

Indigenous (Her)oes and their Healing Work: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women and
Girls

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores strategies thirteen community leaders are implementing to prevent violence and educate the public on historical and current violence, and to empower Indigenous women and girls. These strategies that the researcher explores are from programs and events in London and Sudbury, Ontario. Through qualitative interviews, the researcher brings together the voices of 13 participants, 11 Indigenous leaders (Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee), one settler ally, and two Elders, who implement nine initiatives. Using the framework of the Jingle Dress, the researcher ensures that the data is inclusive of culture and Indigenous perspective. The collective strategies were found to have eight main themes: Culture; Education; Oshkabewis: Taking care of Spirit Through Commemoration; Partnerships; Looking Towards the Future; Families; Art as a Medium for Healing; and Funding. The target audience of the initiatives were both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. This research will help other organizations, grassroots or government, incorporate Indigenous Peoples' voices and culture within programming and events, and can inform allies on how to decolonize their relations to help improve the well-being of all Indigenous Peoples, as well as improve Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations.

Keywords

Indigenous women, leaders, empowerment, healing, families, culture, art, education, MMIWG.

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

The issue of Missing and Murdered Women and girls (MMIWG) in Canada has been on the political radar for Indigenous communities across Turtle Island. For decades, Indigenous women in Canada have been disappearing and dying violently at alarming rates. The disappearance of Indigenous Women in Canada was explored first by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC, 2018). The NWAC has worked for more than four decades to document the systemic violence impacting Indigenous women, girls, their families, and communities. From 2005 to 2010, NWAC's Sisters In Spirit (SIS) Initiative revealed there are 582 cases of missing and/or murdered Indigenous women and girls over twenty years and has worked to raise awareness of this human rights issue (NWAC, 2018). After funding for the five-year initiative ended, NWAC was forced to find alternative means of continuing their research. Throughout that time, NWAC believed the violence against Indigenous women and girls to be much more pervasive than publicly available data would reveal (NWAC, 2010). This suspicion was confirmed in 2013 when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) released a report revealing 1,181 cases of missing and/or murdered Indigenous women and girls (Baum, 2016). Other Indigenous advocacy groups, as well as Northern Indigenous Affairs Minister, Carolyn Bennett, believe the true number of killings and disappearances is closer to 4,000 (Baum, 2016). According to Statistics Canada, 9% of female homicide victims in 1980 were Indigenous. By 2015, Indigenous women made up nearly one-quarter (24%) of homicide victims in Canada (MMIW Inquiry, 2018, p.7). These statistics were very high, considering that in 2006 Indigenous women and girls accounted for only 3.8% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2009).

From 2008 to 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) investigated the impacts of Canada's Federal run Indian Residential School system. In conclusion, the TRC produced 94 Calls to Action, for the Federal government to improve the Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationship in Canada. One of the recommendations targets the disproportionate violence that Aboriginal Women and Girls face. Call number 41 asks the Federal government,

“in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls. The inquiry's mandate would include an Investigation into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The National Inquiry would also expose any links to the intergenerational legacy of residential schools” (pg 4. 2015).

Since the RCMP's release of data on the number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's calls to action in 2015, the Government of Canada had launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in 2016.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) advocacy groups had predated the Inquiry of MMIWG in Canada, and already begun working to protect, educate, and prevent violence within their communities and against their women and girls. Many Indigenous organizations and groups have not waited to heal, educate, and create violence prevention programs within their communities. Within London, Ontario and Sudbury, Ontario, Indigenous leaders have been working to keep their Peoples safe and help them heal from various types of violence. These community action groups include; The REDress Campaign (Sudbury, Ontario), I Am a Kind Man (London, Ontario), Shades of Our Sisters (Sudbury, Ontario), Kanawayhitowin (London,

Ontario), and the Greater Sudbury Police Services and N'Swakamok Friendship Center's Partnership Project, Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women: Learning to Live Free from Violence. These community projects vary in their aims from remembering and honoring events (Walking With our Sisters; Shades of Our Sisters), to healing programs aimed at educating Indigenous men and women to learn their traditional roles and protecting the community.

1.1 Terminology

Indigenous is used throughout this research to refer to peoples who identify their ancestry with the original inhabitants of Turtle Island (North America). The word Indigenous is also in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 (United Nations, 2008). Indigenous is also used as an adjective to describe things that belong to these people (like Indigenous Knowledge). While I recognize that Indigenous is a general term that does not truly represent the diversity of the Nations involved, many of the topics in this research describe experiences that many groups of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples have in common, so I retain the term Indigenous to encompass a larger group of Peoples. The words Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, or Indian, are used for specific references, so I have used these words when they have been used by others.

1.2 Situating Myself

Before I introduce myself, I would like to acknowledge the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek territory, N'Swakamok (Sudbury), that Laurentian University is situated on where I have completed my coursework in the Masters of Indigenous Relations program. All of my formal

post-secondary education (Indigenous Studies and Education) has been obtained in the Anishinaabe territory and the content delivered by many Anishinaabe professors, teachers, and Elders. The location of my studies and the professional academic relations that I have made within my education path have largely shaped the way I see the world and influence my work today. As I situate myself in my research you will notice that I use both the Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) and OnAoyota'a: ka (Oneida) language. The use of Anishinaabemowin honors the territory in which I completed my work and the use of Oneida language is to respect my identity and family history. Author Chilisa (2009) explains that the use of Indigenous languages when applicable is “a medium of communication, a way in which the language can be preserved” (p.57).

She:koli, Aanii, Hello, my name is Michelle Lynn Kennedy and I identify myself as a Haudenosaunee Woman, with settler European roots. My mother is from the Oneida Nation of the Thames First Nation located outside of London, Ontario, and my father's ancestry is both of Irish and Scottish heritage. I am of the Ohkwa:lí Clan, translated to English is the Bear Clan, who are the keepers of medicine and community wellness. I am identifying myself within my research as a way to be transparent about who I am and where I come from, as this is a decolonizing method for Indigenous research. Authors Cote-Meek (2014) and Chilisa (2009) explain the importance of identifying yourself within research to acknowledge who you are and where you come from to begin a transparent relationship. Cote-Meek explains, “It is important that I introduce and identify myself so that people may know and understand the context in which I come from. This is an important Anishinaabe value and protocol, one that is shared by many Indigenous people who write on the importance of acknowledging that we exist in relationship to everything in this world” (p.12). Similarly, Chilisa notes the importance of

situating self as part of Indigenous research. Relations with people and relationship building are an essential aspect of everyday life experience for Indigenous communities in Canada. Wilson (2008) notes that greetings among Indigenous Peoples include asking an acquaintance about their hometown, their relatives, and so forth. The person is inevitably placed in a relationship, through mutual friends, or through knowledge, with certain landmarks and events. The researcher becomes part of circles of relations that are connected to one another and to which the researcher is also accountable. The implication for research is that the participants in a research study are able to make connections with each other when the greeting ritual is respected. Greetings become a way of building relationships and rapport among participants and researchers (Chilisa, 2009, p.113-114).

Figure 1: Harrietta Ann Dockstader (Jamieson, 2017).



Throughout my childhood, I was raised to know the Christian faith. Through my early teens and into my current adulthood I have turned to learn more about an Indigenous/Anishinaabe way of knowing and living. I turned to a formal setting for this knowledge by attending university. Attending post-secondary school is when I fully immersed myself into knowing about Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island and was able to reclaim my identity as an Indigenous woman. Wanting to learn more about my identity, I chose education as a gateway to self-discovery. I began to discover my First Nations identity through the various courses offered in Indigenous Studies at Laurentian University. The hardest part of institution-based self-discovery was the overwhelming anger and sadness I felt learning about the details of the government funded Residential Schools, the attempts at assimilation, the loss of language, the loss of culture, and the

loss of lives. As the grim truth about Canada's past revealed itself in my textbooks, in lectures, and through self-guided research, I began to realize that it was *my* history that was being explained. For the first time, I saw it was *my* grandmother who was sent to a residential school. It was *my* mother who was the first generation to not know the Oneida language as her first language. Learning more about the people who are affected by intergenerational trauma and the complex social issues that follow, I could see it was *my* mother who struggled with alcoholism, and as an implication it was *my* family who grew up living on social assistance with no knowledge of who we were as Indigenous Peoples and in particular, myself as an Indigenous woman. I came to understand the complex reasons for how my identity was affected by past policies of assimilation and acculturation. What fuels me to continue in education is the anger I feel towards the racism Indigenous peoples continue to face today. However, with anger, I also am motivated to create positive change and contribute to decolonization in any way possible, starting with myself, within education using culture as my tool for social justice for the marginalized Indigenous voices.

Because I did not grow up knowing my cultural practices, traditions, or language, it was easy to feel ashamed in my teenage years as an Indigenous person because I simply did not know anything about myself. Growing up in an urban setting, I did not have any ties to my reserve, other than knowing that some of my family members lived there. I was quite removed from any influence of Indigenous ways of being. The acknowledgement of any Indigenous culture was nonexistent in grade school, and it wasn't until I attended public secondary school in London, Ontario that I began to question and reflect on my identity as to who I was, where I belonged, and who I wanted to become. My participation in various ceremonies has fueled me to connect with Mother Earth in a more intimate way and has brought me closer to understanding my role as

an Indigenous woman, strengthened and transformed my relationships with others, and fed my spirit in a way that makes me feel complete.

Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) talks about researchers as an insider or an outsider. Most methodologies assume that the researcher will be an outsider, simply observing without any implications. Within my research, I understand that I may be considered an insider as a First Nations woman with a shared colonized history of many other First Nation peoples in Canada. At the same time, I will also be considered an outsider as I am a researcher within the communities that I do not belong to. I acknowledge that I am not a family member of a woman who has gone missing or who has been murdered. There are, however, instances in my family where members have experienced violence by other family members, by people in the community, and by government-run institutions.

I recognize that colonial violence is directly linked to Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, as Anderson (2000) notes that colonization is a violent process that's brought many forms of violence against Indigenous women, children, and men of the Americas. Anderson (2000) explained that Indigenous Peoples face an epidemic of lateral violence that is alive in our communities today and is connected to colonization as state and church policies which began the cycle of violence by placing Indigenous children in residential schools, placing them in abusive foster homes, and by degrading women sexually, politically and socially.

Linda Smith (1999) states that “the critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity...insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for evermore, and so do their families and communities” (p. 137). I have taken feedback from Indigenous community members to enhance this research, to ensure the research

was moving in a good way.

I am aware of services that are available to me if my mind or heart needs some healing. I have chosen to conduct my research in close proximity to the Indigenous Student Affairs office at Laurentian University to ensure easy access to healing services. Available are services such as Traditional Elders, counseling, and sacred medicines, as well as a room to smudge in.

This research focuses on how Indigenous community-based programs and events promote and educate people on the issue of violence. To situate myself within this topic, I first need to address the historical trauma of my family. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) states that “coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledge” (p. 34). Harrietta Ann Dockstator né: yutatyáts aksótha (is my grandmother’s name). She was taken from her family with many other children at a young age from their families in Oneida Nation of the Thames, located outside of London Ontario, to an Anishinaabe territory in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, to Shingwauk Residential School. On May 19th, 2006 a covenant was signed by the Shingwauk Education Trust and Algoma University College to establish Shingwauk as a University for post-secondary Anishinaabe (Indigenous) studies (Algoma University, 2016). I believe that if Shingwauk Residential school has been able to transform from an institution of assimilation to an institution that remembers their past injustices and offers healing for the survivors, new relationships can also be made between the First Nation Peoples and the non-Indigenous population in Canada.

My interest in this topic of research comes from my passion for social justice and equality for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in Canada. My education and exposure to Indigenous issues through formal education and my experience working with Indigenous Peoples also influenced my interest in this research topic. I have made efforts to answer the Truth and

Reconciliations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) calls to action within the education system, as a teacher, by creating lessons around various topics relating to Residential schools while working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and students. In the past, I have volunteered as a server at the Atlohsa Family Healing Services in London, Ontario, at a drop-in center, serving hot meals to anyone who is in need. The drop-in center at Atlohsa is a safe hub for many Indigenous men, women, and children who need a meal, clothing, or hygiene products, and offers ceremonies that are open to anyone.

My education path in my undergraduate degree taking Indigenous Studies also sparked my interest for social justice by my exposure to learning about Social Policy and Family Law, Community Based Research Methodologies, Seeing with a Native Eye, Aboriginal Health and Wellness, Native Women Perspectives and Issues, and Political Resistance in Canada, just to name a few. Further, in my education path, I attended Laurentian University's School of Education where I gained professional training in how to teach Indigenous studies within a classroom setting for students in grades four to ten, along with other general subjects. Within the last year, I have also learned about social media as a tool for mobilization for marginalized groups and am now a Twitter user. For example, through the Masters of Indigenous Relations Program, I have had the opportunity to work with the social media team to advertise and spread knowledge about the Maamwizing conference, a three-day multidisciplinary conference, that took place in November of 2016 and 2018. All of the above experiences have resulted in me choosing this research topic.

1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives

The research question that guided my thesis was: what strategies are Indigenous

community leaders implementing to prevent and educate the public on historical and current violence, that empower Indigenous women and girls? I explored nine community-based programs, which included:

- Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of our Women: Learning to Live Free From Violence Project;
- Shades of our Sisters, and the “Feathers of our Women Mobile”;
- The REDress Campaign and other Laurentian University Initiatives;
- Kanawayhitowin (Cree: Taking Care of Each Other’s Spirit);
- Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin Men's Group (I am a Kind Man);
- Okaadenige (He or She Braids Things);
- Indigenous Restorative Justice Program;
- Walking with our Sisters (Sudbury, Ontario) and;
- The Teaching Lodge (Atikameksheng Anishnawbek First Nation).

Within these programs and events, I researched what community-based strategies are being implemented to prevent and educate the public on historical and current violence that affects Indigenous women and girls today.

Using a qualitative method, with semi-structured interviews, I interviewed a total of 13 participants, 11 Indigenous leaders, one settler ally, and two Elders, who implement or influence community action programs or events that bring about awareness and education of MMIWG.

The aims of this research were to identify the following:

- 1) how various programs/events contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous communities and educate the non-Indigenous community on MMIWG;
- 2) identify ways that Indigenous leaders and Elders work with government institutions to

contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples; and,

3) what traditional teachings or ways of being were being implemented, if any, to heal Indigenous peoples or educate all people about MMIWG.

1.4 Indigenous (Her)oes and Settler Ally Participants

A total of 13 participants were recruited and took part in qualitative interviews. An opportunity arose where I was able to have input from two Elders through written communication, making a total of 13 participants included in the data analysis. The participants were recruited by their involvement with Indigenous programs and events that address violence against Indigenous women and girls, promoted healing from violence, or empowered Indigenous women and girls. I asked the participants for their consent to use their names in the reporting of the results. Chilisa (2009) notes identifying names keeps with the practices of Indigenous knowledge transfer where we identify our teachers. This way of identifying our teachers further validates the source of knowledge (p.12). Since this is Indigenous research, with Indigenous Peoples using Indigenous methods, it was important to validate the sources of knowledge by using participant names. These research methods should not be measured against Western ways of knowing. Indigenous researcher Wilson (2008) notes that “the notion that empirical evidence is sounder than cultural knowledge permeates western thought but alienates many Indigenous scholars” (p. 58).

I chose to call this section of the thesis Indigenous (Her)oes and Settler Ally Participants because of the outstanding work the participants do with Indigenous Peoples. I see them as heroes because while the National Inquiry into MMIWG was and is currently underway, these (her)oes have not waited for the Inquiry findings, rather they have taken immediate action to

keep youth stay safe, educate the public, and help their peoples heal. The word (Her) is in brackets because I wanted to highlight the strong influence of women, in which, all but two participants are women. I added Settler Ally to the title to not forget about the contribution that the non-Indigenous participant made in advancing the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples in a good way.

1.5 Participants

Shannon Agowissa is from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, Elk Clan, and is the Aboriginal Liaison Officer with the Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS). In this role, Agowissa works closely with the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator, and together they carry out activities that aim to promote healing and education through a program called: Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women: Learning to Live Free from Violence (Gemmil, 2017). Agowissa has participated and helped organize various community events, as well as sitting on several committees and advisory councils. Agowissa was able to share her role in assisting the organization of the violence prevention programming for men, women, and children, and in developing an official strategy to help female Indigenous victims of violence.

I had the opportunity to interview Dennis Neegonee Whiteye, Bear Clan, from Walpole Island. His father's side is from Moraviantown. Dennis is the Manager of Community Support and Outreach Services at Atlohsa Family and Healing Services and the program facilitator of the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin Men's Group. Located in London Ontario, the program is based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings and reminds us that violence against women has never been an acceptable part of Indigenous cultures (Atlohsa, 2017).

Also at Atlohsa Family Healing Services, I was able to interview Charisse Sayer, an

Anishinaabe woman, and the Director of Programs. Mushkode is her Anishinaabe name and she is Marten Clan from Beausoleil First Nation or Christian Island on Georgian Bay. Sayer oversees all the programs that fall under Atlohsa, as well as the St. George Street Support and Housing Zhaawanong Shelter. There are a wide range of programs that include housing, shelter, transitional support, children's programming, as well as all of the programming for women.

The Kanawayhitowin: Taking Care of Each Other's Spirit and the Okaadenige: He or She Braids Things programs in London, Ontario, at Atlohsa is facilitated by Elyssa Jackson, whom I also interviewed. Jackson is Marten Clan from Kettle and Stoney Point First Nation and her Spirit Name is Animikii Koos Ikwe, Little Thunder Women. Her role as the Advocacy Worker and Anti-Human Traffic Coordinator started as a campaign to raise awareness about the signs of abuse within Indigenous communities. Jackson works with Indigenous women and girls who are at-risk of abuse or women and girls who have been abused to provide them with support. These programs are culturally based and focus on ending the isolation women feel, emphasize life skills, work on empowerment, incorporate ongoing awareness-raising activities, and teach safety planning (Atlohsa, 2017).

Lastly from Atlohsa, I interviewed Alana Pawley. From London, Ontario, Pawley is Anishinaabe from Cape Crocker, Neyaashiinigiing. She noted her paternal family is of European ancestry. Pawley is the Cultural Justice Coordinator and created, with the guidance of Elders, the Indigenous Restorative Justice Program at Atlohsa.

I interviewed two people who created the Shades of Our Sisters commemorative art installation, one Indigenous woman and one settler-ally woman. The Shades of Our Sisters project was developed by the Carpenter Family, the Cywink Family, and eight Ryerson media production students. Shades of Our Sisters (SOOS) is a commemorative, interactive art

installation, and online experience co-created by the families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and 2-Spirit people. The exhibit shares the memories of Patricia and Sonya and what the loss of their life means. The interactive exhibit allows the audience to see into the lives of these women who are missing and their families, as the families can tell their memories of their loved ones through artifacts, short videos, audio pieces, and short films. The project also seeks to honor the lives and memories of all MMIWG through the “Feathers of Our Women Mobile” and by connecting with other Ontario families and youth who have also lost loved ones. I interviewed settler -ally, Laura Heidenheim, a co-creator of the Shades of our Sisters art installation. Currently, she is a Masters student in Communication and Culture at Ryerson University. Heidenheim identifies as continuously working towards allyship, as allyship can be defined as many different things to different communities. She notes that she works with a small group of Indigenous Peoples from Northern Ontario.

The other creator of Shades of our Sisters I interviewed was Meggie Cywink. Cywink was born on Manitoulin Island in 1962 and currently lives in Virginia, United States of America. She works part-time for the Ontario Government as the Special Advisor for the Ministry of Attorney General on the file of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Her role is to report to the Ministry and to build trust and relationships with families.

Similar to SOOS, Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS) is also an exhibit that travels throughout Turtle Island. Originally created by Métis artist, Christi Belcourt, WWOS is an art exhibit that showcases moccasin vamps that symbolize the unfinished lives of many missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls¹. For this event, I interviewed two event organizers. Participant Joey-Lynn Wabie, an Algonquin First Nation woman from Wolf Lake and Assistant

¹ <http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/about/the-project/>

Professor at Laurentian University in the School of Indigenous Relations, was interviewed for her involvement in the WWOS event held in Sudbury, Ontario. Wabie's was the Co-Chair of fundraising.

I also interviewed Dana Hickey for her involvement in WWOS. Hickey was born in Kingston, Ontario, and lives in Sudbury, Ontario with her daughter. Her paternal family is from Mississauga and are Settlers originally from Ireland. Hickey's maternal family is from Dokis First Nation. Professionally, she is a research assistant with the Morning Star Lodge, based in Regina, Saskatchewan. Hickey is also a full-time student in the Master of Indigenous Relations program at Laurentian University. I interviewed Hickey for her role as Co-Lead of WWOS, Sudbury, that took place in 2017.

Laurentian University's Indigenous Initiatives are undertaken by many staff within the Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) office. I narrowed my interviews to focus on two leaders and two Elders who work within the department. I interviewed the organizer of the annual REDress Campaign, Gail Charbonneau, and Julia Pegahmagabow who is a Sharer of Knowledge. Charbonneau is the Traditional Resource Co-coordinator within Laurentian University's ISA and organizes the annual REDress Campaign, which is held on February 14th. The campaign aims to honor, remember, and raise awareness of MMIWG, with a four-hour program of prayer, songs, and stories. There is a strong emotional visual component to this event that is laid out all over Laurentian University's campus in the form of red dresses. These dresses are symbols of the lives of MMIWG that have been taken from their families. This art installation was inspired by the Métis artist Jamie Black's REDress project. Her REDress Project focuses on the issue of missing or murdered Aboriginal women across Canada. It is an installation art project based on an aesthetic response to the critical national issue of MMIWG. With the collection of red dresses

donated by the community, they are dispersed and displayed in public spaces throughout Winnipeg and across Canada as a visual reminder of the high number of MMIWG (Black, 2014).

Julia Pegahmagabow, Adik (Caribou) Clan, grew up in Wasauksing First Nation and wears many hats in her life as a daughter, sister, auntie, granddaughter, mother, and a nwiidgemaagan (partner). In her ceremony life, she carries an odaywayigan (drum) with her family and is a member of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge, the Jingle Dress healing society, and also the Buffalo Dance society. In her professional life, she works at Laurentian University on a part-time basis as a Sharer of Knowledge and also volunteers her time as a founding Director of the Teaching Lodge in Atikameksheng Anishinabek First Nation. Academically, Pegahmagabow is also a student working on her graduate studies in Indigenous education.

Along with interviewing Charbonneau and Pegahmagabow at Laurentian University, I also was provided with written content by two Elders, Art (Arthur) Petahtegoose and Juliette Denis about their involvement with Laurentian University's ISA's Indigenous initiatives.

As a researcher, I must incorporate stories within the research process and acknowledge the community's identification, analysis, and solution of the problem. I have incorporated all solutions or suggestions that the community leaders provided during the research process. In this way I do not disregard the community or impose knowledge from the outside (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2013).



Figure 2. Indigenous (Her)oes, Heroes, and Settler Ally Participants.

From top left to bottom right: Juliette Denis, Alana Pawley, Charisse Sayer, Art Petahtegoose, Julia Pegahmagabow, Elyssa Jackson, Maggie Cywink, Dana Hickey, Joey-Lynn Wabie, Dennis Whiteye, Laura Heidenheim. Not pictured: Gail Charbonneau.

1.6 Thesis Committee²

For this research project, my thesis committee is a team of Indigenous women who are passionate, interdisciplinary in nature, and motivated to be a part of a process that brings forth ideas that not only decolonize academia but are also about building respectful and meaningful relationships. The team consisted of Supervisor Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering, the former Director of the School of Indigenous Relations, who has done extensive work with Indigenous communities both locally and internationally. The first committee member is Dr. Sheila Cote-Meek, who is the Associate Vice-President, Academic & Indigenous Programs. Both Dr. Moeke-Pickering and Dr. Cote-Meek have extensive research experience in MMIWG work. The second committee member for this research is Dr. Joey-Lynn Wabie, an assistant professor in the Indigenous Relations Program who has completed her interdisciplinary Ph.D., which focuses on traditional Indigenous spiritual health. This supervisory team's combined experience and knowledge was an excellent fit to support this research. I will note here that Dr. Wabie served as both a committee member as well as a participant in my research. The Indigenous community, let alone those who have experience in the area of MMIWG, is small. It is therefore pertinent at this juncture to name the dual role that Dr. Wabie had in my thesis. Despite this, her experience and expertise in the WWOS installation was an important story to convey for my thesis.

² Dream Team: a team of people perceived as the perfect combination for a particular purpose.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

2.1 Emerging Themes from the Literature Review

From my initial literature review, I reviewed fifteen articles, seven chapters, four books, and six reports. The journals and articles were gathered using several database searches on Google Scholar, Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, Arts and Humanities Citation Index, and Sage Journals. In the databases I searched using the following keywords: missing, murdered, Indigenous, violence, abuse, colonization, sterilization, Indigenous art, healing, and the acronyms MMIW and MMIWG. The books I read were recommended in the courses I completed during the first year of the Master of Indigenous Relations program. Organizations such as the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, Amnesty International, the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and Statistics Canada were used for current facts and reports on their research findings related to MMIWG.

In reviewing the literature, I have identified four themes: the Colonization of Canada; Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada; The Role of Police; and Preventing Violence. Each of the themes are outlined next.

2.2 Colonization in Canada

“Colonialism relies on the widespread dehumanization of Indigenous Peoples--our children, two-spirits, men, and women--so colonial violence could be understood to impact all of us at the level of our denied humanity. Yet, this dehumanization is felt most acutely in the bodies of Indigenous girls, women, two-spirited, and transgender people,

as physical and sexual violence against us continues to be accepted as normal” (National Inquiry Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Interim Report 2018, p.8).

Published in the Interim Report (2018), the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls defines colonialism as

“the attempted or actual imposition of policies, laws, mores, economies, cultures, or systems and institutions put in place by settler governments to support and continue the occupation of Indigenous territories, the subjugation of Indigenous Nations, and the resulting internalized and externalized thought patterns that support the occupation and subjugation” (p.8).

The National Inquiry’s Interim report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples notes that whether such acts of violence by a government institution, or non-profit organizations, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, the underlying root cause of violence against Indigenous women and girls is grounded firmly within Canadian colonialism, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, or two-spirited people (p.38).

The NWAC has completed extensive research in the area of MMIWG in Canada. NWAC and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG, 2018, p.38) found that the impact of colonization and state policies (Canadian)—such as residential schools, the 60s Scoop, and the child welfare system—are underlying factors in the outcomes of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls today. These state policies also continue to harm Indigenous Peoples who did not experience them first hand, through the effects of intergenerational trauma (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010, preface i).

Collectively, there have been over 900 recommendations made by the Canadian state on

how to fix the relationship between the state and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Recognizing the power imbalance and violence experienced by Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian state has released three reports that note the relationship. They include the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991), the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). These three reports all conclude that that relationship between Indigenous Peoples in Canada was and is today, inherently violent. (NIMMIWG Interim Report, 2018, p.9).

Also noting colonial violence is Cote-Meek (2014) in her book *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma, and Resistance in Post-Secondary Education*. She states that Aboriginal Peoples continue to be racially constructed in a very specific way to maintain their positionality as inferior. From her personal perspective, Indigenous peoples in Canada face ongoing violence on a daily basis and she draws from Fanon (1963) as he notes that the colonized person lives in a world of violence directed at him/her which serves to dehumanize and oppress (p. 24). In the book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon names colonialism as an act of violence. In Fanon's view, violence is an intentional act committed upon the body of colonized peoples and is only through that same body that colonialism will be defeated (p. 105). Cote-Meek (2014) notes that the violence present in the process of colonization is something that often gets left out of conversations (p.21).

While Cote-Meek (2014) shares that colonization is often left out of conversations, it is important to address the impact of colonization because of the effects they have on Indigenous peoples today. Goudreau and Wabie (2013) highlight, in their research, that the gap in health between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people today is a result of colonization, past historical trauma that takes form as “systemic racism, policies of assimilation, and cultural genocide”(p.

2). Further, Goudreau and Wabie (2013) colonial policies and practices continue to have a profound effect on generations of Indigenous families which has resulted in “homelessness, addictions, poverty, domestic violence, family dysfunction, and lower health status” (p. 21).

2.2.1 Impact of Residential Schools, Boarding Schools, Industrial Schools, and Day Schools

The literature I reviewed highlighted the impact of Residential Schools, Boarding Schools, Industrial Schools, and Day Schools as Acts of Colonization in Canada. Such Acts focus on the government run institutions that took Indigenous children from their parents as a means to assimilate them into white Canadian culture.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC, 2012) completed an investigation into the impacts of Residential schools or Indian Residential Schools on Indigenous peoples in Canada. The findings were paramount in revealing how much physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental abuse took place within the (Canadian) Federally run schools. The impact of Residential schools still affects Indigenous Peoples today.

Residential schools began to operate in Canada in the 1870s with the last school to close in 1996. There were over 130 residential schools across Turtle Island that were funded by the government of Canada. The residential schools were church-run and operated by priests, nuns, ministers, and missionaries who organized the schools, taught the classes, and who were responsible for the students from morning to night. The 2012 TRC report highlighted that the ultimate aim of the Residential schools was to remove Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) children from their parents which “translated into an assault on Aboriginal culture, language, spiritual beliefs, and practices” (p.10). The Public Works Minister of Canada, Hector Langevin, in 1883, was quoted saying that “in order to educate the children properly we must

separate them from their families. Some people may say that this is hard but if we want to civilize them we must do that ” (TRC, 2012, p.5). During the Indian Residential School era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were forcibly removed from their families and were not permitted to speak their languages or practice their culture (TRC, 2012).

In the report, *They Came for the Children* (2011), it is noted that prior to 1833 Indigenous youth were not subject to the Residential School system, but attended “industrial schools,” which were individual church-led initiatives to which the (Canadian) Federal government provided grants. The goal of the Industrial School was to “prepare older students for assimilation into Euro-Canadian society by training them in a range of trades including printing and bootmaking, and the garment trade, along with a basic education in farming, carpentry, cooking, and housework” (p.6). These schools were purposefully located away from their communities. Also in operation at the time were smaller church-run boarding schools, which were located on reserves, but at a distance from the community. Lastly, the federal government of Canada also operated Day Schools on reserves. These three types of schools were paramount to Canada’s western and northern expansion and by 1931 the government of Canada was operating and funding eighty schools. By taking the children and placing them in these schools further colonization of the Indigenous population and the expansion of Canada’s new lands continued to grow (TRC, 2011, p.6).

The conditions and abuse that Indigenous children experienced within Residential Schools are important to note because of the intergenerational impacts that Indigenous communities and families face today.

“Intergenerational or multi-generational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for

dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as “normal”, when we are children, we pass on to our own children” (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p.2).

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation notes that the trauma that Indigenous peoples face, is not only being passed from generation to generation, but it is also continuously being acted out and recreated in present-day Indigenous culture (2004, p.3). Indigenous children were separated from their parents and raised in overcrowded, underfunded, and often unhealthy conditions within the schools across Canada (TRC, 2012, p. 1). There was frequent physical violence that was also described as excessive discipline. The lack of supervision left children victims of sexual abuse. These schools also experienced high death rates and many of the children did not return home to their families. When the children did return home, lives would be lost to drugs, alcohol or violence (TRC, 2012, p.1). Although the last school closed in 1996 the intergenerational impact contributes to current social problems with Indigenous communities and families (TRC, 2012).

The term intergenerational effects came from Judith Herman, in 1997, who created a theory from people's experiences to psychogenic³ trauma. She termed it complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Historical trauma transmission (HTT) was another theory that has been developed that examines the role of post-traumatic stress disorder. HTT developed after contact in the 1400s, due to the impacts of epidemics⁴ and is the transmission of overwhelming and unresolved emotions to present-day generations. Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) explained that Indigenous Peoples are not only suffering from

³ Psychogenic: having a psychological origin or cause rather than a physical one.

⁴ Epidemics: a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time.

the impacts of generational grief, but they are also acting it out at personal and cultural levels and recreating trauma as a way of life (p.3).

The motivation of the religious people who operated the Residential, Boarding, and Day School was much different from the government of Canada. While the priests, nuns, and missionaries who operated the Residential Schools said that they were answering a sacred call to spread the Christian faith and redeem the Indigenous Peoples who live in Canada, the government of Canada had another intent. Their intent

“was to gain control of Indigenous Peoples land by signing treaties, without honoring them, and creating and approving laws and policies that controlled all aspects of Indigenous Peoples lives. These policies were created to regulate and control Indigenous peoples, which no other ethnic group in Canada were [is] subject to. These laws and policies encouraged and maintained colonialism, making Residential schools essential to the future colonization of Canada” (TRC, 2012, p. 2).

The removal of children from their families and placing them in Residential Schools was a strategic plan by the Canadian government to colonize Canada. Justice Murray Sinclair notes that one of the forms of violence that took place in Canada’s Residential Schools was student-on-student abuse. This form of abuse targeted LGBTQ and Two-Spirited Indigenous people (Kirkup, 2017). The legacy of intergenerational trauma continues as the perpetrators now hold leadership roles, sometimes as elders within their communities. Sinclair notes that this learned sexual and physical violence that is inflicted on others comes from their Residential School experience “part of that can be attributed to how that's how they were abused, and that's how they were treated by...the adults within the schools that they went to” (Kirkup, 2017).

Violence against women through Residential Schools is also evident through the continued lateral violence (discussed in more detail in the next section) they faced within their community and the way the girls were taught to view their bodies whilst in Residential School. Anderson (2000) highlights the impacts that Residential School had on Indigenous girls during their moon time, or menstruating. Traditionally, in Anishinaabe culture, the natural cycle of menstruation is known as the moon time (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 2000). Anishinaabe Health Toronto promotes traditional practices related to health. With these teachings includes the sacred time when an Indigenous girl becomes a woman through her first moon time. Moon time is seen as a gift and a time for a woman to cleanse herself mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually and to prepare for a new phase of her life. It is considered a time of power. When women are on their moon time, their power is at its strongest and this is acknowledged in that they do not prepare foods or medicines or take part in ceremonies. Most importantly, it is a time in a young women's life that is celebrated (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 2000, p.2).

The supervisors at the Residential Schools stripped Indigenous teachings and forced the students to abandon their ways of knowing and adopt mainstream practices. Teachings of a young woman's moon time were forbidden and in place the young women and girls were deemed dirty when menstruating. Anderson (2000) explains the negative tone that was taught in Residential School has carried into community ceremonies where men will say "okay, now you women who are on your time, get out of here!" This makes women feel alienated, embarrassed or excluded and this is not how moon time is traditionally viewed. Another example of how girls were taught to negatively view their bodies is explained by Cree Elder Kathleen Green. Elder Kathleen Green reflected on her time in Residential School and felt she needed to run away and hide when menstruating, recalling when the nuns taught her that menstruation "is the time you

are the vilest!” (p.38). These two examples show that Indigenous women, even after the Residential Schools had closed, still experienced negative memories, and within their communities, lateral violence, that also affected their children through intergenerational trauma.

It was not until June 11th, 2008, that the Prime Minister of Canada addressed a formal apology to the former students, their families, and communities for Canada’s role and implementation of the Residential Schools. The apology recognized the past policy and goal to assimilate and recognized the harm it had on the children who attended the school, their families and communities (CBC News, 2008). This apology was monumental in beginning the healing process for the survivors who attended the Residential schools.

2.2.3 Lateral Violence

Lateral violence was also highlighted in the literature I reviewed as a direct impact of colonization. According to the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), lateral violence is linked directly to Residential Schools. Lateral violence is a cycle of abuse and the root causes stem from colonization, oppression, intergenerational trauma and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination in Canada. These root causes continue the cycle of abuse and Indigenous Peoples become oppressors to their own people, abusing people of their own culture, their peers, and community (NWAC, 2011, p.1). Lateral violence is a learned behavior as a result of colonialism and patriarchal methods of governing and developing a society (NWAC, 2011, p. 1). Because Indigenous Peoples were forced to stop practicing their traditional teachings and continue to face discrimination and racism, the trauma leads to Indigenous Peoples developing social skills and behaviors within the workplace and community that do not create healthy relationships. Indigenous Peoples are now abusing their own people in similar ways that they have been abused. The NWAC explains that a reason as to why someone

would perpetuate lateral violence is because many of these people have been victims of abuse in the past. The learned behavior from their abuse is usually used to manipulate, dominate, control and diminish others (2011, p. 3). Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) explain that not every Indigenous person will display overt violence, but more covert violence is noticed as the high incidence of lateral violence contributes to family breakdown and community dysfunction (p. 3). These forms of violence are both overt and covert and the behaviors are displayed as jealousy, resentment, blame, and bitterness. The impact that lateral violence has on the victim can range from the victim developing sleep disorders either not being able to sleep or not wanting to get out of bed in the morning to develop a more intense physical and emotional health deterioration. People who are victims of lateral violence can end up on sick leave and long-term disability. In the worst cases, people have taken their lives (NWAC, 2011, p. 4).

2.2.4 The Child Welfare System Past and Present

The present day removal of Indigenous children from their families is still a problem and is recognized by the TRC. One of the calls to action by the TRC includes “reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the care of child welfare; publishing the exact numbers of Indigenous children in the child welfare and the reason and costs associated with these services” (National Collaborating Center for Aboriginal Health, 2017, p.1). Indigenous Services Minister Jane Philpott says that Canada is facing a “humanitarian crisis in this country where Indigenous children are vastly disproportionately overrepresented in the child welfare system” (Barrera, 2017). Philpott said in Manitoba alone, there are a total of 11,000 children in care and 10,000 are Indigenous children (Barrera, 2017). The number of children in child welfare closely resembles the Residential School system and the 60s scoop, where children are taken from their families, communities, and therefore removed from their culture, language, and land.

In 1951 the Indian Act was revised and provincial child-welfare agencies were granted legal authority on-reserve. In the years following this amendment, First Nations children were taken into care at an unbelievable rate. This period is commonly referred to as the ‘60’s Scoop,’ a term used to describe the time between 1960 and the mid-1980s when the greatest number of Aboriginal children were adopted (NWAC, 2015, p.2). More than 11,000 status First Nation children, along with many other Indigenous children, were adopted at this time. These children were adopted mainly by white families, resulting in cultural dislocation and confused identities. Many are believed to have suffered sexual and other abuse and continue to deal with the trauma associated with this violence (NWAC, 2010, p. 8).

According to the Government of Canada’s website, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (2018) in the 2016 Census of Population statistics, Indigenous children represent only 7.7% of the total population aged 0 to 14 in Canada. However, they account for over half (52.2%) of children in foster care. NWAC shows that the research by the National Council of Welfare indicates that in some provinces, Aboriginal children comprise 70 to 85% of children in care (NWAC, 2010, p. 9).

In 2007, the Assembly of First Nations and the Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Dr. Cindy Blackstock, filed a human rights complaint against the federal government for underfunding child-welfare services for Indigenous children. In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that Ottawa was racially discriminating with its funding approach, and its failure to implement what has become known as Jordan’s Principle, a policy ensuring jurisdictional disputes does not block First Nations children from getting medical services. This principle was enacted after Jordan River Anderson died in hospital at the age of five after the Manitoba and federal governments battled in court over who should pay his

medical costs (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2018, p. 1).

Within the human rights tribunal's findings, there was evidence that many social factors (which the non-Indigenous population is not subject to) play a role in Indigenous children being placed in foster care. These social factors include poor housing and a lack of clean drinking water in First Nations communities. Additionally, the tribunal found that Ottawa chronically underfunds the agencies it charges with providing child-welfare services to First Nations children, creating “incentive to bring children into care.” The agencies that are in place experience high turnover rates and fail to emphasize prevention measures. There is an even greater incentive: if children are placed in care, costs to keep them there are reimbursed by Ottawa. Other findings from the tribunal conclude that Ottawa often made up for deficiencies in child welfare and education by taking money from other critical programs such as housing and infrastructure, adding to the cycle where poverty and poor housing were the reasons in which the children were placed in care (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2018, p. 3).

The removal of children from their homes and placing them in foster care can be dangerous for Indigenous children. Foster homes that are under supervised become easy targets for sex traffickers. A review of the literature completed by the NWAC, published in their 2010 report titled *Sisters in Spirit*, indicated a link between child welfare involvement, sexual exploitation, and the sex trade. NWAC (2010) completed interviews with key informants in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Edmonton and Alberta and found that it was common for girls who were in the child welfare system to enter prostitution. Surveys in Winnipeg have found that nearly two-thirds of women involved in street prostitution had been taken into care as children. Participants in the study also drew attention to the link between child welfare involvement and sexual

exploitation, noting that girls who run away from their foster homes or care facilities are particularly vulnerable to being preyed upon by older males seeking to exploit them (NWAC, 2010, p.10). The National Inquiry into MMIWG (NWAC, 2010) also addresses a direct link between child welfare apprehensions and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Without a change to the child welfare system, there will continue to be high rates of violence and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (Interim Report, 2017, p.31). These girls who go missing or who are murdered are in the care of the Provincial Minister for the child or foster care (Smith & Yellow-Quill, 2011, p. 2). In summary, the Canadian government's past and continued Acts of colonization have greatly contributed to the social, economic, and health status of Indigenous Peoples, which also contributes to the violence that Indigenous women and girls face today.

2.3 Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

The 2017 Interim Report, *Women are Sacred*, published by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (NIMMIWG) in Canada, provides a definition of violence and also expands the definition by adding colonial, cultural, and institutionalized violence. The NIMMIWG defines violence similarly as to how the World Health Organization defines violence.

"The Intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, organization, group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. This includes violence between people, self-directed violence (suicide or self-harm), and armed conflict" (2017, p.2).

It is important to note that violence is not only directed against Indigenous women, it also affects Indigenous girls as noted by the Royal Commission on Violence Against Girls and Women, which noted that women who have been murdered or gone missing are not women, but also young girls. These acts of violence against Indigenous women and girls are often motivated by “racism and may be carried out because of the societal indifference to the welfare and safety of Indigenous women, in that it will allow the perpetrators to escape justice” (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 2).

To address the issue of violence against Indigenous Women, one must understand the history and impact of colonization on Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Colonization is ongoing and is violent (Cote-Meek, 2014). This violence is seen in many forms including; systemic racism and discrimination, the purposeful denial of culture, language and traditions, and legislation designed to destroy Indigenous identity that has led to the realities facing Indigenous peoples today. The NWACs asserts that colonization is not simply a strategy of the past, but a reality that reinforces the silence surrounding the violence experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women today (2010, p. 1).

According to Statistics Canada (2009), studies have shown that violence against women in Canada continues to be a persistent and ongoing problem, and the violence is only compounded for Indigenous women. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (RCAP, 1996, p.107) also reported that “Aboriginal people are more likely to face inadequate nutrition, substandard housing and sanitation, unemployment and poverty, discrimination and racism, violence, inappropriate or absent services, and subsequent high rates of physical, social, and emotional illness, injury, disability and premature death.” Statistics Canada (2009) reported “Aboriginal women are significantly overrepresented as victims of homicide and between 1997

and 2000, homicide rates of Indigenous females were almost seven times higher than those of non-Aboriginal females.” In terms of violence, the rates are also significantly high, with Indigenous women 15 years and older being 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal women according to Statistics Canada’s 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) (2009). Although this information is not current, the dated statistics still show that the rate is high in comparison to the non-Indigenous population.

Indigenous women’s role has changed as a result of colonial violence. In Kim Anderson’s book, *A Recognition of Being* (2000), she notes that Indigenous women today face violence at such a rate that seems commonplace and the colonial violence has broken down the traditional role of an Indigenous woman. This is evident as pre-contact Indigenous women held roles of power in economics, politics, spirituality, and familial forms. Women’s “roles today in these aspects of life have been dismantled by both the church and state and result in the oppression we see today” (2000, p. 56). To further highlight the present treatment and the reality of an Indigenous woman, an Anishinaabe perspective on women teachings is “striking out against a woman is like striking out against everything we hold sacred, our life, our future, our customs, and beliefs because our women represent the power which is contained within all these concepts” (Anderson, 2006, p. 94). The traditional way of treating women would make it unimaginable in Indigenous culture to inflict violence on Indigenous women. This traditional perspective shows that violence against women by Indigenous people is a learned behavior and can be linked to the process of colonization. Noted earlier, by Fanon (1963) that colonization is a violent act, it makes sense to draw a parallel line between the violence of Indigenous women in Canada and the colonization of Canada. Similarly to Cote-Meek (2014), Anderson (2000) also notes that colonization in and of itself is a violent process. Anderson adds that colonization brought many

forms of violence against women, children and men throughout the Americas upon contact and colonization still continues today as physical and lateral violence within Indigenous communities. Further, Anderson highlights that state and church policies started this cycle by instilling violence in children who were placed in Residential Schools and abusive foster homes, and by degrading women sexually, politically and socially. The introduction of alcohol and drugs intensified violence. Anderson also adds that drug and alcohol are used as a bandage to try and cover the loss of land, children, language and culture (2000, p.95-98).

2.3.1 Indigenous Women and Land

The literature I reviewed also highlighted the relationship between Indigenous women and the land. Anderson (2000, p.100) draws a parallel by equating Indigenous women being equated to the land. In a Western view, Indigenous women have been equated to the land and therefore seen as something that can be controlled, conquered, have possession of, and be exploited. Anderson adds that the Euro-Canadian images of Indigenous women have been constructed within this same context and changes as the relationship to the land changes (2000). This is evident within the idea of the Indian Princess as it is closely linked to the sexual violence against Indigenous women as the descriptions of the new territory equates to the virgin lands, open for consumption, that could be then “used for the colonizer’s pleasure and profit” (Anderson, 2006, p.101). This link of characters such as Pocahontas aims to connect Indigenous women, and the land, as “easy, available, and willing” for the white man (Anderson, 2006, p. 102). Negative images of Indigenous women, whether in historical accounts, anecdotes, jokes, movies, or within Canadian literature, are the root of stories like that of Helen Betty Osborne, a sixteen-year-old Indigenous woman who was picked up by four white men and brutally raped and murdered in The Pas, Manitoba, in 1972, and Pamela George in 1995 who was murdered by

two university athletes (Anderson, 2006, Pg. 109). Also noting the link between the land and colonization is Cote-Meek (2014, p.18), who points out that colonization can be understood as having four dimensions— “it concerns the land, it requires the specific structure of ideology to proceed, it is violent and it is ongoing.” Razack’s (2010) research on gendered racial violence is also linked to colonization. She notes that Indigenous women are in the “Othered” zone and therefore settlers are not held accountable for the violence that they inflict on Indigenous women. When white settler men are prosecuted for their actions it is evident that their actions are not taken seriously and justice does not apply. Razack (2000) suggests that the violence against Indigenous Peoples in Canada continues because justice is continuously denied in law.

Noting the link between Violence and Extraction is Helen Knott in Keetshanak (2018). Knott draws a connection between the losses of MMIWG and land extraction. “I fully believe that the huge amount of resource extraction in this area contributes to the violence committed against women (Anderson, Campbell, Belcourt, 2018. p.149). Part of the reason is the commitment Indigenous Peoples have in protecting the environment and the land. Further, Knott explains, “The continued destruction of Indigenous lands has been an essential part of weaving the narrative that promotes the violence that characterizes Indigenous womens lives” (p.150).

2.3.2 Sterilization of Indigenous Women

Eugenics gained its momentum in 1907 in the United States of America when Sir Francis Galton founded the Eugenics Education Society. This Eugenics Education Society was based on the idea that some people were more fit to reproduce and some people were not (Torphy, 2000, p. 2-3). Eugenics is described in 1883 by “the use of genetics to improve the human race” (Torphy, 2000, p. 2-3). Stote (2012) explains that coerced sterilization can be linked to

“colonialism, the oppression of women, and the denial of indigenous sovereignty” (p. 117). The Canadian Federal government recognized that in order to control Indigenous land and continue the colonization, “it has been central to impose western institutions and to subjugate Aboriginal women through their separation from the land, the control of their bodies and those of their children” (Stote, 2012, p. 119).

Indigenous Women in Canada have been sterilized by eugenically minded doctors in Alberta, Northern Ontario, and Northern Canada. Two provinces in Canada had formal sterilization legislation. Alberta had a Sexual Sterilization Act from 1928 to 1972, and British Columbia, from 1933 to 1973 (Stote, 2012, p. 120). When it came to consent for these procedures, only 17% had consented and more than 77% were defined as “mentally defective,” and their consent was considered not needed (Stote, 2012, p. 120-121). In British Columbia, Canada, in a span of eight years from 1935–1943, thirty-five of fifty-seven Indigenous women were sterilized because of promiscuous behavior (Stote, 2012, p. 121). In Ontario, Canada, more than 1000 sterilizations took place on the grounds that physicians believed that eugenics and sterilization was a good tactic in preventing and reducing poverty (Stote, 2012, p. 124). Stote notes that there has not yet been any in-depth study of these mass sterilizations.

2.3.3 Violence in the Sex Trade

“Involvement in the sex trade is not a cause of disappearances or murders; rather, many women arrive at that point in the context of limited options and after experiencing multiple forms of trauma or victimization” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2010, p. 31).

Amnesty International (2004) notes that whether prostitution is a criminal Act, the women who are in the sex trade still have human rights. Working in the sex trade in Canada can be extremely dangerous for women, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous. This is especially

true for women who solicit on the streets. Women who are involved in the sex trade are at high risk of violence because of the situation in which they work (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 16).

Women and girls are often forced into dangerous or violent situations because of limited choices. Often Indigenous women and girls are forced into situations or coping strategies that increase their vulnerability to violence, such as “hitchhiking, addictions, homelessness, prostitution and other sex work, gang involvement or abusive relationships” (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 16). Women who work as prostitutes or in other areas of the sex industry frequently report to researchers that they experience violence perpetrated by strangers, clients, acquaintances, partners and the police (NWAC, 2010, p. 8).

2.3.4 Root Causes of Violence

The NWAC created a Fact Sheet on the root causes of violence for Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Compared to non-Indigenous women, the rates of violence are much greater (2015). Goudreau & Wabie (2013) in the Aboriginal Women’s Initiative note that there are many root causes of violence which include; the history of federal (Canadian) government control such as the Indian act, alcoholism, the intergenerational effects of residential school and the breakdown of a healthy family, racism, colonization and the cultural genocide of Indigenous traditions and values, and a loss of identity (p. 20-21).

When it comes to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, one contributing factor is the process of engendering descriptions of Indigenous women as the Other. Early colonial discourse by Europeans in the 19th Century objectified Indigenous women using a racialized and sexualized lens. Unfortunately, this discourse prevails today. Depictions of Indigenous women as the racialized or sexualized Other has left a legacy of marginalization

within Indigenous societies as well as within the colonizing society (Tuhiwai-Smith, p.46).

Pearce (2013) highlights the suspicious disappearances and murders of women across Canada over the past forty years only being recognized within the past ten years. Pearce (2013) notes that a contributing factor to the violence stems from the current socio-economic situation faced by Indigenous women (p. 4). Another factor contributing to missing and murdered women in Canada is ethnicity. To prove this, Pearce (2013) created a “Dissertation Database” (DD) that shows a table containing details of 3,329 women (p.18). Within the table are other factors that increase the likelihood of an Indigenous woman experiencing violence, which included: street prostitution, addiction and insecure housing (p.20). Through the close analysis of organizations that handle the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, Pearce (2013, p.47) shows that there are many errors of the people within the organizations. One of the most current cases of organizational errors was due to the marginalization of Indigenous women.

2.4 Role of Police

The literature I reviewed also highlighted the role of Police with regard to violence against Indigenous women and girls. The attitude of police officers in Canada when dealing with an Indigenous woman who has gone missing or who has been murdered, can be negative and puts the blame on the woman for her violence or death, even if the violence and death are caused by another person or stranger. Amnesty International (2004) explained that police officers have inadequate responses to violence which is evident in the way in which they handle Indigenous women and girls’ cases (p. 17).

During interviews conducted by Amnesty International with police officers, a police spokesperson told the organization “that they believe that “lifestyle” factors, such as engaging in the sex trade or illegal drug use are the most important risk factors, and that other factors such as

race or gender are not significant enough to be considered in their work” (2004, p. 17). Moeke-Pickering, Cote-Meek and Pegoraro (2018) share the same sentiments in their paper on MMIW, that negative stereotypes about risk behaviours such as prostitution or addicts “obscures the seriousness of crimes against Indigenous peoples” and further “signals to the public that crimes against Indigenous people do not matter” (p. 4). Other police officers have witnessed the racism and sexism that goes on within law enforcement and recognize that Indigenous women in Canada are at risk from these behaviors of police enforcement (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 17).

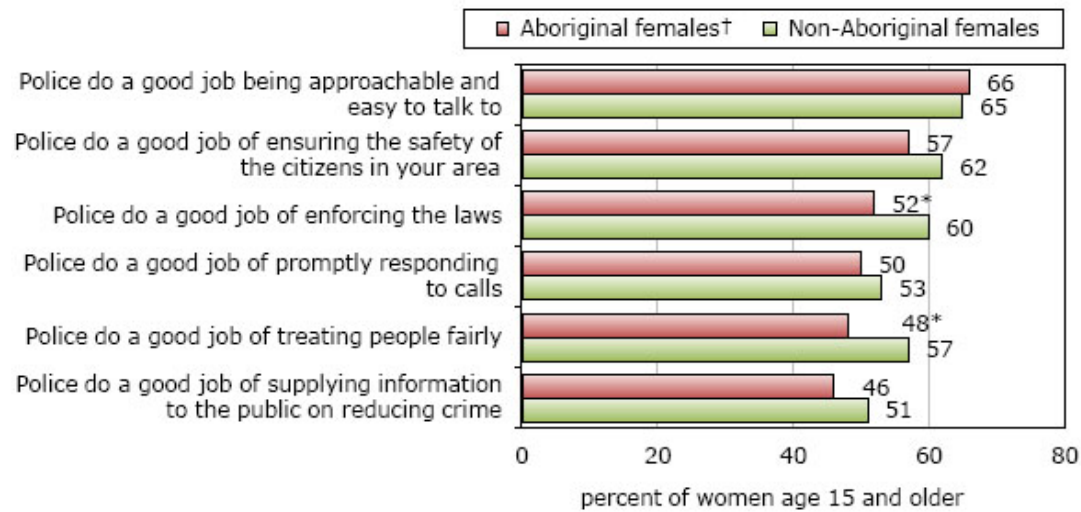
Police who interact with Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in the sex trade also raises concern in the way they treat the women. In Canadian law, communication of selling or buying sex in public is illegal. Therefore, many women who are in the sex trade are afraid to report violence they face to police, which only allows men who commit the violence to get away with their crimes (Amnesty International, 2004, p.16). In general, results from the 2009 GSS (spell GSS out in full) indicate that most violent incidents are not brought to the attention of the police (Statistics Canada, 2010). This creates a dangerous cycle where police officers then blame the victim for not seeking help and participating in a dangerous activity (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 16; Moeke-Pickering et al. 2018).

One approach to curve the problem of the adversarial relationship between Indigenous and police relations is to have more diverse hiring, better training and education, and instruction on how to communicate with Indigenous Peoples (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 18). The barrier to positive Indigenous relations is highlighted by the Saskatchewan Justice Reform Commission as they concluded, “police officers continue to be assigned to First Nations and Métis communities with minimal knowledge of the culture and history of the people they serve”

(Amnesty International, 2004, p. 18). A simple solution would be to hire more Indigenous officers, who know the community and are culturally sensitive, and who are women (Amnesty International, 2004, p.18). Police departments need to work with the Indigenous communities to create protocol, policies, and practices that increase the education of the officer, but also improve relations between Indigenous communities (2004, p. 19). A great example of where this work is being done is in Sudbury, Ontario (Canada) with the Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS). The GSPS launched a strategy in partnership with the N'Swakamok Native Friendship Center called Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women: Learning to Live Free From Violence, funded by Justice Canada, which is lead by the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator. The Aboriginal Women Violence Coordinator is responsible for the implementation of community-based strategies looking at the prevention and promotion of the historical and current violence that affects Indigenous women and girls. The project is aimed to develop a proactive approach to help prevent Indigenous female youth from entering high-risk situations and to improve the police services response to such incidents (Greater Sudbury Police Services, 2017, p. 2).

The perception of the police service, according to the General Social Survey (2009) is similar between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women. The difference between the rating was found in the perception of the police doing a good job of enforcing the law. Indigenous women were less likely to state that police services were doing a good job of treating people fairly (Statistics Canada, 2009). Below is Table 1 that compares the perception of police between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women.

Figure 2. General Social Survey (Statistics Canada, 2009).



2.4.1 The Right to Live Free from Violence

The literature reviewed raised issues about the right to live free from violence. Violence against Indigenous women is a human rights issue (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 4). There are three groups that have an existing legal duty and due diligence to protect Indigenous women in Canada. These laws include the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, the United Nations, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. According to the American Court of Human Rights, the duty of due diligence “means that a state must take reasonable steps to prevent human rights violations, use the means at its disposal to carry out serious investigations, identify those who are responsible, impose the appropriate punishment and ensure that the victim receives adequate reparation” (Amnesty International, 2004, p.5).

The set of laws and basic rules of how Canada operates is outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Even though many Indigenous Peoples have their own forms of self-government, and their own forms of law the Canadian Charter of Rights cover all peoples who live in Canada. In section one it notes the right to life, liberty and personal security

(Government of Canada, 2017). Amnesty International's research in their report, *Stolen Sisters*, found that Indigenous women in Canada face discrimination because of their gender and because of their Indigenous identity (2004, p. 7). Yet, despite these two declarations of basic human rights, Indigenous Peoples, specifically women, and girls, are subject to the highest rates of violence in Canada (2004, p. 7).

Internationally, Indigenous Peoples are also recognized with the right to life. In the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), article 7 1. highlights that:

“Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person. 2. Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace, and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group” (United Nations, 2008, p. 5).

The rate of violence against women internationally was also raised by the first Special Rapporteur, Radhika Coomaraswamy, who highlighted that the States' (countries) due diligence and duty when it comes to preventing violence against women must be paramount. In her 2003 report she notes the duties of the States:

“(a) to prevent, investigate and punish acts of all forms of violence against women, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society, in custody or in situations of armed conflict” (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 5).

2.4.2 MMIWG National Inquiry

In their Final Report (2015), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada pointed out that true reconciliation is not a one-time event; it is a multinational generational

journey that involves all Canadians. In Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's speech to the Assembly of First Nations' 36th Annual General Assembly on December 7, 2015, he remarked how his government would renew its relationship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Specifically, he announced his commitment to enacting the recommendations of the TRC by immediately launching an inquiry into the systemic problem of MMIW (Moeke-Pickering et al. 2018).

In response to calls for action from Indigenous families, communities and organizations, as well as non-governmental and international organizations, the Government of Canada launched an entirely independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in September 2016. Four Commissioners from across Canada were appointed with a mandate to examine and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada by looking at patterns and underlying factors. This Inquiry is independent of Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments, crown corporations and Indigenous forms of government (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018).

The details for examining violence for the National Inquiry were to look into and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including sexual violence. The Inquiry also aimed to examine the social, economic, cultural, institutional, and historical causes that contribute to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The mandate was also to look into and report on existing institutional policies and practices to address violence, including those that are effective in reducing violence and increasing safety (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018).

The Inquiry is not limited to only examining those who were murdered or who are

missing, but also includes women and girls who died under suspicious circumstances. By doing so, issues such as sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, bullying and harassment, suicide, and self-harm can be examined as factors of violence. This violence is interconnected and can have equally devastating effects. Expanding the mandate beyond missing and murdered also creates space for more survivors to share their stories. They can help us look to the future from a place of experience, resilience, and hope (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018).

The MMIWG Inquiry website keeps up to date information on the progress of the Inquiry and currently, the Inquiry has heard: 1273 testimonies provided by family members and survivors who shared their truths, over 15 national Inquiry hearings, and have 1859 families and survivors registered (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018). The method of the Inquiry in finding the truth was done through community hearings, institutional hearings, and expert hearings, past and current research, collaborations with Elders and knowledge keepers, and forensic analysis of police records (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018).

In the Interim report on the Inquiry of MMIWG, the Commissioners announced that “shining a light on all the causes of violence, murders, and disappearances is a daunting task. But it is a necessary one. We are exposing hard truths about the devastating impacts of colonization, racism, and sexism—aspects of Canada that many Canadians are reluctant to accept” (p. 1). The goal is to offer effective recommendations that will keep the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ individuals (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018).

2.5 Preventing Violence

Preventing violence was also a major concern expressed in the literature I reviewed. Many violence prevention programs have been looked down upon because of their focus on placing the responsibility on the victim to keep herself safe, rather than the perpetrators and encouraging a society that allows violence to occur. The NWAC (2010) says programming is secondary to the other social issues that affect the communities, such as “lack of clean water, access to childcare or the economic security to have safe, and affordable housing” (p. 32). Preventative measures or strategies, if any, need to focus on culture and healing which needs to include physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs. It is suggested by NWAC (2010) that to end violence against Indigenous women and girls there needs to be a focus on traditional ways of being: “it is necessary to reclaim the balance inherent in traditional gender roles and to take responsibility for the transmission of pride, cultural awareness and traditional knowledge to future generations” (p. 32). Starting with the youth, one strategy is to have direct conversations about what a healthy relationship looks like as well as information about safety. The role of Elders and cultural-teachings within programs or other strategies is vital to ending the violence (p. 32).

Institutions and organizations such as police station, health care facilities, family and child services, schools, and all levels of government have been called on by the TRC, Amnesty International, and the Native Women's Association of Canada to put an end to the violence that Indigenous women and girls experience. Many Indigenous communities have already taken action to prevent violence to empower their women including Native Friendship Centers, Indigenous Student Service departments within universities, police stations, and Indigenous health care facilities. These organizations create programs that work with Indigenous and non-

Indigenous peoples to create awareness, empower Indigenous women and girls, and also incorporate Indigenous knowledge and cultural-teachings.

2.5.1 Healing

Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) assert that the generations of trauma experienced by Indigenous Peoples is not going to be fixed within a small amount of time, rather healing and recovering from centuries of being oppressed, being isolated from one's culture, having social structures ignored, identity denied, beliefs ignored, and objects being stolen, will take years to heal and recover (p. 79). Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) suggest that the aim of a healing process is to recover a full person (culture) and to create new potential for feeling and expression. To do this, it is suggested to bring a historic past to the present. Many ways of healing have been proposed to deal with the effects of trauma (and/or with the post-traumatic stress disorder) and it is believed that the conventional treatment for PTSD does have a place in the initial phase of healing the effects of historical trauma. The treatment for Indigenous Peoples must incorporate Indigenous perspectives or Indigenous contexts, this "perspective" must be inclusive to encompass all the interconnected elements of Indigenous cultures and philosophies (p.79). The treatment usually has three principal components: 1) processing and coming to terms with the horrifying and overwhelming experience; 2) controlling and mastering physiological and biological stress reactions, and 3) re-establishing secure social connections and inter-personal efficacy (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p. 78).

2.5.2 Art and Wellness

Muirhead and Leeuw (2012) report on Indigenous Art and Wellness as part of the National Collaborating Center for Wellness and Health. As noted above, Muirhead and Leeuw

also concur that “settler colonial laws, policies, practices and structures systematically eroded socio-cultural practices that for generations defined Aboriginal peoples” (2012, p2). To mitigate colonialism, they recommend that the practices of art and expression be resurrected as a Violence Prevention framework. These practices should include but not be limited to: “feasting and gifting rituals, petroglyphs, body ornamentation, singing, dancing, drumming, weaving baskets, and carving” (Muirhead & Leeuw, 2012, p.2). As mentioned earlier the banning and prohibition of such creative expressions were carried out within Indian Residential Schools and through the theft of items and placing them in non-Indigenous institutions (museums) as well as selling of cultural items around the world. Today, these practices of art are critical factors in the well-being and health of Indigenous Peoples and their communities (p.2).

Bead work also serves many purposes, as outlined in Keetshahnak (Anderson, Campbell & Belcourt, 2018) as author Harjo, Navarro, and Robertson stress that “beadwork has served many storytelling purposes of resistance for centuries in Indigenous communities” (p.293). These authors also point out that bead work has a sense of life by helping maintain community, acting as a transmitter of cultural knowledge.

Also connecting the importance of art to Indigenous health and wellness was the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report in 1996. Muirhead and Leeuw noted that in the RCAP report that art and the creative process were deeply connected to the well-being of individual and communal identity, strength, and resiliency (2012). The Arts are also significant in “healing processes, and growth of good health of individuals and communities, specifically for Indigenous Peoples in Canada” (Muirhead & Leeuw, 2012. p3).

The power of art can also connect and create healing between cultures (Muirhead & Leeuw, 2012). The role of art then also becomes a tool in healing relations between Indigenous

and non-Indigenous Peoples. As raised earlier in the literature review, the injustice experienced by Indigenous Peoples and the need to reduce the marginalization⁵ of Indigenous Peoples will contribute to a better health outcome. Art can be instrumental for mutual recognition of the value of cultural expressions and practices and can be the medium for improved relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Muirhead & Leeuw, 2012, p. 3). Why raising the issue of Art as a Violence Prevention framework, is because this was also highlighted by the participants in this study, hence the inclusion of this piece here.

Summary of Literature Review

In summary, the literature reviewed highlighted Acts of colonization which included the sterilization of Indigenous women and girls, the apprehension of children from their families and communities during the Indian Residential School era, the sixties scoop, and the current apprehension of children in 2019 (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010, preface i). These Acts of colonization are violent (Cote-Meek, 2008; Fanon, 1962) and deprive Indigenous Peoples of their right to life, land, culture and traditional values, language, family, and community ties. The impacts of colonization include but are not limited to the following: homelessness, addictions, poverty, domestic violence, and family dysfunction (Goudreau & Wabie, 2005; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). While the TRC Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into MMIWG are steps in the right direction, the fact remains that the rate of MMIWG in Canada is still way above the national average and more work needs to be done.

It was exciting to find among the literature that many organizations and communities are

⁵ Marginalization: treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral.

providing relevant programs to educate MMIWG and families about safety and awareness as a form of prevention. In reviewing the literature produced by the Native Women's Association of Canada, and from researching various Indigenous programs that work to prevent violence, I have learned that the most effective way to ensure violence does not perpetuate within Indigenous communities and/or against Indigenous women and girls is to focus on Indigenous culture and healing. Programs need to include physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs. It is suggested by the NWAC that to end violence against Indigenous women and girls, we need to focus on traditional ways of being. Indigenous youth and Elders have a significant role in keeping the culture alive and reclaiming traditional gender roles (in a cultural sense) (NWAC. 2010, p.32). I have also learned that preventing violence is also a responsibility of the non-Indigenous population, especially those in law enforcement and positions of power who influence policies.

The next section describes my research design and Indigenous methodology.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Indigenous Methodology

3.1 Methodology

This research process was guided by accountable responsibility, respectful representation, a reciprocal relationship, preservation of Indigenous culture, and a sensitive manner given the nature of the topic of MMIWG.

I used a qualitative method situated within an Indigenous Methodology. As an Indigenous student, I do not aim to separate my own Indigenous life from my academic endeavors. This means that I will be incorporating Indigenous worldviews, culture, language, and ways of knowing without solely relying on validations from western theorist and researchers.

Wilson (2008) notes in his book *Research is Ceremony*, that an Indigenous paradigm means that the research is not defined in comparison to Western research and that more than one method can be used. Although I realize I must meet academic requirements laid out by the institution which is granting the degree, I also will be “indigenizing” the traditional Western research methods, as Linda Tuhiwai-Smith notes in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999, p. 53).

Tuhiwai-Smith describes ‘Decolonization’ as a long-term process involving the cultural, linguistic and psychological removal of colonial measures (1999). For example, in order to critically analyze literature in a decolonizing way, I asked myself critical questions about the author/s, where they were writing from, the content they used to support their ideas, as well as being aware of who the intended audience was. As a researcher, it was important to be critical of the literature I included and ensured that I am honoring MMIWG as well as their families and communities by not perpetuating sexualized, racialized or an Othered analysis.

Therefore, Indigenous research methodology informed my research, and encompassed two methodologies used by two Indigenous Scholars. The first methodology I used is “Remembering” as described by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999). I also incorporated Cote-Meek’s (2014) Indigenous research methods from her book *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma, and Resistance in Post-Secondary Education*. These methodologies and approaches have firstly emerged from their Indigenous worldviews and experiences as well as selected social science methodologies, which they related to Indigenous groups (p. 143).

Tuhiwai-Smith’s (1999) framework for ‘remembering’ is a method that calls an individual to remember a painful past. Remembering may take place with the literature review or emerge from stories told by research participants. With respect to ‘remembering’ I was careful to situate all my research activities and design in a good way.

Likewise, an Indigenous methodology provides guidelines as to how to approach research with Indigenous peoples. I was careful to ensure that I was preserving Indigenous culture, building resistance to dominant discourse, strengthening aspects of self-determination and ensuring meaningful and respectful relationships (Cote-Meek, 2015; Smith, 1999). I used an Indigenous methodology approach with respect to data analysis, by interpreting the data using Indigenous worldviews.

To further my research work as decolonizing, I used the following criteria listed below, which includes the way a researcher should interact with the Indigenous community/participants from Shawn Wilson's book, *Research is Ceremony* (2008).

- Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods;
- A knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to the community
- Ways of relating and acting within the community with an understanding of the principles of reciprocity and responsibility;
- Research participant must feel safe, be safe, and include respecting confidentiality;
- A non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware of watching;
- Deep listening and understanding with more than ears;
- A reflective non-judgemental consideration of what has been heard, observed, and learned;
- Awareness and connection between the logic of mind and the feelings of the heart;
- Listening and observing the self and as well as in relation to others;
- Acknowledging that the researcher brings to the research his/her objective self

By incorporating these principles and functions into the research project, the research honors the worldviews of Indigenous Peoples and does so with ethical responsibility and sensitivity (Wilson, 2008, p.59).

Figure 3: Grandmother Earth Dress in She Dances...and they dance with her (Duke, 2017).⁶



3.2 Jingle Dress Framework

I also wanted to draw upon a research framework that honored missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. I opted to use a Jingle Dress Framework. Originally I intended to use a red dress which was inspired by Métis artist, Jamie Black. Participant, Charbonneau, the Traditional Resource Co-coordinator at Laurentian University shared that Black started the REDress Project in response to the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. The original REDress project collected over 600 red dresses by community

donations and dispersed them in public spaces throughout Winnipeg and across Canada as a visual reminder of the immense number of women who are no longer with us. Black (2014) stated that “through the installation, I hope to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and evoke a presence through the marking of absence.”⁷ When looking at Jamie Black’s REDress, the silhouette alone in a public space can elicit feelings that are powerful when you realize that the dress represents a woman's life. Black’s REDress is a moving symbol of MMIWG and I was reminded by one of the Anishinaabe participant’s in this thesis, Cywink, of the healing purposes of the Jingle Dress. I also kept in

⁶ mmiwontario.ca

⁷ www.thereddressproject.org

mind my commitment to decolonizing my research by using the principle that “Indigenous people themselves should approve the research and research methods” (Wilson, 2008). With the recommendation and my commitment to centering Indigenous voices, I decided that it would be more appropriate to use the Jingle Dress as a framework.

I will share that I am not a Jingle Dress dancer. I have received teachings from Meggie Cywink, Julia Pegahmagabow, and throughout my education in Indigenous Studies at Laurentian University. The Jingle Dress has great cultural significance, as it is a sacred dress that was given to the Anishinaabe Peoples from the Creator for the healing of their Peoples. There is also a strong cultural reference to the power of women. While a woman dances, she is connecting to her spirit, to the Creator, to the land, and praying for healing, it is a very spiritual act. The Jingle Dress within this research will be used to honor and support MMIWG. The color red is one of the four sacred colors in Anishinaabe culture. The physical components of the Jingle Dress are interwoven into this research topic. The seams that hold the dress together represents the family. When the seams are ripped this can be seen as dysfunction and trauma of the community and families when these women go missing or are murdered. As the dress is held together by the seams, the family and community fall apart when a sacred and integral component is removed. When the Jingle Dress also represents the commemoration and remembrance of spirits of MMIWG, as through colonization all Indigenous Peoples were banned from participating in their culture and they had to remember and honor their traditional ways. The circle at the bottom of the dress represents protection in the form of Indigenous Peoples and Allies who keep Indigenous women and girls safe from hatred and racism. The teaching I received noted that that circle at the bottom of the dress also teaches the difference between invitation and consent, and the connection as women to the land as givers of life. Within this research the protectors are

people who spend endless days as advocates using social media platforms (eg. Twitter); people who hold vigils in memory of missing loved ones; our Grannies who teach us how to love and the value of our women; men who are learning and teaching their sons to be kind; and professors and students who are word warriors and bring stark facts forward in their writing. The color red is a healing color and represents Anishinaabe Peoples in the medicine wheel. The teaching I reved also shared that there are usually 356 jingles on each dress, one for every day in the year you walk on Mother Earth as a Women. The jingles in this research are the healers who are artists and use their gifts 365 days in a year to keep the communities strong through song, dance, and creation of visual art. These people are the jingles, as the jingles in the dress are necessary for the healing. My part in the jingles is that of a researcher, in bringing together all parts of this research in a good way.

3.3 Method

In this section I address the research question, recruitment of participants, their involvement in the data collection, and data analysis.

To recap, the research question that guided my thesis was: what strategies are Indigenous community leaders implementing to prevent and educate the public on historical and current violence, that empower Indigenous women and girls? I explored nine community-based programs, and interviewed 13 participants using a qualitative method, with semi-structured interviews. Of the 13 participants, 11 were Indigenous leaders, one settler ally, and two Elders. All implemented or influenced community action programs or events that brought about awareness and education of MMIWG.

3.4 Recruitment of Participants

To recruit participants, I looked to Indigenous organizations and Indigenous programs that worked with Indigenous Peoples in the form of healing, education of MMIWG, violence prevention, and empowerment of Indigenous women and girls. I then contacted the organizations and shared my research information and the research aims, and asked for their support in the research. I waited for approval from the organizations to approach the participants who facilitate the programs. I was able to create a partnership with the GSPS and obtained approval from Deputy Chief. Sheilah Weber. At Atlohsa Family Healing Services, I corresponded through email with Raymond Deleary, Executive Director, to confirm a partnership to conduct research.

After the approval from the GSPS and Atlohsa, I then emailed individual participants and provided them with the recruitment poster, information sheet, interview questions (Leader and Elder Version), and the ethics approval form from Laurentian Universities Research Ethics Board (Appendix A, B, C, D, and E). If the participant agreed to participate, I would then set up a time to meet with them in person to explain the research aims, situate myself within the research, go over the benefits and risks of the research, sign the consent form, and offer them tobacco. Tobacco is a sacred medicine in Anishinabe culture and is used as an offering when asking another person for something whether it is an object, time, or knowledge⁸. The acceptance of tobacco also indicates that a relationship has begun in respect. Some participants were not available for a meeting in person, so this exchange of information was done via phone conversation. A total of nine in-person interviews took place, where I was able to offer tobacco first. Two participants were not able to meet in person, so a phone interview took place, and as a result I had provided them with a gift and an offering of tobacco at a later date. Three

⁸ <http://www.tobacowise.com/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=76661>

participants provided me with their input of the questions in written form. All participants completed a consent form.

3.5 Data Collection

I used a qualitative method, interviews, and the questions (Appendix D) were semi-structured. The participants who were situated in Sudbury met at Laurentian University Indigenous Sharing and Learning Center in a private meeting room to conduct the interviews or a choice of their own on Laurentian Campus. Participants who were situated in London, Ontario, or elsewhere, chose a public location with a quiet room. This was a public library or their place of work. Few participants were not able to meet in person for the interview, so we arranged a time to have their interview over the phone. Ten participants agreed to be audio recorded on an MP3 recorder. The remaining three participants only chose to provide written content. After the interview, I provided the participants with a small gift, a thank you card, and offered money to cover the costs of parking (if applicable). The data from the interviews were transferred from the MP3 recorder to a secure google drive account, then deleted from the MP3. To transcribe interviews, the data was uploaded onto the software Express Transcribe, and were only heard by me, the primary researcher. The interviews were again removed from the transcribing software tool once I completed the transcriptions. At this point, the participants were emailed their transcribed interviews using a secure link on Google Drive. The participants were asked to read their individual interview and to ensure what they were sharing was accurate. This included spelling of Anishinaabe names and words. Once completed, the participants approved the data and I moved onto the data analysis and sharing of the findings.

The next step of finding codes and creating themes, is described in further detail in Chapter Four. The second to last step that the participants were involved in was approving the

findings. Each participant was individually sent the completed findings and they were then able to provide feedback as to whether I was sharing their words in a good way. This process required a lot of back and forth communication and a significant amount of participation beyond the interview. This process of verification was necessary to ensure the inclusion of participants worldviews and was a method to ensure their messages were shared with the public accurately. This lengthy process of maintaining connections is referred to as ceremony by Wilson (2008) who notes that from an Indigenous perspective, research is ceremony because it takes “a lot of work, dedication and time” (p. 89–90).

The last step for participants (especially those living in Sudbury although all are invited) in this research is to attend the research defense to hear the overall research and findings. There will be a second information sharing event at Atlohsa, in London, Ontario, in May of 2019 to ensure those participants who reside there, are able to hear about the research process, the findings, and conclusion of the study. If any of the participants are not able to attend, they will be sent the thesis document in its entirety to an address of their choice.

3.6 Consent

Informed prior consent was obtained from each participant. Each participant was provided with the formal documents of the research aims, risk, and benefits. The participants were informed that the entire process of the research is completely voluntary and they may withdraw their consent at anytime. All these forms can be viewed in the Appendix section.

To summarize the Methods section, throughout the entire research process, I incorporated an Indigenous methodology which included a Remembering and a Jingle Dress framework. This was important to me to ensure that Indigenous worldviews and culture were reflected in the writing and activities of this research. It was especially important to me that my participants were

informed of their rights throughout the research, this included being able to withdraw at any time, being able to choose if they wanted to be audio recorded and seeking their approval of their transcripts and the data findings. I wanted to ensure I did not misinterpret the message that was shared during the interviews. This method of providing participants with an opportunity to endorse their contribution created a more transparent relationship which is important in research and more so in Indigenous methodologies.

3.7 Ethics

The research was submitted to Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB) for approval in July, 2018 with the request for an expedited review. This process of review took four months as it was approved in October, 2018 before the research was approved by Laurentian's REB.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Data Analysis and my Journey Finding Themes

For the data analysis, I used the Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis (TA). TA is a method for systematically finding, organizing, and identifying common meaning (themes) and patterns within data. Using a thematic analysis allows the researcher to see the commonalities and shared meanings of the experiences of the participant's data (p. 57). Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that there are six phases to the process: phase one; familiarizing yourself with the data, phase two; generating initial codes, phase three; searching for themes, phase four; reviewing potential themes, phase five; defining and naming themes, and phase six; producing the findings. Within these six phases, I also reflected back to my framework of the

Jingle Dress to ensure the research analysis was inclusive of culture.

The first step in the thematic analysis is for the researcher to immerse themselves within the data (p. 60). I did this by listening to the interview’s multiple times, transcribing the interviews, and re-reading each participant's edits of their interviews. While I was re-reading and listening, I started to critically think about what the data meant, and how it connects to the literature and fits within the Jingle Dress framework.

Step two in the thematic analysis was to create the initial codes. In the first round of coding, I had 41 themes as seen in Table 2. 41 Original Themes below. After I had taken a step back and reexamined the themes, I could see that there were too many and that there were similarities across the data set.

Figure 5: Original Themes

Code Number	Code Description	# Mentions in Interview
1.	Takes care of people so they can heal and provides resources to others	20
2.	Community Consultation	8
3.	Teachings/Ceremony/Culture	81
4.	Partnerships with Political Parties	2
5.	Working with Government	10
6.	Education for Everyone/Public Workshops	28
7.	Commemoration A - Because we care about MMIWG Commemoration B- Raises Awareness	22
8.	Resources/Funding	14

9.	Evaluation/ Develops Empathy	9
10.	Community Focused Programming	3
11.	Institutional Partnerships (i.e Laurentian University, Rainbow School Boards, CAS)	8
12.	Non-Profit Collaboration (i.e Friendship Centers)	10
13.	Addressing Historical Trauma	16
14.	Art-Based Learning/Growth (Art as a medium of communication)	16
15.	Helping a victim of violence	3
16.	Media Recruitment/Awareness Sharing	5
17.	Indigenous women are leaders in the family & community	11
18.	Historical Injustice/Inequality	7
19.	Elder Inclusion	25
20.	Resilience of Indigenous Women	10
21.	Negative Media Portrayal	4
22.	Centering of Families/Indigenous Voices	17
23.	Remembering	4
24.	“In a good way”/Minobimadizwin/Coming from your heart with respect	12
25.	Reconciliation	10
26.	Free of Violence	7
27.	Land extraction synonymous to what’s happening to MMIWG	2
28.	Researcher Relationship	3
29.	WOKE (definition: alert to injustice in society, especially racism.)	5
30.	Institutional Racism	4

31.	Decolonization	6
32.	Thumbs-up Guidance (the good feeling you get when you're unsure if you're doing something right but then a role model confirms you're on the right path with a nonverbal cue: a nod, smile, hug, or thumb's up)	2
33.	All Our Relations (Working with other Indigenous groups, thinking of our ancestors, and looking towards the future generations)	4
34.	Intersectionality	2
35.	Reclaiming Indigenous Identity	13
36.	Consent	2
37.	Language	1
38.	Males supporting females/balance of roles	5
39.	Barriers Between Families and Police Services	1
40.	Trauma faced by families of MMIWG	2
41.	Violence prevention	8

In the third phase: searching for themes, the analysis started to take shape as I shifted the codes to themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 63). Within this third phase, I reviewed the coded data to identify areas of similarity and overlap between codes. In doing this, the 41 themes were re-grouped into eight themes. The groups were done by color coding the themes by their similarities. For example, the codes with red in Table 2. were all grouped together based on the idea of partnerships. The result was Table 3. Eight Themes. I also placed the original theme number in brackets alongside the theme name as well as listed the original theme names.

Figure 6: Eight Themes

49 Codes	Partnerships (2,4,5,10,11,12, 28,33,39) Community Consultation, Partnership with Political Parties, Working with Government, Institutional
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	Partnerships, Community Focused Programming, Researcher Relationships, Non-Profit Collaboration, All-Our Relations, Barriers Between Families and Police Services.
86 Codes	Education (6,9,13,18,21,27,29,30,34,41) Education for everyone/workshops, Evaluation/Develops Empathy, Addressing Historical Trauma, Historical Injustice/Inequality, Negative Media Portrayal, Land extraction synonymous to what's happening to MMIWG, WOKE (definition: alert to injustice in society, especially racism.), Institutional Racism, Intersectionality, Violence Prevention.
16 Codes	Art as a Medium for Healing (14) Art-Based Learning and Healing
158 Codes	Culture (3,17,19,24,31,32,35,36,37,38) Teachings/Ceremony/Culture, Indigenous women are leaders in the family & community, Elder Inclusion, "In a good way"...(minobimadizwin?Coming from your heart with respect) Decolonization,Thumbs-up Guidance (the good feeling you get when you're unsure if you're doing something right but then a role model confirms you're on the right path with a nonverbal cue: a nod, smile, hug, or thumb's up), Reclaiming Indigenous, Consent, Identity, Language, Males Supporting Females/Balancing of Roles.
23 Codes	Families (22,23,40) Centering Families/Indigenous Voices, Remembering, Trauma Faced by Families of MMIWG.
50 Codes	Oshkabewis Taking care of Spirit Through Commemoration (1,7,15,16) Because we care about MMIWG, Raises Awareness, Media Recruitment/Awareness Sharing, Takes care of others so they can heal and provides resources to others, Helping a Victim of Violence.
14 Codes	Funding (8) Resources/Funding
27 Codes	Looking Towards the Future (20,25,26) Resilience of Indigenous Women, Reconciliation, Free of Violence.

In the fourth phase: reviewing themes, I reviewed the quality of the themes and looked at their relation to the Jingle Dress framework. I had asked myself, do the components of these frameworks fit within the themes? I then went back to the components of the Jingle Dress: the thread, the circle of the dress, the elements of nature, the color red, the arm sleeves, the jingles, and I checked to see if these themes were reflected. I also had to identify if the themes were

relevant in relation to the research question. I elaborate and explain how each theme fits within the framework in Chapter Four.

In the fifth phase: defining and naming themes, I found quotes that clearly summarized or supported the definition I created for each theme. In the sixth and final phase: producing the report will be seen within the conclusion of the findings which can be found in chapter Four and connects the data analysis to the literature, research questions and within the Jingle Dress framework.

As mentioned earlier in the Methods section, to ensure this research is inclusive of the original voices of the data, I also provided the participants with an opportunity to approve my interpretations of the data and emerging themes by sharing them on Google Drive. This way, the participants were actively involved in their narrative and by doing this, minimised the potential for misinterpretation.

4.2 Findings Section: Interweaving the Eight Key Themes

This chapter brings together the key findings and conclusion of the research. As mentioned earlier during the coding analysis, 41 themes emerged. From these 41 themes, I was able to group them into eight main themes for the findings. These eight themes are: Culture; Oshkaabewis Taking Care of Spirit Through Commemoration; Education; Partnerships; Looking Towards the Future; Families; Art as a Medium for Healing; and, Funding. Throughout each theme heading, I will explain how the Jingle Dress framework was included, and how it answers the research question: what strategies are Indigenous community leaders implementing to prevent and educate the public on historical and current violence, to empower Indigenous women and girls?

The emerging themes within the interviews were similar because I asked the same set of questions to all participants. The themes are arranged from most cited to the least. The participants have consented to have their identities shared with the public. This is also an Indigenous ethical practice to identify my teachers and knowledge sources and to continue to honor their words (Chilisa, 2016, p.12). I have also included quotes from the participants that are relevant to each theme.

4.2.1 Culture

“When it is all closed down and you look around you’re surrounded by all these tobacco ties, it’s amazing. You’re surrounded by prayer. That is actually what I see and what I feel there”

Meggie Cywink, on the Shades of Our Sister Art Installation (2018).

The leading theme, Culture, had 158 mentions and was the foundation of every program or event that was implemented by Indigenous community leaders and Elders. In this theme, Culture refers to the use of Indigenous languages, sharing of Indigenous teachings, the inclusion of Elders as the keepers of knowledge and transmitters of knowledge, the use of sacred medicines, participation in ceremonies, reclaiming Indigenous identity, learning roles within the family based from teachings, and using traditional methods of justice. This theme fits into the Jingle Dress Framework by way of representation of the color red. Earlier, I explained the significance of the color red in Anishinaabe culture, and within the Jingle Dress Framework red as a healing color. Culture is red within the framework. The theme, Culture, answers research aim number three: what traditional teachings or ways of being are being implemented to heal Indigenous Peoples or educate all people about MMIWG?

When the participants were asked, “What is the program without culture?” their responses were similar in that each participant explained that their program or event is based on

culture and that without it, their respective programs would not exist nor would it be effective for the people to heal and connect to themselves. One of the participants, Hickey, shares about the importance of culture in the WWOS commemoration event below:

“Every day is ceremony, every minute is ceremony, all the time it is ceremony. This is very meaningful and powerful stuff. There is no one in the room who doesn’t know that. In our meetings we make sure we're in a good way we are doing our smudging, we are doing our prayers, that is part of ceremony.”

Here, Hickey tells us that the foundation and process of the WWOS event incorporate Culture into their way of being, practices and decision-making. Similarly, the Director of Programs, Sayer, adds that Indigenous Culture is also the foundation and is incorporated into all program that operates at Atlohsa, in London, Ontario.

“Our programs are rooted in Indigenous knowledge, so everything we do is based on our traditional healing methods and within that Indigenous knowledge that we carry. We use it to develop our programming, but also to develop one-on-one plans of care with women on an individual basis. So depending on where they are at, we always meet them where they are at, some women identify that they want to learn more about who they are as Anishinaabe or Haudenosaunee Women. So we bring in Elders and we work one-on-one with them, with the knowledge that each of us carries within our own bundles. We also work with them to bring their families together. If they have children, we incorporate them into the program so that they can also learn who they are as Indigenous Peoples too”.

This statement shows that Elders were valued for their knowledge and the programs at Atlohsa are created with Culture as the foundation of the programs. Culture is a guiding

framework for how they help children, women, and families learn about themselves and how to heal. The incorporation of Elders in Indigenous programs and events was mentioned in every program and event and connects to what the NWAC literature reported, that Indigenous youth and Elders have a significant role in keeping the culture alive and reclaiming traditional gender roles (in a cultural sense) (NWAC, 2010, p. 32).

Another indication of Culture as a theme was the use of the Medicine Wheel Teachings as a model for wellness and the guidance provided by Elders within the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women projects.

“We have our strategy that we use [Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy], and the strategy also is based upon that medicine wheel.”

Agowissa, a participant, noted that the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy projects were guided by a Nokomis and Mishomis and they ensured proper Anishinaabe protocol was followed.

“As much as we could to include them [Elders], we would try. Even for our planning meetings we offer tobacco to a Nokomis to help guide us through. We want to always be mindful of ceremony and that is what they carry and give us, direction. For example, we had started off with a welcoming song, for a recent event and the Nshomis that was there reminded us, that once you invite those spirits, you also have to send those spirits home. And you have to close with a song so that Nokomis being there was able to facilitate that.”

Agowissa’s quotes shows us that ancestral knowledge and Anishinaabe teachings of process and protocol are highly valued, and that the Elders ensure that when creating a program. it must include spirit. We can see that Agowissa and others were witness to this protocol process which

can be seen as a transference of knowledge and way of being. Also noting the role of Elders in programs and events, WWOS funding lead, Wabie, also a participant, explains how Elders safely help people when dealing or talking about sensitive issues, and ensure things are done in ceremony.

“We have Grandmothers and Social Workers that are trained to meet with them [students] and be sure they are okay before they leave. So they smudge then they go in, and they hold a piece of tobacco in their left hand and then when they leave, they put that tobacco in a container and we burn it in a sacred fire”.

Here, Wabie acknowledges that youth learning about MMIWG need to be prepared mentally and spiritually. She also affirms how the Grandmothers used culture and ceremony to ensure the youth participate, contribute and leave in a good way.

The connection of Indigenous Peoples to their cultural identity and connecting them to their roles within family was a strategy used to stop both the perpetuation of violence and to strengthen the people to further guide them on a healthy path in life. These strategies connect to the literature from both Morrissette (2001) and Anderson (2006) as they inform us that violence against women is not part of an Indigenous way of being. Anderson further affirms this by sharing that “the traditional way of treating women would make it unimaginable in Indigenous culture to inflict violence on Indigenous women (p.94). This perspective shows that violence against women by Indigenous people is a learned behavior and the process of colonization. This idea also emerged in the interview with Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin program as the Coordinator, Whiteye remarked:

“We need male energy to give to the female who is the natural mother. And I think, it empowers women to know that there are kind men out there and that’s what this program

does. It helps create men who are kind, men who can be in a good place to be that support for women. Not solely for income into the household. This program works because when we allow men to connect to the spirit and connect to themselves, we see their behavior change and they see their roles change. There becomes no room for bad intentions. No room for abuse when they are connecting to spirit. You know there has never been violence or abuse in our teachings, so in a kind way, we approach those things and tell the men that abuse was a learned behavior.”

We can conclude from this quotation that violence against Indigenous women is something that can be unlearned through Whiteye’s method of violence prevention. Whiteye connects men to teachings on the role of women and informs the men within his program how women are meant to be viewed, how special they are, and how men can support women in their roles as partners. Learning the role as an Indigenous man or Indigenous women, as Whiteye teaches in his program, can also be connected to strengthening one’s cultural identity.

As mentioned earlier, ceremony and teachings are major components within the theme Culture. In the interviews, it was pointed out that through the programs and events, the inclusion of ceremony and teachings have brought many Indigenous Peoples closer to know their cultural identity as an Indigenous person, and the learning of identity has been used as a tool to create better relations within families. Whiteye, Program Coordinator, elaborated on that connection as he explains how men in the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin program come to know who they are as men:

“The program has also evolved in bringing in teachings as just last week we took our men out to the sweat lodge. At the sweat lodge, they are understanding much more, such as the original teachings behind that fire and the connection to the sacred womb of

Mother Earth. This is where the men start to see that there is so much learning and so many vital teachings that can be absorbed, it is then that the men see there is no room for that other stuff to even enter [abuse and violence]. These teachings help the men create that indescribable connection to the Creator as they are connecting to our original instructions as Anishinaabe Peoples.”

From this we can understand that the need for Indigenous Peoples to know their cultural identity through ceremony and teachings can be beneficial in living a healthy, violence-free life. It is imperative to remember and understand that Indigenous Peoples have not always had the opportunity to know their identity, due to ongoing colonization and the purposeful denial of identity, culture, language and traditions, and through legislation designed to destroy Indigenous identity (NWAC, 2010, p.1). To decolonize, culture is what Indigenous leaders are using to prevent all forms of violence through implementation of their programs for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

Also using decolonization as a tool, which incorporates teachings and returning to cultural structures, Cultural Justice Coordinator, Pawley, whom I also interviewed, helps Indigenous Peoples on their healing path. Working at Atlohsa, Pawley implements a traditional justice system through justice circles with the guidance of Elders. Pawley explained that the program is based on people's strengths and she aims to help Indigenous Peoples find and use their gifts that they were given.

“As Indigenous communities, we just need to return to our gifts and what our practices are so we can heal ourselves. It is very empowering allowing people to reconnect to tradition and have the opportunity to access that.”

This participant tells us that Indigenous Peoples do not need to rely solely on non-Indigenous methods of healing; rather, their cultural traditions can help them find their strengths.

Many of the interviewees also shared the use of specific ceremonies to help women find their power. At Laurentian University, Pegahmagabow is a Sharer of Knowledge at the University of Sudbury and at the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Center. She also volunteers her time as the founding Director of the Teaching Lodge in Atikameksheng Anishnawabek First Nation. When asked what teachings are used to help women within the programs she implements, Pegahmagabow shared that she originally was invited to share and lead the full moon ceremony (mooshki niba giizis manidooke). Pegahmagabow has now been doing the full moon ceremony for three years. The full moon ceremony is for both men and women.

Pegahmagabow explained that male relatives only attend the Moon Ceremony in the winter months:

“In the winter months, men hear the teaching of the original human and the relationship with his Grandmother and how he took care of her. This teaching is a model for all our male relatives and all of us, to show us how we should be taking care of Elders, grandparents, aunties, and uncles. And it gives our male relatives a peek to see and know how it is that women have a relationship to Grandmother Moon. Lots of our male relatives maybe single dads or grandfathers, or uncles, and then they may be called upon and be in positions where they are going to help daughter, granddaughters, and nieces when there is no one else to help them. So, it is important that we come together in the winter months, in the healing moons, to work as a community and understand relationships.”

Pegahmagabow elaborates on the benefits of the ceremony with our relations:

“They hear the story of the original human and the relationship with his Grandmother and how he took care of her, which is a model for all of our male relatives and all of us, to show us how we should be taking care of Elders, grandparents, aunties, and uncles. We are talking about the relationship that women have with our Grandmother, the Moon, and how she can help us to move towards healing and how we are reminded of her role and helping us through all of our transitions.”

This statement shows that ceremonies can happen in a colonial institution such as a university and that a connection to the land and cosmos are important in understanding healthy relationships. Other elements of the full moon ceremony such as wearing a ribbon skirt or a long skirt is also significant in understanding our relationship to the land. Pegahmagabow explained that the skirts are significant as it is a visual reminder that women are connected to Mother Earth as you see that a circle that is created from your waist to the ground. Pegahmagabow shared that not only does the skirt help to strengthen our relationship with the Earth but it also teaches us about boundaries and consent within that circle.

“That’s your space and in this day and age with [#] MeToo movements, women have begun to speak out globally against sexual violence and to share their stories and to confront the people who have abused them. You know, it speaks more to than just a skirt, it is your space and it speaks to invitation rather than just consent. And they too, go hand in hand, but consent means that someone wants to come in. Whereas, an invitation means you want someone to come into your personal space. That statement was shared by an Elder from Wikwemikong and her name is Shirley Williams. She shared that teaching about the invitation and welcoming someone into the circle.”

We can conclude that Pegahmagabow's work in cultural revitalization connects to the suggestion from NWAC, which noted that to end violence against Indigenous women and girls, we need to focus on traditional ways of being: "It is necessary to reclaim the balance inherent in traditional gender roles and to take responsibility for the transmission of pride, cultural awareness and traditional knowledge to future generations" (2010, p. 32). This revitalization of the Full Moon Ceremony is especially important because of forced erasure of the practice during the Residential School era as Anderson (2006) highlights the negative impact on Indigenous girls during their moon time⁹ in which females were made to feel alienated, embarrassed, or excluded (p. 38). Pegahmagabow can connect moon time as a gift and a time for a woman to cleanse herself mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually and to prepare for new life (2019).

Pegahmagabow, Agowissa, Pawley, Whiteye, Wabie, Sayer, Hickey, and Cywink all provided concrete examples of how they include culture, teachings, identity, and Elders within their programs and events to help heal Indigenous Peoples and educate both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people. Their insights provide ways of understanding how Culture is a vital component for violence prevention.

4.2.2 Education

"I find that people, they'll cry. Sometimes there is a bit of anger, like "How did I not know about this? How did I not know this was going on?" Some people don't say much, other people get triggered. They are like "Oh my gosh it's too much" (Wabie, 2019).

⁹ Moon time is when women have their monthly period. It is viewed by many Anishinaabe Peoples as a ceremony in which women can cleanse themselves and connect to Grandmother moon (Pegahmagabow, 2019).

With 87 references for the theme Education, this theme was the second most mentioned. Education for everyone was a large part of every program/event implemented by community leaders that I interviewed. In this section, Education refers to the sharing of knowledge in formal and informal settings through workshops, professional development, sharing circles, art installations, one-on-one conversations, and between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people. Information shared is related to historical trauma and historical injustice faced by Indigenous Peoples. Education was also used as a tool for violence prevention to curb the rate of Indigenous women and girls going missing or being murdered. While I have not learned of any specific mention of the meaning of arm sleeves of a Jingle Dress when receiving the teaching, I chose to give meaning to this part of the dress for this research as a framework. This theme, along with Partnerships and Funding, represent the arm sleeves on the Jingle Dress, which I chose to symbolize the resistance of colonization of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island and their efforts to maintain their culture and way of life. Education was used within these programs and was also a form of decolonization, as many programs were aimed towards Indigenous Peoples returning to ancestral ways of being and knowing. This theme fits within the first research aim: how various programs/events contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous communities and educate the non-Indigenous community on MMIWG?

The literature produced by NWAC (2010) notes that preventing violence against MMIWG is also a responsibility of the non-Indigenous population, especially those in law enforcement and positions of power who influence policies. This was evident in three of the programs that I researched. Specifically, Agowissa, who is a police officer with the Greater Sudbury Police Services (GSPS), has helped facilitate the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of our Women Strategy. Agowissa, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer, does extensive work in

educating her colleagues and helping them become more aware of issues surrounding violence against Indigenous women and girls and those who have been murdered or are missing. GSPS set up cultural mindfulness awareness training and brought in George Couchie, a former police officer who is now retired and facilitating workshops, to give training to the officers, primarily to the supervisors. Agowissa made a point to note that George Couchie has a gift of creating cultural awareness in his workshops that create empathy, as his approach invites people to learn offering truth and gentleness, so people do not put up barriers when learning. Agowissa commented that the GSPS is looking at offering the workshop to all members of GSPS, which includes sworn and civilian employees. In addition to the cultural awareness workshop, Agowissa and the GSPS also took part in running with Caribou Legs, Brad Firth, who ran across the country to bring awareness to MMIWG. The GSPS was the first police station on Turtle Island to participate in Firth's cross-country awareness run. These initiatives that GSPS are implementing are important and show the Sudbury and Indigenous communities that they are creating awareness of the issues surrounding MMIWG. These initiatives may also counteract the future results of the General Statistic Survey, that indicated most violent incidents are not brought to the attention of the police (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Educating police officers and creating more cultural competency, were also incorporated into the Shades of our Sisters Exhibit. This exhibit was put on through the Looking Ahead to Building the Spirit of Our Women Project and honored two Anishinaabe women's spirits. In the exhibit, these lives were told through the voices of their family members which took place on Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Territory at the N'Swakamok Friendship Center. Many police officers, students, and community members attended the exhibit that shared the life stories of Sonya Cywink and Patricia Carpenter. A family member and co-creator of Shades of our Sisters,

Cywink said she wanted to educate everyone on the reality of violence as she described her thoughts on violence:

“I realized that violence is never going to stop. We live in a violent world, that's the way the colonial system is around the world. So, I said well, we should be preventative and we need to slow it down. Violence, slow it down. No rate of violence is acceptable, but we need to slow it down to an acceptable rate. And we can't have these outrageous number of MMIWG.”

Clearly, then, this is where the SOOS exhibit comes in as a tool for prevention of violence, and education on the issue of MMIWG, and healing for the families and those who are grieving a loss or losses.

Another suggestion to improve the relationship between Indigenous and police relations is to have more diverse hiring, better training, and education, and to teach officers how to communicate with Indigenous Peoples (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 18). The Indigenous educational initiatives created by Agowissa and the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator are positive steps in improving that relationship. Agowissa meets the suggestions made by Amnesty International by developing cultural awareness training to the new and existing members of GSPS in relation to Indigenous Peoples, including the history of Residential Schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, local Treaties, the recommendations of the TRC report, Aboriginal Rights, and Aboriginal Law. One concrete example of education was seen when GSPS assisted in bringing the Kairos Blanket exercise to the station and helping to facilitate the exercise for the Sudbury Catholic School Board and Rainbow District School Board, facilitated by the GSPS's previous Aboriginal Women Violence

Prevention Coordinator and Agowissa. Agowissa explained the education that the Kairos Blanket exercise can bring:

“The Kairos Blanket exercise teaches as a story right from contact and makes you think about all the impacts of what happened in history. You know we hear a lot about Residential Schools it has had a lot of impact on people, but there are many other factors into why Indigenous Peoples are hurting right now.”

From this we can understand that teaching empathy is a tool to help Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations and it can also highlight the complexities of colonization related to the present-day circumstance of Indigenous Peoples.

The GSPS also meets solutions outlined by Amnesty International, where a report urged police services to hire people with cultural and historical knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples they serve and to hire more Indigenous officers who know the community, are culturally sensitive, and who are women (2004, p.18). This was noted as GSPS hired Agowissa as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer and another woman as the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator, both Indigenous and women from the Anishinabek community. The positions that Agowissa and the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator hold are also leadership positions that help create space for Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous voices, and have been a positive influence in Indigenous relations and partnerships. In addition to these two roles, in 2017, the GSPS had a voluntary Diversity census, in which 29 people identified as First Nations and 21 people identified as Métis. Members with Indigenous ancestry can be found throughout GSPS both male and female, within sworn and civilian positions. Further, the partnership between the GSPS and N’Swakamok Friendship Centre is highlighted by the Memorandum of

Understanding for the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women projects, which is the first of its kind in Ontario.

Also noted in the literature on police and Indigenous relations was the need for police departments to work with the Indigenous communities to create protocol, policies, and practices that increase the education of the officer, but also to improve relations between Indigenous communities (2004, p. 19). Agowissa and the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator include community by hosting community consultations with a feast. Agowissa adds that

“this is to make sure that anything we are facilitating really does come from the community. One of the things I have learned in this position is that everyone's healing journey is their own, just as everyone's personality is individual, not everything is going to work for a single person.”

The perception of local police services, according to the General Social Survey (2009) is similar between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women. The difference between the rating was found in the perception of the police doing a good job of enforcing the law. Indigenous women were less likely to state that police services were doing a good job of treating people fairly as well (Brennan, 2009). The perception of police in the Anishinabek community, according to Agowissa is different. She explained that there was a transition period where for a few months there was not anyone in the position for the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator and she said the community felt the absence. During the transition, people were asking “What's going on? Who is going to be in that role? Who are you hiring?” Agowissa comments that she was asked by the community many times about who is going to be filling the position and was told that the Aboriginal Violence Prevention Coordinator position needs to be

permanent (2018). These statements shared with Agowissa show that Indigenous Peoples are being consulted on what their healing path looks like. It also shows that the community trusts Agowissa and the GSPS to take action to implement their needs, which I believe is a positive step in educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations.

Similarly to SOOS, which educates Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on MMIWG and honours their spirits, the See Me Tour in London, Ontario at Atlohsa Family Services, offers an educational art installation. Its purpose is to continue the conversation about the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada and the legacy of Residential Schools. Pawley, the Cultural Justice Coordinator, informs us that she takes non-Indigenous youth on the See Me Tour and educates them on Indigenous women and girls on Turtle Island:

“Having all people be aware of what intersectionality is and feels like between racism and sexism for Indigenous women. This is not something that most people get to experience so education is important.”

What Pawley describes as intersectionality of race and sex is also referenced by Statistics Canada (2009). Statistics Canada studies have shown that violence against women in Canada continues to be a persistent and ongoing problem, and the violence is only compounded for Indigenous women (2009).

Within education, there were several mentions as to who the learning was aimed towards, with all programs noting that their workshops and programs are mostly aimed at Indigenous Peoples to promote healing, but also at non-Indigenous people. The Okaadenige program at Atlohsa, which focuses on anti-human trafficking, is welcoming to all people and facilitated by Jackson, who points out that the program is

“Indigenous focused and led, but I would never turn someone away who wants this as part of their healing journey”.

Other events and programs that were open to the public were Shades of our Sisters, Walking with our Sisters, Laurentian University Indigenous initiatives, and several of the projects offered by the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy.

Education for non-Indigenous people is important with the Walking with our Sisters art installation as it is welcoming to all people. Hickey (2018) shares her thoughts on what people might learn from attending the event:

“I think that any non-Indigenous person might have a takeaway from our ceremony regardless of what it is. Our ways, ceremony is not only healing, but it is also knowledge translation, and transmission, and it shows how our communities are. So there is not just healing, it is learning too. I’m not sure what their cultural rituals are, but when they come to ours they can see what we do, what it feels like, and smells like, they can smell our medicines, see that this is what we look like when we are in our skirts and the things that we like to have with us, our tools and sacred items. They learn about that, see, and understand. Reconciliation is about relationships and the reason we are not able to reconcile is the idea that I don’t understand you, and you don’t understand me”.

In Hickey’s comments, we can see that it is fitting that many of these events are also aimed towards non-Indigenous Peoples in order to foster reconciliation and create an understanding of Indigenous Peoples. The literature also suggests that the colonization of Indigenous Peoples in Canada is not a thing of the past, rather it is ongoing, violent, and it is in institutions and organizations such as police stations, health care facilities, family and child

services, schools, and all levels of government, making it even more important for non-Indigenous people to learn about Indigenous ways of being (Amnesty International, 2004, Native Women's Association of Canada, 2015, TRC, 2015).

Another form of education was violence prevention, in which two programs focused on working specifically with Indigenous Peoples: the women's Kanawayhitowin program: "Taking Care of Each Other's Spirit" and men's program, Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin: I am a Kind Man program, both offered at Atlohsa Family Services. Kanawayhitowin is a program that helps provide a mentorship amongst women but also helps them identify safety issues, things related to selfcare, and advice that might help them along their healing journey (Jackson). The Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin program sees men that are mandated by courts to attend and men who want to be involved by choice (Whiteye). Whiteye, who is the Program Coordinator, adds that there is a program for both males and females because there should always be a balance. He explained that both programs aim to help recognize signs of abuse and help people begin to understand that a lot of communities have become desensitized to violence because it has been going on for so long. Whiteye informs us that "many accept that that abuse and violence is just the way it is. And we have to let our men and women know that that's not right" (2018). The violence that Whiteye explains as normalized within Indigenous communities can be attributed to the impact of colonization. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls (2018, p. 38) has found that the impact of colonization and state policies (Canadian)—such as residential schools, the 60's Scoop, and the child welfare system—are underlying factors in the outcomes of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls today. Other literature that also confirms that violence within Indigenous communities is a result of colonization is The Native Women's Association of Canada's research, as they point out how colonization is not simply a strategy of

the past, but a reality that reinforces the silence surrounding the violence experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women today (2010, p.1).

The target audience for many of these programs that I researched were not limited to only women, as many program leaders addressed a need for balance. In particular, the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women projects looked to have balance within their initiatives.

Agowissa, Aboriginal Liaison Officer at the GSPS, added that while there are specific ceremonies such as an all women's sweat lodge, there are educational events open for males too.

Agowissa explained that this need for balance should be in everything people do: “We need everything in balance, we need our women to be healthy, but also our men to be healthy too (2018). Similarly, Elder Petahtegoose (2019) further expanded on the need for balance as he observes “there should be a balance of exposure to learning, this helps to promote harmony in life.”

Working to educate the Indigenous youth is the Sharer of Knowledge, Pegahmagabow. Highlighted earlier, Pegahmagabow has many roles, one of them as the founding Director of the Teaching Lodge in Atikameksheng Anishinabek First Nation. Within this lodge, she uses education as a tool to help students become strong, healthy people (2019). Pegahmagabow informs us that the goal of the school is to:

“impact Anishinaabe overall health, of our families, of individuals, by offering to learn our language, having a rich culture and ceremony, and to have learned on the land. All of those things can contribute to a healthier Anishinaabe identity. So, the hope is to have strong identities, people who are connected and know right from childhood that they come from a strong knowledge base, a very valid knowledge base.”

We should understand from Pegameghabow's Teaching Lodge goals that Indigenous identity is being taught to create strong, healthy youth and is the first priority before all other learning can begin. The Teaching Lodge connects to the literature of Goudreau and Wabie (2013) as the authors found that the gap in health between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people today is a result of colonization, past historical trauma that takes form as "systemic racism, policies of assimilation, and cultural genocide"(Aboriginal Women's Initiative, p. 2). By building and operating the Teaching Lodge in her own territory in an Indigenous decolonized way, Pegahmagabow is reversing systemic racism, removing policies of assimilation, and promoting culture as a foundation of being. All these steps contribute to closing the gap in health between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

One topic that was acknowledged in the interviews and suggested for future education was the connection of Indigenous women and the land. Interviewees Pegahmagabow and Heidenheim referred to acts of colonizing the land, as similar to acts of violence against Indigenous women. Pegahmagabow shares:

"You know, I think a lot of the things that are happening to us as women is related to what is happening to the Earth. Lots of people are starting to make that connection now, I think Winona LaDuke first made that connection. I think when we start to work on our own health and have that strong relationship with the Earth and with Grandmother Moon and all of creation, we are strong."

Pegahmagabow observes that Indigenous women are connected to the land, and only when we can accept that Indigenous women are sacred such as is Mother Earth, then we can understand how important and sacred they both are. Earlier, in the review of literature, I noted that both Anderson (2006) and Cote-Meek (2014) also draw parallels of Indigenous women being equated

to the land.

Other targets for education are Indigenous women and girls who work in the sex trade, those who are survivors of human trafficking, and those who are at risk of being trafficked. Often, Indigenous women and girls are forced into situations or coping strategies that increase their vulnerability to violence, such as “hitchhiking, addictions, homelessness, prostitution and other sex work, gang involvement or abusive relationships” (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 16). Education for Indigenous women was evident in the interview with Jackson, the Indigenous Advocate and Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator with the Kanawayhitowin program. Jackson helps women who are at risk or are survivors of sexual exploitation. In the area of violence prevention, she invites guest speakers to come and talk in a sharing circle about self-esteem, worth, purpose, hope, belonging and meaning. Jackson asserts that:

“the idea behind prevention isn’t just talking about human trafficking, it is helping women understand that they are sacred, they have intuition, they have a spirit and how to trust that. It’s important to find out what’s really going on with these women to help build their self-worth, purpose, and strength. It is also to bring forward awareness of signs and indicators of predators. I help these women identify how social media is used to traffic young women and what is happening in our communities directly.”

Jackson’s comments show us that the core of helping people who are victims or are at risk of human-trafficking is to connect them to their spirit to build the way they see themselves, then she educates these women about how to identify warning signs and methods perpetrators use to abuse women. Jackson’s work with anti-human trafficking connects to the literature produced by Razack (2000), in which she discusses how an Indigenous woman working in the space of prostitution, unfortunately, could be brutally violated while white male settler

perpetrators receive little to no consequences. Since Razack suggested that justice and the law is not upheld, then Jackson's work in preventing Indigenous women and girls from being sexually exploited becomes more important in keeping them safe.

Lastly, within the interviews and through educational work that is done through various programs, events, projects, exhibits, tours, and workshops, people who attend are becoming woke¹⁰. Hickey sums this up by sharing:

“When a Canadian can realize how many thousands are gone and then think of the families that have been affected, which is many thousands of people. To see such great loss, then the Canadian can have an understanding for Indigenous Peoples' healing. It's not just us that is hurting. If someone has anger towards our efforts, they are also hurting; their reactions to it vary depending on who it is and what their thoughts are.”

Hickey's example of Canadians coming to know the truth about Indigenous peoples shows that the educational work that these leaders are doing is having a positive reaction in non-Indigenous Peoples becoming more understanding. Whiteye (2018) affirms the woke effect that Atlohsa programs have had on the general public:

“The See Me Tour has rippled to the Superintendents of Thames Valley District School Board and these people who are in charge will say “I didn't know that” and seeing the tears and emotions that are involved in learning these realities and coming to take part in learning through an Indigenous lens of history, it is an excellent platform to create awareness. This education has also rippled to the Middlesex Health Unit and they have now created the Unity Project. And this learning is not done in a way, by any means as “you did this” or guilting, it's about moving forward together”.

¹⁰ Woke: alert to injustice in society, especially racism. Emerging from the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013.

Whiteye reports that the Atlohsa programs have influenced policy makers who hold leadership positions within health and education, and they have taken what they have learned and put it into action. In Whiteye's efforts to have people learn the history and ongoing violence of Indigenous Peoples, he is fulfilling exactly what the Interim report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women suggests, that is: "shining a light on all the causes of violence, murders, and disappearances is a daunting task. We are exposing hard truths about the devastating impacts of colonization, racism, and sexism—aspects of Canada that many Canadians are reluctant to accept" (p. 1).

4.2.3 Oshkabewis Taking Care of Spirit Through Commemoration

"We honor you, who you are, your life is valued, your life is important" (Heidenheim, 2019).

This theme had 50 references within the interviews. In this section, this theme is two-fold, with Oshkabewis¹¹ referring to the leaders within the Indigenous community who work tirelessly to take care of the spirit of MMIWG help families heal and raise awareness. The second part is commemoration, which is the action of remembering and honoring the spirit of Indigenous women and girls who have lost their lives. This theme connects to the Jingle Dress Framework and the theme Oshkabewis, as both have similar objectives in raising awareness and healing. This theme answered the research aim number three: what traditional teachings or ways of being are being implemented to heal Indigenous Peoples or educate all people about MMIWG.

¹¹ Oshkabewis: a helper in Anishinaabemowin.

Vigils or commemorative events are held to “honour and remember Indigenous women’s lives, support grieving families, provide opportunities for healing and are movements for social change” (NWAC, 2014). Within Canada, the initiative by the NWAC sees a vigil being held for MMIWG on October 4th, called the Sisters In Spirit Vigil. The NWAC notes that a vigil can take many different forms including “balloon launches, community feasts, unity marches, moments of silence, candlelight vigils, gatherings at local parks, or prayer services” (2014). In this section we will see how these Helpers take care of the spirit of MMIWG.

One of the highest mentions in each interview made reference specifically about how to go about the work that these leaders do. There was a reference to “doing work in a good way” or “coming from that good place” in 10 of the 13 interviews. “In a good way” or “coming from that good place” is speaking to the standard of how these community leaders should interact with people. Simply put, it is doing the work with your heart and with respect. Agowissa, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer who assists with the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy, notes that issues such as MMIWG, working with families, and working with victims of violence, is sensitive work and it is complex, so it takes a special person to undertake the task.

“We hired the right person and it had to be authentic in their actions and how they carry themselves, because you are assisting families that have experienced a lot of trauma and they have been through some really terrible things. So you have to make sure that person is coming from that good place, and they have to be sincere their work, sincere in their words, and that they take their role very seriously. And that is what we found in our new Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator.”

Here we can understand that doing the work related to MMIWG and violence requires the

person who is filling that role to lead with their heart. Agowissa, a Police Officer with GSPS, exemplifies the characteristic of doing her work “in a good way,” as she understands the complexities of situations and how her actions can influence a person in need.

“In policing, we are often dealing with people on the worst day of their life, so when we think about an idea such as that, when you’re trying to help someone, they could have some of the most difficult hardships that they are trying to get through, so anything we can do to help them to take a healthier path, it might be small to them, but it is a positive step, and you never know where that could lead. These are small impacts that can have a ripple effect”.

Although Agowissa explains that she was in a supportive role to the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator for the Looking Ahead to Build the Future of Our Women Strategy and projects, she did share her direct influence in the program during the interview and it is evident that she spends many hours in her professional and personal life balancing her efforts towards awareness and violence prevention. She remarked that “a big number of projects I would try to fit into my schedule so that I could be there as well, but there are a lot and I have other duties to my role.” It is important to note these characteristics because being a helper or Oshkabewis of the people is a very important role in Anishinaabe culture.

Another Indigenous leader, Pegahmagabow, not only helps the people through sharing information but she also noted that women who attend ceremony are picking up those helping roles and learning to help others.

“But you can see it, you know after a Moon Ceremony, women may stop to talk and say “I need to talk to somebody, and I need some more help,” so when people are able to take that kind of a step, that is a really wonderful thing to see because they are trusting. They

are able to reach out and ask for more information, more help, some guidance, and if they don't ask us right away, they are asking each other. Women are also coming to ceremony with extra tobacco ties, feast bundles, or skirts for other women who are just learning."

We can conclude from this that ceremony also teaches people their roles as helpers and how to live life in a good way.

Also, doing things "in a good way" was settler-ally-student, Heidenheim, who co-created SOOS. Sincere care was evident in her actions and words in the process of making the exhibit with the families and remaining in contact with the families post exhibit. The exhibit itself embodied how to remember a loved one in a good way as it did not focus on how a loved one passed, but honored them, by showing the value and potential these women and girls had.

"It is a space where we are honoring the life and I think the point of the exhibit is saying these women are more than victims of violence, they are people who had a lot of potential and bright futures. Every family that we work with has a complicated story. Everyone is a survivor and so I think what we are really trying to say is: we understand your survivance and we honor it and you are who you are, we don't judge you based on what you've had to do."

Heidenheim shows through explaining the purpose of the exhibit and creating an alternative narrative to the negative portrayals within media that she truly cares for MMIWG and their families. She also makes an effort to ensure that she is working with families, and not blindly creating a commemorative exhibit on what she thinks as a settler, but is honoring the families' loved one(s). The other co-creator of SOOS, Meggie Cywink, and family member of Sonya Cywink, shared how she as a helper wanted to use culture and ceremony to help families heal.

“So we had this idea that we wanted and that was done in a very ceremonial way. We always acknowledged the land, we always did tobacco ties, we smudge; we had all the components that we felt were necessary in order to bring healing to the family and bring healing to the people that were involved in telling Sonya’s story. Then, it just evolved into Shades Of Our Sisters and was based on my brother, Alex, and I. It was based on a concept we had, because it was more about her life, as opposed to what happened to her.”

This statement shows that family members have their own ideas of how to heal from the trauma of losing a loved one and that remembering their loved one through culture and ceremony is healing. The exhibit is interactive and includes special objects such as videos, photographs, clothing, and journals. The family members themselves also attend to talk about their loved one. Both Cywink and Heidenheim are both Oshkaabewis as they help other family members and communities navigate their trauma and help them along their healing path.

Introducing the good life or Mino Bimaadiziwin is one of the first teachings that Sayer, the Director of Programs at Atlohsa, ensures her clients are introduced to help them on their healing journeys.

“I think it is important that as a team we take things slow with our clients and walk with them on their journey. We never enforce anything, we introduce them to Mino Bimaadiziwin, this good way of living, and we have seen a lot of success in that and we see a lot of women who have now kind of found who they are and they are sharing that with other women. That’s what motivates me, is my family, my family history, and I am hoping to somehow make a difference and provide hope and healing for people”.

This statement from Sayer tells us that Atlohsa programming staff are Oshkaabewis and listen to the client and share culture with them as a foundation of learning, and as time passes,

clients can help others on their healing paths.

Another example of a person who lives the Mino Bimaadiziwin way, and the only male I interviewed, Whiteye (2018) explains that he is able to provide tools that support the men in his program, and that he is a role model for living a healthy life. He noted that it is important for men to see other men making healthy choices and provide them with options outside of the “I Am a Kind Man” program to attend ceremony and continue a good path.

On the women’s side of programming Atlohosa, Jackson noted that her service to the people does not stop at facilitating circles or conducting our outreach. She also provides resources to clients related to wellness, mental health, and addiction. Jackson highlighted that she works closely with her coworkers to use their strengths to connect her clients with their needs. In her actions, Jackson is a Oshkabewis to her people.

Lastly, focusing on commemoration, the WWOS vamp installation was intended for families and the general public. Wabie (2019) informs us that the installation hoped to bring healing as “it may allow them [families] to feel a little bit of relief or love, from a piece of something that they have created for their family member and then as it is traveling the world and raising awareness for MMIW. That is powerful.” Within this program Wabie and the team that brought together the WWOS event are also helpers in commemorating the spirit of MMIW and helping families heal from their trauma.

In regard to healing, Tuhuwai-Smith (1999) asserts that Indigenous Peoples have everything we need: “We don’t need anyone else developing tools which will help us to come to terms with who we are. We can and will do this work. Real power lies with those who design the tools—it always as. This power is ours” (p.38) This display of healing power through commemoration was seen during the WWOS vamp installation, where the making of the vamps

engaged in “storytelling, thinking, mourning, healing, the showing of care, the passing of memory, and the expression of agency” (Anderson, 2016. p.91). These healing events and programs are “personal, intimate moments of learning, mourning, connecting, and perhaps beginning to heal, seem to be at the heart of the project” (p.94). Anderson (2016) noted that, events and projects that have been created through community building, protest, and activism, demonstrate forms of social togetherness, political agency, and the labor of healing can act as medicine (p.94).

4.2.4 Partnerships

This theme had 49 references. Partnerships in this section is defined as the work Indigenous groups do in collaboration with various levels of government, publicly funded institutions, other Indigenous groups, and people of all socio-economic status who work towards the advancement of Indigenous Peoples’ wellbeing. This theme answered research aim number two: identify ways that Indigenous leaders and Elders work with government institutions to contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples.

The first type of Partnership that was mentioned was partnerships with the government or government-affiliated institutions, such as police services. Agowissa explained that her position as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer within the GSPS in helping the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator, was co-created with N’Swakamok Friendship Center. She added that the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy’s projects created many other partnerships with multiple organizations. The most important partnership was with the Indigenous community itself and this relationship was made through the invitation of a yearly gathering. At these gatherings, they feast the project Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our

Women Strategy, and Agowissa comments that, in 2019, the invite to the community will again be shared “to feast the project and the spirit of the project and make sure we are doing that in that good way”. Also important to address is the number of Indigenous communities that attend the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy’s projects and what partnerships are made.

“We do get a lot of the urban Indigenous community, but yes, through the magic of social media we are able to put out a lot of posters, share events, and create event pages. We do end up getting a lot of surrounding areas from Manitoulin [Island] for a workshop. One of the highlights that we were able to do in November 2017, was the MMIWG conference and it had about 300 people from all over Ontario. They came from Walpole Island, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, people from down south, a wide variety of people and from all different social circles, services, and agencies. We also reserved free spots at the conference for family members of MMIWG and through the support of the Anishnawbek Nations, Rebecca Timms and her role, she was able to assist us to get family members from out of town to attend the conference.”

In this statement, it is evident that not only does the Looking Ahead to Build the Future of our Women Strategy reach local Anishinaabe Peoples, but also Indigenous Peoples from Southern Ontario and further north of N’Swakamok. This is important to note because family members are traveling hundreds of kilometers to seek healing or attend an event led by other Indigenous Peoples in partnership with non-Indigenous institutions. In addition to providing a list of Indigenous groups who attend the GSPS Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy, Agowissa also provided an extensive list of partnerships that the GSPS has made to create the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of our Women Program.

“The GSPS and N’Swakamok Friendship Center have many programs within there (Healthy Kids, Healing and Wellness, Wasa-Nabin, I Am a Kind Man, Aboriginal Family Court Worker, Aboriginal Court Worker, Cultural Resource and AKWE: GO), the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy, Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre, Aboriginal Peoples Alliance of Northern Ontario, Métis Nation of Ontario, Sudbury and District Health Unit, Sudbury Catholic District School Board, Rainbow District School Board, HSN Medicine Lodge, Za-geh-do-win Information Clearinghouse, Sudbury and Area Victim Services, Noah’s Hub. And the Indigenous Community in general, they always come and participate, especially when we have community consultations, they come and offer their voice to guide in what we were doing. Also, Laurentian University Indigenous Student Affairs, Cambrian College Wabnode Centre for Aboriginal Studies, and the Aboriginal Community Police Advisory Committee which consists of different members from the community.”

From reading this list, partnerships within the sectors of health, education, social services, and justice, are critical for the well-being of Indigenous women and girls. Adding to the theme of Partnerships, and explaining the improved relationship between Indigenous programs and the government Program Coordinator of Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin, Whiteye explains:

“There is a better relationship now between the government and programs like ours because it’s not a fad any more to be Indigenous, it is something that the non-Indigenous communities are starting to see that has been kept from us. This program works because when we allow men to connect to the spirit and connect to themselves and we see their behavior changes and they see their roles change.”

Here we see that Whiteye is observing changes in the value that the government has had with the Indigenous healing programming at Atlohsa, as it is now being supported.

Another approach to education and awareness of at Atlohsa programming is evident in the partnerships Jackson, the Anti-human Trafficking and Violence Prevention Coordinator, makes with public schools on Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewa First Nation, and Fanshawe College, in London, Ontario.

“I get out to our communities to connect with schools so that I can bring awareness to the youth. I connect with schools here in London as well. Awareness is such a key piece to the Okaadenige program. It can save a life.”

With this statement we can see that Jackson’s work is also doing outreach to Indigenous youth instead of waiting for them to be referred to her program. These partnerships with schools are critical in educating about human trafficking before it happens.

Pawley, the Cultural Justice Coordinator at Atlohsa Family Healing Services, also has a similar approach to her colleague, Jackson, as she also reaches out to social service providers and organizations. Pawley was able to partner with the Indigenous Services Department at the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) in London, Ontario. From there, Pawley described that she was able to get feedback from CAS on what their goals are in helping Indigenous families and how they can work together in the future.

“I did a presentation and we had an awesome discussion about the Justice program and they were just sharing with me how this is incredibly needed. So often, a big agency like that doesn’t have the resources that it takes to meet these clients where they are at. They are always looking for external support and to surround those clients with that support and help them continue on their journeys.”

Clearly then, Pawley is actively seeking partnerships in which she knows Indigenous peoples might need help on their healing journey and sharing with other organizations the importance of the Justice Circle facilitated at Atlohsa.

It is important to also highlight the grassroots programs such as WWOS, SOOS, and the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Teaching Lodge that were created by strong female Indigenous leaders. These organized events and programs do not rely on government support to operate and help heal people, rather they worked with their relations and other Nations. Altogether, the different programs and events saw a number of Partnerships starting with most important one being Indigenous communities and Nations, various levels of government, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.

4.2.5 Looking Towards the Future

Mentioned in every interview, Looking Towards the Future had 27 references and focuses on what the community leaders hope to see in the future for Indigenous women and girls. It also refers to the Anishinaabe teaching of making choices today that will positively affect the next seven generations to come. This theme can be seen as the thread that runs along the seams of the Jingle Dress as this theme was threaded throughout the interviews. I explained earlier that the thread represents the trauma of the community and families when women and girls go missing or are murdered. This theme answered the research aim number two: identify ways that Indigenous leaders and Elders work with government institutions to contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples.

Starting with the founding Director of the Teaching Lodge and the Sharer of Knowledge at Laurentian University, Pegahmagabow shared that she follows her teachings of thinking of the generations who are yet to come. She uses this teaching to continue the good work that she does.

“I am always reminded to continue to look back and remember the people who ahead of me worked so hard, and worked for my generation, and my parents' generation, and I need to keep reaching back to help other people connect when I can. Be a source of support and encouragement and we can be stronger as Nations and really pick up our work and restore our role on Turtle Island and globally also.”

Pegahmagabow's statement shows us that the future does not include only her living relatives, but also those spirits who are not yet born. We can learn from Pegahmagabow to also be more kind to one another by remembering the hard work our relatives and ancestors have already done to make our lives better. Also hoping for a better future for Indigenous women is Agowissa, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer for the GSPS, as she details her desire for Indigenous women to be valued.

“I would like to see a drastic change in the statistical levels of violence against Indigenous women. More education. I want our daughters to be strong and assertive without judgment from others. I want their voices to be heard as equally and as important when they grow up and through their adult years. I want our sons to be able to cry and be sensitive without judgment, equally. I want this issue to remain a priority in terms of ongoing support, education, proactive intervention, to assist Indigenous women and girls. We need permanent funding to support the work being done here in Sudbury.”

Here we can see that Agowissa not only wants a future of equality for Indigenous women and girls' voices, but also space for men and boys to connect to their emotions, without being judged. Agowissa also takes into consideration the role of the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator and the community feedback received as she commented that that funding needs to be continuous and ongoing to support Indigenous women.

Similarly to Agowissa's wish for continued support of Indigenous Peoples, the Shades of our Sisters co-creator, Cywink, wants to see more professionals who are trained to support Indigenous Peoples who are going through trauma related to MMIWG and beyond.

“I'm hoping to have more Indigenous trauma counselors, people that are really skilled and know how to work with individuals that have suffered that level of trauma.”

Cywink also remarked in her interview that there was a huge gap in support for Indigenous family members who have lost a loved one to violence and that their healing is unique and requires someone who understands their trauma to help them on their healing path. Cywink's suggestion for better culturally relevant health professionals supports Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski's report (2004) that mentions the need for Indigenous Peoples to heal from trauma. In the report, PTSD is linked to Indigenous historical trauma and the steps of healing are similar. The treatment usually has three principal components: 1) processing and coming to terms with the horrifying and overwhelming experience; 2) controlling and mastering physiological and biological stress reactions, and 3) re-establishing secure social connections and interpersonal efficacy. The difference for Indigenous peoples is that the trauma needs to be placed in the larger perspective of a person's "perspective" and must be inclusive to encompass all the interconnected elements of Aboriginal cultures and philosophies (p.78-79). This perspective is what Cywink wants to see in health professionals dealing with Indigenous traumas, and it is also what she has been able to provide to other survivors within the SOOS exhibit.

Building on the three steps for healing in the report by Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004), Hickey, the WWOS co-chair organizer, makes a connection to the first step in the report, "naming and defining the problem is the first step toward post-colonial recovery

and healing” (p.78). Hickey explained exactly what Indigenous voices will need to say in order to heal.

“We stand up and say, no look, you're going to listen and look at the truth, and you can't wear a blindfold or cover your eyes, you have to look. And people have to take responsibility and we will talk about this, and we will teach it to our youth, and this will never happen again. And because of our work, there is pressure on all levels of government to change the school curricula to speak it and to know it”.

Hickey's mention of speaking the truth through the WWOS art installation supports the advice on healing by Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski in their report (2004). Going back to the first step of healing: “The story must be told and told so loud that everybody will listen: Aboriginal people who were silenced and forgot how to remember; non-Aboriginal people who often know the Aboriginal world only from biased Western movies and text books; and government institutions who still have the power to decide on the fate of Indigenous people. The story must be told and discussed in a very public forum” (p.82).

A suggestion for continued education aimed towards young Indigenous women and girls on violence prevention to stop the cycle from continuing was also made by Cywink.

“A lot of people talk about Residential Schools, the impacts of residential, the 60's scoop, the Indian Act, all of that, and I am with that, yes it has impacted the missing and murdered, poverty, everything, is has all impacted it. But, if we do not start the work to educate young girls now, we will see the cycle what it is just in another 20 years.”

Cywink's request for preventative education now is for a safer future for Indigenous women and girls which also points to the work that Jackson does as the Advocacy Workers of the Kanawayhitowin and Okaadenige programs. Jackson uses culture as a foundation and

focuses on ending isolation women feel, emphasizes life skills and empowerment, and incorporates ongoing awareness-raising activities and safety planning. Simply put, Cywink wants to see more people like Jackson continuing to educate youth. Jackson, a woman, Indigenous, and a leader is what Knowledge Sharer and Director of the Teaching Lodge wants to see more of in the future. In the interview with Pegahmagabow she suggested that strong Indigenous female leaders need to keep being role models and using their voices to address injustice.

“We can strengthen ourselves and with support and encouragement of our female relatives and receive healthy support from our male relatives who are learning to better understand the importance of women, then we will be able to take care. We’re going to be able to even say to the media and say “you’re not portraying this mother, this granddaughter, this niece, in the best light possible.” The pictures they [media] choose are not the most flattering and it doesn’t show the woman as a bright light. I saw this recently, but, it showed her down at her worst or maybe at a low time and it wasn’t the whole truth. So, we will be able to dispel those myths better in the future.”

We can understand from Pegahmagabow’s statements that Indigenous female leaders are needed to counteract negative stereotypes that Indigenous women are not valued. From the non-Indigenous perspective, Settler, Heidenheim, explains the need for non-Indigenous peoples to listen to those Indigenous voices Pegahmagabow noted earlier. Heidenheim also listed that there needs to be land repatriation and creating space for Indigenous peoples so they can make important decisions for their own futures.

“I really just hope for centering of Indigenous perspectives, centering of Indigenous experiences. I think people talk about reconciliation, they do things which are largely performative and symbolic, but they don’t do things. They need to make important hires

like you need to hire Indigenous women and put them in positions of power and let them shape things. I mostly hope for what the families hoped for, which is the next generation to be free of violence. I also hope for land reconciliation. If the land is not returned we aren't committing to the meaning of the word reconciliation.”

Elder, Art Petahtegoose, wants Indigenous peoples to be safe anywhere, always:

“At any time, day, or night, that all people feel safe and secure in their own home! Be it in their bedroom or downtown Vancouver. That varying worldview will not be viewed as threats but as opportunities.”

Petahtegoose's hope for the future for all people is not asking for much, as safety is considered a basic human right in Canada.

Based on the interviews, the hopes and wants for the future from these Indigenous leaders include safety, taking care of each other, having strong female leaders, a narrative of a truthful history, better education in the form of violence prevention, culturally aware trauma counsellors, voices of Indigenous Peoples to be heard, space to be made for Indigenous peoples, and remembering the teaching of the next seven generations. I think the core message to take from these hopes for the future are simple: Indigenous Peoples have the right to Mino-Bimaadiziwin-- a good life. This connects to the literature review where I noted that Violence against Indigenous women is a human rights issue (Amnesty International, 2004, p.4). What is being asked for are basic human rights as outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and internationally. Indigenous peoples to have the right to live in freedom, peace, and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group (United Nations, 2008, p.5).

4.2.6 Families

The theme, Families, had 23 mentions in two interviews, with Cywink and Heidenheim. Families in this thesis refers to someone who is a relation to women or girls who have been murdered or are missing. There are many experiences that family members have from losing a loved one and their voices are often silenced in their healing journey. This theme is connected to the Jingle Dress Framework as the circle at the bottom of the dress. The circle represents the families, leaders, communities, and nations that try to protect and keep their women and girls safe from violence, hatred, and racism. This theme answered research aim number three: what traditional teachings or ways of being are being implemented if any to heal Indigenous peoples or educate all people about MMIWG?

Starting with the interview with Heidenheim, co-creator of SOOS, she points out that the gap in centering Indigenous voices is when dealing with their own trauma. Heidenheim, noted her conversation and interaction with the other co-creator and family member, Cywink.

“And we met Meggie she said ‘You know no one has ever asked us to sit down and talk about what Sonya was good at. Or asked, what did you love about Sonya? What was she like in the morning getting ready for school? Those nice details about her, no one has really asked us.’”

It is clear in this conversation that Heidenheim and Cywink had, that the focus is on healing and the healing was guided by the member of the family, as they were asked what they loved about their sister. The conversation was not about how she died, but how she lived, how she was loved, and what was lost. Cywink also adopted the process of centering families’ voices as they put together a SOOS exhibit.

“Our thing to heal is to include families in every aspect around missing and murdered, it

is vital to their well-being. You know it [SOOS] does impact families in unknown ways, sometimes good and sometimes bad. There can be a lot of guilt associated with that and there can be a sense of responsibility and sometimes children pick up the mantle and become advocates and sometimes they don't because they can't process, they can't because they don't really know her, just a distant memory. Then my sister was murdered three years later. It is interesting I was just thinking about this last week, but, because my sister was pregnant as well, so I have 125 years of loss. If you think about my sister and her child, so that would be 48 years, and then Melissa was 27 and then my great aunt was 50. So it is a lot of loss. It really kind of hit me right between the eyes, thinking about that amount of loss, it's more than I had really realized. Before thinking about those numbers because I don't think Indigenous people were the types of people who think about loss in that way, in terms of years, but I think we think of loss in terms of experience, in terms of love, in terms of lost years, lost lifetime, and sharing a lifetime together.”

Cywink's thoughts on the importance of helping family members be their own voices for their healing is made clear through her own experiences as a family member. We can also learn from Cywink's statement that healing and trauma can be ongoing and can affect people in different ways.

From listening to families' needs, Heidenheim explained that families wanted to engage the youth and that was how the Feathers for Our Women Mobile was born. The Feather of Our Women Mobile was part of the SOOS art installation, in which the feathers were decorated with thoughtful notes by elementary schools and high school students across the country. Heidenheim received thousands of feathers from Indigenous Youth across Ontario. She remarked that the

“feathers visually represent the 1,200 [MMIWG]. They were beautiful and we worked

with a Cree artist named Waylen Goodwin, who lives here in Toronto now. He actually put backings on every feather and he designed a medicine wheel that sits in the center, then the feathers hang off the medicine wheel. This was born from the voices of family members.”

This quote tells us that when Indigenous families’ voices are centered, the opportunity to create moving pieces of art that connect to culture can be created. This is only one example of what can happen when Indigenous voices are valued and allies work together with families to use their gifts and help them on their healing path.

Further, Cywink asserted that there is a pattern of ignoring the wants and needs of a family member when creating commemorative events. She revealed that family members can come up with their own healing plan, all they need is support.

“And that families have to be able to speak for themselves. I'm done with the days when other people talk for families, we can talk for ourselves now. We have come a long way and a lot of families want to be able to speak for themselves. And so I think it is important to give them that platform and to empower families to tell them ‘you can do this’ or guide them or help them.”

We can appreciate Cywink’s way of taking control of her own healing path and refusing to let people speak for her. We can learn that speaking for family members, about their trauma, and how to help them cannot come from a person who has not experienced that unique trauma. Rather, we can help them learn what it is what they need in a loving way.

Another great project that was born from centering Indigenous families needs and wants was a tool kit for youth. Heidenheim shared within our interview that families stated:

“If you don’t teach the next generation about violence prevention, then what are you doing?”

She took that advice, we had at a two-day gathering at the end of October [2018] and together they started to design and create a toolkit (2018).

Within this theme, centering the families’ voices, remembering that people have their own agency for their healing path, and recognizing that families of MMIWG are going through a trauma were all mentioned throughout the interviews with Heidenheim and Cywink.

4.2.7 Art as a Medium for Healing

“WWOS allows the family member or their friend to still live on and have a voice even though they are missing or murdered, they are still worth something and they still have a voice and they deserve to be seen and heard” (Wabie, 2019).

With 16 references to Art as a Medium for Healing, this theme means using art as a medium of communication or for healing. The theme of Art as a Medium for Healing can be connected to the jingles on the Jingle Dress. I explained within the Jingle Dress Framework that the jingles on the dress are the people that bring healing who are artists and use their gifts to keep the communities strong through song, dance, and creation of visual art. These jingles in the dress are necessary for the healing of the people. This theme fits within research aim number one: how various programs/events contribute to the well-being of Indigenous communities and educate the non-Indigenous community on MMIWG?

The NWAC’s literature highlights that Indigenous programs that work to prevent violence to ensure that violence is not perpetuated within Indigenous communities and/or against Indigenous women and girls are most effective when focused on Indigenous culture and healing

(2010). Programs need to include physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs. It is suggested by the NWAC (2010, p. 32) that to end violence against Indigenous women and girls we need to focus on traditional ways of being. Although there were only 16 references to art as healing, it was part of most events or programs implemented by the Indigenous leaders I interviewed.

Pegahmagabow the Anishinaabe Knowledge Sharer at Laurentian University and the Director of the Teaching Lodge in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek First Nation uses Indigenous art as a medium of communication. At Laurentian University, Pegahmagabow teaches students how to sew ribbon skirts and other items as well as making handcrafts to assemble their sacred bundles. Holding ribbon skirt workshops at Laurentian University is a way to share information about the skirt and its importance, especially in ceremony, and how the skirt helps with the relationship with our mother¹². Workshops at Laurentian University include beading, moccasin making sessions, and bringing in different Elders with different skill sets to come in to share their knowledge. Pegahmagabow shares that the Elders are able to share about leather work and making feast bundle bags.

Similarly, Agowissa noted that the Looking Ahead to Build the Future of Our Women Strategy's project, Warrior Women, specifically focused on empowering women through the arts. She shared that “the women who were involved in the art project created face masks and paintings.” The act of creating art helped women express themselves and also portray their identity in a positive light. Another artistic expression that was represented in the programs and events was seen with the use of technology and the creation of the documentary of Sonya Cywink. Heidenheim, settler-ally and student at Ryerson University, and eight other students reached out to Meggie Cywink, sister of Sonya Cywink, to find out how her sister lived.

¹² It is Anishinabe culture to refer to the earth as our mother as the earth provides everything we need.

Heidenheim explains that the documentary was only 20 minutes long, but it focused on her life and all the good things that the family wanted to remember.

Another powerful, moving, and recurring instance during the SOOS event was the use of tobacco¹³ ties. When the public enters the interactive exhibit there is always a bowl of tobacco ties at the entrance. People would take these tobacco ties and sometimes offer it to the family member, but most of the time they would be left at a spot in the exhibit where a person had been moved. Cywink illustrates the impact the sacred medicines had on her:

“When it’s all closed and you look around, you’re surrounded by all these tobacco ties, it is amazing. You're surrounded by prayer, actually what I see and what I feel there”.

Cywink’s comments on the tobacco ties shows us how an expression of art, in this instance the exhibit, and the pairing of Indigenous culture, can have lasting impacts on family members and the non-Indigenous community.

Atlosha’s See Me Tour has also used art as a medium of communication and remembering the spirits of MMIWG. The art installation is an effort to draw awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) across Canada and was inspired by artist Sean Couchie’s piece, Broken Circle, that features gold birds to represent each missing and murdered woman and girl. The show raised awareness of MMIWG issues, and it also was a means to generate funding for Atlosha’s Indigenous programming. The second show added to Couchie’s installation and featured young, emerging artist, Tehatsistahawi Kennedy. The event saw the addition of 2000 gold birds representing MMIWG that were put on display. Pawley, who often takes people on the See Me Tour commented that there have been hundreds of people who

¹³ Tobacco is one of the four sacred medicines in Anishinaabe culture. One of its uses is for prayer.

have gone through the tour. Also with Atlohsa the Director of Programs, Sayer, shared that art also is used with clients to help them connect with their identity and strengthen their self-esteem.

“It is important to establish their gifts, being able to help them find their gifts, whether it is beading or singing, taking care of children, or taking care of one another, it is important to help people find their gifts. Sometimes when we are in crisis, or we have been hurt, or have been violated, we forget that good side of things, that good that we all carry within.”

We can learn from Sayer’s statement that the clients who are in Atlohsa often have experienced trauma and can forget to focus on positive aspect of themselves, such as creating art. Thus, Indigenous art helps them find something that they are good at and helps them focus on their gifts.

Lastly, the WWOS vamp art installation brings together families who have suffered and continue to suffer from the loss of a loved one. Collectively, and through volunteer efforts, this art installation is powerful and it has brought together thousands of Indigenous Peoples. This art exhibit was made possible by Métis artist, Christi Belcourt, who created Walking With Our Sisters. The interviews with Hickey and Wabie illustrated the overwhelming support the art installation has received with the collection of over 1,800 vamps. In June of 2012, a general call was issued on social media (Facebook) for people to create moccasin tops, also known as vamps. Harjo, Navarro, and Robertson (2018) noted in Keetsahnak, Our Missing and Murders Indigenous Sisters, that “The use of bead work in this memorial is significant because it renders visible the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the pain their families and loved ones endure, without putting their faces and bodies on display” (p.292). The call was answered from people of all ages, genders, and races (Walking With Our Sisters, 2019). Wabie

explained that over 1,800 vamps had been collected from the original call and when the vamps travel to each community they were treated as a bundle, “so it is really about ceremony.” In this statement from Wabie, we can see that at times art is ceremony and art is also a process for healing as seen in the high number of vamps that were received. Wabie emphasized the variety and meaning that went into the creation of many vamps:

“Sometimes it's beadwork. Other times it's like quills, moose tufting, I've seen one that was done with, almost like garbage bags. With garbage bags, it is like “we are not your trash type of thing, we are not disposable.”

Here we see that the vamps created includes messages of how Indigenous women should be viewed. Wabie described her feelings towards the vamps as she could see their meanings. They had the power to move and impact people in a special way. We can learn that Indigenous art in this statement is not only to share meaning, but it is also a unique way to communicate to the general public other than auditorily. Wabie also explained that the vamps can represent a MMIWG which also includes a two-spirited person: “And I think that in itself, you want to represent that person in a way that does them justice and in a respectful way.” This statement shows that this art installation is important for healing for the families to see and honor the spirit of their loved one.

4.2.8 Funding

Few participants made mention during the interviews about how their programs/events received funding, with 14 references. The teachings of the Jingle Dress I have received through my informal Education at Laurentian University, have not included any specific reference to the sleeves of the arms, but I wanted to add symbolism for the purpose of this research. For me, this

theme fits within the Jingle Dress Framework as the arm sleeves. The arm sleeves of the dress symbolize the the resistance of colonization of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and their efforts to maintain their culture and way of life. I thought that the grassroots organizers and leaders within government organizations are showing resistance to colonization by continuing to build programs and events that reflect the worldviews and needs of Indigenous Peoples. Not all of these programs or events are supported by the government as some are crowdfunded, organized by grassroots people who also created the events. Interestingly, this theme did not fit within the research aims, but emerged organically within information shared within the interviews.

The community feedback from Sudbury, Ontario, on the position of the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator at the GSPS, was that the position needs to be permanent. The community also said that the program Looking Ahead to Build the Future of Our Women Strategy needs to stay. There was a worry that there would be a loss of funding in that position (Agowissa, 2018). Agowissa explained that all the Looking Ahead to build the Spirit of our Women is funded by Justice Canada. It was not clear from the interview the duration of the funding for this program.

One way to maintain funding from the government was to show the amount of “reconciliations” that have been made through the Justice Circle program at Atlohsa. The progress or measurement of success is not always something that can be counted within this program but Pawley noted that recording the number of “reconciliations” and what that looks like is up to the Indigenous Peoples. In the Justice Circle at Atlohsa for example, it is a success if they can get a couple to come together and speak in circle. In this statement we can see that simply creating a healthy relationship in coming together and speaking truth and honesty is a

success, even if that couple decides they do not want to be together (Pawley).

Grassroots events such as WWOS (Sudbury, Ontario) which is guided by Indigenous leaders and Grandmothers, have to be creative in their fundraising to bring these events and programs to the people (Walking With Our Sisters, 2019). Other grassroots events' expenses such as SOOS are sometimes covered entirely by family members or through the Nations Band. Cywink described that the SOOS exhibit receives many. People do not understand that the installation and travel of the exhibit is approximately \$5,000-\$8,000 for one installation. The reason it is so costly, is because of the deep cultural component and the efforts made in taking care of the families. Cywink explained that the payment for the Elders to do the opening and closing, to have drummers, as well as food, accommodation, and travel for the families, all contribute to the high cost of the installation. One can see that healing and education in an Indigenous manner, with the inclusion of culture, and when being done properly, can very expensive.

To build healthy Anishinaabeg Peoples, Pegahmagabow, Knowledge Sharer and founding Director of the Teaching Lodge, sources funding through the Ontario Arts Council, the Indigenous Culture Fund, the Laidlaw Foundation, the Crowder Mental Wellness Fund, Connected North, and donations. The Teaching Lodge does not have funding agreements directly with any government-First Nation, Provincial or Federal (Pegahmagabow).

With respect to funding, I was impressed by the events that were crowdfunded and mobilized through online media sharing. WWOS and SOOS, in particular, are not attached to any government organization. These two exhibits used culture as a foundation for healing and remembering their MMIWG spirits, centering families' voices and needs, as they are the ones who are most impacted by a loss. The motivation for healing, education, and remembering the

spirits of MMIWG is what brought together funds for WOOS and SOOS. The programs and events that were funded by the government had similar motivations for organizing their events, and their effects they had on Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous People were similarly impactful as outlined in the themes of Education, Culture, and Healing. Also within the theme Funding, it is important to consider what the implications of funding are and how funding plays a role in an organization. When funding is secured through government, it can influence the programming. Often, funds depend on how the program is operated, the duration of the program, how results will be shared, and how success is defined. These outside influences may change whose needs are being addressed, who is leading (Indigenous leaders and Elders) and how the programs or events operate. Nonetheless, funding is critical in mobilizing these events. Healing is urgent, as pointed out by co-organizer of SOOS Meggie Cywink. Another point that emerged in the theme, funding, was the difference that grassroots initiatives do not have to answer to anyone, whereas Pawley shared that her programs must report the number of reconciliations back to the organization that funds the Justice Circles at Atlohsa Family Healing Services. This is interesting for two reasons, 1.) reporting takes time which could be used in other areas; 2.) there needs to be a form of measuring successes that is approved by the funders which can take away from Indigenous voices, what they see as healing, and it can shift to becoming what an outsider finds appropriate as a measurement of success.

To sum up this section, eight themes emerged from the information that I gathered. These themes were interwoven with the participant's quotes, linked to the Jingle Dress framework, connected to the literature reviewed and sewn together with my own insights.

Conclusion

These findings endorse that many Indigenous Peoples who organize these programs and events are unsung (her)oes. While the National Inquiry into MMIWG is currently underway, these (her)oes did not wait to help their Peoples stay safe, educate the public, and help their Peoples heal. Most of them female and Indigenous, embody what it means to be an Oshkaabewis and help their Peoples to heal from loss and continue to create strong, healthy communities. These (her)oes make helping their people a lifestyle, by committing their personal time, participating in community events, and doing all that they do with their heart and with love. The participants frequently mentioned that their events or way of interacting with others was always done in a “kind way.” The findings show that Indigenous events and programs are fueled by Indigenous women and men who are proud of who they are, proud of where they come from and love their Peoples. These (her)oes are able to use their gifts and find creative, thoughtful ways of improving the overall wellbeing for Indigenous Peoples.

Within the theme Culture, it was shown that each program and event used Indigenous culture as the foundation of their initiative: learning about individual identity, traditional roles, revitalizing language, incorporating Elders, and participating in ceremony. Interestingly, many Indigenous leaders noted that Indigenous peoples are already powerful (Pegahmagabow, Pawley, Whiteye, Agiwissa, and Sayer) and they explained that their roles are not to “empower” people, because they people already have power, but to help women, men, and children find their gifts using culture as a guide.

I learned that the (her)oes work and commitment to their peoples comes naturally as they use their gifts and their own personal time to facilitate these initiatives. Settler-Ally-Student, Heidenheim, shared a message about the spirit of MMIWG, saying, “We honor you, who you are, your life is valued, your life is important.” This quote helped me define the theme

Oshkabewis Taking Care of Spirit Through Commemoration and allowed me to see the role these leaders have in remembering the spirits of MMIWG. It is important for families, survivors, Indigenous communities, and the general population to see how these women, girls, and two-spirited Peoples are loved, and how exactly Indigenous peoples commemorate their loved ones. Many events offered interactive opportunities to engage with Anishinaabe or Haudenosaunee culture. Other outcomes of these programs and events include: non-Indigenous peoples understanding more about Indigenous Peoples' history; their challenges interacting with a settler society (becoming woke); education to the general public on MMIWG; the centering of Indigenous voices; honoring the spirit of a loved one; learning roles within the family to create healthy balanced relationships; conflict resolution; creating space for Elders; taking space in government institutions; securing funding; the education of youth on safety and sex trafficking; empathy training of the GSPS police officers; connecting to land; following guidance of Grandmothers; following Anishinaabe protocol; participating in ceremony; identity revitalization; addressing trauma; partnering with Settler Allies; the creation of art for the purpose of self expression, remembering, or healing; and creating partnerships with various other organizations. Altogether, these programs have shown that there are no limits in how powerful Indigenous leaders can be when they know their strength and use their voices for change.

Partnerships with government organizations can be beneficial to improving relations with Indigenous communities, but at the same time, they must be led by Indigenous Peoples. I was very impressed, in particular, with the commitment of the GSPS and the effort that the Aboriginal Liaison Officer and the Aboriginal Women Violence Prevention Coordinator put in organizing the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit our Women Strategy's projects. It is also important to note that the GSPS and N'Swakamok Looking Ahead Program to Build the Future

of our Women Strategy is led by two strong, Anishinaabe women, who do their work with their hearts. From what I have researched online, no other Police Service in Ontario has this level of engagement with the Indigenous community or centering of Indigenous voices in asking them what it is they need for healing and safety of their Peoples. The GSPS then takes that step further by hiring Indigenous women to carry out the community's vision for better relations and helping to keep Indigenous women safe. I believe the GSPS can serve as a model for Indigenous/Police relations for other Police Services, such as the Thunder Bay Police Services, whose institution was found by Ontario's Police Watchdog to be systemically racist and harmful towards Indigenous Peoples (The Star, 2018).

Sometimes it can be hard to see an Indigenous hero when there is constant loss, suffering, and injustice against Indigenous Peoples. And while it is important to know the truth about loss and injustice, it is also critical to notice the exceptional work that Indigenous leaders commit their lives work to in facilitating these much-needed programs. Even small acts of kindness, such as listening or being empathetic, can have a big impact. It is clear that the amount of work collectively and individually that these (her)oes do every single day is for the betterment of Indigenous People's well-being.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to get to know the 13 (her)oes and learn about their ongoing initiatives, where they have come from, and their hopes for the future. Personally, I will be forever inspired by their words and I am committed to sharing the good work they do.

4.3 Role as a Researcher

As an Indigenous researcher, I understand that there has to be reciprocity within the relationship in order for it to be balanced and healthy. I aimed to be reciprocal by valuing the input of the participants' voices, providing them with thoughtful gifts for their time, and keeping

in touch with them throughout this process through email, in-person visits, and by telephone. Learning from Toulouse (2012), I know it is important to acknowledge that what I am learning as a researcher is not for personal advancement, but rather for Indigenous advancement. The methodology and methods used in my research reflect Indigenous People's goals to produce research that reflects their worldview which adds to scholarly discourse relating to Indigenous healing methods, commemoration, and women empowerment.

This research has been emotionally challenging in both positive and negative ways. It was very difficult for me to be immersed in information relating to colonization and ongoing acts of contemporary colonization when completing my literature review. As an insider within this research, it was easy for me to make connections of colonization to my own life, my family, and to see the implications on the Indigenous community as a whole. I was moved to tears many times and had to take breaks from the literature and seek my own methods of healing to get through that difficult period.

The interviews and writing process were positive and motivating experiences that instilled in me a strong sense of admiration and pride. These feelings came from learning about all the amazing work these leaders--or as I like to call them, (her)oes--do. I was moved by their level of commitment not only in their professional lives but also in their personal lives, connecting to their culture and helping others find that connection too.

Ultimately, I would hope that through this research, better relationships will begin to form between Indigenous Peoples and the non-Indigenous population through ongoing recognition of history and moving towards healing. I would like to conclude this thesis by noting that although there has been a significant amount of violence against Indigenous Peoples and more specifically, Indigenous women, girls, and two spirited Peoples, there is an even greater

amount of resilience in the face of adversity, retention of culture, resurgence of culture, and resistance led by Elders, Indigenous community leaders, and Allies that continue to keep Indigenous women and girls safe. I have learned through this thesis that the resilience of Indigenous women cannot be broken and I believe that with time and effort, and enormous amounts of education, people will begin to value Indigenous women the way they are meant to be. The Native Women's Association of Canada explains that "ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls lies with both men and women, with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. It ends with recognition, responsibility, and cooperation. Violence against women ends with restoring the sacred position of Aboriginal women as teachers, healers and givers of life" (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010, p. 39-40). So it is up to everyone to stop the violence against MMIWG.

4.4 Suggestions for Future Study

This research has the potential to reach Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to assist with understanding and implementing community programs and events that prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited Peoples. With this compiled list of programs and the various outcomes they provide, strategies can be developed for various government institutions (schools, police departments, health units) who aim to build better relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and contribute to the well-being of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited Peoples.

This research was very broad in its focus of the eight programs and events. I think that I could have focused on one program such as the Looking Ahead Projects to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy by GSPS and N'Swakamok Friendship Center and focused on their community building strategies and how they improve relations with Indigenous communities and

its members. From the findings and interview with Police Officer Agowissa, I believe that GSPS could be a model for other police services, such as the Thunder Bay Police Service, to enhance their relations with Indigenous communities.

The key themes and findings that have emerged within this research can contribute to the scholarly articles on violence prevention, education of MMIWG, and healing programs. Relationship building between the scholarly community and Indigenous organizations can also be made through this research. With this new information, strategies can be developed to support and strengthen reconciliation strategies for First Nations and non-Indigenous relations. This research has the potential to contribute to research gaps related to MMIWG2S, Indigenous women empowerment, and the role Indigenous art and culture has within Indigenous healing. More broadly, this thesis has the potential to engage Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in developing cross-sector approaches to reconciliation and to transform the role Elders, family members, and Indigenous community leaders have in using their gifts to organize healing programs and to educate their Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, the research can be a tool that can inform policymakers, educators, media, non-government organizations, and other groups that wish to keep Indigenous women and girls safe and honour their spirits.

4.5 Key Assumptions and Limitations

The limitation of this research is that it represents a small number of First Nations Peoples who are Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. The research does not directly represent Inuit or Métis Peoples. Having noted this, it is important to say that this was a qualitative research study that was guided by an Indigenous methodology and methods. Qualitative research is not meant to be representative, it is meant to provide a depth of understanding (Braun, & Clarke,

2006). In this regard, the interviews with eight people working in programs is enough to give a depth of understanding.

Mentioned by only two participants, Wabie and Cywink, included Two-Spirited (2S) Peoples as an aim for honoring and remembering and was also brought up alongside honoring and remembering Indigenous women and girls. The National Inquiry's findings will include the loss and violence against 2SLGBTQQIA (two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and ally) individuals. This is a limitation as the research only focuses on Indigenous women and girls. When applicable, I included 2S Peoples when the participants shared that group of Peoples within their interviews.

There are many key assumptions within this literature that range from my own personal thoughts to the actions of others. I cannot assume that each research participant will see themselves as a community leader or identify themselves in that way. Rather, they may assert their work or involvement as a communal action or fulfilling an inherent role to use their gifts to help others. I cannot assume that each Indigenous community event, project or program has been influenced or has the involvement of an Indigenous Elder. I cannot assume that each participant has knowledge of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, or two-spirited Peoples, although they may be working towards spreading awareness or administering programming. I cannot assume that each Elder or Indigenous person I encounter would accept or expect an offering of tobacco before the knowledge exchange begins. To avoid the conflict, I have asked how people in their community provide reciprocity to their Elders and/or community members (ex. blanket, food, honorarium).

There were several research barriers with Laurentian University's Research Ethics Committee (REB) that I foreshadowed happening. Understanding that not all researchers are

familiar with Indigenous research methods or cultural protocol, I assumed there would be barriers with the timeliness of the REB approval of my application. I could not control whether the REB agrees with my method of identifying the participants (with participant permission) because Indigenous Peoples are considered a “vulnerable population.” I worked through this by citing within the application that identifying teachers and knowledge sharers is a cultural protocol: “The principle of maintaining relations with the knower (research participants) should be upheld by revealing research participants names where they give approval” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 123).

I also could not control if the REB was not educated on Indigenous methods, such as the cultural practice of asking an Elder or community member knowledge keeper for information or knowledge by offering, tobacco (a sacred medicine), a gift, such as a blanket, food, or providing the participant with an honorarium. I worked through this potential barrier by citing that the gift giving of these items is necessary as a form of Indigenous cultural protocol. I also highlighted that more recently, the National Inquiry of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls provided thoughtful gifts of medicines to show the reciprocity for the families’ time. My initial application to Laurentian University's REB was submitted in July, 2018 and was requested to be expedited. It took four months for the research to be approved, in October, 2018. Other factors that may have contributed to the length of time for the approval include: obtaining written permission to work with organizations, specifically, the GPSP, and also, the month I submitted an application was during the summer semester when many members of the REB take their holidays.

I am unaware if the Laurentian University REB had an Indigenous person on their ethics board, but I would suggest this be mandatory when evaluating Indigenous students’ applications.

This could ensure that the students' world view is not being judged by a non-Indigenous person and this could also potentially cut the length of time and money spent waiting for an approval.

The above-listed barriers in research would interfere with the research being Indigenous in its methods and would not allow the primary researcher to carry out the aimed relationship of reciprocity, respect, and relationality that Indigenous cultures require. Indigenous scholar Wilson notes that the three R's: Respect, Reciprocity, and Relationality, guide the research and must be followed by the researcher. As described by Wilson (2008), Respect is more than just saying "please" and "thank you." Respect means that you listen intently to others' ideas, and that you do not insist that your ideas prevail. A great example of gifts of reciprocity in research and truth-seeking is currently taking place with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada. The National Inquiry notes that they give gifts to "symbolize the relationship we hope to maintain between the National Inquiry and the people who share their truth with us" (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018). The Inquiry goes on to highlight the importance of reciprocity as a mutual exchange of benefits or privileges. "The stories people share with us are gifts that will meaningfully help the National Inquiry. They should be acknowledged, respected, and treated as such. For Inuit, the National Inquiry is gifting suputi (Arctic cotton) and mamaittuquti (Labrador tea). The gift for Métis and First Nations participants is four different types of seeds. Depending on the region: Strawberry, White Sage, Blue Aster, Forget-me-nots, Fireweed, and White Yarrow (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018).

Similarly to Wilson's three R's, Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai-Smith lists three key factors for decolonizing research from her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*. First, the research

within Indigenous communities must be formed by Aboriginal people themselves. Secondly, the research must be based on ethical knowledge(s) and procedures which locate the protocols of working with Aboriginal peoples themselves. Lastly, the research must be approached with integrity and fidelity to this knowledge(s) procedures and protocols” (1999, p. 54). The last point again highlights the importance that the research must demonstrate continuing support, honor, Indigenous knowledge(s) procedures and protocols.

Coming full circle, my hopes for the future for Indigenous women and girls on Turtle Island and globally, is a combination of actions that will need to be done over many years to see change. My main hope is that all people come to know and understand the power of women, not only are they able to bring life into this world, but they also have the gifts to be strong leaders in their families and their communities. I want to see Indigenous girls who are proud to have their Moontime, to know the gift in becoming a women, and to understand their sacred relationship to the land. I want Indigenous women to know who they are in relation to their Peoples and to be able to use that voice to silence stereotypes in the media. I want to see more Indigenous women in non-Indigenous institutions leading and bringing their culture into their workplaces and spaces without being questioned for their way of being. I want Indigenous women and girls to attend educational institutions and not have to feel like they need to conform to a Western academia. I want to see more partnerships creating effective programming for Indigenous women as seen with the Looking Ahead to Build the Spirit of Our Women Strategy. I want young girls to look up at billboards and see Indigenous (her)oes and not another missing persons poster of an Indigenous women or girl. I want Indigenous girls to know and to have access to Grandmothers in their communities and to be able to approach them in a good way. Lastly, I want Indigenous

women and girls to be safe from harm, no matter what lifestyle they live, because everyone has a right to life and every human being has potential. I will end this thesis with an Image of the REDress, as it is not only about the MMIWG, it is also hope for the future.



Figure 6. REDress at Laurentian University (Kennedy, 2017).

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Poster for Program Leaders/Coordinators

Are you currently facilitating or have previously facilitated a program that aims at educating or preventing violence against Indigenous women or girls and empowers them?

I am a Master's student in the School of Indigenous Relations at Laurentian University. I am interested in researching the strategies that Indigenous community-based programs/ events use to educate people about violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Are you willing to share your experiences about your role and the program during a one-on-one individual interview?

The purpose of the research is to gather information about how Indigenous programs work towards educating and preventing violence as well as empowering women. The programs can be relation building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This will help to build a better understanding of how Indigenous community action programs help educate the public, revitalize traditional gender roles, culture and values, and how the relations between Indigenous people and the non-indigenous institutions (police services) are improved.

The interviews could take up to two hours of your time and will take place in the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Center at Laurentian University. For programs that are in London Ontario, the interviews will take place at Atlohosa Family Healing Services.

For more information please contact Michelle Kennedy.

Email: mz_kennedy@laurentian.ca

Poster for Elders

Are you involved with an Indigenous community-based program that prevents and educates the public on historical and current violence that affects Indigenous women and girls and empowers them?

I am a Master's student at the School of Indigenous Relations at Laurentian University. I am interested in researching the strategies that Indigenous community-based programs/ events use to educate people about violence against Indigenous women and girls..

Are you willing to share your experiences about your role and the program during a one-on-one individual interview?

The purpose of the research is to gather information about how Indigenous community-based programs/events work towards educating and preventing violence as well as empowering women. The programs can be relation building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This research will help to build a better understanding of how Indigenous community action programs help educate the public, revitalize traditional gender roles, culture and values, and how relations between Indigenous people and the non-indigenous institutions (police services) are improved.

The interviews could take up to two hours of your time and will take place in the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Center at Laurentian University. For programs that are in London Ontario, the interviews will take place at Atlohsa Native Family Healing Services.

For more information or further questions please contact Michelle Kennedy.
Email: mz_kennedy@laurentian.ca

Information Sheet/Informed Consent

Empowering Indigenous Women and Girls Through Community Action Programs and Events

I am seeking individuals who are involved with Indigenous community-based programs/events that contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous communities and educate the non-Indigenous community on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

PURPOSE:

Gather information about how Indigenous programs/events contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous communities and empower Indigenous women.

PROCESS:

- Your permission is required to share your experiences and perspectives about the program during a one-on-one an individual interview
- Your permission is required to audio record the interview. If you wish not to be audio recorded, then the interview can be transcribed, verbatim
- Your permission is required to have your name published on the final thesis project
- Your permission is required to publish your self-portrait with a paragraph of your leadership role
- All agreements, audio-recorded interviews, and transcribed interviews will be stored on an encrypted Google Drive account only accessible to the researcher and thesis supervisor
- Data will be kept indefinitely
- Your real or chosen name can be used
- The interview could take up to two hours
- The interview will take place in the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre at Laurentian University (Sudbury) and for programs that are in London Ontario, the interviews will take place at Atlohsa Native Family Healing Services,
- If at any time there is information that is given about you or someone that is at risk confidentiality cannot be held and the researcher may have a duty to report to the relevant authorities if a participant discloses any reasonable risk of abuse, neglect or harm to a child or threat to harm another person
- If at any time you would like to stop the interview you can withdraw at any time and any information that you have given will be destroyed
- A list of counseling services will be provided in case the participant feels distressed and wants to talk to a professional

RISK: The risks associated with this research will be minimal. Participants will only be asked to recall personal experiences during their time with the Indigenous event or program where they worked/volunteered. A list of counseling services will be provided in case the participant feels distressed and wants to talk to a professional.

BENEFIT: Participants will be able to share their stories and experiences about working with the organization/event. The public will be able to see what Indigenous role models and leaders

are doing within their community to keep it safe and promote healing. The participant's self-portrait will be shown during the thesis defense, this will encourage the empowerment of women, Indigenous leadership, and promote cultural teachings and traditions. If the participant chooses not to have their photo taken, they can still participate in the research and will not be excluded. I am aiming to seek information about knowledge and cultural mobilization as well as information on educating the public through social movements and empowerment strategies. Participants may gain enhanced knowledge about other programs and events that empower women through the summary of the research findings. Participants will have the option to have their name published on the research by contributing their journeys. If the participants wish to remain anonymous, they may still participate in research and remain anonymous (It is cultural practice for Indigenous Peoples to name who their stories are coming from, as a form of reference).

REMEMBER:

- Participation is completely voluntary: it is up to you
- Deciding to not participate or withdrawing during the process will not result in any negative repercussions
- Only the researcher and the thesis supervisors will have access to the data
- All results will be shared publicly and published in Laurentian University’s online database
- If you change your mind about participating you can let myself or my supervisor know and your information will be withdrawn

I have read, and agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name:

Print Name	Signature	Date
I consent to be audio-recorded		[] Initial
I would like to receive a summary of the research findings		[] Initial
I consent to have my photo taken and displayed		[] Initial
I consent to for my name to appear on the research findings		[] Initial

Witness Name:

Print Name	Signature	Date

If you have any questions please contact:
Michelle Kennedy

Email: mz_kennedy@laurentian.ca

Phone: 705-918-4669

Should you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact my thesis supervisor:

Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering

Phone: 1-800-461-4030 ext 5083 or Email: tmoekepickering@laurentian.ca

If you have any questions concerning the ethical conduct of this research, please contact:

Research Ethics Office

Laurentian University,

Sudbury Ontario

Telephone: 705-675-1151 * 3213 /* 2436

Toll Free: 1-800-461-4030 Email: ethics@laurentian.ca

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Elders

1. Please tell me about your role within this program or how you have contributed to these events/program
2. What sort of ceremonies or teachings, if any, have you implemented into this program?
3. Why is your work important for Indigenous women?
4. What do you hope to see in the future for Indigenous women and girls in Canada?

Interview Questions for Indigenous Leaders

1. Please share your role within this organization.
2. What are the events/programs you implement to empower Indigenous women?
3. What have been the impacts of your program?
4. Is healing involved in the program?
5. What has been the feedback from the community?
6. Why is empowering Indigenous women important?
7. Have there been any teachings included in this program?
8. How have Elders been included in this event/program, if any?
9. What do you hope to see in the future for Indigenous women and girls in Canada?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?