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Urban First Nations Men: Narratives of Identity Striving to Live a Balanced Life

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URBAN FIRST NATIONS MEN: NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY
STRIVING TO LIVE A BALANCED LIFE

By

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A thesis
presented to Ryerson University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Nursing
in the Program of
Nursing

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2013

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URBAN FIRST NATIONS MEN: NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY

STRIVING TO LIVE A BALANCED LIFE

ABSTRACT

Celina Carter

Master of Nursing Program

Ryerson University, Toronto, 2013

Dominant discourse contains an abundance of negative stereotypical images of First Nations males that are historically steeped in colonial issues. These images are locked in time and can influence both First Nations men's sense of self and health care providers' practices. Using a strength-based perspective and the lens of Two-Eyed Seeing, this narrative study explored the identity of First Nations men living a balanced life in Toronto. Three First Nations men participated in two semi-structured interviews and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection. Findings indicate that their narratives of identity are focused on positive mindsets and resilience, and that positive First Nations identity is supported by having mentors, knowing family histories, and connecting with healthy Aboriginal communities. Implications of this research for nursing is the need to employ strength-based and postcolonial frameworks, and reflexive practices that reveal biases; this will facilitate nurses to resist racialized stereotypes and discrimination while promoting culturally safe care.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
LIST OF IMAGES.....	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
CHAPTER 1: MY STORIED JOURNEY	1
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND, PROBLEM STATEMENT, PURPOSE, RESEARCH QUESTION, AND SIGNIFICANCE	15
Background	16
Problem Statement	20
Purpose and Research Question	21
Significance	21
CHAPTER 3: SYNTHESIS OF THE LITERATURE	23
Colonization and Intergenerational Trauma	24
Into the Urban Landscape	32
Health of Urban Aboriginal People	35
How Do I know Who I am: Identity Theories	36
Aboriginality: Individual and Cultural Identity	38
And now...?	39
CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL LENS AND METHODOLOGY	41
Theoretical Lens	42
Indigenous Ways of Knowing	44
Western Way of Knowing: Strength-Based	47
Research Methodology	48
Choosing a Methodology	48
Narrative Methodology	50
Ethics	52
Recruitment	56
Data Collection	57
Interview One	58

Interview Two and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection	59
Data Analysis	60
Rigour	62
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS: GENE	65
Gene	66
The Holistic Content: Main Narrative Ideas	70
I am who I am	70
Mohawk: Situating Self within Community, History, Place, and Beliefs.....	74
Support: Giving and Receiving	79
Walking a Good Path	82
Holistic Form of Gene's Story	84
CHAPTER 6: RESULTS: STEVE	88
Steve	89
The Holistic Content: Main Narrative Ideas	92
The Helper	92
Reconnecting to Culture	95
Taking Healthy Risks	98
Resilience and Positive Mindset	101
Holistic Form of Steve's Story	106
CHAPTER 7: RESULTS: JACY	109
Jacy	110
The Holistic Content: Main Narrative Ideas	115
I'm Not an "Apple": Finding a Positive Aboriginal Identity	115
Expression of Aboriginality.....	118
Empathy and Positive Mindset	121
Holistic Form of Jacy's Story	124
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION	128
Interpretative Discussion	129
Positive First Nations Identity	130
Urban Territory	134
Health and Wellness	136
Answering the Research Question	138
Working with the Aboriginal Community	141
My Aboriginal Advisory Committee	141
Reciprocity and Dissemination	143
Strengths and Limitations	145
Implications: Practice, Education, and Research	148
Conclusion	151

REFERENCES.....	167
GLOSSARY	175

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Elements of Holistic Form Analysis	62
Table 2. Progression of Narratives: Plot of Time	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Two-Eyed Seeing	44
Figure 2. Indigenous Ways of Knowing	45
Figure 3. Progression of Gene's Plot Over Time	85
Figure 4. Progression of Steve's Plot Over Time	108
Figure 5. Progression of Jacy's Plot Over Time	126

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1. Tobacco Pouch	68
Image 2. Drum	91
Image 3. Buffalo Calf Woman.....	113

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT	154
APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	155
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM	157
APPENDIX D: INTRODUCING MYSELF AS RESEARCHER	161
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW #1 GUIDE	162
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW #2 GUIDE	163
APPENDIX G: NARRATIVE TIMELINES	164

CHAPTER 1

MY STORIED JOURNEY

I am here, in this space, on this land. Slowly discovering my life purpose. I stand with my feet planted on the soil in my backyard in downtown Toronto, a city that has always been my home, where I was born, where most of my blood relatives reside. I think about what it means to be from a land, to be born and to bury relatives, generation after generation, into this soil. What it means to eat and dance and love and shit and thrive for generation after generation on this land. Is this land in my bones, muscle and skin? Are the rivers and streams and all that connects life running through my veins? How am I linked to others who feel a similar connection to this land and this city? As I ventured to complete a thesis about urban First Nations men's narrative accounts of identity, I first needed to tell my story and explicate my own positionality.

I am at this point in time, story-ing how I got here. This story must have a beginning, but where to begin when I am not sure of the stories that come before mine, that links me to time and have shaped me? What to do when there are holes and cracks in the stories that cannot be filled? The stories that connect me to place and time and blood are intangible; they change depending on the teller. I wish there were a collective of tellers. But there is not. I am the teller, and so I begin.

Young white educated professional woman of privilege
Doors open, options limitless, my future
Yes, the word I hear most...
Welcomed and granted permission, financial protection
Falling in line with ancestry; parents/grandparents/great-grandparents; white educated professionals

Seven generations of colonization on this land
A detailed family tree, telling the story of the lineage of men. Patriarchy.
Migrating from Western Europe, from where I'm not sure; mutt
My father's ancestor, a Hudson Bay fur trader, marries a nameless Aboriginal woman
What was her story? It has never reached me.

What of my female ancestors? What of their names and stories?
Who will tell me their stories with all the storytellers dead?
How will I know where I came from and where I am going without my grandmother's stories?
They are lost to me. I can only dream and guess.

I am searching for my story, searching for who I am. I was born with a twin brother to a financial planner and an environmentalist/writer with an older brother laying out a path for us. I am a dancer, a poet, a lover of landscapes. I am a wanderer, sometimes introvert, who loves to laugh but does not often enough. I am serious and resistant. I am learning to surrender. I believe passionately in the necessity of free expression, equity, and stories. I am torn between the city and the woods, though my heart can more likely be found in meadows or in a river. This is all part of who I am, part of my culture.

It is said that Canada is defined as the place of multi-cultural culture. It is the place where people bring their various cultures and we live, tolerantly. But what about those of us who, while historically may be settlers, identify as from this land? Families that have been here so long that we are nothing but this land, Canadian. It's hard to describe my culture. A mix of Anglo-Saxon protestant guilt and work ethic combined with a social and environmental liberalism. A connection and appreciation for the outdoors, an individualism, and health beliefs that you must take care of your body with exercise, see the doctor regularly, and eat balanced meals. Many of my friends are Canadian-Jewish, Canadian-Arabic, Canadian-from-somewhere-else. I identify as Canadian with no blood ties to other lands. My lack of clearly defined cultural customs along with my connection to the Canadian landscape and my ancestral history has sent me searching for the culture, history, and customs connected to this land so that I may find more about who I am.

I have long been interested and drawn to stories of the first settling homesteaders and people of this land. I picture my relatives with romanticized stories of a time before technology and individualism. I envision that period in time as one where people lived together, relied on one another, and were bound by the hardship and joy of living off the land. Perhaps I am lured to loving the olden day values because people often had to respect their surroundings and all that inhabited it. There is something grounding and confirming about knowing you are connected to

your environment. Like an anchor in time and space, you know where you are and who you are within the greater world. I think I crave that because my idea of time and my family story can seem patchy and floating. Or maybe it is me, and the sense I have of not belonging. Maybe it's my craving for an anchor to tie me to a community that feels like home.

The notion of home, powerful
We all want it
All things in the realm of 'home'; homey, safety, love
Structure and feeling
Bloodlines and kindness
Home structures that do not feel like home
Places that feel like home but are not solid structures
the embodied feeling of a space
Home: belonging, understanding, acceptance
I want it

My love of, and need for, natural surroundings and artistic expression was cultivated by my experience of spending summers on Lake Memphramagog in Quebec. We lived in a log cabin with my extended family embedded in a community of six other families. We all had similarly rustic cottages spread out along the treed shores of the lake, dotting the woods with campfires, and lining the woods with stomped down trails to connect our small properties. Our community was started by four United Church ministers (one was my grandfather) and two families of scientists. We lived simply, ate together, and as kids, we were free to spend the days running through the woods, swimming, climbing, building, or doing anything we pleased. My time in the summer was mostly spent with friends my age, but also with wonderful older family friends who were role models and nurturers of the spirit.

When I was six years old, I spent many summers sitting for hours with an old woman named Edith in her rickety old trailer in the woods. I would walk up the wooden log steps dug into the hill with my bare feet on the soft damp dirt sprouting sparse grass. I would brush the tall green ferns with my fingertips as I wandered up to her door. Every time I climbed her steps I had

a feeling of adventure and that I was about to learn something great about life or plants or myself. We would sit on a bench at a table with the screen door open and we would press and dry flowers, eat pink candies, and paint. Edith was seemingly ancient when I knew her, with a wild mop of curly white hair and a raspy hoarse voice. She had been a high school science teacher and had always been an artist, human rights activist, and avid environmentalist. She would tell me stories that I can no longer remember and after crafts were complete, we would explore the woods for hours at a time. She would point out plants and birds and interesting shadows and I would grin and feel so happy for the knowledge and special attention. To me she was interesting and wrinkled and mysterious. I remember feeling that she was a wise woman who lived life differently, authentically. She let her love of life and all her passions seep out of her, it was contagious. I felt welcomed by her and encouraged to explore and be as creative as possible.

Another of my favourite people at the cottage was a woman named Joni. She had Multiple Sclerosis (MS). She was my mother's age and lived in yet another rickety slightly mossy trailer behind her family's main cottage. Joni and I would sit in her trailer, at a very similar table to the one in Edith's trailer. Joni's place was tucked in the dark woods by the water and inside she would secretly smoke cigarettes. She had salt and pepper hair, only one breast due to cancer, and always wore glasses that had a slightly purple hue. My mom told me that she was very different before she was diagnosed with MS. She said she was a vivacious, creative, beautiful woman. But now, she walked with a cane, looked disheveled, and said unexpected odd things. Joni and I would sit together and write poetry and she would have me illustrate her books of poems with charcoal crayons and told me to do it however I pleased. She was dark and untamed and so encouraging of self-expression and living as naturally and simply as possible. When I was with her, even as a little girl, I felt like we were creating something special and that she trusted my

artistic knowing. She trusted my intuition and encouraged me to do the same. To listen to the whisperings and urges that comes from the ether or your heart or god.

This feeling of belonging comes and goes, as does a sense of un-belonging. To be honest, my sense of un-belonging is my ultimate vulnerability – it is my deepest insecurity. I would not go as far to say that un-belonging defines my sense of self; it is merely one part of a much larger whole. Nevertheless, like all of us, there are some stories that we are willing to tell, some that are too difficult to tell, and some that cannot be put into words. Although I will not tell all of my stories, I tell some through the medium of prose and poetry, to provide a glimpse of who I am.

To belong
To join in
To embrace the other in me and you
Avoid rejection, un-belong
Reject first, loner
Can I step into the circle casted by light?
No obvious open space
To get in
I need a vision
Dream up an answer
And cut the head off of fear

Does belonging affect my sense of wellness? Does my feeling of un-belonging affect my health? When I imagine myself as whole, and surrounded by community and loving relationships, where I do belong. My sense of un-belonging creates a lack of wholeness and a restlessness in me, a searching for connection. I sometimes find this connection through being in nature, dancing, and spiritual practices. My desire to open my heart and connect is fueled by un-belonging. And my interest in alternative medicine and the sacred must also come from this feeling. I do not remember exactly when I started being interested in healing or searching for my own healing. A personal healing that consists of having courage to be authentic and to join-in, to embrace life and fear. It may have possibly begun in the rickety old trailers of Edith and Joni.

For emotional and spiritual health, I turned to yoga, writing, dance, the moon, herbal medicine, and sweat lodges. Why I seek spiritual health is likely due to a feeling that I have this amazing life force in me, but I have not always had the strength to let it shine outwards. I am not always true to myself and sometimes choose inauthenticity in order to be socially accepted. I remember many instances where I chose to go with friends to parties rather than go to dance or meditation. I remember friends talking about the importance of make-up and clothing and me engaging in the conversation when I was really completely uninterested. There are times I project myself differently than who I am so that I can fit into whatever social group I am with. Sometimes this feels like healthy adaptation and sometimes it feels like lying. And so I searched for something that would make my spirit so strong, that I could do nothing but always be me.

A monumental summer where I experienced belonging and authenticity happened when I was 22. I was in nursing school in Nova Scotia, but went to Vancouver Island between my third and fourth year of university and got a position as a health care assistant working at an Easter Seals camp. Most of the people who worked there were witty, adventurous, artistic, outdoorsy, and had huge hearts. They were outgoing and expected people to be present and express themselves truly. We spent our time at camp in costume, singing songs and keeping campers safe, happy, and having fun. On our days off we went to parties, camped, road-tripped, and went to festivals. We spent a lot of time skinny-dipping and dancing outside and spent most nights sleeping on the grass. I felt a love for everyone like they were family. I had never felt so accepted and part of a community before in my life. I had met people who knew themselves, lived authentically to their inner Self and pushed others to do the same. I was pushed out of my comfort zone that summer, to join in, to trust, to be loud and sing and dance with people. To speak my mind, be decisive and know who I was. I felt that I belonged.

I returned to school the fall of 2005 in a search for myself, for continued healing and a community that could foster the same feeling of love and belonging that I had previously felt. I wanted to face my fears and what made me uncomfortable – feeling un-belonging and voicing my needs. I made some new friends, artists, community activists, and musicians. I went camping, hitch hiking and rock climbing. I took modern and African dance classes and signed up for Reiki.

Two of the new friends I met that year were musicians interested in paganism, such as rituals honouring the natural elements and the spirit world. They told me they had met a woman who was a white Celtic Shaman who held ceremonies on her property outside of Halifax that was beside the ocean. She had been studying shamanism of various traditions and combined her Celtic traditional teachings with Aboriginal traditions during sweats. She had developed relationships with the Mi'kmaq (the Aboriginal nation of the territory where she lived) and had told them of her intentions to hold sweat lodges. Apparently, she was gifted songs by some members of the nation, to sing in ceremony. My friends said they were thinking of going to a sweat and I said I was interested in going and thought to myself, if anything was going to strengthen my spirit and make me face my fears - this was it.

Seven years ago, I found myself standing on a grassy cliff overlooking the ocean, standing in a circle of women, preparing for the experience of my first sweat lodge. The female Celtic shaman hosted and led the sweat and she had invited two of her female shaman friends to assist. She practiced mostly traditional Celtic pagan traditions but incorporated Aboriginal practices into her ceremonies. There were about 20 females who had gathered there. The 20 of us all attended the same university. We were a mishmash of people, studying various things; some of us were friends, some strangers. All of us were white; we were settlers. There was not an Aboriginal person among us. I remember hoping the sweat would not feel like stealing, like cultural

appropriation. I hoped the medicines had been taught and truly gifted to the shaman by the Mi'kmaq or that she stayed true to her own Celtic traditions.

We stood side by side in a giant circle around an altar adorned with gifts for the Creator. We had brought sacred medicines, jewelry, and objects to be blessed. We wore tank tops and skirts and the wind off the Atlantic gave me goose bumps. I was nervous and excited. I did not know what to expect or how to act in such a ceremony. I shut my eyes and took deep breaths, steadying my mind in preparation for a spiritual journey. I eagerly waited to see what would surface.

An older redheaded shaman approached each of us one by one. She smudged us with burning sage, an Aboriginal tradition to cleanse the spirit. She then took a big shell full of blue paint and drew symbols on our faces, which must be a Celtic tradition of some kind. It appeared to me that she drew dots and lines in various formations depending on the person she approached. I cannot remember what she drew on me, but it gave me the feeling of being ready for a battle or journey, and of being blessed, like an initiation into the circle, an energetic tie to that space and the circle of women. We were instructed to whisper “all my relations” as we knelt on the cold earth as we entered the sweat lodge. This is an Aboriginal phrase used to honor our interconnectedness to all of creation. My eyes were wide with excitement of the unknown and I felt good for choosing to do something that would nourish my spirit.

The lodge itself was a dome like structure that was only about 4ft high and 20ft in circumference. Traditionally a sweat lodge was made of thin bent branches and covered by animal hides, but this one was covered with tarps and blankets. There was a pit in the middle of the lodge where the hot rocks that had been cooking in a fire for hours would be brought in one at a time. These rocks would soon be creating the intense heat that we would experience.

Black surrounded us, vision useless, the shamans began to sing. After the powerful singing was over, the shamans began to cackle in the dark, “we know why you’ve come, [pause] but now you’re too afraid, [pause] now you only sit in silence, [pause] but we know what you’re looking for.” At this point I became scared, this taunting was not what I expected. They were not as nurturing and gentle as I had predicted, but were testing us and urgently calling our spirits forth. At first I felt unsafe like they were casting a spell on us, but as they continued to speak, my inhibitions lessened and I realized that I was there to find my voice and to let go of everything. In turn, in that place where rebirth was possible, I found my voice and my fear and my pain as well as my fierce powerful spirit, a spirit that wasn’t afraid. Crying and singing we traveled the journey together for four rounds of singing, prayers and increasing heat.

When I emerged, when it was all over, I felt my eyes sparkle and my body light. I had seen my darkness, my fear. I had looked at my loneliness, at my desire to be accepted and always to do the right thing, and my inability to feel connected, and I had screamed in the darkness. I had, in the lodge, risen up over all the things that bound me and I had felt my true strength. I knew then, that it was going to be possible to live my spirit. I knew that my darkness and fears were not going to bind me forever. I knew that it was going to be possible to overcome them.

I must pause here to comment that many years later, after attending other sweats led by other non-Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia, BC and Ontario, I finally attended a traditional Aboriginal sweat in Toronto led by an Aboriginal healer. Upon reflection, the non-Aboriginal sweats were quite different from the traditional Aboriginal sweats, and I fear that they were practiced with unintentional cultural appropriation. All the sweat lodges I attended were extremely healing and meaningful to me, but after attending the traditional sweat I wondered exactly how the other people were taught and by whom? Maybe the discrepancy was because of the different practices of each nation, I’m not sure. There were similarities in terms of the

physical structure of the sweat lodges, the heating of the rocks, saying “all my relations,” the darkness, the feeling of spiritual renewal and purification. But the prayers of the traditional Aboriginal sweat were all in Ojibway and I was instructed not to sing the songs because I did not know the meaning and had not yet been taught. Interestingly in this sweat led by a traditional Aboriginal healer I felt like an invited guest, but an outsider. I had not experienced this feeling at the other sweat lodges. Maybe this is because the others were led and attended by non-Aboriginal people like me. I am not sure what this means, but I have a feeling that sacred Aboriginal healing traditions are sometimes being practiced by non-Aboriginal people without authenticity. And I have started to ask the question, does this harm?

A year after my first sweat, I got my first job as a Registered Nurse in general medicine at a hospital in British Columbia. I appreciated working in acute care and felt I was doing important work. However, the relationship with clients was short and rushed. I craved to know more about their lives and what had brought them into the hospital. What had gone wrong that resulted in them needing care from me? I did not want to merely bandage them up, pump them full of drugs and send them home. I wanted to be involved in keeping them healthy and preventing the hospitalization in the first place. I knew within a few months of working in acute care that I wanted to nurse in a community setting in health promotion and illness prevention where I would work with clients in a truly holistic way to help them be as healthy as possible. I wanted to provide a place to talk about physical health, but also have time and the capacity to address emotional and spiritual wellness. I wanted to provide care in a way that honored the complex elements and relationships between mind, body, the spirit and emotions that make up who I am and who my clients are. I wanted to be a nurse that recognized the importance of relationships, community and the stories we tell that shape our lives.

I asked myself where I could find such a nursing job that held my values regarding the environment, holistic health, spirituality, community, and alternative ways of healing. I searched, and when nothing appeared, I decided to take a year off to explore other passions of mine. That year of travel and organic farming brought me back to my family in Ontario and to my great surprise and happiness, I interviewed at a community health center for Aboriginal People in Toronto and was hired. That job proved to be my all-time favourite working experience. I learned about primary care from experienced nurse practitioners and physicians, and about healing from traditional Aboriginal healers and healers' helpers. I was educated about Aboriginal health by first learning about colonization and then Aboriginal ways of knowing and traditional health practices and beliefs. I also learned a great deal from the stories of my clients.

After I started working, I often spoke about my new job with friends and family (all non-Aboriginal) and was shocked to hear many misinformed, covertly racist comments about the state of Aboriginal affairs and health. Themes of the comments revolved around alcohol abuse, corruption, violence, laziness, non-tax payers, and demanding/expecting "us" to take care of "them." I heard little to no mention of colonization, the Indian Act, racist government policies, or intergenerational trauma. Instead I heard comments such as, "why are they even still on reserves?" "Why do they always have their hand out?", "they are violent and drunk", "we should just give them each \$80,000 and be done with it." These comments were from educated, middle class people who were raised in Canada and had never learned much about colonization and had never met an Aboriginal person in their life, or at least they thought they had not.

After hearing so many ignorant and inappropriate comments, I spent a lot of my time outside of working hours talking about colonization, the Indian Act, residential school, current government policies, and the effect of racism and oppression on individual and collective identity and health behaviours. I reflected on my education as a child and indeed found that the stereotype

of the peaceful noble savage and the hunter-gatherer, had been taught. As well, the stereotypical Indian warrior was presented to us as a story of futile resistance during the time when colonizers came to North America. Because of these stereotypes when I was a child I had a romantic notion of Aboriginal life. For me it existed only in the past and I wished that I could visit a longhouse or a teepee, I had a feeling I would have liked it there. In school, I heard no mention of residential schools or the extent and harm of the Indian Act. Even in today's media, you hear stories of land claim disputes and addictions on reservations, or you see pictures of traditional Pow Wow dancers and artists (Knopf, 2010). But these caricatures are locked in time. They do not provide a real and dynamic and layered picture into the lives of Aboriginal people today.

After a year and a half working at the centre, I returned to school to complete my Master of Nursing degree. I planned to focus on Aboriginal health and healing. I became immersed in the current literature and it was evident that little was known about the lives of urban Aboriginal men and their participation in the Toronto community. I started to think about my personal clinical experience and the transient nature of most of my male clients. I remembered many of them as being estranged from their families, having experienced various types of abuse, and were often in low paying jobs and experiencing degrees of homelessness. From the teachings I received from nursing with Aboriginal people, I knew that the center of the Aboriginal community was the family, and then I thought about what it means to have the center of the community, the web that holds it together, be broken. I am not trying to say that all Aboriginal men are absent from family life, or that all Aboriginal communities are broken. But from what I saw and experienced, when I looked at the elements of family and their role in supporting the community, I understood the complexity for those trying to heal it. During this time, The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (McCaskill, FitzMaurice, & Cidro, 2011) was published and it echoed what I had seen during my

clinical practice and it called for more research to be completed with the Aboriginal male population of Toronto.

So how did I find myself at this place, about to make the journey into the lived experiences of urban Aboriginal men? How did all of my stories, memories, and choices bring me to this point? Is it because this land is in my body as it is in all the bodies of people who live here long enough? Is it because smudge and the sweat lodge made my spirit stronger? Is it because Anishnawbe Health Toronto was the only place I have nursed where I could engage in the type of healing and health that made sense to me? Is it because I want equity? Is it because I come from a community that needs to hear the stories I am about to hear? It is all these things woven together in this cloth of time that have centered me at this place. It is the subtle and obvious threads that connect us to our purpose and wishes. It is the opportunity that does not make sense at first, but when you know the story, you can see the path that was taken, connecting the past with the present and the future.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND, PROBLEM STATEMENT, PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION, AND
SIGNIFICANCE

Background

Where are the positive stories about and images of Aboriginal men in Toronto? Why do I so often hear stories in the media and/or perpetuated by dominant discourse about Aboriginal men that involve drunkenness, violence, laziness, and entitlement? Have the stories about the Aboriginal male warrior-caregivers, fathers, leaders, and healers disappeared? How do urban Aboriginal men find a positive sense of self within the often racist and discriminatory larger society? How does living amongst negative stereotypes affect their sense of health and wellness? From my nursing experience at a community health center for Aboriginal people where I worked with some of the Aboriginal population of Toronto I came to know many male Aboriginal clients and colleagues who do not look anything like the stereotypical images that are often portrayed. I pause here to acknowledge that some Aboriginal people embrace the term Aboriginal while others do not. One of my participants explained that it is a colonizing term created by the Canadian government to group all First Peoples together. Many First Peoples prefer to identify themselves with the name of their Nation or Band such as Ojibway, Cree, Inuit, and so on. However, I chose to use the term Aboriginal for this study because it is currently the most widely accepted term for First Peoples of North America.

The Aboriginal community health centre where I worked is situated in downtown Toronto. Their mission is to “improve the health and well being of Aboriginal people in spirit, mind, emotion and body by providing traditional healing within a multi-disciplinary health care model (AHT, 2012, p.1)”. The center services some of the most marginalized Aboriginal people in the city, many facing homelessness, poverty, and chronic illness. Additionally a middle class Aboriginal population seeking culturally safe health care also accesses the centre. From my clients I heard stories of abuse, addiction, heartbreak, and struggle. However, I also heard stories of humour and strength, and saw various degrees of success and health and well-being. I found

that many of my clients and colleagues were similar to other people in Toronto (with a significantly different history and ancestral culture), living the trial and error of life, and doing healthy things for their relationships, jobs, families, and communities.

The large majority of non-Aboriginal people know little of the past or present reality facing the 70,000 (McCaskill, et al., 2011) Aboriginal people of Toronto. Non-Aboriginal peoples' knowledge of Aboriginal people often comes from literature, storytelling, and popular media that exhibit caricatures of Aboriginal people that are locked in time (Anderson, 2008; King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009). The caricatures that are often presented are the drunken Indian, the noble-savage, the troublemaker, the abuser, the absent parent, and the criminal (Anderson, 2008; Cherubini, 2008; King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009). These racialized characters did not always exist. They were constituted as a result of and shaped by colonization, which aimed to disempower, suppress, and defeat the Aboriginal people of this land (Tang & Browne, 2008). These racialized characters profoundly influence the larger society's understanding and attitudes towards Aboriginal people (Berry, 1990). They often dehumanize the individual Aboriginal person and lead to generalizations and justification of racism and discrimination (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). They can prevent "us" from seeing and relating to Aboriginal people in an empathetic and personal way. Furthermore, this racism and oppression can limit Aboriginal people's capacity for health and wellness by negatively influencing their personal identity as feeling worthless and oppressed (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010; Tang & Browne, 2008).

Identity is your sense of self. It is about asking the question "who am I" and coming to know the answer over the course of your life through stories and storytelling. An individual's identity is not static but constantly evolving (King et al, 2009; Taylor & Usborne, 2010). Personal identity is formed through our notion of how others view us and what they expect of us (Batory,

Bak, Oleś, & Puchalska-Wasyl, 2010). It is the complex negotiation between the stories we tell about ourselves and the perceived stories told by others about who we are (Batory et al., 2010). Furthermore, personal identity is greatly influenced by the cultural identity (which is a type of collective identity that can be related to ethnicity but not always) to which an individual self identifies (Frideres, 2008).

Often, it is the stories that you tell about yourself that inform and create wellness and/or distress (Batory et al., 2010). We learn *who we are* and how to make sense of the world through stories (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010). Stories have the ability to influence collective and personal identity and are central elements to wellbeing and/or distress (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). Children need positive role models and stories to help shape a positive sense of self and wellbeing (Ball & Manahan, 2007; Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Part of the vision of the community health centre for Aboriginal people in Toronto is “...[Aboriginal] children with a strong sense of identity and the confidence to participate as equals in a Native and non-Native environment” (AHT, 2012, p.1). However, it is said that there is a lack of Aboriginal role models, specifically males, and stories about how to live well, honouring one’s self, family and community (Mussell, 2005). A major reason for this lack of stories is colonization (Mussell, 2005).

Colonization of Aboriginal people in Canada was a purposeful act aiming to acculturate Aboriginal people to European culture in order to make them civilized (Quinn, 2007). This goal was attempted through the illegalization of cultural practices, loss of land, the creation of reservations, and controlling all aspects of life for Aboriginal people (Twigg & Hengen, 2009). The actions and policies that accompanied colonization disrupted important culturally defining features such as language, family structure, economic institutions, parenting, and ultimately, stories (McCabe, 2007; Quinn, 2007). Research suggests that both Aboriginal men and women experienced restricting of traditional roles and therefore trauma to their individual and cultural

identities. This trauma to Aboriginal identity, often results in embodied oppression and disenfranchisement, where Aboriginal people incorporate negative stereotypes into their sense of self and sometimes, act out these negative beliefs and expectations in their health behaviours (Adelson, 2005). The socioeconomic and physical health issues of poverty, addictions, and violence are expressions of trauma that have been passed from generation to generation through adults' behaviour that children model themselves after as well as from the stories that the children are told of who they will become (Menzies, 2007).

Interestingly, some research suggests that colonization resulted in increased trauma to Aboriginal male identity (King, et al., 2009; Mussell, 2005). Female roles such as childrearing, domestic life, and caring for the family are thought to have carried on whereas male Aboriginal roles such as hunting, fishing, building, and protecting were largely restricted, resulting in a devalued sense of self (Ball & Manahan, 2007; King, et al., 2009). This difference in trauma to identity between Aboriginal men and women is currently exemplified by research findings stating that Aboriginal women in Toronto are more likely than Aboriginal men to own a home, attend university, hold a management level employment and so on (McCaskill, et al., 2011). Furthermore, research exploring the identity, lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal men is lacking as the majority of research conducted with Aboriginal communities often focuses on women or the community as a whole (McCaskill, et al., 2011). It is for these reasons that the focus of this study is on Aboriginal men and the formation of identity.

The stereotypes, perpetuated by dominant discourse, are oppressive and discriminating and have devastating effects on the lives, health, and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, specifically men (Tang & Browne, 2008). The dominant discourse of lazy, drunken, worthless "Indian" can be embodied by the Aboriginal men, believing that is all they are. As one of my past male clients told me, he just lived the prophecy of the worthless Indian. Dominant discourse combined with

systematic stressors can inform the construction of a negative sense of self, which makes achieving wellness difficult, if not, impossible. Additionally, these negative discourses place health care practitioners at risk for providing care based on erroneous assumptions. Stereotypes can influence practitioners' assessments and plans of care, making many health services inequitable and marginalizing by negating an understanding of the complex and historical context of the Aboriginal men's life (Shah & Reeves, 2012).

I pause to share a story about when I truly realized the impact of oppression and how it becomes embodied:

He sits in front of me, in my small assessment room. His thin salt and pepper hair is tied back under his baseball cap. His cheeks are slightly sunken, his face deeply lined. He has come to seek healing after his latest suicide attempt – he wants to be healed by his people, with his culture and teachings, so that he can be strong. He has come to tell his story. He weaves me through his lived experience of residential school, having his hair cut and his arms beaten. He speaks about the nun's prophesy that he would be a worthless nobody.

He turns to me and says “and you know what? It came true, I am a nobody. I have tried to kill myself many times, and have never succeeded.”

This client shared with me the impact that a negative story, repeated over and over, had on him. The belief that he is a nobody and therefore unworthy of value and life. His story also highlights the importance of healing within a culturally safe space and the power of retelling your culture's story, which thereby changes your personal story.

Problem Statement

It is said that there is a need for positive stories about urban Aboriginal males and their identity (Mussell, 2005). In this study, positive stories are referred to as strength-based narratives. Strength-based narratives focus on working with people in such a way that strength, talent,

competencies, and possibilities are the emphasis rather than deficits and problems (Saleebey, 1996). These positive stories about one's family, community and culture are essential to health and wellness as these stories profoundly influence one's sense of self, which in turn can impact health behaviours and levels of wellness and/or distress (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). Most research completed with Aboriginal communities focuses on the community as a whole or on Aboriginal women, creating a gap in knowledge and literature about the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal men (Mussell, 2005). Furthermore, current literature, stories and popular media contain an abundance of negative stereotypical images of Aboriginal males that are derived from and historically steeped in colonial issues. These images have become stories. These stories are sometimes embodied in the Aboriginal male, influencing their sense of self. Furthermore, these stories have created generalizations for non-Aboriginal people about *who* Aboriginal men are. These conclusions then influence attitudes, beliefs and behaviour that are often discriminating and marginalizing, which further perpetuate marginalization and inequitable environments for this population.

Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this strength-based narrative study was to explore the identity of Aboriginal men who are living a balanced life within the urban environment of Toronto. The primary research question was: How do Aboriginal men, living a balanced life in Toronto, narrate their identity? As identified later in this thesis, my recruitment strategies resulted in a sample of First Nations men only; thus, my research purpose and question were modified to focus on this specific group of Aboriginal people.

Significance

Stories have the power to invoke empathy, present dynamic characters, and provide new perspectives (Nelson, 2001; Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010). Through the sharing of these personal

narratives of identity, it is my hope that a better understanding will exist about the complex and historically-influenced lives of First Nations men living in Toronto. This research is significant because it provides Aboriginal youth and adults a glimpse of strength-based stories of First Nations men, their life paths and the factors that support living a balanced life in an urban setting. These narratives help to fill the demand for positive stories about urban First Nations men. Through these stories, an opportunity is created to make room for new understandings and beliefs about First Nations men. With understanding comes empathy and space to renegotiate misconceptions and negative stereotypes (Lapum, Ruttonsha, Church, Yau, & Matthews, 2011). Moreover, the sharing of these stories with nurses and other health care practitioners (which many include both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people) may influence the provision of care so that treatment of First Nations clients is provided in a more holistic manner based on cultural safety, acceptance, inclusion, equity, and justice. Please note I use the term First Nations instead of Aboriginal when discussing the significance due to the convenient sampling used in this study that resulted in a sample of First Nations men only.

CHAPTER 3

SYNTHESIS OF THE LITERATURE

At the Aboriginal organization (based predominantly on Ojibway beliefs) where I used to nurse, I was taught that in order for the Aboriginal people of Canada to heal they must develop a positive sense of self. At that organization, as well as at many other Aboriginal organizations focused on health, the emphasis is on teaching clients about traditional ways of life and about spiritual wellness, both of which support clients to find this positive sense of self (Twigg & Hengen, 2009; Quinn, 2007). I was taught that wellness for Aboriginal people included knowing their history, knowing about colonization, and importantly, knowing the stories and teachings of their grandmothers and grandfathers. In this chapter, I provide a synthesis of the literature to provide background to my research topic specific to: colonization and intergenerational trauma; the urban landscape; the health of urban Aboriginal people; identity theories; and Aboriginal individual and collective identity.

Colonization and Intergenerational Trauma

An influence on the lives, identities and health of Aboriginal people in Canada discussed in nearly all literature is colonization (Adelson, 2005; McCabe, 2007; Twigg & Hengen, 2009). There is consensus that colonization pervasively influences Aboriginal history, culture, and health so that one cannot understand current day circumstances without embedding it within this historical context (Adelson, 2005; Ball, 2009; Frideres, 2008; Menzies, 2007).

Having grown up in the Toronto school system, I thought my history classes painted a picture that, although biased towards European-White settlers, provided a somewhat accurate story of what happened during colonization and early Canadian history. I should not have been so naive. “Euro-Canadians, ...[are] profoundly unaware of the social realities of Aboriginal peoples” (King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009, p. 78). Canadian school curricula, popular media, and cultural stories are often based on myths, generalizations, and false one-sided misrepresentations of history (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010). These falsifications keep many Canadians in

the dark about our government's role of systematic oppression, exploitation, and isolation of Aboriginal people (Anderson, 2008; Cherubini, 2008; King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009).

Furthermore, these generalizations, myths, and stereotypes can create misconceptions so that many current day conversations among non-Aboriginal people regarding *what to do about issues facing Aboriginal people* are often ethnocentric and misguided. These conversations also extend into the health care arena where many health care practitioners have racial bias and cultural insensitivity towards Aboriginal clients (Frideres, 2008).

With these issues in mind, I present a brief critical account of Canadian history. Although this is not a comprehensive account, it will help to ensure that future discussions in this thesis stem from a place of common understanding and knowledge about the historical context that influences the current state of Aboriginal affairs. I must first acknowledge that I am by no means an expert in colonial actions and policies. Furthermore, I acknowledge that I am making generalizations to include policies and practices that happened across Canada but that each geographical area, nation, and province also has its own history.

Colonization of this land was planned, executed, and enforced first by the colonizing nations – namely the French and British - and then the Canadian government after confederation in 1867 (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010; RCAP, 1996). For the purpose of this thesis, colonization refers to the ethnocentric policies and processes that focused on organizing, categorizing, civilizing, and assimilating Aboriginal people of the territory that is now called Canada, to Euro-North American culture (Manzano-Munguia, 2011). The French, and to some extent the British, came to North America to fish, gather furs, explore and evangelize (RCAP, 1996). However, it is documented that in the early days of contact between European settlers and Aboriginal people (from the late 1400s to the mid 1700s) there existed relative respect (Leslie, 2002) in which social distance was maintained and partnerships in trade and military alliances existed (RCAP, 1996). It

is suggested that feelings of respect included appreciation with some apprehension of the differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples culture (Leslie, 2002; RCAP, 1996). This early contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people involved bartering, exchanging of goods, and some friendships and intermarriage (RCAP, 1996). Although non-Aboriginal accounts emphasize discovery of this new land, they were dependent on Aboriginal people to survive; the cautious co-operative relationship between the two groups continued until the nineteenth century (RCAP, 1996).

With Great Britain winning the Seven Years War came the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which claimed ownership of North America for King George III (RCAP, 1996). Interestingly, within this document it explicitly states that Indian lands and traditional territories are distinct and separate from colonial lands and that Indians have control and governance of their lands (Leslie, 2002; RCAP, 1996). Secondly, it laid out the policy and procedure for how the Crown could acquire Indian territories while having to provide protection for Indians and respecting their self governance (Leslie, 2002). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) indicates that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 is an important piece of legislation that lays out Aboriginal people's sovereignty and subsequent right to form treaties with the Crown and/or Canadian government.

Following the war of 1812 political and economic environments of North America changed (RCAP, 1996). As the settlers' population grew, the fur trade diminished and the Aboriginal population declined due to contracted disease, settlers wanted to create larger permanent colonies and Aboriginal peoples' use of land and way of life became seen as "savage" by non-Aboriginal people and as a barrier to the progress of the new colonies (RCAP, 1996). Relationships between Aboriginal people and European settlers shifted in which the focus was on acculturating Indians thereby eliminating the need for treaties and the accompanied benefits owed

to First Nations people (Leslie, 2002; RCAP, 1996;). The aim was simple, isolate Aboriginal people on reserves, convert them to Christianity, dress them in European cloths, and assimilate them to settler society, thereby eliminating Indian culture (Leslie, 2002).

In Upper Canada, an act in 1857, the Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes, further attempted to civilize Indians by providing means for First Nations males and unmarried women to give up their status in order to become enfranchised; this allowed them to own private property, attend university, and buy liquor, but it also meant they were no longer able to live on reserves or be members of their nation/tribe (Manzano-Munguia, 2011; RCAP, 1996). Much to the disappointment of the governmental officials whose goal was to enforce the notion of “civility”, First Nations people resisted voluntary assimilation, outwardly opposed enfranchisement, and only one man, Elias Hill, is known to have accepted enfranchisement (Leslie, 2002; RCAP, 1996).

Confederation of Canada occurred in 1867 and it was accompanied by the British North American Act (Leslie, 2002). This act stipulated responsibility for Status Indians transfer from the Crown to the federal government of Canada, no other groups were included such as Métis or Inuit – Inuit people were not recognized until 1939 and Métis were not recognized as Aboriginal people until 1982 (RCAP, 1996). The British North American Act itself gave authority for the Canadian government to be the *guardian* of Status Indians (Menzies, 2007). As the Aboriginal storyteller Dr. Lee Maracle said at a lecture, “For Aboriginal people, our Prime Minister is the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and we don’t vote them in” (Maracle, 2012). Furthermore the Enfranchisement Act of 1869 gave extensive control to the federal government, specifically Indian affairs department over life on reserves (RCAP, 1996). Subsequently the Indian Acts of 1876, 1880, and 1884 codified these existing acts and allotted the federal government power to control all aspects of life on the reserves in order to increase assimilation (RCAP, 1996). For

example, the government controlled band council activities, reserve resources and commerce, and education of Indian children as well as outlawed ceremonies such as the potlatch and sun dance (RCAP, 1996).

The Indian Act further defined who was a Status Indian and who is non-status (such as Métis and Inuit) (RCAP, 1996). Originally, in 1850, Indians included all persons of Indian blood, all persons intermarried with Indians and residing amongst them, all children of mixed marriages residing amongst Indians, and all persons adopted by such Indians (RCAP, 1996). However as the Act was amended it gave unequal treatment to men and women. Status Indian women – and their respective children - who married anyone who was not a Status Indian lost their status and were forced to leave their reserve communities, thereby being forced to enfranchise and lose their treaty rights and benefits (Leslie, 2002; RCAP, 1996). This categorizing of Aboriginal people has resulted in the notion of the Status Indian and governs who is a *legitimate* “Indian” (Maracle, 2012).

In 1880, to further force civility and assimilation, the government announced an education policy (Leslie, 2002; Manzano-Munguia, 2011). This was the birth of the horrendous residential school system and trend of child apprehensions into non-Aboriginal homes that has left a legacy of collective trauma for the Aboriginal people of Canada (Leslie, 2002; Menzies, 2007; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). Residential school policy was based on two reports, the Bagot Commission of 1842 and the Davin Report of 1879 (Manzano-Munguia, 2011). Both stated that in order to assimilate Indian children to European and Christian values and beliefs, they must be taken from their home and communities and have limited contact with their families; this would ensure they did not learn Aboriginal values, beliefs and language, and it would ensure that they lost their identity (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010; Frideres, 2008).

Of relevance to the residential school system, is the influence of a historical figure that my university is named after. Dr. Egerton Ryerson wrote a report in 1847 on industrial schools and recommended the use of such schools for Indian children (Ryerson, 1847). He recommended that Indian children be trained only as agricultural laborers and given only education related to labour, English and religion. Religion was to pervade all aspects of the schools and children were to labour for 8 to 12 hours a day with 2 to 4 hours for instruction (Ryerson, 1847). Dr. Ryerson goes into specific details of how the schools should be run in order to make efficient laborers out of Indian children (Ryerson, 1847). These recommendations were implemented and actualized for the next 100 years (RCAP, 1996). This history, like many other aspects of Canadian history, is not commonly discussed or well known (King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009). Ryerson University has recognized this troubling history (Ryerson University, 2010), however it remains unknown to much of the student body and disturbingly connects the namesake of my current place of study to a legacy of trauma.

Residential school became mandatory, enforced by imprisonment of parents who refused to send their children to these schools (Quinn, 2007). Schools were built in all territories and provinces except for New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island (RCAP, 1996). All Aboriginal children were registered, even Métis and Inuit children (RCAP, 1996). The first schools for Inuit children were constructed later than Indian residential schools as Christian missionaries formed them in the 1930s (RCAP, 1996). As for Métis children, their formal education by Catholic missionaries started in the 1800s mostly in the Red River area (Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels, 2006). Some Métis children attended Indian residential schools especially if they were believed to live like Indians. In fact, approximately nine percent of children who attended these schools identified as Métis (Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels, 2006). However, because the government claimed no responsibility for them under the Indian Act, some children

were expelled from federally funded schools and not allowed to participate in provincially funded schools; essentially no formal education was provided for these children (Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels, 2006). That being said, the Métis people's culture and wellbeing have been greatly impacted by the experience of residential schools (Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels, 2006).

These schools were chronically underfunded which led to unsanitary conditions and inadequately trained staff (Hill, 2009). Students were banned from speaking in their language, practicing their culture, and seeing their parents (Quinn, 2007). They had their hair cut and were often subjected or witnesses to emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010). It is reported that child mortality rates at residential schools were anywhere from 35 to 60 percent (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). It is estimated that over 50,000 children died with many of their corpses unaccounted for (Annett, 2001; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). Many of the children died from beatings, torture, malnourishment, preventable diseases, tuberculosis, and/or denial of medical treatment (Annett, 2001). The children that survived often experienced isolation, shame, grief, and anger (Menzies, 2007). Many children became socially dysfunctional due to the traumas and loss of cultural Aboriginal identity (Frideres, 2008). They were left with broken spirits, stripped of their Aboriginal culture and identity, unable to pass it onto their children (Frideres, 2008). Indeed, children who attended residential school or were placed in non-Aboriginal foster or adoptive homes, often lost their language, culture, traditional knowledge and connection to their family and community. This had a huge impact on individuals' sense of self and self-esteem as well as their ability to engage in parenting and intimate relationships – both of which are primarily learned behaviours. Cultural identity provides the script for everyday life; when this is lost, social norms and values are also often lost causing confusion about one's place, role and sense of self in the world (Taylor & Usborne, 2010).

It is important to highlight that colonial practices and the consequences are not a thing of the past. The last residential school did not close until 1996 (Lavallée & Poole, 2010). Furthermore, the alarmingly high rates of apprehension of Aboriginal children into non-Aboriginal families that started in the 1960s continues to this day (Ball, 2009; Menzies, 2007). In the 1960s the government started to phase out mandatory residential schools, this was also the start of the Sixties Scoop, which further acted to acculturate First Nations children but under the guise of removing them from their “unfit” parents and placing them in the non-Aboriginal child welfare system where they still suffered attacks on their Aboriginal identity (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010).

For over 100 years, hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal children grew up in environments with a culture that was not theirs (Leslie, 2002), and which was often abusive (Quinn, 2007). Children who attended residential schools never learned family values, how to express love, or parenting knowledge (Menzies, 2007). Instead they learned the legacy that providing care for children is based on “punishment, abuse, coercion and control” (Menzies, 2007, p. 372). The impact of being removed from family at an early age and the denial of cultural learning and practices can profoundly affect sense of self and wellbeing. Being removed from family often meant there was no possibility for receiving comfort, cultural knowledge, and language (Maracle, 2012). Additionally, when this is experienced “by more than one generation, personal trauma becomes institutionalized within a family” (Menzies, 2007, p. 371). The individual and collective trauma experienced during residential school or growing up in foster care, is passed on to children of survivors through dysfunctional behaviours related to interpersonal relationships (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010; Menzies, 2007).

The Indian Act has seen some revisions such as Bill C-31, which allowed women who had married non-Status men as well as some generations of children to reclaim their Indian

Status. Furthermore, the federal government has established some funds for Aboriginal healing (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2001). In 2008 there was an apology made by the Prime Minister of Canada to the Aboriginal people of Canada that acknowledged the government's role in residential schools, admitting they were wrong, and sorry for the pain and suffering that resulted (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2001). Some say the apology was meaningful and allowed them to start healing. Others say it was insincere and/or irrelevant (informal conversations with clients and colleagues at Anishnawbe Health Toronto between 2010 to 2012). Regardless of how people feel about the apology, most agree that racism and discrimination towards Aboriginal people as well as intergenerational trauma still continues (Menzies, 2007). Menzies speculates that this is because violence against Aboriginal people is often embedded in social structures in such a way as to be unrecognized and hidden. Furthermore, due to the economic dependence and external control of power, many Aboriginal people have internalized the Indian Act (Frideres, 2008). This is due to the right to receive treaty rights and government support as well as the pervasive "other-ing" of the "Indian savages" (Frideres, 2008). The legacy of colonization has caused insidious trauma and left Aboriginal people with anger, learned helplessness, dysfunctional families and community structures, poor health, and high rates of substance abuse, which are symptoms of internalized colonialism (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010; Gracey & King, 2009). Residential school disrupted the notion of home and created an experience of displacement for children who attended them (Quinn, 2007).

Into the Urban Landscape

The trend of urbanization for Aboriginal people in Canada started in the 1950s (McCaskill, et al., 2011). Aboriginal people often migrated to the city for increased opportunities such as employment and education (McCaskill, et al., 2011). It is said that originally for many Aboriginal people the move into the city was a difficult one full of discrimination, racism, limited

resources and struggle (Frideres, 2008). However, over 50 years later, there now exist unique vibrant communities in many Canadian cities (Frideres, 2008). More than 50 percent of the over 1 million Aboriginal people in Canada now live in urban settings (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012) and in many urban settings Aboriginal people from different nations are creating a community and culture together (McCaskill, FitzMaurice, & Cidro, 2011). There is an emergence of a distinctive urban pan-indigenous identity, which has not been seen before (Frideres, 2008)

In 2010, Environics Institute undertook a large study titled “The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study” (UAPS). The aim was to understand the reality of Aboriginal people living in urban environments with regards to their identity, experiences, values, and aspirations (Environics Institute 2010). They found that the majority of Aboriginal people living in urban environments were the first generation to live in an urban setting and that individuals came to Toronto for employment, further education or to be closer to family (Environics Institute, 2010). Additionally, the majority of participants had pride and respect for their Aboriginal identity which was influenced by education in both academic and cultural venues, having a mentor, and having knowledge of family heritage (Environics Institute, 2010). Many Aboriginal people living in urban environments call the city home and have no plans to return to their community of origin (Environics Institute, 2010). Despite this sense of pride and feeling at home, it was found that the majority of Aboriginal people feel invisible and discriminated against by the larger non-Aboriginal community (Environics Institute, 2010). It is noteworthy to mention that limitations of this study include a skewed sampling consisting of many post-secondary students with 50% of the sample having completed a diploma or degree. This skewed sample is in contrast with the reports that approximately 20% of the Aboriginal population in Canada has attended post-secondary education or higher (Adelson, 2005) As a result, the findings are not fully representative of the urban Aboriginal population.

During the same time that the UAPS was taking place across Canada, a local study was happening called the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) led by researcher, Don McCaskill (2011). TARP explored the lives of Aboriginal men, woman, children, and elders in Toronto looking at many concepts including successes, challenges, and social determinants of health. Over 1,400 people participated and seven methodologies were used including photovoice, case studies, and quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews (McCaskill et al., 2011). Key findings indicate widespread poverty for this population and at the same time a growing middle class (McCaskill et al., 2011). They found that Aboriginal people experience plenty of racism in Toronto but also felt they had vibrant cultures and a growing art scene (McCaskill et al., 2011). Pertinent to my study, TARP reported that Aboriginal men in Toronto were less likely than Aboriginal women to own a home, be married, raise children, obtain a university education, or have high paying employment with job security (McCaskill et al., 2011). However, Aboriginal men interviewed in this study expressed several factors that supported their success in life including educational attainment, employment, stable family life, a successful healing journey, and access to Aboriginal culture (McCaskill, et al., 2011). The following is an insightful quote from a key informant about the importance of culture to living a balanced, successful life: “It is always the same ... those who are successful are that way because they have balanced themselves culturally (McCaskill et al., 2011, p.133).” This statement exemplifies the role that culture plays in having a balanced life.

Recommendations from this research relevant to my study are 1) that more research must be conducted with Aboriginal men in Toronto to better understand their situation and 2) that the complex formation of individual and collective identities for Aboriginal people in Toronto is unanswered in research and should be examined. Noted limitations of TARP include recruiting participants from many people through their use of social services and a small sample size of

Aboriginal men, only 39 percent of respondents for the community survey were men, making generalizability questionable.

Health of Urban Aboriginal People

Disparities of mortality and morbidity rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people within urban settings are staggering (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012). There is a gap in life expectancy between Status Indians and the general Canadian population of approximately seven years, despite similar geographical access to services (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012). Urban Aboriginal people rate their health as fair/poor in comparison to the non-Aboriginal population (Frideres, 2008). Infant mortality rates are 40 percent higher for Status Indians than the general Canadian population (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012). Furthermore, both Aboriginal men and women are more likely than non-Aboriginal adults to have a smoking addiction or a chronic condition such as diabetes, and feelings of sadness or depression (Adelson, 2005; AFN, 2005; Kirmayer et al., 2000), as well suicidal ideation is twice as high (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012). Low levels of social determinants of health such as low income, employment rates, and levels of education, are experienced by many urban Aboriginal people (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012; McCaskill et al., 2011). This is often due to systematic issues of racism and discrimination, and intergenerational trauma (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012). Additionally, it is reported that Aboriginal people experience discrimination and care that is not culturally safe from health care practitioners (Shah & Reeves, 2012).

Not enough is known on the topic of urban Aboriginal health as this is an understudied topic (Wilson & Cardwell, 2012). However, more researchers are taking notice and in the last several years there have been a number of research projects that have commented on the urban population of Aboriginal people (Environics Institute, 2010; Lavallée, 2009; McCaskill, et al., 2011; Restoule, 2008; Wilson & Cardwell, 2012). These studies largely focus on the health of

urban Aboriginal people by exploring different concepts such as identity, health inequality, lifestyle, access to resources, and so on. I, personally approached my study of urban Aboriginal people with a focus on men's narratives from the perspective that a sense of self influences health and wellness. Therefore, I discuss identity theories that explain how we come to know who we are.

How do I know who I am: Identity Theories

How important is one's sense of self (a term interchangeable with identity) to health and wellbeing? Can families and communities be healthy when individuals belonging to these groups either do not know who they are and/or have negative beliefs about their personal identity? It is argued that without a positive sense of self, an individual will not experience psychological wellbeing (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). Furthermore, a personal identity based on negative beliefs about oneself – often accompanied by others' perceived negative or low expectations of a person – may be lived out in an individual's relationships, behaviours, and choices (Frideres, 2008). Therefore, one's sense of self affects all aspects of life including health and community. Kirmayer et al. (2000) discuss the link between personal identity and mental wellness, eluding that a traumatized cultural identity will negatively impact an individual identity and this increases rates of depression, suicide, and violence.

Drawing upon the theory of self, Taylor and Usborne (2010) explain the primary role that cultural identity plays in shaping and influencing individual identity and wellbeing. Cultural identity is the “socially constructed set of norms, values and behaviours that act as a guiding framework for group members” (Taylor & Usborne, 2010, p. 99). Cultural identity (which is a type of collective identity) plays a specifically important role in forming an individual's identity as it provides a behaviour script for everyday life (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). If a traumatized and/or negative cultural identity exists, this can influence a person to have a negative personal

identity (Frideres, 2008; Taylor & Usborne, 2010). Members of the same culture have a shared history and often share similar family structures, child rearing practices, and ways of making meaning of the world (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). Furthermore, cultural identity cannot exist without opportunities for cultural expression such as rites of passage, economic structures, and ceremonies, as well as the sharing of knowledge and social constructs such as values, language, and beliefs (King, et al., 2009).

The formation of personal identity is a complex negotiation between one's sense of self and others' perceived ideas, beliefs and understanding about a person (Nelson, 2001). Stories are important agents of this identity formation, as identity is formed through a dialogical process and internal dialogue (Batory et al., 2010). One's sense of self is never finite or complete; it is in constantly changing *storied* negotiation between "internal complexity and the external world" (Batory et al., 2010, p 28). Dialogical theory recognizes the multiplicity of roles (teacher, father, victim, manager, and so on) and the influence of external agents (peers, family, employers, historical events) that play in the formation of individual identity (Batory et al., 2010). This theory provides room to account for external factors that can be oppressive, racist, and/or marginalizing and how they can be internalized within individual identity. Societal assumptions and expectations about a group of people and the resultant discrimination or acceptance influence identity construction (Lavallée & Poole, 2010; Nelson, 2001). Stories told by others about an individual, can influence the individual's own story and his/her personal identity and behaviour (Nelson, 2001). Powerful social systems, such as the present Eurocentric Western-based Canadian culture, act to shape both cultural and individual identities and stories about who various groups of people are and how they should be treated. Thus, stories are powerful agents that have the potential to heal and/or damage cultural and individual identity (Nelson, 2001; Taylor & Usborne, 2010).

Aboriginality: Individual and Cultural Identity

Aboriginal cultural identity is often constructed by language, culture, geographical location and the political landscape (Kirmayer, et al., 2000). The notion of a singular Aboriginal identity is a Western colonial construct that aims to police and control Aboriginal culture and identity (Frideres, 2008; Kirmayer, et al., 2000). However, as this thesis is using the political definition and grouping of Aboriginal people, discussions focus on the pan-Aboriginal urban culture.

Contemporary Aboriginal cultural identity appears to be negotiated in a dance between *traditional ways*, the modern life, and the *other* relating to non-Aboriginal society and the static colonial images of the male “Indian’s” long braid, bare chest and moccasins (Frideres, 2008). Identity for the new generation of Aboriginal people is about maintaining the feeling and accompanied expressions of being Aboriginal which often includes symbolic association, linguistics, and connection to an Aboriginal community and behaviours (Frideres, 2008). Cultural identity – based on ethnicity - is formed through one or two aspects, 1) self-identification with a cultural ethnic group and 2) behavioural or symbolic gestures of belonging to a cultural ethnic group (Frideres, 2008). Behavioural or symbolic gestures consist of values, beliefs, language, ceremonies and so on (Frideres, 2008). Whether identity is behavioural or symbolic is largely related to spatial approximation to the cultural group (Frideres, 2008). Furthermore, part of a person’s sense of self is formed in relation to their cultural identity (Frideres, 2008). However, it is suggested that some Aboriginal people today lack cultural pride due to internalized oppression and the stigma of identifying as Aboriginal (Lavallée & Poole, 2010). It is posited that one aspect of healing Aboriginal identities in Canada requires reconstructing positive stories among Aboriginal people as well as non-Aboriginal people (Lavallée & Poole, 2010).

And now...?

The formation of individual and cultural identity is complex, dynamic and storied. History as well as political, social, and economic environments influences both individual and cultural identity. Furthermore, individual and cultural identity requires space for expression as well as positive reinforcement (King et al., 2009). A positive sense of self is supported by a positive cultural identity, both are crucial for wellness (Taylor and Usborne, 2010).

Specific to the identity of Aboriginal people living in the urban environment is the experience of being embedded in a largely non-Aboriginal, discriminatory, and marginalizing culture (McCaskill, et al., 2011). Traditional Aboriginal identity was connected to the land, community, and traditional gender roles, but this has been disrupted. With a focus on Aboriginal males, I pause to ask, what is the identity of today's urban First Nations male? How does his story of identity influence his sense of health and wellbeing? How do the negative, racist discourses about First Nations men, which are so prevalent in today, influence his identity and thereby wellness?

Research is required that explores First Nations men's identity within urban environments in ways that do not perpetuate the stories common to media and Western discourse. I believe that in order to do this we need to use a strength-based approach which also encompasses using Indigenized perspectives of resilience (Kirmayer, et al., 2011) and strength. Such a perspective involves a social-ecological view of resilience that recognizes adaptation, revitalization, and reconciliation rather than only individual traits such as hardiness and intelligence (Kirmayer, et al., 2011). This perspective is based on the idea that strength is dynamic and based within context. It is important to use such a perspective in order to draw out strengths and pivotal events from stories that are meaningful to Aboriginal people; otherwise, the alternative is to continue to inflict a colonial lens upon Aboriginal identity. This approach of strength-based Indigenous

perspectives will support stories of identity that will illuminate dynamic contemporary Aboriginality and dispel negative stereotypes based on static colonial images of First Nations men. To reiterate, the purpose of this strength-based narrative study was to explore the identity of First Nations men who are living a balanced life within the urban environment of Toronto. The primary research question is: How do First Nations, living a balanced life in Toronto, narrate their identity?

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL LENS AND METHODOLOGY

To choose a theoretical lens for a study is no small task. It is a deliberative process to determine the lens through which I explore and interpret the research phenomenon. It informs the philosophical underpinnings and beliefs that give meaning to the research (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers must be explicit about the paradigm(s) and theoretical lens(s) that guide their research, as it is through those lenses that they ask questions and interpret data (Creswell, 2007). In this chapter, I first describe the theoretical lens and the research methodology that I employed in this study as well as issues related to ethics. I then outline the methods pertaining to recruitment, data collection, and data analysis, rigour and dissemination.

Theoretical Lens

As a theoretical lens for this study, I chose what is referred to as Two-Eyed Seeing to help me make sense of urban Aboriginal men's narrative accounts of identity. This is an interwoven capacity to embrace both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing (Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012). I provide some personal context first before I proceed into the details of this theoretical lens.

Prior to determining the theoretical lens for this research, I began by reflecting upon my own paradigmatic beliefs. The Western paradigm largely frames my worldview. Because of where and how I grew up and my positionality (documented in Chapter 1), this generally involves some level of individualism, hierarchical structures, whiteness, and patriarchy. In health care, this includes the biomedical model that gives precedence to objective ways of knowing the person specifically the physical body (Capra, 1982; Lapum, et al., 2008). My personal knowing is framed by the Western paradigm and also a way of knowing that is subjective, socially constructed, and influenced by cultural, historical, and political context. As I have grown older and become aware of how I see the world, feminist and anti-oppression theories have become meaningful lenses that help me make sense of my interpretations. These two theories have led me

to question dominant discourses and be conscious of power dynamics, oppression, and honouring different truths and experiences. However, I believe that the application of these lenses alone to this study would limit my capacity to understand First Nations men's narratives.

As a non-Aboriginal woman, I wanted to incorporate a way of knowing that was complementary with my substantive topic and would allow for an understanding of First Nations men's narratives. In discussions with my thesis committee, I became more aware that employing Indigenous ways of knowing as a theoretical lens would not be fully authentic as it would not recognize a way of knowing that was already present within me. Thus, I chose to recognize the Western paradigm and interweave it with Indigenous ways of knowing under the lens of Two-Eyed Seeing. This allowed me to Indigenize the research process while also legitimizing the "Western" aspects of the study such as the narrative methodology, setting, how interviews were conducted, and my own positionality as the researcher.

Mi'kmaw Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall developed the theory of Two-Eyed Seeing as a way to honour multiple perspectives by interweaving two vastly different knowledge systems, biomedical Western knowing and Indigenous ways of knowing (Bartlett et al., 2012). To elucidate this concept, I created a diagram of Two-Eyed Seeing adapted from Bartlett and Marshall (2010) with descriptive text from my understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and Western ways of knowing (see Figure 1).

Albert and Murdena Marshall believe that people can work with these two knowledge systems in a way where each is respected as valid and neither holds dominance over the other (Martin, 2012). Furthermore, it is encouraged that researchers weave back and forth between the two in order to better grasp the complex context and therefore come up with creative and innovative solutions to problems (Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Martin, 2012).

Two-Eyed Seeing

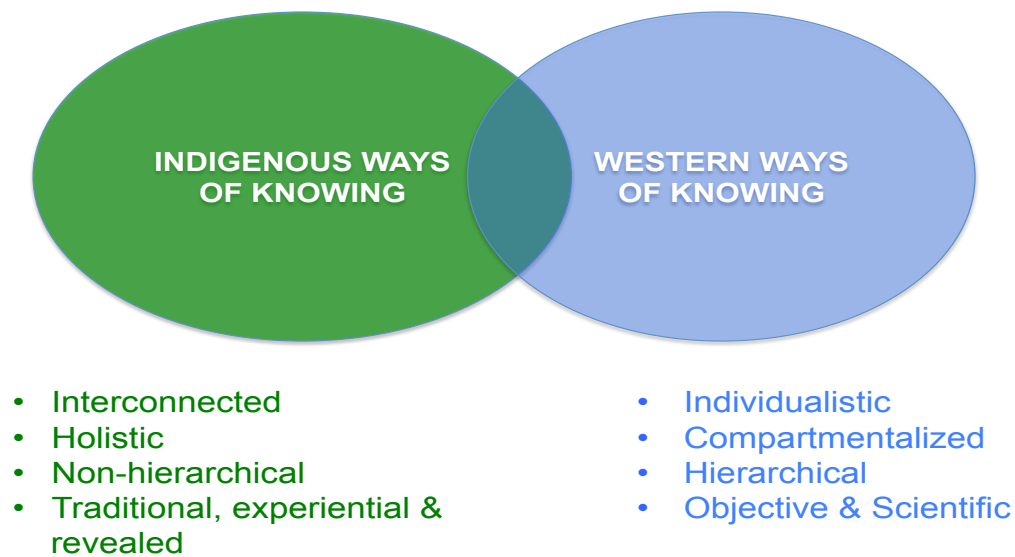


Figure 1: Two-Eyed Seeing (Adapted from Bartlett & Marshall, 2010)

Consequently, I applied my knowledge as a Western woman and Registered Nurse coupled with my knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing in approaching the research as well as the participants' stories of identity.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

In explaining Indigenous ways of knowing, I would like to re-emphasize that I am non-Aboriginal and so the information I present here is knowledge acquired through my clinical experiences and readings. I also acknowledge that there is vast cultural diversity within the Aboriginal community in Canada. However, I have attempted to use a lens that is said to hold meaning and be applicable to many Aboriginal groups in Canada (Gone, 2009; McCabe, 2007; Twigg & Hengen, 2009).

The following quote highlights some of the components of Indigenous ways of knowing that became important to my research:

The Anishinaabeg have no term for [the separation of] man/nature, or [this] subject/object dichotomy in their language, because there is no nature, or environment ... understood to be separate from the self ... What I am talking about is a completely different worldview, a worldview where we relate and interconnect everything with a manido (spirit) dwelling within everything (Paul Bourgeois (1993) in Rheault, 1999, p 29).

This excerpt explicates the interconnection between the spirit and everything in the physical world; nothing can be understood in separation. To further understand Indigenous ways of knowing, see Figure 2 for a diagram I created based on the work of Gone (2009), McCabe (2007), Twigg & Hengen (2009), Quinn (2007) and William & Bellefeuille (2006).

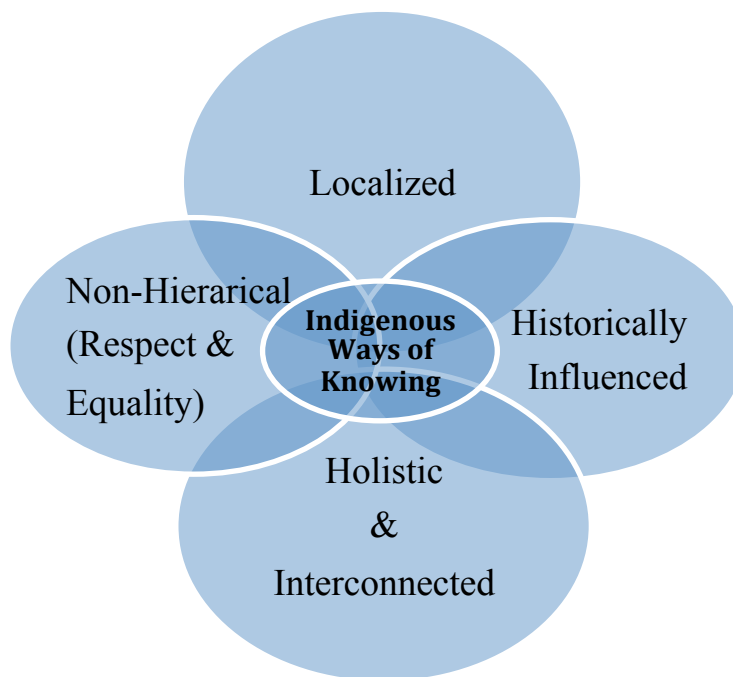


Figure 2: Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Adapted from the work of Gone, 2009; McCabe, 2007; Quinn, 2007; Twigg & Hengen, 2009; William & Bellefeuille, 2006).

Indigenous ways of knowing are often referred to as *holistic and interconnected* (Gone, 2009; McCabe, 2007). This refers to seeing individuals as made up of a balance between mind, body, heart and spirit as well as being within all of creation and knowing that individuals, family, community, and all of creation cannot be understood in separation. Indigenous ways of knowing are also *influenced by historical events*, the history of colonization has greatly influenced Aboriginal peoples' collective journey and knowledge (Gone, 2009; McCabe, 2007; Twigg & Hengen, 2009). Indigenous worldviews and meaning making are *non-hierarchical* and based on *respect and equality* (McCabe, 2007; Gone, 2009; William & Bellefeuille, 2006). Furthermore, Indigenous knowledge is *socially and geographically localized* (Quinn, 2007). Thus, knowledge and ways of life emerge as influenced by the physical landscape and one's social world.

Part of Aboriginal traditions is the sharing of knowledge from generation to generation by the teachings found within various types of stories (Rheault, 1999). In Aboriginal traditions, knowledge is shared not owned. The stories that are shared teach values, beliefs, and ways of knowing. However, individuals are encouraged to take stories and interpret them in a personal way and shape it until they understand and know its teaching (Castellano, 2000). Individuals create unique knowledge by incorporating all aspects of themselves including the various aspects that appear disparate (Castellano, 2000). Another source of Indigenous knowing is gained through visions, dreams and/or intuition. This knowledge is seen as spiritual, and equally legitimate to other ways of gaining knowledge (Lavallée & Poole, 2010). Castellano (2000) concisely expresses the dynamic, multiple, and intimate nature of Indigenous ways of knowing by stating "Indigenous knowledge is said to be personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language (p. 25)."

Western Way of Knowing: A Strength-Based Lens

A strength-based lens was the western way of knowing that guided this research. Due to my positionality as a western woman this lens weighed more heavily than Indigenous ways of knowing within the application of the Two-Eyed Seeing on this study. A strength-based lens encourages listening to narratives with the focus on capacity and ability (Saleebey, 1996). It does not ignore challenges but rather reframes them within possibilities (Gottlieb, Gottlieb, & Shamian, 2012). This lens informed the way I approached this entire research project. It informed selecting the inclusion criteria and my search for hearing stories of men who self-identified as living a balanced life. It also influenced the way I asked questions during interviews and analyzed data, which involved always looking for strengths, abilities and possibilities even within sections of the narrative with struggle, regression, and/or challenges.

Many westernized methods were used within this research. For example, a narrative methodology, one-on-one interviews, and Lieblich's data analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998) are all western methods of research. However, I was able to indigenize many of the approaches in order to make them more compatible with and honour Indigenous ways of knowing. I achieved this with the application of Two-Eyed Seeing and the weaving back and forth between Indigenous ways of knowing and strength-based knowing, as well as having guidance from my thesis committee and advisory committee. The advisory committee, consisting of Aboriginal people, assisted me to indigenize the methods as they provided guidance for inclusion criteria, recruitment, the interview script, and so on. Also, I was able to indigenize the data collection methods by focusing on stories and oral traditions within the one-on-one interviews as well as using the indigenous data collection method of Anishnaabe Symbol-based Reflection by Lavallée (2009). I indigenized Lieblich et al.'s (1998) data analysis by reading for

holistic form and content and eliminating reading for categorical form and content, which fragments narratives and is incompatible with Indigenous ways of knowing.

The application of Two-Eyed Seeing allowed me to interweave Western ways of knowing with Indigenous ways of knowing. Additionally, this lens helped ensure that the knowledge generated from this project was meaningful and significant to the Aboriginal community of Toronto; this is of utmost importance due to the long history of exploitation and Western interpretation of Aboriginal people's knowledge (Cherubini, 2008). I acknowledge that I have an understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, but it is not my dominant paradigm. Therefore, I established and worked with an advisory committee (made up of Aboriginal people) for this study. The composition of this advisory committee and their involvement is detailed later in this chapter. Working with these individuals facilitated my use of an Indigenous lens for this research. It was with their insight and wisdom, as well as an Aboriginal researcher sitting on my thesis committee, that my interpretations made through Two-Eyed Seeing were validated and proved meaningful to Aboriginal community members.

Research Methodology

Research methodology involves the overall approach to a study. In this section, I detail the following elements of the methodology for this study including: choosing a methodology; a narrative methodology; ethics; sample and recruitment; data collection; data analysis; rigour; and dissemination.

Choosing a Methodology

In choosing a research methodology, I quickly recognized that stories would need to play an important role because of the close links with the substantive area of my work.

The Ojibways have a great fund of legends, stories, and historical tales, the relating and hearing of which, form a vast fund of winter evening instruction and amusement. Some of

these stories are most exciting and so intensely interesting, that I have seen children during their relation, whose tears would flow most plentifully, and their breasts heave with thoughts too big for utterance. Night after night for weeks I have sat and eagerly listened to those stories. The days following, the characters would haunt me at every step, and every moving leaf would seem to be a voice of a spirit. ... These legends have an important bearing on the character of the children of our nation. The fire-blaze is endeared to them in the after years by a thousand happy recollections. By mingling thus, social habits are formed and strengthened (Copway, 1850: 95- 97, cited in Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010).

The above quote highlights the significance and power of storytelling in Aboriginal culture. It reflects how stories seep into a person, shaping who a person is. For generations, Indigenous knowledge has been passed orally through the use of stories; as such, stories are an essential aspect of Aboriginal culture (Quinn, 2007; Twigg & Hengen, 2009). Maracle (as cited in Fee & Gunew, 2004) emphasizes the importance that stories are sacred and understanding them explains how to make meaning of the world. As such, I intuitively knew that stories needed to be part of the methodology because of the important role they play in Aboriginal culture.

Stories have purpose and are dynamic. They provide a foundational core to Aboriginal culture and teach and reinforce norms, beliefs, and values (Wesley-Esquimaux 2010). Sharing of stories is a relational and continuous process between tellers and listeners. It is not about the result or product, but more about the shared journey and knowing that comes from telling and listening (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010). Hence, the teller and listener are both affected, just as both the researcher and participant are affected by engaging in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Kovach, 2010). Stories weave and change in continuous motion; they are never over or complete, but continue to evolve and change well after their first telling.

As a non-Aboriginal health care practitioner, it is through my client's stories that I come to understand their lives, beliefs, priorities and needs. The objective clinical data from lab tests and monitoring of vital signs tells me but a fraction of their reality. It is the dialogue and shared knowing that occurs through storytelling, which creates our relationship and the possible space for healing. Moments of vulnerability and humanness embedded in stories create a foundation for growth and wellness. From listening to and reading works by traditional Aboriginal teachers and healers, I imagine that stories can be much more than what the Western paradigm understands them to be, simple fables containing life lessons. Unlike the Western paradigm, Aboriginal traditions hold stories to be sacred medicine and fundamental to their culture (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010)

In deciding upon a research methodology I asked myself, in what way can I best answer the question, how do urban First Nations men living a balanced life in Toronto narrate their identity? What research methodology will allow for the existence of the crucial authenticity of my story as well as the stories of the participants? What type of data collection and analysis can be employed that will not try to shape, control, or impose significance on those stories? I made the decision that narrative was the best approach.

Narrative Methodology

Narrative is a type of qualitative research (Munhall, 2007). Qualitative research is made up of many methodological approaches. Commonalities of this type of research include situating the researcher in the research, conducting research in natural settings, and interpreting meanings that people bring to their world (Creswell, 2007). Within health care, specifically nursing, qualitative research is gaining recognition for its insight into human experiences and the generation of unique knowledge (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). Specific to narrative research is the development and creation of knowledge by focusing on stories (Munhall, 2007).

Narrative, as a research methodology, has its origins in the humanistic sciences and is a relatively new approach (Creswell, 2007), particularly in health care. It is guided by the assumption that people ascribe meaning through stories and significance to events, space, time, and relationships based on their cultural and social position (Creswell, 2007; Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). In this study, the words story and narrative are used interchangeably and understood to be "...personal accounts of people's motives, experiences and actions and the way they interpret and assign meaning to them" (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007, p.5). Telling stories encourages the narrator to express, reflect, and interpret, and by doing so, there often comes new understanding and meaning (Barton, 2004). Nurse researchers argue that narratives are an essential part of understanding the multifaceted complexity of human experience (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). Furthermore, it is one way to understand peoples' identity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998) and the meaning and significance of life events and how they affect the whole individual (Creswell, 2007; Holloway & Freshwater, 2007).

There are several methodological approaches that fall under the umbrella of *narrative research* (Creswell, 2007; Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). The specific narrative methodology that I employed was informed by Lieblich et al's. (1998) work. This specific methodology provided a systematic approach that also allowed for flexibility, authenticity and honouring of moments of vulnerability and insight. I did not want to restrict and/or shape participants' stories, but allow them to emerge as is relevant to their context and place in time. Employing this narrative approach appeared congruent with the principles of Indigenous ways of knowing (ie. holism, balance, interconnectedness, and respect) (McCabe, 2007). This congruence greatly influenced my choice of methodology as it was essential to respect and account for my participants' ways of knowing.

The narrative methodology presented by Lieblich et al. (1998) places an emphasis on understanding identity and individuals' social worlds as told through peoples' stories about their lives. This approach takes into account the individuals' position, experiences and representation of historical events, cultural expectations, and social environments (Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach & Lieblich, 2008). It seeks to understand how individuals tell the story of their lives within the world which is subjectively experienced through changing contexts (Lieblich et al, 1998). Like stories, context is dynamic and temporal (Lieblich et al., 1998); thus, the stories I elicited in the interviews provide only one layer and will continue to evolve as will identity. Furthermore, the larger cultural systems of meaning are important to what stories are told and how (Zilber et al., 2008). This approach complemented the lens of Two-Eyed Seeing because of its emphasis on context and subjective knowing. Furthermore, it was important to keep in mind that the aim of this research was not to define the phenomenon or create a theory about male Aboriginal identities in urban environments, but to understand how identity is narrated in a selected sample.

Ethics

Ethical issues that often emerge in narrative research are informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity; relationship roles, boundaries, power dynamics; and sensitive subject matter (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Informed consent requires that participants have adequate information about the research, comprehension, free choice, and voluntary participation without consequence (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). To ensure informed consent, I discussed with participants the purpose of the research, the benefits and risks of participating, expectations of participating, and how their identity will be protected (Creswell, 2007; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). A consent form was signed at the beginning of each interview. Participants were notified that they could withdraw from the study at anytime without repercussions. Originally the plan was to achieve confidentiality by using pseudonyms for participants and eliminating all

identifiable data of places and events (Creswell, 2007). However, two of the participants requested to use their given name in the reporting of this study. The Ryerson University Research Ethics Board approved this request. As agreed upon with participants, I removed the names of secondary characters and requested places. All data continues to be kept in a locked filing cabinet and only shared with the thesis committee. It will be destroyed by the researcher after seven years.

In regards to relationship roles, boundaries, and power dynamics, as well as sensitive subject matter, I, as the researcher, included the participants in negotiation of our relationship. Participating in narrative research can feel intrusive and memories that are traumatic can surface. In telling parts of my journey in Chapter 1, I realized that storytelling can be a vulnerable act and I therefore needed to ensure that participants felt safe to recount parts of their story and engage in the vulnerable act of storytelling. Part of this involved engaging with them authentically and ensuring a private and quiet interview room. As the researcher, I focused on always doing what was best for the participants and conducting interviews in a manner that was authentic, respectful and flexible (Barton, 2004). For example, I let participants know that if they became emotional or drained during or after storying a painful experience, we could take a break or re-schedule the interview. In addition, I was prepared (if needed), to speak with participants about seeking counseling, which included speaking with their family health care practitioner (Creswell, 2007).

In addition to the common ethical considerations when conducting research, there are specific ethical requirements when conducting research with Aboriginal communities in Canada. Through the process of preparing my ethics protocol to the research ethics board, I particularly familiarized myself with Chapter 9 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement, which provides mandatory requirements for research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples of Canada as these populations have experienced considerable oppression and exploitation (Canadian

Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). It is not in keeping with the intent of this thesis to discuss all of the requirements of Chapter 9, however, one requirement that was essential to this research was engaging with the relevant community. This is done in order to ensure that the community and the researcher mutually decide the nature of the research relationship and that there are mutual benefits resulting. This included elements such as discussing who will be involved, the research questions, and research dissemination, and negotiation about confidentiality (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). In Toronto, there is no one governing council or leadership group of Aboriginal people, but various Aboriginal organizations. As the researcher, I have been engaged with Aboriginal communities in Toronto through previous clinical work and have maintained connections with multiple Aboriginal men and women who are well known within the Aboriginal community in Toronto. I had multiple informal discussions with these individuals regarding the invisibility of Aboriginal people in Toronto and lack of positive stories about Aboriginal male role models. Additionally, discussions emerged about the importance and need for sharing positive or successful stories about Aboriginal men and how the non-Aboriginal community of Toronto needs to hear these stories in order to counter the negative stereotypes that are abundant in Canadian culture.

I engaged the Aboriginal community in several ways in order to provide them with Ownership, Control, Assess and Possession (OCAP) over this research (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). In fact, before embarking with this research, I asked two Aboriginal men whom I knew or were acquainted with the community what

they felt about exploring the life stories of Aboriginal men in Toronto and if it was important and/or necessary. I also asked them about what concepts (such as success, health, living a good life, etc.) they thought would be important to study as well as what possible barriers might arise because I am a white woman. They both responded that more research should focus on Aboriginal men in Toronto, that healthy living and success should be explored because of the abundant negative stereotypes and invisibility of Aboriginal men. Also, they both said they could not speak for all Aboriginal men but that if I was open, honest, culturally respectful, and authentic, that conducting research as a white woman with Aboriginal men should not be a problem. After receiving this feedback, I then felt comfortable to start this research and thus, establish an advisory committee (composed of Aboriginal people) to guide and support the development of this study.

I invited (by email) eight Aboriginal people with knowledge and/or leadership whom I had either worked with in the past or met at conferences (if they were interested) to join an advisory committee for this study. In the email, I explained the purpose of the research and stated that expectations of this advisory committee would be negotiable, but would likely involve a one year span and 2-3 contact times for discussion on various aspects of the project to ensure the research stayed true and relevant to the Aboriginal community. Two people declined due to busy schedules and three others did not respond. Three people agreed to join the committee, two First Nations men and one First Nations woman. I engaged in discussions with these individuals throughout the research process including conceptualization of the idea, methods, and recruitment strategies as well as discussions of the research findings and dissemination.

Part of the ethical process in Aboriginal research involves a commitment to include the Aboriginal community in the dissemination plan. Thus, both the advisory committee and the participants were engaged in discussions about how best to disseminate the research; this

involved some discussion about the key findings and how to frame the results to have an impact on the key stakeholders and remain authentic to Aboriginal communities and stories. Discussions occurred about who the audience is and how best to reach them in terms of a dissemination plan. In order to ensure authenticity and relevance, participants and advisory committee members reviewed parts of the results and discussion chapters and provided input. They were also aware that a part of the study dissemination would be this written thesis.

Recruitment

I spent a great deal of time thinking about who the best participants would be for this study. Additionally, this was discussed with both my thesis supervisory committee and the advisory committee. As indicated in Chapter 2, it is important to not perpetuate the stereotypical, media-based story of Aboriginal men. For this reason, exclusion criteria included individuals who are homeless and/or have a current severe mental health issue and/or, a severe addiction to drugs or alcohol. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- 1) Individuals who self-identify as male;
- 2) Individuals who self-identify as Aboriginal including First Nations Status and Non-Status, registered Métis and non-registered Métis, and Inuit;
- 3) Individuals who have lived in the urban environment of the Greater Toronto Area for a minimum of 2 years so that knowledge generated by the study would be local to the urban environment of Toronto;
- 4) Individuals over the age of 18. I chose this as criterion because I wanted to study the adult population, as I believe they have a larger selection of life experiences from which to draw upon when narrating their identity.
- 5) Individuals who self-identify as living a balanced life.

Recruitment occurred by word of mouth through the advisory committee. This was a recommendation by the advisory committee so that participants for this study could be chosen and nominated by the community, making the stories of Aboriginal male identity more relevant and significant to the Aboriginal community of Toronto. The advisory committee members were provided with a loose recruitment script (See Appendix A), which they shared via email, or in face-to-face communication with potential participants. The people who were approached to participate were instructed to contact me for further information. Participants were chosen based on a first come basis, consent to participate, and meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria. I informed the advisory committee that they would not be informed as to who participated and who did not participate in the study; this was important in order to protect participants' privacy and ensure confidentiality.

Three individuals were recruited. In a narrative study, sample sizes are smaller due to the rich and large database that is collected when exploring one's story (Lieblich et al., 1998). Furthermore, two interviews were conducted with each participant, which added to both the depth and breadth of data collected (Creswell, 2007).

Data Collection

Data was collected through individual, semi-structured interviews with participants. Two interviews were conducted with each participant and the interviews were spaced about two weeks apart; this provided participants time to reflect on their story. The interview commitment time was approximately one and half-hours for each interview for a total of three hours. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission so as to retain all information that was said. One on one interviews have been used in multiple studies with Aboriginal communities and, if conducted in a flexible reflexive manner, is conducive with Indigenous ways of knowing (Barton, 2004; Kovach, 2010; McCabe, 2007). Demographic information (see Appendix B) was also

collected as a way to describe the sample. This form was completed at the start of the first interview. This information included age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment status and position, financial needs, marital status, number of children, type of housing, family composition, and number of years living in Toronto.

Consent forms were discussed and signed at the start of each interview (See Appendix C). An honorarium of \$25 was also presented to participants at the start of each interview as a way of showing thanks and respect for their time and contribution to the study, as recommended by an experienced Aboriginal researcher. Furthermore, I reminded participants that they could stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Interviews were conducted in a private setting, in a room at Ryerson University.

Interview One

The first interview began by talking briefly about who I am and why I have chosen to engage in this research. I was as authentic and transparent as I could be in order to establish rapport, trust, and a sense of safety. This involved identifying myself as non-Aboriginal and indicating that I am a student in a Master of Nursing program and telling the participants a little about my who I am (see Appendix D). We also discussed how the interview should proceed. The interview followed an emergent, narrative process; thus, many questions emerged based on the participants' stories.

For interview one, a semi-structured guide (See Appendix E) was employed using open-ended questions and starting with broad questions and progressing to more specific. Such questions included: In thinking about your identity, what is important to tell me? Tell me about where you grew up? What connects you to your Aboriginal identity? What connects you to your community? At the end of each first interview we debriefed about how the interview went. This conversation included a discussion with each participant to determine if they would like to

change anything for the second interview, but they did not. Additionally, each participant was asked if they would like to participate in the second interview and if they were willing to bring in an object, piece of art, writing, song, or photograph that represented their identity. The object or symbol could be something they made and/or chose during the time between the two interviews. All participants agreed to participate.

Interview Two and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection

The second interview was informed by a type of arts-based methodology and data collection method called Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection and was created by an Aboriginal researcher Dr. Lavallée (2009). It is a unique method because the reflection and creation of a symbol represents a specific concept and is a spiritual experience that can elicit rich self-reflection and data from participants (Lavallée, 2009). A sharing circle where participants present their symbols to the group is part of the method (Lavallée, 2009). This element of the method was not included in this study due to ethical issues related to identity and vulnerability.

The second interview provided an opportunity to elicit further data and explore participants' narratives based on the symbol they had chosen. The interview started by talking about the symbol representing the participants' identity. Participants were asked questions such as, tell me about this symbol? what does it mean to you? how does it reflect your identity? (See Appendix F for interview guide two). Each symbol was photographed and described in my field notes. Additionally, my preliminary analysis and interpretive conclusions of the data from the first interview, allowed me insight into participants' stories and identity (Creswell, 2007). Hence, during the second interview, specific, clarifying questions were asked. In addition, interpretive questions based on the analysis were also asked, such as: tell me more about...when you said this, did you mean.... At the end of the second interview, participants were engaged in a

discussion about dissemination. However, none of the participants had specific ideas or requests about dissemination.

Data Analysis

A narrative analysis was employed which followed the Lieblich et al., (1998) approach. It is an emergent approach that is influenced by participants' stories and focuses on holism, which is also an important part of Indigenous ways of knowing; albeit this approach is not specifically Indigenous. This demanded that I was reflexive and explicit in all of my decisions and interpretations. Thus, I kept a field note journal. This is a journal that I started immediately after my first thesis supervision meeting in April 2012. The detailed approach of Lieblich et al.'s (1998) full method involves four readings of the transcript: categorical form, categorical content, holistic form and holistic content (Lieblich et al., 1998). However, I followed an Indigenized version of Lieblich et al.'s (1998) model for the classification and organization of types of narrative analysis, analyzing for holistic content and form only. I chose to do this because I believe this version of analysis is in keeping with Indigenized ways of knowing that are holistic and connected. I felt that the other aspects of Lieblich et al.'s (1998) model, including categorical content and form, risked fragmentation of the story and isolation of parts which was not congruent with Indigenized ways of knowing. After the interview audio-files were transcribed verbatim, the analysis involved two primary readings of the transcripts for holistic content and form. The two readings are as follows:

1) Holistic content. In this reading of the text, I examined the transcript as a whole. Thus, it was critical that sections of the transcript were considered in relation to all parts of the transcript and the evolving story. It was important to consider the participant's life story and how identity was narrated. In this reading I examined the transcripts and meanings within the introduction of the story, first memories (chronological and childhood because the first often indicate an emotionally

significant time that displays the tellers' basic view of life and personality), and narrative content ideas, which were validated by repetition throughout the text (Lieblich et al., 1998). Narrative content ideas are the themes and global impressions that are present throughout the narrative as a whole (Lieblich et al., 1998).

2) Holistic form. In this reading of the text, I paid attention to the structure and emotional tone of the text. Situations, tension, climax, and resolution revealed the emotional progression as did evaluations made by the participant about events (Lieblich et al., 1998). As I began my analysis of the transcripts, I initially rejected analysis of the form of the stories because at first I felt this type of analysis was based in western literary pedagogy that focused on classifications and rules, which seemed counter to Indigenous ways of knowing. However, I realized that the form was about seeing the emotional progression and journey of the story in its entirety and reviewing the content alone would not answer the research question.

Key elements of holistic form analysis were drawing out the foci, typology, and progression while situating the stories within historical and social context. See Table 1 for a chart of the three elements of holistic form analysis that I created based on the work of Lieblich et al. (1998). The first element of holistic form analysis is the foci of a narrative, which refers to the cohesive aim of the story; it brings all parts of the story together under one goal (Lieblich et al., 1998). The foci are revealed by reading the text in its entirety and seeing how all parts come together as a whole (Lieblich et al., 1998). The second element of holistic form analysis is typology, which refers to the literary type of the story told (ie. the plot) (Lieblich et al., 1998). While many narrative typologies exist, I chose to consider six when analysing the narratives of this study. Four dominant literary types include: the "romance" (the struggle to get to the goal is the focus of the story); the "comedy" (the restoration of social order); the "satire" (a critique of

Element	Definition	Examples
Foci	The cohesive aim of the story bringing all parts together under one goal	“Forming a positive Aboriginal identity”
Typology	The literary type of the story told (e.g., the plot)	Romance Comedy Satire Tragedy Reincarnation Quest
Progression	The development of the plot over time related to advancement and regressions of the foci	Narrative of Progress Narrative of Decline Slowly Ascending Narrative Trial and Error Narrative Risk and Gain Narrative

Table 1: Elements of Holistic Form Analysis

social life); and the “tragedy” (where the hero is defeated by evil) (Lieblich et al., 1998). I additionally found two other typologies from literature to consider. One of the typologies is from Aboriginal literature, reincarnation (reawakening Aboriginal identity and reclaiming the accompanying role(s) within family and community) (Anderson, 2008). The second typology is from health and social science literature, the quest (the protagonist lives their life in pursuit of something that can be learned and passed on to others) (Frank, 1998). The final element of holistic form analysis is the progression of a story, which refers to the development of the plot over time related to advancement and regressions in relation to the foci (Lieblich et al., 1998). There are many types of progressions. See Table 2 for a diagram of the five progressions that I considered when reading the participants’ narratives; this is drawn from Lieblich et al.’s work.

Rigour

Rigour in this study was a process that was informed by the following key ideas. First, it was critical to maintain authenticity as the researcher and ensure analysis and dissemination was

true to what participants' said. As Lieblich et al. (1998) indicate, interpretation is always a part of research; this suggests that as a researcher, I was always making sense of participants' stories through my own positionality. As such, it was important that I was explicit about analytical choices and constantly reflecting on my own story within the context of participants' stories. Through the lens of Two-Eyed Seeing, I interpreted the participants' stories for significant context as well as common threads that appeared within the narratives. I took note that part of research is ascribing meaning and significance to stories. Thus, in order to limit my biases and

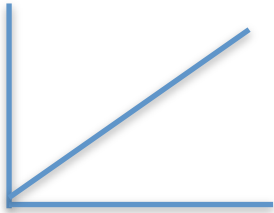
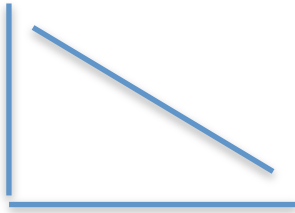
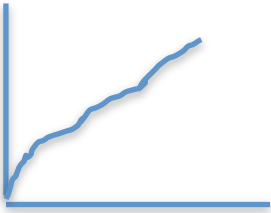
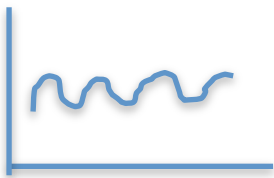
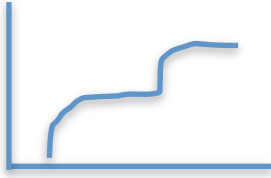
 <p>Narrative of Progress: advance steadily towards the objective of the story</p>	 <p>Narrative of Decline: progress away from the objective of the story</p>	 <p>Slowly Ascending Narratives: move in a less direct manner than Progressive Narratives, however, they nonetheless progress towards the goal</p>
 <p>Trial and Error Narratives: are made up of high peak levels (character growth and new lessons) and troughs that are the lowest point in a cycle (challenge that leads to change). These stories consist of challenging encounters that cause change and growth for the protagonist</p>	 <p>Risk and Gain Narratives: consist of taking risks (doing something where the outcome is unsure) and subsequently being rewarded (having a good outcome)</p>	

Table 2: Progression of the Narratives: Plot over time

Western paradigm on the meanings assigned, I engaged in member checking regarding the foci, typology, progression, and narrative content ideas with participants during the second interview as well as via email several weeks after completion of data collection. This approach allowed me to seek out participants' input and incorporate them with my interpretations.

As I listened to stories and conducted a narrative analysis, I questioned what was going on in the story; sought further elaboration and clarification; and "looked for gaps, contradictions, silences and the unsaid" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 166). I made content idea sheets and a chronological timeline of the participants' lives (See Appendix G) in order to better understand the progression and significant events. These critical explorations were important ways to examine the narratives in more depth. Additionally, it provided me the opportunity to stay close to the data while simultaneously reflecting on my research question.

CHAPTER 5
RESULTS: GENE

In this chapter, I present Gene's narrative account of identity. I present Gene's story first for no particular reason except that I analyzed Gene's story last so it was the most fresh in my mind. Gene decided to use his real name and not choose a pseudonym for this study. Gene verified the narrative content ideas and focus of his narrative during the second interview. He has read his results chapter and voiced no objections to any of the content.

In this chapter, I first provide my initial impressions of Gene and a brief description of him based on his demographic data and my observations. Next, I share the main foci of his narrative as related to his identity as well as the symbol he chose to represent his identity. Additionally, I discuss the storied content of his identity as presented based on four narrative content ideas: 1) I am who I am; 2) Mohawk: situating self within family, history, place, and beliefs; 3) Support: giving and receiving; and 4) Walking a good path. Last, I discuss Gene's account of his identity through analysis of the narrative form of his story including the type of story he tells and its progression.

Gene

Gene is in his thirties and is a Status Indian, First Nations, Mohawk. Over his lifetime, he has lived in Toronto for a period of six to ten years. The impression I had after my first interview with Gene, after we hugged and he left the interview room, was that he was self-assured and driven. His words "Gene controls Gene" stayed with me while writing my field notes and conducting the analysis. His narrative suggested that he was on a quest and that he, and not anyone else, was going to set the agenda for his life. Gene came to the interview impeccably dressed in a light grey suit and stylish thick-rimmed glasses, with his short hair brushed. He explained to me that he was going to a diversity awards gala that afternoon as if to explain his suit, but he was just as well dressed for the second interview.

Gene works full time in a management role as a human resources professional at a large bank in Toronto. Prior to obtaining this position, he completed his undergraduate degree at a university near Toronto, a bachelor of education at a university in Ontario, and then achieved his Certified Human Resources Professional designation. Currently, he lives with his partner, in a rental home (he did once own a house, but he sold it to rent with his partner). Gene is not married, and does not have children but would like to one day. Gene reported that his income is always sufficient to meet his needs.

The narrative cohesiveness of Gene's identity is related to the clearly defined foci of being true to all the parts that compose who he is and giving each equal room to flourish. Gene's narrative reflects that he cannot be defined by one part of who he is; the parts are dynamic, evolving and changing. Gene stated:

This part of me [being gay] is the exact same part of me ... as being a figure skater, which is the exact same part of me as being a First Nations person, is the exact same part of me as being a banker ... it's only one puzzle piece of a bigger picture of Gene ... and I can't let that [being First Nations] be the picture. I need to let that be it's own little puzzle piece. ... I think also the puzzle piece isn't a static puzzle ... it's actually continuous, so I think that word that you used, dynamic, is important because new puzzle pieces can be integrated into it within time.

Gene uses the metaphor of a puzzle to explain his multifaceted identity and to demonstrate how being First Nations is only one part of the larger whole. His narrative points to the idea that he believes his identity should remain fluid and reflective of his life. He has a will and ability to create his identity as he lives it while not conforming to expectations of what a gay man or Aboriginal man or banker should be.

As soon as I asked Gene about a symbol that represents his identity, he instantly knew what symbol he would bring, stating he always has it with him. I was excited that he wanted to participate in the second interview and was curious about what his symbol might be. Because he said he always has it with him, I thought maybe it would be a piece of jewelry or maybe a tattoo. The following piece of writing describes Gene's identity symbol from my perspective of the researcher and how he introduced the symbol, talked about it, and interacted with it.

It's the beginning of the second interview; I ask Gene if he would like to share his symbol with me. "Would you like me to show it to you?" he says. He loosens his tie and unbuttons the top two buttons of his collared shirt. Is the symbol a tattoo on his chest? He slowly pulls at a little leather string around his neck. He brings it up over his head and out from under his shirt, on the end of the string is a little tobacco pouch (see Image 1 of a photograph of this tobacco pouch).



Image 1: Tobacco Pouch

Gene lays the deer hide tobacco pouch on the table, its original tobacco is inside. We look at it in silence. He does not touch the pouch the entire time he tells me about it. When the story is done, he picks it up, puts it around his neck and tucks it back under his collard shirt.

Gene shared this story of how the tobacco pouch was gifted to him by an elder on his reserve several years back, he states:

it's a tobacco pouch which was given to me ... at a point where I was experiencing ... some trouble sleeping and things like that and, so its original purpose is as a protector. So, tobacco as a protector for First Nations people is the background there. And it's to protect me from evil people or malicious people or negative people in my life. And for me to continue to be on a good path. However, from even more of a personal perspective, it reminds me of who I am. So as I wear it every day ... you can't go without feeling it on your body or you can't go without thinking about it. Being there, is what reminds me continuously where I came from and what my upbringing is, to keep me humble ... it's my identity as a First Nations person. My identity as a person who walks on a good path. My identity as a person who lives the values of the Seven Grandfather teachings.

As reflected in this excerpt, the tactile sensation of the pouch on his chest is a constant reminder about his ancestry and the value of being humble. This symbol represents his identity as one who walks a good path – knowing where he came from, so that he knows all parts of himself and can take those parts with him as he walks through life. In sharing the story of the tobacco pouch, Gene narrated his identity statements about knowing himself as a member of his culture who lives a good life following the Seven Grandfather teachings. When asked to describe what these might be he stated, “so respect is important to me, honesty is important to me”. Indicating that of the seven, respect and honesty stand out in his memory as most important to him. Because Gene did not elaborate on what the rest of the teachings are I will not guess or try to name the rest based on written literature.

I found it interesting that Gene did not need reminders about the other parts of his identity such as being gay or an uncle or a banker, but he needed a reminder about his Aboriginality. He stated: “I go home every night to my partner, I'm reminded that I'm gay.” Gene's narrative reflected that he did need something to remind him that he is Aboriginal. Gene tells a story of a

turning point when he was immersed in the gay culture and he lost focus of his identity as an Aboriginal person:

The pendulum swung completely, to my identity as a gay person and my identity as an Aboriginal person kind of minimized during that period of time, so this is my reminder to continuously keep that puzzle piece in action.

The metaphorical usage of pendulum and repetitious usage of puzzle appears as significant as Gene tells the story of his identity. His Aboriginal identity was once diminished and he strayed from his path, he does not want this to happen again. Like a pendulum that can be influenced by gravity and momentum, so too can his identity be shaped by his current life circumstances. His identity symbol reminds him to live the good life and keep all the puzzle pieces, and everything that makes up who he is, as equally important.

The Holistic Content: Main Narrative Ideas

I read Gene's interview transcript over and over. Remembering what he said and how he said it, thinking about what I felt while he told his story. I remember feeling his determination and drive to lead his community from "good to great." I read his narrative keeping the research question and the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing in mind. I was at first hesitant to assign narrative content ideas. I did not want to simplify his story. However, as I delved deeper into his story, key narrative ideas emerged that helped me better understand his narrative account of identity. These narrative ideas focused attention to the core of how he stories his identity. Below, I present the four narrative content ideas that best represent Gene's account of his identity.

I Am Who I Am

The narrative idea of "I am who I am" is present throughout both interviews. It captures two primary ideas. First, it reflects that his identity is a dynamic, evolving puzzle and second, that he controls his life. Demonstrating his tenacity, he said or implied several times in both

interviews “when I know who I am, then I know who I am! And I’m going to let everyone know who I am.” Gene’s identity is storied with pride, confidence, and resilience. His statement “I’m like Teflon” exemplifies his capacity to not internalize racism. Rather, he is unapologetic and proud of whom he is. His narrative reflected that when he encounters adversity or discrimination, he consciously chose to not internalize it; he refuses to give other people control over his life.

The narrative idea of “I am who I am” captures Gene’s sense of self as it is made up of dynamic and versatile puzzle pieces. He stated:

I don’t think any puzzle piece takes dominance ... depending on how you meet me, when you meet me, where you meet me, a certain puzzle piece might be a bit more dominant than another. So if you and I meet on reserve ... I’m going to play my First Nations background card ... as a predominant puzzle piece ... I’m still represented as a whole person but that one is the one that I’m showcasing. So it’s more like a light bright puzzle piece. So I turn a switch on and that one glows but the rest of them are still there but the light is brighter for this particular one, at that point in time.

Gene’s storytelling shows how he is quite reflective and conscientious about the different components of his identity. During the first interview, he referred to the four puzzle pieces that make up his identity as Mohawk, gay, figure skater, and banker. Additionally, he later mentioned and referred to other components of his identity related to being an uncle and an intellectual, but did not expand on these substantially. It was nevertheless apparent that there were many pieces to the puzzle of his identity.

Mohawk is the first puzzle piece that Gene introduced me to. For example, in introducing himself during the first interview Gene said, “I’m going to tell you first that I grew up on a reserve.” He immediately situated himself as a member of the Six Nations reserve. In explaining his Aboriginality he said, “so when I lived on reserve it was easy, it was convenient, it was the

way the world worked.” As reflected in his comment, Gene did not have to search out his Aboriginal identity in his youth because it was an unquestionable part of him.

The second puzzle piece that Gene mentioned was his gay identity, of which he is equally proud. He commented: “I’ve chosen to be out and proud of both my First Nations and gay background.” Gene came out when he was around 20 years old:

When I went through that process [coming out as gay] I had a strong identity towards it and it’s something that I could discover, it was new and it was stuff I had not experienced before so I just really immersed myself into those pieces. And it’s not like ... I shunned my First Nations background. It was there and I was still going to the First Nations student centre but I was also going to the LGBT centre.

Gene’s identity puzzle was evolving and as he discovered a new part of himself, focus was taken away from other parts of his identity. Conflict arose because Gene put most of his energy into being involved in the LBGT community. He indicated that he “was really engaged with ... the LGBT centre at the university. Of course the whole clubbing atmosphere and things like that. Marching in the gay pride parade ... I was immersed in what it was to be gay.” He noted that it was around this time that he was expelled from university and after some reflection, he realized that if he stayed on that path he might be taken to a negative place. He stated that he had to “think about what’s going on in my life at that point in time.” He continued to elaborate:

In that space it’s not taking me to a place that I’m going to be successful or I’m going to achieve great wonderful things. If anything I think if I stay down this path of being within the LBGT community, it may take me into a negative place because there is just a lot of debauchery ... that’s when I’ve gravitated a little bit more to how can I be reengaged in what it is that I’m doing with the community as an Aboriginal person, as a First Nations person.

The tension revealed in Gene's story acted as a prompt for him to re-evaluate who he was and what he wanted to be. His narrative reflects the importance of wholeness and fluidity as it relates to his identity.

Central to his narrative is Gene's desire to never be defined by one piece of his identity. When asked about what was important for people to know about his identity as an Aboriginal man in Toronto, Gene responded stating:

I'm not just an Aboriginal man in Toronto. ... I would say, not that I've struggled with my identity but I have had fluxes and changes in, with my identity, I came out of the closet as a gay man when I was 20, so at that time I sort of shifted my identity to identify more with being gay than being Aboriginal and kind of have now shifted back to it kind of all being a part of who I am, not specifically more one than anything else, but that everything makes up who I am as an individual.

This narrative excerpt points to the importance that his identity must not be defined by one role or aspect of his life, but defined by the balance of all of who he is. A multi-faceted and strong sense of self, makes up the "I am who I am" concept in his story.

Part of the "I am who I am" narrative idea in Gene's stories is influenced by his father. Gene described his father as a carpenter who put Gene "in his place", was somewhat abusive and was an alcoholic. As reflected in Gene's story, his father also role modeled and taught him the fierce independence and confidence that is a huge part of Gene's identity:

You asked me where I got my strength from or my "I'm going to do it, I'm going to be an individual" ... I think a part of it comes from my dad ... because my dad was very much an individualist person. He was very much about himself and he was very much kind of "if you want it done right, you do it your own-self" ... that modeling behaviour is kind of a part of who I am today and getting the job done myself and being independent ... So when

somebody ... pisses me off, “I don’t think so.” Nobody controls Gene Jamieson, Gene Jamieson controls Gene Jamieson.

This excerpt depicts Gene’s personal sense of power and control over his life. Interestingly he speaks in the third person, which may indicate a perspective of self as a subject. Regardless this excerpt highlights his identity as a strong, resilient, and decisive person.

Gene’s individual resilience corresponds with the resilience of Aboriginal people as a collective. This collective resilience is told through stories of reconnecting to one’s culture.

I think that what you’ll see now in kind of First Nations ... I can only from my own personal First Nations perspective, is that you see a lot of people are, I will use the word lost ... I’ll even say myself to a degree and this is really helpful for me to take a look at that ancestral background ... to reconnect with where I came from and that aspect for a lot of people because they are lost, they are gravitating back towards, and I wouldn’t even necessarily say traditional rituals or activities or anything like that or traditional way of being but integrating that into their life, the way that they live it now.

What Gene is talking about here is a reclaiming of culture after genocide and incorporating Aboriginal culture into life after colonization. Engaging in traditional activities is not something Gene takes on personally, “my family has never really been ingrained in First Nations culture ... I’m trying to think if I’ve ever actually taken part [in traditional activities], I’m trying to remember.” It is not one of the ways he expresses his Aboriginality, however for many members of his community embracing traditional activities such as smudging, dancing, and drumming are expressions of their culture and part of reclaiming and resilience.

Mohawk: Situating Self within Community, History, Place, and Beliefs

The narrative idea of situating self as Mohawk captures a component of Gene’s identity that is connected to his culture. This narrative idea is bigger than his individual puzzle pieces;

rather it is the collective identity and history that shapes Gene's sense of self. Although Gene is explicit that he does not want to be seen as just an Aboriginal man, his Aboriginal community is an important part of his identity as demonstrated by his narrative and the identity symbol he chose to share.

Gene's narrative reflected ways that his Mohawk culture was simply a part of his identity; it was not something he had to purposefully seek out. In asking Gene what connects him to his Aboriginal identity he responded "it was the fact of growing up on the reserve, it's kind of difficult not to." This statement highlights the osmotic nature of being surrounded by a homogenous culture on the reserve. Gene continued to explain that he was taught about his culture in school, which would not have been available to him had he not been on the reserve: "In elementary school there are things that off reserve you would learn that I probably didn't learn on reserve but that they replaced with things that are of an Aboriginal background or nature." It was the physical closeness and integration into a cultural community that taught Gene what it was to be Mohawk by learning the norms of behaviour and shared history. Gene continued to explain that his family was not traditional growing up. Being Aboriginal was just who they were, they did not need to do anything specific to be Aboriginal: "It's there in the background, it's there in who we are and it's embraced in that manner but it's not celebrated, it's not something that is active in my parents, or in my upbringing." As reflected in this narrative excerpt, knowing and expressing self as Mohawk was engrained.

Gene strongly identifies with Mohawk or Iroquois culture and practices and not with the pan-American Aboriginal culture although he does often refer to himself as an Aboriginal man. He stated:

The Longhouse, versus Teepees and Sweat Lodges, is my traditional upbringing and my traditional background ... so my identity ... I focus specifically on who it is that I am or

where it is that I come from. And not in the broad sense of First Nations as a population ... so if I was to have an opportunity to learn Ojibway I wouldn't take it because Ojibway really isn't my own language. And then I would feel that I was slighting my own language by trying to learn a different First Nations language.

Gene's narrative points to the specificity of various cultures within First Nations and his value of being true to the history and practices of his Mohawk culture. Upon situating self as a Mohawk, Gene speaks more about the history of colonization, its impact on his family structure and upbringing. In speaking about his historical roots, he refers to a family tree that he has been developing, tracing his family back eight generations. Within the family structure, he reveals that there are two non-Aboriginal women. He stated that this "obviously means that I'm not 100% Aboriginal, which I already knew." He elaborated that "I just kind of look at my own visual sense of myself ... I don't stereotypically look like an Aboriginal person and when I grow facial hair I have little red specks in my hair. I'm thinking ... that's not traditional." His excerpt reflects the physical outward component of his identity and explicates the symbolic physical characteristics that can connect or exclude a person from identifying with an ethnic cultural group (Frideres, 2008).

Gene talked about the impact of colonization on his family. He referred to the naming of Aboriginal people, the way his last name was appointed through colonization, and furthermore, how residential schools disrupted parenting so that a motive of punishment was learned and trickled down to how power, punishment and control were part of his childhood:

They [the settlers] named them [First Nations people], "we'll call you Jamieson" and that's what we kind of became. ... For years I thought to myself residential school means nothing to me ... and it just clicked on me that it ... has an indirect impact on me my great grandparents weren't able to be with their families and they didn't learn how to be parents.

So their children learned their parenting style from my great grandparents and my grandparents taught my dad and my mom how to be parents and you know therefore, my parent's parenting style has actually been ... an indirect impact of what would have gone on in a residential school system. So punishment being a primary motive and those kinds of things instead of a loving, caring atmosphere directly.

As reflected in this excerpt, Gene recognized that who he is and how he acts and behaves in the world is influenced by the disruption that occurred with residential schools. In fact, everyone within Gene's family is affected by this legacy.

In relation to place, living both on and off the reserve have greatly influenced Gene's identity. In regards to living off the reserve, Gene discussed some judgment and discrimination from inside the community on the reserve when a member of the reserve chooses to lead a more modern and/or urban lifestyle. He stated:

I think that from an external perspective those individuals who might judge me for not being on the reserve might assume that I'm drifting away from my culture ... But from my perspective, I am who I am and I know where I come from and I know all of this stuff and regardless of where I'm at or go in the world I'm going to bring that with me.

Despite some feelings of ostracism, Gene's narrative reflects that his identity and connection to his roots is steadfast. He remains authentic and presents his sense of self regardless of the external context.

As Gene recounted, he feels Toronto encourages his Aboriginal identity because he has to consciously think about how he wants to engage with his culture when it is not an explicit part of his life, like on the reserve. Living off the reserve has given Gene many opportunities to learn new skills and attend university, becoming a successful human resource professional. In talking to Gene, it was clear that he has great aspirations for his community and ideas on how to get there

that involve people leaving the reserve to gain tools and skills and then returning to support and improve life on the reserve:

When you go out to a First Nations community it's all about you know "I want to give back to my community, I want to be able to be in my community and serve my community and do all of these things." And one of the things that I used to always tell people was don't negate the fact that you can get experience somewhere else and you can then bring that back to your community ... we can't self govern if we don't have the tools to be able to self govern.

As reflected in this excerpt, Gene believes that skillful self-governance is more likely to happen if Aboriginal people, such as himself seek education and skills outside the community. He feels adamant that place can support as well as hinder one's development and that people from his community should not be fearful to leave what he calls the "security blanket" of the reserve.

Being raised on the reserve as a place was fundamental in shaping Gene and connecting him to his culture, however, being off the reserve he feels no less attached to his culture. The only difference for him is that his family and the longhouse are less accessible so he has had to make an effort to join the Aboriginal community in Toronto.

When I listen to Gene speak, I am hopeful and inspired. Part of his narrative account is a passionate vision in which he believes the world is interested and ready to see him and his community grow and become great. He commented:

I think that we're in a state in the world now where people are interested or intrigued by the First Nation or Aboriginal or Indigenous community and how it is that that community can support where it is we're going next in the world. Seeing that there is some great knowledge there and I think that I have a lot of allies who see that and who understand the value that Indigenous people play, are intrigued to learn more and ask questions.

As reflected in his narrative, what is deemed as credible knowledge is changing. Aboriginal knowledge is starting to be seen, not as savage, but as valued and legitimate. Gene finds allies who value this knowledge, which in turn supports his sense of self, through the validation of Aboriginal beliefs and reclaiming intellectual space. Despite this, Gene knows there is still a lot of healing to do with his community, stating:

I don't know if many people within the First Nations community are at good yet. So I would like to take them from good to great but they still need to get to good before we can get to great ... we're on the cusp of being good. And from there it's only an opportunity for us to exponentially grow to great and once we do that then there is no holding us back!

His linguistic application of the business jargon “good to great” to his First Nations community signifies his two-eyed seeing. Gene uses his knowledge of business theory to support his community to improve. Additionally, his linguistic usage of “us” in the last sentence reflects a strong sense of collective identity for him. Gene states that he is connected to Aboriginal people “I know they are a part of me, because I identify with a part of them and they identify with a part of me.” Interestingly, Gene’s story of identity exemplifies this study’s theoretical lens of Two-Eyed Seeing. He carries his tobacco pouch and the Seven Grandfather teachings – respect and honesty - with him to work at the bank. He carries the knowledge of the reserve and business world with him, forming knowledge from both world perspectives.

Support: Giving and Receiving

The narrative content idea of support captures the important role that the giving and receiving of mentorship have played in Gene’s life, making him the person he is. As reflected in Gene’s narrative account, the support he received from his mother and extended family influenced his identity and how he lives in this world: “My mom is always one of the biggest significant contributors to my life ... my father was an alcoholic growing up, and if it wasn’t for

my mother I think I would have taken a very different path.” As reflected in this excerpt, his mother was instrumental in assisting him to be on the good path in life. Additionally, he referred to significant relationships, beyond that of his mother’s that provided this support and influenced who he is. He stated:

Having a very responsible mother in some ways was the crux of making me who I am ... giving me the support that I needed to be who I am. But beyond that it wasn’t just my mom, it was that whole concept of extended family, the whole idea that it takes a village to raise a child ... I know that I had aunts and uncles and grandmas and grandpas and cousins that were just as supportive of me growing up and guiding me down the right path as the rest of my family.

The common linguistic expression “it takes a village to raise a child” influenced his sense of self. Gene specifically remembered his aunt teaching him to read and count and having his uncle always there for him if he needed to escape his house. This support gave him the tools to create his identity pieces, such as intellect and figure skater, as well as to be confident to allow them to flourish.

The reciprocity of support played out in his narrative account as Gene talks about learning responsibility and providing support. He was the eldest of three boys and a much younger, by 13 years, sister. He described that he and his brothers are similar characters to the children’s cartoon of the 1980s, The Chipmunks. Gene states, “I was Simon, which is the one with the glasses, the brainy one, the smart one and the responsible one and the one always making sure everyone was in line.” In his family, he spoke about his responsibility to support his brothers and guide them:

I was responsible when mom wasn’t home because dad wasn’t responsible so I was the one in charge of the house. Since 13, that situation in itself require me to be independent and required me to take charge and required me to do all of these things and required me to

figure it out because there was nobody else there to help me figure it out in those situations and be responsible for two other people.

This feeling of being responsible, doing his best and supporting others is a big part of Gene's identity, which he has carried on his life.

The type of support that Gene values and emanates is the kind where someone is there to support but does not interfere: "I would tell you my mom, it is just being there. It wasn't an incident, it was just a way of life for her. And that in itself encompassed everything that it is that I needed." This learned behaviour of supporting without meddling, is something Gene brings with him to his work as a manager. He described a good mentor as:

From my perspective, is someone who enables you to be able to make those decisions or enables you to be able to go on whatever path, or a guide that provides you with some guidance with where you could go but ultimately you are the one making that decision about where you will go. ... that's always one of the things that I've told our mentees ... your mentor is not the driver in your life or in your career, or in your relationship, you are the driver.

As reflected in these excerpts, it is important for Gene to guide, but not forcefully direct someone on the good path. This value of independence and self-knowledge is a key component of his own identity, influencing how he approaches work and mentorship.

In a more general sense of being supported by communities and place, Gene believes that living in Toronto has supported his Aboriginal identity:

I don't think they've [the non-Aboriginal community] influenced my identity but they have encouraged it. ... I would say it [living in Toronto] has helped me connect to my identity ... now I need to actually work to create that presence within my life. Which ... gets me involved in things at the NCCT

Although it was “work” to connect with his Aboriginality in Toronto, it was a process where he could engage in receiving and giving support through this work. Gene’s identity flourished in Toronto by finding a new community to engage his Aboriginality not through traditional activities but by joining the board of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. His narrative reflects that this gave him the opportunity to give back to his community through his business perspective and expertise.

Walking a Good Path

A significant component of Gene’s narrative account of identity is about being “a person who walks on a good path. ... live[s] a good life.” He clearly identified himself as one who is walking a good path and living by the Seven Grandfather teachings. This idea is present throughout his narrative. Although the foci of Gene’s narrative is to be true to all the parts that make up who he is and giving each equal room to flourish, the values and beliefs that guide his life and behaviour are based on “walking a good path” and following the Grandfather teachings. For him, this involves a focus on respect, honesty and balance:

So my physical health and wellness, my spiritual health and wellness, my mental health and wellness, my emotional health and wellness are all facets of who I am as a person. And if one is off, then I’m not well or ... could affect one of the others ... but at the end of the day it’s the holistic viewpoint of it all being one piece.

Underlying this narrative excerpt is the importance of living a balanced life. In order to walk a good path and live a good life, balance of all aspects of self needs to be achieved.

Reflected in Gene’s account are critiques related to these four aspects of self (mental, physical, spiritual and emotional). He commented about the importance of physical health, but he states that it is being neglected because he does not figure skate or practice yoga much anymore.

Additionally, he has mixed feelings about his emotional health because he wants to experience balance, but does not know quite what that looks like:

My gut tells me that my ideal is not to live in negativity, my ideal is to live in that positive space in order to live a good life and that's balance when it comes to emotions. But when I look at it from a bigger perspective, wouldn't balance really be that I understand all of my emotions and that ... I'm comfortable being in each one of these different areas but I'm again torn because I don't want to be in these areas.

This excerpt reflects a narrative tension in what exactly balance is and how to live positively with all types of emotions. On the other hand, Gene refers to his spiritual health as balanced:

I take spirituality as an individual kind of thing. I bring my spirituality with me or I invoke my spirituality within me as a person and it's not something I need to be in a congregation of people with or that I need to be in a room with other people or I need to believe in a certain way with other people, it's something that's me and who I am and who and what I represent.

Spirituality is an individual piece of him rather than something he finds in a collective. Last, mental health, for Gene, is about life-long learning: "I am a big proponent of learning, so life long learning is a huge thing for me and if I'm not learning, then I definitely feel a void."

Intellectual curiosity is how Gene achieves balance within the mental aspect of self.

A component of staying on a good path is Gene's living of the Seven Grandfather teachings. After he heard about the Seven Grandfather teachings in his early 20's, he said:

This is exactly the way that I live my life or that I would like to live my life ... from a First Nations background to say that in words is what it is that I've tried to live my life with and what I believe my culture has instilled in me to live my life as.

As reflected in this revelation, he believes that these teachings encompass what his world and Aboriginal teachings are all about: respect, treating people well, and balance. Furthermore, he wants to impart these teachings to others, as he believes that they provide the support and guidance that people need in life. He stated that: “in thinking about those traditional values ... to actually impart them into my nieces and nephews ... imparting them with the right support and giving them the right directions is important.” As reflected in Gene’s story, living the teachings is a way of life for him. They are the foundation to making good decisions and staying focused on living the good life.

Holistic Form of Gene’s Story

I explored the holistic form of Gene’s storytelling as a way to understand Gene’s narrative account of his identity. In understanding how Gene tells the story of his identity I discuss narrative type and progression. The type of story that is told reveals the values and perceptions of the storyteller. Although there are many narrative typologies, the one that echoed Gene’s story was that of a quest.

Quest stories are ones where the storyteller or protagonist lives their life as a pursuit of something that can be learned and passed on to others (Frank, 1998). The protagonist lives this quest and in doing so, experiences changes in their self and beliefs (Frank, 1998). Gene’s quest has been to stay on the good path, continually learning and evolving: “I want to live a good life, so I want to be in this positive space of happiness and joy and enlightenment.” As he proceeded in his journey, he learned that his Aboriginal identity, including the grandfather teachings, is something that will help keep him on this path. Additionally, he noted that he grew to understand that it was important for him to pass this knowledge on to his family, community, and co-workers.

The progression of a narrative plot is reflected differently in each person's story. The way a person tells a story provides insight into their perceptions, emotions and the impact of events. For example, Gene was patient, thoughtful and reflexive when he told his story. He waited for me to ask questions and asked for clarification when my questions were unclear. He storied his narrative mostly with ideas and reflections rather than memories or events. Gene avoided assigning evaluation to events such as using language "it was great", "it was bad", and so on. However, without evaluations, it was still obvious when events were positive, negative, or neutral. For example when he was talking about being demoted from skating coach he said, "that small world caught up to me and people didn't like the way that I worked." The tone and language used indicated a negative event for Gene. On the other hand when Gene talks about his aunt and how she encouraged him to learn he said "I would always say it was because of her because she taught me my ABC's when I was three and she taught me how to count and how to add." The tone in which it was said and his obvious pride in his intellect indicated a positive event. The overall progression of Gene's narrative is a steady ascent towards his goal. See Figure 3 for a diagram of the progression of Gene's plot over time.

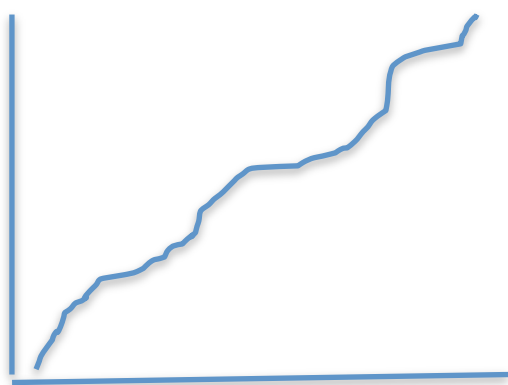


Figure 3: Progression of Gene's Plot over time

The narrative idea of being Mohawk progresses as a risk and gain story. There are moments and elements of progression where the mood was light, emotions charged with passion and

success such as learning about Iroquois people in school, creating a family tree to ground his story in history. He stated: “You learn about those things and you learn about the historical components. So the Iroquois, where we were warriors and where we used to reside and where we reside now, like all of those things that I think were fundamental components to my life.” Gene indicated that during his childhood on the Six Nations reserve he gained knowledge about his people in a positive light, which helped to build his positive sense of self. There were also realizations that led to regressions such as the continued impact of residential schools and the accusations that leading a modern life as an Aboriginal man can be seen as abandoning his people. Gene risks isolation from his community but with his confident sense of self, he stays connected and perseveres.

One part of his story that had a peak and trough progression was the balance of health and wellness. He commented that “lately it’s been a challenge. It’s challenging to balance everything that goes on in the world these days.” This is the only part in Gene’s story where he talks openly about his regressions towards achieving balance or lack of balance. It is important to recognize that stories are dynamic and his comment is a reflection of his current situated context. I suspect that his pursuit to continue to walk a good path may reframe future tellings of this balance in his life.

Gene did not discuss many times of decline that held him back from his goal. The ones that he does mention, he refers to as an event that he dealt with. For example, he discussed being expelled from school but then he reflected, reconnected with his entire self, and went back to school. He stated: “Well I got kicked out of university and then I came back and did my final year.” Despite a set-back, Gene stayed focused on his goal of walking a good path with education and opportunity. Gene also talked about being demoted from coaching the girls’ synchronized skating team, but he then discussed how he resigned because no one controlled him. He stated:

The president tells me “oh this year Gene you’re not going to coach the synchronized skating team.” ... It took me about a week ... then basically handed in my resignation ... but it warms my heart when the skaters email me on facebook and, “oh Gene, we miss you and the skating team is not the same this year without you.”

Gene narratively expresses his resolve to stay positive by making sure he accepts nothing less than what he believes he deserves. Throughout his narrative, he represents himself as strong and resilient. He has deep self-knowledge and confidence. This, coupled with the guidance of the Seven Grandfather teachings, creates a positive Aboriginal identity and an overall balanced life.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS: STEVE

In this chapter, I present a narrative account of Steve's identity. Steve decided to use his real name and not choose a pseudonym for this study. Steve has read his results chapter and agreed with the information presented here as accurate and insightful.

In this results chapter I first provide my initial impressions of Steve and a brief description of him based on demographic data and my observations. Next, I share the main foci of his narrative as related to his identity; this is also discussed in relation to the symbol he chose to represent his identity. Additionally, I discuss the storied content of his identity as presented based on four narrative content ideas: 1) the helper; 2) reconnecting to culture; 3) taking healthy risks; and 4) resilience and positive mindset. Last, I discuss Steve's account of his identity through the narrative form of his story including the type of story he tells and its progression.

Steve

One of the first things Steve said to me was that he was looking forward to participating in this research because he had never heard of a project looking at the positives of his community. Because of his past and current employment, he explained that he had been involved with or witnessed a lot of research with his community and that it mostly examined deficits and trauma within the Aboriginal community. Steve noted that there are a lot of good things happening in his community and that this deserves attention. I was pleased to hear this, as this feedback from Steve helped to reinforce the purpose of my research.

Steve is a 41-year-old Status Indian, First Nations, Ojibway man. He has lived in Toronto for over 11 years. He has a medium build, is about 5 ft. 10 inches with dark, short hair. Steve lives in a home that he owns with his common-law wife and two daughters, his stepson moved out some time ago. During the interviews, Steve's manner was relaxed as well as a little shy. I remember him playing with his hands, having them clasped together resting between his

abdomen and the table. Without unclasping his hands, he gently tapped his fingers on the table while he spoke.

Steve noted that he completed college in North Bay in the social services program. Since then, he has worked in supportive roles doing outreach for at risk youth and counseling as well as management level positions. He has also volunteered on several committees and boards. Steve now works full time as an Executive director of an Aboriginal men's shelter and he reported that his income is always sufficient to meet his needs.

The narrative cohesiveness of Steve's identity is related to the clearly defined foci of living a good, balanced life - a life that is guided by the drum. He stated that the drum keeps him "balanced" and elaborated on this:

When I came around the drum I still had my problems but I felt good ... I would think about whatever problems I had at the time and ask that I was able to deal with them ... And afterwards I wouldn't necessarily know the answers but I would feel better ... I accredit the drum to me being where I'm at ... the drum has been really good to me and my family ... drum has been able to connect me to trying to live a good life ... what keeps me grounded. The drum has been present and an important guide in Steve's life ever since he heard the echo of the drum at a Pow Wow when he was in his early teens. As reflected in the excerpt above, the drum acted to connect Steve with his culture and provide a foundation for him.

Steve's narrative account demonstrated how his life objective is to live true to the teachings of the drum - to be balanced, positive, free of drugs and alcohol, and in touch with the heartbeat of mother earth, which the drum represents. He stated that "the drum has connected him to living the good life" and elaborated that

It reminds me of that heartbeat and it reminds me to behave and stay balanced. And it reminds me to ... [be] a good person ... and when I sing, I try to sing my best and put my

heart into it when I sing and when I drum. So yeah it reminds me of all those good things and I accredit the drumming and the drum to you know what helped me to quit using drugs and drinking right, so it's a big part of my life.

As reflected in Steve's account, the drum has provided a way and a path that has resulted in balance in his life. His narrative points to how the drum is much more than a mere physical object. Rather, it plays an active role influencing his sense of self and helping him live a good life. As I found out, it is the symbol that he chose to represent his identity.

The Following piece of writing describes Steve's identity symbol from my perspective of the researcher and how he introduced the symbol, talked about it, and interacted with it.

Steve has a black case with the medicine wheel painted on the front. I look with anticipation at the familiar four quadrants of the circle painted yellow, white, red, and black. Steve unzips the case and removes a drum; this is the symbol that he has chosen to represent his identity (see Image 2, a photograph of the drum on his lap). He holds the drum in one hand and rubs the surface of the drum with his other. It is a round-dance style drum, but Steve also uses it for sweat lodges. The drum feels cold; he gives it a little tap. Steve turns the drum over in his hands finding dirt on the edge, he tells me it is from the sweat lodge from the night before.



Image 2: The Drum

He brushes it off, apologizing that he is getting mud on the table. Steve tells me that the drum is made of untreated moose hide, it is special, made in the old way, not with chemically treated hide that so many drums are made of today. He turns the drum around, showing me the inside where you can see the light coming through to expose the swirling shades and different patterns in the skin. He made the drum, getting the moose hide last fall: "...you take the hair off and you scrape the inside off, where the meat and the guts all used to be, so they scrape that off, fleshing they call that." Sinew is sewed through the hide, holding it to the wooden frame of the drum keeping it taut.

From the moment I asked Steve to bring a symbol that represented his identity, he knew right away that it would be a drum. The story of his identity symbol is the story of connection to his culture. The drum as an object and symbol is almost inseparable from who Steve is:

I carry it [the drum] with me almost everywhere. ... I think that if you ask people, "oh you know Steve" "oh yeah he's that guy that drums." Or if you ask people from far away "do you know Steven Teekens?", other Native people that might be in another culture "oh yeah, he's a really good drummer or he makes drums," people know me for that.

As reflected in this excerpt, the drum is deeply intertwined with his life to the extent that others also define Steve by his connection to the drum.

The Holistic Content: Main Narrative Ideas

I read Steve's narratives over and over, letting the story speak to me and show me the main narrative ideas within his story. I kept asking myself, what is his story really all about? While I engaged in his interviews and read the transcripts, I kept the framework of Two-Eyed Seeing in my mind, trying to acknowledge both the western and Indigenous ways of knowing. The narrative ideas that emerged for me after the first interview were, reconnecting to culture; a story of discovery, opportunity and realizations; and resilience and positive mindset. However, the

words “realizations” and “opportunities” did not resonate with Steve so he suggested we use the phrase “healthy risks.” Then, after the second interview, additional narrative ideas emerged including helper and the good life. Following several more readings of his transcript, I found four narrative ideas that best captured Steve’s account of his identity: 1) the helper; 2) reconnecting to culture; 3) taking healthy risks; and 4) resilience and positive mindset.

The Helper

The helper, as a key narrative idea, shone through in the entirety of his story. This content idea, as it relates to Steve’s identity is comprised of two aspects. First, the drum and embodied traditional beliefs are Steve’s helpers. They helped him become the person he is today and the beliefs keep him balanced. Second, Steve is a helper to his community. This is a huge part of who he is as a leader, an advocate, and a role model to his family and community.

The drum, as Steve’s symbol of identity, can be referred to as the helper. As recounted in his story, the drum helps him to stay balanced and connected to his community:

The drum, so that’s a big part of who I am and has really helped me a lot. So when I heard that drum, you know, it drew me in like a magnet, it really moved something in me. So I always wanted to be around it. ... It reminds me to behave and stay balanced ... just be a good person.

As reflected in this excerpt, the drum has an active role in the way that Steve lives his life. The above excerpt shows a desire he has to be in close proximity to the drum as it is a constant reminder to lead a good life and stay grounded.

The narrative idea of the helper is reflected in Steve’s account of working with his clients and the community. Steve referred to dedicating his career to helping others:

I was a counselor there working with youth ... I helped a lot of youth and I remember one time when I thought to myself “I’m so happy in my job,” so satisfying, I enjoyed it, I could probably do this job for the rest of my life and be happy.

The helper is reflected as a major component of his identity and he finds it rewarding and it also motivates him to carry on the work he does. In order to help, Steve is compassionate and stays positive. In referring to his work with the homeless, he tries to see the good in everyone:

They have a lot of dreams and we try to help to get them on the right path to achieve those things and I’ve seen a lot of guys come from very challenging situations, find the resilience in themselves and overcome a lot of things ... if you give people a chance and help them that they can go a long way ... It’s easy to see the negative in people. It’s very easy. It’s harder to find the positive in people. If you can see a guy lying on the street who has maybe peed his pants and smells really bad and looks awful and you don’t even want to touch him, it’s hard to see the good in him. But if you can do that, and make them feel good, you’ve done something good.

As reflected in his narrative, not everyone can see the good in people; it takes a conscious effort. This excerpt also highlights his role as a helper to be a good person by helping others find their path in life.

Advocacy for Steve’s community is part of his identity as helper. He lists several boards for various organizations around Toronto that he is involved in:

I’m on the chief of police’s advisory committee. I’m the chair of the Aboriginal consultative committee for the Toronto police service. Passed policy through the police services through the board for Aboriginal policing a few years back. And I’ve been on that committee for about 12 years. I’m the vice president of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal

employment and training services board, been doing that for about 15 years I think. I'm a volunteer on Aboriginal legal services community council program.

Steve's listing off of the organizations that he is involved in reflects his commitment to the community and the importance of these volunteer activities as a human being who cares about other people. Steve also advocates for his clients, helping to make Toronto a safe and just place for them. As an example, he recounted a story about a group of his clients who have lunch in the park and play Frisbee:

The police would come in the park and just stop the Native guys and ask them for their IDs and ask them why they are in the park. And it became a habit. And the guys were getting upset and one guy was a little bit brave and asked "how come you're asking only us Native guys? You know, why don't you ask the other people in the park?" and the cop gave him a hard time. So I asked the guys "next time you get hassled by the police get their names and badge numbers, write down the time. And if you can't get their badge number, get their car number." And it happened frequently enough where I finally emailed the unit commander at 13 division ... I also cc'd our local city counselor, Joe Mihevc ... I said "this has to stop." And you know I would be willing to work with them to maybe educate them.

The way he retold this story, it was apparent that he was attempting to resolve the situation in a positive way through education as opposed to conflict; this reinforced his role as an effective advocate particularly related to the Aboriginal population.

Reconnecting to Culture

Reconnecting to his Aboriginal identity and culture was a key narrative idea underlying Steve's story. Steve was born "without" his culture and his story reflects the journey of discovering Aboriginality:

Some of the cultural practices that I use have really helped me to be the person I am, a fairly healthy person. But that being said, I didn't grow up that way. I didn't grow up on reserve. I grew up in a very non-Native community. And that community was as diverse as white bread and a glass of milk.

His metaphorical reference to white bread and white milk highlights the lack of Aboriginality in his early life. Although supportive, neither of Steve's parents could teach him about Aboriginal culture because his Ojibway mother grew up in a French foster home and his father is non-Aboriginal. Steve noted, however, an affinity towards the natural environment and he talked about playing with his younger brother out in the woods and fishing all day long. He commented: "I didn't realize it [having a connection to the land] was a part of the culture but it's a big part. And I had it right from the get go." He elaborated that this connection to the land may be a part of an inherited "blood memory." His statement reflects an ancestral connection that is inevitably a part of his identity, showing itself in his values and behaviors.

Steve's narrative account reflected a deep curiosity about connecting to his culture. Referring to his Aboriginal culture, he stated: "Growing up I didn't have much connection to my identity." His statement points to how being Aboriginal was somewhat external to him, but still a part of his sense of self. Steve identified the drum as a gateway to his culture: "Aboriginal culture, Native culture, Ojibway culture. Growing up I knew little about being Native and as I got older I was curious and the drum sort of, it was the gateway." Like a gateway, the drum opened up future possibilities to learn about and connect to his culture. Steve noted that he went up north for College to be near his reserve: "I wanted to go there, just be around there and get to know some of the people there, just make those connections." The physical proximity to the reserve was reflected in his narrative as a step to learning more about what being Aboriginal was about.

His physical proximity to the reserve was referred to with mixed feelings. Once there, he reconnected to his community and land based activities: “It almost felt like reconnecting to a part of my family’s history that I never knew before. So ... it almost felt like a sense of coming home ... even though I never grew up there I was accepted by the people of the reserve.” The connotation of “home” in his statement reflects a level of comfort and a returning to one’s origins. Additionally, the language “reconnecting” suggested that he was previously connected, possibly through his blood memory noted earlier. However, he identified that many people on the reserve did not practice traditional spirituality; instead he found himself and his new friends engaging in lots of drinking and unhealthy behaviours:

When I first went to college I lived in North Bay ... and made friends with some of the people from the reserve. They had a Native hockey team in college, so [I] played hockey. Yeah, it was just a really interesting time. I learned lots, not so much about the culture or spirituality, yeah, it was a lot of partying really. It wasn’t the greatest.

Although he felt a sense of coming home, it was reflected in the above excerpt that there was lack of spiritual connections and healthy, balanced living at this time in his life.

It was also during this time up North that Steve made his first attempt at drumming. He shared with me his recollections of this experience that ultimately ended up being disappointing:

I went up to the drum where my friends were ... and I asked them “hey can I drum with you guys, I want to learn.” He said “okay,” they made me feel welcome, they gave me a chair, gave me a drumstick, and they said “okay when we do our song you’ve got to drum on the edge of the drum only, don’t drum in the middle or close to it” so I said “okay.” So the song started and I was drumming along on the edge and I look around the drum and notice that everyone else is drumming close to the middle, I’m the only guy drumming close to the edge, you can’t even hear me, right, drumming. And I thought, this is no good,

I'm the only one doing this. So I got my stick and I started moving towards the middle and as soon as I did that my drumming was off beat. ... They are all looking at me kind of giving me mean looks. And I seen these drumsticks come towards mine and knock my stick off the drum. And after that song, I didn't drum again for 4 years.

After this event of feeling rejected from drumming, it took Steve several years before he drummed again. He recounted the story when he did finally reconnect with the drum and his spirituality, taking place in Toronto as opposed to the reserve:

On the reserve ... there was no connection with spirituality, there was people that were spiritual but they kept quiet, I don't know if they were shunned upon by others ... my circle of friends ... I would say too busy with drinking and smoking up ... they still lived off the land ... activities like fishing and hunting ... But not the spiritual cultural type things. So being in the city, that's where I learned a lot of the stuff ... I worked at Native Child, they were looking for a staff to stay late so they could offer drumming to the youth and I volunteered and I thought cool I want to learn anyways ... they encouraged me to sit and drum too and sort of role model.

Steve found a new Aboriginal community in Toronto that encouraged and shared traditional activities. In order to find his way, Steve recounted how he continued drumming, asking questions and learning the stories of the drum.

Steve's narrative demonstrated how he slowly incorporated traditional Aboriginal beliefs and practices into his own life and his family. He noted how he prompted his daughters to connect with their culture by presenting them with rites of passage:

I made sure that my kids went through different rites of passage growing up. So ... when they were young we got them their spirit names and when we went to Pow Wows, they danced. And when they had their first menstruation we had them go to, learn about their

moon time and berry fast where they don't eat berries for a year and then they end that with a fast. We did those things with them so we made sure that we raised them well and that they understood their culture.

As reflected in this account, Steve was mindful of raising his daughters within their culture so as to prevent the cultural disconnection that he experienced as a child. As a parent, Steve leads by example and he himself attends different ceremonies and activities such as sweat lodges, drum circles, Pow Wows and Sun dances.

Taking Healthy Risks

It was Steve who named "taking healthy risks" as a key narrative idea related to his identity. He defined healthy risks in relation to unhealthy risks:

Sometimes there are risks that aren't healthy to take that will lead to a path that is not good.

But if it's a healthy risk even if you're a little afraid to do it, you know find a little bravery and take those healthy risks. Maybe, if it doesn't work out, it's still, won't hurt.

Underlying this narrative excerpt is a sense that taking healthy risks shaped Steve's sense of self. Some of these healthy risks that Steve recounted included participating in ceremonies for the first time, going to college and university, having children, and taking and quitting certain jobs. Steve sought out and took opportunities when they were available to him even though he was not aware of what the outcome may be. When Steve was still in high school he went to his first sweatlodge. His mother took him and he went even though he did not know what to expect. He recalled going into the lodge:

I went in and it was dark and I didn't know what to expect and it got really hot ... I could see things in there and it just really amazed me and afterwards I asked the guy who was conducting the sweat lodge ... "did you bring in some bears paws or something because things touched me eh". And he said "no, look around, do you see any?" and I asked him

about the things I saw and he said those are things that you saw, the spirits wanted to show themselves to you. So it was amazing, it really was. It really woke me up to those things. As reflected in this excerpt, participating in the sweat was a healthy risk, which led to Steve awakening more of his spirit and connecting with his Aboriginal identity.

Linked in with these healthy risks were also unhealthy risks. Steve referred to himself as a bit of an “outcast” in high school. He stated: “I enjoyed partying a lot and smoking up all the time.” During this time, he quit school once and got expelled the year after for being rude and defiant. Upon reflection Steve believes this behaviour was just teen rebellion. Despite this behaviour, Steve was determined to go to college. He described how this was a good risk:

I graduated [high school] and I know I want to go to college, my friends had no plans of doing that. And I think of the crowd that I hung out with, I think I was the only one who went. And a few of them carried on with that party life style and I’ve been to a few of their funerals. Yeah, they got stuck in that lifestyle.

As Steve recounted, he took the healthy risk to leave the safety of his circle of friends and attend college away from his hometown. This decision led Steve to pursue a life in social services wherein he has excelled and become a leader. More recently, Steve took a healthy risk in going back to school last year to get his university degree while working full time and having a family. Another healthy risk that Steve referred to was having children. He recalled the experience:

The first time, we didn’t plan for our kids ... When my first daughter came I was really happy when I heard she was coming a long and you know I’d never been a father before at that point and I didn’t know what to do to get ready and I didn’t know what I had to do and I was a kind of nervous.

In order to prepare for the birth of his daughters, Steve recalled making a traditional tikinagan (a traditional Ojibway baby carrier). He did not know how to make one, but tried it anyway. Steve

took the healthy risk to embrace fatherhood and a new skill in making the traditional Ojibway baby carrier.

During his career, Steve took many healthy risks, both in the selection of his jobs and in his advocacy work. Steve took multiple risks during his career like moving to Toronto for the first time to work with homeless youth. He stated: “My job was walking around at night looking for street youth particularly Aboriginal ones and it was funded by AIDS prevention funding.” He learned new skills and put himself at risk to help youth. Additionally, Steve changed jobs when he met his saturation of learning and growth: “I had to keep busy. So I got bored of working there after not too long. So I started looking for work.” He also recalled leaving jobs if it made his life out of balance: “I had developed some bad habits. I would do work at home, my writing and proposals ... till 4 in the morning, sometimes I wouldn’t sleep at all ... and I thought, this isn’t healthy. I’m not appreciated there, my efforts aren’t being acknowledged.” Steve took healthy risks to put his needs for health and balance before work. It was apparent that he encountered his fears head on and when the risk leads in the right direction, he goes with it saying “I’ll try it, sink or swim.” This statement leads to how resilience is an important part of his life.

Resilience and Positive Mindset

Steve’s resiliency and positive mindset were quite apparent throughout his story and closely interwoven with his identity. Positive mindset relates to Steve’s optimism and appreciation for life. Resilience, from an Indigenous perspective, as described by Kirmayer et al. (2011), relates to adapting through relational, eco-centric, and cosmo-centric concepts of self as well as revitalizing culture for healing, and renewing political agency.

Steve’s identity story was full of positives. As reflected in his account, he does his best to look on the bright side and appreciate the little things in life:

It's not easy all the time, but I try to be positive. When I wake up in the morning I try to look in a positive way or put things in a positive way. It's the small things. In the summer months I try to go by the lake, even Lake Ontario. I like going there and being by the water, listening to the sound of the water ... smelling that fresh air smell ... I think that's what's helped me for so long.

Nature is clearly reflected as part of his positive mindset and ensuring that he maintains this way of thinking and being. His positive mindset shines through in other examples when he talks about enjoying commuting for two hours each day for his job or how his job is difficult but fulfills him because he knows he is making a difference. Another key example is the importance he attributes to staying positive and respectful during times of conflict and protest. He sees the good in people and in movements like Idle No More:

The good thing about that [blocking the peace bridge at Fort Erie], the positive thing they didn't block all the lanes, cars were still able to come and go, they were a little slower yeah, but it was peaceful. There were a lot of people in support, Native and non-Native.

Through his narrative, it is clear that Steve resists a negative outlook and the embodying of anger. Rather, he attempts to empathize and see opportunity for change and improvement.

Part of maintaining his positive mindset is his capacity for resilience which is intimately threaded throughout Steve's narrative account of identity. Three obstacles that stand out during Steve's life story are in school when he was teased by children and accused by the principal of spray-painting the school, and his experience with alcohol and drugs. When Steve was young he was called "stupid Indian" and "wagon burner." When kids did this, Steve at first used violence to deal with the discrimination: "I got mad and I lost it and I beat him up! ... after that people kind of quit, stopped calling me those names." However, Steve always disliked the feeling of violence, he felt "not so good" after hurting someone. Steve worked hard to make non-violence

the way he came to deal with oppression. An example of this is his reaction to when the principal of his school accused the Native students of putting graffiti on the school:

It was all over the school you could see it from the road, it said “we support Oka by your friendly neighbourhood alcoholics” somebody spray-painted. And then later that day ... some of the Native kids were called to the office and asked if it was us.

Although Steve was disappointed that the principal would do that, he talked it out rather than responding with violence. Additionally, his resilience was demonstrated when Steve overcame his negative relationship with drugs and alcohol. He commented “my drinking was getting pretty bad. I didn’t get too heavily involved with drugs, mainly smoking weed.” Because his friends drank a lot and encouraged drinking, it eventually started to be every day that Steve was getting drunk. He stated:

The drinking was getting out of control, I bombed out of university ... towards the end it wasn’t any fun ... towards the end I wouldn’t be such a fun guy, sometimes I’d be angry ... Sometimes I’d fight.

As reflected in Steve’s account, drinking became an obstacle in his life and was negatively affecting his personality. He thanks his parents for driving up north and bringing him back home: “They drove all the way up there to come and get me ... so I ended up getting a summer job.” As Steve indicated, his parents showed their worry and support with this gesture.

For several years after his move south, Steve’s drinking was moderate, but he found that he was still getting in trouble, “the occasional fight, argument, before I moved to Toronto I would sometimes wake up in a jail cell because I was walking around drunk and they would put me in jail.” This trouble came to an end during his first few years in Toronto when he developed his deep relationship with the drum. He recounted:

I kept asking around, asking elders and then finally learned one of the teachings on the drum ... I learned that story ... I decided that I want to quit drinking. I learned that you're not supposed to be doing drugs or drinking when you come around the drum because it's not good ... So I quit. Just quit. I didn't go to treatment or nothing. And it was really good. As reflected in Steve's narrative, the Aboriginal teachings around the drum grounded him and guided him to lead a good, healthy life.

Steve's narrative account of his identity is about revitalizing his culture to find himself and live a healthy life. He first reconnected to his culture because he and his mother were both curious: "My mom was curious and we started going to Pow wows." Since that time, Steve now carries many traditional beliefs and knowledge including how to cultivate health and wellness:

I've learned ... health is four aspects of a person ... the mental, emotional, physical, spiritual. And if your mental health is unbalanced it may affect your physical health. Or if your spiritual health is lacking, it make affect your emotional health. And all of those sort of play hand in hand so balance is somewhere being in the middle of all of those things To cultivate balance, Steve refers to drumming, having a positive mindset, being connected to nature, and sharing his feelings. Steve stated:

It [the drum] reminds me ... stay balanced. ... A lot of mornings when I wake up, I try to wake up and be positive about things and I find that if I wake up with a positive mindset that it carries me through the day. ... Or if I go out by the lake and spend time by the water ... I'll see a beautiful sunrise and it'll just make me think, wow, I'm lucky to be alive. ... When I have hard times or problems, um I'm not one to hold it in. There are a few people I'll speak to that I trust.

His narrative reflects a compilation of things that cultivate balance in his life. It is this ability to stay balanced that shows his resilience. Other times that Steve has revitalized his culture is when

his children were born. For each child, he made a tikinagan and kept the placenta after their birth. His wife gave birth in western style hospitals and each time Steve explained to the staff that the tikinagan was in place of a car seat and that the placenta they must have for cultural reasons: “We used the tikinagan instead and no one gave us any problem with that.” By doing this Steve displayed resilience by socially positioning himself as an Aboriginal man who practiced his cultural traditions within an urbanized and Western society.

Finally, Steve recounted his resilience by renewing his political agency. He discussed his political action related to Idle No More:

I’ve been following it and it’s been really raising a lot of ugly things and showing a lot of ugly attitudes and intolerance. I read the Toronto Sun newspaper ... there was one article that I read that really upset me ... it was about one reporter sort of insinuating there are two sets of laws in Canada. One for Aboriginals and we’re allowed to break them and one for non-Natives ... I started writing. I wrote a letter to the editor; of course it didn’t get published. But ... I sort of rebutted some of the comments he made and I said ... “if you did a little bit of investigative reporting you would you have come across this piece of legislation called the Indian Act, there actually is two laws in Canada you know. And the Indian Act contains a lot of unjust laws. Like it used to be illegal to pursue post-secondary education, it used to be, couldn’t do it. It used to be illegal to hire a lawyer to represent your community for unjust things happening. It used to be illegal to vote.”... So I went on Twitter ... and started debating him. And I decided to use intellect instead of anger.

Steve’s political agency through his writing and social media reflect a commitment to educate others about Aboriginal history, colonization, and the Indian Act. Although the first avenue was not fruitful, he continued with social media showing resilience.

Holistic Form of Steve's Story

I reviewed the holistic form of Steve's narrative to better understand the way his identity is recounted. In understanding how Steve tells the story of his identity, I discuss the type of story he told and the progression of his story. These two components of narrative form provide a detailed picture and insight into Steve's sense of self. In this section, I specifically focus on form as opposed to content of his story.

The typology of Steve's narrative, specific to identity, is one of reincarnation. I use the definition of reincarnation as defined by Aboriginal social activist and educator, Allyson Anderson (2008). She explains that reincarnation is about reawakening Aboriginal male identity and reclaiming the accompanying role(s) within family and community (Anderson, 2008). She defines it as a spiritual journey that involves reconstituting "fragments of traditional masculinities that have survived generations of physical and cultural genocide" (Anderson, 2008, p. 186). Reincarnation can take place through rituals, rites of passage, and the rejection of colonial definitions of Aboriginal masculinity in order to redefine Aboriginal manhood and restore connection to women, mother earth, and the community (Anderson, 2008). The meaning of reincarnation is not simply about being reborn; it is the process of reclaiming identity and culture after genocide.

The typology of reincarnation fits Steve's narrative as he recounted becoming reconnected with his culture and finding a way to reclaim his Aboriginal identity. This reclaiming occurs in the context of colonization breaking the link between his family and their community and their Aboriginal culture. Additionally, Steve faced oppression in school when he was teased and called a "wagon burner" and "stupid Indian." In the face of this, he reincarnated himself, not in the eyes of the oppressors, but in his own eyes by having a positive mindset and following the beat of the drum.

His first memory provided a glimpse of this narrative typology of reincarnation. As Steve began to tell his story, he stated: “I’m very into my culture” but that he did not grow up with it. The first memory he shared about his life is an account of hearing his mother’s childhood story, the reason he grew up without his culture. He commented that his mother was taken from her parents and placed into a French foster home: “My grandparents lived a fairly traditional life style of hunting and gathering, they were trappers. And then how they ended up losing the kids was the trapping business was not going so well ... the cost of furs was reduced and they couldn’t support themselves.” He noted that his mother lost her language, rites of passage, traditional teachings and practices, and community. With this action, the link to culture was broken for her, but also for him. As reflected in Steve’s story, this act represents the divide that he had to overcome to get back to his culture: “I didn’t even realize I was Aboriginal until a little later ... being teased by kids.” The kids at school also pointed out that his skin was dark and those are the two ways that he came to know himself as Aboriginal. However, he responded to name calling by telling himself, “I knew I wasn’t those names.” Despite experiences of racism, it is apparent that he resisted internalization of these comments. A positive mindset seemed to impede this internalization.

This typology of reincarnation continued throughout Steve’s story and was closely interwoven with how his identity was storied. Steve recounted that he engages in rituals, especially related to drumming, and promoting rites of passage for his daughters. As reflected in his narrative, Steve reclaimed what it is to be an Aboriginal man living a balanced life and living the teachings of the drum. As Steve’s path of the drum became more engrained in his life, he also forged stronger bonds with his community, becoming a leader, advocate and protector.

Steve’s identity story follows the progression of a slow ascent towards the goal of living a good, balanced life. See Figure 4 for a diagram of the progression of Steve’s plot over time.

During the interviews, Steve told me the story of his identity in chronological order with the central narrative thread being his education and employment. He talked about work as an important part of his life. There was a fair amount of continuity throughout Steve's story with not



Figure 4: Progression of Steve's plot over time

many surprises. At times, he discussed things that had been difficult such as being teased as a child, being discriminated against by his principal, and failing university. However, Steve did not recount these conflicts as significantly affecting his path or severely altering his progression in life. Because of his leadership position and healthy lifestyle, I was not expecting him to talk about a history of drinking. However, this emerged early on and the fact that he overcame it was aligned with his story of success. I also did not expect him to talk about conflict as I read him to be mild mannered and agreeable. Conflict with other people was not a major focus of his story, but it did appear a few times and mostly to do with work related things. However, the way he storied these events focused mostly on his ability to overcome, cope and let it go, and thus, not letting it affect him. As such, Steve's identity story slowly progresses, with only short minor regressions towards his goal - living a good, balanced life - a life that is guided by the drum.

CHAPTER 7

RESULTS: JACY

In this chapter, I present Jacy's narrative account of identity. Jacy was originally going to use his real name, however, after much thought and the reading over his results chapter, he decided that although he resonated with the results and thought they were "great" he wanted to use the pseudonym, Jacy, to protect his identity. Additionally, pseudonyms have been provided for all other identifying information.

In this chapter, I first provide my initial impressions and observations of Jacy with a brief description of him based on his demographic data and storytelling. Additionally, I share the main foci of his narrative as related to his identity, as well as the symbol he chose to represent his identity. Next, I discuss the storied content as based on the three main narrative content ideas contained in his story: 1) I'm not an "apple": finding a positive Aboriginal identity; 2) Expression of Aboriginality; and 3) Empathy and positive mindset. Last, I discuss Jacy's account of his identity through analysis of the narrative form of his story including the type of story he tells and its progression.

Jacy

Jacy is in his 40s and identifies as Status Indian, First Nations. Jacy was born in a western province, taken into foster care from birth until the age of three, and then adopted into a white family in Ontario. Over his lifetime, he has lived in Toronto for over six years. Jacy has an undergraduate degree and works full time as a social service worker in Toronto. Over the course of his life, he has had many jobs and prides himself on having always worked. He now lives with his wife and two children in a house that they own. He reported that his income is always sufficient to meet his needs.

During the interviews Jacy and I sat in a small interview room eating pizza. I sat at a small round table and he sat in an armchair, making himself comfortable. Talking together seemed comfortable, as we both had relaxed postures, we laughed often and smiled. Jacy was a

wonderful storyteller; he held my attention with his humorous accounts and wise teachings. He struck me as self-confident and self-assured. He narrated his identity as if it were unshakable. For example he stated, “Some of the kids thought I was Chinese growing up. So they would call me Chinese ... I knew I was Native ... I just laughed at them because I knew they were wrong. ... ‘you’re stupid, you don’t know your races. Get it right.’” This excerpt reflects Jacy’s ability to resist the internalization of racism. Jacy’s sense of self, even as a child, is solid and strong, he does not let other people’s stories or perceptions of who he is influence his identity.

The narrative cohesiveness of Jacy’s identity is related to the clearly defined foci of strength and perseverance. His narrative is complex, with the telling of multiple stories, events and memories that are shared without chronological order. There is no particular climax of his story. However, the consistency throughout Jacy’s story is the strength and perseverance of his character.

Two poignant examples of this focus are times when Jacy experienced conflict related to his Aboriginal identity. The first experience that Jacy shares is about a time when he explained smudging during a spirituality class at the school on his reserve. Jacy talked about being made to feel as an outsider by a student who was related to him. Jacy explained that it felt like the student stuck a “knife in me”:

I just said “oh you just do this part and you just” ... and then he yelled out “Oh you don’t know! You don’t know!” ... I’d already been living there [on the reserve] a couple years. ... I was already doing the Sundance. ... I was so stunned and ... so hurt that he said that ... I was so angry. And I said to him “Why don’t you go back to your father and get him to teach you some respect.”

This quote points to the discrimination Jacy experienced within the Aboriginal community of his reserve where his knowledge was sometimes discredited because he did not grow up there.

Despite being angry and hurt, Jacy was able to believe that his “calling down” was due to a learned behaviour of the person, it was not really about Jacy. He empathetically stated:

He doesn't know what I know ... He just saw a new guy coming in. ... And then I realized that this is the kind of family that he is from. They must say those things in there, behind the walls. They must do this kind of stuff to each other.

Jacy's narrative demonstrated how his response to the situation was an attempt to understand this person's comments and he recognized that this form of discrimination is a learned behaviour, which he persevered over.

The second story of conflict that Jacy perseveres through relates to throwing a rock through an RCMP window after he was not hired onto the police force. Jacy explained that he thought his Aboriginal identity was going to increase the police's brutality towards him.

There are like 5 or 6 cop cars outside. ... They look at me ... I thought “oh man, I'm going to get a Rodney King beat down.” ... I still thought I was going to get it when I got to the station but nothing happened. They knew I was Native, they had my Status card. ... They just took me and put me in the drunk tank and they let me go. ... I made them laugh by just telling them the truth. I think that is what changed everything.

The fear of police violence is a present day reality for Jacy and other Aboriginal men. Jacy highlighted his use of humour as a way to survive potential discrimination. His excerpt demonstrates his strength and perseverance by finding two meanings from his experience, 1) that he was on the wrong career path and 2) that “good people make mistakes too.” Jacy indicated that he accepted what he had done and decided to move on, not letting this event define his sense of self.

When I asked Jacy if he would like to participate in the Anishnaabe Symbol-based reflection portion of this research he said that he would and that he might choose a drum to be his

symbol. Two weeks later when Jacy produced his symbol, a picture of Buffalo Calf Woman (see Image 3 of the Buffalo Calf Woman), I was surprised. The following piece of writing describes Jacy's identity symbol from my perspective of the researcher and how he introduced the symbol, talked about it, and interacted with it.

He reaches into his black leather and wool work jacket. From within the inside breast pocket he pulls a folded piece of white paper. He slowly unfolds it and lays it on the small round table in the space between us. He positions it so it faces me. "It's a Native American folklore myth, it carries a lot of weight in our community, for us it represents life, renewal, new lessons ahead, a lot of good things." I look at the printout of the painting of Buffalo Calf Woman on the table while he speaks. He does not touch the symbol while he tells me about it except for one time when he looks to see if anything within the picture does not represent his identity. At the end of the interview, he tells me to keep it.



Image 3: Buffalo Calf Woman

In his explanation of his identity symbol, Jacy shared some teachings of Buffalo Calf Woman. He recalled one of the teachings related to a story about two brothers out hunting:

They went out into the plains. And they came across this ... big giant teepee and there was this big beautiful woman standing in front of it. ... "Hey look at that woman, she's so

beautiful ... we got to go see her!” One brother is like “we got to go hunting for the community, we didn’t come here to lie down with her right?” And the one’s like “No man she’s beautiful, she wants us, look at her, she’s waving us in, saying come into her teepee and lie down with her.” And the other brother is like “No, I’ve got a really bad feeling about this” ... So the one brother goes and visits with the woman ... and the other brother goes back to his village. ... he goes back out the next morning and he checks up on him ... the only thing left is a bunch of bones and it was his brothers bones.

The story was important to Jacy because as he noted, it taught him about listening to one’s instincts and respect for both his role in the community and about respecting women. These were teachings that Jacy embodied and narrated throughout his story.

Jacy shared a turning point for him when all these teachings of the Buffalo Calf Woman came to a juncture. He and his cousin were in a northwestern state at a party after a Pow Wow, they were looking for their other cousin but two girls wanted them to come home with them:

I had a bad feeling ... that girl is pushing her body against me and all of a sudden my stomach went really bad like it was turning, like someone was opening up a safe ... all of a sudden I felt this tap on my shoulder and I looked back behind me and there was this drunk Indian guy and he was like 30 or 40 feet away just sitting down and drinking his drink and looking at me ... then I look around because my grandfather always said when someone touches you or you don’t know what it is, look around, so I looked around and I noticed there were two guys that were looking at me and [my cousin]. I didn’t like the way they looked at us ... “I’m outta here man, I don’t like this place, I don’t like this place at all, lets get the fuck out of here.” ... So we went back and he was mad. ... [the next day] there were police all over the place and then we saw those two girls with them. ... she goes “yeah just

after you guys left, like two other guys came up and they were talking to us and my ex boyfriend was in the crowd and he came over and he beat one up and he killed him!”

This excerpt reveals that Jacy learned a life lesson as well as felt validation for trusting his instincts and respecting women by not using them for their bodies. He now narrates his identity as someone who trusts his instincts, makes good decisions and is choosing the right path. At the end of this specific story, Jacy says:

I know there are other guys out there with that kind of upbringing where they don’t respect women. ... I think I just dated women for their bodies and not really for their minds. ...

Life is about having kids now, life is about raising them with good values and being there for them, not being drunk, not being out with the guys.

This portion of Jacy’s narrative points to the progression he has made towards living a life of respect and fulfilling his role as a man. It also poignantly suggests there is work to be done in supporting other men to learn to how to live respectfully.

The Holistic Content: Main Narrative Ideas

I read Jacy’s interview transcript over and over, asking myself, “what does this story want people to know?” I read it with an open mind and heart; letting it speak to me, three major narrative ideas emerged. These narrative ideas help to understand and focus attention on the significant elements of his identity.

I am not an “apple”: finding a positive Aboriginal identity

Jacy grew up in a white adoptive family without any contact with other Aboriginal people. “Growing up I never saw any Native people.” He had been adopted from his reserve in a western province because his mother was 15, her parents were heavy drinkers, and they did not have the skills or resources to look after him. Initially, Jacy grew up not realizing he was Aboriginal. He stated: “My mom would always explain that I was adopted. ... I didn’t really realize [I was

Native] until I looked at my skin and then I looked at their skin, and I was darker, that's when I knew." Skin colour alerted Jacy that he was different from his family and other kids at school. This realization awoke the otherness in him, it awoke that idea that he might identify with another culture. However, Jacy did not have any contact with his Native community until he turned 18, when his adoptive parents suggested he write to his reserve to ask if they could fund his schooling.

They told me to write to the reserve ... they weren't sure if my [biological] mother was going to be there ... So I wrote and this lady she said "yeah okay, you can go to school and here's your funding." ... 6 months later, I phoned up ... and I said, "look, you guys have done a wonderful job supporting me, but this just isn't for me, I don't want to do it." And within that conversation she said that she was my mother. ... It felt pretty good ... she wanted to meet, so her and her husband drove down from there, from [the reserve].

As Jacy explained later, this phone call changed the course of his life and awakened his Aboriginal identity. His sense of self continued to be self-assured and this supported his developing curiosity about his Aboriginal culture.

A few years later Jacy was invited up to the reserve and he lived there for two years. The general feeling was of acceptance and excitement about learning new things. Jacy explained:

I went out to see my natural biological mother. She wanted me to believe in all this [traditional teachings] and get me involved. I thought it was great because I didn't grow up with religion, I didn't grow up with any beliefs ... I really liked everything.

This excerpt reflects Jacy's initial excitement about reclaiming his Aboriginal identity and rejoining his biological family. However, his experience also ended up containing hurt and trauma from which he had to heal. His advice to other people that are adopted: "You're not

always going to like what you're going to find. So, it's like opening a can of whoop-ass, you don't know." He elaborated by highlighting the tensions that he experienced on the reserve:

I didn't really like who she [his biological mother] was, I didn't really feel a connection.

Her values were different than mine. ... they [his biological mother and her husband] were involved in shootings, they were involved in drive-by's, typical Bonnie and Clyde. ... So because [I] didn't grow up there, they [youth on the reserve] were making their own

analogy, "well he's a white guy from the city. He's a white Native, we call them Apples."

Rather than finding a community to which he belonged, he found himself conflicted by feeling dissonance with his biological extended family. Additionally, the metaphorical reference to being called an "apple" highlighted a sense of otherness in his narrative because he did not grow up in a Native family on the reserve.

Despite feeling like an outsider, in some ways he was welcomed. For instance Jacy recounted being taught about ceremonies and traditional teachings. He stated: "I was already doing the Sundance. ... I was in the circle already. ... already in the ceremonies." Jacy experienced conflicting feelings regarding insider/outsider positionality. He enjoyed learning the ceremonies but he did not like the behaviour from his family on the reserve. He commented on the violence that he was seeing: "I'd had enough. ... dysfunction, gangs, too many guns lying around. ... I just thought, what they were doing was wrong and I thought this can't be the Native way. This can't be it." Jacy indicated that he packed up and left the reserve carrying a negative sense of his Aboriginal self. His statement reflects confusion as well as a struggle about what it meant to be Native.

The next leg of Jacy's narrative involves an account of his anger as a result of his experience of the reserve. He explained that his internalized hate towards Aboriginal people was overwhelming:

When I first moved out from the res ... I was so angry at them that I would have punched or kicked ... the first Native person I saw on the street! ... how they handled things. That I hated Native people so much. ... That's how it would feel because I was just redirecting it all from my step father and mother.

Jacy's account reflects ways that his identity as an Aboriginal man had been traumatized from the violence and conflict that he experienced on the reserve. This experience resulted in a prime narrative tension in his story in which he struggled with the Aboriginal part of himself and projected his anger outwardly onto other Aboriginal people. Jacy stated that joining a program solely for Native adoptees helped him:

They started taking me to the sweat lodge ... I started doing counseling, and they ended up writing a book and I was in a book and I put my own stuff in it. So that service really helped me out, it really helped me.

As reflected in this narrative excerpt, in order to heal he found an Aboriginal community that he respected and related to and also found various ways of expressing his challenges and anger, which included writing about his experience in a book and participating in counseling and ceremonies.

The final part of developing a positive Aboriginal identity occurred later in Toronto when Jacy found a group of Aboriginal friends who lived balanced lives and who helped him to incorporate the traditional teachings and healings into his life. Jacy elaborated about an encounter with one of these friends:

I had kept some items for dancing but I didn't know how to put them together and he [a friend] showed me. ... Once I was dancing, I thought, "yeah, this is it, this is for me." ... the dancing was always about healing. So when I came back I remember I was starting to dance just to heal. But now it's just all done, the healing. ... We [Aboriginal male friends]

do a lot of drumming together. ... So I have my Native friends ... we're big jokers so we mostly do a lot of Native humour, we play tricks on each other.

This narrative excerpt points to the way that a positive sense of self, interwoven with feelings of belonging and respect, was developed by the healing that occurred through his Aboriginal community in Toronto. He commented that "I know everybody, everybody knows me. It's pretty good." This statement suggests a positive narration of his identity. Despite some narrative tension in the account of his sense of self, he was able to create a positive Aboriginal identity and persevere despite obstacles.

Expressions of Aboriginality

Jacy introduced his narrative by saying "it's a big deal for, let's say First Nations people, to have their identity because historically it has been taken away from us." His statement "to have" suggests that identity for First Nations people had to be meticulously taken back and secured. To Jacy, the reclaiming of and having an identity is a feat for him as well as the entire community. He continued by explaining why this reclaiming and possessing is an accomplishment:

The whole reason for residential schools was to wipe away our Indigenous identity. And to make us into ... normal Canadians. But it didn't work. ... The fact that there were still Native people on the reserve still doing the traditional ways, even though the Canadian government tried to outlaw our dances.

The language Jacy uses is indicative of overcoming oppression. His linguistic usage of "wipe[d] away," suggests that the dominant group felt one's Aboriginal identity could be erased. However, Jacy's narrative reflects a collective perseverance by retaining cultural practices. Despite this feat, the impact of colonization continues to affect Aboriginal communities, Jacy explained:

Our community has been torn apart by colonization ... it's like we're in a healing mode still. So what I've noticed is a lot of families don't have the basic skills of tidying up or

doing the dishes or fixing their house, some of them do, but some of them don't. ... People are trying to heal from residential school. Just be thankful they aren't out, shooting their gun off. Be thankful that there is just some garbage bags in front of their house.

His statements point to the way that Aboriginal peoples' identity and every aspect of their lives has been influenced by colonization. The current status of people is one of a "healing mode."

The first memory that Jacy shared about his identity is related to his participation in the Sundance ceremony. He recounted:

I was dancing the Sundance. ... when I was doing that, that was a lot. Pretty emotional, pretty new things there. I remember I had a grandmother, an English grandmother ... she passed in ... '98. And I remember being out on the Sundance ground and I smelled her. I smelled her perfume. And there is no way anyone else her age was out there, because you're out there for 12 hours a day for four days in a row with no food or water and it was only on the second. So I knew that she was around. That was pretty powerful.

This account by Jacy reflects a strong spiritual connection to ceremony, family and spiritual life. His narration highlights a connection that he makes between traditional ceremonies and ancestors, prompted through his senses.

Humour is also another way that Jacy believes he and other Indigenous people heal and find self-expression. He explained his theory about the power of humour:

I'm going to say Indigenous groups, that's how they cope with what's happened. ... Like full out belly laughs. It doesn't matter who's listening or who's around, it's just going to come out. ... I see it with the Aborigines, I see it with everyone across Turtle Island all the way down to South America. So, I think it's an Indigenous thing.

His narrative excerpt above highlights a positive method that his community has used to deal with the historical impact of colonization and oppression on their past and current lives. The collective nature of his statement demonstrates coping as a group and not just as individuals.

A key component of Jacy's identity is about wellness and connection to Aboriginal beliefs and practices. He commented:

Any land, we have a connection to. Not just Native land ... a connection with me and the earth. ... I felt that when I was a little kid. ... It's just like nature going through you. It's a beautiful thing. It's just being safe, like when you know you're safe. Like when you're on the grass and you just feel like you're grounded. ... How do I stay well? ... To be around the drum ... the drum group ... and at Pow Wows. ... I drum and I sing, I dance. I smudge with other people. And then the laughing that goes along with it. ... It's being around the community that makes me really happy.

As reflected in his excerpt, there is a deep connection between his sense of self and the land and his Aboriginal community and practices. Earlier in this excerpt, his use of the word "we" highlights a collective nature to his identity in which belonging and shared experiences are part of how he forms a sense of self. Belonging to and participating with the collective and traditional practices keeps him well.

Finally, when asked what is important for people of Toronto to know about Jacy's Aboriginal identity, he speaks not about himself but about Native people in general and about the beauty of their culture and their resilience to oppression. He stated:

It's a beautiful thing. That it's peaceful, it's not going to harm anyone. ... like the Idle No More movement it's about peaceful protest ... waking up my people. ... We're connected to the earth and if you go up to someone and just give them a light tap ... they'll fall over, it's because they are not grounded ... Someone who is attached to the earth and attached to

their inner core ... to their inner heart, you can't push them over. I find that with Native people and that's why they stand up, that's why ... you can punch them 100 times, you can kick them in the face ... they are resilient to it and they are just going to keep going.

This excerpt is filled with the power of collective Aboriginal identity upon Jacy's individual identity. There is the sense that what happens to one Aboriginal person affects all. He associates with the struggles, accomplishments, and perseverance of all of his people. Prominent in his narrative is the collective resilience of the Aboriginal population.

Empathy and Positive Mindset

Empathy and positive mindset are main narrative content ideas in Jacy's story. His narrative reflects a positive mindset that propels him through challenging situations. An example of this is when he was adopted at the age of three from his foster home in a western province. As opposed to narrating an experience filled of fear and separation, Jacy explained that he felt special:

I thought it was a new place ... I thought it was exciting. I was surrounded by toys. ... it was pretty cool. Because now I was like the star! In the other place I was just another kid. ... they [his foster parents] had their own kids, six of their own kids and then four foster kids. So now I was the star and this was like the reward for being the star, it was neat.

As demonstrated through this quote, he went from being one of many in the foster home to the center of attention in his new adopted family. The linguistic usage of "star" suggests that he perceived being distinguished and celebrated in this new family. Jacy uses his positive mindset and sense of self to frame experiences in an optimistic light such as in this example where he drew out the good, rather than negative during a significant transition.

Jacy's positive mindset often manifests as empathy throughout his narrative. Jacy recounted believing his sympathetic nature was a birthright, "I just think I was born with it." For

instance, Jacy experienced conflict with his biological mother on the reserve as well as during a time when he worked in a jail and an inmate called him “Hey, Chief.” Despite the hurt that Jacy felt during these times, he demonstrated empathy towards these two individuals and attempted to understand their situation and the reasoning behind their behaviors. When reflecting on his biological mother’s “different values”, violence and betrayal, Jacy stated: “she came up from a dysfunctional course. You know, residential school, being abused.” His statement reflects an understanding of the external context that influenced his mother’s behaviour. It is apparent that Jacy’s capacity for empathy facilitates his positive sense of self. He demonstrates an understanding that what people say is often a learned behaviour and more reflective of them, not about Jacy or what he is doing.

During the evolution of Jacy’s narrative of his identity, he talks about the emergence of his human side and realization that he should be a social worker. This realization coincided with an important moment that Jacy identifies as a turning point in his life (ie. the time he threw a rock through the RCMP window). Prior to this time Jacy had wanted to be in the police force since he was a little boy. He explained the transition:

So this was like closure for me. And ... I was okay with it ... I’m where I’m supposed to be. If that rock didn’t go through there, I’d still be trying to get on the police force. So after that happened I just pushed it all away and started going for something else. ... My human side was starting to develop. ... it was like “wow man this is cool, this job” [working with men with autism]. You know I feel like I’m actually helping someone. ... I was meant to be a social worker.

As reflected in this narrative excerpt, there is the sense that everything happens for a reason to lead a person to the right place in life. This is highlighted in his statement: “I’m where I’m supposed to be.” Jacy’s excerpt pointed to a positive mindset in which he took this experience as

one where he made a mistake and that it ultimately set him on the path that he was supposed to be on. Jacy noted that he became a social service worker. His empathetic nature to help others is prominent when speaking about his job:

The way I see it is that I rescue kids. ... I don't have any shame, I don't have any qualms about the kids that I removed. ... each one of those kids was in trouble. ... the situation they were in was terrible. So I'm glad that they were gone and no one can come up to me and say that I did the wrong thing because I know I would never remove unless I had to. ... I was for keeping the unit together. ... trying to help them. Even the most awful people, have feelings and a heart too, right now you're just in the ugliness of them.

This narrative excerpt reflects a story that has come full circle. In being adopted himself, Jacy now helps children in challenging situations. His statement points to a transition from maintaining the family unit to one in which removal is sometimes necessary. His professional role is intimately interwoven with his sense of self and historical and personal experiences.

Holistic Form of Jacy's Story

I explored the holistic form of Jacy's storytelling as a way to understand the narrative account of his identity. In terms of form, I discuss narrative type and progression to further understand Jacy's story. The type of story that is told reveals the values and perceptions of the storyteller. Although there are many narrative typologies, the one that echoed Jacy's story is that of the romance. Although his story could have been classified by many other typologies such as reincarnation, his story highlighted the journey of overcoming obstacles and resilience more than the reclaiming of Aboriginality.

The romance typology is not about love as one might imagine, but about the protagonist overcoming obstacles on route to his goal (Lieblich et al., 1998). The journey and the struggle to achieve one's goal is the essence of his story. Jacy's narrative reflects a journey of overcoming

challenges in order to achieve a positive Aboriginal identity. Some of the challenges involved being adopted and separated from his Aboriginal culture as well as later experiencing trauma when he returned to the reserve. As reflected in his story, Jacy cultivated healing for himself by seeking out dancing and a community that was respectful, full of laughter and practicing the traditional ways. Jacy's narrative is not necessarily about his positive Aboriginal identity, but rather about the strength and perseverance it took to get there.

The progression of Jacy's narrative is "Trial and Error" while slowly ascending to his goal of developing a positive Aboriginal identity. Jacy narrates his identity through non-chronological stories about life lessons. The majority of the stories that he tells entail a conflict that is resolved through trusting his instincts, which rely on him knowing himself. During the first few readings of Jacy's transcripts I experienced confusion and difficulty completing analysis because there were a large number of stories that at first glance seemed to be unrelated and therefore lacked a cohesive plot.

Jacy's was the first narrative I analyzed and therefore, I was new to the analysis process. At first I only valued narrative content analysis because it helped to organize the narrative ideas of Jacy's story. I resisted narrative form analysis because I felt that it attempted to fragment and categorize his story. However, through discussions with my thesis supervisor I realized that narrative form helped to reveal the emotional tones of narratives, which are essential components to understanding narratives. Analysis of Jacy's narrative form assisted me to work through the confusion related to the seemingly chaotic content of Jacy's stories and view the narrative as a whole in relation to the emotional journey of his story. This process revealed the progression of his story of trial and errors. His narrative reflects the way that he engaged in various experiences and opportunities that prompted a change of course in his life such as the many times when he made a decision to leave school, home, the reserve, Winnipeg, a job, and so on all of which

changed his life journey. Through each of these experiences, he recounted learning about himself and emerging more self-assured and self-knowing. During the telling of these trial and error stories, Jacy did not talk a lot about the emotional significance of the events but he did assign evaluations such as “it was good” or “I felt betrayed”, which guided the peaks and troughs of the progression. See Figure 5 for a diagram of the progress of Jacy’s plot over time.

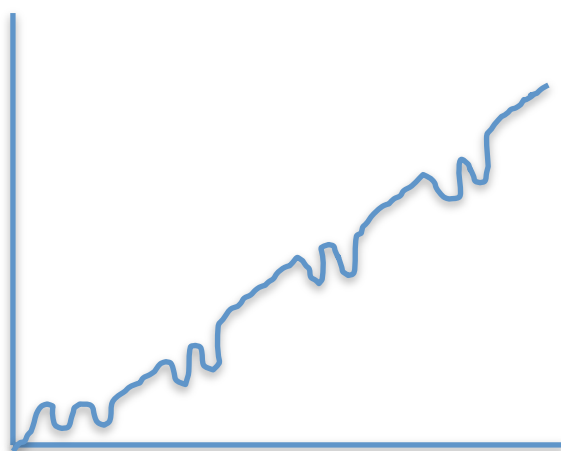


Figure 5: Progression of Jacy’s plot over time

An example of a trial and error was living on the reserve, experiencing betrayal and hurt by his mother. He explained when he knew it was time to leave the reserve:

I’d had enough. ... They were fighting their chief and his security guards ... and I didn’t want to be a part of it. ... There was a big giant eagle wing, and a head that was pointing towards Winnipeg. And I remember thinking ... I got to go. The next day, I was gone.

This narrative excerpt reflects Jacy’s trust in his ability to read the signs and know what is best for him in life. Another time when Jacy changed his life course was when he decided to move away from Winnipeg. He told me: “I knew who I was and what I had to do and that was just to go back home. So I risked everything, I had a job with Corrections and I just left it.” Jacy was decisive and trusted his instincts. Winnipeg had been a place where he had healed from the

trauma of the reserve and although it was difficult to leave, he knew when it was time to change his life course.

A final example of Jacy's trial and error was reflected in his learning of the Buffalo Calf Woman teachings. During this teaching Jacy experienced an event, which put him at risk and required him to learn respect and trust his instincts. Jacy emerged from the trial and error a changed man who knew respect for his role, women and community. Additionally, the overall struggle Jacy experienced to find his positive sense of self is one of trial and error. He experienced multitudes of divergences, adoption, violence on the reserve, and a hate towards Aboriginal people. However, of utmost importance in his narrative was how he overcame his challenges, healed, and now helps with the healing of others.

CHAPTER 8
DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I provide an interpretative discussion of my research, how it fits with current literature. I specifically answer my research question, “how do First Nations men living a balanced life in Toronto narrate their identity?” Following this I discuss working with the First Nations community and the strengths and limitations of this study. Last, I comment on the implications for future research, education, and clinical practice. Before I begin the discussion, I must acknowledge that the convenient sampling method I used resulted in three study participants whom all identify as Status Indians. Therefore, although the aim of this study was to examine Aboriginal men’s stories, in fact this project is actually about First Nations men and not Aboriginal men as no Métis and Inuit men were recruited. Therefore, the question that I actually answered was “how do First Nations men living a balanced life in Toronto narrate their identity?” From this point forward I will use the term First Nations in relation to the participants identity and use Aboriginal to discuss the larger community and culture of Toronto when applicable. I would also like to be explicit that this research is not Indigenous as I am not Indigenous. As an advisory committee member reminded me, Indigenous research is usually produced by someone who identifies as Indigenous. However, this research does add to the body of literature about urban First Nations men and it also brings Indigenous research methods into academia both of which help to share knowledge about First Nations people and claim space for legitimizing Indigenous ways of knowing and research.

Interpretative Discussion

It is known that colonization has resulted in loss of traditional Aboriginal male roles; this has led some Aboriginal men to experience trauma to their identity and to embody oppression as expressed by high unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and violence in this group (Adelson, 2005; Ball & Manahan, 2007). These negative expressions of colonization and oppression have created negative stereotypes of Aboriginal men, which have come to dominate current day stories

about who Aboriginal men are (Mussell, 2005). In returning to chapter two of this thesis, I poignantly recall the negative stories featuring historically charged and stagnant caricatures of Aboriginal men, which were stories I was familiar with as a white woman growing up in Canada. However, as a nurse working with the Aboriginal population in Toronto, I began to encounter other stories, positive stories, and I realized that the negative stories and caricatures portrayed in literature and media were frozen in time, they were static and unrepresentative of modern day.

It was because of these phenomena that I chose to conduct this research; I wanted to counter these negative stories with something real and dynamic. I wanted to know how Aboriginal men living a balanced life in Toronto narrated their identity. I wanted to know how others could learn from these stories. I divided this interpretive discussion into three sections: 1) Positive First Nations Identity; 2) Urban Territory; and 3) Health and Wellness.

Positive First Nations Identity

I expected that embodied oppression would be present in the participants' narrative accounts of identity and it was true that all three participants acknowledged experiencing racism and stereotypical assumptions related to their Aboriginal background. However, all three participants resisted the embodiment of negative Aboriginal stereotypes. One thing that stood out in the participants' stories was their resilience and positive sense of self. An aspect of their resilience was the way that each participant dealt with discrimination towards themselves or people in their community. Gene said he was like "Teflon" and that he actively diversified his skills so that he would not be pigeonholed as just an Aboriginal man. Steve learned to negotiate with and teach people who were discriminatory towards himself and/or his community. Jacy used humour and empathy when faced with discrimination.

The content of each of their narratives communicated a sense of pride and confidence as central to their identity. Echoing Restoule's (2000) work, these First Nations men did not hide

who they were; rather, they were proud of their First Nations identity. Rather than embodying negative caricatures or stereotypes, the participants of this study told stories of always having and/or coming to have, a positive First Nations identity. Whether their resilience was an intrinsic characteristic or related to certain experiences was unclear.

Stories were reflected in this study as powerful. The stories that children are told often guide the way they see and interact with the world (Mussell, 2005). Many of the stories that participants told in this study were ones that they had heard when they were younger as well as stories that represented significant moments or turning points in their lives. In general, stories can be supportive or stigmatizing, told by grandparents or the media or others (Taylor & Osborne, 2010; Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010). For these participants, their “guiding” stories that emerged in adulthood, were positive, and were narrated in relation to the significance of their symbol. The symbol and accompanying story that each participant shared was clearly linked to their positive First Nations identity and signified an important aspect of themselves. As Frideres (2008) declares, expressions of being Aboriginal often include symbolic association (Frideres, 2008). The participants’ symbols of a drum, a tobacco pouch and a picture of [White] Buffalo Calf Woman are all associated with traditional First Nations practices and/or teachings, thereby showcasing that expressions of First Nations identity are at the core of each participants’ personal sense of self. Drawing upon Lavallée (2009), not everything can be said through words, and symbols can often capture meaning and promote discussion. The use of symbols allowed participants in this study to elaborate not just on their identity, but their positive sense of self and resilience. Similar to Restoule (2000), I question what made these men proud of their First Nations identity as opposed to wanting to hide it or be ashamed of it. How did their narratives account for this resilience?

In this study, the role of mentors and positive mindsets stood out as important influences on participants' positive sense of self. Mentors appeared especially instrumental during participants' childhood, which ultimately shaped their life choices. Children need positive role models and stories to help shape a positive sense of self and wellbeing (Ball & Manahan, 2007; Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Participants' narrative accounts in this study displayed positive mentorship, usually by parental figures, through various means such as unconditional support, acceptance, constant encouragement towards educational and employment opportunities and the role modeling of respect towards self and others. It was clear in this study that having positive and encouraging role models were contributing factors to resilience and the positive nature of participants' narrative accounts. Furthermore, each participant's narrative demonstrated a positive mindset. Even in childhood their stories contained empathy, optimism, and confidence. This finding echoes the research by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation that found certain protective factors such as altruism and nurturing parents support individuals who experienced adverse conditions and experiences (Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003).

Specific behaviours that supported a positive First Nations identity for these participants were similar to previous research findings (Environics Institute, 2010; McCaskill, et al., 2011) related to knowing one's family history and participating in positive Aboriginal community. Environics Institute (2010) found that Aboriginal identity in Toronto is supported by having a mentor, having knowledge of family heritage, and education in cultural venues. Furthermore, Aboriginal men interviewed for the TARP project expressed several factors that supported their life including a successful healing journey, and access to Aboriginal culture (McCaskill, et al., 2011). In this current study, the participants' narrative accounts echoed these findings and shared stories of connecting to their First Nations identity by: knowing their family history and stories (especially regarding the impact of colonization); and participating in positive, healthy

Aboriginal communities, which provided avenues to express and share traditional teachings and/or practices and/or ceremonies.

Learning about family history such as the impact of colonization on their ancestors and themselves as well as connecting with blood relatives was important to these participants – learning history and reconnecting are intertwined concepts. For example, Gene talked about having the realization that residential school impacted the way his father parented him and that without colonization he would not have spent time at church. He also spoke about staying connected to his blood relatives on Six Nations reserve and the importance of passing his knowledge down to his nieces. In order to gain knowledge of his history, Jacy reconnected with his blood family on his reserve and learned stories. Jacy told many stories of his family history specifically about family at residential school, and experiencing trauma, poverty, and anger. He told stories of how these aspects of colonization influenced his life largely through his adoption. Additionally, Steve listened to the stories of his mother growing up in foster care. He was acutely aware of how this story represented a fracture between him and his First Nations history. He and his mother reconnected to their blood relatives and together they learned their history and culture. Interestingly, both Steve and Jacy learned the stories of their ancestors, and went back to their reserve communities, however, both saw a lot of trauma behaviours there. Both were thankful that they left those communities and that they searched out a healthy Aboriginal community in Toronto. Joining a healthy Aboriginal community was essential for both Jacy and Steve in forming a positive cultural identity, which is critical for having a positive sense of self and wellbeing (Taylor & Usborne, 2010).

Unlike previous literature (Adelson, 2005; Ball & Manahan, 2007), nowhere in the narratives did the participants talk about having to negotiate the colonial images of the male “Indian’s” long braid, bare chest, and moccasins. I thought that these historical and stereotypical

images might appear in their narratives, but they did not. These images may be implicit or somewhere within their subconscious, but none of them storied thoughts or feelings regarding this phenomenon. They did however narrate the negotiation between traditional practices with modern life in Toronto. Each participant in this study noted that they engaged in traditional practices in different ways, and it is evident that they live traditional values in their lives, communities (including work environments) and families. It must be noted that due to inclusion criteria this finding may relate to selection bias, but is nonetheless reflective of one of many realities and perspectives of urban First Nations men.

Urban Territory

I use the term “Urban Territory” to discuss the physical space and community that has emerged on the land called Toronto. I specifically comment on this concept because I was interested in generating local knowledge pertinent to Toronto in regards to how Toronto supports or hinders a positive Aboriginal identity. This urban territory has unique characteristics and provides unique opportunities for the various communities it houses. Consistent with other literature about urban Aboriginal people in Canada (Frideres, 2008), this study’s findings reflect a distinctive urban Aboriginal identity in Toronto. From the perspectives of this study’s participants, who identified as Mohawk, Ojibway, and First Nations, they shared that what is unique in this urban space is the coming together of multiple nations and creating an amalgamated community where working, socializing, drumming, dancing, feasting, and so on, is done together regardless of belonging to different nations. Joining this amalgamated community does not mean that individual identity related to nations is lost. For example, Gene spoke about the importance of retaining knowledge and ceremonies specific to his Mohawk people but was open to participating in other nation’s practices. It was clear that this urban environment fostered sharing and acceptance of various expressions of Aboriginality. Of note, it is important to

comment on the blending and blurring of traditions from different nations that often occurs in the urban context. This may be reflected in the participants' descriptions of their beliefs and/or source of knowledge.

For the participants in this study, joining the urban Aboriginal community of Toronto was an important part of expressing and living their culture. Their narratives reflect that once they moved to Toronto for work, all found Aboriginal community through Aboriginal organizations and places of employment. For all three participants, Toronto, which they now call home, was a place to reconnect with their First Nations culture. Both Steve and Jacy recalled experiencing unhealthy behaviours and/or trauma when they connected to unhealthy First Nations communities on their reserves. It was only in urban territory that they both connected to balanced Aboriginal communities and started to develop a positive First Nations identity. Similar to Restoule's (2008) work, Toronto fostered a positive unique urban Aboriginal identity through community relationships, access to many nations' traditional practices, and a culture of acceptance and support.

Literature points to Toronto being seen as *both* a place of racism and discrimination for Aboriginal people (Environics Institute, 2010) and also a place where urban Aboriginal identity can evolve and be expressed (McCaskill et al., 2011). In order to understand participants' perceptions of Toronto as a community, they were asked, "what is important for people in Toronto to know about your Aboriginal identity?" All participants' answers reflected a need to be understood in a positive, resilient light. They indicated that although they themselves did not feel oppressed, they recognized that their community is often viewed in a negative, stereotypical way. The negative caricatures of history reinforce static representations of their community and do not reflect present day stories of these First Nations men, which are complex, layered, positive, resilient and inspiring:

- Gene wants people to know that he is “not just an Aboriginal man.” He does not want to be defined by his Aboriginality, which he believes is often pigeonholing into stereotypical Aboriginal behaviours such as being community-minded, simple, and earth-based. Nevertheless, he is also proud of his Aboriginal identity.
- Steve wants Toronto to see the good in Aboriginal people. He stated: “I work with men ... guys who are homeless. ... a lot of people don’t think very highly of those guys that are homeless. ... But I try to find the good in them. And there is a lot of good in these guys.” Steve’s answer reflects his desire for people to look past their common beliefs of who Aboriginal homeless men are, and to see them within a new, humanizing light.
- Jacy responded “ ... it’s a beautiful thing [Aboriginal culture] ... it’s peaceful ... Native people ... they are resilient ... I know it because that’s how I feel.” This answer points to Jacy’s desire for people to see Aboriginality as good and strong.

Each participant’s narrative reflected a belief that their community is in a healing mode and that work needs to be done to get the community from good to great. However, each believes this transformation is possible and wants people of Toronto to know it and believe in it.

Health and Wellness

The notion of health and wellness is an important concept in this study as it is argued that without a positive sense of self, an individual will not experience psychological wellbeing (Taylor & Osborne, 2010). The participants all expressed a positive sense of self and also wellness. Additionally, their narratives represent what keeps them balanced in the four aspects of self: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. From my experience working with the Aboriginal population in Toronto, I was taught that wellness for Aboriginal people started with the spirit and included knowing: their history, about colonization, and the stories and teachings of their

grandparents. This knowledge supports a positive identity and balance between the four aspects of self. Lavallée & Poole (2010) explain that many Aboriginal nations share the teachings of the medicine wheel and regard health as the balance and interconnectedness between mind/intellect, body, emotions, and spirit. These authors elucidate that Aboriginal health cannot be understood outside of the context of history and colonization (Lavallée & Poole, 2010).

In this narrative study, the findings were similar to Lavallée & Poole (2010) as well as Twigg & Hengen (2009) both of which found that balancing the four aspects of self are important to wellness. Both Steve and Gene discussed the importance of finding balance between the four aspects of self. Gene found balance for each aspect of himself through different practices including skating, yoga, being a life long learner, striving to understand all his emotions and be happy, and carving out alone time for reflection. On the other hand, Steve recounted being holistically balanced by drumming, having a positive mindset, being connected to nature, and sharing his feelings. Jacy mentioned that for him to be healthy, he cultivates connection to the earth and makes time for drumming and dancing with the community. Interestingly, both Steve and Jacy's narratives indicate that what makes them feel balanced, drumming and connection to the earth, is also what connects them to their First Nations identity. Perhaps, this is seen as stereotypically Aboriginal. To me, that is irrelevant. Stereotypes can be true. The danger in them, is believing that they are the only truth about a group of people (Adichie, 2009). Perhaps Steve and Jacy are balanced by these two things because reclaiming their First Nations identity has been a big part of their lives. Maybe it is because drumming is medicine and has the ability to balance and heal. Either way, they claim these things that balance them as their own and do not narrate them as stereotypical.

Answering the Research Question

The research question of my study was, how do First Nations men living a balanced life in Toronto narrate their identity? The way I answer this research question is directly related to the methodologies employed and the narrative analytic process that I used in the study. I begin by first discussing symbolic representation found through the use of Lavallée's (2009) Anishnaabe Symbol Based Reflection. I then point to the foci, typology, progression, and content of the narratives.

Aboriginality is central to how this sample of urban First Nations men narrate their identity as demonstrated by the symbol each chose to represent their sense of self. As evident in their narratives, each participant embodied traditional First Nations teachings and incorporated them into their way of being and how they described themselves. As demonstrated in their accounts, their symbol captured what is important in their lives and informed the way they take care of themselves, interact with others, and live their lives. Each participant is guided by a different traditional teaching. Gene is guided by the Seven Grandfather teachings. Steve follows the teachings of the drum. Jacy follows the teachings of Buffalo Calf Woman. Extending Restoule's (2008) work, only one participant learned these traditional values and teachings as a child in his home. Restoule found that urban Aboriginal males often form identity by implicitly learning traditional Aboriginal values from their families. My research echoes this only within Gene's narrative where he learned the seven grandfather teachings by living within his extended First Nations family. However, Steve and Jacy grew up in homes that had no knowledge of First Nations culture or values so they did not learn such things from their parents or in those environments. Instead, their accounts reflect consciously seeking out teachings and communities in order to learn about their First Nations identity.

A significant component reflected in these accounts was the collective nature as well as the construction of identity. King et al. (2009) found that cultural identity cannot exist without opportunities for cultural expression such as rites of passage, ceremonies, the sharing of knowledge, and social constructs such as values, language, and beliefs. This finding was exemplified in participants' narratives and symbols of identity, which pointed to the crucial importance of expressing their connection to Aboriginality through the following: sharing and passing on of traditional knowledge; humour; engaging in traditional practices such as drumming and dancing; belonging to a community; and connection to land. The participants' identity symbols express their positive First Nations cultural identity and how they have internalized the teachings and practices of this cultural identity into their own individual identity, creating a positive First Nations self. Previous research suggests societal assumptions and expectations about a group of people, and the resultant discrimination or acceptance, influence identity construction (Lavallée & Poole, 2010; Nelson, 2001). To elaborate on these authors' ideas, the narrative accounts of the men in this study reflected positive mindsets and resilience; these appeared to ward off the internalizing of racism. In fact, the narrative accounts of these men reflected positive identity formation despite various obstacles and a history of cultural genocide, and rampant negative stereotypes.

The first method of analysis I used was finding the cohesiveness of participants' narratives. I did this by reviewing the introduction, first memories and the narrative as a whole. Each participant had a unique focus to their identity narrative. Gene's focus was being true to all the parts that compose his identity, giving each part equal room to flourish. Steve's focus was living a good, balanced life - a life that is guided by the drum. Jacy's focus was strength and perseverance. These foci reflect a sense of self-awareness and resilience. These men narrated their identity with self-knowledge, knowing who they are and what they are capable of.

I found that participants' narrative accounts of identity were best understood and reflected by three different typologies, the quest, the reincarnation, and the romance. A common component was that each narrative progressed towards a goal, exhibiting strength and perseverance in the teller. Although the typology of each narrative was different, their accounts focused on a journey of achievement; each is comprised of self-learning, success and a continued evolution. Furthermore, each of the participants narrated their identity as a slowly progressing ascent to their goal. Although regressions and declines were part of the story, they were not highlighted by participants as the focus or highlight of their stories. Rather, the narrative focused on growth and success. In this study, the narratives of identity as told through these men's stories are one account based on their current context. Identity is formed through a dialogical process and internal dialogue, as such stories are important agents of identity formation (Batory et al., 2010). The participants in this study narrated their subjective experiences and the roles that they play in their lives (ie. father, partner, uncle, counselor, banker, drummer, dancer, figure skater, and so on). The participants' narrative account reflected that identity is not fixed, but rather will continue to evolve in relation to life experience and external agents such as community, family, peers, social norms, and a postcolonial environment. If I draw from Restoule (2000), identity may be more accurately referred to as *identifying* in order to signify its dynamic nature, which is "situational and historical" (pg. 103). Although these participants' accounts in this particular study are complete, their narrative is far from over.

There were three to four main narrative content ideas in each participant's narrative account. Several similarities emerged between the narratives. Although each participant recounted various challenges in their lives, their stories reflected a positive sense of self. This positive sense of self was evidenced in their stories through their positive mindsets about themselves, others, and situations. Additionally, each narrative contained the idea - to some

degree - of actively seeking and reclaiming their First Nations culture. Cultural identity is formed through one or two aspects, 1) self-identification and 2) behavioural or symbolic gestures of belonging (Frideres, 2008). Two participants grew up spatially separated from their First Nations cultural group. Therefore, until they reclaimed their identity by connecting with their cultural group, their identity as First Nations men was largely symbolic. As reflected in their narratives, identity was related to actively engaging, learning and/or reconnecting in ways to enact traditional First Nations teachings within the community in order to foster a positive First Nations identity.

Working with the Aboriginal Community

A focus of mine was to work with the Aboriginal community throughout the research process. This involved establishing an advisory committee composed of Aboriginal people; and the cultivation of reciprocity.

Aboriginal Advisory Committee

When I envisioned an advisory committee I pictured us coming together over lunch several times and having discussions and debates about the most important issues to explore and the best ways to conduct research. I wanted my committee to have ownership over the project and directly influence the activities of the study. This did not happen exactly the way that I envisioned. The three people who formed the committee were Jay Lomax, Bill Mussell, and Melissa Stevenson. Bill lives in British Columbia so he and I communicated over email. Jay and Melissa had conflicting schedules so the three of us never got together as a group. However, two or three times I had lunch (which I funded as a thank you for being on the committee) independently with both Melissa and Jay and lively insightful discussions did take place. All three committee members provided insight into the concept to explore, the methodology to use, and the inclusion criteria. I usually suggested possible approaches and they would either agree or

suggest something else. Because Bill does not live locally, he declined to help recruit for the study as I was particularly interested in Aboriginal men that lived in Toronto. However, both Jay and Melissa recruited participants through both personal and community contacts. Due to privacy and confidentiality, they were not made aware of who decided to participate and who decided not to participate, nor did they engage in analysis of the interviews. However, all advisory committee members were asked if they would like to provide feedback on the final discussion chapter as well as dissemination of the project to the community. Both Bill and Melissa provided guidance on the discussion chapter, but not regarding dissemination.

I was a little disappointed that I could not have facilitated more group discussions and continued feedback about dissemination. Aboriginal researcher, Cyndy Baskin, explains that often the research team feels like a family as there is much emotional and social connection over the course of the project (Baskin et al., 2008). However, the feeling of family never emerged with my advisory committee. I think because we were never able to physically sit with each other as a group; but, I still felt emotionally connected to and grateful to each of the advisory committee members.

That being said, I believe there were many successes with regard to working with the Aboriginal advisory committee. Most importantly, they were part of the research process right from the beginning even well before the proposal was written or the ethics application was submitted. Additionally, they took ownership over recruiting so that members of the community chose who would be involved in this study. One thing that I might have done differently is aligned myself with and worked through an existing Aboriginal organization to ensure that the information generated by this study was truly owned by and shared with the community.

According to the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) (2006) there exist three essential components to community-higher education partnerships. These include a process

based on honesty, respect and trust building; meaningful outcomes for the community; and transformation including personal, institutional, community, knowledge-based, and political transformation (CCPH, 2006). Upon reflection, I believe that I developed a high quality process between myself and the Aboriginal advisory committee and between myself and the participants. This was evidenced by the constant support and agreement that things were progressing in an ethical manner. It was also evidenced by the personal information that was shared with trust. Meaningful outcomes to the community will hopefully be achieved through the dissemination of this work, however, this has not yet taken place. I suspect there has been some level of transformation for participants as they voiced enjoyment of reflecting on who they are and how they have come to achieve their positive identity and success. There has certainly been personal transformation of myself. This is reflected in *my* adoption of a more positive mindset. I have hopes and am committed to working to inform transformations of health care institutions, and share knowledge with both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities of Toronto – this is future work that has yet to be accomplished.

Reciprocity and Dissemination

An important part of conducting research with any Aboriginal community is ensuring the community benefits from the research; researchers must also give back, ensuring they are never just taking. Reciprocity concerning this study is three fold, for the participants, for myself, and through future dissemination with the community. My own healing has surprised me over the course of this research. I have learned a lot about my strengths and abilities. Working from a strength-based perspective and listening to the participants' stories of living a balanced life has helped me to foster a positive mindset that supports my own feeling of belonging. As for the participants, they all expressed enjoyment of the process and were happy that they participated in

the study. Gene told me that he does not usually talk so much. At the end of the second interview he said to me, “I think you’ve been great, thank you so much. Helping me to explore my life and giving a venue to be able to showcase my brain.” This statement reflects his personal process and positive experience of participating in this research. Steve told me he had a really nice time participating in the research. He said, “I left last time and thought wow what a nice afternoon. I just spent reflecting on my life and all these things and I mean it was, it was really nice.” The process of storytelling helped him to reflect on his life and brought him joy. Jacy was less explicit about his experience participating however at the end of the second interview we hugged and he said “thank you, it’s been an honour.” Although I am unsure of how he benefited from this research, this statement provides insight that the experience was special and positive for him.

In terms of reciprocity to the larger Aboriginal community in Toronto, I received feedback from one advisory committee member thanking me for exploring this topic and group of men, as they are often discounted. This feedback signifies the relevance and reciprocity of this work to the community. In terms of dissemination of this work, I have asked my advisory committee, and participants for ideas and they have all said that they are flexible and do not have any specific requests. One suggestion was to publish the results in the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto newsletter. This is a monthly newsletter that is read by many Aboriginal people in Toronto and therefore would reach more people than an academic journal. I would also like to publish results in the Aboriginal Nurses Association newsletter, which is read by a variety of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal healthcare professionals. Additionally, a larger project to share the knowledge generated from this study with the larger Aboriginal community would be to work on an arts-based form of dissemination that could include an installation of voice recordings and pictures of symbols or even a collaboration with participants and the Aboriginal advisory

committee (if they want to participate) and the Centre for Indigenous Theatre to transform the stories and results of this study into a play or a dance piece.

Strengths and Limitations

There were several strengths to this research. As a non-Aboriginal person studying an Aboriginal population, it was of utmost importance to consult the Aboriginal community throughout this study to ensure an ethical and valid process. I began by speaking with Aboriginal colleagues about my study idea and gauging its relevance. Additionally, I sought out a leading Aboriginal researcher to be a member of my supervisory committee. I also developed an advisory committee consisting of Aboriginal people. It was essential and a major strength of this study to have their continual input throughout the study's conceptualization, research process and the writing of the thesis so that an appropriate Indigenous lens could be applied and ensure the research was relevant.

The methodologies employed for this study were congruent with Indigenous ways of knowing, i.e. storytelling and an Indigenous methodology, Anishnaabe Symbol Based Reflection. These methods strengthened the research as they complimented and honoured the participants' and Aboriginal communities' knowledge and paradigm. This in turn, helped to breakdown the barrier between academia (known for its exclusive promotion of western knowledge) and Indigenous ways of knowing. By employing these methodologies I participated in the movement that works to legitimize and honour multiple paradigms that hold and generate knowledge. Additionally, I used the theoretical lens of Two-Eyed Seeing to further integrate this research with the notion that both western and Indigenous ways of knowing are legitimate.

Using a strength-based approach during the entirety of the research project was consistent with my research purpose to counter the historical and stereotypical images that are popularized in the media. This approach was a strength of the study as it allowed me to see Jacy, Steve, and

Gene in a real, dynamic way. I could see and talk about their struggles, regressions, or vulnerabilities without calling them limitations. I was able to be transparent and honest and at the same time look for the strength in lives, stories and identities, which is always there, but sometimes overlooked or ignored. Furthermore, because much research with the Aboriginal community looks at deficits and trauma, it was refreshing for the participants and myself, to look at successes and strengths.

A final strength was participant involvement in member checking, which validated the meaning that I had made out of the narratives. With each participant, I took time during the second interview to clarify the foci, and narrative content ideas, which had emerged during my analysis of their first interview. Additionally, each participant had time to read a draft of their results chapter and provide feedback. Although this is not a participatory action study, being transparent and sharing responsibility for the way the interview was conducted, analyzed, and ideas about dissemination, shared ownership and control with the participants.

The main limitations of the research are specific to the inclusion criteria, sample and the analysis. In order to ensure that the research findings were relevant to Toronto, I needed to ensure that participants had lived here for a specific amount of time. I was unable to locate literature that spoke directly to this from an Aboriginal perspective. The only data that I found related to length of time for an inhabitant to incorporate culture of that place into their identity was specific to the immigration literature; this of course did not apply to my study's population. Lacking these data, I speculated that participants would need to live in Toronto for two years, thereby claiming that data are local and relevant when possibly it is not. Additionally, I used a convenient sampling strategy, which resulted in a sample of participants who were all Status Indians. Because none of the participants were Métis or Inuit, my sample was not representative of the Aboriginal community. Therefore the limitation is that this project is actually a project about First Nations

men, and not about Aboriginal men, which was my original focus. Third, I attempted to Indigenize Lieblich et al.'s (1998) analysis by reviewing only holistic form and content, and removing categorical analysis. The Aboriginal advisory committee did not review this decision. This may have created issues of validity and authenticity to Lieblich et al.'s (1998) work. Furthermore, employing an Indigenous analysis method rather than trying to Indigenize a non-Indigenous method would have generated different results and likely knowledge generated from this study would be more congruent with Indigenous ways of knowing. Another limitation in regard to analysis involves the typologies I considered when reviewing the participant's narratives. I searched literature for Indigenous literary typologies but the only one I found was the reincarnation typology. I am certain there are more, but unfortunately my literature search did not reveal any. I would have preferred analyzing for only Indigenous typologies that would likely have drawn different concepts out of the participants narratives.

Several perspectives that informed my study were not Indigenous: strength-based perspectives, dialogical theory, Lieblich et al.'s analysis, and narrative methodologies. However, according to one of my advisory committee members, strength-based perspectives appear to be Indigenous approach. That being said, this study may have been different if I had used all Indigenous perspectives to inform this research and it may have been more compatible with the community of study. However, being non-Aboriginal myself, I felt that it was important to incorporate and be explicit about the paradigm I bring to the research. In fact, I think it would be impossible and inauthentic for me to conduct a study using only Indigenous perspectives and methods because it would ignore my influence on the research. To honour and incorporate Western and Indigenous perspectives, I attempted to balance Western perspectives with Indigenous ones such as Two-Eyed Seeing, Indigenous ways of knowing and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection methodology. I was conscientious throughout the research process

about the melding of Westernized and Indigenous approaches and kept a fieldnote journal so that I could reflexively address issues that arose.

Implications: Practice, Education, and Research

The main implications of this study are related to practice, education and research. Although the findings are not transferable to all urban First Nations men, their stories provide insight about the narrative accounts of identity. As such, these strength-based narratives provide examples of stories that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can learn from and use in their daily lives and practices.

Stories have the capacity to help us understand the other. They can promote reflection and foster empathy, encouraging emotional intelligence. Participating in this research and listening to the narratives of Gene, Steve and Jacy have given me a better understanding of their lives. The influence of colonization is obvious in each of their stories, reminding me of the importance to provide care within a postcolonial framework. Furthermore, these men have left me with an impression of perseverance, resilience, determination, and ability, and a need to consider these strength-based components in all people. At no point during their narratives did I see the static colonial images of noble savage, alcoholic, or abuser. Even during times of challenges with substance abuse, notions of strength and ability to heal were prominent.

It is with encouragement and support that people grow, not criticism. As Steve said, “it’s hard to see the good in him [a homeless man]. But if you can do that and make them feel good, you’ve done something good.” Nurses and other health care providers, during practice and education, need to embody this knowledge. They must be taught and mentored about the importance and power of providing care within a strength-based, resilience framework. This approach nurtures the human spirit and sees people as whole and as able. This framework does not ignore challenges and struggles, but rather embraces them under the lens of possibility and

healing. Although health care providers and students may not have knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing or traditional practices, operating within this framework keeps the mind open to acknowledge and value clients' resources, worldview, and personal health and wellness behaviour, which are key components of providing culturally safe care (AHT, 2013).

Unfortunately, an Indigenous perspective of colonization is not currently taught in our Canadian secondary-school curriculum nor is it a dominant discourse. Therefore, the methods of colonization, the impact, and importance of operating within a postcolonial framework must be taught to healthcare providers during practice and education. It is only under this lens that the impact of political, social, and historical context for Aboriginal people can be seen in its entirety. Providing care without this knowledge is in fact, culturally unsafe (Anderson et al., 2003). Without this framework healthcare providers may disregard the impact of colonization, continued oppression, and genocide. Furthermore, they may not take into consideration the complexities of Aboriginal people and the layers to their stories.

Nurses, other health care providers, and students must be taught and encouraged to reflect on their biases and stereotypes that inform their knowledge of Aboriginal men and other stigmatized groups. It is imperative that health care providers have the ability to reflexively understand their attitudes and beliefs, which inform their behaviour towards Aboriginal clients. With this conscious reflection of beliefs and behaviour, the implicit is better understood (AHT, 2013). This knowledge brings us one step closer to listening with an open mind, being empathetic, and providing culturally safe care (AHT, 2013; Anderson, Perry, Blue, Browne, Henderson, Khan, ... & Smye, 2003). It is our ability to listen, accept the client, and avoid judgment that creates culturally safe care (AHT, 2013). Even if knowledge about the client's culture is limited, being authentic, unassuming, open minded, and curious will support an environment of safety and respect (AHT, 2013; Anderson, et, al., 2003).

In terms of research implications, I first acknowledge that all studies completed with an Aboriginal population should come of the community; they should request that it be done. Historically, there is a legacy of exploitation, and unethical research practices with Aboriginal communities. Chapter nine of the Tri-Council Policy Statement calls for respectful, reciprocal, and collaborative research (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). Furthermore, the community should have ownership, control, access, and possession of data collection processes pertaining to their communities. Additionally, I recommend that Indigenous research methodologies and analysis be used whenever possible so that Aboriginal worldviews are honoured and reflected in all aspects of the research. That being said, my recommendations for future research are only as relevant and meaningful as the community deems them.

Five future research areas of focus would be: 1) exploring what cultivates positive mindsets in urban Aboriginal men. Given this was identified as a key factor in creating “balanced lives”, it is important to know how this can be encouraged, supported, and taught to others. 2) Differences appeared in regards to cultural identity and connection to culture, as well as expressions of personal First Nations identity between those who were born off reserve versus on reserve. Those born off reserve had journeys of struggle and conflict during the process of reclaiming their culture. Future research should explore whether Aboriginal children born off reserve to parents with little Aboriginal knowledge feel this lack of cultural identity. If so, what are ways that a positive First Nations and/or Aboriginal identity can be promoted early on so that they may avoid the possible conflict and struggle of reclaiming that part of their identity later in life. 3) Having mentors and role models for guidance and support was essential for these men to live a balanced life. Further research should explore informal and formal mentoring types and

programs that support First Nations and/or Aboriginal youth in their development of positive cultural identity and living a balanced life. 4) This study's participants were in their thirties and early forties. Future research examining narratives of identity of younger or older First Nations men could reveal differences of identity formation at different ages. Furthermore, following the narratives of a group over time could reveal how age and life events influence cultural and individual identity. 5) To conduct this same study with a bigger sample that includes Métis, First Nations, and Inuit to see similarities and/or differences between narratives of identity and what supports living a balanced life for these groups.

Conclusion

We tell stories to heal. We tell them to pass on knowledge, to warn, to break down the barriers of otherness. We tell them to share a part of our selves, to share in our humanity together. As a reader of this thesis, it is my hope that the humanity shared within these pages allows you to see yourself and to see the other. Can you see yourself in my story? Can you feel the resilience of these three First Nations men? Do you understand any of these First Nations men better? If you judge us, so be it. They have learned to be “like Teflon”, your judgments will slide off. I have learned to focus less on how others perceive me, I turn my attention to what I know and feel is true. They have emerged through challenges unharmed. They have taught me to see the positives in life. We could search out assumptions and judgments, but we will not. Rather than judge us. Open yourself up. Hear the participants' complex stories. Hear mine. Consider, sharing your own.

Three urban First Nations men in this study narrate their identity focused on positive mindsets and preventing the internalization of racism. They resisted the Canadian government's attempt to *drive the Indian out of them*. They are strong, resilient, and have deep self-knowledge. Mentors, knowing their history, and enacting expressions of traditional cultural beliefs and/or

practices are important to supporting their positive Aboriginal cultural identity and living a balanced life. Additionally, their narratives showed how they formed a positive identity through connection with healthy Aboriginal community. This connection to the Aboriginal community was not always a given. Rather, they sought it out and consciously cultivated it over the course of their lives, specifically during times spent in the urban landscape. Living in Toronto nurtured positive Aboriginal identities likely because it provided possibility and space for expressions of Aboriginality.

As a listener, a storyteller and a graduate student in a Master of Nursing program, I see the importance of health care practitioners, including both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal nurses, to focus attention during practice and education on employing strength-based and postcolonial frameworks, as well as reflexive practices that reveal biases. These frameworks and reflexivity will assist practitioners to acknowledge and resist racialized stereotypes and discrimination while promoting culturally safe care. They will allow practitioners to enter into therapeutic relationships with Aboriginal men in which strengths and capabilities, rather than stereotypes and biases, guide care.

When I began writing my story, almost a year ago, I was looking for an anchor to tie me to a community that felt like home. I craved belonging. I mentioned in my story that there exist cracks and holes because I cannot know the stories of my relatives that have passed on. Mysteries remain with the unanswered questions. I do not know the stories of my female ancestors so I may always feel unsure of where I came from and therefore I must rely on intuition and a supportive community to guide me in where I am going. Storytelling is a vulnerable act and I am only willing to share so much. Thus, I leave you, the reader, with unanswered questions. Though, I will say that through these participants' stories, a strength-based lens, and my own life experience, I now realize that my feelings of un-belonging had a lot to do with my mindset, my

history, and my resistance and a feeling that *the grass is always greener*. It is through gratitude that I have come to feel home. I have stopped looking for a group that fits me perfectly and instead have come to love and appreciate moments of connectedness, joy and collaboration. I no longer think of home and belonging as static. They are complex, multilayered, and bigger than myself, and to this idea, I surrender.

There is danger in knowing only one story about a person or groups of people (Adichie, 2009). We are many stories woven together. We are not our stereotypes. All of our identities are dynamic and evolving. We must all seek out and share multiple stories and understandings of the other and of ourselves. It is easy to see the negatives, it is easy to believe the single story of the caricature locked in time, but resist. Be curious. The new stories you share will cultivate empathy and respect, and those are two things we all deserve.

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT



Urban Aboriginal Men's Narratives of Identity

I am a member of an advisory committee for a Ryerson University Master of Nursing student's research. The research project is titled "Urban Aboriginal Men's Narratives of Identity". The purpose of this research is to explore personal stories of Aboriginal men's identity within the urban environment of Toronto and to tell stories of identity that go beyond the common stereotypes of Aboriginal men.

As you may know, there is a shortage of positive stories about urban Aboriginal males and their identity. Current literature, stories and media contain many negative stereotypical images of Aboriginal men that come from colonial issues. For example, the alcoholic, the abusive husband, the criminal, the unemployed lazy man, and so on. These negative images can influence attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of people, including healthcare providers that can be discriminating and marginalizing towards Aboriginal men.

You may be a candidate for this study and people may benefit from hearing your story of how you have come to be the person you are.

If you are interested in participating, the commitment is two interviews lasting approximately 90mins in length. The interviewer will ask open-ended questions about who you are and events that have shaped your life and your sense of self as an Aboriginal person living in Toronto. You will be given \$25 at the start of each interview as a token of thanks for your time, energy and contribution.

If you are interested in participating please contact the principle investigator (contact info listed below). There is no obligation to participate in this research. It is completely voluntary. I will not be informed as to whether you contact the researcher, and I will not follow up with you or ask you if you are participating. In order to protect your privacy, the researcher will never, at any point during or after the study, disclose to the advisory committee who did or did not participate in the project.

Principal Investigator: Celina Carter, RN, BScN, Master of Nursing student
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APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic Questionnaire

Pseudonym _____

Age: _____

Aboriginal Identification (ethnicity/nation) (choose one category that best describes you)

☐ First Nations status / non-status (circle one)

☐ Métis registered / non-registered (circle one)

☐ Inuit

☐ Aboriginal multiple identities (ex: Ojibway and Jamaican, Ojicree): _____

With what Nation do you identify? _____

Highest level of education that you have completed

☐ Primary school

☐ Secondary school

☐ College

☐ Undergraduate degree

☐ Master's degree

☐ Doctorate

Employment status: _____

If employed, what type/level employment (E.g. trades, labour, administrative, entry, management?) _____

Is your household income sufficient to meet your needs?

☐ Always

☐ Usually

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

Marital Status: ☐ Single

☐ Married

☐ Common law

☐ Divorced

Other: _____

Number of children: _____

Housing situation ☐ Rent ☐ Own ☐ Other _____

Who is living in the household with you? (Who are the members and what is your relationship?)

How many years have you lived in Toronto?

☐ 2-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11 + years

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM



Consent Form

Study Title Urban Aboriginal Men's Narratives of Identity

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Principal Investigator: Celina Carter, RN, BScN, Master of Nursing student
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celina.carter@ryerson.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jennifer Lapum, PhD, MN, BScN, RN, Associate Professor
Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing, Faculty of Community
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Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to explore strength-based narratives of Aboriginal men's identity within the urban environment of Toronto. Three Aboriginal men living in Toronto will be recruited for this study. The eligibility criteria is 1) Self-identifying as male; 2) self-identifying as Aboriginal (this includes First Nations status and non-status, registered Metis and non-registered Metis, and Inuit); 3) has lived in the urban environment of Greater Toronto Area for a minimum of 2 years; 4) self-identify as currently living a balanced life; and 5) is over the age of 18. Exclusion criteria include individuals who are homeless and/or have a current severe mental health issue and/or, a severe addiction to drugs or alcohol.

Description of the Study: After completion of this consent form, you will be invited to participate in two interviews conducted two to three weeks apart. The interviews will be conducted by the principal investigator. The location of the interview will be a private setting such as a room at Ryerson University, an Aboriginal organization, or a public library. Interviews will be audio-recorded so that the investigator can focus on listening to you. During the interviews, you will be asked questions about your identity and living as an Aboriginal man in Toronto.

At the first interview you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire about age, ethnicity, education, employment status and type, financial needs, marital status, number of children, type of housing, family composition, and number of years living in Toronto. This will assist the investigator to describe the research sample. The principle investigator will have a flexible interview guide. You will decide what you would like to share and talk about. You will

be asked question such as ‘In thinking about your identity, what is important to tell me?’, ‘Tell me about one or two events in your life that have influenced your sense of self’, ‘How has living in Toronto influenced your Aboriginal identity?’ and so on.

For the second interview, you will be asked to bring an object or symbol that represents your identity or represents something about you. This can be a song, art piece, photograph, object, story, and so on. You will be asked to talk about the symbol, what it represents and why you chose it. The investigator may also ask you clarifying questions about aspects of what you shared during the first interview. The researcher will ask if she can photograph the symbol. This is your decision. She can also describe it instead of photograph it. The picture of your symbol will be used for the researcher’s dissertation and published thesis. If the researcher wants to use it in any other way, she will ask for your consent. The researcher will retain ownership over the photograph, however you can request that it be destroyed or given to you at any time without question.

Before publication, the researcher will consult with you to ensure that your narratives are true representatives of your stories. If they are not, they will be changed until you feel they accurately represent you. Additionally, if you want to be involved in how the research findings are shared with the broader community, you will be welcomed to continue participating. For example the researcher is interested in arts-based dissemination.

What is Experimental in this Study: There is no experimental intervention in this study.

Risks or Discomforts: You may find it uncomfortable to talk about yourself and your identity. Additionally, telling stories about events and relationships that make up *who you are* can feel vulnerable and carry the possibility of bringing up past trauma or experiences that are painful. Participating in this research may be mentally, emotionally, and/or spiritually difficult.

Benefits of the Study: The researcher cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct or immediate benefits from participating in this study. The results from this research will be shared with the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community of Toronto to help fill the reported lack of positive stories about Aboriginal men. Additionally, the results will help health care providers to understand the lives of Aboriginal men in Toronto thereby hopefully influencing their practice to be more just and equitable towards Aboriginal people.

Confidentiality: All data gathered by the demographics questionnaire, audio-recordings of interviews, and pictures or descriptions of symbols will be kept confidential. Data and participant names and contact information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at Ryerson University as well as on a password protected computer. You will choose a pseudonym, and data will be assigned accordingly so that your name is not associated with data. All identifying information will be removed from the data and names of people and places will be replaced with pseudonyms and/or general locations. The principle investigator will present a summary of the findings in a way that no individual or organization can be identified. Data will be kept for seven years and then destroyed.

Incentives to Participate: A financial incentive of \$25 will be given to you at the start of each interview. This is to show appreciation for your time and contribution to the study. At no point

will you be asked to return/pay-back the amount even if the interview is stopped and/or you withdraw from the study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or your relationship with the advisory circle member who recruited you as they will never know if you participated or not. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact the Principal Investigator. Please sign and return the consent form to the following individual:

Celina Carter
T: 416-979-5000 ext. 2566
E: celina.carter@ryerson.ca

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator /Interviewer

Date

Audio-recording:

Your signature below indicates that you agree to have your interview audio recorded. You may request to have the recorder turned off at any point without consequence.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator /Interviewer

Date

Photograph of your symbol:

Your signature below indicates that you have agreed to have your symbol photographed. The researcher will retain ownership over the photograph. It will be used for the researcher's master's dissertation and published thesis only. You may request to have the photograph destroyed or given to you at any point.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator /Interviewer

Date

APPENDIX D: INTRODUCING MYSELF AS RESEARCHER

Introducing myself as researcher: Script

Welcome, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this narrative study. I know that I am asking you to share a lot of personal information about who you are and about the events in your life that have had an impact on your identity.

So, to start, I thought I would tell you a little bit about me and why I am interested in this research. Would you like to hear this story or would you rather begin the interview?

My ethnic background is a mix of Western European heritage. I was raised in downtown Toronto and have lived here most of my life. My family and close community generally consist of white middle-class people. Historically, on my father's side, our ancestors immigrated to this land in the late 1600s and one of our ancestors worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. This man married an Aboriginal woman and had several children, however, that part of my heritage has been lost and no one in my family identifies as Aboriginal.

I became a nurse in my early 20s. Then, three years ago I was hired by Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT) and I worked there for just under 2 years until I went back to school.

When I started working at AHT, I would tell my predominately white middle class community and my old nursing colleagues where I worked and it seemed that many people pictured me working at Bathurst and Queen where there is a small group of people (some of who are Aboriginal) often found on the corner drinking. Many people I spoke with did not know much about Aboriginal people or colonization. I also found that excluding the group at Bathurst and Queen, Aboriginal people were largely invisible to many communities in this city. I was troubled by a lack of understanding, knowledge and empathy expressed in conversation with members of my community and I was troubled that many people in my community placed blame on Aboriginal people for the current state of health disparities. Additionally, I listened to my client's stories of discrimination and the racism that they faced on a daily basis from many people including health care providers. I also listened to and learned from my Aboriginal colleagues' stories of struggle, oppression, and success.

So when I entered my Master of Nursing program, a research topic that called to me was exploring urban Aboriginal men's stories of identity and telling different or more complete stories than the negative stereotypical stories we hear in the media. I hope to present life stories in a real dynamic way that shows the complexity of Aboriginal life with all the struggles but also the strengths because according to my experience and many of my Aboriginal colleagues perspectives these stories of strength are not told.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me, or anything you would like me to clarify before we begin the interview?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW #1 GUIDE

Interview Guide One

Today I am interested in hearing about your identity as an Aboriginal man living in Toronto...
Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. In thinking about your identity, what is important to tell me? (Probes: What Nation do you identify with? Tell me about who you are. Tell me about your Aboriginal identity)
2. Tell me about where you grew up. (Probes: How was Aboriginal culture part of your life? Who were the significant people in your life? Why?)
3. Tell me about one or two events in your life that have influenced your sense of self.
4. What connects you to your Aboriginal identity? (Beliefs, values, activities, cultural activities, events, etc.) (Probes: How do they add to your sense of self?)
5. Tell me about a time when your Aboriginal identity felt threatened. (Probes: What did it involve? How did you manage?)
6. Tell me about the proudest moment in your life.
7. Has the non-Aboriginal community of Toronto influenced your Aboriginal identity? (Probes: Has living in Toronto influenced your Aboriginal identity?)
8. Tell me about how being in Toronto has helped or hindered your connection to your Aboriginal identity
9. What connects you to your community?
10. Tell me about a time when you were proud to be an Aboriginal man in Toronto.

Closing

Before we close, is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your identity?

Do you have any questions before we finish?

Thank-you for your participation

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW #2 GUIDE

Interview Guide Two

It has been a couple of weeks since our first interview. Today, we will focus on the symbol that you brought in. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Tell me about the symbol you brought in? (Probes: what is it? what does it represent?)
2. Tell me about why you chose this symbol?
3. How does this symbol tell the story of your identity?
4. What aspects of you are represented in this symbol? (Probes: what aspects of your identity are not represented in this symbol?)
5. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about this symbol?

Before we close, I have a few follow-up questions to ask you from your first interview (Note: these are not noted here as they will emerge from the first interview and the preliminary analysis)

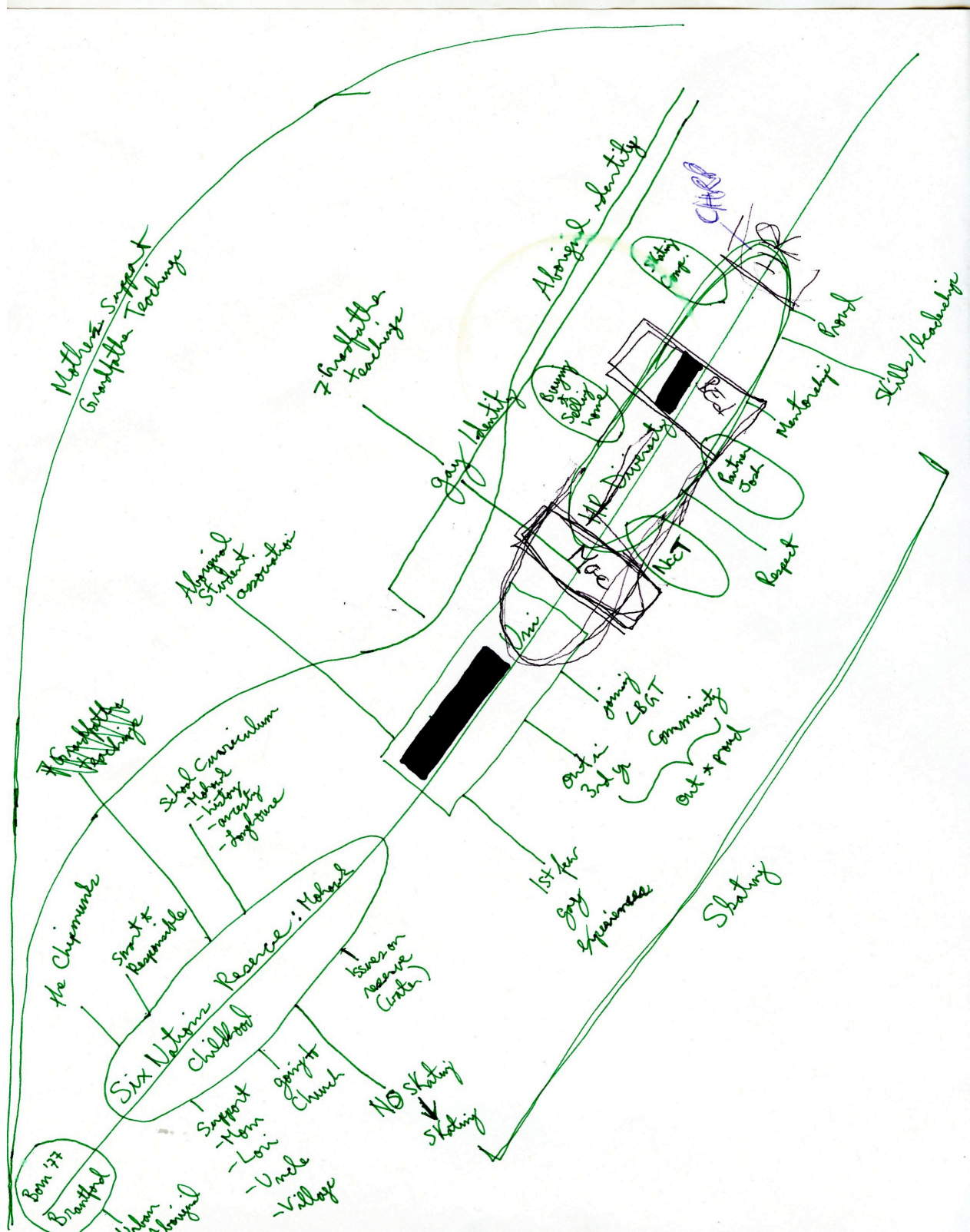
Closing

Before we close, is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your identity?

Do you have any questions before we finish?

Thank-you for your participation

APPENDIX G: NARRATIVE TIMELINES



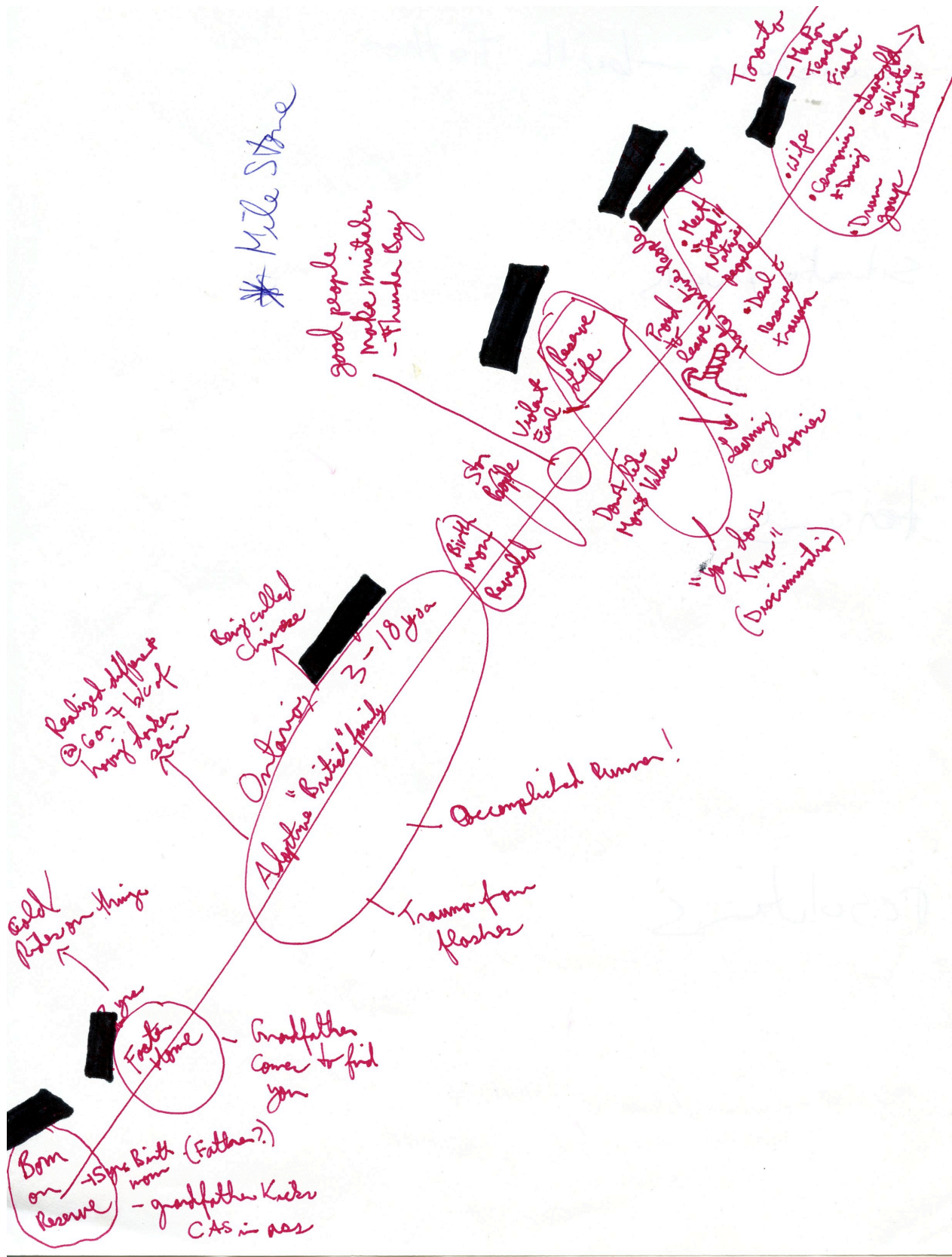
Gene's Timeline

the water

in balance I think

you're
cool!





Jacy's Timeline

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GLOSSARY

A reserve: is the land set aside by the Crown and Canadian government for the use and benefit of First Nations people in Canada.

Aboriginal nations: a group of Aboriginal people with a shared cultural identity, making up the predominant population of a certain territory or collection of territories.

Aboriginal people: includes Métis, Inuit, and First Nations regardless of where they live in Canada and regardless of whether they are “registered” under the Indian Act in Canada. This word has been assigned to this group by the Canadian government. Some people embrace it, while others reject it for their own choice of name which is usually related to their Nation such as Ojibway, Cree, Inuit, and so on.

Anishnaabe Symbol Based Reflection: refers to an Indigenous research method where participants are asked to choose or create a symbol, which subjectively reflects a specific concept. This method is a spiritual experience that elicits rich self-reflection and data from participants.

Colonization: refers to the purposeful act by the Crown, the church, and Canadian government to acculturate Aboriginal people to European culture in order to “drive the Indian out of them” and make them “civilized”.

Cultural identity: Cultural identity (which is a type of collective identity that can be related to ethnicity but not always) plays a specifically important role in forming an individual’s identity as it provides a behaviour script for everyday life based on collective norms, values and behaviours. Cultural identity is formed through one or two aspects, 1) self-identification with a culture and 2) behavioural or symbolic gestures of belonging to a culture. Behavioural or symbolic gestures consist of values, beliefs, language, ceremonies and so on. Whether identity is behavioural or symbolic is largely related to spatial approximation to the cultural group.

Cultural safety: a set of values, attitudes, knowledge and skills that improves sharing of information and understanding between client and health care provider of different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, it refers to care that is embedded in and takes consideration of historical context, and can include an understanding of colonization and recognition of Aboriginal epistemology as legitimate. Cultural safety is more than cultural competence and/or sensitivity; in relation to the Aboriginal population it involves recognizing power imbalances within systems and individuals and also aiming for inclusion and de-colonization.

First Peoples: is an all-encompassing term that includes Inuit, First Nations (Indians) and Métis.

First Nations: refers to Status or Non-Status Indians under the Indian Act in Canada. It is often the preferred word to replace Indian, which is in most contexts, a derogatory term.

First Nations People: refers to Status and Non-Status Indians named so under the Indian Act.

The term is not a synonym for Aboriginal Peoples because it does not include Inuit or Métis.

Genocide: the deliberate and systematic destruction of, in whole or in part, an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group.

Health: refers to a condition of optimal well-being by balancing the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects within a personal, as well as social context.

Helper: The term helper is used in many Aboriginal communities to signify someone who provides physical, emotional, spiritual and mental support to traditional healers. Furthermore, they are often mentors who role model healthy lifestyle and values to the community.

Identity: Identity refers to a person's sense of self. It is formed in a dynamic and dialogical process between the stories we believe encompass who we are and the stories we believe others tell about us.

Indian: The term "Indian" collectively describes all Aboriginal people in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. It is considered a derogatory term and is therefore only used when citing titles of

books, works of art, etc.; in discussions of history; in discussions of legal/constitutional matters; and in discussions of Indian Status.

Indigenous: refers to people native to an area. Aboriginal Peoples in Canada are indigenous to North America. However, the term is often used to refer to Aboriginal people internationally.

Indigenous ways of knowing: are ways of knowing that are holistic and interconnected, historically influenced, non-hierarchical, and locally derived. It includes traditional, experiential, and revealed knowledge that is often storied or oral. These ways of knowing are talked about in the plural as there are many different nations/tribes/communities that have unique knowledge and ways of knowing that fall within Indigenous ways of knowing.

Interconnection: refers to the idea that individuals cannot be understood in separation from family, community, the land, or history.

Intergenerational trauma: refers to individual and collective trauma experienced through acts of colonization that are passed from generation to generation through behaviours, values, and stories.

Inuit: Inuit are a circumpolar people, inhabiting regions in Russia, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland, united by a common culture and language. The Indian Act does not cover Inuit, however, in 1939 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that law pertaining to Indians and lands reserved for Indians are to extend to include Inuit.

Living a balanced life: Living a balanced life is a continual process. It refers to a subjective, personal belief about the way one is living one's life. In this study it includes but is not limited to, learning and sharing traditional knowledge, being connected to a healthy Aboriginal community, being connected to the land, and a life free from substance abuse.

Métis: The word Métis is French for - mixed blood. Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes Métis as one of the three Aboriginal Peoples. Today, the term is used broadly to

describe people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis. Métis organizations in Canada have differing criteria about who qualifies as a Métis person.

Native: Native is a word similar in meaning to Aboriginal. Native Peoples is a collective term to describe the descendants of the original peoples of North America. The term is increasingly seen as outdated (particularly when used as a noun) and is starting to lose acceptance.

Non-Aboriginal people: refers to anyone who is not an Aboriginal person.

Reflexivity: refers to conscious and critical reflection, often verbal or written, about emotional experiences and corresponding external contexts. This process reveals implicit beliefs, biases, and expectations, which influence reactions.

Resilience: refers to an Indigenous perspective of resilience of adapting through relational, eco-centric, and cosmo-centric concepts of self as well as revitalizing culture for healing, and renewing political agency.

Status Indian: Status Indians are people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Certain criteria determine who can be registered as a Status Indian. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the Indian Act and are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law.

Seven Grandfather Teachings: There are many versions of the grandfather teachings depending on who or which Nation provides the teaching. Generally the teachings consist of seven values that are important to living a good life. Because there are many versions, none are more true than the other, I will thus, not list them here.

Strength-based stories: refers to stories that focus on strengths, capabilities, and possibilities rather than weaknesses, deficits, or limitations.

Traditional healing: refers to Aboriginal practices or set of practices carried out to promote holistic health.

Two-Eyed Seeing: is an theoretical approach that combines the strengths of both biomedical Western knowing and Indigenous ways of knowing. Each knowledge system is respected as valid; neither holds dominance over the other. Using this lens, supports understanding the complex context of Aboriginal health as well as creative and innovative solutions to problems.

Wellness: is a subjective state of feeling well. Wellness is different for each person but is often cultivated by balance of the four interconnected aspects of self: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual as well as having balanced interpersonal relationships.

Western paradigm: refers to a way of knowing that is individualistic, compartmentalized, hierarchical, and objective and scientific. It places value on economics and the physical world. It is also currently the dominant paradigm of academia.