saw this weakness in me and since he was thoughtful and kind, he didn't mind stopping occasionally to loosen the soil around the winisikins. His help made it easier for me to push my shovel into the earth and pull up the root. I would hit it against my shovel to knock off the dirt, then rip the white floral tops off and put them into my apron. We did this arduous work all day long and only stopped occasionally to quench our thirst with water that was stored in, what looked like, a cloth

pouch. As the evening approached Mishomis continued to dig attentively and monitored daylight by looking towards the western sky. As the sun began to set in the horizon and dusk emerged, he would tell me it was time to head back to the camp. We walked back in complete silence and exhaustion but very proud of all the winisikins that was dug. Usually, when Mishomis filled one large sack, he would leave it in tall shady grass or put it in a ditch or stream to prevent it from drying out and he picked it up on the way back to camp. Mishomis usually dug two large, jam-packed, bags of winisikins. Just before we reached the camp, he would reach into his sack and put extra winisikins in my apron. The small things he did for me through his acts of kindness made me feel like a proud and significant member of the family.

Besides being the family patriarch, Mishomis was honoured with a very valuable and respected gift. The Creator granted him with the wonderful wisdom of healing with traditional medicines. Sick people came from rural areas and offered him tobacco to cure their illnesses. There were many times when the medicinal resources were difficult to find but Mishomis persevered because he recognized their significance and importance to restored healthiness. Some of the areas where medicinal plants were found were near the edges of swampy areas, deep in the mountains, in the woody areas and fields, and near the lake. Mishomis always stressed that sacred medicines were not to be gathered in an area if Mother Earth was disrespected and/or polluted, and to respect and only gather what was needed. This was traditional knowledge among Aboriginal healers, Cajete (as cited by Michell, 1999) stated the plants are the *õhairsö* of Mother Earth and each time you take from the earth a sacred offering of tobacco and prayer must be made. Mishomis gathered assorted roots, herbs, barks, twigs, grasses, and floral or thorny plants. He silently ventured out into the woods for hours, no one witnessed how he nobly gave gratitude to Mother Earth but I am certain he honoured her with prayers and tobacco. There is a

belief among First Nation people that if one takes something from nature the balance is disrupted and there is a need to restore, the practice of replacing what has been taken restores harmony (Michell, 1999). There was great care and respect for the sacred medicines gathered. Mishomis carefully laid them on a blanket where they were sorted or cleaned, sometimes they were tied together and hung in branches or they were packed in brown paper bags to dry out. Once all the preparations were completed, Mishomis put the medicines under his bed in an old suitcase he used especially for storing medicines. Now the traditional medicines were ready for the next ailing person. My grandfather passed away in 1985 but he left his legacy of Anishinabe teachings. I acknowledge Mishomis for all his traditions, culture, language, values, respect, guidance, and wisdom.

Customs Cease

By the time I was ten years old, my family's way of life forcefully ended. We were no longer permitted on the lands that once supported our traditional livelihood. They were now fenced with barbed wired to keep the "Indians" out, and the cattle and horses in. The farmers were obviously not concerned with our existence, but only their own. The earnings that came from selling winisikins and pelts of beavers, muskrats, coyotes, and fox were no longer possible. Ending the customary livelihood of many Anishinabe people caused hardships, provisions became scarce, and income to purchase basic necessities had become threatened. Despite this peril, my family was more determined to find work. Thankfully, for united community members who were resilient and resourceful, people quickly found alternative methods to support their families.

Once again, as before, family leaders and their relations picked up their camping gear and moved to new locations. Eventually families began setting up camp near and around Portage La

Prairie to work for the local farmers. I vaguely recall this next story so I relied on my mother to confirm that it happened. My family lived near the edge of a sugar beet field in our old patched tent. An older Caucasian man came to our tent looking for my parents. My older sister who was babysitting got scared and ran into the tent to hide. I boldly stood outside the tent and spoke to him in Ojibway. He did not understand but he thought it was cute that a little blue eyed, blonde haired girl was speaking to him in Ojibway. He smiled to himself as he walked away. My older sister was always quiet and shy. Although she was only ten years old, she was like a second mom. She carefully watched over us while our parents were out picking sugar beets. I respect, value and appreciate all the love and care my nurturing sister presented.

Sugar beet picking was arduous work especially on long hot days. Another laborious job was manually clearing stones and trees from farmer's fields. My parents worked from dawn to dusk and returned to camp very, very late in the evening often too fatigued to eat. After about two months of camping and working away from home, my family reluctantly moved back to the Métis settlement. There were always responsibilities and chores that lie ahead. Children had to get ready for school, food preserves had to be made, and the log house needed winterizing. Life was extremely hard and I admit that I lived in poverty and that my quality of life was substandard. The poverty issue was summed by LaRocque (2007) when she pointed out that it is a social evil that steals a quality of life and it severely compromises the physical, cultural, and psychological well-being of children.

Childhood Chores

As suggested in the Spirit of Belonging (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002) I now understand that even as a child I was a valuable and contributing member of the family. I did not

protest or complain about household chores but contributed to the household. Our log house had one large room for the living room and kitchen. Campbell (1973) also wrote about the layout of her home in a similar way. I remember insulating our old log house getting it ready for the cold, stormy winter. For insulation, my mom taught us how to make a filling from a mixture of clay, water and grass. We would use our hands and mix everything together in a big, metal container. Next, we were shown how to spread the mix between the outside and inside logs. This technique was called chinking and every family that lived in log homes insulated homes using this method. This domestic type of insulation prevented wind and snow from getting through the walls and it kept homes warm and cozy.

My mother was a good housekeeper, and she always tried her best to make our home look good. She used to get down on her hands and knees and vigorously scrubbed the knotty wooden floors, again similar to what was written in Campbell's (1973) biography. To decorate the interior she nailed brown cardboard on the walls and painted it white. Framed black and white family pictures were hung throughout to add a decorative touch.

Our home was nestled in a bush next to a farmer's field. Along the edge of the field was an abundance of raspberry, chokecherry, and saskatoon trees. Children were mainly in charge of gathering berries for preservatives. I eagerly walked along the bush gathering and eating juicy berries while swatting annoying mosquitoes. My siblings and I put our berries in small canning jars and Mishomis put his berries in larger ice-cream pails. We usually did not return home until all our jars were filled. When we got home, we sat outside on an old blanket and cleaned the berries. The cleaning was done by adding water to remove twigs, leaves, and dirt. Mom cooked the berries with a lot of sugar, put them into sterilized jars and hot boiled them to seal. Once the preserves were cooled, children crawled in the cold, dark cellar to store them away.

Another chore that I particularly enjoyed during the winter was collecting snow for everyday household jobs such as cleaning and washing. My siblings and I used a metal dish to scoop up the snow and pack it into big homemade pillow cases. Although it was considered a chore, we always had fun and entertained ourselves by making little paths around the back yard and pretending they were roads. Other times we pushed one other into the deep snow and gave each other face washes but when all the fun was over, we continued with our chore. We took the bags of snow inside where mom emptied them into a large steel wash tub on the wood stove. Once thawed and heated we had water for sponge baths, and for washing dishes, floors and clothes. Washing clothes on a washboard was hard and caused blisters on my mom's hands. The wash water was used repeatedly and wet clothes were hung outside on a barbed wire fence for several days but they never completely dried. We used to laugh when the clothes were brought in because they were frozen stiff and then mom hung them on a rope behind the wood stove to dry.

A wooden fish box that was nailed to the outside of the log house acted like a freezer. It was nailed high so dogs could not reach the wild meats and fish that were stored inside. In the summer, foods were kept cool by storing them in cream cans that were buried in the ground. Only the lid of the cream can was seen above the ground.

My family laboured very hard but every now and then, they would forget about the work and loosen up. On those relaxation days, my family occasionally entertained visitors. Mishomis played his violin, dad played guitar, mom sang, and an adopted man, we called Uncle Sam, played the harmonica or the accordion. Campbell (2007) recalls a lot of fiddling and jigging in her home. People came from all around the neighbourhood to join in the partying, singing, dancing, or sometimes just to enjoy the music. This scenario brings to mind a time when I was a little girl sitting on Mishomis's feet as he gently tapped to the rhythm of his violin. As I got older

I stood on his feet and danced with him, and by the time I was an adult I confidently danced the waltz. Mishomis and I enjoyed many, many dances together and only stopped when his poor health took control. I will never forget these fond moments of dancing with my Mishomis.

Educational Experiences

Gillespie and Grant (2001) noted that Eurocentric educational experiences in the provincial school system were not personally accommodating to Indian children because there was a lack of understanding, from the teachers, about the cultural and linguistic heritage; this educational deficiency becomes a barrier and/or deterrent to student success. Although, some of my educational experiences were negative and disheartening, there were some positive and helpful attributes that contributed to my academic success. I recall more experiences that are negative but I was not discouraged to attend school. I was thankful that my parents understood the significance and value of obtaining an education. I believe that this was especially important for my father who quit in the third grade. He did not have the opportunity to get an education because he had reluctantly chosen to work. My mother was a little more fortunate in her educational attainment. She completed the highest grade possible while in the Sandy Bay Residential School. Residential schools went to grade eight and those who desired a higher education had to leave home (Haig-Brown, 1988; Voyageur, 2008). As I mentioned previously, we were poor and sometimes my siblings and I attended school with scanty bread and butter sandwiches for lunch. We were usually famished when we got home from school. The delicious aroma of fresh baked bannock and homemade macaroni, tomato, and bologna soup was mouth-watering and very filling. This food became my favourite meal and I enjoyed making a little batch for myself every now and then.

I attended a provincial school in a small town. My early years' experiences were particularly more challenging because this is when I faced greater social alienation and prejudices. I was a young innocent child who was teased by ignorant children. The children enjoyed teasing and taunting me, but I will not divulge those details, so I fought to defend my dignity. Later on in middle years, I got bullied and threatened by older students. Some of the students identified me as an Indian or a poor Métis. Some Caucasian and Métis students who acted "white" used the term "Indian" in an insulting manner towards the poorer Métis and Indian children. Campbell (1973) also mentions many fights with white kids when she attended school. I now understand why Young (1997) stated that for her, the term "Indian" became derogatory because of the negative stereotypes associated with it (p. 3).

Surviving the negative school tormenters and stereotypes was crucial if I wanted to continue with my education. I learned very quickly to take advantage of the only thing I could, my "Caucasian" appearance. Since I inherited the physical characteristics of my Scottish father, I accepted the Métis label that was attached to my identity thinking that things would get better. I was young and did not understand that I should have been proud of my Aboriginal heritage. I attempted to integrate myself into a school environment that was not entirely inviting. However, my effort of mingling with non-native students was merely a personal survival technique used to gain acceptance and feel significant in school. I was a "Métis" at school and an "Indian" at home. This allowed me to integrate using a process defined by Gibson as selective or additive adaptation (as cited by Atleo & Fitznor, 2010). Simply stated, I took my environmental situations and attempted to adapt them to suit and support me in any circumstance. I found this process was appropriate in a Euro-western school environment but it deprived me of cultural morals.

Also embedded in my mind are depressing and disheartening memories of unsupportive and merciless teachers that I wish to have forgotten. As the years passed, I attempted to figure out or justify their cruelty but could not. These types of negative experiences were not isolated and were validated by others who faced similar incidents. Fitznor (2002) describes educational experiences that she had that there were white teachers who were clearly racist and if they were supportive and open, they still taught from mainstreamed values and Eurocentric perspectives.

This statement may sound contradictory to what I have already disclosed about negative school experiences but it would be unfair if I did not mention my grade one teacher who was a warm, helpful, loving person. When I started school, I was fluent only in Ojibway and I had a lot of difficulty learning and speaking English. This problem was immediately challenged by my teacher who worked diligently with me in all areas of language arts to help me overcome the linguistic barrier. Eventually her determination and commitment was rewarded and I drastically improved in my literacy skills. My grade one report card was impressive considering my illiterate skills. The memory of this dedicated teacher remains embedded in my heart and mind. I believe that this teacher laid the foundation, which established and cultivated my academic world.

The difficulty of learning the English language was common among Indian children. At that time, statistics indicated that 50% of the Indian children across Canada entered school with no facility in the English language and *students very often face difficulties in the use and understanding of the English language* (Indian Tribes, 1971, p. 106). Very few First Nation students were fluent in English yet it was to be their language of instruction; the government believed that English was the key to Indian children's academic progress (Indian Tribes, 1971). I may have been part of this statistic because I also had trouble learning the English language.

Given that the language is part of the culture, it follows that public schools contributed to a significant sense of cultural dislocation and intellectual alienation (LaRocque, 2007).

I completed my first grade with above average marks and I was promoted to grade two. I felt contented and thought that with this educational accomplishment, I would be integrated and accepted in the Eurocentric school environment. However, this feeling was short lived as my grade two teacher immediately confirmed her wickedness. During this school year, my emotional and mental well-being was shattered and my educational aspirations tumbled. The feelings of hopelessness further escalated and I faced total devastation when I was placed in a class of slow learners. It was labelled a "special class" and it consisted mainly of lower academic Indian and Métis students and students with physical and mental disabilities. According to Gillespie and Grant (2001) and Dyck (1997) large numbers of Indian children were placed in special education classes and little attention was given to them by the teachers because they were mainly Indian children who were labelled as lacking the academic ability to perform satisfactorily. Also by doing this, the provincial schools were eligible for additional funding as long as students were placed on individual educational programming (Dyck, 1997; Gillespie & Grant, 2001). In 1971, Gillespie and Grant (2001) also stated that only 20% of Indian children were fluent in English so they were automatically placed in the lowest groups; teachers assumed the children's unique communication attempts were due to low intelligence. In 1971, the Indian chiefs pointed out that many of the teachers were of middle class background that imposed their values upon their students and they were inexperienced or not knowledgeable in the cross-cultural situations and did not adapt the curriculum to meet the students' needs (Gillespie & Grant, 2001; Indian Tribes, 1971).

A study later conducted by Atleo and Fitznor (2010) found that non-Aboriginal educators recognized that their own education and training did not include Aboriginal perspectives and thus it was a challenge for non-Aboriginal educators to understand Aboriginal student experiences. Another similarity was that there is little or no assistance or supports for students with academic and cultural integration into the mainstreamed society (Atleo & Fitznor 2010). Research shows how at each progressive level of the educational system relationships increasingly lack meaning and personal satisfaction; my personal educational experiences reflect this fact. Lack of relationship and connection with teachers could easily lead to an adverse situation for any student. The outcome is that students who have not made attachments with any teacher are at the greatest risk of dropping out (Brendtro et al., 2002).

Going back to my educational experiences, however upsetting, I feel compelled to disclose another damaging action of this second grade teacher. She physically/bodily mistreated me in school. The teacher had a rule that students were not permitted to drink water after using the washroom. I was thirsty so I asked to use the washroom, I turned around and checked the halls, and they were clear so I sneakily walked over to the fountain and took a quick sip of water not knowing the shocking consequence that would soon follow. While drinking from the fountain, I unexpectedly heard the clacking of the teacher's heels pounding angrily on the floor as she swiftly and angrily walked towards me. Looking into the eyes of an infuriated teacher suddenly filled me with alarming fear. I swiftly went back into the classroom and sat at my desk. The teacher entered the room quickly and furiously screeched as called me behind her desk. I submissively obeyed and helplessly allowed her to put me over her lap and spank my bare bottom. I was too petrified and embarrassed to cry. I do not understand why I was too afraid to report this incident to my parents. To this day, I have not told my mother, and my father is now

deceased. Even now as an adult, I get flashbacks when I hear heels pounding on a hard surface. I believe that this type of abuse and/or mistreatment of students must have been concealed by authorities of provincial schools. However, in the personal testimonies of the Elders and in research, both reveal that physical violence was very common in residential schools where many girls were beaten in privacy but were too quiet to come forward (Milloy, 1999). My lasting silence has given me courage, support and psychological strength to overcome the smaller issues in life. Silence is sacred; it helps Aboriginal people learn the language of the plants and animals (Graveline, 1998), and for many First Nations silence is a sign of strength (Haig-Brown, 1988).

When I was in grade three, I went to school one time feeling nauseous. It was useless asking to stay home because school was mandatory. By midday, my sickness was apparent so the teacher got a cot out of a storage room and placed it in the hallway for me to lie down. This situation was embarrassing for me because the students stared as they went out in and out for recess. I remained on the cot until the end of the day and when school was dismissed, I went home on the bus. My parents were unaware that I was sick in school. I believe that provincial teachers, at that time, lacked parental communication and developed unconcerned attitudes. Their main objective was to keep students in school for funding and/or financial support for the faculty. While researching for this study I discovered why so many parents back then supported school attendance. The Canadian Government had this oppressive compliance tool in its attempts to keep First Nation children in school. It was called the Family Allowance, which was introduced in 1945. The allowance was a monthly supplement support issued to parents who complied with educational regulations and if parents did not cooperate there would be an immediate suspension of money (Milloy, 1999). In other words, the allowance acted as a bribe to encourage Métis and/or Indian parents to send their children to school regularly.

When I was in grade four, I experienced social alienation for what I thought was the first time. A group of girls convinced me to join a Brownies club and I accepted their invitation with eagerness and excitement. When I attended my first meeting, I drew everyone's attention. I immediately felt embarrassed about my appearance when I saw the girls in their pressed brown uniforms and tightly braided hair. My physical appearance was unacceptable to the club members. I tried to braid my own hair and I wore some old brown clothes that I found in my mom's shack. I felt totally self-conscious but stubbornly remained at the meeting. The pain of social rejection was heart-breaking. I watched moms and daughters as they bonded and developed positive relationships. They sat together talking, laughing and participating in fun activities. I sat alone and choked back tears. When the meeting ended, I was terrified knowing that I was stranded in town. I acted brave and refused to cry as I stood by the side of the road pretending to be waiting for a ride. I still do not remember how I got home that evening. I wanted badly to be accepted into this well-known club however, the rejection and heartless actions of the individuals caused me such emotional hurt that I reluctantly and regrettably quit the club. This type of action was noted by (Gillespie & Grant, 2001) who stated that school activities were held after school to prevent Indian children from participating. When I think back, this incident still upsets me. Even in my childhood innocence, I was not welcomed in a society of the privileged.

I do not have distraught memories of grades five and six but I remember positive comments and attitudes of teachers as they noticed and approved my academic growth. They commented that I made such substantial academic improvements since I had been placed in the "special class" and they believed that I actually progressed further than the students that were in the regular program. I detested this "special class" because I experienced anxiety and fear each time I

entered. The teachers did not protect me from the daily taunts, and yearning behaviours of older boys. I recall running and hiding behind tables and desks until the boys got tired of chasing me or when the teacher had enough of my whimpering and stopped the tormenting.

When I got to high school, the harassment did lessen slightly but I continued to get bullied and threatened by students who persistently identified me as an Indian or a poor Métis. Some Caucasian and Métis students who acted "white" used the term "Indian" in an insulting manner towards the poorer Métis and Indian children. The years of being treated as a disadvantaged and underprivileged student took its toll. As a result of this treatment, my personality and attitude suddenly changed when I was in grade seven. I became stronger-minded and more determined to take control of my surroundings and those in it. I took on the role of the aggressor and began to torment those who were more defenceless and poorer. I thought this dominance and command would give me empowerment and strength to overcome feelings of inferiority and worthless existence. However, my teacher saw through my antagonist performance. She began a system of constructive criticisms and lectures but always gave me encouragement, praise, and recognition. Her thoughtful and caring approach, sooner or later, gave me confidence and hope for opportunity. I still see my former teacher from time to time; she refers to me as "*my kid.*" These occasional meetings are welcomed with mutual and genuine respect and admiration. I personified a fearless and intimidating student but in reality I was living in a shell of self-protection; underneath I was an adolescent who just wanted to belong. Children sometimes need someone to throw them a lifeline (Brendtro et al., 2002) and this teacher was my lifeline, and for this, I am extremely grateful.

Not all my educational days were depressing and I did have some fond memories of my grade one and seven teachers who were supportive and caring. I developed positive attitudes

towards education and was able to cope with challenges when I received helpful teacher supports. When I look back at my depressing educational experiences, I cannot control my feelings of anger and unearth personal grief. I believe that I would not encompass this grief if I had not witnessed and experienced different forms of prejudices and racism. What happened in my educational environment was not my fault and I could not influence it, nor did I have the power over what was outside my sphere. All I wanted was to be accepted and/or recognized for my individuality and my rights to an appropriate education. Unfortunately, my esteemed Aboriginal heritage and identity inadvertently caused rejection, lack of humanity, and triggered oppressive feelings of defeat and blame.

The educational environment of a child can have a positive or negative effect on future opportunities. As in my case, there is evidence that school induced abuse, poverty, and cultural hatred can develop into personal strengths and opportunities (Benard, 2004). LaRocque (2007) mentioned that poverty is a social evil that steals the quality of a good life among children. Although poor, I was fortunate to have the guidance of caring individuals who allowed me to accept the truth and so allowed me to release the negative experiences, which controlled my emotional well-being. I reversed my dejected mindset and convinced myself that I could accomplish what I want. "Accommodation without assimilation" (Benard, 2004, p. 25) is how I describe my Eurocentric academic achievement while maintaining and preserving my cultural uniqueness. I believe that I am a prime example of how a culturally alienated First Nation pupil can prevail and co-exist in a mainstreamed society that highlights colonial societal values and supports Eurocentric schooling.

Undeniably, there continues to be narrow-minded individuals in society who are absorbed with prejudices, stereotypes, and racism. However, resisting those negative attitudes has helped

me cultivate and acknowledge my Anishinabe/Ojibway ethnicities. Having experienced both the "Whiteman's" world and the "Anishinabe" world my innermost values lie within the cultural world of Aboriginal beliefs, traditions, customs, and spiritual guidance. Benard (2004) notes that "Studies found that having a strong ethnic identity is associated with having a high self-esteem, a strong commitment to doing well in school, a strong sense of purpose in life, great confidence in one's own personal efficacy and high academic achievement" (p. 21).

In closing this chapter, I want to add that I enjoyed and cherished my childhood years, in spite of the difficult school experiences I mentioned. My family and school life was far from perfect and I respectfully forgive those who may have caused any sorrow. Looking back, I came to an understanding that Aboriginal teachings of interconnectedness and holistic foundations supported my Anishinabe/Ojibway heritage (AhNee-Benham, 2003; Archibald, 2008) and conserved my oral language and customary traditions.

The next chapter reviews educational school systems. I want to stress that this thesis was not an attempt to deliberately humiliate or boast about the residential, provincial or band operated school systems. However, it is significant that the histories of these educational facilities are made known and for one to understand and appreciate the impact and consequences caused to the First Nation people. Therefore, I briefly introduce these three educational histories in the next chapter to highlight the extent to which the First Nation female educators of this study who attended these educational facilities developed resiliency.

Chapter Two: Educational Philosophy: Life Prior to Contact

In this chapter, I will provide significant historical information that is relevant to this study. The history that was documented by previous researchers and scholars provided me with information about a number of factors, some of which include: 1) life of the First Nation people before contact, 2) how the Sandy Bay Indian Reserve came to be, and 3) the educational history of the reserve from the very beginning of establishing a school, to residential, provincial and band operated schooling which resulted when First Nations across the country began controlling education.

Throughout my culture, I have often heard Elders talk about Turtle Island. Prior to European encroachment into Turtle Island, now known as North America (Fitznor, 2012), First Nations children were educated through traditional teaching methods of dialogue and observation referred to as anti-dialogical, which means not written in words. Loppie (2007) suggests that since time immemorial, Indigenous cultures and histories have been passed on from generation to generation through an oral tradition in which storytelling was the extensive teaching tool. There was mutual respect and a great deal of patience when teaching young children. Many Aboriginal cultures believe that children are to be treated with respect and dignity (Brendtro & Shahbazian, 2004). There was a notion on the part of European peoples that Indian parents were unable to comprehend what was required to educate their children properly (Dyck, 1997) however, the type of learning that the parents taught was community oriented (Haig-Brown, 1988) with the primary purpose of nurturing the children (Brendtro & Shahbazian, 2004). With the parents and community working in harmony, this type of rearing was ideal for basic survival (personal interview with Elder J. Spence, 2008). The Elders were considered as the most

important teachers in the First Nation society and the younger generations sought help from them because the Elders were viewed as very caring and nurturing leaders (Brendtro et al., 2002; Kirkness, 1973).

All of the community members participated in maintaining the livelihood of their relations (RCAP, 1996). The food sources came mainly from fishing and hunting. The meat and fish were usually preserved for the winter; fruit and berries were also picked and preserved. The harvesting of wild rice was a major occupation and source of food, along with maize and potatoes that were grown (Indian Tribes, 1971). First Nation people in other areas of Canada were also migratory and travelled seasonally to gather food, hunt, and trap (Haig-Brown, 1988; Kirkness, 1973). The First Nations of Sandy Bay were part of a migratory people; they also hunted, fished, trapped, picked berries, and dug winisikins during their travels. Rather than establishing new villages within their extensive territories and ventures therein, they always returned to their original home territory. They created and developed what was considered making a presence (Gaywish, Richard, & Rocke, 2008) in their travels to show commitment and establishment to the territories and lands.

In the beginning contacts, RCAP (1996) outlined the historic phases where firstly the First Nations and Europeans formed alliances and established trade relations that were beneficial to both nations. However, this situation was short lived and these alliances faced a harmful separation in which the relations would be negatively impacted for many generations to come. RCAP (1996) further outlined the socio-historic relationships that moved from equality to colonialism and to where we are today: hope for renewal. One of the main issues the two groups faced was the European's hunger for the land; this caused the economic base to shift from fur to agriculture. The Canadian federal and provincial governments promoted agrarian lifestyles for

the First Nations but they quickly allocated the land to the continuous flow of newcomers into Canada. An objective of the treaties was to change the Indian from a hunter to a farmer by confining him to reserves on which he would have land to cultivate with implements, animals and instructions provided by the government but most of the lands that were assigned were literally worthless (Indian Tribes, 1971). The new settlers who arrived in the new country came to view the First Nation people as major problems and obstacles that would obstruct and delay their claims to the land (RCAP, 1996).

The fear of losing their rights to the land and worries of self-sufficiency put great stress upon the First Nation people; they were unaware that they would soon face drastic changes to their economic, social, and political interests as recorded in the document, Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) in 2002. Formidable changes were inevitable and the Aboriginal people knew that somehow they must ensure the future welfare and self-subsistence for their nation. First Nation leaders wanted the treaties as a promise from the government to provide assistance for their people in establishing new ways of life for themselves, their children, and grandchildren (Dyck, 1997). Years later after many negotiations, the government of Canada, in the treaties, established a legal obligation to provide education to First Nation children (Report A. H., 2002). In exchange for sharing their territories, the First Nations requested and then later accepted schools provided by the federal government so that children would be provided with educational skills. After the signing of the treaties in Manitoba, the government increased the number of schools (Indian Tribes, 1971). The establishment of these schools developed a bond between the Canadian Government and the Roman Catholic Churches whose united goals were to impose the European educational system upon the First Nations. Haig-Brown (1998) states that prior to contact within a tribe existed the complexities of the culture: government, religion, science,

technology, acknowledgement and celebration of life passages, traditions, and oral history celebrations, traditions and oral history which included a theory of originö (p. 27).

In summary, cultural annihilation set in with the European advancement and encroachment throughout Canada, and the lifestyles of First Nation people dramatically changed. The establishment of the reserve system and its negative effect upon a nomadic nation, imposing restrictions in the mobility of the populace, brought changes to the character of life of the Indian (Indian Tribes, 1971). This would be an irreversible and everlasting change for First Nations. Vanished were the sustainability and resourcefulness of community and family migrations to hunting grounds, and the environmental respect and connection to Mother Earth. This final cataclysm would alter the path of history and forever transform the lives of the First Nations people.

Kawikwentanwankek Anishinabe Aki: Sandy Bay Ojibway Land

“Our land is as sacred to us today as it was centuries ago” (Indian Tribes, 1971, p. 19).

In Anishinabe/ Ojibway, Aki means Ojibway land. A small parcel of swampy and barren land, now known as the Sandy Bay (Kawikwentanwankek) Indian Reserve, was allocated as a reserve in 1874 to the people who lived in the area. It is situated on the southwest shore of Lake Manitoba. Originally, Sandy Bay was referred to as the White Mud River Band, which was part of the Portage Band, under Chief Yellow Quill; this band signed Treaty 1 on August 3, 1871 (Report I. C., 2007).

The first Chief of the new reserve of Sandy Bay in 1874 was Na-naw-wach-ew-wa-capow (Report I. C., 2007); he was given a treaty number of one and he was Chief for nine years. As

Chief of the White Mud River Band, he wrote to Indian Commissioner Wemyss Simpson stating that the band was not represented at the treaty negotiations and that it wanted to be separate from the Portage Band. Refusals and disagreements over the size and location of the reserve, and opposition among the Long Plain and White Mud River people led to an amendment of Treaty 1 to deal with the Portage Bands. By 1875, the Portage Band was divided into three distinct bands; the Portage Band, the Long Plain First Nation, and Sandy Bay First Nation. The bands, as they were called then, each received land from the original Portage reserve (Indian Tribes, 1971; Morris, 1991; Report I. C., 2007).

According to Indian Tribes (1971), Milloy (1999) and Report I. C (2007) the land that was to be allocated to Sandy Bay had originally been taken up for a reserve by the Sioux. The Sioux are the most recent tribe to arrive in the province of Manitoba (Indian Tribes, 1971) approximately in the year 1862 (Morris, 1991). They were once a powerful tribe that was called *ōNadowessiouxō* by the Algonquians, but later became known as the Sioux. They were a nomadic group that traveled, dispersed and settled in regions throughout central Turtle Island, of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and parts of the United States. After much opposition and instability, including wars with the United States government, the Sioux were eventually allotted reserve land north of Turtle Mountain in 1876 (Morris, 1991).

A survey was approved on January 1, 1874. C.P. Brown surveyed the land, which contained 12,085.81 acres of land. In July 1876, Dominion Land Surveyor J. Lestock Reid reported that the residents of the Sandy Bay First Nation wanted to settle on the western shore of Lake Manitoba. There were five farms in this vicinity (Report I. C., 2007); this type of agrarian lifestyle was viewed as a positive step towards civilizing the Indian (Haig-Brown, 1988). The Indianø

complaints about the question of the size, quality and assignment of the reserves were ignored (Indian Tribes, 1971).

A revision to the treaty was signed on June 20th, 1876; it was at this time that Sandy Bay First Nation signed its own name (Jones, 2002). After many consultations, the land surveyed by Brown was reviewed by Reid for a reserve; this was later confirmed as Sandy Bay IR 5 by Order in Council 2876 on November 21, 1913 (Report I. C., 2007).

The federal government's establishment of the Sandy Bay First Nation Reserve laid the foundation for countless social, educational, economical, developmental, and industrial changes and historical events, which irreversibly impacted the community.

A Reserve School: The Beginning of Eurocentric Schooling

The beginning of Eurocentric schooling came as a result of aggressive federal enforcement and Aboriginal requests. The government's initial goal to eradicate the First Nation people of Canada did not end even after reserves were developed; it was determined to wipe out the nation. After reviewing the reserve conditions for two years, Governor Sir Charles Bagot declared that First Nations people were only a "half-civilized state" (Milloy, 1999, p. 12). The goal to enforce assimilation upon the First Nations led to the 1842 document, the Bagot Commission. One of the recommendations in the document was to apply aggressive education as a means of getting rid of Indians; the scheme of employing education was the most important element towards the civilization system. One agent concluded that the results of the treaties could make Chiefs believe that they had a voice regarding the management of their schools (Indian Tribes, 1971).

Unknowing that the full intent of the Canadian government was to eliminate the Indian, reserve residents believed that there would be benefits to an educational system and wanted this

academic schooling for their children. In 1883, the community members of Sandy Bay gathered and attempted to erect a school-house. They were unsuccessful as there was a massive flood and the residents evacuated. In 1884, the water levels on the reserve receded and many of the residents returned home (Report I. C., 2007). The Chief of Sandy Bay, at this time, informed the Indian Agent that a majority of the band members had since converted to the Roman Catholic religion and he requested a French speaking teacher to educate the children on the reserve; he also asked the government to help furnish the schoolhouse.

This request met the criterion that was set out by the changes made in the *Indian Act* of 1880. The act stipulated that education would be provided on reserves with teachers of the same creed for the children who were now Catholic Indians. As the protector of the Indians, the government would ensure that proper teachers of the Roman Catholic religion were provided to the tribes as noted in the Hawthorn Survey (Carney, 1983).

During the first several years of the schooling, the residents of Sandy Bay complained about the incompetence of the teacher and after listening to their concerns the Indian Agent agreed. However, the teacher had complaints of her own and informed officials that the parents were not sending their children to school regularly. An assessment of the schoolhouse was conducted by government officials. The assessment demonstrated very little educational progress and only those children who attended regularly showed progress in their academics (Dyck, 1997).

Further to the complaint, in communication with various Elders, there were stories that teachers often complained about parents taking children away as soon as they begin to know something and when they return, they have to learn all over again. As a rule, Aboriginal children were extremely irregular in their attendance (Milloy, 1999. p.24).

Complaints from other reservations were also noted as Agent J. Marlke wrote in 1918 “*many parents are not pleased with the lack of progress that the children are making*” (Milloy, 1999, p. 166) and thus were not sent to school. A more recent statement stated that when children were at school, they were apt learners but teachers were very incompetent to teach anything beyond the simple elements (Indian Tribes, 1971).

Residential Schools: A Permeation of Colonial White Educational Systems

“Little can be done with him. He can be taught to do a little at farming, and at stock raising, and to dress in a more civilized manner, but that is all.” (Indian Tribes, 1971, p. 112).

The residential school system has an extensive history. The first residential school opened in Quebec in the 1600s. This was when the Christian Missionaries travelled across from European countries and infiltrated Turtle Island. From the outset, the intent of the Canadian government was to rid the Indian of their languages, cultures, and force assimilation into the Canadian society (Dyck, 1997). This intent was stated very bluntly in 1890 in the well-known comment of Nicholas Flood Davin, a journalist who was given a commission to report on industrial schools (Haig-Brown, 1988) “... *if anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young*” (p. 30).

The Federal Government began to develop and administer the guiding principles of the Residential School System in 1874 to meet its obligation under the *Indian Act*; it was meant to provide education to First Nation people and to integrate them into Canadian society. To ensure the integration into society residential schools were set up in every province and territory. It is estimated that 100,000 children attended these schools (AHF, 2002). The residential schools

were shaped by the set of underlying political, economic, and cultural relations between the First Nations and representatives of the state and church; the missionaries would establish the footholds and play prominent roles in the new communities that were expected to arise (Dyck, 1997). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC, 2012) released its interim report that clearly outlines the devastating effects of residential schools as outlined earlier in the Report of the Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996).

Duncan Campbell Scott, who was a Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, summed up the Government's intentions when he said: *"I want to get rid of the Indian problem. Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian Question and no Indian Department"* (Milloy, 1999, p. 46).

The residential schools were devised as a means of isolating children from their parents and turning them into "civilized" beings unlike their parents (Dyck, 1997, p. 23) and away from the influence of the reserve (Indian Tribes, 1971). In 1883, a derogatory statement by General Milroy suggested that Indian children could learn nothing from their ignorant parents (Milloy, 1999) and that education was supposed to *"raise Indians to the level of whites"* by confirming Christianity upon them as stated by (Carney, 1983). Nearly one hundred years later, First Nations people who had well-founded views commented *"We had beautiful, meaningful and complex religions, despite being characterized by the white man as heathens"* (Indian Tribes, 1971, p. 3)

The desperate efforts of the churches and governments to "civilize" the children to their criterion were unsuccessful so the bureaucrats reformulated and amended the educational system because they believed it had failures. They wanted those Aboriginal students who were educated

to assist their communities to becoming fully civilized and self-sufficient; this was not what happened, and to the dismay of politicians when Aboriginal students returned home and they were quickly reabsorbed back into the community (Milloy, 1999). In the end, not all the efforts involved in relocating, educating and graduating First Nation students met the government and church criterion of civilization (Fitznor, 2002; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2012).

Milloy (1999) stated that the Canadian government was so relentless that it introduced more acts in attempts to ensure enfranchisement and relinquishment of First Nations people from tribal affiliation to full members of colonial society. One act stipulated that if the First Nations people obtained an education, represented good character and were free from debt upon application of enfranchisement, they would be awarded fifty acres of land. The government hoped that this Act would not only complete their goals of private land ownership and cultural displacement, but it would also serve to reduce the number of First Nations living in reservations. Subsequent acts gave full control of the reserves to the federal government to create greater power in moulding every aspect of life on the reserve and to create any infrastructure to achieve the desired “*assimilation through enfranchisement*” and eventual “*disappearance of First Nations*” (Milloy, 1999, p. 21).

Nicholas Flood Davin, a journalist, was given approval by John A. Macdonald to report on the working Industrial schools of the United States in the hopes of establishing similar institutions in Canada (Haig-Brown, 1998; Milloy, 1999). When Davin returned to Canada from his studies in the United States in 1879, he brought a recommendation in which the main principle was “*aggressive civilization*” (Milloy, 1999, p. 8). With this recommendation, there would be a movement towards an implementation of aggressive and oppressive educational

systems. These educational systems were massively introduced and enforced by the churches and the governments without negotiations, contributions, or advice from the Indian people.

Emphasis was placed on the rigid administration of academic activities and work programs that were designed to assist in the maintenance of the school buildings, stables and land (Carter, 2007; Indian Tribes, 1971). Industrial schools would provide skills for boys in agriculture such as husbandry, working in the fields, cleaning stables, mechanics, and trades. Girls would spend half of their time scrubbing floors, dairying, learning needlework, and cooking (Indian Tribes, 1971; Milloy, 1999). The goal of both the residential and industrial schools was to isolate children from parental influence with hopes that the children would “*imperceptibly acquire the manners, habits, and customs of civilized life*” (Milloy, 1999, p. 13).

In order to transform young Indian children to their society, the Canadian government united priests and teachers with churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian) to become the instruments of aggressive civilization (AHF, 2002; Haig-Brown, 1988). As the government moved towards First Nation education for the purpose of assimilation, the Nicholas Flood Davin Report of 1879 noted that “*the industrial school is the principle feature of the policy known as that of aggressive civilization*” (Milloy, 1999, p. 8). The governments continued to build many residential schools across Canada. However, maintenance of Indian residential schools was very expensive and the schools received only a fraction of funds. The poor maintenance caused many problems such as diseases, hunger and overcrowding which was noted by the officials as early as 1897 (Carter, 2007; Milloy, 1999). In 1907, Indian Affairs chief medical examiner, P.H. Bryce reported that up to 42% of First Nation children were sent home to die. Bryce found death rates higher in some reserves, such as the Old Sun's school on the Blackfoot reserve in Alberta (AHF, 2002; Milloy, 1998) and described it as “*unsuitable in every*

way for such an institution” and as a “sink hole of tubercular infection and scabies, the result of the staff’s neglect of the children’s hygiene” (p. 261). Residential schools were constructed of the cheapest materials and the buildings were “undoubtedly chargeable with a very high death rate among the pupils” (Milloy, 1999, p. 94) as told by Duncan Campbell Scott to Arthur Meighen in 1918. Still, nothing was done to alleviate this problem and the schools remained open. In fact, Indian children lost their natural resistance to illness by living in the confined quarters of the residential schools and they died at much higher rates than they would in their village (Carter, 2007). Besides causing severe sicknesses, the underfunding of residential schools caused also physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental intellectual deprivation of First Nation children.

The quality of education in residential schools was substantially lower than that of non-First Nation schools (RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2012). It is stated by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (as cited by Report A. H., 2002) that in the 1930s only three of 100 First Nation students managed to advance past grade 6; obviously, the Indian residential school system failed to provide contemporary standards of the Canadian lifestyles. The residential school system was in operation from 1879 to 1986 (Milloy, 1999). At one time, there were over 130 residential schools existing in Canada during the period of 1800-1900. In the early 1900s about 1/6th of First Nation children between the ages of 6 and 15 attended these schools. By the 1940s, about 8000 Indian children were enrolled in 76 residential schools across Canada. British Columbia and the Prairie provinces had a higher enrolment; partly due to the fact that children living in these two provinces were forcefully removed from their homes (Report A. H., 2002).

The techniques used by the governments and churches to provide education were extremely dogmatic and failed to recognize the First Nation people for their unique cultural civilization.

Native beliefs were founded with a deep, connected spirituality, which centred on worship for the land and nature. Beliefs and practices were formed on the sacred and unique relationships with the land, surrounding environment and the supernatural world in which Native people lived their beliefs (Report A. H., 2002). Continuing to deny a First Nation society of its civilization and attempting to impose assimilation can lead to devastating long term consequences. A lost identity prevents the body and mind from embracing the innate Aboriginal philosophy, and without way of life, educational achievement declines (RCAP, 1996). It is difficult to be successful when First Nation perspectives, culture, identity, and language are excluded. As Fitznor (2002) argued, to work from Eurocentric perspectives alone have failed, oppressed and colonized the Aboriginal people. The arrival of Western ideology caused suffering and trauma of assimilation, cultural deprivation, and genocide (AhNee-Benham, 2003).

In closing, it is fair to say that the government and churches had not met the educational needs of the Indian people (Indian Tribes, 1971). Inadvertently and coincidentally, these educational institutions may have contributed to the development of a resilient and triumphant First Nations as the fight for survival against innumerable odds became a way of being for many First Nations children. Residential school students were perhaps one of the most traumatized groups of First Nations (Report A. H., 2002; TRC, 2012). The eradication of identity and marginalized self-efficacy has caused dramatic painful memories of trauma, neglect, shame, and poverty that thousands of residential school students endured for years. Residential schools were the institutions where First Nation children were alienated from families and where assimilation was forced; many survivors described it as a cultural genocide (Report A. H., 2002; TRC, 2012). Overcoming the residential school shock, First Nation people survived, holding on to, and enthusiastically reclaiming their traditions and languages (AhNee-Benham, 2003).

Sandy Bay Residential School: Historical Overview

“The government asks the Indians, ‘What do you want?’ But they don’t understand we’re different cultures and have different answers to the question.” Marina Tom- Wisdom of the Elders (Kirk, as cited by Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 126).

Immemorial customs of the First Nation people ensured well-organized educational systems. Prior to European contact, cultural, economic, political, and educational systems existed and thrived in a manner that worked for the people. This situation quickly changed when the federal government forced Aboriginal people into formidable ecclesiastical educational systems. Numerous residential schools were built across Canada to house Aboriginal students; this included the construction of the Sandy Bay Residential School in 1904. One year later, in August 1905, the school officially opened its doors to house students from Sandy Bay and other reserves. The Sandy Bay Residential School was run by administrators and Oblate sisters (interview with Elder, J. Spence 2008).

The low enrolments across the residential school systems worried the bishops who then petitioned the government to take children away from their families (Milloy, 1999). Because of this concern, the government developed a new policy, which permitted priests to remove children from their parents and communities and board them in residential schools. This policy was intimidating to the parents but they knew that they had no choice in the matter (AHF, 2002). This was a demoralizing move, which forced Indian children to integrate and assimilate into European society and give up their way of life. As indicated in Indian Tribes (1971), the Indian student integrates by giving up his identity and adopting new values and a new way of life.

My mother was only seven years old in the 1940s when she became a victim of the government's policy of enforced child removal. I share her heartbreaking story, which echoes similar events of former residential school students. For this thesis, I will name my mother Myrtle.

She was born on the Swan Lake First Nation. Her father passed away when she was barely two years of age, leaving her mother to single-handedly care for her children. Myrtle was a happy and caring child who had many responsibilities. Some of her chores included cleaning, cooking, and nurturing her siblings. One hot, summer day she noticed an unfamiliar person standing with her mom; they appeared to be in a sombre conversation. She describes this odd encounter as seeing "a man in a long black dress talking to her mom who was hanging clothes." Myrtle questioned her mom about this man. Koko, my maternal grandmother, replied to her that he was a Catholic priest who came to inform her that she was obligated to send her children to attend the residential school in Sandy Bay. Myrtle does not have any memories of what transpired immediately afterwards but later recalled "riding in a shiny, big, black car with her brother and a younger brother chasing the car and crying for them." She said that "the priest stopped and put her little brother in the car even though he was much too young to attend residential school." After what seemed like an endless frightening ride, they finally arrived at "a big building" which was the Sandy Bay Residential School. Myrtle described how she had mixed emotions of excitement and nervousness as she exited the car and entered the impressive, brick building. She remembers being introduced to a care-giver, an older girl, whose main responsibility was to watch over Myrtle and gradually transition her to the new living quarters at the residential school. For the next ten years Myrtle's life rapidly changed and she faced various and unfamiliar challenges and adversities. In order to survive the daily authoritarian schedule

Myrtle quickly accepted the changes to her life. The emotional look of pain in Myrtle's eyes is understandable as she speaks about traumatic events. She describes how the nuns poured turpentine on the heads of children in attempts to kill unobserved head lice. This brought to her mind an upsetting memory of the time a nun who took scissors and cut her waist length hair to below her ears. She was emotionally scarred by this cruel action. Her late father cherished and adored her long, black, wavy hair. With her Ojibway identity stripped (Morris, 1991) she was too ashamed and embarrassed to look into a mirror because she felt ugly. She once looked into a doorknob only to see a large nose which made her feel even uglier. Cutting girls' hair to the ears was a common practice of residential schools (Kenny, 2003) and attributes to feeling a loss of personal identity (Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 52). Myrtle lived and experienced the malicious and common practices of residential schools.

My mother is a great and well-founded storyteller. She was a suitable candidate for this study; she was able to share and describe confidential experiences of a formidable environment. However, I only chose relevant transcriptions as evidence of her experiences and treatment while in the residential school. She is very caring woman who understands the grief and disequilibrium that the Indian children of residential schools faced long ago. Today my mother is a respected and treasured matriarch and Elder.

The Sandy Bay Residential School was co-educational as most residential schools were. This meant that the boys and girls were housed under the same roof, and were equipped with dormitories, classrooms, kitchens, dining rooms, playrooms, and staff quarters. A review of the Sandy Bay Residential School noted that the school faced overcrowding, poor ventilation, poor lighting, poor heating, and cramped quarters (Indian Tribes, 1971). A record of student attendance and activities were kept by the nuns so each child knew exactly where and when

she/he should be at all times, and speaking in their mother language of Ojibway was prohibited.

In 1938, after an inspection of the residential school, Inspector Connolly recommended:

The imperative thing with these children is much practice in good conversational English. Their own language should not be permitted even in explanations, during classroom periods at least. They will only learn English by using it, and using it continuously as possible” (Milloy, 1999, p. 182.)

Sadly, the infringement of the Canadian government and churches proved to be very detrimental to the First Nation people who did not request cultural assimilation, abuses, deprivation, and humiliation (AHF, 2002). The government knowingly and forcefully intended to annihilate the First Nation people. Haig-Brown (2006) reinforced this notion and stated that the goals of the government and the missionaries of total cultural annihilation were undeniable. In 1903, Missionary Hugh McKay admitted that the government's attempts were to educate and colonize a people against their will (AHF, 2002). After 65 years of forceful integration and assimilation in a Eurocentric and ecclesiastical education, the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School closed down on June 30, 1970. The sight of the residential school was a constant reminder of the pain and suffering. Eventually furious and offended residents vandalized and torched the residential school and later it was completely torn down. Residential schools across the country were also torn or burned down (Haig-Brown, 1988). Such actions were the forceful acknowledgement of how the residential schools traumatized individuals and failed First Nation's educational requirements.

Provincial School: Moving Towards Integration and Acculturation

“He is suddenly expected to compete with students who have lived in the area all their lives and know English well” (Indian Tribes, 1971, p. 106).

In 1948, Indian Affairs realized that the cost of running residential schools was more expensive and unsuccessful than they thought so they created another new policy, that led to an educational shift in the 70s, to close the residential schools and to transfer Indian children in the direction of integration and acculturation of provincial schools (Dyck, 1997; Gillespie & Grant, 2001; Haig-Brown, 1988). The federal government would provide provincial schools with more funding for newer construction and equipment; this pleased the taxpayers because their taxes were lowered. The federal government then decided that it did not need the churches to make up the deficiency of educational costs and that the churches should play a less significant role in the Indian schooling or none at all; the churches opposed the plan of public school integration (Carney, 1983; Haig-Brown, 1988).

Despite church opposition, the government came up with three options, which were to admit only those children who required institutional care, open more day schools and improve transportation, or subsidize the enrolment of Indian children into non-Indian schools (Dyck, 1997). The government solely decided what direction Indian people's lives would take; their belief was that "Indian" problems would be solved if the students and parents adopted white middle-class values and practices (Gillespie & Grant, 2001). The move towards integrated schooling was a decision made by outsiders and neither the culture of the First Nations or the

involvement of their parents or leadership was taken into consideration (Dyck, 1997; Gillespie & Grant, 2001).

In the early 1960s, the Department of Indian Affairs quickly took advantage of provincial interest through the creation of an overall agreement respecting the education of Indian children in the public schools (Milloy, 1999, p. 202). This agreement would permit the province to accept the responsibility of the integration program in return for certain financial guarantees from the federal Government. This joint school agreement (Dyck, 1997) would further enhance the objective of the government of assimilation through integration. The final dismantling of the residential school systems would also allow the Department to relinquish the responsibility of educational services to Indians (Milloy, 1999). This served as an end for many residential schools because the governments now allowed Indian attendance in the public school system (Haig-Brown, 1988). Integrated education was proposed with the hopes of bringing Indian people into the mainstream of Canadian Life (Indian Tribes, 1971). The increasing costs associated with operating the schools, increasing resistance from First Nations people, and the recognition that the residential schools had not achieved their purpose of assimilation led to a decision to educate First Nations children in provincial schools. By the 1980s the government had managed to close all former residential schools across Canada (Dyck, 1997) with the last one, White Calf Collegiate in North Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, closing in 1998 (Canadian Indian Residential School System). Not surprisingly however, the study of provincial jurisdiction over Indian education and the recommendation of integrated education were strongly rejected by the First Nations because they felt that the provincial schools would be ill-equipped and unprepared to handle the learning issues of native children (Milloy, 1999). The First Nations of Manitoba issued a paper, which stated that the move to residential and provincial schools had

failed Indian children (Gillespie & Grant, 2001). The idea that education failed students challenged the common belief that children failed at school because there was something lacking in the children or their parents (Gillespie & Grant, 2001). However, the document *Wahbung*, (Indian Tribes, 1971) suggested that education had failed the people because they were not given the opportunity of involvement or of plan. Western education failed to recognize the cultural values and backgrounds, and customs, differing life experiences, language, and contributions to mankind (Haig-Brown, 1988; Indian Tribes, 1971).

In summary, the educational shift to integrated schooling began when First Nation students began attending provincial schools in the 70s. Mainstreaming the Indian children was the goal of the government whether or not society was ready to receive them. All decisions were made on behalf of bands and all agreements were made between the federal and provincial representatives; chiefs of a band did not sign any forms (Gillespie & Grant, 2001). In the new educational facilities it was believed that the faster Indian children were assimilated and pressured to act like white children the more acceptable the educational programs were deemed to be. Native cultures were believed to be deficient and children were marginalized (Gillespie & Grant, 2001).

Band School: Reclaiming Indian Control of Education and Self Government

“And further, Her Majesty agrees to maintain a school on each reserve hereby made whenever the Indians of the reserve should desire it” (Indian Tribes, 197, p. 109).

The First Nations movement towards local control and reclaiming education came in the wake of a new document set forth by the government. In summary, it was in June 1969 when this

new document called a "White Paper" policy for the Canadian government was introduced by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and his cabinet (Milloy, 1999; Morris, 1991). The purpose of this new policy was to abolish the Indian Act and move all "special status" (Voyageur, 2008, p. 6) care of the First Nations to provincial governments (Battiste & Barman, 1995). It proposed that Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada (INAC) be dismantled (Milloy, 1999) within five years, including the special and constitutional status of Canada's Indians who would be granted title and control of reserve lands and receive services from paying taxes to the provincial and municipal governments (Dyck, 1997). It was suggested that Indians would have control over their own lands, and the department to relinquish all responsibility of educational services to the Indians (Milloy, 1999) and all Canadians would recognize the unique contribution they made to Canada.

Inadvertently, a new problem emerged when Aboriginal leaders, churches, and organizations became aware of Indian problems (Milloy, 1999). The White Paper backfired on the government; instead of dismantling constitutional status, it helped to promote stronger Indian solidarity (Voyageur, 2008). The defeat of the White Paper signalled a new political world in which the churches and First Nation leaders established alliances and the goals of self-government and self-determination became public (Milloy, 1999). *Citizens Plus*, which was created under the guidance of the Indian Association of Alberta in 1970, was replaced as the *Red Paper* became the formal opposition paper that was developed from Native leaders across the country. The *Red Paper* suggested that the government abandon all plans to break promises of the treaties and eliminate Indian status, and focus on improving living conditions in communities and promoting economic development. On June 9th, 1970, the Prime Minister Chretien responded to the *Red Paper* (Voyageur, 2008) to indicate that his government would settle the

controversial treaties in an honourable fashion (Indian Tribes, 1971). Chretien also promised the Indian people that he would not implement anything that was unacceptable (Dyck, 1997).

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood presented a policy *Indian Control over Indian Education* that advocated that Chiefs and Councils should have the right to make decisions about the education of their children (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Milloy, 1999).

Many decades passed before the educational plight of First Nations was brought to light. This is when it became obvious to the First Nation leaders and community members that changes needed to be made and the control of education was the only hope to find success and cultural survival (Milloy, 1999). The community of Sandy Bay was one such reserve that waited patiently for the government to support the changes that would be beneficial to the educational achievement of the First Nation students. Finally, after years of negotiations between the federal government, stakeholders, and First Nation people, authorization to build schools on reserves was supported. There was great satisfaction from the leaders and community members of Sandy Bay First Nation because they were eventually given the responsibility for educating their own students. Sandy Bay opened a school in 1972, which housed the grades one to eight. The original high school did not have senior grades but a grade ten program was added in the fall of September 1973. As the years went on, grades 11 and 12 senior high grades were eventually added. In June 1976, the school proudly graduated six students from grade 12. However, diplomas and certificates are not enough for Aboriginal students; strengthening the foundations for Aboriginal education in languages, and cultures, ancestral heritage, and enlisting the Elders for advice and assistance may help First Nation students succeed at greater rates (Battiste & Barman, 1995).

This preceding section provided only a glimpse into the historical background of government and church run educational institutions. It also mentioned the plights endured by the First Nation people who were schooled in ecclesiastical institutions and forced to obtain a Eurocentric or Western style education. Their struggles with the federal and provincial governments to attain educational rights yet somehow maintain First Nation communal cultural values were difficult to achieve.

Understanding the historical educational development in Sandy Bay was important because it not only provided the groundwork for this study but it also related to the emergence and/or the development of resiliency among those participants who faced of unfavourable educational conditions. Resiliency was the main focus of this study so it was essential that an overview of scholarly literature was included. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate a longitudinal study of resiliency conducted on First Nations people of Canada but I have included other studies of resilience that have been conducted by various researchers (Haig-Brown, 1988; Nichol, 2000; Young, 1997).

The literature review in the following chapter outlines the investigation of scholarly researchers who are dedicated experts in the field. It is important to acknowledge that the findings are supported by evidence found in innumerable longitudinal studies. The definitions and the studies of resiliency are conclusive and comparative for the reason that researchers delivered extensive literature. Included in the next chapter are the definitions and studies about resilience from scholarly works, and the influences of resiliency within the environmental, family, school, community and probable risk factors. These studies have mirrored the importance of having a mentor, guide, or caring individual to help one develop one's innate resiliency; they

also suggest that with appropriate supports there are many opportunities for success and overcoming adversities in order to enhance positive livelihoods that are culturally embedded.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Defining Resilience

“The traditional process is what contemporary researchers, educators, and social services are now calling fostering resilience.” (Decelles & HeavyRunner, 2002).

The study of resilience is relatively a new concept in the psychological sense in that it recently became discussed in the 1980s when it was used to describe links between dangerous environments, disrupted families and dysfunctional schools (Brendtro & Larson, 2006). The subject of resilience has led to numerous research studies, which attempt to define this term based on particular findings. The resiliency idea suggests that all individuals have positive attributes of which they need to take advantage to cope with daily adversities. This finding set off a resilience revolution, which documented how the most difficult youth can overcome obstacles and become positive and contributing adults (Brendtro & Larson, 2006). Somehow, youth that lived with those types of negative issues became productive citizens (Benard, 2004). I agree that this also occurs in the lives of Aboriginal peoples who may suffer various disruptions, negative issues and/or risk factors than they can be overcome.

Benard (2004) is a well-known researcher who believes that resiliency is a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity. She suggests that we are all born with an innate capacity for resilience by which we are able to develop social competence, problem-solving skills, critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. In her view, the virtues of resilience can be taught and each person has the potential

to become a caring adult. In an ideal world, children would have more than one protective factor from external supports from the family, school, community (Brendtro & Larson, 2006).

Researchers differ in opinion about resiliency. Some think resilience is a rare personality trait of a few invulnerable super-kids (Brendtro & Larson, 2006) and others believe that no person is invulnerable (Brendtro & Shahbazian, 2004) to extreme levels of stress and that resilience is a natural trait of all humans. Resiliency is defined by Brendtro (2004), as the study of human courage. Much of the research promotes the idea that resilience is not a quality that some people possess and others do not. Rather, resiliency as an innate and normal human capacity to cope with adversities and is strengthened by environmental protective factors (Benard, 2004). Still another misconception is that the findings from resilience research only apply to high-risk youth but in reality any type of supports and opportunities are protective factors for any students who face adversity (Benard, 2004). Modern resiliency research is based on defining the adverse and protective factors within the family, school, and community of successful children or adolescents.

Ann Masten, a resilience researcher, summarized that resilience is a normative process of human adaptation, and that it does not come from rare and special qualities, but rather from the minds, bodies, and brains of children who are involved and developed relationships with their families and communities (as cited by Benard, 2004). Research attention has focused towards cultural competence. This research has shown that resilient youth of a non-dominant culture develop the ability to move back and forth between their culture and the dominant one, and learn to accommodate the dominant culture without assimilating into it. This theme of moving back and forth between two worlds and learning to manage the one in between is similar to what Atleo and Fitznor (2010) relate to in a discussion of an Aboriginal Zone where the differing

perspectives overlap and must be managed to accommodate living for success. Giving up one's identity is not an option within their framework but learning to cope is important. Developing codes of power help youth retain their culture and self-identities (Benard, 2004, p. 15).

Bernard (2004) states that, "Studies found that having a strong ethnic identity is associated with having a high self-esteem, a strong commitment to doing well in school, a strong sense of purpose in life, great confidence in one's own personal efficacy and high academic achievement" (p. 21).

There is accumulating evidence that individuals are not equally resilient across contexts and that particular characteristics rarely serve completely as risk or protective factors; in other words, individuals who appear resilient on one index may not be in another (Mischel & Shoda, as cited in Antonio & Downey, 1998). Interestingly, Battiste and Barman (1995) speak of a similar idea in their book, *The Circle Unfolds*. When speaking about the consequences of Indian education they suggest that "some currents are stronger than others in a particular time or place" (p. 8). Aboriginal phenomenology suggests that like ever-changing waves in the ocean, so are the ever-changing variations of resilience. I support the notion that the development and experience of resilience is different for everyone for the reason that resilience changes from person to person, from time to time, from settings to settings and from situations to situations.

Studies of Resilience

Longitudinal studies indicate that for every child from an at-risk background who later needs intervention, there are a higher percentage of children who come from the same background who become healthy, contributing adults (Krovetz, 2008). Resilience research has found that children

from highly stressed families or resource deprived communities somehow manage to make decent lives for themselves (Benard, 2004).

Initially, scientists hypothesized that resilience was a trait that was found in a few ÷invulnerableö (Benard, 2004) super kids but research conducted on this topic shows that resiliency is the norm (p. 75). It was also believed that humans were created with the tendency to overcome all but the most dangerous experiences and each of us have come from ancestors who have survived many types of hardships (Brendtro & Larson, 2006). Resilient youth, especially those who have been oppressed or labelled, understand their innate resilience to make the most of their personal power to reframe their life narratives from damaged victim to resilient survivor (Wolin & Wolin, cited by Benard, 2004).

The study of resilience suggests that protective factors are supports and opportunities that lessen the effects of adversities and enable normal childhood development to proceed and enhance positive outcomes (Benard, 2004). The *Resilience Code*, as cited by Brendtro and Larson (2006), summarizes the findings from major studies of resilience such as those conducted by Frederic Flach on psychotherapy patients, Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith on high-risk Hawaiian children from childhood to maturity, and Steven and Sybil Wolin who studied resilient youth who overcame highly troubled family backgrounds. The results of these studies suggest that resilience is related to the development of trust, talent, power, and purpose. These tenets are parallel to studies conducted by Coppersmith (1967) in which the foundations of resilience were significance, competence, power, and virtue; and to Benard's tenets of social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose and future (Brendtro & Larson, 2006). Researchers use a variety and/or preferred terminology but all studies tend to draw on the same meanings (Benard, 2004).

These Western studies are also consistent with the broad themes found in the *Circle of Courage* model that was developed by Native American psychologist, Martin Brokenleg (Brendtro, et al., 2002). It identifies four universal needs for children, which are belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. The spirit of belonging suggests that everyone is part of society and the Native society honoured all kinship bonds, and relationships. The spirit of mastery offers that there is a desire to strive for mastery in the environment and stems from the fact that children were taught that wisdom came from listening to and observing Elders. The spirit of independence suggests that the Native culture places a high value on individual freedom and survival is depended on making judgment, self-management and obedience. The spirit of generosity suggests that the highest virtue is to be generous, unselfish and always share generously (Brendtro, et al., 2002). Masten (as cited in Benard, 2004) asked thousands of people "what has fostered your resilience; what has helped you see yourself and your life in a new way? The most common response referred to "facing and overcoming adversity and challenge" (p. 24). Modern studies of resiliency are based on defining the adverse and protective factors within the family, school, and community that promote successful children or adolescents. The ideas contained in Medicine Wheel teachings are similar to what Brendtro et al. (2002) suggest, that people can develop their strengths or resilience to maintain balance of living, and these are facets that can be found in the environment, community, school or family.

The following sections provide information about protective factors in the environment, family, school, and community. The supports and opportunities lessen the effects of adversities and enable normal childhood development to proceed and enhance positive outcomes (Benard, 2004).

Environmental Protective Factors

Environmental factors that affect resilience include all facets that surround and sustain an individual in his/her resilience development. Some of the environmental factors that support the development of resiliency in youth include: caring relationships, high expectations, and supports and opportunities to participate in and contribute to the family, school, and community (Benard, 2004). Shielding factors such as parental involvement, teacher empathy, and participation in the home, school, or community are advantageous in helping youth conquer adversities; all youngsters need the support of families, peers, and schools. Protective factors of the family, school and community are explained in the following paragraphs.

Family Protective Factors

A strong family unit is perhaps one of the best protective factors that a child can have. Even children who are exposed to severe trauma can turn their lives around if they find a supportive person. Fortunately, in the Aboriginal cultures, parenting is not limited to biological parents but it is the duty of all adults who serve as teachers of younger persons. Children that are nurtured in a larger circle of significant others enable them to feel a sense of belonging and children, seek help from adults who they see as caring and nurturing (Brendtro, et al., 2002). McFarlane et al, (as cited by Benard, 2004) suggest that parenting style rather than family structure has been a main determinant of effective family functions and adolescent well-being. Werner and Smith (1982) identified care giving, perhaps by a parent, during the first year of a child's life as the most powerful predictor of resiliency in children (Benard, 2004). Larson (as cited by Benard, 2004), stated that when children do not have additional family or community they find it more difficult to develop resilience. Brendtro (2004) says "treating others as kin forged powerful

social bonds that drew all into relationships of respect (p. 7). As evidenced by the adoption of my father by my grandfather, Brokenleg (as cited by Brendtro, et al., 2002) wrote that kinship in a tribal setting was not strictly a matter of biological relationships; an ultimate test of kinship was not by blood but by behaviour. As I think about family relationships and my teachings, I realized that our identity as Ahishinabe people was embedded in the values and philosophies of the Medicine Wheel traditions.

There are some studies that focus on the cultural differences in parenting. For example, studies on African American and Asian American youth suggest that those who were raised in authoritative homes versus non-authoritative homes fare better in psychosocial development, stress, and problem behaviour; there is greater emphasis on obedience and respect as an attribute of caring and relationship closeness (Benard, 2004). On the other hand, there are numerous cultures where children are born to parents with ineffectual parenting skills not caused by incompetency. One such culture is the First Nations where the intergenerational effects of residential schooling have caused parenting skills to be inadequate (Haig-Brown, 1988). However, an important survival technique among First Nation families is nurturing relationships, and as long as adolescents feel connected to their families this "connected relationship" is a protective factor against high risk behaviours such as drug and alcohol use, violence, and risky sexual behaviour (Resnick et al., as cited by Benard, 2004, p. 54).

A quotation by Feldman, Stiffman, and Jung (as cited by Benard, 1991) stated, that "the social relationships among family members are by far the best predictors of children's behavioural outcomes" (p. 10). Research into why some children who grow up in poverty still manage to be successful in school and become fine adults has identified high parental expectations as the contributing factor, (Williams, Komblum, & Clark, as cited by Benard,

1991). He suggests families that establish high expectations in their children from an early age help them develop resiliency. Also associated with high expectations are other family characteristics such as structure, discipline, clear rules and regulations. Firmness is also considered a protective factor within the family that has been found to prevent behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse, and delinquency, as well as academic competence. Parents who believed that their child(ren) could be successful and demonstrated their beliefs in an accepting, supportive manner, often motivated their children to exceed those expectations (Brooks & Goldstein as cited by Bernard, 2004). Those parents who had high expectations for their child(ren) promoted positive health choices and academic success; students did better in school and avoided social and health risk behaviours when their parents have a strong sense of self-efficacy (Furstenberg et al, as cited by Benard, 2004).

The family background of resilient children is usually characterized by the many opportunities that are provided for the children to participate and contribute in meaningful ways (Benard, 1991). Werner and Smith (2001) concurs that children who have productive roles of responsibility associated with close family ties develop important protective factors for facing times of adversity. Several hundred studies support the findings of resilience research that family and parenting does matter but the idea of a nuclear family as the only and best structure for rearing our children is not necessarily true (Benard, 2004). In many Aboriginal cultures, tribal responsibility rather than a nuclear family ensures survival (Brendtro et al., 2002). This type of responsibility is common in many First Nation communities; typically, the grandparents are considered as the primary parents since their caring and rearing of the child(ren) is important for an appropriate and respectful upbringing.

School Protective Factors

In all the findings of resilience research, a common theme is that schools are the most important institution and the teachers are the most important people who can help a child turn his or her life from one of risk to resilience (Garbarino et al., as cited by Benard, 2004). Many researchers have conducted numerous studies that focus on the academic ability of children. The role of school in young people's lives is very important, especially in the absence of positive family relationships (Benard, 2004). In fact, if a school fails a child, this can be the single and strongest predictor of adolescent risk (Blum, Beuhring et al., as cited by Benard, 2004).

According to Rhonda Weinstein (as cited by Bernard, 2004) there are teachers who make prior judgements and do not provide equal opportunities for children. She stated that "teachers tend to provide for those students for whom they hold high expectations more opportunities to learn, and under more positive conditions, than for students for whom they hold low expectations" (p. 75). This may be true; however, there has been a recent shift towards encouraging supportive school environments. Schools could become the new "tribe" to support and nurture children at risk. Schools are the only institutions that foster on-going and long-term relationships as teachers spend over half of a child's life with him/her (Brendtro et al., 2002). When students are questioned as to what qualities they like in a teacher, their response is they want teachers who are caring and who will not let them fail or give up on them (Benard, 2004). In follow up interviews with graduates, students stated that the teachers who fostered resilience provided them with the encouragement and support to significantly improve their self-esteem and to accept greater academic challenges. Turnabout teachers are credited for helping youth who have been labelled oppressed by their families, schools, and/or communities go from the damaged victim to the resilient survivor (Benard, 2004).

In fact, one of the richest areas of research in the last decade looked at how children and youth from non-dominant cultural and linguistic groups succeeded in school despite the risks. The non-dominant group continues and needs the protective factors of caring relationships in schools, high expectations, and opportunities for participation (Benard, 2004). Furthermore, teachers recognize that a child's learning is influenced by his/her culture. For example, cooperative learning and helping is more natural for students whose culture emphasizes and values interdependent relations and the well-being of a group than it is for students from cultures that emphasize individual fulfillment and choice (Trumbull et al., as cited by Benard, 2004).

The environment of pedagogy used by teachers also affects resiliency. A study conducted by Benard (1991) demonstrated that students who work in classroom environments, which are highly teacher controlled with nonstop instruction, had a higher rate of dropping out of school, earned lower incomes, and a greater likelihood of becoming offenders. In contrast, the reverse pedagogy reveals a much different picture. Two studies, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and the Centre for Substance Abuse Prevention's National Cross-Site Evaluation of High-Risk Youth Programs, suggest that the most common protective factors were: strong connections with others at school, feeling safe, fair treatment, maintenance of strong bonds with school and family. When these factors are in place there is reduced substance use; in this case, school bonding was even a more powerful protective factor than family bonding (Benard, 2004).

Cooperative learning is a pedagogical approach that allows students to work together to achieve a shared learning goal. By learning in this style, students can build his /her interpersonal and social skills, which also fosters cognitive, emotional, social, moral and spiritual holistic developmental outcomes (Battiste M. , 2005; Benard, 2004). Another process for sharing is

through a community circle called "council" which was developed by Jack Zimmerman in which listening and being heard are key to addressing the youth's desire for connection, identity, and meaning (as cited by Benard, 2004). This method of connection is similar to what the First Nation people have been practicing for thousands of years. The Sharing Circle, as a form of Aboriginal pedagogy, and/or Talking Circle allows all participants to sit in a circle, to be heard, respected, and acknowledged (Archibald, 2008; Bopp, 1988; Fitznor, 2002; Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2008) The method of providing students with opportunities for "a voice and choice" allows them to share and practice positive school experiences (Benard, 2004, p. 81). In effect, children who are given responsibility to make decisions, become responsible adults (Brendtro et al., 2002).

In hindsight, it seems that schools promote the innate resilience of students rather than create and/or overpower it. Jarald, stated that researchers found that "high-poverty" and "high-minority" schools that utilized strategies to promote resilience often outperformed predominately white schools in wealthy communities (as cited by Benard, 2001). This finding is substantiated in a study conducted by Rutter (as cited by Benard, 2004) who found that students in high poverty schools developed less problem behaviours the longer they were in nurturing schools but students developed more problem behaviours in non-nurturing schools.

Research based strategies that are used by schools to foster resilience include the development of services and resources that are culturally relevant, the hiring of teachers with high expectations and caring attitudes, and the provision of authentic opportunities for students to learn. These strategies help students who face great challenges succeed and develop resilience; children need to be given the opportunity and freedom to grow, make decisions, and safely meet challenges, also by making connections with others to nurture the sense of self (Benard, 2004).

Community Protective Factors

Throughout history, people living in communities have connected and formed relationships for mutual protection and support (Brendtro et al., 2002). Such a community recognizes the inter-connectedness of all its citizens and understands that the well-being of children and young people is connected to the well-being of everyone else. A resilient community is characterized by caring relationships, high expectations of positive beliefs and respect for all citizens, active participation and contribution of everyone (Benard, 2004). Having a sense of community is a very important protective factor that helps nurture children and provides them with the essential skills for survival and safety.

A relatively new finding in resilience research is the positive influence of community mentors such as neighbours, parents, teachers, or anyone who takes time to care (Benard, 2004). An example of this positive influence was created in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program. The program found that youth who were matched with adult mentors from the community were less likely to use drugs, drink, hit others, skip class or school, and they made gains in their grades. The mentors saw themselves as friends, not people who had to "fix the kid". Youth involved in this type of program also improved their relationships with their parents and peers (Benard, 2004). The caring and support within communities is a well-known protective factor for those youth who have a small number of relations and limited school resources.

A longitudinal study, Carnegie Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs, indicated that the lack of a strong community is devastating even when there are supportive and caring families. Another study conducted by Benard (2004) found lower levels of violence in the communities that believed youth were relations and also when community members intervened in the lives of the youth. Peter Benson, (as cited by Benard, 2004) believed

that caring relationships have been the way cultures passed on the best human wisdom- through wisdom modeled, articulated, practiced, and discussed by adults with children around them; it is learning through engagement with responsible adults that nurtures value development and requires intergenerational community (p. 93). When youth have the chance to develop skills that are relevant and meaningful to them through their connection to a caring adult, they create a bridge of resilient strength to a bright future. Marian Wright Edelman, (as cited by Benard, 2001) summarized the importance of community togetherness when she quoted "It really takes a community to raise children" (p. 89).

Relevance of Study

This study documented many challenges, which according to resilience practice, are viewed as opportunities and not problems (Benard, 2004), a comment that I accept and agreed with. One main challenge that I faced while researching for this thesis was the inability to locate a scholarly longitudinal study, to be specific, a quantitative study for statistical support on the resiliency of First Nation people. There were several quantitative studies conducted on various cultural groups by Western researchers, however, none were found on Canada's First Nations. I sought information from various libraries and book stores for scholarly journals, worldwide web, Amazon books, ERIC, and various native scholars, but found very little on this particular topic. To me this demonstrated that there is a gap and/or void in literature because most studies are quantitative and are conducted on other ethnic groups with no First Nations involvement. It is important to note that qualitative studies of First Nations deals with complex social contexts that should not be eliminated or excluded from studies for it can offer valuable insight to future

scholars. I was fortunate to find qualitative research and analysis, which were conducted by Indigenous researchers that supported and guided my study.

The small research study, of six Anishinabe women, that I conducted will not seal the large gaps, of either quantitative or qualitative, resiliency research of First Nation people but it may provide supports to upcoming studies. The topic of resilience is very extensive with diverse definitions given by researchers and selected research participants. I am optimistic that there will be future studies that will add richness to resilient literature. This study cannot guarantee and/or confirm the all-inclusive meanings of resiliency but it could compliment what past theories and studies have already concluded.

The experiences of my participants relate to many outcomes of existing research, yet each story is unique in a sense. The question(s) for further study remain, because there is no definite answer to "where do we go from here?" I caution that the results of certain studies can be biased when based on the cultural situations within the environment, community, family, and school situations. To prevent this type of bias, additional longitudinal research, either quantitative or qualitative, needs to be conducted with a larger population and diverse generations of First Nations, perhaps across Canada, to help address the issues and/or concerns of biases and/or voids in resilience literature.

The next chapter on methodology refers to the theory of how knowledge is gained or the process that researchers go about finding things out (Wilson, 2008). This chapter discusses qualitative methodology, the design of the study (including the interview structure), sources of information, participant selection, analysis of information, researcher positioning and bias, and confidentiality and ethics (Lincoln & Guba, as cited by Stringer, 2008).

Chapter Four: Methodology

In this chapter I provide information on the methodology of how my study was designed, sources of data and information retrieved, method of participant selection, procedure of data analysis, researcher bias and issues related to confidentiality and ethics.

Although it was unplanned, the Indigenous philosophy of Medicine Wheel teachings became a vital part of this study. The conclusion of this study revealed some unexpected information, which led me to believe that the participants were gifted with an innate philosophical worldview to heal (Calliou, 2001) and empowered them to embrace the powerful gift of Medicine Wheel teachings (Archibald, 2008; Bopp, 1988; Calliou, 2001). Absolon, as cited by (Graveline, 1998), stated that healing and teaching comes from our experiences, an experimental process, which unconsciously gravitates our being towards a positive wholeness of Medicine Wheel teachings.

To further support the importance of the Medicine Wheel philosophy in methodology, Battiste, (as cited by Michelle, 1999) commented that we need to examine the ethical standards involved in conducting research of Indigenous populations due to the past practice of invasive methodologies that marginalized and oppressed their being. Wilson, (as cited by Kovach, 2010) points out that there are methods that are useful from an Indigenous perspective or epistemology and if a researcher uses Indigenous methodological framework then it should make sense from Indigenous knowledge's perspectives. Furthermore, Michelle (1999) believes there is a need to reintroduce Indigenous research methodologies that are culturally relevant and respectful. To complement this statement, Lincoln and Guba (as cited by Mertens in Kovach, 2010) described methodology as the process of gathering knowledge by stating that the methodological question asks, "How can the knower go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understanding?" (p. 8). The principles of methodology, by noted scholars, confirm that gathering knowledge,

perspectives, and/or understandings can be and/or should be acquired by culturally relevant framework. These methods expand and enhance the techniques employed through narrative/storywork in which Indigenous perspectives and knowledge are incorporated into the research rather than relying solely on Western theories (Archibald, 2008).

Renowned Indigenous scholars provided influential support in qualitative methodologies and rationalities of paradigm or worldviews. Those supports grounded my research and enabled strategies within Indigenous methodology frameworks to be utilized. To obtain knowledge and understanding I employed a narrative/storywork methodology. This methodology allowed me to gather data and/or information through the detailed accounts and explanations captured in transcribed tapes of interviews (Charmaz, 2006) and it allowed flexibility in collecting and analyzing the information provided. Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested that some of the reasons why qualitative researches are conducted are because it allows researchers to access the inner experiences and perspectives of participants to determine how meanings are formed through and in their culture, and to discover rather than test variables. The methodology of narrative/storytelling has allowed a reversal of roles where I learned from the participant who became the educator and I became the participant.

An important feature of storytelling is that a theory emerges from people who were "silenced" (Haig-Brown, 1988) within in the educational systems and storytelling is a form of data gathering for research (Archibald, 2008; Haig-Brown, 1988) for an emerged theory. Fitznor, (as cited by Kovach, 2010) integrated thematic coding in her research but it was obvious that her stories were presented as much as possible within the life situation of the storyteller. In Aboriginal/Indigenous epistemologies, one form of story is personal narratives of place, happenings and experiences that are passed on through oral tradition. The terminology that

researchers use for this kind of meaning is "reflexivity" in which the researcher's own self-reflection helps in the meaning-making process (Kovach, 2010). Within the context of narrative/storywork, research is a method of sustaining lasting friendships through deep caring and endless stories and talk (Archibald, 2008) not to mention that having a pre-existing and ongoing relationship with the participants is an accepted characteristic of research according to tribal paradigms (Kovach, 2010).

As a researcher, I could examine the methodology from both the Indigenous and dominant worldviews but was influenced by Wilson (2008) who suggested that when working with dominant system academics, there is no requirement to see other ways of being or doing, or to recognize that things exist and that dominant system academics ideas come from worldviews that differ from Indigenous perspectives. Fitznor (2002) echoes this statement as she acknowledges Indigenous researchers' practices uphold the spirit, culture, and language of Aboriginal peoples; and working from the Eurocentric "perspective alone is wrong and has failed, oppressed and colonized Aboriginal people" (p. 15). Therefore, these strong views persuaded me to accept Indigenous framework of narrative/storytelling research for my study. My findings not only reveal the truth and reality of the participants but it will also clarify the grounds and motivators that were behind the successes of individuals who may have lived with adversities and/or challenges.

It was important that I observed and acknowledged both the Indigenous and dominant worldviews; however bridging both practices was a challenge (Fitznor, 2002; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999). I found this more challenging because I grew up as a Métis with different understandings from Indigenous and dominant worldviews, and was not "entirely rooted" in either worldviews. My Indigenous philosophy existed only through a "traditional silence" in

which traditions and customs were recognized and carried forth in our personal and/or private environment and I was somewhat banished from any European standards of existence and acceptance. Therefore, acknowledging both worldviews was important for bridging the challenges that were associated with understanding and appreciating knowledge.

Design of the Study

The design of this study focused on employing Indigenous research methods for gathering and analyzing data/information while upholding and respecting customary practices. Narrative/storytelling is a practical Indigenous methodology; Kovach (2010) comments that when engaging in conversations with an acquaintance it requires a certain level of trust and reciprocity. In conducting my research, there was trust and reciprocity, which allowed me greater compassion and understanding during the interview process. Narrative/storytelling is the most commonly used culturally relevant qualitative research method available to First Nation researchers. Wilson, (2008) commented that storytelling enhances interest between the researcher and participant who often share common beliefs and spirituality. Hearing others' stories provided me with an avenue to co-create knowledge. Stories are not only a means of hearing another's narrative but they also invite reflexivity into research which allows opportunity to express the researcher's inward knowing (Kovach, 2010). Stories also remind us of who we are and of our belonging. They can never be decontextualized or removed as appropriate knowledge from the teller (Kovach, 2010). Graveline (1998) mentions a similar idea and states that we are not separate entities but are part of the subjects. Reiterating the significant common practice of Indigenous research methodology through interviews, conversations, and sharing

circles as the most current means of data gathering utilized by First Nation researchers (Fitznor, 2005; Kovach, 2010).

This study acknowledged customary cultural practices. As traditional in the Anishinabe/Ojibway culture, a respectful protocol is that tobacco is offered to all participants. This is an ethical custom practiced by many First Nation researchers, whose research is grounded in Indigenous methods, to show respect and give protection to the knowledge shared (Kovach, 2010; Michell, 1999). Only when the tobacco was accepted and the participants knew why it was offered, did I have the approval to conduct the sensitive interviews. Prior to the interview, I conducted an Anishinabe ceremonial opening asking our Creator for guidance, and together we honoured our traditional smudge bowl and smudged with sage and/or sweet grass which is used for cleansing the body, mind, spirit, and heart. My participants declined the opportunity of inviting an Elder to do the opening prayer and smudge. These cultural protocols have been done in other research situations by Aboriginal scholars (Fitznor 2002; Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Unfortunately, Michell (1999) was denied this practice when he was not allowed to include this recognized cultural protocol and way of gathering knowledge in a university setting; he referred to this as institutional racism.

Due to the sensitivity of this study and the questions asked, the methodology of narrative/storytelling was the best choice because it allowed freedom of employing traditional practices prior to and during the study; it also allowed me and/or the participants to discontinue if necessary. I took careful provisions during the interview to be mindful of the participants and to recognize sensitive topics. The participants were allowed to select the meeting place for interviews to ensure privacy and a distraction free environment. I respectfully permitted a

gradual change of discussions and/or topics during the interview to allow the participants to speak freely while in a state of well-being.

The interviews were approximately one hour to one and a half hours. Each of the interviews took approximately twenty hours or so to transcribe. The most extensive part of the research was spending approximately 120-150 hours transcribing. The interviews were documented with a tape recorder, which permitted easy retrieval, assured accurateness of the individual's words (Archibald, 2008) and allowed for uncomplicated transcriptions. The outcomes of the interviews provided the essential data/information to answer researcher's main question: What meaning(s) do First Nation graduates of secondary or post-secondary education make about risk and/or protective factors that may have affected their success in completing their degree/diploma? The responses to the interview questions revealed that there was an emergence of resilience that was enhanced and developed by risk and/or protective factors. The words of the participants serve as a record of cultural history (Archibald, 2008).

Sources of Data/Information

The primary approach of gathering data/information was conducted by in-depth personal interviews with key informants through a method of narrative/storytelling. They (participants) contributed to a qualitative study that allowed for a study of social phenomena that then builds hypotheses from collected data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and/or information.

In this way, research is framed as conversation and is characterized as an open-ended interview with opportunity for both sides to engage and absorb the meaning of the talk; also referred to as "research as storytelling" (Archibald, 2008) and "research as chat" by (Haig-Brown, 1988).

Other relevant sources of data/information included: journal articles, books, studies, documents, records, and the World Wide Web; all provided descriptive statistical and written information. The data/information retrieved involved studies that were conducted by First Nations and Western scholarly researchers in the field, which was presented in the literature reviews of chapters 2 and 3.

Participant Selection

In this study, as suggested within qualitative research, the participants were selected based on what they could contribute to the study and their individual knowledge related to the area; this is referred to as purposive and/or concept sampling (Stringer, 2008) and was more appropriate than the random participant selection method (Kovach, 2010). Without prejudice, the criterion for participant selection was choosing those who had experienced learning in the residential, provincial, and band operated schools, those with a Western academic Bachelor of Education degree, were classroom teachers and/or former administrators, had an Anishinabe/Ojibway cultural background, and were women. I chose to assemble the stories of First Nation women because their voices have been absent from resilience literature (Scarpino, 2007) and I consider them to be leaders in First Nation communities. Voyageur (2008) noted that female leadership characteristics are evident in their historical roles as tribal advisors and confidants since time immemorial.

Research also mentions that females, particularly administrators, are more often than men scrutinized and may face criticism despite their ability to complete tasks (Wallin, 2005). Tsosie, (as cited by AhNee-Benham, 2003) supported this idea and stated that Native/Indigenous women are often misunderstood and thought to be unqualified to provide leadership. Furthermore,

LaRocque, (2007) stated that Aboriginal women have the stake in self-determination as they struggle with decolonization and struggle to basic human rights. Females inherently perform many communal tasks and I respect the remark made by AhNee-Benham (2003) that it may be a challenge to understand the women's leadership ways because they tend to walk in many worlds, in and out of native and non-native lands, and professional and personal environments, nevertheless they must also preserve cultural heritage and reject assimilation. LaRocque (2007) wrote that Aboriginal women were not automatically included in leadership roles, lived as victims of patriarchy, however were strong and gracious fighters and survivors. Further confirmation in the opposition of female leadership is documented by Voyageur, (2008) and LaRocque (2007) who put forward that First Nations women are challenged and/or restricted in their roles when they become politically active within their communities, especially after emerging from domestic roles of housekeeping, mothering and child rearing. Female educators have on occasion become politically active and developed influence and power in their communities through their official authority as First Nation educators and/or administrators. As a result, females in their positions were successful at achieving authority within the community and were likely resilient in the face of their respective past histories. Therefore, it is important that this type of study, as described by Fitznor (2006), specifically aims to unveil female educators' worldviews. Furthermore, this exploration of Aboriginal women who demonstrated an emergence and/or development of resilience can provide vision, focus, and direction for creating better futures and reclaiming our identity with pride and honour (Scarpino, 2007).

I was honoured to interview six successful Anishinabe women from the Sandy Bay First Nation. My interview process involved two interviews for each educational era of the residential, provincial and band operated school. This was a generational study; the ages of the participants

were between 25 and 60 years with approximately a thirty-year educational span between the 3 sets of interviewees. The participants are recognized as being successful because they have worked diligently to obtain a degree from an accredited Western academic university to become educators and/or leaders in their communities despite what scholars define as challenges and adversities they may have faced in their schooling experiences.

Approval for the study is attached as Appendix A. All participants signed the consent form, presented in Appendix B, which provided details regarding the purpose of the study, structure of the interview, a brief introduction to the main topic and a sample questionnaire to be used as a guide and covered prior to and during the interview. After the sensitive interviews, there was an extensive transcribing process, and upon completion the stories were returned to the participants for final approval to check for accuracy also referred to as member checking (Stringer, 2008). This qualitative method is crucial for Indigenous study because it cautions against any misrepresentation of Indigenous cultures and communities within research (AhNee-Benham, 2003; Kovach, 2010). I regret that one participant did not return her transcript despite numerous contact efforts. Although this participant signed the consent form, I felt it was my duty as a considerate Anishinabe researcher to be courteous and respectful of her avoidance and not include her transcription in the study. The remaining five participants did not change the transcriptions and asked to receive the final version of the paper. Participants were also given the option of taking their tapes, revising or withdrawing transcriptions, and/or a receiving a copy of the final report.

Addressing the Research Question(s).

The participants who contributed to this qualitative study allowed for a study of social phenomena to build hypotheses from the collected data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and/or information.

The findings from this study suggested that some of the participants faced damaging forms and/or risk factors of criticism, prejudice, social exclusion, assimilation, backlash, embarrassment, cultural denigration, language loss, and oppression. What the participants faced may have been triggered from centuries of imperialism and/or colonialism. Risk factors, such as these, can contribute to and/or cause grief, depression and destructive behaviours.

Nevertheless, evidence gathered in this study suggested that the participants overcame harmful risk factors. The women proudly spoke about protective factors such as positive relations, loving and caring households, peer and/or parental support and protection, educational achievement, childhood responsibilities, and compassionate educators; they were also deep-rooted in their culture, language, spirituality and traditional worldviews.

Summarizing the Research Question(s).

The research question for the study was "What meaning(s) do First Nation graduates of secondary or post-secondary education make about risk and/or protective factors that may have affected their success in completing their degree/diploma requirements?" In order to make sense of what emerged from the data, I decided to condense the interview guide into three major interview questions. This decision was decided after a careful review of the participant responses and links to literature. I highlight the questions here to include them in the methodology section,

then they are taken up again with a summary of the findings in the chapter five: 1) Did the participants experience any personal or educational hardships while attending secondary or post-secondary schools that contributed to their personal resiliency? 2) What do the participants identify as their protective and/or defying factors they faced in their environment, community, school, and family and what motivated and helped them throughout secondary and post-secondary school? And, because this study is about resiliency emergence and/or development, I also wanted to study, 3) what do the participants feel is an appropriate educational environment for First Nation children?

Relating analysis to the Medicine Wheel Framework.

The analysis of the data/information in this study was especially challenging. Understanding challenges for studies is not new knowledge and many research courses in graduate programs are difficult and dreaded by students, but Hampton (as cited by Kovach, 2010) stated that research is about learning and ought to be looked upon as such. The difficulty I encountered caused much confusion about whether or not to bridge and/or separate Indigenous and Western coding strategies. I struggled to make sense of the information and because my methodology was primarily Indigenous oriented, it was suggested by my committee that I find alternatives to Western methods of coding. This was a qualitative research method, which involved both interpretative and analytical approaches to find meaning and understanding. I relied on grouping information and working with transcripts to arrive at a "meaning" commonly referred to as "coding" (Kovach, 2010). Part of the difficulty during the coding process was the inability of breaking down all the pieces to examine minute details that may have been the reason for my

obscurity. Wilson (2008) suggests that in Indigenous methodology all the pieces are included in the relationships and breaking them apart destroys the relationships, we must look at them from a holistic view.

We have been taught by the traditional western scientists that analyzing data is a linear process. However, this method undermines the intuitive and natural way of analyzing for First Nation researchers (Wilson, 2008). The ideas contained within the Medicine Wheel framework (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1988; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002) was one way to bring together all the pieces for a more holistic understanding that supports Indigenous perspectives and this made sense for this study.

I feel obligated to explain the reasons for the lack of contributions in relation to the Medicine Wheel teachings in the previous chapters. In the beginning stages of this study there was no consideration or intent to explore the Medicine Wheel analysis methodology otherwise, the entire research, approach, methodology and all mechanisms of this study would have been very different had I recognized this analysis approach earlier. However, with struggles comes learning and with inspiration from my committee I was encouraged to incorporate this method of analysis. At first, I was worried because I was unable to recognize and understand the Medicine Wheel framework. This is when I began smudging daily and seeking direction and guidance to overcome this challenge. I was given a vision that would help support and encompass the findings of my study. I created an inclusive, encircling diagram of my analysis but for unknown reasons, once again, I began struggling with comprehending and merging my conclusions.

My determination and willpower began diminishing, greater challenges occurred and I felt mental blockades and feelings of failure and fear. With strength of mind, I fought against these adverse feelings and continued to smudge myself, my work, and my surroundings each time I

worked on my paper. It was during this process of learning and holistic interpretations that I finally recognized and understood the meanings behind the Medicine Wheel analysis framework. This method provides a traditional approach and is recognized and respected by Indigenous people (Archibald, 2008; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Bopp et al., 1988; Calliou, 2001; Fitznor, 2011). Too often conventional evaluation methods refer to accountability, efficiency, and measureable scales of effectiveness (Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework, 2012).

The Medicine Wheel teachings can become very multipart or marginal depending on the individual creating it. The Medicine Wheel is a framework for understanding Indigenous perspectives is based on ancient Indigenous wisdom and particular philosophies/worldviews that are dependent on the context of each nation. It is understood that collective wisdom is contained within the various aspects of the Medicine Wheel and have been used to guide the lived ways of people over time. As indicated earlier in this study, much of this knowledge was disrupted with the advent of policies related to domination of Western perspectives over Indigenous perspectives, while colonialism and assimilation intended to end a way of life (RCAP, 1996).

The Medicine Wheel has been symbolically constructed to represent a circle of life that includes four directions, four colours (diversity of human family), four elements, four stages of human development, and four aspects of human capacity such as spirit, physical, mental, and emotional well-being, and much more (Archibald, 2008; Bopp et al, 1988; Graveline, 1998). It takes a lifetime to fully appreciate and comprehend the teachings within the Medicine Wheel. It is meant to make sense without isolating or compartmentalizing our understandings and it also deepens our understanding, encourages participation and fosters storytelling (Archibald, 2008; Bopp et al., 1988; Graveline, 1998; Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework, 2012). It is important to recognize that all the experiences and reality of the individuals determines its

placement in the Medicine Wheel, but also to understand that all codes that emerge from the participants' stories are encircling and show interconnectivity.

Hence, to overcome the difficulty of Western coding strategies, I relied on Indigenous epistemology and perspectives of the Medicine Wheel. I decided that coding in holistic views based on an Indigenous research method was the ideal process and by incorporating this methodology, I have ensured that the emphases of First Nation perspectives were observed. For the purpose of this study, the Medicine Wheel framework is used as a plan of analysis. It is structured in four sections, which consist of a centre and interrelated quadrants. An individual is represented in the middle and is surrounded by sacred and valuable teachings.

In chapter five, I make an effort to discuss the themes as they relate to the specific quadrants of the Medicine Wheel with regards to the four aspects of being: Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, and Spiritual.

Triangulation

I did involve a western method of theoretical triangulation. To ensure that I understood and accurately recorded the participants' stories, I returned the transcripts to the reader for review and endorsement of dialogue. Comparing and confirming the findings of all six cases to literature helped identify which common themes occurred. This strategy is used to limit the possibility of distortion and that the point of view of participants is presented in measureable accurately. It also contributes to the trustworthiness of the findings. However, in conducting Indigenous analysis, it is presumed, that the stories speak for themselves and are validated as describing their own truths (Wilson, 2008).

Researcher Positioning and Bias

As a researcher, I am in a position where I must recognize and acknowledge my biases in this thesis. One way I have attempted to limit my bias is that I have incorporated self-reflection or reflexivity. Reflexivity is the notion that thoughts and ideas tend to be inherently biased and the values and thoughts of the researcher are represented in the work affecting results in the meaning-making process of the study (Kovach, 2010, p. 32). The factors of reflexivity and self-reflection are not rare in methodology and when conducting Indigenous qualitative studies reflexivity is associated with validity to help identify bias within research. An innate bias of mine, as an Indigenous person, that I must include is acknowledgement of my beliefs about the importance of relationships and the idea that relationships are encompassing of all creation. Several Indigenous scholars repeat this importance; Wilson (2008) stated that, "this relational way of being was at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (p. 80). Kovach (2010) indicated that using a conversational method is inherently relational. Fitznor (2002) is aware that Indigenous biases may be frowned upon by western-trained academics but her identity and Aboriginal framework guided her enquiry and analysis. As a final point, LaRocque (2007) noted that Aboriginal scholars walk a tightrope between keeping an eye on western-defined standards and negotiating cultural interests. Aboriginal scholars have influenced me to acknowledge my biases, which I confess, may have inadvertently influenced the research findings.

In Indigenous qualitative methodologies, such as story and Indigenous inquiry, it is crucial that there is a trusting relationship between the researcher and research participant and for the story to surface. Fitznor once spoke about the significance of pre-existing relationships with the research participants as cited by Kovach (2010). Identity for First Nation people is grounded in relationships (Wilson, 2008). As a researcher, I am confident that I upheld this important

variable and I maintained respect, understanding, honour, and continued to build a good relationship with the interviewees. By asking others to share their stories, I have also shared, situated, and positioned myself into the research to help the reader determine the rationale that led to the study. I believe that I have empathetically dealt with the interviewees, and reported their perspectives in a sensitive way, which helped me, analyze the data more appropriately. In no case did I jeopardize the stories of the participants or use my own experiences as an advantage and/or as a method to coax the participants into saying otherwise. I was accountable to all interviewees and I did not use my position as a school principal to coerce or persuade the participants. My role as a researcher was to grow and learn and to allow a theory to emerge from the common or uncommon experiences of resiliency through the stories.

Confidentiality and Ethics

Confidentiality and ethics are crucial in any study. Many researchers substitute the real names of persons and places by using pseudonyms (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The participants from this study are all from a First Nation community and have been selected because they have met the criterion and more importantly have experienced schooling in a residential, provincial and band operated schools. They were assured that anonymity and confidentiality would be guaranteed by the researcher. Given the historical silencing of Aboriginal peoples' voices and experiences, the participants were given the choice to reveal their identity or remain anonymous. My participants chose to remain anonymous, so their identities were not revealed. Pseudonyms (McNiff, 2006) were used to prevent others from identifying the participant. I removed all identifying information from the findings and presentation of data. The interviews were conducted in private settings to ensure participant comfort and confidentiality. The information

gathered was stored and secured in my office at home on a password-protected computer and in locked filing cabinets for safekeeping. Only the participants were allowed to review the transcriptions to verify content or to make changes. My advisor was given access to the data for assistance in the analysis of data/information. The questions were generalized, again, to ensure anonymity. The participants read and returned the transcripts without any changes. One participant did not follow through with the study after she was given her transcripts for final review. Agreeing to university ethics, once signed the contract is binding and the interview that was conducted may have been presented. However, without disrespect to the academic world, my ethical standards and morals as a First Nation researcher did not allow me to include her voice in this study. The high regard and respect of this individual's voice, which I have known since childhood, took priority over the academia ethics agreement.

Chapter Five: (Results) First Nation and Resilience

In this chapter there are three different sections that I emphasised; they are the summative interview questions and breakdown of the participant's responses, the connection to the Medicine Wheel and Western resilience research findings, and the narrative/storywork of the participants. Subdividing this section helped me understand the responses and by what method to connect these responses to the Medicine Wheel and Western resilience research. First, I worked from the summed up interview questions and provided a cumulative/summary response to the initial question. Next, I took these responses and created the framework to understand the linear forms of exploring resilience (Scarpino, 2007) and the Medicine Wheel teachings and exploration of interconnectedness. Lastly, I shared the transcribed personal stories of each participant. Each of these pieces had their own strength and together they helped build a more complete picture of what the women experienced in their lives as connected to the research question.

Interview Questions and Summary Responses

This section further supports the questions from the interview guide in a cumulative method. A summary of findings based on the participants' interviews and linking them to literature was necessary to analyze the study. Therefore, the interview guide down to three major questions. These questions and answers incorporated credible information gathered from literature in the field. My situatedness allowed my perspectives to be presented and my voice to

be heard with reasonable and subjective explanations. A summary that includes a profile of each individual, as well as three questions that were answered in this study are as follows:

1. Did the participants experience any personal or educational hardships while attending secondary or post-secondary schools that contributed to their personal resiliency?

By interviewing the participants, it became obvious that they experienced both educational and personal struggles. Their stories of life and ensuing struggles are testimony to the hardships they have endured and overcame, and the ways they thrived and embraced their cultural understandings. The main educational hardship for participants was their inability to speak the English language when entering school. Every one of the participants spoke Anishinabe/Ojibway as her first language and learning the English language was a challenge. Early research, of the 1950s, indicated that only 50% of Indian children entered school with no capability of the English language (Indian Tribes, 1971). This statistic has since reversed, more current research, (Hallet, 2006) reveals that 72.7% of Aboriginal people in Manitoba refer to English as the mother tongue.

These women also commented that their early educational experiences with instructors, whether it was the nuns or teachers, demonstrated a lack of compassion for the children they were teaching. These educational experiences were negative compared to their nourishing and caring home environments. The school setting contradicted the teachings learned from home and this caused confusion and struggle because the participants (as students) could not understand what types of behaviours and learning were required of them. In the narratives, the participants often spoke of punitive and threatening disciplinary measures while in school. The type of discipline that students endured was unthinkable in their home environments where reasonably enforced discipline consisted of learning from mistakes and contributing to family

responsibilities. In North America, the native people developed strategies for rearing respectful children without using harsh punishment, which supported the idea that the central purpose of life was to nurture children (Brendtro, 2004).

Three of the participants identified their personal struggles, which were further complicated by living in poverty. They humbly described their personal socioeconomic struggles as unavoidable and accepted this situation as their way of life. Some of the families relied on social services for financial survival and other families worked and survived off the land by selling furs and winisikins and living on wild meat. Two of the participants described that their fathers found employment to provide for their families; on the other hand it was only these participants that spoke about their fathers as being alcoholics. One participant recalled childhood responsibilities, her family owned cows and horses so she was required to do chores on the farm. Involving children in chores was a common practice in Aboriginal families. This participant acknowledged and embraced this part of her life as developing personal obedience. Three of the participants recalled other forms of socioeconomic struggles. One participant stated that the family did not have much when referring to money, another spoke of reduced hygiene because the family had no running water, and another spoke of hunting and gathering for survival. Five of the participants were raised in log homes without running water and electricity. All of the participants recalled that they faced some form of unfriendliness from community members and others as a consequence of grim socioeconomic factors.

The resiliency traits that were developed by the participants align with what research defines as resilience. As indicated earlier, researchers have a preference for terms when defining the conceptions of personal strengths. Benard (2004) describes personal strengths as, social competence, problem solving ability, autonomy, and possessing a sense of purpose.

Coppersmith (1967) defined resilience as having a sense of significance, competence, power and virtue. Brokenleg defines resilience as related to the notion of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity (as cited by Brendtro, 2004). It is important to note that Brokenleg defined the key elements of resilience in *The Circle of Courage* (as cited by Brendtro et al., 2002) as similar to the values/philosophies encompassed in Medicine Wheel teachings, which I discussed when considering the themes and coding. Whichever definition researchers prefer, all meanings relate back to interrelated and interconnected resilient traits of individuals, regardless of differing environmental, racial, socioeconomic, and generational situations.

2. What do the participants identify as their protective factors and/or defying factors they faced in their environment, community, school, and family and what motivated and helped them throughout secondary and post-secondary school?

Every participant defined family support, as her major protective factor. All of the participants had children when they first attended university. Their extended families, parents and spouses, encouraged them to continue with their education and cared for the children while the participants were away at school. Close family members were the most supportive people in the participants' lives. Even with personal advantages and supports to the participants there continued to be unavoidable sacrifices that would challenge even the most determined person.

One participant recalled how she wanted to give up and was in tears because she was unable to participate in family gatherings. She had a paper due the following day so this prevented her from enjoying the family get-togethers. Another participant told how she refused to finish her university degree because she lacked the guidance and academic support of university professors. Her husband supported her decision because he understood her frustration and

recognized her stubbornness. This move inadvertently prompted her to meet the university terms and commit herself to achieve academic success.

Another participant credited a respected community member as her mentor and support needed to succeed. She saw him as a positive leader; he supported and visited her while she attended school in Winnipeg. Four of the participants credited a school teacher for their support. Often, it was a teacher who encouraged and convinced the participants to follow through with their education. One teacher convinced a student to quit working and return to school. Another teacher provided academic guidance and encouragement to help overcome daily challenges. One teacher was so idolized that it triggered the participant to become a mirror image of her caring and calm manner. Another participant recalled that her teacher gave her the confidence to succeed and helped her overcome upsetting personal issues.

3. What do the participants feel is an appropriate educational environment for First Nation children?

The participants who provided a response all had comparable answers to this question. Their main response was that schools need to have caring and nurturing environments and the teachers need to provide structured and enjoyable learning in the classrooms. The participants' responses echo what Benard (2004) believed, that a school can provide the nurturing environment for fulfilling psychological needs for belonging and affiliation. Participants also commented that there should be empathy towards the students because we do not understand their backgrounds; one participant said that this would promote a sense of belonging. When teachers care about students, not only do they support the belonging or affiliation needs but they also support the learning process (Benard, 2004). Teachers are powerful and influential role models that have

important roles in students' lives. Teachers can help turn a child's life around from risk to resilience by engaging and supporting them.

One participant commented that there was too much strictness in schools. The strict classroom structure, which was similar to the residential school environment, should not be permitted and children should be given opportunities to enjoy the freedom of a stress-free environment for ongoing opportunities and academic success. Another participant stated that structure was important and that rules needed to be enforced. Schools can establish a climate where strategies of maintaining attendance, regardless of discipline, are made obligatory. Keeping students in school was a priority that some of the participants spoke about and developing empathy and understanding was one means of avoiding truancy.

Two participants suggested that parental involvement and spousal support were important protective factors. Parents and family are important because they are influential in teaching empathy and compassion. They are also the first to teach that belonging and connectedness are essential to rearing and learning the culture. Parents are not only needed as additional supports for maintaining discipline, in and out of school, but also to enforce stern but fair rules. Lastly, the participants confirmed that their families are warm and loving and they developed and remained in close bonds.

This concludes the interview questions and summary responses. The findings from this study were condensed specifically to report the facts from the narrative/storywork of the participants. To address the caution of favouritism, home life versus and school life, I must inform the readers that I respectfully approved requests from the participants to remove certain negative factors pertaining to their home life. The participants felt saddened when they spoke about negativity at home and they did not want to share this part of their lives as a part of this thesis. The data is

open to scrutiny and may be analyzed by others so that they can develop their own understanding of resilience. The knowledge that I gained from this study is not individually owned rather it is to be shared. The findings are based on a collaborative analysis of all the stories, which allowed the results to be encircled within a set of ideas and became hermeneutic (Wilson, 2008) or to expand on methods of interpretations and explanations.

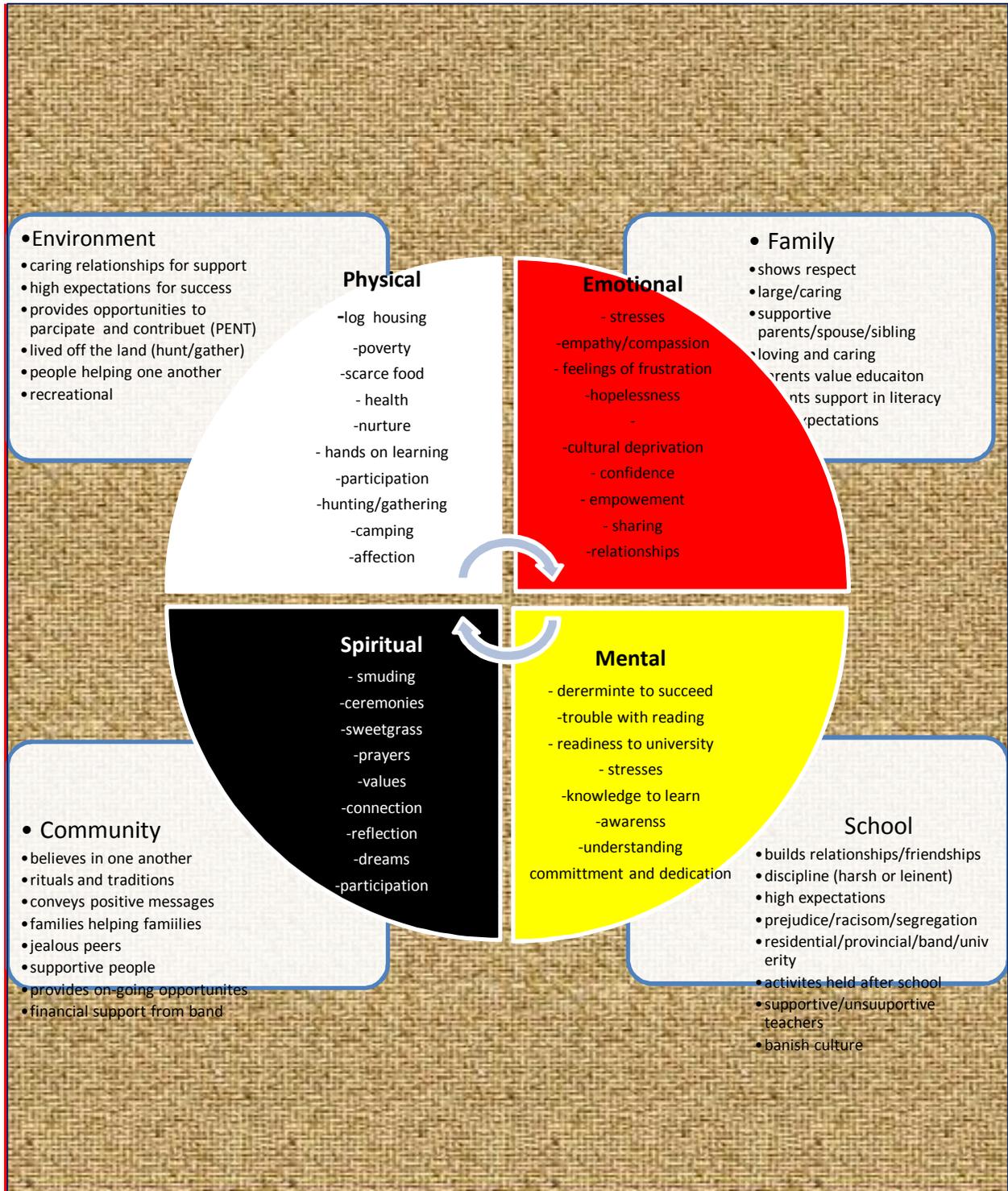
Medicine Wheel Connections

In this section, I attempted to centre the codes and/or themes from the stories into a Medicine Wheel framework in order to demonstrate important behaviours according to the values/principles/philosophies of Indigenous teachings. First, I shared the complete data analysis of the participant's narrative/stories into subsections. Then I placed key words in the Medicine Wheel and Western research coding diagram, which I created specifically for this data analysis. This method of analysis is intended to provide a detailed and legitimate summary of my findings and also to support individuals that learn best through visual and/or symbolic understanding. The framework that I selected from the common understandings of Medicine Wheel teachings consists of quadrants based on the sacred parts of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual experiences (Archibald, 2008) and the four common places of the environment, community, school, and family (Benard, 1991) where people might strive to be resilient. The design of the Medicine Wheel analysis is symbolic to my Anishinabe identity. This method is not intended to be used as generalizing ideas across Indigenous cultures in Canada, but it should demonstrate respect for the diverse cultures and traditions. I used the colours black, white, red and yellow for each of the quadrants and surrounding these are the four places of resiliency emergences and/or development. The background represents woven sweet grass that binds and bridges both the

interpretative (resilience described) and the analytical (resilience reasoned) approaches to find meaning and understanding. This cultural frame method allowed me to safely discuss and/or question other encircled areas and/or experiences of the women. This method grounds the concept of holism which refers to the interrelatedness of the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual (Battiste M. , 2005) realms but extends to and is mutually influenced by one's family, community, (Archibald, 2008) environment and school.

Indigenous Methodology Analysis: Medicine Wheel Analysis

Created by Colleen West



Physical quadrant.

In this quadrant, I summarized risk and protective factors of the participants' physical upbringing. The women acknowledged that interacting risk factors and/or positive factors enabled them to become resilient.

The educational environments, whether residential, provincial or band operated, were vindictive according to the participants. Early educational experiences were primarily negative and feelings of frustration and hopelessness were prevalent. The issue of not being able to read in English was embarrassing and created segregation among students. The women also spoke about various forms of discrimination from other students and sometimes teachers.

The socioeconomic poverty that the women, as children, suffered created additional stress to their young minds. Some of the women spoke about the scarcity of food and going to school hungry. Most of the meals were made from wild game and bannock. Log houses, although still habitable in the 1970s, were a common sight throughout the community. Some families still lived in log houses long after new homes of treated lumber were constructed.

As youngsters, the participants contributed to the family unit through daily chores and responsibilities that their parents enforced with firmness and consistency. Some of the errands included: barn chores of feeding and watering the animals, getting water from the lake, caring for young siblings, working to financially support the family, and gathering berries. The parenting style of firmness and consistency, according to Benard (2004) and Bendtro (2004), is the most effective positive support to the well-being of children.

In adulthood, the women were determined and better prepared to handle daily challenges. They developed self-esteem and self-determination, which helped their ability and potential to

grow and change (Bopp et al., 1988). The participants appeared gratified and pleased about their considerate and loving families that cared for the young children when they attended university and/or studied. The family duty in child rearing is a shared responsibility (Brendtro, 2004) in many families; this nurturing is still common practice Aboriginal communities. The participants' mothers and spouses gave them hope and encouragement to stay in school. These strong-minded women were so focused on obtaining their Bachelor of Education degree that they sacrificed togetherness and willingly removed themselves from their families.

Other similarities the participants spoke about were large, stable families, and siblings who supported and helped one another. The participants did not speak negatively about their parents or siblings, but they spoke about negative factors that they felt were too sensitive to share and later asked for those details to be removed from their stories. The women acknowledged the harmony of their homes and they vaguely spoke about kind-hearted and caring families.

In ending the physical quadrant, I want to summarize that the participants' protective factors of loving and caring homes, parental support in early literacy, insistence of childhood responsibilities, parents valuing education, and teachers making a difference are unquestionably interconnected to the following three quadrants.

Emotional quadrant.

The emotional quadrant addresses the innermost state of mind, feelings, and spiritual connections. Understanding the emotional state of others and of self is spiritual uplifting. In this study, the participants described many positive feelings but they did not speak about any verbal or physical displays of affections; there were no hugs, cuddles, or spoken words of love for one

another. Nonetheless, these types of affections were confirmed by observing and witnessing family unity and empathy. Unity is a family value, valuing self and others must be kept in balance to prevent suffering (Bopp et al., 1988). Empathy is the ability to understand how another feels, caring, and compassion; all of these are features of resilience (Benard, 2004). Experiences such as family unity, kindness, and support are considered protective factors.

However, there was one undesirable experience that three of the participants revealed. Two of the participants spoke about their fathers drinking alcohol daily but defensively stressed that the family was always provided with food and clothing. The third participant spoke about her parents drinking occasionally. She was so emotionally upset by this incident because it brought back depressing childhood memories. She later requested that this dialogue be removed because she felt that it was too private to be shared. Other participants also had stories of undesirable events that they did not reveal during the interview but spoke about them after the taping stopped.

Perhaps the most important similarity, which I found interesting, was that the participants did not have apparent problems before they began school. To learn about their personal experiences prior to school and the facets during their school life were important factors that may have contributed to their development of personalities and principles. Haig-Brown (1988) stated that schooling experiences have been contrary to the values and beliefs held before attending school. Through my observations and interviews, I have concluded that hostile school experiences inadvertently developed positive and confident women.

One participant, Sarah, recalled her disturbing punishment when she was unable to recite the alphabet. She was made to stand motionless in front of the class and was refused to use the

washroom. Sarah recalled the emotional embarrassment and humiliation of wearing soiled clothing until the end of the day.

Stella describes how her traditional values were shunned by the Catholic nuns at the residential school. In day school, she was denied her language and forbidden to speak it. While in an inner-city school, she often heard insulting "Indian" comments and other racist comments from non-native students. For a short time in her life, Stella became emotionally confused and struggled to openly declare her Aboriginal identity.

Eliza also recalls denigrating comments by children in school. She faced emotional cruelty as the students labelled her as poor and unkempt. Sarah was also criticized by her own peers for her darker skin and curly hair. The children that Eliza and Sarah spoke about were from their own community. LaRocque (2007) regards self-determination as the freedom to the basic qualities of life free and from racism even if it is from one's own people or relations. In Aboriginal homes, this type of ostracism and racist behaviour was unacceptable but it is important to mention that these activities took place in school.

Clara and Lena also faced similar forms of emotional racism but in the provincial school system. They sombrely described how they felt like rejected outsiders in a non-native society. Dissimilar to the rejections is the traditional culture where the sense of belonging extends to all human relationships and exclusion is not part of the nurturing process (Brendtro et al., 2002). Marie also faced discrimination in a band-operated school. Her Métis status caused prejudice and isolation from both the native and non-native students. This is perhaps one of the worse types of feelings when one is not accepted or acknowledged by either culture or society.

It is interesting to note that the participants did not all choose teaching as their first goal but this later changed as more educational supports in post-secondary became available. Five of the

participants took advantage of a program called PENT, or Program for the Education of Native Teachers, from the Brandon University. This educational program allowed the women to work at the school for eight months, attend university for three months, and rest for one month before school started. The PENT program began in the 1970s. The main objective was to provide support and guidance to First Nation people who wanted to become teachers. The PENT program had a very high success rate. An interesting fact was until the 1940s First Nations people enrolling in post-secondary education were required to surrender their status as "Indians" and it was not until 1968, that post-secondary programming for status Indian students was reinstated (Kovach, 2010) without having to give up "Indian Status".

Obtaining an accredited university degree in education was very important to all of the participants; actually, some of the participants even chose education over marriage. At a time when marriage was standard and expected at sixteen years of age, these women became liberated and determined to achieve their educational goals. A university degree was perhaps the most important outcome, whether it emerged and/or was developed from protective factors and/or risk factors. This desired outcome of education involved many sacrifices but the most common sacrifice that the participants spoke about was the separation from families. All the participants spoke of leaving young children at home, and suggested that if not for their parents and spouses they may not have succeeded in post-secondary schooling. Parents and spouses cared for the young, offered non-stop support, guidance and encouragement to continue with academic goals; these physical and mental supports ensured stress free learning and minimal barriers.

Benard (2004) suggests that families cannot provide all the support that young people need and other settings, such as the school and community, have a role in the development of young people; they can transform and influence the lives of children. This statement was commonly

shared by the participants and everyone recalled a significant other person, whether it was a teacher or a friend, who was a helpful supporter. Interesting is the parallel piece of evidence that four of the six participants credited a schoolteacher, as the main reason for their educational success. Caring and respectful teachers were positive role models for the emotional well-being of Lena, Sarah, Clara, and Marie. The teachers' helpful behaviours enhanced the personal resiliency of these students by giving them encouragement and always believing that they could succeed. This support gave those participants hope and optimism for a brighter future. Schools can provide a protective and nurturing environment and teachers can change a child's life from risk to resilience (Benard, 2004). This is further evidenced in research, which suggests that in each progressive educational environment a caring adult can be the most important protective factor in a child's life (Brendtro & Larson, 2006).

Mental quadrant.

The mental quadrant refers to the intellectual growth of an individual. The upbringing and personal summaries provided the background information of how the participants were able to obtain a formal education. The upbringing is one means of making connection and developing the intellect. A positive support for all the participants was being raised by their biological parents and they were not required to live in the dorms of the residential school. They were considered day students and were permitted to go home at the end of the day; day schools met the government requirements of compulsory attendance (Haig-Brown, 1988).

The educational achievements of the participants' parents varied and just two of the twelve obtained grade eight while in the residential school. The remaining ten parents had very little

schooling, but later as their children became educated, they were taught how to read and write some of the English language. I believe that the participants' parents lived in a period when Eurocentric education was not trusted and therefore had little meaning; formal education was not a life obligation, but ensuring survival was and this is where the parents focused their attention.

The first educational challenge that was identified by all the participants was their difficulty in speaking the English language. Their first language of Ojibway proved to be a barrier to learning in a western or Eurocentric educational system. Four of the six participants, who were fluent in Ojibway, recall using the method of memorization and repetition exercises to recall and read new vocabulary. These strategies were methods of surviving a western school system. All of the participants established personal commitments and determinations to learning the English language. It is evidenced that the participants developed and employed their intellectual skills, minimized intimidations and pressures, and overcame deliberate and/or accidental challenges and adversities that existed in their Eurocentric school environment. The perseverance demonstrated by the women is indication and evidence signifying the emergence and/or development of resilience.

Spiritual quadrant.

The spiritual quadrant is an area that focused on increased traditional historical teachings and their healing potential. This section was the least established primarily because the questionnaire was not developed for this quadrant and the redirection of analysis methodology developed near completion of thesis. However, it is imperative that some of the participants are recognized for sharing their respected and valued spiritual practices and understandings. An important

observation is that the spiritual aspect of Indigenous identity suffered the most atrocities because of the ban on traditional practices. Fortunately, these practices are finding their ways back into our lives (RCAP, 1996).

The participants were moulded by their families to develop strong principles related to the sacred teachings; they included support, compassion, understanding, respect, humility, and truth. The participants did not suffer any threats of spiritual well-being in their homes, and communities.

Two of the participants recognized the role of spirituality as a protective factor and significant to their resilience. Sarah clearly stated that she practiced traditional customs such as smudging and praying as a means to overcome daily adversities and obstacles in her life. She preferred to practice traditional and customary ceremonies in private. As an adult, Clara's entire daily living embraced and was devoted to the Aboriginal culture; she is a Peace Pipe carrier, singer, dancer, and fire keeper. She strongly advocates for First Nation women, who Voyageur (2008) says must work harder to gain credibility and prove themselves. After the interviews ended, three of the participants briefly mentioned that they experienced traditional and spiritual values. One participant, that attended the band operated school, recalled how she attempted to follow the teachings by getting a traditional outfit and dancing in Pow Wows but she was not supported by her parents. Another participant, that attended a provincial school, mentioned that she used to listen to her grandfather softly chant in Anishinabe and wondered why he was doing this in private. The last participant, who attended the residential school, wanted to talk about her mother's Anishinabe lifestyle, and was sorry that she did not learn those traditional and spiritual values.

This completes the summaries and analyses of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual quadrants of the participants. These respected human attributes are encircling and woven into a complex restructuring of understandings. The Medicine Wheel analyses that I created for this study is a symbolic representation of merging factors found in the quadrants, and resilience research. The background of woven sweet grass symbolizes that all the data can be restructured and rationalized in a variety of frameworks. In essence, all-inclusive studies such as this can be reconstructed within the frames of the Medicine Wheel.

In the following section are the summaries of individual stories told by six Ojibway female educators. When I interviewed the participants, they often got off topic and the result was 105 pages of transcriptions. I defined pertinent and relevant information as participant individualism. I reluctantly edited and excluded non-relevant information such as what they or others did when they played, activities of others, and repeated words and/or dialogue. Without jeopardizing the study, the exact dialogue was quoted in this thesis.

In my Anishinabe/Ojibway culture, the spoken words of individuals are highly valued and provide knowledge to be heard. Therefore these interviews were grounded on the foundation of positive relationships, empathy, and admiration of the participants. The stories reveal humility, strength of character and self-determination that allows individuals basic rights to a certain quality of life, and to be free from racism, poverty, violence and/or any sufferings (LaRocque, 2007). In conclusion, I share the stories that were told by the six Anishinabe women so that others can honour and hear their voices.

The Participant's Life Stories

This chapter summarizes the Anishinabe women's stories. As a novice and eager interviewer, I practiced attentiveness, patience, and respect. My sense of duty was to accept, as truth, the honest and sincere spoken words of the participant. Indigenous cultural stories can be told repeatedly; they are developmental, and in essence, we grow with our stories. The female participants in this study were allowed to speak freely without critique. I did not judge, invalidate or test the participant's stories against a theory (Voyageur, 2008) but rather, I developed an understanding of individual strengths through their experiences and created meanings about the emergence and/or development of resilience. The actual words of the participants are written in italics to help the reader differentiate their dialogue from the researcher's explanation and understanding. I did not correct the grammar used in the stories, they are the actual words spoken by the women. It was an honour and privilege to have interviewed these women. I am grateful and I will always treasure and value the knowledge bestowed upon me.

The participants were offered tobacco for their knowledge and stories. When one takes a story from a person, one is taking something away and this leads to a disruption; the tobacco replaces what has been taken (Michell, 1999). Once the tobacco was taken, the interviews began with a traditional smudging of sage and a prayer for strength and guidance. After this time-honoured custom, the interviews began. The participants were asked to describe their upbringing, where they attended school, explain their educational experiences, supports either at home, school or community, happy or sad moments in school, challenges or adversities, personal adjustments, educational goals, what they felt was an appropriate educational environment for

first Nation students, and what factors lead to success. (See Appendix C for the questionnaire sample that was used during the interview). Cree scholar, Kovach (2010) stated that oral stories are born of connections within the world, which connect us with our past and provide a basis for continuity with the future. I invite readers to listen to the voices of the women. It is with great honour and privilege that I present the participants' stories with a quote: "Sit down and listen and that's the thing, our ancestors used to say" (Chief Simon Baker, transcript, 17 February 1992, as cited by Archibald, 2008, p.47).

Stella

Stella was one of twelve children who was born and raised by her parents on the Sandy Bay First Nation. Her family had a small farm. She attended residential school at the age of seven; she was taken out in order to wait for her younger siblings. She later returned to residential school at the age of ten. She completed all of her schooling there until she completed grade eight at the age of sixteen and then she attended a residential school in Winnipeg and also a Catholic school. She got married after graduating grade twelve. She later attended University of Manitoba and Brandon University to obtain her credits for provincial teacher certification. With her husband, she had five children. Her father did some home schooling with her; he completed grade eight in the residential school.

When Stella was asked to describe her upbringing, she started off by calmly describing her parents' marriage:

others arranged the wedding... my dad used to say that somebody would bring flour, sugar, lard, and meat, for a wedding feast... they all cooked it together... to make a log cabin for the young couple, everybody pitched in... they would go get married, and

meanwhile people would put the cabin together while the couple were gone for the ceremony in a wagon... they would have the feast there, it was simple and the community all came together.

She tells about her mother's educational background, "she went up to grade 6 because that is when she met my dad and they got married... my mom was from Ebb and Flow." From the outset, Stella spoke highly about her father. This admiration was noticed throughout the interview and the researcher comprehends this as sign of Stella's gratefulness; she stated that her father instilled the value of education:

My dad he was the one that taught me the value of education and to never let it go. That is the one who instilled the values cause he would have the alphabet right from the time I remember right on the, right on the, on those, on that wood, on the, in the log cabin, he would have the alphabet and the numbers and he would, I remember a cardboard, he would have the multiplication, so he never let us write anything, it was always here (point to head) he made us spell words.

The traditional cultural values of First Nation people were often hidden from society but Stella recalls some significant cultural teachings from her mother even though the majority of her teachings were based on Catholicism. This aligns with some scholars of missionary work who concluded that Aboriginal women resisted Christianity (Carter, 2007). Stella talked of how she learned traditional values: "My mom taught me the traditional ways, even though it was kind of squashed at that time, you couldn't be Indian in those days, it was very hard." Stella's parents participated in the annual summer Sundance. The Sundance is a ceremony during which the spirit powers are asked to bless the people; it played a vital role in sustaining and reinforcing the culture and society of the people (Carter, 2007, p. 27). Stella was at the residential school during

one Sundance ceremony and she recalls the emotional devastation of confinement. She longed for the interactions of her parents and relations. She wanted to partake in the ceremonies but the nuns rejected all student involvement in cultural events:

I remember one thing that especially stands out, one May or June, we very hot were sitting and getting a lecture after supper, and then we heard the drums. There was a sun dance. I knew my mom and dad were there because they used to take us there in the wagon. We would spend the night and weekends there. So anyway, we were sitting in the playroom in the basement, and she, the nun, closed all the blinds and all the windows so we didn't hear anything. That was the worst, that's what, got to me the most. Now I always leave my window wide open so I don't get claustrophobic, I don't want to close anything. She belittled it, like that's why people got confused, and they don't understand, like we didn't understand. We didn't want to be Indians when we were in Winnipeg.

According to Stella, First Nation children had errands and jobs within the family unit. It was a common practice for children to develop responsibilities at an early age. Stella recalls that at an early age she had some responsibilities:

I remember learning about responsibility when we were growing up. My dad always insisted and stressed that we support ourselves and work, and he taught us responsibility; he always worked. I must have been 7 or 8 years old. We took turns each morning to build the fire, melt the ice to wash up, and then we would go out and pitch the hay for the cows and horses; we also checked if there were any eggs. I remember walking out there with the lantern because there was no hydro. One morning it was my sister's turn, I looked out the window I felt so sorry for her because it was blowing and windy. My dad woke up,

“kawashimun” sleep, he said to me and then I lay down. I realized that we all had to take turns.

Although Stella attended the local residential school, she did not live in residence. She was considered a day student. Day schools were set up on the reserve to limit enrolment and operational costs of residential schools (Dyck, 1997). Stella recalls, *“We all walked to school every day even in the winter.... I don’t know why I didn’t go live in the residential school.”*

Although it was common practice of educators at residential schools to keep the girls’ hair short, just below the ears, Stella said that she was allowed to keep her hair long but personally preferred shorter hair. When she was an adolescent, Stella recalls an incident of emotional and physical abuse by a nun in charge of her care. She describes this confrontation with a dismal voice,

The nuns were verbally abusive. I remember one nun pulling my hair, and then I turned around and looked at her and she said, “I am sorry I made a mistake.” But why would she want to pull someone’s hair when she doesn’t know... I must have been 14 years old, we were going down the stairs, and she was standing at the top, and she pulled my hair from the back.

She recalls some other forms of the emotional abuse that she went through:

I remember I was in my teens; one nun would make everyone sit around in the playroom and just call us down and just on a daily basis. I think that was the emotional abuse that got to me for so long. She would say to us that we were no good, we were dirty, we were filthy; that was the emotional abuse.

Stella was a survivor. She remained enrolled at the residential school in the face of emotional and physical hardships. As the years went on, Stella achieved every grade with ease. As she got

older, she realized that soon she would be done schooling on the reserve but she wanted more schooling. She happily speaks about the first time that someone she thought of as an important person, convinced her to expand her education:

Someone from Indian Affairs education came, a short man with a little derby and a long coat and I will never forget that sight when he came to our grade 9 class (Stella laughs). Most of my grade 9 classmates made it out of here and we graduated, so I think that whoever he was, he really played an important role in education. He told us if we continue our schooling to grade 12 we would go to university and eventually have jobs. I was really happy and I ended up going into another high school.

Stella completed grade nine at the Sandy Bay Residential School then she attended the Assiniboia Residential School in Winnipeg. The new residential school offered her more personal choices that she appreciated:

I took grade 10 and 11 in Assiniboia. I went to the Sacred Heart Convent, there were grey nuns that ran Assiniboia, they were quite different from the ones here in Sandy Bay, they let us wear the modern clothes. The clothes we wore here were handmade and sewn, so they took us shopping and allowed us to wear whatever clothes we needed to wear.

From Assiniboia, she attended the Sacred Heart convent, also in Winnipeg, to complete her education. She recalls the differences in the school environment and organization, this new setting was more optimistic:

When I went to the Sacred Heart Convent, I had a uniform and so I didn't wear my clothes.... I had good support from the nuns at the Sacred Heart Convent, were called St Josephs; they were very encouraging. Every Friday there was an assembly and we were

chosen for the best in history, English, and sports. We would get a pin, you would get a pin all week, you were the best math, and you were the best athlete, I would wear those pins.

After many emotional challenges, she proudly graduated grade 12.

Stella did not end her learning there. She maintained her commitment to education and attended university. While she was still a secondary student, Stella accepted a job so she could financially support her family who struggled back home on the reserve. She states, *“I was able to earn extra money to go shopping to bring a whole pile of Christmas presents and Christmas decorations for my mom and dad, they didn’t travel to Winnipeg to do shopping and they were quite happy.”*

When asked who some of her supporters were while in Winnipeg, Stella replied, *“Friends supported each other. My best friend and I supported each other... My parents were supportive... My brother and sister came to Winnipeg... We tried to support each other but we were all sent to different schools.”*

Although Stella was content and happy with her educational achievements in Winnipeg, she felt very alone and longed for home:

I was very, very lonesome. You just had to keep busy and that is how I got into the dictionaries, and encyclopaedias. I would spend my time in the Assiniboia library to read, if they lost me they knew where to find me. I did a lot of reading. In 68, I graduated grade 12 from the Sacred Heart convent and I left.

A common practice in all residential schools was the abolishment of the traditional language (Report A. H., 2002; Young, 2003). Stella also faced the abolishment of her language. Back then, students who attended residential schools were not permitted to speak their language; however, this common practice was not enforced at Assiniboia. Stella quotes,

We weren't allowed to talk in our language, it didn't matter because by the time we went to school we were 7 yrs, old, we had the language right packed so we never lost it. We always talked it in Assiniboia... they didn't worry if we talked our language as long as we didn't talk our language in school to interfere with the classrooms to be disruptive.

I asked Stella if she had any happy moments while at the Sacred Heart Convent and Assiniboia Schools. Smiling she replied,

I had a few happy moments, when you had people come to see you come to visit you because it was such a long way, it was such a privilege for someone from Sandy Bay to be able to come and visit you.. They used to come and get us on the weekend and I always looked forward to that.... The personal visit from my mom and dad, they didn't really make it all the time and they didn't come when they could, I know that they used to have somebody drive them.

A melancholy look fell upon her face. Just moments before she described happy moments: and now she spoke with a solemn voice as she described the loneliness she felt while away from home. Stella whispered,

It was very, very lonesome, one of my sisters came home and they didn't force anybody to stay, I knew that I didn't want to come home to get married because that was the only other option. All the girls at the school that quit school or left after me ended up getting married and I didn't want that, I didn't want to be stuck at home, I knew I wanted to go to school. ... Well it was the loneliness, I remember this song, something about I will be home for Christmas. (Laughs softly). I remember standing at the window there, watching the bridge towards beside Polo Park. I remember that I just had to kick myself and think of why you're here... Some of the boys cried they wanted to go home, their parents picked

them up and they came home. I stuck to it, and my dad told me he could come for me anytime.

When asked why she chose to be an educator Stellaø replied that her first ambition was not to become a teacher, but to go into medicine. She laughs loudly as she describes the regular accidents that took place in the science classes:

I wanted to be a nurse or even a doctor and I worked hard for those courses... To be in nursing at that time you had to go across to the States, when I was in grade 12... I always did something wrong in this class, I blew up a flask at one time and I melted one of those tubes, test tube... I don't know why that happened; I always made mistakes in the lab... I wrote to Minneapolis, that hospital there, I was accepted as a nurse's aide for that summer and father, I remember father bought me a bus ticket and I was supposed to meet the people and I was supposed to live in residence thereí . I changed my mind about it I didn't want to be in a hospital, it was so far awayí . I decided a change in career was in store for me.

Although she was now eighteen and living on her own Stella did not have full control over her life and what she wanted in her future. It was chosen for her by authorities. She said *“Indian Affairs, they still decided what you were going to do.”* Knowing her future was decided Stella decided to go into teaching. She felt that *“I had to anyway, I had to take an extra course to go into education meanwhile... I went to work in St. Laurent that is where my French was useful.”*

Stella was a university student while employed by Sandy Bay First Nation as an educator. She applied for the PENT program at Brandon University but faced immediate refusal from university officials. Stella tells,

A principal told me to register in the PENT program with them so I can take those courses, so I did. Did I ever meet a lot of opposition; there was a lady and a committee at Brandon University who just refused. They didn't want to take me in PENT maybe it was because I was already regular student. I really had a hard time getting into PENT. It was convenient to work here as a student teacher so I could go to school until I finished. I said never mind, with this entire struggle, I will go back to regular university so I did.

She completed her educational studies and graduated with a Bachelor of Teaching Degree.

I have known Stella for many, many years and I have come to recognize and appreciate her knowledge and wisdom in the educational field. She has provided me with encouraging words, support and guidance. As an educator and an Elder, her opinions are valuable. Because she educated students decades before, I really was apprehensive to what she may replay when I asked her what she felt was an appropriate learning environment for First Nation children. I was pleased when Stella replied,

Support and encouragement; I think that is the main thing, they need strict rules well. I've heard students tell me they like strict, they like people to tell them what they are supposed to do and what they are not supposed to do. I think if my parents didn't care, I don't know what would have happened to me. Encourage them all, especially the boys, a lot of issues are bothering them like drinking and drugs. Talk to them and just tell them that they have to stop that. Encourage them, just acknowledge them, they are in school.

As we were ending our interview, Stella returned her focus back to the person she highly adored, her late father. She describes and credits him as the chief factor to her success:

I guess getting encouragement from my dad, he was my role model right from the start, and then what triggered that to help it along was that Indian Agent who came and talked to

us at our grade 9 class...My dad was the one who instilled the values... I remember when I did my biology in high school; it took me only 20 minutes to do it. That was grade 12. It was from memorizing all those formulas and things and that helped me right from the start.

Before concluding the interview, Stella feels the need to confess that her cultural upbringing did not progress. She supports the cultural values of her late mother, but regretfully states that her mom also had difficulty maintaining those cultural values; she later felt guilty for this loss:

My mom had a lot of crafts upbringing. Later on in life like when was getting old, when she was about 75, that is when she asked herself how come she didn't keep with making all those baskets and going for herbs. My mom taught me that everything looks so different now like the world is destroying all of that. This is one part that she was really was upset with herself.

Eliza

Eliza is between the ages of fifty and sixty. She was born and raised on the Sandy Bay First Nation. She is the youngest girl in a family of twelve. She has six stepbrothers and one stepsister. Eliza attended residential school when she was seven. She completed the highest grade obtainable at the residential school, and then she went to school at the Assiniboia Residential School in Winnipeg. She returned home from Winnipeg and she met and married a man from the reserve after she turned twenty-one. They raised six children and now have many grandchildren. She graduated university and obtained her 5th year Bachelor of Teaching degree. She has retired from teaching but the desire to continue teaching has taken her out of retirement. Eliza attended the Sandy Bay Residential School from the age of eight to sixteen.

Eliza began her interview by talking about her childhood memories of moving from one location to another; her family lived a semi- nomadic lifestyle within the reserve. Each time they moved to a new location her father had to clear land for a road and yard. He did not do this laboured work alone; he always enlisted community members to give a hand. Eliza describes the many moves in her life:

We lived on the north ridge and then we moved over to the main road. Later on when we were moved to the main road, there was no road so my dad had to make his way down with the horses and wagon carrying us. My dad had to cut down the trees, he had the help of a lot of people, at that time, people used to help each other a lot. They helped us make that road up to the main road. Later we moved on again, and we ended up over here closer to the school. Again, the neighbours came and they built the house in a day. Everybody helped out, the guys went into the bush and cut down trees, some of them were swading, and making notches. The ladies were there making the plaster with clay and grass and other ladies were cooking. That is the way it was, it was really nice, everybody helping out. When we were growing up we were so close, we had only a two-room log house. One part was where the living room was along with the kitchen and the other one is where everybody slept. My dad made one huge bed.

Eliza did not consider her family as being poor because they always had food; her dad was a gardener and a good hunter. She says,

You would think that people were poor back then, but we don't think we were. We had food to eat every day and a bed to sleep in. My parents were very loving. I remember when I was living on the north ridge my dad used to have a beautiful vegetable garden,

and we used to play hide and seek in between the potato rows. We upset my dad but he didn't really get mad at us he just didn't want us to destroy the plants or anything.

Materialistic possessions were not mentioned at all during the interview and they did not appear to hold any value to Eliza. Life was about giving and she recalls how her family was sharing and generous to those less fortunate in the community. Eliza describes the generosity of her parents:

My parents always said that, if you have food in your house and someone comes over to the house, and you know that if they don't have as much as you do, you're going to feed them. Whatever food that you get if you go out hunting, you always had to share. That's how my parents brought me up. That is how I was raised. Whatever I had I always had to share. My dad always told me that anything you do in life, if you feel that the other person can benefit more than you then you are going to let the other person take that instead of always thinking about myself first. That is just the way I was raised. You have feeling for the other person too. Food was plentiful. You went out into the bush you gathered berries; there was a lot of wild vegetables or fruit that you could dig up. You could either freeze them or put them in the cellar, that's what we used to do a lot of.

In the Aboriginal world giving is not confined to property, but rather permeated all aspects of the Native culture and sharing food was the spirit of generosity (Brendtro et al., 2002)

Eliza had a loving family and caring home environment. Sadly, though, life was not so kind on the outside. She sadly describes the painful criticism she faced from the community when she was a little girl:

They always used to pick on me here in the community. Community people used to put me down because of the clothes I wore, or if I happen to have dirty socks, or if my hair was messy. They used to say you're so dirty, how come you don't comb your hair, or wash. But

I didn't have any running water and sometimes if you got up very early the water was still frozen in the sink and so my dad had to start making a fire to try and thaw the water out. They used to make fun of my parents too. When I told my parents, I'd say that they're putting me down calling me this and that and they would say it's Ok. Don't listen to them what they are saying to you is what they are actually saying about themselves. My dad said that you are not there to please them, just go to school and learn. That's basically, what they told me.

When Eliza was little, she recalls not wanting to attend residential school. She remembered the priest always going to her parents' home to ask why she wasn't in school and when her parents decided that she should go, she obeyed:

When I was about 8, my parents decided I should go to school, because the priest was always coming to the house; I'd hide because I didn't want to go to school. Then my parents said well, she is going to have to go to school now, and they didn't force me or anything. So I said ok this is what they want, I'll go to school, and so I did.

During her childhood, Ojibway was the only language that Eliza spoke and understood. Although her parents struggled with the English language, they taught Eliza what they could. She respected their determination with teaching her Basic English skills and described this experience:

I didn't know a single word of English. My parents made me practice, and they practiced with me. They said this is what they are going to say to you when you go to school; they are going to say how old are you, and what is your name? I don't know if I got things mixed up but I must have got through to the nuns. I don't remember much of my grade one.

Looking back, Eliza is very thankful for the support she got from her parents; they overlooked their own weaknesses and struggles with English so that they could provide Eliza with essential skills.

The grand, brick residential school stood ominously across the road from Eliza's home. Since she lived so close to the school, she walked to and from school every day. She was not required to be a resident so was considered a "day-schooler" by the authorities. Eliza describes this memory as, *"I attended a residential school. I lived right across from the school so I didn't have to be a resident of that school. I was just like a day schooler, so I ran to school every day."*

Attending the residential school was both overwhelming and fascinating to Eliza because she had minimal experiences with the outside world. She said,

I remember before grade one, I was in a room where there was a bunch of birds close to the ceiling and cupboards, and there was glass windows... I remember seeing all the birds there. I remember in grade one I went up about 6 flights of stairs, to get to my class. I remember reading a book was called David and Anne. I looked at the pictures and tried to figure out what it said because I didn't know any English. It was very repetitive, so I was almost able almost to memorize the words that I saw. I liked what I saw in the book. They had these little stairs that they had to climb, and I wondered how that would feel to have that in my home. That's all I remember about grade one.

When asked about her parents' educational background Eliza stated that her dad did not attend school and her mom had very little education. She said, *"My dad didn't go to school. He went one day and he went home at recess time and he never went back."* Later on as her English improved Eliza showed her father how to write his name *"When I got older I taught my dad how to write his name because he couldn't, he was able to after a while."* Her mother attended

school but only for a short time; she did however, learn how to write her name. *“My mom could, she went up to grade 4, and at least she had a little bit of education so she could speak English. My dad didn’t but he was able to understand.”* Unemployment was high in the First Nation community and people struggled to get blue-collar jobs for minimum wage. Eliza’s mom managed to find employment at the residential school but interaction with her children was not permitted: *“My mom worked at the school too. She worked in the laundry, kitchen, and sewing. But I never got to see her during the day, sometimes I’d walked by but we were not allowed to say hi, so I just kind of glanced at her when I walking up the stairs because the sewing room was just right there.”* The prospect of day school had benefits as such that children who attended school allowed their parents to find work. The day school was also intended to provide greater stability in the community by not hindering the parents from seeking work (Milloy, 1999).

Eliza spoke with a gentle tone and she appeared calm and confident during the interview. Unexpectedly there was a sound of apprehension in her voice as she began to speak of the looming physical threats that she faced daily. If she made any wrong moves, she thought that she would be punished so she remained silent in the classroom. This was a very scary experience for her:

The fact that there was always somebody there waiting for me to make the wrong move, I was always scared. I knew what would happen if I did make a wrong move because I saw for myself. I don’t remember much about the second grade either but I do remember that there was one student standing in the corner, he or she stood there all day. I remember the northwest corner, that’s where this is where this kid was for the whole day. I never dared turn around because I was scared. I could hear the yard stick back behind me for anybody who made a wrong move, so I tried not to make any ripples.

Eliza recalls a time, in elementary school, where she studied and memorized words for an upcoming spelling test. At this young age, she was already developing skills that would eventually lead to her academic goals. She was committed to learn and master the foreign language of English:

There was one word that wasn't on the list of words that we were supposed to study. But I remember seeing it before; it was the word was crocus. I looked at that word because it was kind of like a flower and I remembered what letters were in that word. So when the test came, oh by golly, I knew all the other words and I know this one too. The next day the nuns announced the next day that there was one person who got 100% and I wondered if it was me and sure enough, it was. That was my one good moment that was one positive in grade 2. I always made an effort to try getting 100% all the time. Then I had that choice again to have again that 100% in grade 6 but I chose not to but I don't know why. The priest gave us a dollar if we got 100% when we had a spelling bee. I knew how to spell that word but I chose not to, I gave someone else a chance to get it right and they did. So I felt good that the other person got it, but I knew deep inside that I could have got that.

As Eliza became a young woman, she knew what she wanted; she wanted to continue on with her learning and get more education elsewhere. She did not want to stay at home and get married:

I remember my older sister talking about grade 7 or 8 then I wanted to go there too. Another school was opened and it went up to grade 9. I finished grade 9. I wanted to go further and I talked to my parents, and I said I want to go to school, because guys would or the older people would come to the house and ask for my hand. They would talk to my parents to see if I would want to marry their son. The parents came to the house, I was in

the bedroom listening and wanting to know what they were going to say. Then my mom said well it is up to her. I was so relieved I don't know what I would have done if they would have said Yah.

Grade eight was the highest grade one could complete in most residential schools but when Eliza attended the school offered grade nine. What should have been the happiest day; turned out to be upsetting. She recalls how she faced dejection and sadness when all the resident students received gifts on the last day of school:

I was the only one in grade 9 that was a day student and when I went that last day, I watched all of the students get suitcases and toothbrushes, but I didn't get anything cause I was just a day student. I talked to my mom about that and said I so wanted a suitcase and I said and I didn't get anything and yet I finished my grade 9 too. She said Manoo, Manoo, you don't need all that stuff, you go to school, you go to Winnipeg and you do your best there.

Elias recalls all the support that resident students received, she said that *“Everything was set for them all they had to do was jump on the bus, and head to the next residential school, which was Assiniboia.”* Once again, Eliza maintained her personal commitment and determination to finish school by stating, *“I went ahead and I wrote to Indian Affairs. I told them that I was interested in furthering my education and so they wrote me back. They put a one-way bus ticket in the envelope. I was happy but I was sad to leave because I never been away from home.”*

Attending another school was more difficult than perceived due to the racism she experienced each day. This was another challenge that Eliza had to deal with to survive in mainstreamed society: *“It was a Catholic school, but you could almost see it on a daily basis. They called us dirty Indians, you know, even though it was a Catholic school, avoiding us”.*

During her last year in Winnipeg, Eliza was placed in a private home with a relentless racist and his Aboriginal wife. Once again, she recalls words of negativity, prejudice and insinuations. She describes this incident,

The last year I was there, we were placed in a private home. We were not at the residential school anymore that was in the 1970's. There was a native lady and she was married to this white guy. This guy was always putting Indians down yet he was married to a native woman. I used to ignore his remarks. There was another native girl that was placed in the same home as me; she was from way up north, Pukatawagan. He always used to put us down, not directly but he would make comments like oh is this the first time you saw butter, I didn't say anything, but my friend there she said where I come from we eat butter every day, we never eat margarine. Really, he said. She said, yup we eat butter. Really, he said. She said, yup we eat butter every day, no margarine.

Eliza smiles as she describes the first burger she had ever eaten:

One girl had already gone to residential school in Winnipeg a year before me. She showed me the ropes and I was glad about that. I remember the first time she introduced me to the hamburger, she said we'll go to the restaurant and we'll have a hamburger. I asked her what's that, and then she said it is just like bread and there's meat in between. It is really good you will like it. I said OK, and I got one and did I ever like it. I made sure I went to that restaurant each and every time.

Eliza returned to her community shortly before she would have graduated grade twelve in Winnipeg. Back home she was offered employment by a counsellor. She accepted the job to work as a teacher in the local school. A common practice of First Nation leaders was to hire community members, as noted by Voyageur (2008) that chiefs and councillors often sent back

skilled workers into their communities. Eliza tells, *“After I came back from attending Daniel Mac, I was approached by one of the counsellors from the reserve. He asked me if I wanted a job to work at the school but I wanted to go back to school. I was 20 already. I wanted to go and graduate. Then I figured I might as well stay. I stayed and I helped my parents out, whatever money I earned, I helped buy groceries.”*

Not many educational opportunities were available to First Nation people. Eliza got a much-needed break; an opportunity came up to apply at an accredited university for an education degree. This program provided extra supports to Aboriginal people who wanted a Bachelor of Education degree. Eliza enrolled and was accepted in the PENT program, which was offered at the Brandon University. She decided that this time she would finish her education; she made many sacrifices along the way as she describes in her final leap to succeed:

In 1971, the PENT program started, and then I went. I just had my baby son, and then I had to go to PENT. I wanted to go. I wanted to make something of myself. But after I started my job, I liked it. I attended university for 5 summers. I started at 8:30 in the morning, to 12:30, and then we started at 1:30 again went to 4:30. The evening classes were from 7 to 10. I ended up went to bed at... usually at 1 or 2 in the morning. There was a lot of cramming, after I graduated from university, I got my teaching certificate and I was proud. I came back to work. I wanted to still continue with my education then I got my bachelor of teaching and went back again and I got my bachelor of education, and if that wasn't enough I went back another time I went for back again and got my bachelor of education my 5th year.

When asked why she became an educator Eliza laughed and replied, *“I never wanted to be an educator. My goal was to become a stewardess that is what I was going to do but things change.”*

During the last phase of her educational achievement, Eliza was no longer bothered by the racism or prejudice she previously encountered. Her state of mind had refocused and she was now more concerned with fulfilling a self-determined goal for herself, *“racism or prejudice didn’t matter to me. I thought I am not doing it for anybody else; I am doing it for myself. I wanted to make my parents proud of me because they believed in me so much. My sister was always encouraging me to go to school and to make something of myself”*.

When asked who her most valuable supporters were, Eliza proudly responded,

Of course, my parents, they offered me so much support. My dad had the taxi business then he started, he had a little bit more money. My husband was always there and liked to help me out; we had our kids. So it helps when you have all that support. But the more meaningful ones was my parents, because they didn’t have an education themselves but they were so educated in other ways like in the way they brought me up.

In ending, Eliza shares one more experience, her response to a question while attending a training session:

One time when I attended a session in Clear Lake, they asked me what person was the most educated that I respected in life. I said my parents, because that is who, I thought, was more educated. To me education just doesn’t mean reading and using these big, big words to write essays and understanding the meaning of a lot of books. It has a lot to do with life, the way you live your life, that is what that means, how you are able to live your life, but I

don't really want to say recognition, because that is something that I don't believe in myself.

Clara

Clara read and signed the consent form but failed to release the transcribed interview back to the interviewer. She did not provide an explanation for her decision. Without any disrespect to the university ethics approval certificate, my ethical Anishinabe values and morals of courtesy and respect for this individual, respectfully allowed me to exclude her individual voice in this study. However, because Clara initially read and signed the consent form, I believe that is sufficient enough to include a summary of her story. I feel that because Clara's narrative consisted of many comprehensive life experiences that were rich for the data gathering; and therefore her story will be told but not written and quoted. Her narrative was emotional, but she spoke with tranquility and confidence as she described her upbringing and educational challenges. Clara's story is significant and meaningful to the thesis, therefore, I will include her in the discussions and her identity will remain as a pseudonym.

Clara was raised just outside the Sandy Bay First Nation. She is approximately fifty to sixty years old. She came from a large family of seventeen children. She is married. Her parents are products of the residential school. Her father was a Métis and her mom an Aboriginal.

Her father was an alcoholic and her mother was a non-drinker. Her mother raised her children in a strict and responsible environment. Clara attended both provincial and band operated schools. She faced discrimination and prejudice at both schools; at the provincial school, she was labelled an Indian and in the band school, she was labelled as white. She grew up as a Métis, and felt that she did not belong to either world.

When she was in senior high she needed only several courses to complete and graduate grade twelve; this is when a teacher convinced her to return to school. She returned to school and graduated the next year, an event for which she is very proud. She met her husband many years later and with his support and guidance, she embraced and immersed herself into the Aboriginal culture.

Clara recalls negative incidents as a university student. The racism did not stop after university; it continued while she was student teaching in an urban school. For her own personal healing, Clara turned to the traditional culture. Clara is very spiritual and strongly believes and practices the First Nation traditions. She credits supports of the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of life. Clara also credits her husband as a great support. Other supports include participating and reclaiming traditional practices and ceremonies such as pipe ceremonies, sweat lodges, conducting sharing circles, sun dances and participating in fasting.

Clara believes that the best educational environment for children is to inform children about the history and the role it played with First Nation people. She stressed that the First Nation people had a government, education, social system, and policing and that colonization has changed the culture, spirituality, language and the way of life forever. Children have to be taught that we have a rich culture, that we must be proud to be First Nation and that we can do anything to which we set our minds. We have the right to be loved, to be heard, and to be responsible for our learning. First Nations must stand up to this right and make personal achievements.

Besides her traditional values, she strongly advocates for First Nation women. Clara believed that women have been marginalized in society and she will fight for their rights, whether it is in education or ceremony. Women need supports to stand up with confidence and say that they are

worthy of education, and to conduct ceremonies. Before colonization, every child, Elder, and woman had rights but because of colonization, those rights have gone into seclusion. Clara believes in ceremony, consistency of environments, routines, and expectations, whether in school or home.

Marie

Marie grew up on the Sandy Bay First Nation and attended the band school. Here she obtained all her schooling from kindergarten to grade twelve. She graduated from her community and immediately attended the University of Winnipeg. She obtained her Bachelor of Education several years later. She is the third daughter of six girls. She is approximately twenty to thirty years of age.

When asked to describe her upbringing, Marie casually responds, *“We had a pretty good upbringing, we didn’t have much money for material things but we had food all the time and we never really struggled that way.”*

Displaying some nervousness about the interview, she immediately starts talking about her parents’ educational background,

My parents didn’t graduate grade 12. My dad had to quit school to start working, I always remember him talking about how, he didn’t like that and that he regretted it. I guess that really made me value my education even more, the fact that my dad had something taken away from him; he really emphasized the importance of education. My dad always had novels around; he was always an ardent reader. He got his GED when I was in high school. I gave him some of my high school books to study. I was so happy to help him out that way. My family was very proud of him. My mom had to stop attending secondary

school because she got pregnant in her last year. She didn't get a chance to go to university until she was older, and the fact that she went back, after she had children was really inspiring to me.

Once the initial anxiety of starting the interview was over Marie appeared more relaxed and enthusiastic to continue the interview. Marie talked about her own early educational experiences. She focused first on the positive experiences,

School was good when I was a kid, I was friends with everyone, I had no problems in school, I was just a goofy little kid and everyone liked me and thought I was cute. When I was in grades 2, 3, 4, I always had like the top grades I remember in 8th grade I had a teacher who started talking about university. She told me her experiences at U of M. She lived in a dorm and it was the best time of her life. She put that in my head that maybe that's what I should do.

The positive school experiences were few and the negative experiences overshadowed them. Marie describes some of her depressing and emotional experiences while in elementary school: *One experience that sticks out is in grade 3. My best friend was falling behind, and she told me to wait for her. She said she wouldn't be my friend anymore if I didn't. My teacher pulled me aside and asked why I don't do any work, and I told her that I didn't want to ruin our relationship.* Besides the childhood betrayal of someone, she considered her best friend; Marie expresses the difficulty of living in a community that was not part of her immediate family environment. She encountered some prejudices and isolation while in the band school:

I was not like the other kids. My family is not really from Sandy Bay, so I am not related to many people out there. I am lighter skinned and I am not as full native like the other kids were. They used to tease me, and they would speak in Ojibway to me and I wouldn't

understand. I always felt like an outsider. There is nobody else with that last name as mine. My friends were all into the Pow Wow and the traditional lifestyle, my family was not really into that. I wasn't really raised with that kind of life, and I think all my friends knew that. I always wished I was more native when I was in elementary.

Marie continued to face many emotional and physical threats. They began in elementary and continued on into secondary schooling. She bravely talks about her adolescent years in the reserve school: *“I experienced bullying when I got to high school. My best friend growing up turned against me and always wanted to beat me up. I was always scared that someone...”* Suddenly, without warning, Marie began to shed tears but she bravely continued to describe the challenges she faced. Although she had difficulty containing her emotions, she refused to stop the interview. She wanted to speak about her tormentor; a boy that she felt forced to date:

There was pressure on me to have a boyfriend I wasn't ready for it physically, mentally, and or emotionally. I went ahead and had a boyfriend so I would not be alone; I didn't really have any more friends. School experiences were really horrible for me. Saddest moments in school were probably when I was a teenager. I had a boyfriend and he was really mean. There was no counsellor, no one to really talk to. This caused emotional stress in school. When you are being chased around and harassed how are you supposed to focus on school. I had really bad attendance; I was skipping a lot and getting a lot of letters home for absences.

I felt obligated to stop the tape at this time. I stopped recording for several minutes to allow Marie time to calm down. She still did not want to stop the interview nor did she want a counsellor. When she was ready, Marie smiled and wiped the tears from her eyes. She took a deep breath and sighed, she then commented that this interview was like a healing process and it

felt good to release this hurt and to have someone hear what she went through. The listener was the counsellor; she just wanted her story to be heard.

Again, I asked Marie if she would like to take a break and relax; we could finish the interview later. But Marie was determined to continue. She reassured me that she was ready to carry on. I went straight to the question of who her supporters were, to which Marie replied, *“Definitely parental support is very important and it’s something that is lacking on a lot of First Nations”* This question was answered with a lot of optimism and cheerfulness. Marie’s expressions and the tone in her voice demonstrated confidence. She stated her view,

As a teacher you can tell which kids come from a home where their parents care about education. You can tell because the kids whose parents don’t care, students usually don’t care either. Sometimes they are not motivated because their parents don’t work, or they drink a lot and why should they be motivated when that’s the life that they’ve known. I feel that family is really important.

Since we were on the topic of supports I decided to ask, what she felt was a community support? Marie replied,

Role models in the community and in school, promote a positive environment, and provide counsellors so students feel safe to talk about their issues. Teachers need to be more supportive, and more aware of student needs. We need to foster a sense of togetherness, teacher, student and peers. Good school leadership. Promote school spirit, and allow opportunities to learn. Sports programs also need to be improved. There needs to be more funding for transportation, equipment, extracurricular, and coaches. Students just need to see like this is the real world, and they need to get out there and experience it and not be confined to the reserve.

It was obvious to me that Marie was now enjoying the interview because she demonstrated an eagerness and interest to discuss more. I was also enjoying the interview; I respected her individuality and valued her honest opinions. When I asked Marie who influenced and supported her, and she replied that, it was a teacher,

A teacher told me about university. I believe she cared about me and wanted to see me to succeed... You meet people in university who are going to be doctors, orthodontist and other careers... They have really remarkable study skills and you just surround yourself with the right people, and you get down to business and you start doing what you have to do.

I allowed Marie the option of discussing other aspects of her life or if she wanted to speak of other topics that were not on the questionnaire. Marie beamed when she was given the open-ended topic and the opportunity to go on. She proudly and eagerly informed,

I was asked to be a guest speaker at my younger sister's grad, I definitely felt appreciated. When I was finished university, I became successful and happy to be out in the working world. I definitely felt gratitude to a lot of people when all was done. I was welcomed back by my former teachers and they were happy with my success. I feel like they supported me all along.

The final question posed to Marie was what she felt was an appropriate educational environment for First Nation students? She keenly replied,

I would say caring teachers. The old method of yelling to scare is not working anymore, not like long ago... Guide them and discipline so they know appropriate behaviours... learning should be fun and interactive. I don't remember too many dynamic things

happening in my classroom when I was a student... let the students show more of their personalities give them more choices, and give them more independence.

Education is the main profession of many females in Marie's family. Marie remembers a suggestion she once received from her mother: *“My mom said you should become a teacher.... teaching seemed practical to me and it was an attainable goal.... I actually really like it so I am glad that I picked that career.”* Marie mentioned that her ambition was not to become an educator but to practice medicine. This was an inspirational dream that would never be fulfilled. She suggested, *“I never grew up thinking I would be a teacher... It is probably not my dream career.”* Marie acknowledged and confessed that her lack of scientific knowledge prevented her from challenging science courses in university; she somewhat blames the secondary educational institute for not providing her with the necessary skills that she needed and stated, *“I never had the opportunity to take physics or chemistry in high school yet my aim was to study medicine. I did my first dissection in a chemistry lab while in university.”* She feels some regret to this defeat and questions why Aboriginal students are not skilled in the sciences, since *“Students across the country learn about these things in science, why not in First Nations schools. The science programs on a lot of First Nation schools seem to be extremely lacking maybe because of lack of science equipment or lack of funding.”* It was noted in research that Natives are the most poorly represented among the occupations of natural sciences, health sciences, and mathematics (Battiste & Barman, 1995).

I asked Marie what are some of the existing challenges she faced as a classroom teacher? Marie replied, *“An unforgettable experience was when I had to gain the trust of a young girl. Sure enough a young girl came to me and told me that she was sexually abused by her step*

father, and I had to report it.” Marie noted that this was an extremely difficult situation to be in but had absolutely no regrets reporting it.

Marie’s final comment was,

I believe that First Nations are definitely the future, one of the highest birth rates in Canada, the youngest population in Canada, but unfortunately also the most over represented in prison and probably in the welfare system; something that I think that is wrong. First Nation people need to get out there and get those desired jobs. But it begins with education and it starts in nursery. We can’t put someone through a substandard education and expect them to make something of themselves. We need to provide them that quality education immediately, provide family support systems and get parents involved and concerned about their child’s education. I just learned an important lesson, as teachers we have many roles. We are not just teachers, we are psychotherapists, we’re counsellors, we’re nurses, we’re parents, in some instances, and we’re really the only ones who care about the kid on that day. They might not go home and get the care they need, and so you know teachers just need to extend themselves. Let them know that you are always there for them. You are the second parents to these kids and you just have to be willing to help them at all times.

By the end of the interview, it was obvious that Marie established greater self-confidence to tell her story. This confidence was observed as she continued to offer more interview time and was raring to go. This dialogue was truly a learning experience for me. I feel extremely honoured that Marie accepted my request and shared her valuable personal life story.

Lena

Lena grew up in a Métis community. She is between forty and fifty years old. She has four brothers and three sisters. She is married and has three children and three grandchildren. She graduated from the Brandon University PENT program. She attended a provincial school in town from grade one to ten.

Lena was very prepared for her interview; she took the interview questions that were previously given to her and she answered each one in writing. At first, the meeting felt very impersonal because it was noticeable that she rehearsed the interview; she read the questions and answered each one by reading off the questionnaire sheet. The first question asked her to describe her upbringing. Lena replied,

I was brought up just off the shore of Lake Manitoba. We were brought up on the other side of the road which is not considered a reserve; across the road was the reserve. We were non-treaty. We were raised in a log house that had one bedroom and a porch on it. There was no hydro and no running water. There were my parents, and my grandfather, and 8 of us children living in that house. I was the third youngest.

Working from within an Indigenous story work methodology, which permits the speaker to share and express their thoughts and feelings, I listened and allowed Lena to talk without disruption. Lena continued to tell about her upbringing and childhood memories:

But while we lived in the log house the only source of heat was a wood stove, it was placed right beside my grandpa's bed. He was the fire keeper all night long because he was the Elder; no one else was allowed to make the fire. There was also a cook stove in the porch, it had 4 big elements, on one side was the water heater, we used to use heated water to wash dishes, or pots and pans, and my mom would make bannock in the oven. Most of our

meat came from the wild life, my dad used to go hunting and trapping all the time, no matter what season it was there was always food out there. In the fall, they would go snaring rabbits around November, and my mom used to make soup or fry it up, whichever way it was always delicious. In the winter, we had plenty of fish because we lived right by the lake. We always used to have deer meat all year round, even if it was in the spring time, I remember one time they were cleaning a little fawn, they accidentally killed the mother so they had to take the fawn too. Out of the rabbit fur, I remember my mom made us winter coats, she used that rabbit fur for the trim around the collar, for my sister and I, we were so proud of those jackets. Out of that bambi fur, I remember it lying on the floor as a rug in our log house, us kids used to sit to keep warm; that was our rug.

We lived a walking distance from the lake, we had no running water, but we had an old panel truck that my brothers used to put the cream cans into to get water from a nearby pump house. But lots of times in the winter that pump house would be frozen so they had to go get ice at the lake and when the panel truck did not start, my brothers had to pull a sled to the lake and all the way home again, they used to chop holes for ice and bring it back. They would put it on the wood stove to melt it for water, but then again if they couldn't go to the lake if it was too stormy, my brothers used to get snow. They used to put it in pillowcases, they used an old plastic plate, scoop up the snow, fill up the pillow cases and bring it in the house and boil it down again for water. We had a hard time getting water back then and that was in the winter.

It was customary socialization for children to offer help by hauling water and chopping wood (Michell, 1999).

As soon as summer time rolled around, school was out; my parents and my grandpa start packing up and fill up the old car or the old panel truck or whatever we used, to go camping for the summer. We would also pack in an old canvas tent, although it had holes in it we used to patch it before we left. We packed old pots and pans, an old tea kettle, you could just see the burn marks on the kettle from previous years and of course a .22 calibre and other weapons and tools we needed while we were camping; my grandpa used to hunt while we were out camping.

The reason we went camping is to go and dig winisikins, a lot of families used to go camping to go dig winisikins that was the only source of money back then for people who did not have full time jobs. Everyone had to work for their living, there was no government money yet at that time, so we camped all over and at the end of summer, my parents would sell all that winisikins and then they would buy the flour, lard, bacon, baloney, baking powder, and beans. My mother would make bean soup with pork in it, all the time.

We would come home again in the fall and get ready for school. But it was hard; I could not imagine how hard it was for my parents to raise 8 children with no running water or hydro. In 1970 when we moved into our new house, but it still did not have, running water, but at least it had electric heat. I don't think that electric heat worked very well because we had oil stove in the middle of the house for extra heat. While living in the log house, they were building the new house, my parents used to run an extension cord from the new house to the log house so they can listen to their record player. They played old music such as Wilf Carter. My parents tried their best in raising us children, now I find it even harder although we have running water and we have hydro. It is hard to raise kids now days it is

very costly. There was no welfare at that time so my parents work hard, to raise all us kids.

After her candidly opening to the interview, she said that her dad was not educated but her mom was: *“My dad went up to grade 3. My dad could only write his name, maybe he could read very little.”* On the other hand, her mom did attend the Sandy Bay Residential School and she completed grade eight, the highest grade reachable at that time: *“My mom went up to grade 8. My mom can read and write. Neither of them graduated grade 12.”* Lena remained on the subject of education. She spoke of how the Chief of the Sandy Bay Reserve allowed her and her younger siblings to attend school in Sandy Bay: *“I just happened to luck out to go to school in Sandy Bay because the chief told my dad that it was ok if your kids to go to school there.”* She described her first educational experiences:

“When I was 5 years old I went to school in Sandy Bay. I only went to school for one year in Sandy Bay I don’t remember too much about my experiences at residential school. I just remember seeing the nun standing at the steps when I would walk into the school. I didn’t talk very much and I was very, very quiet. All I did was watch everything what was going on. I was a day student.

Lena continued reminiscing about her childhood story and explained how she got to the residential school each day:

I commuted every day on an old school bus. It looked like a little old panel truck, there was a wood burning tin stove in the back... you could see the fire going through that stove, how hot it was. There were two little benches on each side of that panel truck. Every day we travelled back and forth but, sometimes we couldn’t go to school if it was too cold, or if

that old bus broke down, or if the roads were blocked. But we always tried to go to school, and we had a hard time but we would still get there.

Lena attended the kindergarten class at the residential school for a short time. Because she was a non-resident she eventually had to attend the provincial school from grade one onward. She informed me that she had no English language skills; she did not learn the language at home or in residential school. The rigorous teachings of the educators made sure that the English words permeated into her intelligence:

I didn't know any English; I just spoke Ojibway all my toddler years. I didn't learn any English at the residential school. I spoke Saulteaux, Ojibway, that's probably why I was so quiet in school. I was scared to talk because I didn't know what to speak. I didn't even know how to speak English, eventually the English language absorbs through me quickly, now when I speak Ojibway, it's not very fluent and it sounds very broken.

Lena described the repetitious vocabulary in the first book that she read:

My first book was not Dick and Jane, but it was John and Janet. It was green. The first page would be John and the next page is Janet, then there's little sister Anne, then you turn the page the dog was Lucky, mom and dad. I had to read those over and over, until I memorized that book and I knew every word. You basically taught yourself, because you had to know the dog's name Lucky, and then look at the word and the picture. I remember how I started learning how to read and speak English.

Lena recalled a proud moment in grade one when she received recognition for her outstanding schoolwork. A small incentive such as receiving a sticker was pure happiness:

I never got a chance to go up there. I used to watch the other kids sing all the time then one day I was just surprised when the teacher gave me back my work. I had a star on the top

of my page. I just felt so good to go up there and sing; that was probably one of the happiest moments of school life. I remember in grade one the teacher would hand out our work after she corrected it, and then if you got a sticker on your work, which means you got it all right. You got to stand up in front of the class and hold your paper up high to show the other kids, your star on your work, then you got to sing, Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.

From experiences of happiness to unhappiness, Lena sadly spoke about the ruthless discipline of students; it was harsh and physically abusive. It threatened and caused the students to be fearful of the teachers: *“There were no behaviours problems back then, if there were behaviours we got a strap. If the superintendent was coming to the school all the kids would just be scared stiff and they would just sit in their seats just straight up because they were scared, that man was coming.”*

Lena looked down to her interview guide to make certain that she was on track. She was careful not to accidentally overlook any of the questions. As she continued, Lena described how she always felt unwelcomed at school. She described this dreadful feeling as, *“I probably felt more unwelcomed than welcomed, throughout all my school years. Most of the time I would say I felt unwelcomed because again, like I said no one really acknowledged you, they never said good morning or anything like that, just straight into the school like zombies and then straight to your desk, sometimes I felt like a lost lamb.”* There were times when being underprivileged and poor excluded Lena from much wanted school activities: *“I do not remember any fun days in school, maybe once in a while a field trip at the end of the year. But then again we didn’t go to those anyway cause we had no money to go, you had to have your own money, only the kids that could afford it can go, I just stayed home.”*

Lena did not recall any teacher educational supports during her early years in school. She explains her rationale through her experiences:

I would say probably quite a few of them were unsupportive. We were just there and there was no one on one help. The teacher wouldn't even come up to you and show you how to do your work, if you didn't know how to do your work, you just had to catch on or you failed. You are at school to sit still and listen. The teachers talked to the class as a whole, they would not look at you in the eye individually and talk to you, and they would stare at one spot in the classroom, it was like you were invisible. That's how I felt sometimes when I was in the elementary years.

It would be many years later that Lena would finally experience the caring and support of a kind educator. It was in junior high that a teacher saw Lena as a child who needed a chance to establish herself; she needed nurturing and understanding if she were to succeed. Lena had the intelligence for academic success and finally someone gave her the confidence and hope for a better future: *One grade 7 teacher was really my inspiration. I really wanted to do what she did....one day I said to myself, I am going to do that ... it was an educator.... I always thought about her.* This teacher was a lifeline for Lena. This statement corresponds with research found that resilient outcomes were associated with close bonds of at least one caregiver, not necessarily from within the family (Brendtro, 2004).

Just as her academics and self-confidence were improving, Lena got pregnant in her secondary years. She now had greater challenges to face her peers, continue on with her education, and face great criticism from teachers. Her adolescent life was taken as her role suddenly changed from student to parent. Lena was determined to finish her education so after she had her child she returned to school. Returning to school was not all welcoming; she became

mentally and emotionally devastated. The very place she once sought environmental and personal support, became the place where she would develop hurtful feelings of exclusion. She replied, *“One of the biggest challenges was trying to finish school after I had a baby. I when I went back I just really felt out of place I really felt weird, unwelcomed, because I was the only one in that whole high school that had a child.”* Even former friends were long departed so *“I had just a couple of friends.... those friends went to school elsewhere.... eventually I just wanted to quit school.”*

Many years later, after three children Lena decided to return to school. She was thankful that her sister convinced her to attend a PENT program that was offered at University of Brandon: *“My sister asked me if I wanted to go to school in Brandon, to university in the PENT program. She encouraged me to go, let’s give it a try she said.”* The overwhelming workload of the university courses was exhausting and intense. There was many times that Lena wanted to give up and stay home with her family. She whispered this dilemma she faced:

It was very challenging, lots of hard work I remember coming home it was so beautiful outside in the summer. Everyone was outside playing baseball, and I looked on the table and there’s all my homework, a big pile of homework. I had to have an essay done by the next day, and then I looked out the window, I started crying actually, cause I thought I have to do all this, I had to put my family on hold is how it felt.

Lena gratefully acknowledged that her husband and mother gave her emotional and mental supports. She said, *“My mother encouraged me to finish high school... my mother encouraged me to finish high school. Family, it was always family, you have your mother, you have your husband to help you out with the kids.”*

When asked what she felt was an appropriate educational program for First Nation children, Lena replied,

My environment was so strict everything had to be so perfect...you couldn't talk and you couldn't get up to walk around, nobody could move, you had to sit still.... You had to put up your hand for every single thing; even if you used the bathroom when you weren't allowedyou would get the strap.... the students have to be talked to nicely and let them know they are valued.... you show them that you care... a few that want that sense of belonging.... show them some love.

Lena believed that in order for a child to succeed in school there must be,

A sense of belonging... they won't learn anything... that's how I felt, I felt like I didn't belong... set out the expectations for them.... Show them that they are there to learn....There has to be some structure too... make learning fun.... parental involvement is very important... give them opportunitieswhen someone doesn't have a lunch we find ways to feed them.

At one time during the interview, Lena broke down in tears as she brought to mind the extreme poverty during her upbringing. Lena knew that her depressed childhood feelings would surface during the interview. I believe that she was emotionally unprepared for reliving this past so I immediately stopped the taping, and offered her some comfort and acknowledged her emotional pain. A short time later I offered her access to a counsellor but she refused. It took several minutes for Lena to gather herself and when she was ready, we resumed the interview. I found it heart wrenching and emotionally difficult to see this woman cry. During this breakdown, I completely understood how she felt and uncontrollably shed tears of my own. I had empathy for Lena because I also grew up in a similar environment and lived with extreme poverty. She

shared some emotional and touching details of her life story with me and later decided that she did not want to share this part of her life with others. She felt that this would remain private and should not be publicized. I respected her wish and removed these details from her transcription once it was returned to her.

Sarah

Sarah was born and raised in Sandy Bay. She said she came from a family of seventeen, acknowledging the three siblings that passed, and the remaining seven girls and seven boys. She is between the ages of forty and fifty. She is married and has twelve children. She received her Bachelor of Education from the Brandon University. She attended residential school very early in life but a majority of her schooling was in a band school.

Sarah was prepared for her interview; she took home the interview questions and began answering them on paper. Sarah cheerfully and eagerly described her upbringing:

We always lived together in a one-room house... Growing up, like we were always together, you know, going into the bush, living off the bush... We went into the bush and lived off the plants. ... We got the strawberries, gooseberries, pahganuk (nuts), and winisikins í we always used to travel with our parents... My dad was a very hard worker, he always provided for us... he was an alcoholic. He was, but that was the one thing he showed us, he always worked, sometimes he used to leave us for a week at a time, come home, yes he was intoxicated when he got home but he brought the food he brought the money... There was one thing that he always did was made sure that we always had food in the house.... When we ran out of things, my mom knew what to do. ... To replace some of the staples, like flour when she was making bannock, she would throw in some oatmeal just

to make it work...and there was absolutely nothing wrong with that, and that's what we grew up with. And I still love it, bannock, lard, salt, pepper, tea and later on, I got the nerve eating onion. (laugh)

Sarah recalls how the children were always welcomed and invited by their parents on family outings and visits. Years ago, people that lived in the community tended to visit one another very often; this was a sign of communal unity:

We always used to travel with our parents, and then we grew up like that. A long time ago, I remember families always visiting... I don't remember anybody doing that anymore, I don't see anybody doing that, and we were always with them, they always took us along... We were always with my parents, they always took us along. We met kids from other families, while the older people sat and visited. They had tea and bannock. I remember all those things, all those days.

Sarah confidently continued with the interview without being prompted. She was in total ease as she recalled childhood memories. She had a vivid memory of the residential school she attended and began describing the visual imagery that was firmly embedded in her mind:

I still dream about running through the halls of the old residential school. I remember exactly the way it looked. I also remember the other school that was built across it and running through those halls and the classrooms. We were told not to go up in the attic, that's where they kept the girls. We used to go all the way up there; people say it's haunted. I still have dreams of going up the stairs. When you were in the basement, the south side was the girl's side and the north side was the boys. We were separated that way with a hallway, the floor looked like a wave because the linoleum was so old. I remember

on the left side there was a kitchen with a stove. Eventually we moved to the north side when everything started to change; the classes were ended there.

It was obvious that Sarah's primary educational experiences within the residential school were emotionally humiliating and depressing. She remembered one particular shocking and dishonourable incident that occurred when she was around five years old:

I remember the way the benches were in the room where the girls were. There were benches along the wall, and you could lift the benches to put your stuff in, like your coats, jackets, and boots. One time there, we were all sitting there, and we were asked to recite the alphabet, and not stop from a-z. If you forgot, you stood there until you remembered it all you had to keep trying, and trying, and trying. I think there was a nun, yes; I remember that I couldn't sit down because I only went up to "L". I couldn't remember and I stood there and I stood there, but she wouldn't let me sit down. I knew for a fact that I wanted to use the washroom but she still wouldn't let me sit down and I soiled myself there in the middle of that room, with all the girls standing there. She finally got disgusted with me and I remember walking back to that bench, and sitting down and I was wet. She didn't send me home or anything to change, I had to sit there until I was dry; I sat there by myself. I often think about that and I can still see the girls sitting there. They had their hands beside their thighs, looking, and watching. I just had my head down; I just had my head down.

I expected to see Sarah saddened and tearful as she spoke about this terrible incident. This was an atrocious experience that would have devastated any individual but in Sarah, it inadvertently created an emotional strength for she was able to overlook this negativity and

forgive. I witnessed as Sarah's character proudly revealed a contented and confident Aboriginal woman.

Sarah moved away from this dreadful topic to talk about another childhood put down. The critical remarks she received when she was a young child forced her to attempt changing her skin and hair. This caused some shame of her Indian identity. Sarah softly spoke, *the one thing, I remember trying to get white (laugh) maybe there was, because when I was growing up I know there was a lot of people saying things about the colour of my skin and my hair.* Sarah's voice suddenly changed into a somberly tone as she repeated the actions she took to change her skin colour:

The only thing that really, really stands out is washing, trying to wash my hands, wash my hands, and wash my hands, until they could be white. Try and have them white, because my skin is dark, but that's...even up to grade 7 I did that, when I went in to the washroom, washing my hands...I saw my hands and now they are white, you know, I don't know where that came from, like I wanted to be white, I don't know why, I don't know.

Sarah was too young to comprehend her actions but it is obvious that the offensiveness of others caused her emotional struggles in accepting her individuality. As I looked at Sarah, I also questioned why she would want to change her looks. She had the conventional beauty of an Indian, her darker skin and jet black curly hair complemented her prettiness and identified her uniqueness.

Now as an adult, Sarah has a much different attitude. She confirmed that the pessimistic remarks and opinions of individuals cannot bring her down. She regained her delighted composure and smiled as she spoke of another childhood memory. Through her infectious happiness and enthusiasm she commented,

But now I said I didn't care, because I know there was a few teachers that taught me... in grade 3 here, she was a very nice lady... I remember her glasses, I remember her coming, and after, you know, when she had recess duty, combing her hair, you know... she was a really nice teacher.

By the time she was in grade four, Sarah knew that her ambition in life was to become a teacher. She spoke respectfully about the teacher who became the influenced her by mentioning the support, guidance, and respect she received was encouraged her choice. She smiled and said,

It was that teacher that taught here for almost 40 year... she was the one that inspired me, 'cause she was the one who said, what you want to be when you grow up. I ended up being the teacher. She was very nice, if you respect the teacher, she will respect you back. She was very nice, some kids thought she was strict, thought she was strict, but I learned from there already, that if you respect the teacher she will respect you back. Right there already because I used to see a lot of kids getting into trouble, some of them for nothing, you know, she was so neat, she was so, I don't know, sometimes I felt like the teacher's pet (laugh) I don't know. (laugh)

Although Sarah describes her attachment as being a teacher's pet, this attachment demonstrated that the teacher connected and associated with her. Children do not form attachments randomly but selectively connect with people who treat them with sensitivity (Cassidy, as cited by Brendtro, 2004).

When Sarah was in grade five, a teacher on duty accused her and her friends of breaking a baseball net. Despite pleading and claiming their innocence, the teacher marched them to the principal's office. It was in the office at the hand of the principal that Sarah would suffer extreme physical and emotional pain. Although she was physically mistreated, she would not give the

principal the satisfaction of making her cry. Sarah continues to maintain her innocence as she softly stated,

We didn't break it. We did go to the principal. It was her word against ours, and then we got 3 straps, three times on each hand, but that's what they used to say. He used to jump if he was going to hit somebody, you know I never believed it before that, and then when I got that it was true. That was the first time I've ever got the strap...he actually kinda jumped. And then when he held my wrist, my left hand, he hit me 3 times with that strap on that hand. I didn't cry, I just took the pain. I learned already, I guess, that time to take the pain, same thing on the right hand. I didn't cry. I just held it all in, because I didn't cry with the first hand. He tried to do it harder with the second one, that's when he jumped and then, he wouldn't even open the door. I just opened the door with my hand pounding, red.

When she got to junior high, she witnessed a hostile confrontation between a student and a teacher. She knew that this incident was against all the policies and teacher conduct and she also knew that the student was insubordinate. She described the argumentative incident as,

When you got her mad, you know, not me but whatever, but other kids got her mad, she got mad. But that one time, I guess, I don't know if she got fed up or what, she stuck one of the girls right across the face with a hard cover book, when we were reading, like a novel together. They had some differences, her, the teacher and another student, and... but even that student she was sitting beside me, she was... I don't know what you would call it, what kind of word to use, but wouldn't listen. She kept talking back to her... eventually the student swore at her.

Sarah paused for a few seconds. She was looking towards me but not at me. She appeared to be in deep thought as if to try and figure out this punitive action. She then she looked at me and started talking again about other events in her life.

Sarah recalls as she grew older, she assumed more household and nurturing responsibilities, such as babysitting, within the family circle: *“They saw that I was responsible, I don’t know, but I was always babysitting, I guess you can say that I grew up fast. By the time I was 8 or 9 I started babysitting, for other families or, all my nieces and nephews.”*

Sarah was a teenager in high school when she unexpectedly became pregnant. In her loving manner, she said that she had no regrets. She was fifteen and along with her future husband, they faced and accepted the huge responsibility of being parents. Sarah described this as, *“I only attended up to, going into grade 9, cause that’s when I found out I was going to have my first baby, when I was 15. Actually, I was 14... I had him when I was 15. But you know... I never regretted not going back to school, after I had my baby, because already by 17 ... I was already married with 2 boys.”* Sarah continued to have more children. Although she loved motherhood, she was determined to return to school. Sarah stated *“I wanted to get my education I started the courses at ACC. I still struggled at that age, I just had my first daughter, and I had three sons.”*

When asked if she had parental support, Sarah responded with a smile,

I had the support of my parents, and like, they showed me the way, but I saw my mom the way she worked too because she was a CHR, community health representative, ...she used to leave us too to go for training, and what not, and I saw all those things, I think maybe you can say.

Some of Sarah’s most important supports, while in education, came from her immediate family. She said, *“My mother-in-law and husband used to keep the boys. I went to school.”* Sarah

credits former schoolteachers as well, suggesting, *“There was a few teachers that taught me she was very kind so those are the 2 teachers that really stood out.”*

When whether or not she had any educational challenges or adversities, Sarah quickly responded that she spoke only the Ojibway language and struggled with English. She commented that it was a struggle speaking English, but learning to write it was even more challenging:

I was raised to speak Anishinabe, even now; I don't what kind of words to use to describe something in English, especially on paper. It was hard for me to make a story, I guess I didn't write properly, you know, but I knew what I was saying, but to put them in words, because that was strong at home. Just recently, we started using English, we always spoke Anishinabe, always... I think that was where the challenge was.

Sarah also tributes her family in helping her learn *“sometimes my mom when she had the time, she would help me or sometimes my dad.”* An older sibling also helped with the teaching.

Some of Sarah's other challenges in school were more emotional and had to do with her personal well-being. Sarah struggled with maintaining long-term friendships for reasons she did not understand. She stated that her female friends were always together in what she referred to as the gang but this mutual bonding weakened and Sarah eventually got shunned: *“Friends going against you... they ganged up on me... I wouldn't let them put me down, it was always a gang, there was a gang, but then sometimes that gang went against me, there was a lot of girls that used to go against me, and yet they were my friends.”* When I asked why her friends went against her, Sarah softly replied *“I don't know, I don't know... I am not bragging or anything... I was good in a lot of athletics... I did a lot of things, I got a lot of recognition from the teachers, I don't know, maybe it was just plain jealousy, I don't know.”*

When Sarah was asked why she wanted to return to secondary or post-secondary school. She responded, *“I wanted to go back to, I just wanted to, I wanted to get my education ...there was a lady ...that’s who taught me, she used that reading series SRA, that’s the one I used, that helped me too, I struggled but you know.”*

When I asked Sarah what were some adjustments she made returning to school she responded,

Going back, I took her to school with me... and the boys, my mother-in-law used to keep them and my husband, if he was unemployed, he kept them. But I went to school that’s when it all started, I went to school ACC took those courses, I went to Yellowquill College, Portage, graduated in 87, I did the UCEP program... I was gone on the highway, already 7:30 in the morning and didn’t get back till sometimes 6:00...that time already, then I quit for a while after that... and then stayed home for a while and then this job opportunity came up 1988 ...took that job...then I started taking those courses, University of Winnipeg, there again, I had to leave my family sometimes, weeks at time, or stayed back and do the courses that were offered here or in Winnipeg. Sometimes I took my babies with me...I had to have them with me (laugh) and then my husband used to stay home and keep the rest, so and then I just stayed in education, started work from there, and then I got my diploma in 1994, graduated with graduates in Winnipeg, finished that.

One evening while Sarah was studying for a test, a fire mysteriously started in her home. By the time, she realized what was happening the fire had spread to other areas of the house. Frantically Sarah’s first thought was to save her little children who were already asleep. She bravely fought through the smoke and blaze, found her children in their beds, and ran them out of the burning house. This emotional and devastating event added to additional stress and

challenges. Sarah and her family had to find a new home and somehow she had to keep attending school to maintain her status as a student. Sarah vividly remembered this incident as if it happened only yesterday:

When my first house burned down... I was studying for a test that evening, I already put the boys to bed. We lost everything material wise I was able to get my boys out, and yet I just finished putting them to bed, in their pyjamas the snow was up to my knees. I just grabbed everything from the closet, threw them outside on the step there, just for them to stand. When I was in my bedroom where it was burning, I saw one of my boys slip under the dresser, and when I ran back in, I saw the smoke coming down so I had to crouch down, run to the room where my other baby was, his little foot was sticking out of the dresser, and I pulled him out of there, so I grabbed both of them and ran out and yet that's where it was burning, in my bedroom, in the closet, when I saw it, the fire starting, was burning my wedding dress, (laugh) but there was the hydro panel box, I stayed away from school for about a week, I went back to school.

Sarah returned to school almost immediately. This commitment confirmed that she was dedicated and strong-minded. Sarah refused to be defeated and determined to achieve her educational goals.

When asked what she sacrificed Sarah replied *“I had to leave my family sometimes, weeks at time.”* When she decided to attend Brandon University, she had a family meeting with her husband and children. They discussed her desire to attend university and in the end, she had the support of everyone. This was very important to Sarah because she valued her family's opinions and would not do anything they did not approve of. Sarah whispered, *“We had a big family meeting, told our boys that I was planning on going to school... but we told them you know what*

that means... I have to leave, leave home, go to school and you guys are gonna have to fend for yourselves, they said go for it mom."

Sarah believed that the misfortunes and hardships in her life were invisible forces that were meant to stop her from finishing university. Sarah summarized these negative experiences,

There always seemed to be problems there was always accidents with me, there was always something happening, for me not to finish. I had to have emergency surgery. I had that emergency operation for my appendix, then I fell off the stairs over there I almost lost the use of my knee. The year I was going to graduate, that's when I had that operation on my back. I slipped on the ice just before I graduated.

When asked exactly how she overcame these problems Sarah tenderly replied, *"I used a lot of spiritual guidance like smudging and praying, and offering tobacco, just to have protection in that journey to finish my education."*

Sarah is extremely happy and proud that she achieved her childhood dream to become an educator.

This interview concluded the participant's narrative/storyworks. The stories that were shared by the participants revealed similarities despite diverse educational eras. Although, the focus of this study was to interview students who only attended a residential, provincial, or band school, I soon learned that this restriction was difficult because the participants had integrated educational experiences of several school systems. This was at first was a hindrance, but I later discovered that their variety of circumstances and experiences added further richness to the stories. I was also able to observe diverse situations of different educational eras and associate those experiences based on what AhNee-Benham (2003) describes as alternative worldviews that focus on the interconnectedness of family, community, culture, nature and spirituality as told in the

stories of the participants. Similarly, this study supports the Western worldview of resilience that suggests that it is an innate quality that comes from everyday human resources that are interrelated in the minds and bodies of children, and from their families, relationships, and in their communities (Benard, 2004).

The next and final chapter is my epilogue which, revisits and analyses final thoughts, expresses new knowledge and learning and analyzes the developmental process of my thesis.

Chapter Six: Epilogue

I would like to begin this section by restating the reasons for employing interviews in this qualitative study. I believe what Kovach (2010) stated about listening to people's narratives/storytelling as a knowledge seeking method. I felt that it was very important for me to empathetically connect myself to the participants' stories so I could gain a broader appreciation of their lived adversities and challenges and to help determine whether or not resilience emerged and/or was developed. Listening to the women's narratives triggered many of their personal feelings. I had to remain focused but at the same time psychologically prepare and support them especially when their feelings of depression became noticeable.

There was no specific checklist that determined whether or not the participants were resilient. Given the standards and definitions of resiliency by scholarly researchers, it was established that the participants in this study were resilient. Resilience is defined from exploring the process of resiliency development from Aboriginal women's perspectives (Scarpino, 2007).

The structured interview guide which I developed had little entitlement in the participants' stories because the stories unfolded naturally and not always in harmony with the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted with a lot of flexibility and awareness by accommodating the participants and interviewing at their will and place of comfort. Although the interviews were very organized, there were times I hesitantly refocused the participants' thoughts back to the interview guide when they veered off topic and/or expanded their stories. I initially thought that this swerve was a distraction, but as the interviews progressed I realized that it was more of a learning curve. Kovach (2010) and Fitznor (2002) both have stated that research becomes less about participants' responding to the questions and more about the sharing their stories in relation to the question.

I preplanned traditional supports in the event of an emotional breakdown. The participants began their interviews with calm demeanors and I believed they were emotionally prepared. However, two participants broke down in tears during the interviews. I realized that I may have inadvertently unlocked years of heart-rending memories. These participants just asked for time to regain their composure. I sat with them and did not attempt to carry on with the interview until they were ready. All of the participants refused referrals to Elder and/or traditional counselling as they felt that was not necessary.

One participant did not remain committed to the study. Although she signed a consent form and was positive with the interview, she did not return the transcribed interview. Numerous calls were made to her but she did not respond. As I explained earlier, I respected her avoidance and/or wish not to continue with the study. However, I regret that she did not follow through because her interview was passionate and her story would have provided powerful insight to the findings of this study. She embraced her Aboriginal culture to overcome adversities and /or challenges and found support within her family.

I truly valued the strength that all the participants demonstrated during the interviews. My learning development materialized into greater knowledge in practice, ethics and the theory. More notably, I developed admiration of the participants and a better understanding about the all-inclusive and encompassing teachings of the Medicine Wheel.

Because of the nature of the research question, the methodology of narrative/storytelling was the most beneficial for this study. Linking the Medicine Wheel framework allowed a critical but, also sensitive reflection and understanding necessary for the analysis of the study. Traditionally the Medicine Wheel has no failure because it is used as tool of healing and inner caring, and the idea is to always work toward balance lifewayø in all aspects of our lives. The experiences

spoken in the narrative/storytelling of the participants allowed persons, directly or indirectly involved, to weave and contribute to the stories that were told.

This study came with personal sacrifices and emotional distress. Including my experiences was difficult but encouragement from my advisors gave me willpower. By developing and enhancing self-assurance, I was able to openly discuss my life experiences. I am certain that this method also accommodated the participants because it allowed them more security and comfort during the interviews. The participants reminisced freely about their life experiences and they were allowed the freedom to select and disclose any personal event(s). I am very familiar and respectful of a unique cultural trait of Aboriginal people. This silence is a distinctive characteristic, which signifies humility requiring individuals to listen, pay attention and always choose respectful words. I originate the careful choosing of voice as “*silent mannerism*” to demonstrate the probable inappropriateness of candidly discussing personal adversities and/or challenges of life and to always speak words with carefulness and thoughtfulness. Perhaps this explains why participants asked for negative experiences to be removed from their stories. Disclosing personal information was also difficult for me; it was uncomfortable and I believed that I might disgrace relations or others if I focused on negativity that was discreditable and dishonourable. There is no denial that adverse truth is often buried.

While conducting this research, I quickly realized that there was a weakness in resilience research as it focuses on Western definitions that do not take into account colonization or Indigenous worldviews (Scarpino, 2007). The topic of resilience was extensive but by reviewing this wide-ranging subject and connecting similarities among the stories, I developed a better understanding of how resilience emerges and/or is developed and is how it is defined through different and/or common experiences. Since this research was well grounded, and correlated with

resilience literature I have been able to observe a diversity of contributing factors within the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, schools, families and environments that promote student success. It was important for me to understand what my protective factors, challenges and/or adversities were to determine whether or not they promoted and/or contributed to my success. Reflected in my learning is that protective factors are commonly and consistently described in comprehensive studies.

I acknowledge that studies are well founded and substantiated but my personal experiences propose opposition and I question the explanations and justifications of challenges and/or adversities. I feel that there is a grey area that eludes resilience studies because I believe that challenges and/or adversities are predominantly defined and/or explained by western researchers and studies are conducted with measureable approaches. As a result, of my opposing opinion, I wish to clarify and validate my views but leave this perspective to others for scrutiny.

As a researcher, I must admit that my bias somewhat played a role in this study. I am an Indigenous person; therefore I believe that on the journey to understanding and making meaning, one must listen to stories that are merged into a multiplicity of outcomes of the Medicine Wheel. Indigenous inquiry requires a trusting relationship between the researcher and research participant and for the story to surface. Individuality is shaped and grounded in relationships (Wilson, 2008) and I consider this as an important piece for First Nation people.

I believe that non-native researchers have prior judgement and predetermined notions or sets of characterizations that are considered challenges and/or adversities which are applicable to a diversity of cultures. Essentially my belief is that an individual, not a researcher, has the right to inherently explain and define challenges and/or adversities based on his/her personal experiences and circumstances. What an individual may consider as a challenge and/or adversity may not be

considered as such by another individual. Identical issues are also not defined in the same way nor does everyone who overcomes an issue consider him/herself as a resilient individual.

Conceivably some researchers assume that participants in their studies live with challenges and/or adversities without definite disclosure or declaration from that individual. Are researchers biased and entitled to say that one is resilient because of their personal circumstances or ethnographical status? Would they consider me a resilient person because I became a successful educator despite grim socio-economic factors or because I spoke English as a second language? If so, would it change researchers' opinions if I acknowledged and declared that they were not adversities but merely undesired attributes in a controlled and mainstreamed Eurocentric society? Should adversities be based on materialistic wealth, educational achievement, professionalism, cultural and/or racial backgrounds? My thoughts were illuminated in an article by AhNee-Benham (2003) who stated that researchers and scholars define native/indigenous groups from perspectives and interests that dismissed unique life forces; as a grassroots researcher I acknowledge this view.

Lyle Frank (as cited by Michell, 1999) understands the importance of First Nation researchers. He commented that there are times when non-native researchers enter First Nation communities without permission to interview, analyze and publish their interpretation of the information and when this happens, it may result in distorted truth and reality. Longitudinal studies conducted at the grassroots and based on Aboriginal worldviews would provide significant definitions for "truth." More work by native scholars with an "insider" perspective is essential for the future progress of unique native/indigenous people (AhNee-Benham, 2003). The overall evidence conducted by native and non-native research demonstrated that individual

adversities and/or challenges can be toppled and lead individuals to successful and prosperous lives with supports (Battiste M. , 2005).

There were times during this study where I questioned and sometimes doubted my viewpoints. It was also difficult to comprehend and justify my purpose and/or the events of my life. It was not until the later stages of this study that I discovered a new outlook and appreciation. I developed an epiphany, a sudden understanding and realization. The principle understanding, as a school principal, is that some Aboriginal people continue to live with challenges of low socio economic status, English as a second language, and racial discrimination, to name a few, which become deterrents to success. My epiphany and viewpoints, based on Indigenous and Medicine Wheel understandings, clarified that my role in education is to provide Aboriginal students supports such as counselling, encouraging, nurturing, caring, respecting, valuing, and accepting individuality.

AhNee-Benham (2003) looks at educational leadership from female perspectives to support and create the best learning environments and experiences for native children and youth. Students need adult(s) in their lives who have overcome challenges and/or adversities which disable their successes. Obtaining Eurocentric education and maintaining Indigenous cultural values allows more Aboriginal students to achieve success. Jointly embracing the finest of *ōMoniayaö* taka *ōAnishinabeö* (Whiteman and Ojibway) worlds, has enriched and nourished my individuality.

At present, I am a middle-aged educator/administrator who has conquered depressing emotions spawned by negative educational experiences. I defeated a discriminating school system and I achieved educational success. Did the presence of protective factors or risk factors of my environment, community, school and family life contribute to my resiliency development?

I define protective factors in my life as intrinsic motivators, based on the Medicine Wheel teachings, as values, beliefs, behaviours, respect, spirituality, humility, and truth and extrinsic motivation such as caring adults, educational opportunities, family supports, nourishment, and a home. Without question, intrinsic and extrinsic protective factors dominated daily hardships. Those hardships inadvertently supported my Aboriginal worldviews and beliefs; they highlighted the importance and appreciation of cultural teaching. As Fitznor (2002) stated, we need to understand Aboriginal knowledge and philosophies if our people are to succeed. McCormick (as cited by Michell, 1999) stated similar ideas of revival and maintenance of cultural practices to help First Nation people regain their identities and heal. Using the Medicine Wheel teachings and philosophies as tools has helped me heal and accept life. I am able to embrace, respect, value and accept my Anishinabe values and culture. My culture has enriched my worldview philosophy or as Kenny (2003) describes the good way of life as taught by the teachings.

The implications for this thesis are to inspire future researchers to study First Nation women and resiliency, encourage the development of culturally appropriate educational programming and curriculum development and to address the various challenges that impact Aboriginal students with diverse abilities, aspirations, economic and social backgrounds (Fitznor, 2005, 2011). Only when our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits work together do we truly have Indigenous education (Archibald, 2008).

I have come to appreciate, accept, and value whatever crosses my path. For me, life was created and nourished within the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical quadrants of my Anishinabe identity. In closing, I would like to quote Francis Katasse (1969 cited by Haig-Brown (1988) who acknowledged the tension of identity faced by Indian children by stating, *“Who are you, who are you? I have to admit to them; to myself I am an Indian”* (p. 11).

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval Certificate



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APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

October 15, 2010

TO: Colleen West
Principal Investigator (Advisor L. Fitznor)

FROM: Stan Straw, Chair
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: Protocol #E2010:092
"First Nation Educators' Stories of School Experiences: Reclaiming Resiliency"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Research Project Title: First Nation Teachers' Stories of Schooling Experiences: Reclaiming Resiliency

Researcher: Colleen West, Graduate Student

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Advisor: Dr. Laara Fitznor, University of Manitoba, 204-488-1211

Dear Participant:

I am planning to interview six teachers from the community of Sandy Bay who were former students of either the residential, provincial, or band operated school systems. You have been chosen as a potential participant for this study because you represent a person who meets this criteria. The data collected from the interviewees will be analyzed into emerging themes to determine the factors supported First Nations students to experience educational success within these different educational environments.

This consent form, a copy which will be left with you for your records and references, is only a part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what this research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. Purpose of the Research

This study is for the completion of my thesis for the Master's Program. It is also a study that I am very interested in as a First Nation educator working in a First Nation community. I would like to find out what factors in the community, family, or school, help First Nations students succeed in secondary or post secondary educational schooling. I am anxious to see what emerges from this study, and especially curious to understand what promotes resiliency in First Nations students.

2. Research Procedure

I wish to interview six teachers from the community of Sandy Bay who, as students, have successfully made their way through the residential, public or First Nations administered school system. I will use a method of Indigenous storywork in order to provide participants with the opportunity to share and express their insights and experiences during their academic journeys. The interviews will take place at a time and place convenient for you and where you can be assured that you can speak freely. Interviews will take approximately one hour to complete, and you will be provided with the questions ahead of time so that you can prepare for our discussion. All discussions will be audio-taped and transcribed by me. After our discussion, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript. You will have two weeks to confirm, change, add or delete information on the transcript, after which I will assume that the information you provided

can be analyzed as it is. The information provided will be analyzed by key experiences or themes. All data and information will be securely locked on a password protected computer and locked filing cabinets in my home and no one but myself and my advisor would have access to the data. All tapes and data will be destroyed once the final thesis has been approved by Graduate Studies.

3. Risk Assessment

Since the purpose of the study is to examine the experiences of those who have successfully navigated through the residential, provincial and First Nations administered school system, I do not foresee risk involved in this project. Though there are many stories of the trials involved in the schooling experiences of First Nations students, this study attempts to gather the stories of those who were successful in school and who were teachers within the community. However, at the time of our interview I will pass forward to you the contact information of a qualified counsellor, a Spiritual Healer and a community Elder in the case you feel any discomforts. In addition, should you feel uncomfortable at any time, the interview will be stopped. You have complete control over the stories you share with me. You can withdraw at any time and have your information deleted from the study. Should you choose to withdraw, you simply need to contact me or my advisor at the contact information provided below and indicate a desire to withdraw from the study. My role as a researcher is to grow and learn about your experiences as you share the factors which helped you achieve educational success.

4. Confidentiality

Given the historical silencing of Aboriginal peoples' voices and experiences, I believe that it is important to allow participants to choose whether or not your identity is made public. If you choose to remain anonymous, you can be assured that your identity will not be revealed. Pseudonyms will be used in any data reporting or presentations, and any quotations that may identify you or the community will not be used for reporting purposes. If you would rather your name be used publicly in this thesis, you must sign the waiver attached to this form that grants me permission to use your name publicly. At all stages, participants can choose to withdraw from the study, and should you choose to do so, your information will be stricken from the record. Should you choose to withdraw, you simply need to contact me or my advisor at the contact information provided below and indicate a desire to withdraw from the study. The results of this study may be used for presentations at conferences and may be used for publication in journals in the future.

5. Participation and Compensation

Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. There will be no repercussions. There is no financial compensation for taking part in the interview. However, you will be offered tobacco, as customary, in the First Nation culture as gesture of respect and appreciation for your participation.

6. Interview Feedback

After our discussion, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript. You will have two weeks to confirm, change, add or delete information on the transcript, after which I will assume that the information you provided can be analyzed as it is. You will also receive a summary of the study that will be mailed to you. If you would like a copy of the results of the study, please sign and provide your address on the space provided at the end of this form.

Your signature on this form will indicate that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation in this research project agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher, sponsors, or involved institution from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any of the 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

You may contact me, Colleen West, Graduate Student, @ 842-2837 (home) or 843-2407 (work) or my Thesis Advisor, Dr. Laara Fitznor @ 488-1211

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY.

Participant Signature: _____

Address to which to send the results: _____

Email: _____

**Consent Form for Non-Anonymity and Confidentiality of Information Acquired
from Personal Interviews**

I _____ have read and understood the informed consent form above, and I have consented to participate in the personal interview to be conducted for the study entitled, *First Nation Teachers' Stories of Schooling Experiences: Reclaiming Resiliency*, led by Colleen West from the University of Manitoba. Though I recognize that the information of this thesis may be used in public dissemination such as in the thesis itself, in workshops, presentations, and in journal publication, I am consenting to the use of my real name in the writing and dissemination of results. I understand that with such a decision, I will be personally identified in the information and that such identification means that members of my community, the educational community and the research community will be able to identify who I am and how my story relates to the topic of resiliency amongst First Nations teachers who have attended either residential, public, or First Nations administered school systems.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix C: Questionnaire sample questions

Prior to the start of interviewing process an Anishinabe ceremonial of smudging with sweetgrass or sage as an opening for guidance and strength for the Creator for the researcher and participants to compete this study.

I will use an unstructured interview method which will allow me to adjust the questions according to how the interviewee is responding.

The following is a checklist that may be used by the interviewer to ensure that hard data is collected. The interviewee may also add additional questions that she feels are pertinent to the study. In order to get some background information, you may need to provide context to your questions...think of your research question and literature review.

1. Describe yourself, your siblings, family, upbringing, where you lived, etc.
2. What were your educational experiences like, where did you attend school, how long did you attend there, what grades you took at this school, etc.
3. Did you have teachers that were supportive, how were they supportive, tell me about that.
4. Did you have teachers that were unsupportive, what things they did to be unsupportive, tell me about that.
5. Describe your happiest moment in school.
6. Describe your saddest moment in school.
7. Did you feel welcomed or unwelcomed, tell me about that.
8. What were some challenges or adversities that you faced or were challenged by in school, at home, or in the community?
9. What were some of the supports that you had either at home, school, community, or within yourself?

10. How did these supports enable you to succeed in school?
11. What do you feel was the most important factor to your personal success?
12. Have you made any personal adjustments in your life so that you can succeed in school?
13. Why was it your goal or ambition to attend university?
14. Why did you want to become an educator?
15. What do you feel is an appropriate educational environment?
16. What do you feel would help First Nation students to succeed in schooling?
17. How would you describe the current educational attainment of First Nation students?
18. When do you feel changes should have been made to the educational systems to deter the statistics of educational gaps between First Nation and non-First Nation students?
19. What is your take on the educational gap, as mentioned in studies?