

**Yukon First Nations Youth Mental Wellness:
The Development of Culturally Appropriate Healing**

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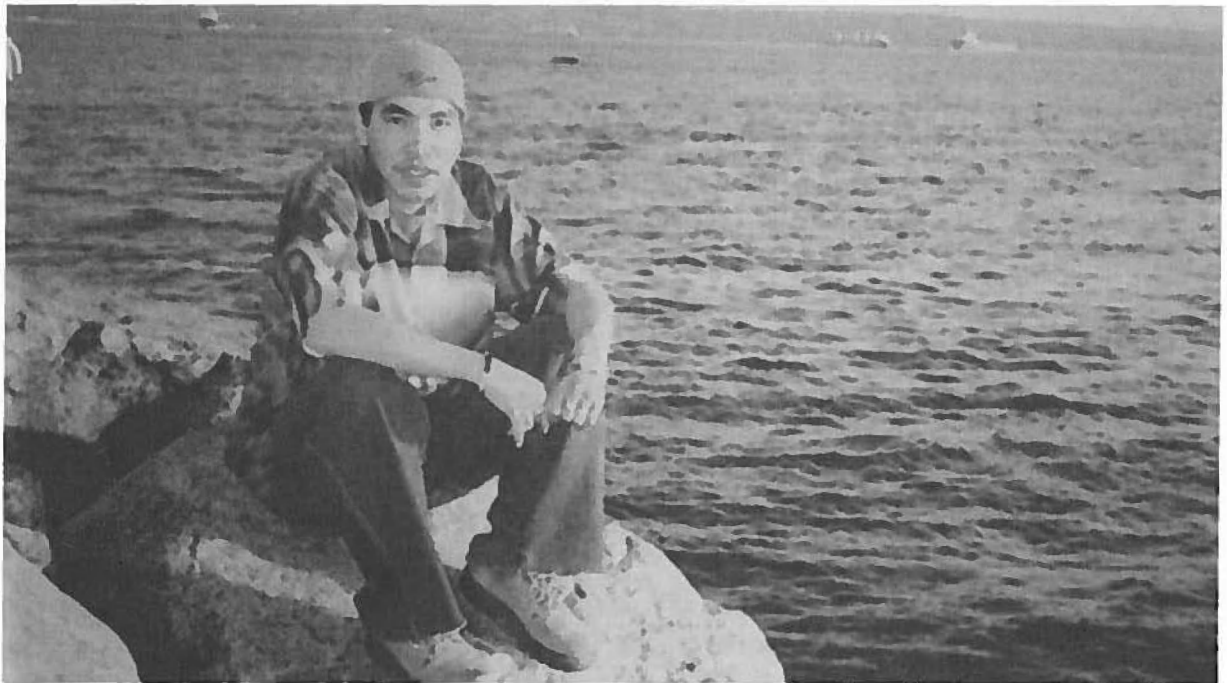
Dedication

For my late brother

Terry Wilson Carlick AKA Rock'n Terry Carlick

July 26th, 1982 ~ February 29th, 2004

Figure 1.



My brother Terry was kind hearted, he would do anything for anyone, he shared healthy advice to those who would listen, and he would love to put a smile on your face. Terry was a very spiritual soul, and though he is not here physically, he is still here more spiritually than ever, helping and looking after his son, family and friends.

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An exceptional thank you to all my research participants: Grandma Angel Carlick and Randall Tetlich (Elders); Winona Polson-Lahache and Andy Nieman (Service Providers); Lori Duncan (a Mom) and William Carlick (a Dad); Anonymous Uyinji Natsat /“She is Brave” (a Female Youth) and Isaiah Gilson (a Male Youth). My interview participants have made this thesis possible and I am forever thankful for your time, knowledge and support. Your words are invaluable, and your stories are important for the mental wellness of our people. I feel privileged and honoured to have your contribution to creating this thesis.

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demonstrates as a powerful reality that we are all rowing in unison for the betterment of our nation.

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Indigenous versus Western philosophies that pertain to treatment of mental health and wellbeing for Indigenous youth in the Yukon. This thesis is framed by two questions about the experience of identity for Yukon First Nations Youth: (1) How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in? And (2) What is the Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and Youth suicide prevention? It is pertinent that a distinction be made between what has been implemented in health care and seen as the social norm in terms of the Western use of power versus emphasis on spiritual truth. The words Spirituality and Healing are synonymous to Indigenous philosophies of wellness. There is a need for culturally appropriate healing approaches in the Yukon. This thesis focuses on solutions for the First Nations youth in the Yukon, as described by two Elders, two service providers, a mom and a dad, and the two youth that I talked to, thus taking a unique and insightful approach. The questions they were asked have identified how these people view youth developing and sustaining their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

“Aboriginal youth want to be the solution, not the problem. Healing youth today will lead to their empowerment tomorrow. With empowerment, they will have the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual energy to help those around them: their peers, their parents, and their communities. The circle of wellness will grow.” (Wieman, 2006, p.1).

Background

I have chosen to write my Masters Thesis in the field of Yukon First Nations Youth Mental and Emotional and Spiritual Health. I chose this area of study because I am driven to help our Aboriginal Youth achieve greatness. Our Aboriginal Youth Mental/Emotional & Spiritual Wellness is an area I am wholeheartedly committed to through my family, my work and the aspirations I hold in my life. My First Nations family background, my education and employment and volunteer experiences influenced my decision to explore the topic of First Nations Youth Mental/Emotional and Spiritual Wellness in the Yukon.

My mom and dad are Kim and William Carlick and my grandparents are Rose and Frank Billy, and Angel and the late Wilson Carlick. I am of Southern Tutchone, Tlingit, Kaska and Tahltan descent. I grew up in Whitehorse and this is where I have a strong connection with my Southern Tutchone roots. The Southern Tutchone people follow a matrilineal clan system. The clan system consists of the Crow (Ts'urk'i) and Wolf (Agay) Clan. My mom Kim is Crow, so naturally I am Crow. I am born into my mom's Clan and follow her throughout my life, but I am also equally connected to my dad because his Wolf Clan helps me through life and is the other half of my social world. Therefore, I am also deeply connected to my dad's Kaska and Tahltan roots. I need both

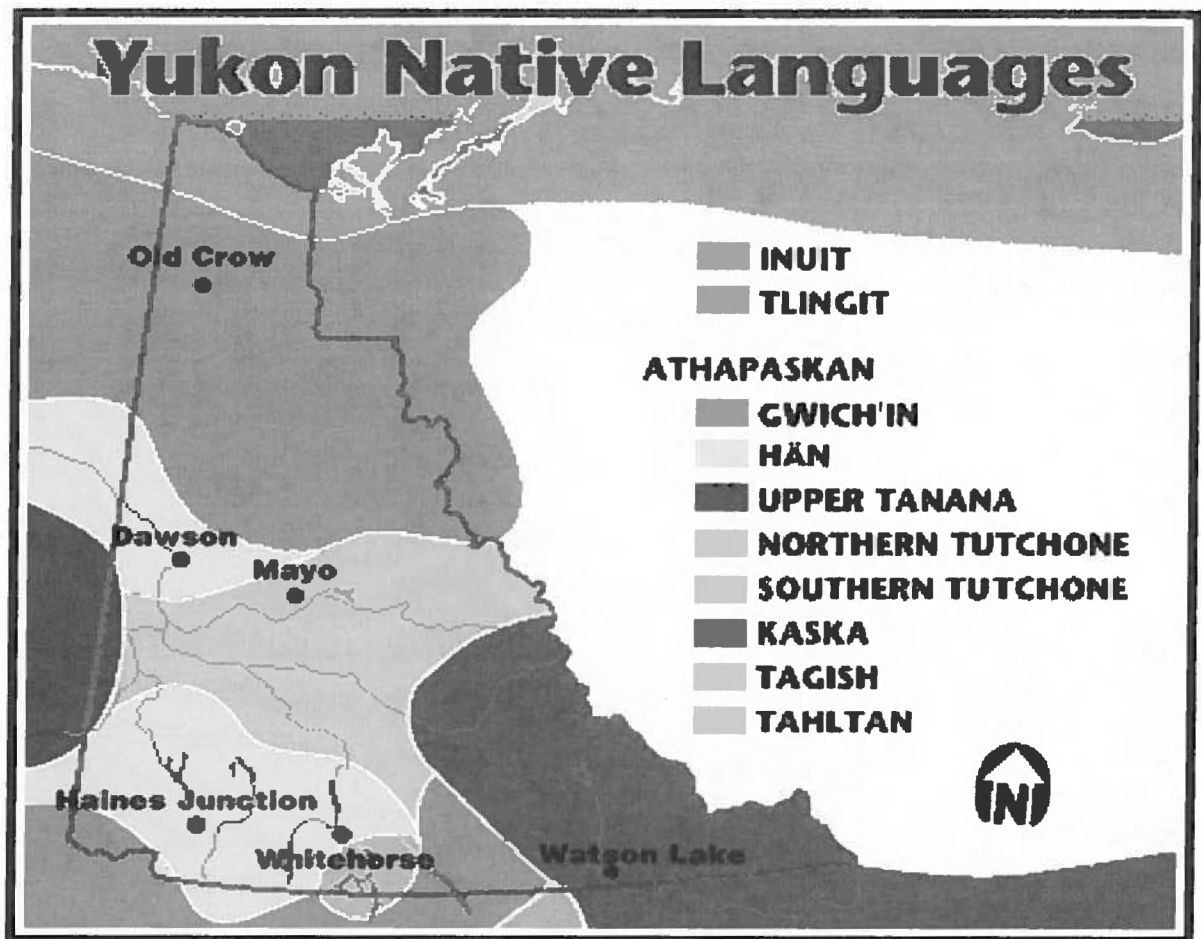
of my parents and Clans to make me whole. Wherever I go, I have my parent's people beside me. This is my identity and what helps me throughout life. I am thankful my parents taught me my kinship and raised me to know who I am, where my roots are, and how to connect to the Creator. It is what helps me climb the mountain in life in a healthy way. I strongly believe identity shapes individuals; if the youth look deep down into their hearts, they will truly understand who they are. Understanding the normative course of young peoples' social-cognitive development, coupled with an appreciation of the course of identity, strongly shapes a Youth's emerging sense of responsibility for their personal past and commitment to their future well-being. There is a strong connection between health and healing from mental/emotional health issues through the connection of identity. First Nations Youth who are taught their background, history and stories will understand and acknowledge their identity and they will be gifted with their power to journey in a healthier direction in life. If our First Nations Youth understand the issues of life and have a strong connection with who they are, they will be able to continue a life in a healthy direction.

I completed my Bachelor of Arts Degree in First Nations Studies at UNBC in December 2008 and graduated in May 2009. I enrolled in the First Nations Studies Master's Degree Program in January 2009. I knew I wanted to continue on with my education because as a young Aboriginal woman I am wholeheartedly inclined to make a difference for the better for my people. I thought it was a good idea to not take a break after completing my Bachelor requirements because I am eager for change and thought it would be good to have my Masters Degree at age 25. I never lost focus and I am committed to continuing to serve Aboriginal Youth's Mental/Emotional & Spiritual

Wellness in whatever capacity I am able. This leads me to the point in my post-secondary education: my goal is to contribute to Aboriginal Youth and their well-being as we need to keep rowing the boat in unison for the betterment of our people.

I realize that my interest in First Nations Youth Mental/Emotional & Spiritual Wellness began before I became a graduate student. I was raised in a home learning some of my Southern Tutchone and Kaska language, going hunting in the fall, ptarmigan hunting on the quad with my brother, watching my grandma, mom and aunties as they cut up moose meat, attending ceremonies, while on the other hand attending a Westernized school and balancing my journey in the First Nations and Western world. I was given the opportunity to progress in both worlds. The map below indicates the language and location for Yukon First Nations as there are many linguistic languages within the territory, the land I am from.

Figure 2.



There are many First Nations in the Yukon where I grew up. The many First Nations are: Carcross Tagish First Nation in Carcross, Champagne and Aishihik First Nation in Haines Junction; Kluane First Nation in Burwash; Kwanlin Dun First Nation in Whitehorse; Liard First Nation in Watson Lake; Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in Carmacks; Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation in Mayo; Ross River Dena Council in Ross River; Selkirk First Nation in Pelly Crossing; Ta'an Kwach'an Council in Whitehorse; Teslin Tlingit Council in Teslin; Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation in Dawson City; Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in Old Crow; and White River First Nation in Beaver Creek.

According to the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association (YFNTA, 2010), the Yukon

First Nations have occupied the land since Crow made the world. The people belong to the Athapaskan and Tlingit language families.

Yukon First Nations peoples have either settled their land claims or are in that process. Yukon Land Claims were initiated through the coming of the outsiders. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 required treaties with Aboriginal people of Canada; however, treaties were never signed between Yukon First Nations and the Canadian Federal Government (YFNTA, 2010). The Yukon land claims process was first initiated in 1973 when Yukon First Nations leaders, headed by Elijah Smith, presented the Government of Canada with the document “Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow” (Government of Yukon, 2010). This document states the Yukon First Nations intentions to protect their culture and develop economic opportunities for future generations. In 1993, twenty years after the document was submitted to the Government of Canada, the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) was signed and this agreement helped the process of modern-day treaties for all Yukon First Nations (Government of Yukon, 2010). Most Yukon First Nations have settled their land claims, but there are three First Nations land settlements remaining to be finalized. The agreements recognize the interests and rights of the Yukon First Nation and help protect our land and resources, and provide the First Nations with 16 000 square miles of land, financial compensation, and a role in managing natural and heritage resources in the Yukon (YFNTA, 2010). Yukon First Nations self-government agreements provide more legal control over the management of First Nations affairs and land than existed before. The agreements are historic milestones and guide the Yukon economic, political and social development.

I belong to the Kwanlin Dun First Nation which is the largest Yukon First Nation. We signed our Final Agreements and Self-Governing Agreements, recognized as part of Canada's constitution, and it came into effect as of April 1, 2005. The Kwanlin Dun land claims agreement was initiated because the traditional territory is in the heart of the Yukon's capital and economic area, the City of Whitehorse and about 75 percent of the Yukon's population lives within Kwanlin Dun's traditional territory (Kwanlin Dun First Nation, 2010). Kwanlin means "running water through canyon" and the Kwanlin Dun First Nations have lived along the Chu Ninkwan (Yukon River) for generations. Kwanlin Dun First Nations live in the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dun (Kwanlin Dun First Nation, 2010, p. 1) but the Nation acknowledges the Tagish Kwan who are the original occupants of the lands within the traditional territory. The nation is linguistically affiliated with the Southern Tutchone Tribal Council. Kwanlin Dun includes people of Southern Tutchone, Tagish, and Tlingit descent. Most Kwanlin Dun First Nations occupy the Whitehorse area (Kwanlin Dun First Nation, 2010).

I was told that Yukon First Nations were introduced to a drastically new lifestyle during the gold rush and later by the creation of the Alaska Highway which was the economic and political institution that caused social, economic, and political changes among the First Nations (YFNTA, 2010). Angela Sidney shares in Julie Cruikshank's book (1990) *Life Lived Like a Story*, the story about the discovery of gold by Skookum Jim. Skookum Jim, otherwise known as James Mason (1856-1916), was "a Tagish man of the Dak l'a Weidi Clan who discovered gold on Bonanza Creek in 1897 leading to the great Klondike Gold Rush" (Skookum Jim, 2011, p. 1). "Skookum Jim was highly regarded by his people. Upon his death, Skookum Jim's fortune from the gold rush was

put in trust, and according to the terms of his will, the interest generated by the money was to be used to help obtain a better standard of health and education for Indian People in the Yukon” (Skookum Jim, 2011, p. 1). Skookum Jim’s discovery of gold held a very different meaning than the discovery of gold for non-First Nations. Angela Sidney shares how Skookum Jim was living in Dyea and he went to the bathroom outside, on his way back to his house he heard a noise

“Whoo...”-just like sand pouring down. So he stopped and listened. Here there was a ditch alongside the house where they dig up the sand and put it on the moss for roofing. That’s what they used, long time ago. So he went to the edge and he looked down. Sure enough there was a big frog- coast frogs are bigger than these frogs, you know. Long way from water, too, they said. Here it was trying to jump up and trying to get back but it fell down. Kept doing that, I don’t know how long. Gravel fell down with him- that’s what’s making the noise. Anyway, Skookum Jim saw it, so he looked around for a board. Here he found a board and he shoved it down that hole and then that frog crawled on that board. So Uncle Skookum Jim lifted it up. He lifted it up and carried it and took it down to the creek- There must be a creek there- this is Dyea. So anyway, he left it there. He let it go” (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 58).

Angela Sidney goes on to explain that a year later Skookum Jim was injured and became sick where he could not move anymore and one morning a frog was licking his sore place which woke him up. The mother who was taking care of Skookum Jim gave silk thread and beads to the frog and put swan down feathers all around him and took the frog down to the creek (Cruikshank, 1990). The feathers, beads and silk thread were payment for healing Skookum Jim; days later he began to heal and was better in no time (Cruikshank, 1990). Skookum Jim went to visit his mother in Carcross, and he camped halfway in a bush camp and dreamed of a nice-looking lady “just like shining, gold shining.” This lady gave Skookum Jim a walking stick and told Skookum Jim that he had saved her (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 61). “I was almost starving and I was just about going to die. And here you saved me one time. And I’m the one that saved you, too, when you were sick.

When you were sick, I saved you. I helped you. I medicine you. That's why you got better.' That's what that lady's supposed to tell him because he dreamed that" (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 61). The lady shared with him that he will find the end of the walking stick. "'Look this way,' she said, pointing to Atlin. 'Look this way.' He looks and sees just like a searchlight coming up. 'That not for you, though; that's for somebody else. You go down this way and you're going to have your luck, your walking stick' [indicating down the Yukon River]. That's what that lady is supposed to tell him" (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 61). A year later Skookum Jim forgot about the dream he had and that is when he went down the Yukon River. "He didn't think any more about it. Until he went down the river and found gold" (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 62). The story of how he found gold is deeply founded in our First Nations spiritual understanding or ontology. The Gold Rush and the Alaska Highway affected the Yukon First Nations in many different ways as it opened access to many Native communities for the first time and made new locations of settlement for other First Nations (YFNTA, 2010).

As previously stated, my traditional territory is in Whitehorse, the territory of the Kwanlin Dun First Nations and we share it with the Ta'an Kwach'an First Nations. In high school there was a trailer detached from the school that was a place for students who were struggling with the academic standards. They were given a place to receive help with their work. They were mostly First Nations students and my brother was one of them. My brother was an amazing man in the bush. He knew how to live off the land while also finding his heart in music. Western academia is not for all Aboriginal youth because their intelligence often lies elsewhere. Yet, we try to integrate the Westernized academia into our lives because that is how you survive in the non-First Nations world.

With that being said, I believe it is not a lack of intelligence that is preventing Aboriginal students from graduating from High School as compared to the rest of Canada but, rather, our people understand a world view that is reflective upon their own ways of knowing and being. Some paths are traditional and healthy, but sadly not all paths are.

My brother always said I had the brains in the family, he always said I was so smart, yet he was also smart and had the power to do all he can do and I looked up to him. Yes I did pass well academically, but he had talents that I valued and desired, such as his artwork, music, humbleness etc... He was so kind to everyone.

The Value of Native Spirituality and my Introduction to It

"Aboriginal youth are our future" – they are, but they are also our present." (Wieman, C. 2006, p. 1).

It is possible to link our First Nations youth to their future by helping them explore their identities, traditional knowledge, cultural practices, ceremonies and the healing within these knowledge(s) as one must understand the future by reflecting back to the past teachings. The past has led us here as Aboriginal or Indigenous youth giving us the opportunity for future possibilities. Sweat lodge ceremonies are available in the Yukon. Randall Tetlich is a spiritual healer from the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation who has spent many years conducting ceremonies for people in the Yukon. Randall has a sweat lodge in Whitehorse and travels around the Yukon and other provinces and territories to perform healing for people. He has taught other First Nations and helped them create their own ceremonies.

I am convinced that there needs to be a re-focus on cultural healing like that offered by Randall's sweat lodge ceremonies in order for First Nations Youth to heal. I

genuinely respect Indigenous Peoples' Spirituality and all of the Creator's creations as it helps me live a better life and guides me through life's challenges. The most challenging part of my journey was the loss of my older brother Terry. He was one of the greatest First Nations Disc Jockey's (DJs) for the Yukon First Nations radio station CHON FM. His loss encouraged me to make changes and to become more spiritual. This change prevented me from falling into depression. My brother was well respected and well known around the Yukon. He had a gift to help people; I watched as he introduced individuals to their First Nations spirituality and guided them in a healthier direction and away from depression and suicide.

My brother had done so much at the early age of 21 years old and he followed his journey by attending ceremonies and keeping a smile on his face. According to Atleo (2004) everyone has a place and purpose to live with a certain role to fulfill and every place and purpose in life demands appropriate teachings for fulfillment. He was my older brother and definitely took on the older brother role of caring for his younger sister. I applied to a university/college and was accepted, but did not attend. My brother was upset I didn't go to school and was willing to drive four hours to pick me up and take me to university in Nanaimo, British Columbia. I did not listen to him and regretted it afterwards. In January 2004, I moved to Fort Nelson, found a job and lived with my cousin Santana. During the Valentine's Day weekend my brother drove from Whitehorse to visit me and his cousins on this special day. We all had a great time together and it made me realize that I should be home in the Yukon with my family. I was planning on going back for a visit when I received the dreadful phone call that my brother died in a

motor vehicle accident. I became deeply depressed and did not understand how to live the rest of my life without my brother physically here.

There are people in the world who are clearly impaired, crash and fly out of their vehicles and survive because it was not their time to go. Of course time never stops for anyone, each and every one of us has an allotted time to live their physical life, some people die young, some die old, but the bottom line is that everyone has a set time in this physical world and when the Creator calls you, you must go. With that being said, it is imperative for each and every one of us to use our time wisely, grow, change in a good way, and honour our purpose in life. So, we all must live our lives, laugh and love what the Creator has given you, and help those who are struggling. Many of our First Nations Youth are struggling with mental/emotional illnesses and taking their own lives. It is never a good option for people to self-implode, but unfortunately, many of our First Nations Youth do take their own lives.

According to Elizabeth Gudrais (2011, p. 2) in the Harvard Magazine, “More people die by their own hand than by someone else’s” – suicide is more common than homicide (p. 2). “It’s a huge societal problem, a huge clinical problem, a huge research problem, and we know so little about it.” Also, “Suicide itself often follows months or years of impaired productivity and quality of life, of strained relations with family members, as a person struggles with mental-health issues such as anxiety, depression, or substance abuse” (Gudrais, 2011, p. 2). I know of people who made the choice to take their own lives, and others who are following the same pattern, but I believe that my purpose in life is to help in making changes for the betterment of our people. Our Nations are rising above the intergenerational trauma imposed on them years ago in Indian

residential school and now our Aboriginal/Indigenous/First Nations youth are the fastest growing population in Canada. Unfortunately, with the impact of colonization, our youth in Canada today, they are making choices to take their lives at an alarming rate. In order for our future leaders to regain Hope and Humbleness, we need to change the hearts and minds of the youth. We as Aboriginal people and as a collective have the responsibility to make the change a reality for stronger nations as the Creator had intended.

The Creator and my brother left behind a precious gift: my nephew Terence William was born on April 10, 2004. My brother lives on in his little man and I thank the Creator and my brother for giving us what we call his son-shine. Family is very important to Yukon First Nations, so everyone in the extended family has a role in raising the children on both sides of the family. We do not follow a nuclear family household system.

When someone passes away in the Yukon, there is literally a flood of support, people come to your house and stay with you until after the funeral. Terry, like me, is of the Crow clan, so the Wolf clan looked after my family. My brother died after 4am, and on a day that only happens every four years, and it was the year 2004, four is a sacred number. He was 21 years old and over \$21 thousand dollars was raised at his potlatch. This shows how well known and respected this young man was.

2004 was the worst year of my life. Losing my brother, I felt my world turned upside down and inside out. I looked at my brother's lifeless body and begged him to wake up so that his death was 'just a dream', I did not think life would ever be as happy without him physically here. Yes, that was the lowest time in my life. After losing such an important person in my life I needed help. I needed to understand the ways of Being,

Knowing, and Doing to survive the trauma. After losing my brother, my teacher, my best friend, I knew it was time for me to do something with my life, I needed to do what my brother desired for me to do, continue my education and keep living my identity while also balancing the two worlds.

Thankfully Randall Tetlichich put on sweat lodge ceremonies after my brother passed away because my family and I needed to attend ceremony. I needed to believe and know that my brother was in a good place. Since my brother took the spiritual path during his life, I wanted to follow and do everything my brother did so that one day we will meet again. I was taught that I represent my past, present and future, and in order to heal I need to know/confront/face/appreciate my past and present to deal with the present and future. They are not three separate periods, they are all connected and they are all me today. The path in life I choose to take is a way of doing and I utilize the environment for support to walk the path in order to know where I am going. I was taught that we are on our right path in life, we already set our path in life by making a deal with the Creator before we came to live this life, so we know where we are going, and it is living this life to our upmost potential because our purpose is already set out.

I owe thanks to my saviors' Randall Tetlichich and my parents Kim and William Carlick for helping me believe and lean on the Creator. Randall says "Sometimes we have to humble ourselves to grow. Many good people are leaving to a better place, we must be grateful that we were part of their lives." I learned to humble myself through ceremony. The Sweat Lodge Ceremony has taught me the power of spiritual medicines, drums, rattles, prints, songs, oral tradition, creation stories, and healing. The power of spirituality has taught me the power of prayer and believing in the Creator. The Creator,

including Grandmothers and Grandfathers is a way of life and it is the path I follow. I do not know my Spiritual Guides by name, but I do know they are with me and my people and I am grateful every day and night for their continuous love and support and the equilibrium that is achieved through my prayers.

My brother was dedicated to attending ceremonies with Randall and looked up to Randall. Terry appreciated the strength he was given by attending ceremony, but I was focused elsewhere. I decided to become more involved and in-tune with the spiritual world because that is the only way I knew how I would keep in contact with my brother, so I began to attend sweat lodge ceremonies with Randall, and I looked across to where my brother always sat. I prayed to see my brother, hear my brother again. I wanted his presence. It was the power of ceremony that helped me dream about Terry and helped me know that while my brother's journey was finished in the physical world, he was still with us spiritually and he left us his little gift, his son Terence Jr. Ceremony is powerful, it balanced my life, it gave me the trail to be successful in academics and to make change for our Aboriginal people because that is what my brother also desired. He wanted his people to persevere and be the greatest they can be. He wanted us to be the best in both worlds.

One of the things I did the year my brother passed on was move away to Prince George to attend the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) because I knew my brother wanted me to utilize my "intelligence." I chose UNBC because it was close to home and I had family and friends who already lived in Prince George. When I started attending UNBC in the fall of 2004, I majored in First Nations Studies. I was driven by academics. I came to understand and appreciate the power in me to be empowered by my

own educational progression as a young First Nations woman at the postsecondary level. I understood that choosing to pursue my education in First Nations Studies was not just a choice I made on my own, it was a choice the Creator, my brother and my helpers helped me make, it reflects the support and reassurance that I needed in order to establish my purpose in life. I am right where I am supposed to be.

The Creator called my brother's name, so I know that it was simply his time to go to the spirit world. Yet Western researchers, such as the one in the Harvard Magazine believe and say, "researchers believe accidental deaths are rightly considered related to suicide, because such deaths often reflect soldiers' mental health and indicate problems that accompany suicidal thinking and behavior" (Gudrais, 2011, p. 3). Also, exactly two years after my brother passed away, my cousin Joshua Behn passed away. What is paradoxical is that Josh passed away March 1, 2006, my brother passed away February 29th, 2004, so it is pretty much the same day. They were both in motor-vehicle accidents and were both very close growing up. Terry loved to do everything and anything with his cousin Josh. He was the leader of the crowd, an incredible person, and he had two amazing children with his love and partner Elizabeth. Josh lived his life to its fullest outdoors, hunting, quading, motor-biking, working in the bush, and above all caring for his family.

My Work with the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council

My passion for helping youth began in 2007 when I was asked to attend an Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council meeting in Halifax with my friend Mikah. The council conducts meetings and conference calls with representatives across Canada to share ideas and bring recommendations and/or solutions forward on youth

issues and to take back to our communities. The council is committed to being positive role models by advocating for First Nations youth. I was in turmoil that summer as the opportunity to travel across Canada to represent the Yukon at this meeting was also the same weekend as my Cousin Josh's headstone potlatch. If only I could have been in two places at once. Family is number one to me, but I ended up after some immense pondering going to the meeting in Nova Scotia. Attending the meeting in Halifax was the starting point for my involvement with working towards a better life for First Nations Youth because my work and research directly relates to Youth. I was the Yukon Representative for the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council (AFN NYC) from the summer of 2007 to the summer of 2010. Now I am the alternate Yukon representative for the AFN NYC. We are involved with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) through the Executive Committee, the Confederacy meeting, and the Annual General Assembly and Chief's Committee meetings. We support and work with regional youth initiatives and create positive working relationships with other National/International Youth Councils and act as a resource and representative at the community, territory, regional and national levels.

Each AFN Native Youth Council representative holds portfolios, and one of my portfolios was Education. I was in attendance at the Cultural Economic Political Social (CEPS) conference in Manitoba February 24th and 25th, 2010. CEPS balances the four aspects of the medicine wheel and I learned that CEPS was created by First Nations Youth for Youth as the four main components are necessary for leadership development among Aboriginal youth. CEPS has a curriculum developed to provide youth with necessary skills to become strong leaders for tomorrow.

Many Aboriginal Youth at the conference had taken CEPS training and many found that it revitalized and reconnected them to their culture as they were educated on the history of the first Indigenous peoples. CEPS Youth Leadership Development Training is unique because it focuses on the cultural identity of the individual. The youth are given the opportunity to examine who they are and they are given the chance to develop relationships with family, community, and their nation. I found that CEPS provides successful futures for Aboriginal Youth who are not doing well within the mainstream educational system. I was given the opportunity to hear what Aboriginal youth experienced who found they were not raised knowing their identity until their experience with CEPS; CEPS gave them the chance to experience sweat lodge ceremonies. Another young woman said she is proud to be Aboriginal because of CEPS, expounding further that it opened her eyes to participate in the ceremony; she and others learned the true history of Canada in terms of colonization and residential schools, and politics; it helped them develop good public speaking skills; they became passionate about youth programs; it made one feel important. This was the first time the participant achieved something she started, and was able to complete the entire training. CEPS is definitely a powerful training tool for Aboriginal Youth because I have seen firsthand that it teaches the young generations to continue on with pride and it keeps them away from negative influences and shows them how to balance their life in a positive way. I learned this when the youth themselves informed me of their healing journey developed from CEPS.

The CEPS and AFN experience was truly an honour. I was able to travel across Canada to attend meetings, was elected to the Executive position, so I sat at the Executive

table with the National Chief to conduct business for our people nationally, and learned all I could about First Nations politics. There are so many bright, super-intelligent youth across Canada who are making positive changes for Aboriginal people. It was being a part of the AFN NYC that I began pursuing the topic of First Nations Youth Mental Wellness and this is where I believe my research for this thesis began. According to Atleo (2004) everyone has a place and purpose to live with and a certain role to fulfill and every place and purpose in life demands appropriate teachings for fulfillment. I believe that I was desperately trying to understand the depths of the experience that Aboriginal people had in the past and still have today, nationally. The issues and challenges that I saw while growing up in the Yukon are experienced amongst many First Nations throughout the country.

I feel with the experience and knowledge I gained through the AFN NYC, I became better prepared to be a helper/teacher and an advocate for Aboriginal Youth regarding their mental/emotional and spiritual wellness. Ultimately, it became necessary for me to conduct this research and enable myself to explore and to develop by understanding my own history, and the impacts that Aboriginal people of Canada have faced through the legacy of colonialism. Such legacies were created by the residential school experience, poverty, social determinates of health, oppression, lower education and health disparities. These discourses continue to disrupt today's generation. Some of the unique challenges Aboriginal Youth face today are due to the fact that we live in a globalized society where cell phones, I-Pods, computer games, fast cars, and clothes are part of the discourses and create a discontinuation of cultural practices. The youth have become detached and co-opted by the global world. I realized this at UNBC and in the

general public, how uneducated people are about the land they live on, and First Nations way of life, politics, and practices. There is hope in seeing positive changes because non-Natives need to learn the history and dynamics of the land they live on.

I understand there is a huge gap when it comes to academics and actual hands on work when it comes to working with at-risk youth. What I learn in books and reading does help me understand, as laid out in the literature review in Chapter 3. But when I actually began to work with at-risk youth with mental health issues, I was smacked clear in the face with the reality that there needs to be better healing methods for our struggling First Nations youth.

First Nations Mental Wellness is a complex issue that has genetic, state –related, historical, environmental, and psychological and community factors. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1995) reveals that the “profile of mental disorders among Aboriginal people is primarily a by-product of our colonial past with its layered assaults on Aboriginal cultures and personal identities (Canadian Métis Heritage Corp Newsletter, 2007, p. 1).” The rate of suicide amongst First Nations population in Canada is considered an epidemic in some, but not in all communities. However, there is even greater concern about the high rate of suicide among Canadian First Nations, Inuit and Métis Youth because most suicides take place in this age group.

Aboriginal adolescent suicide in Canada is of epidemic proportions (Weir & Wallington, 2001). “Substantial research” has been conducted and a variety and combination of interventions have been implemented, but suicide rates continue to rise within this group (Centre for Disease Control, 2004; Cutcliffe, 2003, p.96; Health Canada, 2003, p. 96; Health Canada, 2003b; Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 2003). The traditional methods used to address suicide are inadequate and not specific to the Aboriginal population (Smith, 1999; Tatz, 1999).” (MacNeil, 2008, p. 1).

Yukon First Nations do not have a high rate of suicide which is one of the reasons I want to provide insight into the ways Yukon First Nations are helping their people refrain from suicide. On the other hand, many Yukon First Nations youth are suffering from the intergenerational trauma of residential school and represent a high rate of incarceration and are suffering with mental health issues; this demonstrates the need for culturally appropriate healing approaches.

The Legacy of Residential Schools

Canadian Aboriginal youth are suffering with mental health issues because of the ripple effect of Indian residential school. When Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the government for residential schools, the Council of Yukon First Nations set up Televisions within Yukon Hall. I found it ironic to watch the Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper (2008) apologize while I was sitting in a former government run school and sitting with my family, co-workers and many of the First Nations from the Yukon. Afterwards, I was able to sit and listen to what the former students had to say and then my dad went up to the microphone and I stood behind him in support for what he had to say. My dad is a strong man, he has gone through so much in his life and I am only now learning what his life was like, but I would not have known that as a child because my parents were ultimately the grandest parents who showed my brother and me nothing but love and support and stopped the ripple effect from abusing us.

It was not until the summer of 2009 that Yukon Hall was destroyed. Before it was destroyed the hall was smudged, people were given the opportunity to burn old memories in a sacred fire that was run by my dad outside the building and there was an

opportunity for healing to unfold within the building with stories, songs and messages to the youth. My dad had run the sacred fire and I believe it helped heal many Yukon First Nations people that day.

I find it hard to believe it only took a generation (my mom and dad's generation) to transform the future. I am unable to speak my language, but I try to learn words when I have the chance. My maternal Grandpa and paternal Grandma can speak their language, but none of their children are able to. Language plays a key role to identity and First Nations peoples who embrace their identity will ultimately refrain from passing on negative life situations. For example, I was raised in a healthy home where both my parents never drank or held any bad habits. I am truly blessed because I know that the ripple effect of Indian residential school is very much alive among Yukon First Nations. My dad made the choice to continue in a healthy way after spending many years in Indian residential school; unfortunately that is not the reality for many other survivors.

My mom's parents did attend residential school in the Yukon, but none of their children attended the school. I see that my grandma and grandpa still practice their cultural ways of life, hunting, fishing, and attending potlatch ceremonies and gatherings. Also, my grandparents are Christians and raised their children to know the biblical teachings and attended church growing up. They are an example of one of the ways people balance living in both worlds.

My dad's mom is a very strong Kaska woman, she did not attend Indian residential school, but most of her children did attend. My grandma knows her language, yet none of her children know the language fluently. Grandma Angel knows how to live out on the land and so do all her children because they were raised in the bush. One thing

I am confused about is the fact that she follows the Catholic belief system. Maybe because the influence of the Church was so strong back then, it was natural to follow instead of her own spirituality.

Something my parents kept secretly away from me was the fact that my dad did attend Indian residential school. This is normal for any parent who wants to safeguard their children from harm. While I journeyed through elementary and high school I was never given a chance to learn First Nations history. There was little time spent learning about First Nations history, other than a slight indication of Columbus meeting the “Indians.” The true history was left out. Luckily I was raised knowing my culture and way of life from my mom and dad’s family and the community, but I was not given historical information until I decided to major in First Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia. In taking First Nations 100, I was furious to learn about the Indian residential schools and then started to ask my family questions. After learning about Indian residential school, a lot of the mental health issues First Nations youth face today began to make more sense. This era is integral to learn about because it will help the general public understand and know why Aboriginal people are suffering today and help them to make proactive changes. Yet many students and citizens are clearly not educated to know and understand the real history of the land they live on, and the sad story of the inhumane practices of Residential Schools.

Research Questions, Objectives and Personal Perspective

The specific goal and objective I have in writing this Master’s thesis reflects upon my personal and professional dedication to improving the experience of First Nations Youth while they are growing up in the Indigenous and Western world.

My goal for this thesis is to help First Nations Youth, while providing useful research for the Mental Health professionals, parents and Youth in the urban and remote/rural communities of the Yukon. My thesis is going to be easily accessible and understandable so that people of all ages and backgrounds have an informative and interesting graduate paper to read to help them understand what makes for healthy Aboriginal youth.

My primary objective is to provide a useful thesis that will provide information on Culturally Appropriate Healing Approaches for Yukon First Nations, and inquire how and if integrating a sweat lodge ceremony and traditional healing centre will be different from the traditional method of helping First Nations Youth in existence in the Yukon Territory and how the people in the community will react to the option of attending a culturally sensitive healing centre and a sweat lodge ceremony. I have done this by:

1. Evaluating Western Mental Health versus First Nations approaches to healing and evaluating how and whether following a First Nations healing approach establishes a decline in the inclining rate of mental health issues among Aboriginal people in the Literature Review and through my interviews.
2. Presenting the problems associated with the current intergenerational trauma of Indian residential school experience among Yukon First Nations Youth and in many Canadian First Nations communities as stated within the Literature Review.
3. Examining examples of First Nations solutions to the epidemic of dysfunctionality associated with drugs and alcohol in First Nations communities and how and whether these solutions will be useful within the Yukon, addressing how it will

provide a unique healing experience for Yukon First Nations Youth. This will be explained within the Literature Review section.

4. Finally, I have integrated a local focus to the research and investigated how two people from the Yukon First Nation peoples in each of the categories of Elder, parent, youth and administrator/service provider think Yukon youth respond to culturally appropriate healing approaches and how else they know we can find solutions that will work for our Youth to heal and begin a healthy legacy for the future generations. This is presented in Chapter 4.

I hope my thesis will be a valuable tool for Yukon First Nations communities, the Yukon Mental Health workers and the general public in addressing the situation of First Nations Youth who are directly affected by high rates of mental un-health or mental health dysfunction in their communities. I have sought to show how the Yukon can find solutions through culturally appropriate healing approaches. Personally, I believe First Nations Youth need to be given the tools to balance the Western and First Nations worldviews and find healing by going back to a spiritual means of healing.

I interviewed eight people: Two Elders, one female and one male; Two Service Providers, one male and one female; Two Parents, a mom and dad; and Two Youth, one female and one male. I chose to interview both sexes from all generations because I found it is the right thing to do because it shows a balance between both genders. All but one are from the Yukon: I have selected a First Nations service provider from Ontario as an appropriate non-Yukon person whose opinions I want to put on paper.

Below are some of the questions that form the foundation of what I asked the interviewees:

1. What are some issues/problems that affect First Nations youth here today?
2. How can traditional First Nations spiritual ways help?
3. Does knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free of negative mental health?

These questions are expanded in Chapter 4. Before asking these questions and sharing the answers I want to lay out the theory I am using, by looking at First Nations and Western theoretical approaches in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 also describes the Methodology I used, while Chapter 3 reviews the literature on residential schools and colonization and the impact on Identity.

Compiling my list of potential interviews in the Yukon was somewhat easier. I immediately knew that I wanted to interview people I know and respect. This is part of being Indigenous; we are kin based people. I wanted to interview Elders Randall Tetlich and my Grandma Angel Carlick; Youth Isaiah Gilson, and an anonymous Female Youth I call Uynji Natsat /“She is Brave”; Lori Duncan (a Mom), my dad William Carlick (a Dad); Service Providers Winona Polson-Lahache and Andy Nieman. One of the first issues that I was confronted with after getting ethics approval from UNBC to conduct interviews for this study was realizing that it is summer time and many people are busy during the summer season and I would have to find ways to meet with them throughout the summer before I moved back to Prince George.

Service Provider Andy Nieman (Northern Tutchone) is a long time friend of my family and I knew somewhat of his past through my mom and dad and reading about him in the news with his new position as Child and Youth Advocate in the Yukon. I quickly asked my supervisory committee if it is okay for me to make a change of who I was

going to interview for the male service provider, and they agreed. I approached Andy after receiving Ethics Approval and he was able and willing to take part after hearing what my research is about. Andy and I met July 6, 2010. My next service provider interview I briefly discussed earlier as the only non-Yukon person, Service Provider Winona Polson-Lahache (Algonquin and Mohawk). I interviewed her in Vancouver October 22nd, 2010. I chose Winona because I was able to attend meetings across Canada with Winona, as she would come and present to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Youth Council about Mental Wellness and is the AFN Policy Analyst.

I interviewed (a Mom) Lori Duncan (Ta'an First Nation) June 28th, 2010. I knew Lori would be a good interviewee because she is of First Nation and European ancestry, she is knowledgeable about First Nations Youth in the Yukon and is a healthy mom. My dad was a chosen participant because he is an intelligent man who has been through so much growing up and I wanted to know more about his past, especially in Lower Post, and see why his family is healthy the way they are today. We were able to conduct the interview June 28th, 2010.

Isaiah Gilson was the male youth I chose to interview. He was my first interview on June 19th, 2010 in Whitehorse. Seeing that my thesis focuses on Aboriginal Youth, I decided to interview a youth first. Isaiah is knowledgeable about spirituality and is goal oriented, and is a strong mentor for our Indigenous youth by representing Aboriginal Youth at the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council. My next youth interview was on June 30th, 2010 with the female youth I call Uyinji Natsat since she wanted to remain anonymous. I knew that with my research, she would provide a key perspective on the subject because I knew a bit about her history and I see what a strong leader she is

today for our Aboriginal youth. She is a strong mentor and a youth dedicated to positive change.

I provided my participants with 4-5 core questions and an extra six questions tailored to them that had been created with my supervisory committee (See Appendix B for the questions). All interviewees received a copy of the interview questions, a consent form, and an information sheet on what my thesis was about and why I am researching this topic. The interviews took place in secure and non-secure environments, but were one-on-one. The participants' answers were digitally recorded. In the consent form, the issue of confidentiality and sensitivity was addressed as this is of the utmost importance. I believe that the participants needed to feel that they could speak in confidence; the promise of confidentiality is crucial in having the consent form signed before conducting the interviews. One participant chose the option to remain anonymous and agreed to use the made-up name I chose.

Yukon Canoe Project and the Dugout Canoe as my Conceptual Framework:

Once my interviews were transcribed, I was confronted with deciding how to incorporate the data I received from my interviewees in a way that would honour my First Nations tradition. I decided it was important to present the interviews using the framework of the dugout canoe to show that their words were a continuation of the enhancement of my own life journey. I was inspired to do this after hearing one of my mentors Rheanna Robinson (Métis) discuss how she utilized the Métis Sash as her framework in her 2007 UNBC Masters Thesis entitled *Education Transformation: Issues for Implementing an Aboriginal Choice School in Prince George, B.C.* My committee member Tina Fraser (Maori) sat down with me to discuss Indigenous theory, and during

the conversation, she helped me develop the idea of using the Cedar Canoe and its paddles as my Conceptual Framework. I knew it was helpful to integrate the canoe as a conceptual framework because it reflects the First Nations Youth in the Yukon pulling together, using their traditions with respect for my ancestors and cultural ways of life, and it reflects the strength of my interviewees responses which all together pull our way of life through the ripples colonization and residential schools have caused. The dugout canoe holds First Nations culture and spiritual values to my people and to First Nations people across Canada, as described by the Yukon Youth who created a canoe in 2009.



Figure 3

In the summer of 2009 a 13, 000 pound red cedar log was shipped from Terrace B.C. to Whitehorse and once it arrived a raft was used to float the cedar log down the Yukon River to the island camp. Nineteen youth carvers created this healing canoe on the island camp located on the east side of the Yukon River (Yukon Canoe Project, 2009). The youth spent two months on the land living a traditional lifestyle and learning the traditional technique of creating and carving a dugout canoe. The youth committed eight weeks of being drug and alcohol free, participating in talking circles and sweat lodges, learning from Yukon Elders, and giving up their iPods, computer games and cell phones (Yukon Canoe Project, 2009). This was a unique and incredible journey for the youth.

After the camp ended, the youth carvers paddled the canoe out from the camp while their friends and family sang traditional songs on the shoreline as they arrived in their canoe.

The dugout canoe was presented as a gift to the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and is displayed in the Culture Centre on the Whitehorse Waterfront; however, the carvers are entitled to use their canoe for local and international canoe journeys in the future (Yukon Canoe Project, 2009). It was an important group project.

With the eight First Nations people I interviewed, two youth, two Elders, two parents and two service providers, we have a strong crew to paddle us through any rough waters towards a place of wellbeing for First Nations Yukon youth and youth of other areas as well.

Chapter 2. Indigenous & Western or Two World Theory and Methodology

“The theoretical framework is the viewpoint or angle from which you are approaching your topic. This framework should enable you to ask questions of a topic that could not be asked (or could not be asked as effectively) without it” (University of Ottawa, 2010, p. 3).

On what basis are you making your arguments? This thesis is based on First Nations theory. I begin with the wise words of Randall Tetlichich (2009).

“Peace comes within the souls of humans when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the centre of the universe dwells the Creator, that this centre is really everywhere, it is in each of us” (Tetlichich, 2009).

The Creator has put us on this earth for a reason. It is up to the individual to soul search their identity, their ways of knowing and being, to build on relationships that are balanced in a good way, and for us as a whole to teach those upcoming stars. It is our responsibility to honour the stars, that is our way to reciprocate in health and wellness.

My theoretical position is that First Nations Youth mental wellness requires culturally appropriate healing approaches for the betterment of everyone. Reviving cultural ways of life will ultimately heal the individual from the intergenerational effect of the colonial put down experienced in Indian residential school. The syndrome has greatly affected First Nations Youth mental health and established the large disconnection from their roots. Once the connection is re-established and there are culturally appropriate healing approaches among the mental health professionals, there will be a more positive outlook for the Youth. Times are changing and First Nations

recognize forced assimilation, but they continue to resist the oppression set upon them. First Nations are working towards revitalization through language, spirituality and communal practices. These fundamental acts of healing reveal that all approaches regarding mental health promotion with First Nations peoples' need to consider the continuous uses of tradition to assert cultural identity. First Nations Youth are our future, but they are also our present; therefore, it is integral to make sure they are given the necessary tools to continue life with a connection to who they truly are. The connection means their connection to their true identity, since many of our Youth are suffering because they do not have the necessary tools to know or respect who they are or where they originate from. The large gap between Youth, identity and health is caused by racism, which in turn is caused by the ripple effect of Indian residential school and the colonial concepts that fostered that system. I know and see this far too often, and it made me want to research and help our Youth take pride in the land they live on, because this land is where their Ancestors danced and embraced their culture. The path to healing is the path of **relearning our** identity: when our First Nations Youth realize their connection, they will understand that they are walking with their Ancestors. I want our Youth to know and understand that they are here for a reason, and by taking their own life, they are throwing away a sacred gift the Creator has given them.

What assumptions or presuppositions are you bringing to your work? Why? (University of Ottawa, 201, p. 3).

The power of the Spiritual world is necessary to understand because it is the world we live in. We are all Spiritual beings and our beliefs are all interconnected. I believe it is vital to show our Indigenous Youth and our People the power of Spirituality.

Individuals who find their connection through various ways, such as sweat lodge ceremonies, are capable of returning to a positive state of mind. Spirituality is powerful because it assists people to understand the world around us in a positive manner. The basic point is Spirituality is about healing the Spirit and when individuals focus on healing their spirit, the emotional, mental, and physical parts of their mental wellness is being formulated as one. Spirituality is in each and every one of us, it changes peoples' lives for the better. Reviving Spiritual ways of life will ultimately heal the individual from the ripple effect of Indian residential schools. Once the connection of identity is re-established within our youth, and the Spiritual healing approaches among the mental health professionals, there will be a more positive outlook for the Youth. Times are changing and Indigenous Peoples` recognize the reality of what is coming, and they continue to resist the oppression set upon them. Indigenous Peoples` are working towards revitalization through language, spirituality and communal practices. These fundamental acts of healing reveal that all approaches regarding mental health promotion with First Nations peoples need to consider the continuous uses of tradition to assert cultural identity.

I wanted to interview Elders, Parents, Youth and Service providers about what they think in order to see if they agree with me, and if they can help me form a vision of how to re-create good strong Indigenous youth, those who care, are proud of their culture, aware of the Western world and so able to help the Western world to also embrace a concern for all life forms. The people I interviewed are steering the canoe of healing by rowing together through their life endeavors and challenges to help our youth embrace in their culture and ultimately grow in a healthy direction.

How are the [questions or issues] brought forward based in a theoretical framework?

(University of Ottawa, 2010, p. 3).

One form of culturally appropriate healing is through spiritual means. I am absolutely fascinated with the Spiritual realm. I endlessly search for any opportunity to discuss the power of Spirituality with anyone who lives a Spiritual life. I have engrossed myself in literature by Graveline (1998, 2004), Henderson (2008), Mehl-Madrona (2003), Duran (2006) and Duran and Duran (1995). My love and passion for Spirituality is something that is natural, due to my Southern Tutchone, Kaska, Tlingit and Tahltan background and my dedication to pursue a Master's Degree in First Nations Studies. Indigenous Peoples' Spirituality is an integral part of who we are, it is our identity, and it is what keeps us strong. It is vitally important for our Indigenous Youth to know, believe, and lean on the Creator because Spirituality is a window of hope for us to move towards a healthier future. Everywhere we look, and everything we see has a Spirit, therefore, it is important to treat all life with respect. If Youth listen to their Elders, they will understand their Spirit is a gift from the Creator. The Youth will recognize that they have the power to balance between the two worlds and gain the vital knowledge of their Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive reality.

What does your theoretical framework enable you to do with your topic? (University of Ottawa, 2010, p. 3).

My theoretical framework frames the questions I asked, and the literature I have read and present. In my view, First Nations Youth mental wellness affects everyone, no matter where you are on Mother Earth. Elders explain that Youth need to connect with Elders and fill the gap that exists. The Youth will recognize that they have the power to

balance between the First Nations' and Western world because it is integral for First Nations Youth to know and understand the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental reality. There are distinctive dissimilarities between Western and First Nations' worldviews (Little Bear, 2000). These dissimilarities are evident when we examine issues surrounding First Nation youth. It is integral to analyze historical contexts when determining how society has been and continues to be structured in terms of Western traditions in academia and its understanding of mental health care. Prior Eurocentric people and philosophers established the dichotomies between First Nations and colonizers. First Nations Youth are struggling with their relationship between identity and healing from addiction, suicide, and many forms of abuse. I began with the perspective that improving First Nations mental wellness through the development of culturally-appropriate healing approaches for First Nations Youth is critical for the wellbeing of future generations.

Methodology

This thesis is using a narrative inquiry methodology. The fundamental basis of narrative inquiry is the belief that individuals are able to understand their world clearly by telling stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999; Riessman, 1990). My thesis takes a qualitative approach and uses a narrative analysis that involves the assessment of participant stories identified in interview data (Mishler, 1979, 1990, 1996). Indigenous peoples are oral-based peoples who come from a story telling tradition (Medicine-Eagle, 1989), so my thesis follows a narrative approach that is culturally appropriate because it is asking the participants to tell their stories. Narrative inquiry is a “‘relational methodology’ when used in an Indigenous context, where epistemological implications

of Native ways of knowing demonstrate how Indigenous epistemology can influence knowledge and practice in research” (Barton, 2004, p. 519). Stewart (2008) cites Barton (2004) who suggests that “the interpretive activities of co-constructing and co-participating stories is inherent in a narrative inquiry, and this reveals a circular, or continual, understanding of experience” (Stewart, 2008, p. 13). Hearing the participants tell their stories of their “life lived” made it a mutual experience for all of us of “life unfolding.”

In Western terms, qualitative research derives from “assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). There are various types of qualitative research and the type that is most reflective of my research method is called Narrative research. According to Creswell (2007, p. 55) “An *oral history* consists of gathering personal reflections of events and their causes and effects from one individual or several individuals.”

Primarily, this thesis, through my qualitative, critical theoretical approach, is narrative. Critical theory perspectives are “concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (Creswell, 2007, p. 27). This narrative approach is seeking change through the participants’ words which is noted as an interventionist rather than simply a descriptive approach. The geographic regions focused on in my background literature review includes Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand. Documents from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1994, 1995, and 1996) and the

recommendations of other major national, territorial and provincial documents will be included and/or implemented.

I have faced challenges when writing my thesis that are similar to Brayboy's (2000) because I am a First Nations researcher and must open my senses to what it means to be Indigenous and attempt to have our academic theories meet our real lived experiences. While researching I do utilize the Western senses and also include Indigenous senses such as, spirituality and the dream world, this way I as a Yukon First Nation person demonstrates that I not only am a Western academic researcher, but one that is culturally sensitive to working with, by and for our people. I needed to become more specific about seeing the differences among Indigenous people, their world-views, and recognize the disparity between our theories and the real lives of those we study (Brayboy, 2000). Brayboy further reveals the idea of examining how issues around colonialism influence the ways in which we essentialize each other.

Creating a Respectful Sacred Process

My thesis is written in a careful manner regarding words and language and the need to be mindful and respectful of the Yukon First Nations' world-views. Overall, I have researched to examine the various facets of First Nations culturally appropriate healing approaches. I have prayed to the Creator, Grandmothers and Grandfathers for their help and support along the way. I honour and respect all the knowledge given to me on my journey. I instinctively knew from the outset that my background will have its advantages and disadvantages. My background will enable me to interact easily with the subtle aspects of First Nations culture. I know my experience (both positive and negative) of being First Nations has helped the interviewees to establish a sense of connectedness

with me that provides a sense of reassurance that I will be able to understand their stories on a deeper emotional level. I acknowledge and respect the culturally appropriate protocol when interacting with First Nations community members. I have learned to recognize and respect my peoples' perspectives on knowledge and culture.

My thesis was researched in a manner culturally appropriate and respectful to all the fourteen Yukon First Nations in the Yukon, and more importantly to the Healers and Elders I interviewed. The thesis stems from an overarching conceptual framework of Indigenous ways of knowing and social constructivism. Indigenous ways of knowing ground the research in a community-based model that respects cultural history, knowledge, and protocol (Smith, 1999). Furthermore, this thesis involves social constructivism as a framework since it will follow an approach that values the context in cultural construction of knowledge, language and communication (Stewart, 2008). I engaged in participant observation of healing ceremonies and when deemed culturally appropriate, provided an offering and a gift to the interviewees in exchange for their knowledge. The people I have chosen to interview I know well; some are kin. This is appropriate in First Nations methodology as we are a kin based society.

The investigation to compile the information I needed to complete this Master's thesis stems from two streams of research which in the academic context is called a qualitative format (both primary and secondary). In First Nations terms, Shawn Wilson says that "an Indigenous methodology must be a process that adheres to relational accountability. Respect, Relationship, Reciprocity and Responsibility are key features of any healthy relationship and must be included in an Indigenous methodology" (2008, p. 77). I am an insider researcher and followed the four Rs identified by Kirkness and

Barnhardt (1991) when going back to my community to conduct research. Besides Respect, Relationship, Responsibility and Reciprocity, there is also Relevance and Reverence. For the purpose of this research, I want to elaborate further on what it means to me when I am using such terms as:

Respect- respect is a word commonly used by Indigenous people to indicate that sacredness, ceremonies, teachings, learning, traditions and practices among many other is not to be taken lightly. In essence, it is directed to all humanity.

Relationship- is the interconnectedness to all things imbued with spirit, life principles, our connection to the land, our mountains, rivers, animals and to each other. Without the land, we become disassociated with our being and knowing. It is a part of our wholeness to mental health and well-being.

Responsibility- we take mother earth and sky father for granted by destroying the very things we as human-beings are responsible for. All our Creator asks for is that we take care of our space and look after the traditional medicines used to heal us and to preserve, maintain and sustain our well-being.

Reciprocate- by giving back to each other, we become healthy. We continue to repay our ancestors for teaching us about balance, harmony, love, kindness and many other teachings. They have left us a legacy of hope for maintaining the “Self” in a good way. That is what we can give back to the Youth.

The four R’s explained above connect with the guidelines used from Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s seven principles. I followed the “guidelines aimed at respect for and protection of the ‘rights, interests and sensitivities’ of the people being studied” (Smith,

1999, p. 119). The research followed the cultural terms that Tuhiwai Smith has outlined for Maori and Indigenous researchers:

1. Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people).
2. Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face).
3. Titiro, whakarongo... korero (look, listen... speak).
4. Manaaki kit e tangata (share and host people, be generous).
5. Kia tupato (be cautious).
6. Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the *mana* of people).
7. kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge).

My research paradigm methodology also contains the Western concepts of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. According to Shawn Wilson (2008, p. 70), who seeks to bridge Western and Indigenous terms of world views, "ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships." According to (Dictionar.com, 2010, p. 1), Ontology means:

1. *philosophy* the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being
2. *logic* the set of entities presupposed by a theory

1. A systematic account of Existence. 2. (From philosophy) An explicit formal specification of how to represent the objects, concepts and other entities that are assumed to exist in some area of interest and the relationships that hold among

them. For the systems, what "exists" is that which can be represented. When the knowledge about a domain is represented in a declarative language, the set of objects that can be represented is called the universe of discourse. We can describe the ontology of a program by defining a set of representational terms. Definitions associate the names of entities in the universe of discourse (e.g. classes, relations, functions or other objects) with human-readable text describing what the names mean and formal axioms that constrain the interpretation and well-formed use of these terms. Formally, ontology is the statement of a logical theory. A set of agents that share the same ontology will be able to communicate about a domain of discourse without necessarily operating on a globally shared theory. We say that an agent commits to ontology if its observable actions are consistent with the definitions in the ontology. The idea of ontological commitment is based on the Knowledge-Level perspective.

3. The hierarchical structuring of knowledge about things by subcategorizing them according to their essential (or at least relevant and/or cognitive) qualities. See subject index. This is an extension of the previous senses of "ontology" (above) which has become common in discussions about the difficulty of maintaining subject indices.

Epistemology is the “branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and origin of knowledge. Epistemology asks the question “How do we know what we know? The theory of knowledge, the critical study of its validity, methods, and scope” (Dictionary.com, 2010, p. 1)

The Indigenous ontological theory relates the Indigenous epistemology and epistemology includes the entire systems of knowledge and relationships. “Indigenous epistemology is our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities and our places in the cosmos. Indigenous epistemology is our systems of knowledge in their context, or in relationship.” (Wilson, 2008, p. 74).

My methodology also includes presenting an analysis of secondary sources that deal with the history of First Nations in the Yukon and the existing situation of Yukon First Nations Youth according to statistics provided by Mental Health services in Whitehorse as well as other relevant data provided by Discussion Papers and secondary

sources in the forms of books, newspapers and the internet. My literature review is interspersed with my own commentary on what I think is effective in giving First Nations youth a strong cultural identity in the two worlds in which we live today. While taking a personal approach based on my lived experience, described above and below, I approached my research in what Creswell (2007, p. 27) calls Critical Race Theory. Creswell explains that the critical theoretical approach addresses the historical problems of power, alienation, and social struggles. This approach will also address a critique of society and the envisioning of new possibilities. Therefore, the research is based on the fact that it is due to the state and its' colonial functions that many Yukon First Nations Youth are struggling when trying to succeed in our current situation using non-Indigenous Western healing approaches. These non-Indigenous Western approaches are jail sentencing with no cultural teachings while imprisoned, counseling in a Western setting, and Western education and beliefs. Many healing methods used are not based on Indigenous spiritual and cultural healing; rather they are based on Western forms of science and advice that is unnatural to the Native perspective. Western Medication can be problematic because it is misused and can lead to addiction dependencies for many individuals who take Westernized medication for their depression.

To further the analysis of culturally appropriate healing approaches for Yukon First Nations Youth, I demonstrate the current situation of Yukon First Nations Youth and provide information about how selected Yukon First Nations Youth will react to a culturally-appropriate healing option.

Those to be interviewed: As I stated previously above, I have conducted interviews with eight individuals. Note that Whitehorse is home to a number of people

from different First Nations. The Yukon is receptive to having people from these different First Nations work together for our common goals of giving the youth great opportunities. The interviews were conducted where they were most comfortable. They were given the option of where they would like to be interviewed as long as they choose a one-on-one environment.

Interview Transcription Process

After completing each interview, the words of my participants were transcribed by me to ensure that the interviews were being documented accurately. I made an original copy of the transcriptions available to all my interview participants for their approval, in case they wanted to make any changes before I put their words into this thesis. I then took out parts of what was said at their request or because it was not relevant to this thesis. Therefore, the transcriptions have been thoroughly listened to, read-over and slightly copy-edited. The female youth asked to add further comments to the answers she had given me, and emailed/gave me further answers.

The canoe, paddles and paddlers became the model for incorporating my research into this writing. The canoe and paddlers are what shapes my thesis, the Elders are positioned in the middle of the canoe to balance and guide the canoe, the youth positioned in front of the canoe listening to the guidance they receive from the Service Providers who are sitting behind the youth in the canoe to initiate the wellness and healing, then the mom and dad are sitting at the rear of the canoe to watch over the youth and steer the canoe. The Elders, Youth, Mom and Dad, and Service Providers are all rowing the canoe in unison. This framework balances the Western ways of being (ontology) and ways of knowing (epistemology) with an Indigenous framework.

Chapter 3. Indian Residential School and Colonization: Background and Literature

Review

According to Freire, “As the oppressor minority subordinates and dominates the majority, it must divide it and keep it divided in order to remain in power. The minority cannot permit itself the luxury of tolerating the unification of the people, which would undoubtedly signify a serious threat to their own hegemony” (2009, p. 141). The Europeans needed to divide and conquer in order to keep their power. Freire further explains that it is in the “interest of the oppressor to weaken the oppressed still further, to isolate them, to create and deepen rifts among them... This is done by varied means, from the repressive methods of the government bureaucracy to the forms of cultural action with which they manipulate the people by giving them the impression that they are being helped.” (2009, p. 141). The oppressors needed to make any possible excuse in order to keep their power, which in turn created the assumption that Indigenous people did not have a history or identity that was connected to the land. Sinclair, Hart, and Bruyere, (2009, p. 27) highlight the three means colonization uses to diminish Indigenous knowledge:

Colonization connects directly to Indigenous knowledge through at least three means. One means is exclusion, or the absence of Indigenous knowledge, methodologies and practices, with Eurocentric scholars identifying their knowledge as superior (Battiste and Henderson 2000; Blaut 1993; Smith 1999) and excluding knowledge different from their own. Indeed, the colonizer’s account of history as described by Albert Memmi (1965) and Fyre Jean Graveline (1998) exemplifies this exclusion. A second means is marginalization, or the process of putting peoples, individuals, ideas or additional matters on the periphery. In this process, it is important to note who holds significant power in systems such as academia and how such power is used. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin address this point:

Education, whether state or missionary, primary or secondary (and later tertiary) was a massive cannon in the artillery of the empire. The military metaphor can

however seem inappropriate, since unlike outright territorial aggression, education effects, in Gramsci's terms, are a "domination by consent." This domination by consent is achieved through what is taught to the colonised, how it is taught, and the subsequent emplacement of the educated subject as a part of the continuing imperial apparatus... Education is thus a conquest of another kind of territory – it is the foundation of colonialist power and consolidates this power through legal and administrative apparatuses. (1995, p. 425).

Appropriation, a third means that connects colonialism to Indigenous knowledge, is explained by Graveline (1998) as the misrepresentation or partial representation of an idea or artifact without recognition of the sources of knowledge or inspiration while gaining prosperity, success and/or benefit from others' ideas. In experiences where Indigenous knowledge is appropriated, Indigenous persons, if not objectified, become virtual non-entities.

To thrive in this colonial environment, we, Indigenous peoples, have little choice but to participate in academic endeavours that either devalue or do not recognize our cultural identities. More specifically, Indigenous peoples' knowledge is given little, if any, legitimate academic role in higher education, and foundational aspects to Indigenous knowledge, such as spirituality intertwined with the land, are ignored. As a result we find ourselves learning and perpetuating predominantly Amer-European knowledge in Amer-European environments within the dominant Amer-European paradigms (Morgan 2003, Sinclair 2004). (Sinclair, Hart, Bruyere, 2009, p. 27)

Colonization in Canada has occurred in many forms, from treaty negotiations, reserve allocations and by the representations and lived experiences of Aboriginal bodies (Kelm, 1998). The residential school was a period of cultural hegemony inflicted on First Nations by the colonizers (Kelm, 1998). These colonizers believed First Nations were naturally unclean and diseased, so residential schools were a way to save the Aboriginal children from their home life; however, the schools were anything but healthy, they offered scant sanitation, and spread physical illness and disease (Kelm, 1998). The newly inflicted education system further endangered the children by exposing them to disease, overwork, underfeeding, and abuse. "Historians Altback and Kelly argue that 'Indian' education in North America was inextricably interwoven with colonization and cannot be removed from this context" (Kelm, 1998, p. 58). Therefore, the new education system

was established as a form of 'cultural invasion,' "in which the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression" (Kelm, 1998, p. 58).

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996, p. 335) the residential school system was established by successive governments as an attempt to determine the fate of Aboriginal people in Canada. The newly formed education system tried to appropriate and reshape First Nations peoples' future by removing thousands of children from their homes and communities and placing them in the care of strangers. The newly established education system had a goal, "To kill the Indian in the child." (1996, p. 365). The department worked hard to make this happen by taking and cutting the artery of culture that ran between parent and child sustaining family and community (op.cit.). "At the point of final assimilation, all the Indian there is in the race should be dead.' This was more than a rhetorical flourish as it took on a traumatic reality in the life of each child separated from parents and community and isolated in a world hostile to identity, traditional belief and language" (op.cit.).

Research such as RCAP and the literature shows that the Indian residential school is the leading cause of the mental health issues in today's generations, and if it is not the only cause, it is definitely the mother cause. I often hear non-educated non-native students on campus complain about First Nations treatment today: 'they get better treatment, they get their schooling paid for along with their health and dental, why don't they just get over what happened to them and move on.' Seeing that discrimination is evident and racism is alive and well today, I believe it is important to unfold the legacy

and history of Aboriginal people in this thesis. I am interested in demonstrating linkages between the discursive formations of Aboriginal subjects produced by Canadian hegemonic elites and the lived realities of Indigenous youth living within and between a colonially constructed world and the Indigenous world.

According to de Leeuw (2009, p. 125),

discourses operate in the realms of semantics and semiotics, their power lies in the production of that which they name and represent. As Michel Foucault reminds us, discourses are anything but immaterial; they are more than 'groups of signs... but... [are] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (1972, p. 49). In (post)colonial studies, government policies and legal frameworks are understood as powerful discursive structures that function to marginalize certain subjects in order to legitimate the rights of others to social and spatial supremacy (McLintock 1995, Spivak 1996, Razack 2002, Lawrence 2003). The discourse produced by colonialists in reference to colonized or Indigenous subjects are particularly encoded with struggles to attain and maintain power over bodies and territory (Bhabha 1994, Said 1994, Harris 2004, Li 2007). Indeed, as Edward Said so compelling demonstrates, the violence of (re)territorializing people and their lands requires a careful thinking-through of the process, a thinking-through that involves producing sociocultural products that legitimate colonial desires.

de Leeuw (op. cit.) continues:

At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, [and] controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings. For all kinds of reasons it attracts some people and often involves untold misery for others... Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 125).

Indian residential school education was initiated in the late nineteenth century and had a three-part vision of education in the service of assimilation. Firstly the newly placed education system was considered to be "a justification for removing children from their communities and disrupting Aboriginal families; second, a precise pedagogy for re-

socializing children in the schools; and third, schemes for integrating graduates into the non-Aboriginal world” (RCAP, 1996, p. 337).

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), First Nations in the north were not impacted by the residential school system during the pre-World War I period. The Yukon First Nations residential school called Chooutla began in Carcross in 1902, and they were served by the Anglican while many Yukon First Nations attended the Catholic run residential school in Lower Post which is located in northern British Columbia. According to Residential Schools Settlement: Official Court Notice. (2010), Yukon residential schools also included:

Coudert Hall (Whitehorse Hostel/ Student Residence- Predecessor to Yukon Hall),
St. Pauls Hostel (September 1920 to June 1943),
Shingle Point (Predecessor to All Saints),
Aklavik, Whitehorse Baptist Mission,
Yukon Hall (Whitehorse/Protestant Hostel). (p.5).

Figure 4.



Chooutla, Carcross, YT - Staff and Children, 1925
Photo: General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada

Figure 5.

Choooutla, Carcross, YT - Girls of Carcross c. 1937
 Photo: General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada

According to the Council of Yukon First Nations (2010) the Yukon First Nations were known as wards of the state and controlled by the federal Department of Indian Affairs. At this time it was the law for Status Indians to send their children to residential schools and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police saw that this was enforced. Children were taken away from their rural Yukon homes as far north as Old Crow and sent to Carcross. Many of the children were raised in the residential schools, some for twelve years or so and were not given the chance to see their families. These schools were established by the federal government who targeted the young First Nations to be assimilated. The government solely wanted the young First Nations youth to be integrated into mainstream society; therefore, the children were stripped of their dignity, identity, familial and communal ties. Despite the verbal, emotional and sexual abuse, our people survived.

In 1960, First Nations across Canada were given the right to vote and this opened the doors of hope for Yukon First Nations. "A new generation emerged, barely intact from the brutality of the mission schools, and began a movement to fight oppression,

provide vision and hope, and to gain some rights for the generations to come” (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2010, p. 1). The legacy of the school is evident in so many Yukon First Nations Youth today. There is a lot of healing that needs to be done among Yukon First Nations Youth because they feel the effects from their parents’ and grandparents’ mistreatment at residential schools.

The former Yukon Hall was made into the office of the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN). I worked for CYFN in the old Yukon Hall for two summers. It was hard for former students to enter the CYFN office because it was the old Yukon Hall. My dad spent years in the Lower Post residential school and then spent another few years in Yukon Hall, as noted above.

Carole Williams completed her Master’s Thesis entitled *Factors Enabling Health in Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal Cultural Encounter in the Yukon* at the University of Northern British Columbia. She describes some of the context of residential schools:

Aboriginal people have concluded that the assimilation policies during the cultural encounter of the colonial era have created socio-economic conditions which have led to the prevalence of these social health problems in their communities. Part of these socio-economic conditions is the loss of spirituality and culture (Brant, 1993; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1994; Justice and Warry, 1996). Miller’s documentation of the Residential School experience is one exposition of the effect of some of these assimilation policies (Miller, 1996). The reality of the experience for the students in the schools was a far cry from the hopes and visions of Chief Shingwauk, an Ontario Chief, who had requested the provision of a “big teaching wigwam” where Aboriginal children would be “received, and clothed, and fed, and taught how to read and how to write; and also how to farm and build houses, and make clothing; so that bye and bye they might go back and teach their own people.” He had not envisioned the mistreatment of the children, the denigration of Aboriginal culture, the prohibition of Aboriginal language nor the inadequate food and excessive chores. In particular he had not foreseen the inadequacy of the education which failed to prepare the children for a successful life in the Euro-Canadian world, the whole aim of his request. Miller’s book is especially useful in that it contrasts the aims of the Aboriginal people in requesting education with the different agendas of the Canadian Government (vocational training to aid the

economy at minimal cost) and the Churches (evangelising). Local agents realized that “the children had to undergo a great transformation and became stranded between cultures, deviants from the norms of both (1996: 358). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples testimonies (1996: 378) opened the enormous amount of terrifying memories and the public was informed of the reality of residential schools. The residential school trials have had their greatest impact in validating the general critique of the system (1996). It was common during the residential school era that the parents and communities protested against the schools’ conditions and the care of the children (1996). Parents wanted to protect their children and prevent their children from going to the schools and petitioned for their return; however, the parents were generally disregarded by the churches and government (1996). (Williams, 2005, p. 13-14)

A few years ago Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, offered an apology to Indian residential school survivors; this official apology was definitely a historical event. According to de Leeuw (2009, p. 123-124) Prime Minister Harper (2008) stated in the apology that residential schools were:

designed to remove and isolate [Aboriginal] children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. [It was] based on the assumption that aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed... it was infamously said ‘to kill the Indian in the child’. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

Prime Minister Harper’s apology answers a lot of questions as to why our Aboriginal youth are traumatized and facing mental health issues. The history is devastating and unfortunate because it is a history where the original inhabitants of this land were discriminated against and ultimately forced into assimilation. As Harper (2008) stated, Indian residential schools were in place to kill the Indian in the child. According to de Leeuw (2009, p. 124), Harper’s words indicate that the removal of children from home and their relocation to a place of cruelty, was about school spaces regulating and curtailing behaviours, and about the emplacement of children into spaces built with the sole purpose of assimilating the Aboriginal peoples into a colonial society. Prime

Minister Harper's apology acknowledges the "inherency of geography and the power of place in Canadian colonial projects" (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 124).

de Leeuw (2009) indicates that the successive settler-colonial structures placed before Aboriginal peoples constructed that Indigenous peoples were in need of protection and management. Basically, Aboriginal children

were understood as eminently concrete embodiments of a culture that the Eurowestern colonial project was intent on aggressively circumscribing, if not expunging, from a newly emerging Canada. As embodiments of extant Indigeneity, Indigenous children were threats to settler-colonial imaginations. So something had to be done with Aboriginal children. That something occurred through residential schools and imprinted itself on the bodies of children (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 124).

There was a great shift in the lives of Aboriginal people during the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century as the Canadian government worked to assert Canada's nationhood by displacing and assimilating Indigenous peoples (de Leeuw, 2009). Settlers in Canada heavily relied on discourses of a terra nullius, an empty untamed frontier occupied by no one and, available for settlement (de Leeuw, 2009).

In order to explain colonial agendas of territory expansion and the subsequent confinement of Indians onto small parcels of land, the commissioners turned to 'the natural laws of society', according to which the savage yet childlike Aboriginals would lose their land to heartless settlers unless the government first dispossessed them. The commissioners employed a for-their-own-good argument to justify expropriation. For the authors of early Federal Government consideration about Indians, then, discursive constructions of the Indian as childlike wards of the state were intrinsically linked to more material and grounded practices of territorial expansion.

The Bagot Report also linked colonial education of Aboriginal children to the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their lands. The Government, the commissioners argued, had a moral and protectionist duty to ensure Aboriginal peoples became acclimatized to Eurocolonial expectations of civilization, including agricultural proficiency and settlement of delineated, privately owned properties. These obligations could most efficiently be achieved through education of the Indian. It was the commissioners' sense that land was an important component of transformation of Aboriginal peoples and the education

was the most efficient means of inscribing traits of civility upon Indians. The commissioners' landed the logic of an 1828 report that had been prepared by Sir John Kemp for the Government of the Province of Canada:

It appears that the most effectual means of ameliorating the conditions of the Indians, of promoting their religious improvement and education, and of eventually relieving His Majesty's Government from the expense of the Indian Department are: 1st to collect the Indians in considerable numbers, and to settle them in villages, with a due portion of land for their cultivation and support. 2nd. To make such provision for their religious improvement, education, and instruction in husbandry as circumstances may from time to time require... (Kemp 1828 quoted in Report of the Affairs, 1845, p. 7). (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 127-128).

Literature Review on Value of Spirituality:

Contrary to the justification given for residential schools is a body of literature that acknowledges the value of Spirituality, Indigenous or other. Carole Williams (2005), cites Uberman (2000) and Koenig (2000) as studies that indicate spirituality is a positive factor in healing physical and mental-health issues. Further studies reveal that spirituality is a positive factor in healing mental ill-health (O'Connell, 1999; McDowell and Galanter, 1996; Kaczorowski, 1988). Research reveals that spirituality endorses physical health (Comstock and Partridge, 1972; Hawks, 1994; Koenig, 2000; Leach, 2000). Researchers have found that spirituality combats traumatic experiences as it forms a resilient factor in survival (Valentine and Feinaer, 1993; Pargament et al., 1988 in refs/1997; Fabricatore, Handal and Fenzel, 2000; Maton, 1989).

The quote below by Stewart (2008) describes traditional and contemporary health:

Traditional and contemporary health includes mental health for Canadian Indigenous peoples. Indigenous cultural understandings of mental health and healing are distinctly different from understandings that have prevailed in most North American mental health provider settings, including counselling contexts. Counselling services in Canada and the United States are based almost

exclusively on a Western paradigm of health that differs from an Indigenous worldview (Gone, 2004). These differences in paradigmatic perspectives can form a barrier to effective health promoting services for Native peoples who seek mental health support from formally trained counsellors, including those who may be trained in cross-cultural or multicultural approaches. Further, Duran (2006) suggests that counselling Indigenous individuals from a non-Indigenous perspective (i.e. Western perspective) is a form of continued oppression and colonization, as it does not legitimize the Indigenous cultural view of mental health and healing. Health promotion within Indigenous communities, in the current context of decolonization, could instead accept an Indigenous view of health that was not judged or valued by non-Indigenous views. (Stewart 2008, p. 12)

Health professionals in Canada are given a dearth of information about culturally appropriate methods of assessment and counselling for Indigenous youth and adults.

Regardless of the high rate of mental health issues among Indigenous communities within Canada, mental health services are irregularly used by aboriginal peoples (Government of Canada 1991; Health Canada 2003; King, 1999; Waldram, 2004). This research reveals that Indigenous peoples are not utilizing the help because most services are based on non-Indigenous methods of healing. Furthermore, many counsellors are not accustomed to the First Nations people of Canada or their philosophies and worldviews or respect it (Stewart, 2008). Duran & Duran (1995, p. 6) note that "A postcolonial paradigm would accept knowledge from differing cosmologies as valid in their own right, without their having to adhere to a separate cultural body for legitimacy." Stewart (2008, p. 13) cites Blue (1977) as finding that Indigenous peoples do not incorporate Western healing methods into their lives because it is not adapted to a First Nations helping model. McCormick's study found that (1996, p. 13)

some British Columbia Aboriginals described a successful counselling approach as one that was culturally-based in local tradition, included Native rules of behavior such as respect, non-interference, and input of Elders. Thus mental

health workers such as counsellors should be educated in terms of cultural notions of Indigenous mental health if they wish to meet Native clients' needs.

According to Carole Williams (2005) there is a relationship between community socio-economic conditions and suicide based on scientific studies. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) relate "B.C. community statistics on Aboriginal suicide to 'cultural continuity' factors present in the local community. Suicide rates were found to be lower in those communities with cultural continuity" (Chandler & Lalonde in Williams, 2005, p. 15). The ripple effect is evident among First Nations people because the abuse they endured during their stay at the residential school has spilled back into the communities. The schools closed, but the effects echo in the lives of subsequent generations of children. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states:

The survivors of the Indian residential school system have, in many cases, continued to have their lives shaped by the experiences in these schools. Persons who attend these schools continue to struggle with their identity after years of being taught to hate themselves and their culture. The residential school led to a disruption in the transference of parenting skills from one generation to the next. Without these skills, many survivors have had difficulty in raising their own children. In residential schools, they learned that adults often exert power and control through abuse. The lessons learned in childhood are often repeated in adulthood with the result that many survivors of the residential school system often inflict abuse on their own children. These children in turn use the same tools on their children. (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 379)

Many parents were faced with losing their children to Indian residential school, losing the sound of children's laughter and energy. The communities fell silent and were nearly dead because when the government took away the children it killed the natural way of life. The Creator/Children and Elders are the centre of the community, the mother is next protecting the children, then the men are on the outside protecting the life in the circle. Indian residential schools messed up a healthier way of life and so many of the

mothers and fathers resorted to alcohol or other unhealthy ways of coping with losing their children, and self-imploded as a means to cope. When the children did return, many parents were alcoholics and couldn't care for their children, so the children were forced to choose to fend for life on their own or go back to residential school.

Moving forward from the residential school experiences has not been a success for many survivors. The trauma has rippled forward because many of the survivors are paddling their canoe in many different directions, are not in unison, and are capsizing. The survivors need to create a new journey towards wellness, and this is done by rowing in unison. Michael DeGagne (2007, p. 51) cites Judith Herman in an article, "[I]n the course of a successful recovery, it should be possible to recognize a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory, and from stigmatized isolation to restored social connection." DeGagne (2007) reveals that trauma experienced during childhood varies in the ability to integrate experiences into the narrative of their lives. According to reports from project participants, healing will start with individuals who have awareness of barriers to a satisfying life and beginning recognition of their sources. Survivors will likely develop awareness gradually, or by other means such as through crisis, health problems, breakdown of marriage, or being changed with an offence (DeGagne, 2007). Projects have revealed that the healing journey begins when the history and impacts of residential schools are taught by means of legacy education, and group events that revolve around cultural activities, supported readiness to engage in therapeutic activities and relationships are put in place (Op cit., 2007).

During the duration of the healing journey, survivors need to feel safe, so the development of cultural safety is important in order to affirm identities that have been suppressed from residential school. "Sharing their stories in talking circles that fostered relationships among survivors and mentoring by Elders encouraged remembrance and mourning of what had been lost, paving the way for the long haul of reclaiming a healthy way of life" (DeGagne, 2007, p. 51). Reclaiming their identity does take a considerable amount of time and discipline, and survivors do require support and guidance during the duration of their healing journey from family and their community to regain stability (Op cit, 2007).

Interventions that were frequently used were talking circles, legacy education, workshops and ceremonies and the most effective activities were individuals who interacted with Elders, ceremonies, one-on-one counseling and healing/talking circles (DeGagne, 2007). Also, Western therapeutic approaches were employed in sixty percent of projects, and were usually in conjunction with cultural interventions and/or legacy education (DeGagne, 2007).

During the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) work, it was revealed that one-on-one therapies delivered by mental health professionals are by themselves inadequate to respond to the pervasiveness and depth of trauma that continues to reverberate in Aboriginal communities.

According to DeGagne (2007) the Aboriginal Healing Foundation found that:

- 1) Community healing is a necessary complement to individual healing. Restoring networks of family and community support is essential to stabilize the healing of individuals who continue to carry the burden of childhood trauma and family disruption.
- 2) Culture is good medicine. Individuals who had previously resisted interventions responded to culture-based outreach and healing mediated by survivors, local

personnel and Elders. In a climate of cultural safety, survivors became more open to Western therapies adapted to their context.

- 3) Reservoirs of resilience in individuals and communities can be tapped. AHF funding stimulated and supported diverse and creative community initiatives. Survivors who made progress on their healing journey assumed helper roles. Cells of healthy individuals in distressed communities mobilized support for change. These resources are largely invisible or undervalued by outsider professionals extending services.
- 4) It takes time to heal. In virtually all projects, the initial phase of outreach- to dismantle denial- had to be traversed, either at the outset or circling back after a therapeutic initiative had been launched. Sixty-six percent of projects surveyed in 2004 reported that they had accomplished a few goals but much work remained as AHF support was winding down.
- 5) Service infrastructure and continuity are necessary to consolidate individual healing and assist communities who are 'hitting the wall' in their healing journey. Programs that connect with community initiatives operate on the margins of core and professional services and are typically short-term and project-based. Evidence from AHF research indicates that services utilizing local capacity and Indigenous knowledge are effective and economical.
- 6) As individuals and communities heal, the depth and complexity of needs become evident, generating demand for training.

(DeGagne, 2007, p. 53).

Mental Health in the Yukon

Government of Yukon (2010) News releases have mentioned the gap that exists in the Yukon that pertain to mental health services in the territory. On November 25, 2010, CHON-FM News, the First Nations radio station located in Whitehorse, stated that:

The Yukon Anti Poverty Coalition is having a meeting tonight to identify successes and gaps in mental health services in the territory. Coalition member Sue Edelman says it's time for conversation to occur about mental health services available in Whitehorse and in the communities. (Edelman): "20 percent of Canadians at some point in their life are going to have to deal with mental illness and if that's the case then we need to take a look at all the services and all the options that are available and have to constantly revisit that process. We always revisit that process with the hospital for example around health but we don't necessarily do it around mental health and that's as important as vaccination programs or diabetic programs. Mental health is an integral part of any healthy person." Edelman says more awareness needs to be raised around mental illness adding many of the people who suffer with this are the poor. According to a Canadian Institute of Health Information report persons with mental illness have a 70 to 90 percent unemployment rate. The Government of

Yukon projects that by 2018 36 percent of the population will be over the age of 50 years meaning dementia rates may increase as well. A brainstorming session will take place tonight at the Whitehorse United Church at 7:00 p.m. and everyone is invited to attend.

The CKRW radio station located in Whitehorse stated on November 25, 2010, that:

Sue Edelman says the time is right for a real conversation to occur in Yukon to ensure needs are being fulfilled. (Edelman) "In the Yukon we have huge issues with addictions and addictions are very strongly linked with people with mental illness. It happens as a result of mental illness or it triggers a mental illness and I think that those are areas where we need to pay more attention."

Yukon is currently the only jurisdiction in Canada that doesn't have a mental health association branch established and Edelman says that's something that needs to change. (Edelman) "It's important to have sort of that larger picture in that distance as well as the backup of facts and figures and policies and best practices from other places but there's a lot more that needs to be done and [we need to] take a look at the people that are growing older in Yukon."

Clearly, the gap exists in the Yukon regarding mental health services. The public health services to First Nations are provided by all levels of government, and directly by many First Nations communities through health services transfer agreements (Suicide Prevention, 2008). The current programs and services for First Nations are focused on priority health areas such as Youth Suicide Prevention.

First Nation communities face a significant gap in regards to their health status compared to the rest of Canada: "Left out of public health successes" (Suicide Prevention, 2008). The public health area is a key priority of focus for both short and long term improvements in health, however, gaps are evident in areas such as: Lack of sufficient data and comprehensive surveillance, Need for standards and enforcement (i.e. health protection, Gaps in programming and access to services, Health human resources capacity, Governance and roles and responsibilities (First Nations, federal government, provincial/territorial governments, regional health authorities" (Suicide Prevention, 2008).

According to Suicide Prevention (2008), now that Gaps are recognized, Mental Health is a priority for the National Chief and the Minister of Health. Suicide Prevention (2008) notes:

- Mental Wellness Advisory Committee (MWAC) drafted “Strategic Action Plan”, a values based approach
- In regional focus groups now
- MWAC plan the “umbrella” for FNIHB mental health programs:

National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP)

- National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (NAYSPS)
- Brighter Futures, Building Health Communities
- Indian Residential Schools Health Support (Suicide Prevention 2008, p.2)

National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (NAYSPS)

The National Chief met with the Minister of Health and they prioritized their approach to reduce suicide among First Nations Youth. More positive activities were developed to coordinate existing intervention services and increase training for providers (Suicide Prevention, 2008). According to my interview with Winona Polson-Lahache reported below, the gap still exists where some adults are not working/interacting or believing youth are educated enough to work at a “higher” level to make decisions on behalf of their nation, their people, and their community. By involving youth in First Nations Governance and development of new ideas and initiatives, communities will improve their services (Suicide Prevention, 2008). Youth need to be involved at a higher level such as the design of suicide prevention projects. “Incidents of suicide tend to be lower in communities that have high levels of cultural continuity as expressed by self control over land claims, self government, education and cultural practices. Key causes of suicide in First Nations communities are poverty, poor health, and low self-esteem.”

(Suicide Prevention, 2008, p. 1). Chandler and Lalonde's 1998 findings have added to Suicide Prevention awareness.

Mainstream students need to be taught the truth of Canadian history, so they understand why many First Nations, Inuit and Métis Youth are living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Effects, are poverty stricken, are dropping out of school, are dysfunctional, represent the highest percentage of the population in prison, are drinking and using drugs, self-implode, become parents at a young age and do not know how to parent properly because they were not given the proper parenting skills since their parents were raised in Indian residential schools. There are many reasons behind the legacy of Indian residential schools, and these facts need to be known, taught and understood in order to for healing to occur.

Many First Nations Youth in the Yukon are examples of the ripple effect that consists of alcohol and drug abuse and dysfunction because they lose hope. According to Freire (2009, p. 91), "Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice." According to William Carlick (2007 Oral History Citations), "being LOVED and having HOPE is very important. When anyone loses both of these then their purpose to continue living has no future. It is of utmost importance to recognize the value of an individual's hope, for this may be all one has left." First Nations Youth are hopelessly suffering from identity crises due to the impact of colonization, and represent the high percentages of all the negative statistics for suicide, poverty and incarceration.

First Nations youth in the Yukon are suffering from a huge loss when they are not immersed in their traditional cultural beliefs. The huge gap that exists has established a large barrier between First Nations Youth and their Elders/Ancestors' teachings. This gap has withdrawn First Nations Youth from their healthy spiritual traditions and left them in complete devastation and in deep depression. The precipitating factor is colonization, even decades or centuries after contact. There is awareness that depression and suicide and related pathologies did not exist pre-contact (Waldram, 2004). Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo (2003, p. 20) acknowledge

the increasing effects of internal colonialism on cultural identity, and prolonged tensions between the values of First Nations peoples and mainstream society complicate the efforts of First Nations Youth to forge their identities and find their ways in the world. Traditionally, First Nations Youth did not have identity crises because they were considered important like everyone else, and were required to fulfill important roles and had opportunities; therefore, they were given a clearly defined direction (op.cit.).

Kirmayer, Simpson, Cargo (2003, p. 21) explain gender differences, as young women are immersed in social roles and involved with child-rearing, school, and fulfilling multiple tasks. On the other hand, young men are experiencing a profound disjuncture between traditional roles and the limited opportunities available to them in many First Nation communities. The traditional ways of supporting the community no longer offer economic stability.

One form of cultural healing is spirituality and it is taught among Yukon First Nations peoples. It means going back to traditional knowledge holders and listening to their powerful teachings that are the lessons of life. First Nations Youth who are absorbed within Elders/Ancestors teachings will ultimately refrain from following the black road

because they will understand that what they do in the physical life, will ultimately affect them in the spiritual life and vice versa. According to Atleo (2004, p. 28) “family and community are a natural state of existence, it is also true that one purpose of life is to live in family and community.” Atleo (2004) indicates that good families and communities do not form naturally because they need sustained cooperation in order to be healthy.

Basically the community relationship represents grapes or berries that grow together on one branch and each grape or berry is different whether it is in size, shape, colour and condition, but they all belong to the same branch/community (Atleo, 2004). The grapes/berries idea is about community and the connection with ancestors and the Creator.

Yukon First Nations Youth are embracing their culture, singing, drumming, and sharing their identity within the Yukon and beyond. Many Yukon First Nations Youth have dance groups and were involved with the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. I know many of the Youth in the Yukon who use traditional medicines and spend time with their grandparents to gain traditional knowledge. There are many strong First Nations Youth role models who are balancing their life within a First Nations and a Western world.

Another type of connection is that people generate as ‘one’, and follow a healthy existence within the Spiritual, Physical, Emotional and Mental world. Existing as ‘one’ is a powerful aspect of existence, as we each survive off the same essentials as everyone else. According to Atleo (2004, p. xi), “everything is one.” The power of ceremony will help our Indigenous Youth find their way and break away from the evil of alcohol and drug addictions.

My mom and dad taught me that the evil side is working just as hard as the healthy spiritual side, and as a result, the evil works to get individuals out of balance. According to Atleo (2004, p. 35) "evil needs a home, a place to live." Good and evil are created/organized in the spiritual realm and this is the same as on earth/the physical realm. There are organized 'good' approaches such as ceremonies and organized churches; on the other hand, the organized 'evil' is organized crime, gangs, and corporate corruption. Good/beauty, as Atleo (2004) says, is a spiritual principle that survives off of positive heavenly characteristics for its expression, and evil/ugliness survives upon negative characteristics for its expression. The choices individuals make formulate their lifestyle and that is what determines their appearance. Therefore, good acts, such as being generous and kind to other spiritual beings create good/beauty, while evil/bad is created from stealing and creating destruction. Atleo (2004) notes the truth and strength of power because the Spiritual realm has beneficial, healing, and hurtful, painful, and destructive powers that may even cause death; furthermore, the physical dimension is similar to a mirror reflecting the Spiritual realm. If the Spiritual realm contains good/positive powers, the same good/positive powers can be experienced in the physical realm. The Physical derives from the Spiritual.

My position is that First Nations Youth need to refurbish their views on spirituality because it is fundamental to who they are, it is where their roots are, and their connection to spirituality is there to help them in this world. However, many First Nations Youth do not even know what the term 'spirituality' means. The 1996 Wunska study asked Indigenous Youth if they considered themselves a spiritual person, and 59% said 'yes' (range across regions: 53-66%). On the other hand, a large number did not

understand the word 'spiritual' (Andersson & Ledogar, 2008, p. 76). According to the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (2004), Wunska is "To wake up", in the Cree language. Many people need to wake up to their spiritual traditions. Below I summarize, as a part of this Literature Review, some of the further sources on spirituality.

Spirituality is an effective method of healing; however it is not widely used, nor is it widely taught. Andersson (2008, p. 4) argues that "even limiting Indigenous spirituality to enculturation and/or cultural orientation, there are serious difficulties in its measurement." Furthermore, Andersson & Ledogar (2008) provide insight into the issue of identity. The inability to be cognizant enough to remove oneself from a linear perspective on issues such as spirituality/healing is extremely problematic. Discarding First Nations worldview occurs out of pure ignorance. The more an individual disconnects others into "us/them" categories, the less apt we/they are to truly respect/appreciate/embrace differences; thus perpetuating a cycle of cultural/spiritual genocide by way of misunderstanding/misattributions of others' actions/beliefs/cultures.

Proctor (2005) reveals the breakdown and devastation of community, cultural and spiritual life, explaining the effects on First Nations Youth, on those raised unsure of what path to follow, those who have had reduced access to identity-forming structures which help the transition from childhood to adolescence into adulthood and provide Youth, particularly males, with positive role models and coping behaviours in times of conflict. Furthermore, Proctor (2005, p. 239), states:

In the experience of psychological insecurity, depression, loss of relationships and meaning, conflicts with others, including kinship networks and parents, and the perceptual and cognitive disturbances associated with alcohol or substance use, young people might have felt extremely strong responses of guilt, shame, rejection or despair.

It is scenarios like this that lead to a severely diminished or absent future orientation associated with no will to live.

Vicary & Bishop (2005, p. 8), explain that various scholars agree that mainstream mental health services are not meeting the crucial needs of First Nations Youth because they are not using culturally appropriate healing approaches. Additionally, they note that reports regarding the mental health situation, reveal that mental health has only recently become a priority for Aboriginal people (p. 8). First Nations people, Youth in particular, have a difficult time conversing with mental health professionals because of the stigma, cultural misunderstanding, involuntary confinement, and the dissatisfaction with previous mental health professionals (p. 8). According to Vicary & Bishop (2005), there is a mutual understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors who portray the manner in which the Western mental health system has underprivileged First Nations Youth and documented the need for self-determination in the provision of mental health services. Additionally, some scholars believe combining Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal models of mental health and intervention analyses to improve the quality and cultural sensitivity of mental health services provided to Aboriginal people is important.

The study conducted by Vicary & Bishop (2005, p. 10) reveal four metathemes “(a) the importance of culture; (b) conceptualisations of mental health; (c) the importance of Aboriginal mental health treatment methodologies, and (d) the appropriateness of Western psychotherapy when applied to the Indigenous population.” Additional findings imply that traditional treatment for mental health problems are commonly used among First Nation communities. Many of the participants in the study agreed they would acquire healing through traditional means, such as spiritual healing,

rather than from non-First Nation services, or if no other treatment alternative was available (p. 11). Yet note that Vicary & Bishop's fourth metatheme is "the appropriateness of Western psychotherapy."

The dominant Europeans' "sophistication" in areas such as theories, principles, and doctrines (Battiste, 2000, p. 12) was accepted and paradigms shifted and continue to shift according to what Westerners deemed "scientific discoveries." In this process, there is a deliberate disregard surrounding the fact that First Nations and Europeans had/have two unrelated worldviews contributing to what was/is considered "real." Henderson speaks to this, explaining, "Eurocentric thought claimed to be universal and general" (Henderson, in Battiste, 2000, p. 62). This Western conception of a "universal and general" state of mind is at fault for the biased mental health approaches used in today's society. Mehl-Madrona (2003, p. 118) states the Indigenous experience: "All healing is Spiritual healing." European culture immensely ignores the spiritual realm out of pure ignorance, and claims that seeking assistance from this realm is psychotic. However, Henderson (2008, p. 45) wisely states "the essential part of our humanness is our spiritual health." Mehl-Madrona (2003, p. xix) also focuses on spiritual healing for his patients and states: "In general, miracles point toward greater freedom from the constraints of physical reality. It is as if miracles - their apparent impetus to transcend death, time, space, and matter - want to create a new environment."

Spirituality is one way First Nations Youth are progressing forward and resisting cognitive imperialism and despair. According to Andersson (2008), researchers need to focus on what strengths First Nations Youth hold because there is too much emphasis on what is wrong with them. Additionally, virtually everyone is interested to learn what

strengths they embrace; however, there is less interest when people are told what problems they have. Nevertheless this is what people like First Nations Youth are told while they are developing their strengths. Culturally-appropriate healing approaches for First Nations Youth are accepting of the fact that Indigenous resilience has a collective aspect, combining spirituality, family strength, Elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, identity, and support networks (Andersson, 2008).

According to Graveline (1998, p. 110), "It is embracing our cultural identities to resist acculturation that frames our daily struggles. Simultaneously, we acknowledge oppression and resist these forces. The oppositional struggle is one of the vital and sustainable gifts of our cultures." One form of culturally appropriate healing approaches is the healing circle. Talking circles uncover and help First Nation Youth accept lessons from all sorts of experiences and stories. Graveline (1998) establishes the idea that First Nations Youth need to heal themselves because they are the walking wounded. It is time for First Nations Youth to progress and come to terms with themselves because they have gone through so much already.

First Nations Youth who embrace and come to terms with their culture and well-being are one of the main healing methods for future generations. Andersson and Ledogar (2008), share in their research findings that talking circles are benefitting Youth, and when interviewing healers and traditional leaders separately, they were given information on community and community level factors that positively influence Youth resilience.

Archibald (2008, p. 40) shares her knowledge of balance because she was given the lesson from her grandparents that, "You'll do good in life if your hands are both full to overflowing. One hand could be filled with the knowledge of the White man and the

other could be filled with the knowledge of your ancestors.” Archibald’s (2008, p. 40) knowledge of balance is integral for First Nations Youth’s mental health; so having the tools to use from both the ancestors and Westerners, First Nations Youth will have a lot more power and will be attuned with both sides of the two worlds they now live in, so they can become strong speakers, organizers, and great helpers of the people.

With the help of scholars such as Waldram (2004), a scholar who has devoted deep attention to First Nations cultural revitalization, such as Aboriginal healing methods in mental health programs, the future looks promising. Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo (2003, p. 15) share their findings with regards to culturally appropriate healing approaches; their ideas of tradition and healing are essential to current efforts by First Nations peoples to confront the legacy of oppression and suffering that resulted from the history of colonialism. As a result of the individual and community-based initiatives, and immense political and cultural processes, First Nations peoples in Canada are involved in healing their own traditions, repairing the ruptures and discontinuity in the transmission of traditional knowledge and values, and asserting their collective identity and power.

Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo note that “in order to heal, First Nations Youth require the ability to recover and apply traditional methods of healing; this will mean that First Nations Youth need to learn their ancestor’s traditional ways” (2003, p. 16). First Nations peoples were knowledgeable of a variety of methods of healing that were embedded in spiritual and subsistence activities that included the community and offered their people systems of meaning to make sense of suffering (op. cit. 16). Unfortunately, the old teachings were disregarded by Euro-Canadian missionaries and governments. “Restoring the culture is helping First Nations peoples reconnect to both their traditions

and the contemporary world and mobilizes the use of rituals and practices that can promote community solidarity” (op.cit. 16).

Gregory Cajete is a Tewa Native American and a member of the Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico who explains the spiritual process as having five unique characteristics. “First Nations spirituality in many different groups share these characteristics. The first characteristic of First Nations theology is its inherent, yet undisclosed, complexity” (Cajete, 1994, p. 43). Friesen agrees with Cajete’s five characteristics. According to Friesen (2000 p. 12) the Indigenous Peoples did not elaborate a minutely delineated set of doctrines, but lived them out and passed them on in principle via the oral tradition and by example. Cajete (1994, p. 43) explains that the Indigenous Peoples’ metaphysical belief system did not follow an organized description; rather, it is a way of life that is nothing like a warily catalogued description of major and minor doctrines, sub-doctrines and corollary beliefs. Indigenous Peoples believe Spirituality is a process and not an intellectual structure (Friesen, 2000).

Secondly, Cajete notes “the spiritual stance of the First Peoples was premised on the idea that words and language have a quality of spirit because they can be an expression of the human soul” (1994, p. 43). Therefore, language can be used as a prayer and a song can provide powerful energy in its own way and is able to influence other energies toward certain ends (Friesen, 2000). Cajete’s third characteristic “is the belief that anything created with spiritual intent originated with that act a unique quality and spiritual power that should be respected” (Cajete, 1994, p. 43). Therefore, art is a creative process that has to be well respected (Friesen, 2000). The Fourth unique feature is “the perspective that the universe moves in never-ending invisible cycles of creation.

Knowledge of the cycles (though partial), was used to structure and express the sacred in the communal context of traditional Indian life” (Cajete, 1994, p. 43). The fifth and final characteristic explains how “there was in place the understanding that Nature is the true ground of spirituality. Father Creator and Mother Earth together provide for humankind, their children” (Cajete, 1994, p. 43). According to Friesen (2000) everything in the universe is a sacred and spiritual gift.

One important lesson about worldview is that it changes, and McClellan (1987) emphasizes that historical occurrences formulate new ideas so quickly that to some people the whole world seems to lose its meaning and they lose their direction. “In such times, the old and young find that they no longer share the same ideas about the nature of the universe and how to behave in it. Their values may differ sharply” (McClellan, 1987, p. 250). The fast changing times cause unhappiness and some turn to anger and are discouraged when the old ways are no longer as they were. Some individuals find excitement in this change and try to balance the best of both the old and new ways and this is what our Indigenous Youth need to do, with the help of the Elders and the parents’ generations.

It is integral for Indigenous Youth to have faith in the Creator, Spiritual Guides and Prayer to live through life’s challenges. I find that many Indigenous Youth are struggling today since they do not follow a Spiritual path because many say they are not religious. Spirituality is a way of life and I try to teach Youth this when I have the opportunity. According to Creative Spirits (2009, p. 3) there are numerous books that use the term Aboriginal religion when they are actually discussing Spirituality. To clarify, “Spiritual relates to people’s deepest thoughts and beliefs, rather than to their bodies and

physical surroundings. Religious is something that [...] is about or connected with religion. i.e. the belief in a god or gods and the activities that are connected with this belief, such as prayer or worship in a church or temple” (Creative Spirits, 2009, p. 3). Therefore, Spirituality is the underpinning of faith and it is the base of any religious or spiritual practice and way of expression.

Indigenous Youth are struggling because they have a different set of survival challenges than their Ancestors had in the past. Many of the youth are struggling to survive due to their imbalance because they are not connecting with their roots. According to Graveline (1998, p. 54) “The foundation, you have to know your roots, where you are coming from....You see a tree is weak, about to give up. Sometimes you find people like that. Why is that tree just barely making it? Because the roots are not strong.” Therefore, if the tree has strong solid roots it will be a strong and beautiful tree. This tree will be able to survive the cold, hot, and windy weather and people need to do the same because people have roots and are growing like the tree (op cit. 1998).

Indigenous Youth need to be conscious of their roots and know that in Aboriginal Traditional forms, the individuals’ spirit infuses their entire existence within the world (Graveline, 1998). The strong Spiritual connection helps integrate the individual as a unified entity and integrates the individual into the world as a whole. Spirituality is ongoing and individuals experience and need to experience their connection to their family, community, society and Mother Earth (op. cit., 1998).

Graveline’s (1998) interview with a Mi’kmaq source reveals that Spirituality is ongoing because Elders have always expressed that there are five physical senses and six non-physical senses: thinking, memory, imagination, dreaming, visioning, and spirit-

travelling. The senses are all gifts from the Creator and the Individual's use of dreams, visions and spirit-travelling is vital to help heal and provide insight into what needs to be done in the physical world. Furthermore, the Elders emphasize that peoples' Spirits are not trapped in the body because the Spirits can travel and are interconnected with the universe (Graveline, 1998).

Respect is essential because we are all interconnected. According to White and Archibald (1992, p. 161-62), we all have a place within the circle of life and everyone's place and role needs to be honoured and respected. We all have a certain cultural responsibility for our place in life and our role: "the storyteller-teachers share their knowledge with others; the listener learns to make meaning from the storyteller's words and to put this meaning into everyday practice, thereby continuing the action of reciprocity" (1992, p. 161-62). According to Irwin (2000) life is circular and a change often has different phases, but throughout the differences, all is related, so we must honour the relationship we have with one another and give to one another. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples' spirituality takes place through respectful listening, learning and balancing.

According to Alvord and Cohen (2000, p. 187) "If the concept of balance is extended to the community level, then communities out of balance will have problems such as gang violence, elder neglect, child abuse, and drug use." Since Western society focuses on the individual rather than the community, the consequence is that of disaster as it withers away from supporting the entire community (Alvord and Cohen, 2000). Traditionally within Native societies, youth greatly admire and respect their elders for their wisdom, and there was no such thing as orphanages because the children are cared

for and valued by all community members (Alvord and Cohen, 2000). “Apply this same concept to the national level, and it is clear that if nations do not live in harmony together, then wars are a natural result. Now in the nuclear age, the health of all humanity weighs in the balance” (Alvord and Cohen, 2000, p. 187). Only when individual have an imbalance with the natural world they become ill and clearly imbalance leads to disastrous consequences.

Indigenous healers acknowledge that balance is essential and an individuals’ journey begins with spirit, and the miracles come from the miracle of hope, purpose, and meaning because the Spirit works from those three healing aids (Mehl-Madrona, 2003). Spirituality is creating inroads into conventional medicine and psychiatrists are learning how to address Spirituality with their patients (op cit). Mehl-Madrona (2003, p. 114) reveals that “Spirit knows no denomination, and whether we pray to God, Yahweh, Allah, or Tatu-skan-skan, we address the same great mystery.” We are all interconnected and we are all travelling up the same mountain, but with different views and beliefs.

Further Literature on the Importance of Positive Identity and Further Literature on the Damage Caused by Colonization

According to Tucker (2008, p. 119) identity is only a single part of the various components people have that provides a sense of self, and is related to a person’s self-esteem. Furthermore, identity relates to many terms that are used such as, racial identity, cultural identity, group identity, collective identity, ethnic identity and self concept, but there is hardly any attention paid to defining racial identity (2008, p. 119). Tucker reveals that “identity continuity is a protective factor against Youth suicide of native Canadians

and Sami youth” (p. 120). Therefore, Youth need to take pride in their identity and believe and embrace it.

Settlers did not respect Indigenous Peoples’ way of life and identity, and they did not respect it because they were fearful of it; I was taught that when people fear something, it stops them from moving forward. According to Friesen (2000) the introduction of European missionaries brought about a huge change because the missionaries felt as though they were entrusted with “sacred truth,” compared to the “mythological beliefs” of the First Nations. Unfortunately, these missionaries believed it was inconceivable to consider that the First Nations and European systems of thought would be able to work together or deserve and have equal validity (2000). First Nations beliefs and ways of life were discredited and therefore, targeted for transformation. The European missionaries disregarded the land they were on and disrespected the spiritual ways of life by stating that it was fallacious, heathen, and in desperate need of replacement (2000). The concept that Aboriginal Peoples are primitive, uncivilized and heathen was and often still is used to justify taking away rights to land, identity, native spirituality and lifestyles.

According to Milmine (2005, p. 51) First Nation’s identity is considered to be undeniably complex, so First Nations face difficulty when trying to reconcile identities suppressed by the new settler population who forced a foreign and destructive value system on the people. Now First Nations Youth need to deal with the pressure of the effects of colonization and negative stereotypes, while also dealing with the pressure to conform to mainstream society (2005, p. 51). One of the stark realities is that European missionaries were able to brainwash First Nations into believing their ways of life were

fallacious and heathen; as a result, some First Nations people did change their mindset into believing something unnatural to their ways and turned against their traditions. I know many lost their self-esteem and hid their pain in alcohol and now in drugs as well.

The lack of respect First Nations receive is due to the hierarchical view along with the likelihood of facing non-First Nations people who are uneducated about the history of Canada and North America, and this has made racism live on. Racism is definitely a social issue and it greatly impacts the identity and health of Youth who experience its many forms. Tucker (2008) indicates that it affects individuals' mental health because it creates stress, which in turn impacts the well-being of the person; as a result, racism creates a self-hatred or hate towards the other race or both. Many First Nations Youth experience and suffer from widespread prejudice at all levels during daily life (Tucker, 2008). The issue of racist remarks is that it creates stress and depresses First Nations, which in turn affects their cultural identity and self-esteem.

First Nations Youth are growing up in an entirely different era than their ancestors, and most communities are experiencing a huge change within the social and cultural area (Friesen, 2000). The changes are seen with the introduction of the new forces of globalization that are evident in remote communities (op.cit.). The significant changes are challenging First Nations identity and have pushed First Nations Youth further away from adults and Elders creating a huge gap in cultural identity (op.cit.). Rapid changes that are evident affect the entire population, so mental health services need to work towards an individual and community level program (op.cit.). The Elders have faced the prejudice of Indian residential schools too so the impact is generations deep. Many Elders chose to use alcohol as a coping method to numb the pain associated with

their past. Furthermore, Elders would intentionally not pass on their language so their children would face less prejudice and that is why my mom and dad do not speak their Native tongue and why, therefore, I was not taught their Native languages.

According to Kirmayer (2000) cultural change is happening all over the world which contributes to marginalization, and absorption into a global economy that has no regard for aboriginal sovereignty. Where there is cultural discontinuity, there has been a high rate of depression, alcoholism, violence, and suicide that has most profoundly affected First Nations Youth (op.cit.). Indigenous people deal with a wide range of health issues that target the people at a higher rate than the general public (op.cit.). The devastating rate of suicide among many Indigenous communities is the direct result of alcoholism and violence, and the pervasive demoralization seen in communities, and is a direct consequence of the history of dislocations and the disruption of traditional life patterns and connection to the land, and a consequence of the demeaning way Indigenous people are treated, as in Indian residential schools (op.cit.). Many First Nations Youth in the Yukon are following an unhealthy path in life, selling drugs, using drugs and over consuming alcohol, which in turn leads them to serve time in institutions. Drug lords are a reality in the Yukon, especially in Whitehorse which is the capital city of the Yukon and the main hub for the surrounding communities. These unhealthy choices are a reality because Youth were not, in most cases, given the proper upbringing or simply choosing to act out in a different manner.

First Nations are connected to their land, regardless if it is on a reserve, or in their original communities, however, realistically they are far from a healthy home because many reserves/communities suffer from excessive social problems (Friesen, 2000).

Suicide rates are out of control in some reserves/communities across Canada, and alcohol and drug consumption controls many First Nations Peoples' lives (op.cit.). Also, First Nations Youth are dropping out of school and there are high failure rates; on the other hand, there is an increasing percentage of First Nations Youth who are completing high school and enrolling in postsecondary institutions, but the proportion compared to that of the national average is low (op.cit.). Also, First Nations represent a high number of individuals incarcerated in prisons per capita compared to the general population, and unfortunately, the incarceration is mainly due to mental health issues, such as alcohol and substance abuse (op.cit.). Friesen (2000) indicates that First Nations Youth represent the highest percentage in all the negative statistics.

Melanson (2009, p. 1) explains that "a sense of identity is intrinsic to a sense that life has value and purpose." First Nations Youth need direction which means that, "A healthy future hinges on the reconciliation of old wounds through cultural reclamation and self-government." First Nations Youth's future depends on healing from the past. Healing from suicide requires work and dedication because the wounds of their ancestors entail that they are also the Youth's wounds.

Kirmayer (2000), following Chandler and Lalonde (1998), explains that there is a connection between levels of community control or autonomy and suicide rates regarding First Nations peoples. There are six indicators of "cultural continuity/local control" which are: community control of police/fire services, education, and health, local facilities for cultural activities, self-government, and involvement in land claims (2000, p. 611). When these six indicators are in local control, there is a lesser chance of suicide compared to communities lacking in local control. Research is trying to unveil "why" some First

Nation communities do not have any suicides and other First Nations communities had up to 800 times the national average (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998).

According to Tucker (2008) when racial identity is demonstrated in a positive way, combined with positive student identity of Indigenous students, it enhances their chance of success in school. When there are positive examples within the educational system, Indigenous students experience a positive collective Aboriginal identity when they are working together (op.cit.). On the other hand, Indigenous Youth have a hard time adjusting to the educational system, which too often creates confusion and conflict in regard to their racial identity (op.cit.). This results in poor self-esteem about their identity and a high dropout rate in secondary and post-secondary school.

First Nations Youth need to progress towards a healthier future, and find a clear understanding of Traditional First Nations identity, philosophy, and pedagogy as they are continuously revealed in the modern world (Graveline, 1998). Colonialism has made it difficult to progress forward and has interrupted the epistemologies and pedagogies guiding our Ancestors' daily lives and colonialism continues on by dividing First Nations people from a healthy identity construction (Graveline, 1998, p. 69). It is important to move along a healthy path by unveiling the philosophies and pedagogies that were/are used to dominate us in order to better challenge the Westerners (Graveline, 1998). The truth needs to unfold because the life our First Nations Youth are leading today did not occur by choice or from some cultural defect on the First Nations part (Graveline, 1998). Having a critical analysis and cultural recovery are essential approaches to take when working to move along in a healthy traditional Indigenous way, in the current age of domination (Graveline, 1998).

In order for First Nations Youth to move forward, take pride in their identity, and progress in a healthy manner they need to have balance. According to Archibald (2008) university can put me and my Native cohort on the borders of First Nations contexts. Elders encourage their people to pursue a higher education, but mainstream education unfolds a gap between the individual who is postsecondary educated and others who are not educated in that manner. Archibald (2008, p. 40) emphasizes that “The critical rational thinking, questioning, and writing required by academe is like one of the mismatched eyes that Coyote acquires in the story recounted in Chapter 1. A First Nations way of thinking and communicating may be the other eye.” Receiving a higher education requires harder work to prove to others in their community that they still live and respect the cultural ways of life and strongly live the life where they are still at heart a First Nations person living in some form of harmony and balance (2008). Elders have said and still say today that it is integral to learn to “live in two worlds” (2008, p. 40).

Many community level programs are now incorporating traditional healing practices and these practices are spreading across diverse cultures and communities. Reviving traditional practices such as the sweat lodge ceremony has been part of the global movement to regenerate Indigenous people’s identity and find the significance of an evolving tradition in the contemporary world (Kirmayer, 2000). Kirmayer (2000, p. 614) notes that traditional healing practices “draws its efficacy from its rootedness in a local community with a shared social life.” The healing practices help First Nations Youth discover their identity, which in turn helps Youth dance within their soul by looking deep within and finding who we really are. According to Sinclair, Hart, Bruyere, 2009, p. 31),

Academics, Indigenous knowledge holders and the political leaders of Indigenous nations and settler governments engaged in the protection, recovery and maintenance of Indigenous knowledge systems must work to dismantle the colonial project in all of its current manifestations (Simpson 2004; Smith 2005). Academics, and new learners who are true allies to Indigenous peoples in the protection of our knowledge must “step outside of their privileged position and challenge research that conforms to the guidelines outlined by the colonial power structure and root their work in the politics of decolonization and anti-colonialism (Simpson, 2004, p. 381).

Another key trait of anti-colonial resistance is cultural revitalization for social transformation. Despite the physical and epistemological violence of colonialism, proponents of anti-colonialism are quick to point out that Indigenous knowledge and ways have not been substituted and replaced by diffusion (Pratt 2004: 453). Instead of the offsetting disregard of “tradition” and “culture” that is characterized in postcolonial discourses, and indeed by some colonial theorists such as Franz Fanon (1963) and Howard Adams (1999), anti-colonialism stands from a place of tradition, orality, visual representation, material and non-material cultures and Indigeneity, and validates Indigenous voice, words and languages.

Strengthening Mental Wellness

First Nations in the Stikine region began to progress forward by planning for the initiation of the renewal of community based and traditional approaches that will create wellness, self-sufficiency and prosperity for the people (Stikine Wholistic Working Group (SWWG), 2009). This initiative began March 2009, and while the planning process does take years in order to achieve tangible impacts at the community level, the *Initiating Change Project (ICG)* was planned to make changes and made changes throughout the process (SWWG, 2009).

This project implements change by using a grass roots level approach that will be a part of the planning and traditional support systems. Also, the grass roots community approach will be integrated into the already existing supports (SWWG, 2009). The ICG held meetings, interviews and ‘on the land’ discussions and they came up with nine

categories of actions to achieve community wellness and sustainability (SWWG, 2009).

These are:

- Renew traditional land based activities
- Renew “It takes a community to raise a child”
- Increase resources and supports for families
- Improve food security and self sufficiency
- Promote youth development
- Increase child and youth activities
- Support community healing
- Strengthen partnerships and collaborative efforts
- Maximize human resources and community capacity

The process of the project began in May 2002 when the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) facilitated a meeting in Prince George to introduce Aboriginal people within Northern BC to the concept of Aboriginal Authorities (SWWG, 2009). In 2008, Aboriginal authorities have found the unique needs of the communities in the Stikine region; therefore, MCFD and First Nations Leadership from Daylu Dena Council, Dease River First Nation, Iskut First Nation, Tahltan Band and Taku River Tlingit First Nation, committed their focus on planning for a new Stikine service delivery system (SWWG, 2009).

On March 3, 2009, a meeting was held in Dease Lake, where the representatives joined together to create the Stikine Wholistic Working Group (SWWG) (SWWG, 2009). Since this meeting, representatives have joined skills, knowledge and experience together to help create progress. Some of the work that has already been achieved is:

1. Developing the first ever protocol between Tlingit, Kaska and Tahltan Nations with the Ministry of Children and Families,
2. Developing new infrastructure in each community specifically for community gatherings in traditional places,
3. Sponsoring culture camps and community gatherings in each community,
4. Holding project discussions in each sponsored camp location to gain direction,

5. Increasing partnerships with provincial bodies (i.e. Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation etc),
6. Initiating positive tangible changes in the communities, and
7. Creating 5 individual community direction reports and a regional report (SWWG, 2009).

Prior to colonization, the First Nations communities have utilized traditional land based cultural activities as a means of supporting the well-being of the community's peoples. Everyone was knowledgeable about their culture, the land and nature. They went hunting and fishing and held feasts, which was a framework for community respect, wellness and prosperity (SWWG, 2009).

So, today members of the community have expressed that they enjoy being out on the land because it allows their people to 'be themselves'. In order for sustainability and knowledge of the land to continue, they need to ensure land based traditions become a focal point for the community (SWWG, 2009). Also, language, traditional practices, food gathering and preservation needs to be a huge part of their lifestyle today.

If the community progresses towards sustaining their traditional way of life by the means listed above, they will become self-sufficient, and build respect and trust within the community, but most of all it will improve their cultural connection to who they truly are (SWWG, 2009). The project took a unique approach by including all the community, not just focusing on adults for instance. It included Elders, children, youth, families and the community. For example, in order to achieve an objective, they will show youth where and how their ancestors used the land, have Elders, children, youth, families and community learn to harvest and preserve natural resources (SWWG, 2009).

Another direction the project took was to build a traditional spiritual house to have traditional ceremonies, cultural activities, language lessons and healing take place

(SWWG, 2009). The 'Spiritual House' gathering place will help achieve renewal of the community's traditional wellness activities. This house will help ensure revitalization of the community's traditional practices and wellness grows. The project noted that having a spiritual house will provide the community with a place to experience positive wellness, spirituality, support, education and of course it will be monumental in renewing traditional ceremonies (SWWG, 2009).

What I found integral about the spiritual house, was their actions clearly state that they will work with youth, Elders and the community as a whole to ensure a traditional planning process. Their entire action plan is clearly inclusive of all people and will then become a great initiative for all.

The third direction this project took was looking at the development of culture camps. These camps are vital in of renewing communities' traditional supports and wellness (SWWG, 2009). They give the people the opportunity to enjoy the land, learn cultural traditions and gain community support. Cultural connections will be maintained while teaching critical skills to live off the land. The project noted that the communities want to increase the positive outcomes of the camps, so to ensure this continues there will be an increase in traditional activities for youth (SWWG, 2009).

The direction will also help enable progress towards sustainability, so the community will gain support to then have individual family camps. Having a family camp would create support within the family and have a greater connection with each other and the land.

The fourth direction focused on renewing and celebrating rites of passage because it is an important part of human development. They are important times in one's life,

such as birth, naming, adulthood, marriage, creating life, becoming an Elder and the passing of the body. Celebrating Rites of Passage will help ensure positive self-development and keep the individual on their way in life's journey (SWWG, 2009). To get the Rites of Passage out of hiding, communities have created Direction 4 to help it come back to ensure a significant role in traditional teachings of culture, gain respect, community wellness, and societal roles and responsibility (SWWG, 2009).

Direction 5 is to 'Renew winter trap lines and teach traditional means of providing food and income'; this will help with the implementation of traditional trapping and hunting programs to support families through difficult life situations that pertain to the economic downturn (SWWG, 2009). If the community becomes involved with renewing their traditional trapping lines they will gain their traditional life skills and also gain extra income from selling of furs. Significantly, if the winter trap lines are renewed, it can be combined with winter culture camps and hunting, so youth and members will work in collaboration for their community (SWWG, 2009).

The Sixth direction is to create a traditional Sweat Lodge because Western methods of healing are not helping our people's mental wellness (SWWG, 2009). So, in order to fill this gap, the project made it clear that the creation of a Sweat Lodge will improve healing by holistic means.

The next direction is to increase fluency and learning opportunities because language is a key aspect of identity. In order to achieve a healthier future, cultural knowledge and the wisdom of Elders needs to be retained (SWWG, 2009). Community members who took part in this project's planning, explained all ages want to learn and find a way to strengthen their language, culture, and wellness in their community

(SWWG, 2009). Action towards revitalization of language is to develop more opportunities to learn the language and develop its use in the communities.

The next few directions are:

8th Direction: utilize art, storytelling and songs as traditional forms of knowledge sharing,

9th Direction: Support Elder Focused Initiatives

10th Direction: Renewal of traditional competitions that teach culture and sustainability, such as having traditional sport day, and cultural days besides only on Aboriginal Day as a means of celebrating our people. There needs to be a renewal of celebrating and having fun in transferring traditional knowledge. For example, 'who could build fire the fastest' and 'who could build shelter fastest'. This competition is fun as they run into the bush, choose the material they would use and Elders, adults and youth teach and learn in preparation for the cross community competitions (SWWG, 2009).

11th Direction: Utilize success of TRTFN Dance Troupe to encourage participation and pride

12th Direction: Encourage new drumming groups throughout the Kaska nations.

13th Direction: Develop Family Support Circles that are aligned with traditional family decision-making

14th Direction: Support Extended Families raising children

15th Direction: Establish and renew community resources and support networks

16th Direction: Develop "coming home" and reunification initiatives that welcome children, families and people back to community,

17th Direction: Continue MCFN partnership that promotes extended family supports in the home,

18th Direction: Explore concept of providing support for child to remain in the home and removing the parents when necessary,

19th Direction: Develop Iskut Tsu Tsu grandmothers group that provides power, knowledge and authority,

20th Direction: Empower, train and increase support to families and parents,

21st Direction: Additional Counselling Supports, counselling comes in many forms, (mental health, addictions, family, and more is evident and is a significant contributor to the support services available in the communities. There is a huge gap when it comes to counselling and treatment services available. There are many First Nations who are successful when they took the 'CHOICES program in Vancouver. Choices is one of the most significant experiences available for healing (SWWG, 2009).

22nd Direction: Utilize integrated Case Management for clients

23rd Direction: Develop "Activities Calendar" to inform community and refocus family planning

24th Direction: Create an Aboriginal Advocate position,

25th Direction: Centralize family programs and create "family and youth centre"

26th Direction: Develop foster care homes in Good Hope Lake,

27th Direction: Develop Kaska Family Resources Library,

28th Direction: Develop traditional hunting and food gathering activities,

(Please see Appendix C for Direction, p. 29-57).

The above initiative is something the Yukon needs to look into and should also follow because much of the directions put forward will create mental wellness within the Yukon for youth and its entire people. Direction 45 is something we need to look into to

fill the gap so as to provide services to all people, regardless of trans-boundary issues. This plan is valuable for the development of our region and something that should be done nationally in all communities.

As I had stated earlier in Chapter 1, there was a Canoe project that took place in the Yukon during summer 2009. Nineteen youth carved a 30-foot red cedar dugout canoe which was led by Tlingit Master Carver Wayne Price. These carvers were guided into a journey to discover, heal and become stronger. This framework is used in the interviews with two youth, two elders, two parents, and two service providers as the paddlers of the canoe. We are all on the journey together, and I want to present how they will steer and empower the healing journey because “we need to always remember that the waters ahead may be choppy, but the traditional teachings and the support is strong so that we can paddle proudly, far and wide through both rough and calm waters” (Chief Sam Robert, 1999, p. 19).

This Chapter has set out some of the work that has been done to note the strength of returning to spiritual traditions for healing. In the next chapter the voices of the eight people I interviewed will show how they would guide and paddle the canoe of wellness forward in unison by utilizing all generations of knowledge and empowerment.

Chapter 4. The Canoe and its Paddlers: The Participants, the Questions They Were Asked and What the Participants Had to Say

I chose the people to interview because I wanted to interview people I know who have knowledge about the history of First Nations in the Yukon and in Canada and are positive role models for First Nations Youth. I chose to interview both family members and non-family members because I thought their stories would help establish a strong *ken* or canoe of understanding. According to dictionary.com (2010), *ken* means “knowledge, understanding, or cognizance; mental perception: an idea beyond one’s *ken*” and “to know, have knowledge of or about, or be acquainted with (a person or thing) and to understand or perceive (an idea or situation).” I wanted to interview both First Nations and mixed-blood because we live in this world together and we all represent the medicine wheel, all the Creator’s creations are important. I chose the individuals that I knew would be helpful and knowledgeable of the cultural protocol which is not written; they/we already know if we do something, they/we recognize it will come back on you. Also, these people know and have a sense of who we are and know we have the responsibility to create a balance in life, know that we are affecting the future people and are borrowing the land of our future children. The following interviews begin with what the Youth had to say because this thesis is for and about Youth. They are strong paddlers of the canoe. What they had to say is followed by the Elders, a Mom & a Dad, and then the Service Providers. Together they steer the canoe. First some words about ethics and community protocols for doing these interviews.

Ethics & Community Protocols:

To interview people as a part of my research process, first I needed the UNBC ethics approval. Ethics approval is required for all research proposals that involve individuals to ensure the health and welfare of the individual is respected while conforming to certain requirements that are to be followed and are part of University research protocols. The Informed Consent Form Approved by UNBC Ethics is in Appendix A. Appendix B provides the questions I prepared to ask the participants.

I have conducted my research in a respectful, reciprocal and responsible manner and included the interviewees and community that is interested in learning about my research. I have conducted community meetings in Whitehorse to provide insight on what has been accomplished to date and to keep the community well informed of what I find. Each interviewee received an information sheet that outlined what my thesis is about and why I am performing the research before they were interviewed. Each interview was tape recorded with the permission of the person, and after I had transcribed the interview they received a copy of the interview, as I said before, so they could make additions or changes as they liked. As I said before the youth young woman added to her answers.

I provided the interviewees with a formal consent form and the issue of confidentiality and sensitivity was addressed as this is of utmost importance. The interviewees were given the choice to remain anonymous if they wanted. One participant the female youth chose to remain anonymous and was given a made up name Uyinji Natsat which means "She is Brave" in Southern Tutchone. I gave her a name in Southern Tutchone because that is my language.

The excerpts of the interviews provided in this chapter are woven through the model of the canoe and paddlers. Each paddler represents an interviewee and their experience and the canoe is what is carrying the interviewees as they paddle in unison. I hope these interviews provide a unique and beneficial insight into the way to steer the canoe of mental wellness for Yukon First Nations Youth. The following picture is of the launch of the cedar canoe made under the direction of a Tlingit master carver taken in Whitehorse on September 30th, 2009.

Figure 6.

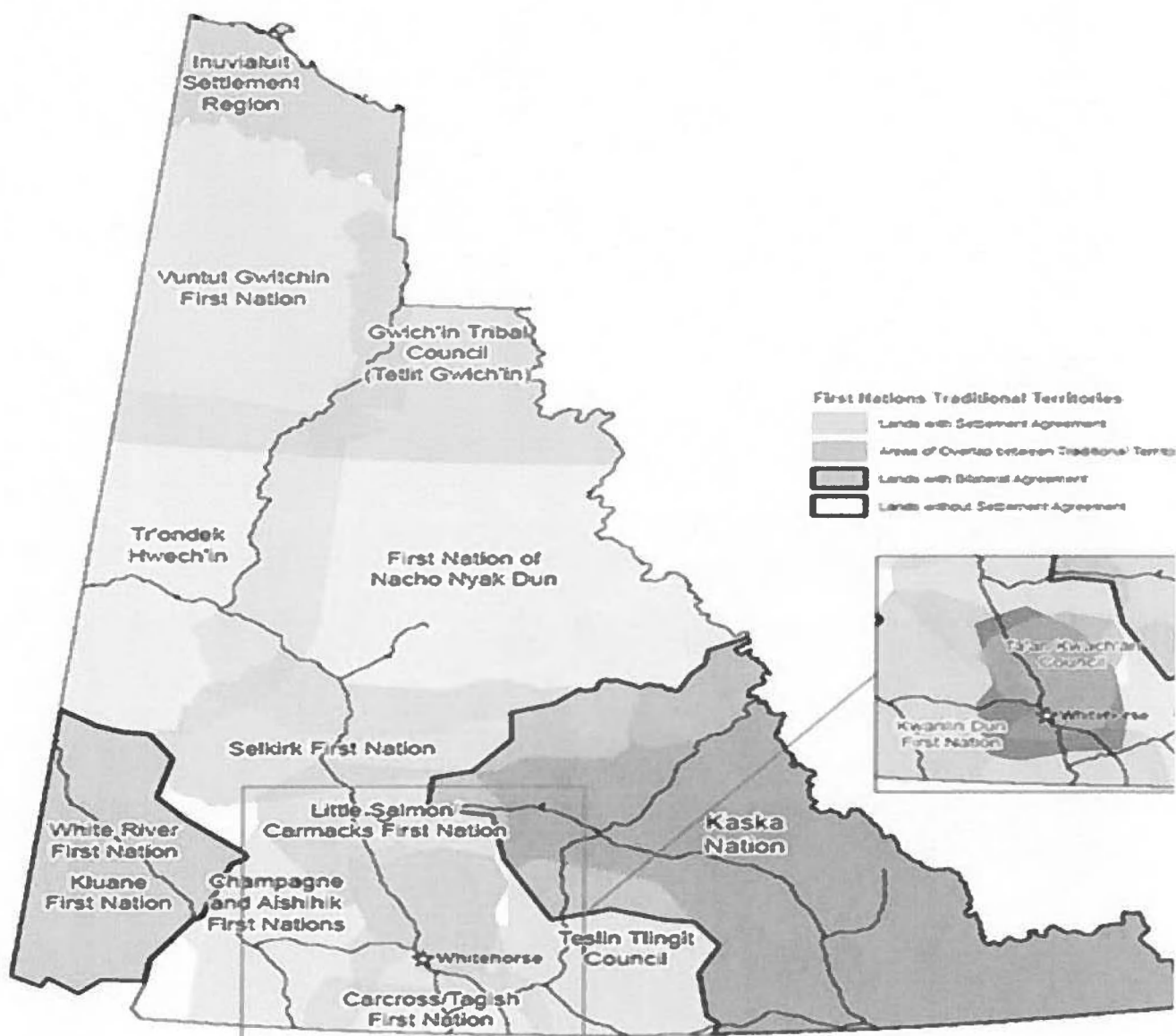


The future journey involves recognizing the dual worlds we live in and the need to succeed in the Western world and in Western education and also in traditional knowledge on the land and though cultural and spiritual teachings and experience.

I have placed the Map of the fourteen First Nations who occupy the territory, so you can see that the participants represent a large part of the range of the different First Nations in the Yukon. Randall Tetlich is Vuntut Gwitchin (North), Grandma Angel is from the Kaska Nation located in the South-Eastern part of the territory, Uyinji Natsat is from Northern BC, and is also affiliated with the inland Tlingit First Nation, Isaiah

Gilson is from the Kluane First Nation, My dad William is Kaska/Tahltan, the Mom Lori Duncan is from the Ta'an First Nation (Whitehorse), Service Provider Andy Nieman (Southern Tutchone) is from the White River First Nation, and Winona is from the Mohawk and Algonquin from Eastern Canada. Therefore, the interviews are affiliated with a wide geographical area from all over Yukon to across Canada.

Figure 7.



INTERVIEWS: The following interviews were edited to share what is relevant to the topic of this thesis. I used the material that directly relates to the questions asked, so I am not sharing all of what the participants have said. They agreed to share what appears below.

Youth

Figure 8. Uyinji Natsat /“She is Brave” in Southern Tutchone Language: Anonymous Female



YOUTH:

Uyinji Natsat, translated means (“She is Brave”) in my Southern Tutchone

Language: Made Up Name:

Uyinji Natsat is my friend, a traditional dancer, a young mother, a healthy youth role-model of Tlingit Ancestry and of the Wolf Clan. I chose her because she is a strong

young First Nations woman who has a healing story to tell and her story will be powerful for others to learn from. Uyinji Natsat represents the youth paddler who is sitting in front of the Elders in the canoe so she can listen to their guidance to make the future better for her child.

Melissa: Please tell me about yourself, how you were raised?

Uyinji Natsat: I am a firm believer that it takes a whole community to raise a child. Unfortunately that community for me was a split between the entire Canadian Western Coast. I grew up in Vancouver BC, Northern BC and Whitehorse YT. When I was 4 years old my biological mother and father split up while we were in Northern BC. My father chose to move to Vancouver and not long after my mother followed suit and I remember taking the greyhound bus to Vancouver with her. Once we arrived in Vancouver, she started a relationship again with my deceased sister's father. His name was Sunny (made-up name) and he has now passed onto the other side as well. Anyway, those are my first recollections of the abuse that followed throughout my life. I know that the abuse started when I was very young. I heard from others that I was neglected as a baby: I was left in a cold bath tub with my mom passed out, that I was left with drunken baby sitters who passed out and was caught drinking beer at 1 or 2 years of age because my milk was curdled. I spent a lot of my formative years around passed out drunks as far as I know. I don't think that I was really raised for a long time. I was just dragged along this path of dysfunction and neglect.

When I share my life story, people are surprised, because it is difficult for people to imagine that life is like that for some kids in this day and age. This all happened in the late 80's early 90's. I wasn't really raised at all for the first while obviously, and my mother was with Sunny who lived in Vancouver. I remember being in kindergarten and he placed a lock on my door. I would be locked in my room for hours at a time and I was physically abused as well. The abuse got so bad, that one time I had two of my older cousins that came to stay with my biological mother and I with Sunny. Sunny locked all four of us in my room for days. I remember running out across the house to grab a bag of chips for us to eat. My cousins are older than I am and they remember this occurrence as well.

My mom hung out with "her friends" and I spent a lot of time on the downtown eastside and I knew Hastings very well. I remember playing in the park a lot because that's where my mom and all of "her friends" would like to hang out, drinking in the park. I know that my mother drank Listerine. I remember that she drank a lot of Smirnoff vodka. She used to drink it with cream soda. I know it was cream soda because she used to share her mix with me in the alleys. Today, I can't drink cream soda for the life of me. It brings back too many bad memories. Some of my family told me that when they came to visit they found needles in her pockets. Anyway, my mother met my step dad at the bar.

My mother continued to drink, Social Services were called and I was taken away. The sense of abandonment and confusion continued as I was bounced around to 3 or 4

different homes within the span of a year or so. I was so young I thought my mother didn't want me and didn't understand why all of these other strangers didn't want me either. My schooling definitely suffered because there wasn't any stability in my home life or the schools that I attended. It was difficult for me to make friends. I remember having a few scheduled and supervised visits with my mother in social workers offices. Finally my mother sobered up and Social Services allowed me to go back with her.

My step-father and my mother were living in a one bedroom apartment in Capilano within Vancouver BC. They gave me the bedroom and they slept on a pullout couch in the living room. My biological father came back into my life and my mother gave him visitation. He lived across town in a one room bachelor pad and I remember sleeping on his couch while he slept on the floor. Those were some of the happiest days of my childhood. My Mother wasn't drinking, my Father was in my life, and my step-dad was in my life. My Mother and my step-dad bought me a Nintendo NES, my Father would take me to parks and playgrounds, water parks, bike rides and built me a dollhouse. I started to make Friends and was doing well in school. Then, my dad stopped visiting me. My mom started to drink. Step-dad was drinking with her. Social Services issued a warning to my mom and my step-dad that they would take me again. My step-dad stopped drinking, and he called my grandparents in Northern BC.

I was sent on a plane by myself to Whitehorse as an avoidance tactic, and a way to dodge social services. My step-dad and my mother didn't have enough money to send me back to Whitehorse so my Grandmother and Grandfather paid for my flight. Once I got to Whitehorse, my grandmother and grandfather were there to pick me up. I didn't have a lot of recollection of them, since I was 4 when I had left Northern BC and I was now returning as a 7 year old. I think that it was spring, and I had vague memories of a few of my cousins who I grew up with in Northern BC. I didn't remember my grandmother very well.

Soon afterwards, my grandparents and I drove back to our hometown in Northern BC and a week later my Mom arrived in back home as well. I remember my entire family was at my grandma and grandpa's house waiting to greet her. When she arrived, she was drunk... and I just remember how disappointed I was as a little 7 year old. Everyone knew she was drunk, and I felt the shame. My step-dad later explained to my family that he had sobered her up before she got on the plane, but she must have drank on the flight. A few months later my step-dad came up. My step-dad, my mom and I moved 2 houses down from my grandmother.

I spent a lot of my childhood poor, neglected, in Salvation Army clothing, being made fun of in school. In grade 4 I remember one of my friends stating "Well at least my mother isn't an alcoholic." This happened again when I was in college, and is probably one of the worst things that someone can say to a child of an alcoholic. It cuts pretty deep.

I spent grade 3 and 4 bounced between households again. My Mother and my step-dad continued to drink and I suffered the same emotional and sexual abuse when I was in my hometown previously, before all of the drama in Vancouver. This never happened from my Mother or my step-dad, but from other people that they allowed to

live in our house or people who partied at our house. I moved from my mom's house to my grandmothers, and then to my Aunt's house.

Grade 4 is when things really started to turn around for me. A man who worked for my First Nation and his wife took me into their home. They loved me very much and I actually gained a sense of belonging. I still love them to this day, I wish I knew where they were so I could reunite with them and they could see how amazing I'm doing.

My aunt was having regular visits with me. I was asked whether or not I wanted to stay and live with her or go back down south. I chose to stay with my aunt and finish my school year in my hometown.

That summer my aunt and I moved to Whitehorse. I started Grade 5 in one school and stayed at that school until the end of Grade 7. Living with my Aunt and Uncle was good. Things were stable, but in a lot of ways I still felt like a "nobody's child." my aunt and uncle never had children of their own, but my uncle had a few children from a previous marriage. It was fairly evident that he didn't want any more children. I was still lacking a father figure in my life, and my uncle did not actively partake in that role. It was always a battle with my biological mother because she wanted me back, but was never stable enough to keep me. Originally I was supposed to only stay with my aunt for 1 year, but my mother never got it together. So I stayed with my Aunt and Uncle. I was very happy with that, but my biological mother was not. There was tension between my mother and my aunt because my mother would blame my aunt for taking me. My aunt was good to me, but they were also very strict.

My Grandfather died when I was in grade 7, and my aunt kind of went ballistic. I ended up moving out and into another foster home for a few months. My Aunt and I had reconciliation and went to counseling together. I started to repress my feelings and opinions. I learned to be bullied from my Aunt and Uncle and did not express myself.

In grade 8, I heard of a girl trying to commit suicide by swallowing tons of aspirin. I don't think that anyone knows this, except for one friend, because I went to her house that day instead of school. I was so depressed that I tried to take my life, or at least hurt myself. My aunt the day before had physically abused me and I had a very fragile spirit then that was completely withered. I ended up swallowing about 30 aspirin hoping that I was going to die or at least hurt myself. I called the children's help line, and they suggested that I go to the hospital. I didn't, and at the end of the day I ended up going to day care and continued on with my life like nothing had happened. I never got caught for missing that day of school. No one ever found out what I did.

By Grade 11, my Grandmother passed away. That was a very difficult time for us all. My Aunt and Uncle moved back to Whitehorse and I moved in with them. After I graduated, my plan was to go to Post Secondary. My boyfriend and I both moved to the Prairies in October 2003 and started classes November 3rd 2003. It was a heavy course load and was intense. I saw a lot of my friends not make it to graduation, many people gave up.

The beginning of our second year I turned 19, this was in 2005. I went home for the summer break to Whitehorse without him, and I started drinking. I stayed with school

and finished my degree in spring 2007. There were some bumps along the way to say the least. Like I mentioned, in 2005, I started drinking. I also didn't know how to handle all of the attention that I was getting. I think that I went through this "ugly duckling" phase where it seemed like I blossomed like a swan and didn't know how to handle the attention. Things got a little crazy and I saw a couple of guys while I was living in the Prairies. I think that I was feeling messed up by 1, cheating on my first love and 2, by the "renewed" relationship with my biological Father, who had basically not been in my life since I was 5 or 6 years old in Vancouver. I never want to go back to that place I was in. It was a very upsetting and dark time of my life, and it definitely hindered my performance in school. I think that I sunk into a depression, I was living in fear and spent days in my room... I was afraid to go outside.

What happened to me was that Christmas of 2005, I stayed in the Prairies instead of going back to Whitehorse. I thought that it would be a good way to renew my relationship with my father. So basically my father and I spent the whole week together and almost every day we would do something new and exciting around in the city. After the Christmas break, I needed to go back to reality and back to my life of school and my part-time job. My dad went mental. He started sending me inappropriate text messages and started sending me letters in the mail with no return address. The only thing that was on the envelopes would be my address and he would cut his eyeballs and my eyeballs out of photos and tape them to the outside of the packages. I finally talked to the police after one day after I received a string of emails from my father basically stating... and I'm paraphrasing here: "I'm in Vancouver and I'm on the Lions Gate Bridge and I'm going to jump. Farewell daughter" So yeah, I went to the police because I thought that I would be responsible if he committed suicide and I knew about it. The police asked for a statement from me and asked for the back history, so I opened up to them about what was going on. They tracked down my father and it turns out that he was still living in the same City as I was. I can't explain all of the things that he would send me because many things were just so obscure and weird. Sometimes he would send me sex books and highlight parts that he thought I should read. He would email me 2 or 3 times a day. He sent me photos in the mail of his groin area. I was terrified. I started hiding out in my room. I missed classes, I failed a class. Anyways, the police didn't do anything. The police just told me "Oh you're over 16, so there's nothing we can do. You just have to file for a restraining order." It was a very difficult time in my life to say the least. I've never felt so afraid or so alone in my entire life. I was keeping everything that he was sending in a couple of garbage bags downstairs. When I finished school and moved, it was too much of a burden to carry and take that along with me, so I chose to throw it all in the garbage. I still receive the occasional package, usually mailed general delivery to my hometown, but I never open the packages. Even now, I wonder how a person can do that to their own child, and I figure that there are other women that he is out there harassing.

When I graduated from Post Secondary in the spring of 2007, it was a very celebratory time. Almost my entire family came down to celebrate with me. It was one of the best years of my life. Strange that I could say that and it was also an alcohol and drug free year. I found out one week before my graduation that I was pregnant. I was very adamant about giving my child the best life that I possibly could. I did not drink, smoke or drink coffee while I was pregnant. I drank plenty of water and took my prenatal pills, I

exercised and ate healthy. I had my child near the end of 2007, and I know that gave me the best possible gift of all: the gift of parenthood. It was so crazy though because my pregnancy was not planned and before my child, I was not very attached to children at all. My child became the center of my universe and the joy of my life. Now I am the type of person who coo's over babies and is just so in love with the preciousness of children. Being pregnant with my child developing inside me increased my awareness of the preciousness of children, and the love that I already had for this yet to be met person in my heart. I just kept looking back at my own childhood and wondering "who does that to a child?"

Anyways, I was still living in the Prairies for the first trimester of my pregnancy and after I passed my 4 month probation period at work I decided to leave for home. I was working at a law firm in my field. I remember at that time I didn't have a vehicle or a license and needed to buy my first vehicle. I ended up getting my learners license, purchasing a 1994 Nissan Pathfinder and towed my stuff all the way home. My child's dad came with us. My family accepted him for a while, but I was having a very difficult time with him. After our child was 6 months old, I started back at work. I thought "ok, we're so awesome... taking turns with parental leave for our child." It was great in theory, but in real life, I was very resentful because it is not easy to stay home and be Mrs. or Mr. Mom. When I was at home with our child: I paid my own debts and my part of rent. I don't think people realize how much work it actually is to stay home. You don't get coffee breaks or lunch breaks. It's not 9-5 it's 24-7. And it was great that he got time with our child, but he did not do a good job taking proper care like I did. He would spend the day drinking or smoking pot, I would come home from work and the house was messy and I had to cook and clean. Needless to say, I was exhausted because I was doing all of the work and he was practically doing nothing. It's like I was a single mother with a full time job and 2 children to take care of. I got sick of that pretty fast and by our child's first birthday we were definitely on the rocks. The only stipulation that I had for him was that he stop smoking pot (because he smoked every day) and he said that he would never quit... so I took our child, moved out of our apartment and in with my aunt.

I was living with my aunt for 4 months before I moved in with my current boyfriend. Our relationship moved fairly quickly, but sometimes you just have to let go and go with the flow. I was definitely in a place in my life where I had begun to mature. I was at a place where I knew my worth and what I wanted. I think more than anything I wanted forever. I wanted love and support and safety. A place where we could be a family and nurture, embrace and have a sense of security in our lives. I found that with him and I still have that. I feel very lucky and blessed to have such a good man and a good life now. We have been together for about 2 years and we have plans to marry. My child lives with my spouse and I full time and I will be applying for sole-custody soon, seeing as the biological left the Yukon 5 months ago and has chosen not to contact.

Melissa: Do you think that a lot of that trauma was because of Indian residential school or?

Uyinji Natsat: It's hard for me to say. I know that my grandparents went to residential school, as did all of my aunts and uncles and my biological mother. I know that residential schools attempted to take the Indian out of the child, and children were taken

away from their families. The whole situation surrounding residential school makes me livid... did the "white man" not think that we had the capacity to raise our own children? We were viewed as just savages and animals in our very own country. They disrupted the family nucleus, and took away First Nations pride, honor and respect.

The levels that First Nation's children were forced into assimilation and disconnected with their way of life are astronomical. What is even more discouraging is that, until recently, residential school was an unwritten chapter of Canada's history. There are many people within Canada that do not want to acknowledge the genocide and intentional suffering that occurred for aboriginal children. Today so many aboriginal communities are plagued with many social issues as a result of what happened in residential school. This makes me frustrated more than anything because people can be so quick to make assumptions based on what they see vs. what they actually know and people don't take the time to learn the history behind something or someone before they judge them.

I understand that it was traumatic and our people are still working towards healing, I know that the effects ripple into the lives of generations that never went to residential schools. I see residential schools as a national tragedy that should have never occurred. But, ultimately, I can't say why some people make it and some people don't. In this day and age we are constantly within this inner turmoil and distress. There are still many people who are ashamed of their First Nation's heritage. Those that embrace our First Nations selves, have a difficult time because it is almost as though we walk in two worlds: The traditional First Nation's lifestyle, and a modern "white" world. I know for myself, this makes me feel as though I carry twice the burden. I try very hard to be a functioning part of society, to be seen as more than the stigma that surrounds First Nation's people. I also try very hard to find a way to honour my elders and ancestors. I work very hard to honour my traditions and my cultural heritage and my connection to the land because that is my identity.

I am not a psychologist; I don't understand the dynamics of weaving people out of their trauma and back into functioning people in society. I have come to my own conclusions and I guess some individuals have a higher level of resiliency compared to others.

On the same note, I just find it difficult because I know that people turn to alcohol and drugs to improperly cope with trauma. For myself, I am cynical towards my biological mother for the things that I went through. I find myself asking "who would do that to a child?" when I think about residential school, and when I think about the way that I was brought up in foster homes. The dysfunction from residential school (and foster homes) needs to end. The ripple effect and cycle needs to end somewhere. I wish all of our people could find the strength and the ability to be warriors again, to stand proud and whole. It is sad to see people walking around with broken spirits, lost in both worlds and unable to find their way.

We need to protect our children. Children are so sweet and innocent. Once that innocence is gone, they never get it back. Children are the leaders of the future and we need to protect them, nourish them and help them to flourish.

I think that our generation being the first to not go to residential school and we're aware of what happened to people I think we're really trying to make a difference in our lives to make sure that, if we have kids now or some day in the future that we give them the best possible life that we can and just keep persevering. I don't know why some people make it and some people don't because I read over some of your questions and it focused on youth suicide which is really predominant in the First Nations community, lots of people commit suicide all over all the time and the reasons why they do that I don't know. I know that your study is really focusing on culture and your identity as a person and I think that it really comes down to just having a sense of community and a sense of belonging, like a lot of First Nations youth I think are probably feeling really lost like they don't belong anywhere, like no one loves them, like they're not going to be accomplishing anything in their lives. When I was going to college I talked to this one kid like he was a street kid, he wasn't aboriginal, but he lived in foster homes and my parents were not like really good parents and what not and he was just living on the street. I just looked at him and I didn't understand why there was a difference in my life compared to his like I was going to college I was going to get my degree, I was working part time you know I think it just comes down to just your own inner strength and not being a victim, not being victimized, laying down and putting up with whatever happened to you in your past, but like standing up and deciding like I am going to not be a victim anymore, you know I'm going to be strong and I am going to do something with my life.

Melissa: That is great, you're definitely a strong youth and it just shows that you wanted to make a change for yourself, you didn't want to live from the past, and you wanted to make your own life.

Uyinj Natsat: Yeah

Melissa: You are creating a positive life for your child. Thanks for sharing that! So how has embracing your culture helped you follow a healthy lifestyle?

Uyinj Natsat: Tlingits are a very interesting group of Aboriginal people. We were a warring people and had slaves from other nations. We are divided into 2 main clans "Wolf" and "Crow". Tlingits are a matriarchal society whereby all children follow the clan of their mother. We are always supposed to and marry someone from the opposite clan.

My grandparents paved my path towards embracing my culture. They taught my family how to live a traditional lifestyle. They were definitely leaders in our community. They reached out not just to the aboriginal community or their own family, but to everyone in Northern BC and the world. They were very good at making new friends and adopted many children and adults into their hearts and lives forever. Today, wherever I go, there are people who knew my grandparents and have a funny, happy or heartfelt story to share with me. That was just the type of people that they were, and because of that, they left a great legacy.

My grandmother always had an enormous interest in children, they were truly her reason for being and she had a huge heart. She started a camp for children. In this camp, we (as children) could discuss with my grandma things that were going on in our little lives. We would smudge, pray to the creator, and eat candy. My grandmother was such

an amazing woman. She was so very loving and giving and kept the culture alive in the children. She would teach Tlingit language lessons at the school, have summer culture camps, tell stories and help us all find ourselves and our identity. I have been out on the land a lot with my grandmother: in her garden, tanning moose hide, making dry meat and dry fish, collecting berries, plucking grouse and singeing gophers, making rosehip jam, collecting and making wild chamomile tea, making soapberry ice cream, spending time on her boat out on the lake. My grandmother passed away in 2002 from cancer.

Hunting camp is just outside of my hometown. Originally, it was used by my grandfather with my uncles. After my grandfather passed away, my entire family started to go. As more people from my family wanted to go to this area, we started to run out of room and things were too cramped. So everyone started building their cabins and now we have several cabins that belong to different aunts and uncles of mine. I am very lucky because my Mom has a guest cabin for now, but my spouse is excited to build our own cabin.

I recently heard someone from Old Crow Yukon say: "The land is my store, my church, my school, my home." And I couldn't agree more. These areas around my hometown are a part of my culture and identity. My culture is not just singing and dancing, my culture is also my connection that I have to my traditional foods and places. It is good and important that we continue to go to these sites. These places have great significance to our people that span beyond generations and generations of Inland Tlingit People. It really has a lot to do with the spiritual survival of the Tlingits. I think that my Grandfather recognized this when he built his cabin, and I am so very thankful towards him.

Melissa: Do you want to tell about your group...Your dance group?

Uyinj Natsat: Oh yeah I can, we were very fortunate to have our dance leader come back to the community and set up the dance group and to really revive our culture. Since our dance group leader returned we now have a cultural center in my hometown where we make regalia, sing our songs, work on our dugout canoe and learn other culture from our dance group leader. Every two years there is a celebration in Juneau Alaska to celebrate and dance with other Pacific Northwest native people: It is a gathering of many different indigenous groups: primarily the Tshimisan, Gitksan, Tlingit, and Haida. Every second year our dance group attends Celebration. The next celebration is going to be in 2012. There is an inland Tlingit celebration that just started in 2009. This celebration is meant to alternate years with the coastal celebration. So the next inland celebration will be in 2011. We dance at these events and also at Aboriginal Day and any other invitation that we obtain. We were welcomed at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics to perform at the Aboriginal Pavilion and also for the Mayor of Vancouver, Gregor Robertson. Next year we are going to perform at the Smithsonian Institute in New York City. We have been fundraising selling Salmon at other small events and venues so we can afford to go. Our dance leader raised a critical point at our last dance practice: and said, it is not the events like Vancouver, or Juneau or New York that really matter, it is the performances that we do at home, the potlatches that we go to and the traditional celebrations we attend. As a dance group these are the important venues and celebrations that we should be most proud of. These are our opportunities to showcase our skills and show our people how to

dance and sing our songs. It is these times that are our moments of strength and honour as a dance group; the moments when we are not in front of the world, but rather in front of our people.

Within our dance group it is also important to note the effect that we have on our spirits, the inner strength that we obtain by remembering the old ways. Our dance leader talks about dancing and letting the spirits come into your body and allowing the spirits of our ancestors dancing through you, that the dance becomes almost a trance and being open to that spirit to enter you and guide you. There is a real mysticism involved with traditional dance that I am holding back from... that I haven't embraced yet. I also have heard about your regalia becoming a part of who you are, a part of your spirit. It's actually like that for any clothing that you own, part of your energy and your spirit becomes a part of that garment, it is a part of you.

Melissa: What made you decide to join a traditional dance group or were you always a part of that?

Uyinj Natsat: I decided to join the dance group because I think it's really important that my child grows up with that. A lot of the culture was lost and it would be nice for my child to have a culture from birth all the way until the end I guess, the end of life. So I joined the dance group because I wanted my child to be in the dance group, and so my child has been part of the dance group since six months old of age. It's nice to be in the dance group because a lot of people choose a healthier lifestyle, probably like 90% of our dance group doesn't drink or drug or do anything like that.

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When my child was born, I joined the dance group and started attending more for their sake than my own. My child has been in the dance group since 6 or 8 months old. They couldn't even walk then, and I would hold my child in my arms as we danced together. My child has grown up with the culture and is going to be three soon. With the dance group I have seen my child start to really blossom and my child loves to sing our traditional songs. My child is getting very good at dancing as well. I am happy that at 3 my child is immersed into our Tlingit culture.

Melissa: And it helps you learn your language too right?

Uyinj Natsat: I'd like to learn the Tlingit language more because it's such a huge part of your identity and it comes back to that sense of belonging and I think a lot of youth are lacking that, so it's nice. There are a lot of youth in our dance group and some of those kids don't have very positive role models in their lives, so they come to the dance group

to be around people who support a healthy lifestyle choices and they can embrace part of their identity and have a sense of belonging and a lot of times when you live in a smaller community there is lots of family politics that go on there is lots of like band politics and everything, but we try and just leave that outside our dance group because we're a dance group and we're a collective group, it doesn't matter what family you come from, like whatever kind of band politics are going on, we just totally dismiss that and we really have a sense of unity.

We have learned our language through our songs. A lot of learning Tlingit has been self-study and some have indulged themselves more into learning the language than others. We have started Tlingit Language classes for our dance group, trying to ensure that we can learn Tlingit, hopefully we will learn 50 words in the next year? I think that is the goal, but I am not too sure. So far, I am trying to learn a new phrase ever so often. I learned how to say "Gunalcheech haat yee aadi" which means "Thank you all for coming" I also try to find online language plans so I can teach my child how to speak Tlingit. Again, it is something that I want my child to grow up with... I want my child to have a strong sense of identity and roots knowing self-worth and way in the world. I feel very blessed that I have the opportunity to teach my child the culture and give this gift to such an important person. Also teaching is one of the best ways to learn... by teaching my child Tlingit I will also be teaching myself. I want my child to know many languages, when they start going to school. I want to put my child in French immersion and also into Spanish language classes.

Melissa: Sounds like a really inspiring and healthy traditional dance group and I think all our people should embrace in learning their traditional songs and dances like you and your group. What would you like to see done in the Yukon for First Nations Youth, especially those suffering from mental health issues?

Uyinji Natsat: "Mental Health" issues are sometimes just caused by drugs or drinking. That's just me being blunt and honest. We need to educate our youth and properly parent our youth so they don't want to do drugs/drink. I would like the youth to also know themselves and have a strong sense of identity. I am a strong advocate for healthy families. Further than that, aboriginal people are survivors of genocide. We were stripped of our culture, our heritage and our identity. Life can seem bleak when it lacks a sense of direction or purpose.

For the Yukon First Nations, I would like to see more cultural programs. More time spent with elders, more time out on the land, more dance groups, more cultural and identity awareness. More job shadowing, more sports, more counselling.

Melissa: So who are your most inspirational teachers in life?

Uyinji Natsat: It is quite obvious that my biggest inspirational teachers in life were my grandparents. I am also inspired by people who are real catalysts for social change. On a global scale: I look towards and am really moved by Ghandi, Mother Theresa, Che Guavera, Princess Diana, Obama, the Dalai Lama, pretty much anyone who has implemented a lot of change in their lives and also in the lives of others. On a territorial scale: I am very impressed with and look up to our former senator Ione Christensen, Current MP Larry Bagnell, current AFN –Yukon Chief Eric Morris, current CYFN Grand

Chief Ruth Massie, former CYFN Grand Chief Ed Schultz, Current KDFN Chief and lawyer Mike Smith, former leaders Elijah Smith, Dave Joe, Paul Birkel. Many of these people are still alive and I am thankful to have them in my life. It is good to have role-models and inspirational people who you can find mentorship from.

My other inspirational teachers are our ancestors. I am really fuelled by the fire of our ancestors. I am fuelled by their legacy, by their quotes, beliefs, their stories, and their language. It is my legacy, it is my turn to learn the stories and create new ones, to speak my language, to embrace my culture. I am so very blessed to come from a very influential family. My great, great grandfather said: "You got no land to give to me – This land belongs to me" and my grandfather was always saying that we need to love one another and share that love.

Melissa: In your view, how are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in because like a lot of our friends and a lot of people we know, like us especially, we live in two worlds, we live in the Western and our own world, right? So how do you think we can balance the two worlds in a healthy way?

Uyini Natsat: It is so difficult to answer this question because I have been thinking about this question a lot lately and there are no easy answers. Being an aboriginal person can definitely be a double-edged sword. It definitely feels as though you do walk and live in two worlds, the "white" world and then our "native" world. We need to embrace our identities as native people and also to work together with modern society to protect our ways of life. As we expand our families we need to teach our children to be flexible and adaptable so that they can succeed in both areas of their lives. They need to be taught their own value and have a respect for the way of their people and the contemporary lifestyle. I believe for myself it was a high level of resiliency. I am very resilient and I don't know what fostered that in my life, but I have it and it's a quality that I admire about myself very much. I believe that if I didn't have that resiliency that I probably wouldn't have made it.

Keeping a connection to the land is important, so if you live in the north it's easy for you to go out hunting or fishing or be self sustaining, go berry picking, just like people have in the past, you know, because that's also a part of our history is our life living off the land. I think once we break that connection and lose that part of our identity then it's like losing a piece of ourselves. When I lived down in the Prairies I saw how First Nations people lived down there and they call themselves "Safeway Indians" cause a lot of people that I met didn't go hunting, they didn't live off the land, they just I don't know, it wasn't a part of their identity anymore. I think that if youth can find people, if you go away to school and find people in the city, just not to lose that sense of community because I think that's what happens to a lot of youth and why they don't make it in postsecondary is because they live away, they lose their sense of self because they lose their sense of community, lose their sense of belonging and they don't really work alone because family is so important and community is so important in a First Nations lifestyle.

Melissa: Do you think it is easier for Youth here than if you lived a more urbanized way?

Uyinj Natsat: Well, even if you live in an urbanized setting, just making sure you have access to the First Nations community would be good because then you have access to at least traditional foods. I contacted First Nations and we'd have dry fish and like dry meat and stuff and just having that connection to the land somehow, present in your life is so important. And as well learning your language and your culture, learning your songs, however you can find a way to connect with the past.

Melissa: What is or can be First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention? I remember you touched on suicide, so do you have anything else to add? Do you think spirituality would help mental health and in turn help suicide prevention, or knowing your culture, do you think that would help?

Uyinj Natsat: I think so because living a cultural lifestyle also means walking the red road right, which means living a clean and healthy lifestyle because a long time ago you know we didn't have alcohol and drugs and it was always used as a way of suppression and there's actually I read a little bit about that being not just for aboriginal people, but for the greater spectrum of Canadian society and society, present day society, being a bit of conspiracy where the government makes money off of alcohol and tobacco taxes, we know that all these things are not good for us, and the government knows it isn't good for us, but it's still available and it's like just the government allowing people to continue these things we all know isn't good for us anyway. You know I don't understand why it's still endorsed and still allowed.

I believe that the youth suicide rate is higher in First Nations communities because they are faced with the reality that even the basic needs are not being met, basic needs like water, shelter, and food. Then there is a lack of direction and a lack of support from families. First Nations children probably internalize all of their struggles and believe that they don't have what it takes to make a difference, that things will always stay the same and that there is no hope. Definitely reconnecting aboriginal youth to their culture will give them a sense of community and a sense of direction. Once again, I cannot stress the importance of being drug and alcohol free. I think that if their parents, and their aunts and uncles could stop then there would be less abuse for the younger generations. They need to know that there is hope and that they are safe. Children thrive when there is stability and structure and love. When one of these key components is missing I could see them going the wrong way and not making the right decisions in their lives.

And in the first question, you were talking about that duality about having to balance your traditional First Nations lifestyle with this modern day society, which is a white, predominately white based system, and trying to find a way to satisfy both worlds and I think that First Nations youth, I know for myself, sometimes it seems like maybe you are the only First Nations person in your office, you're the only, for myself I feel like I'm young I am a woman and I'm aboriginal which gives me an advantage, but it also gives me a setback because I am dealing with issues I feel that other people don't have to deal with, it feels like everybody lives such a normal happy life, and you know I have my alcoholic mother calling me, you know these substance abuse issues just keep coming up and it's like how do we find the balance, how do we pretend like everything is okay when it's not. You know I work really hard at trying to have a work/life balance, and that's kind

of where I'm at, with where I am at in my life, always trying to find this work/life balance and like keep everything level and not get too stressed out when I get sick and it's really difficult. You know it's really hard like trying to find out exactly who you are, where you belong.

Melissa: Do you think that knowing your cultural teachings help you maintain a healthier lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?

Uyini Natsat: Yes, and part of knowing my cultural teachings comes from knowing my elders. They are the ones that I have primarily learned my culture from. Also, just really my connection to the land like just being able to go onto the land and escape from the city or escape from Whitehorse and it's nice to just get out and find a little bit of sanity again because sometimes it could just feel like a rat race, you know you're always jumping to the next goal or objective in your life. Definitely, when I get a chance to go out on the land and connect with the ancestors either through singing and dancing or walking on the trail or going fishing or hunting or whatever, any of those activities really help me for clarity, balance, and just having the structure of community in your life that you can connect with and understand what you're going through.

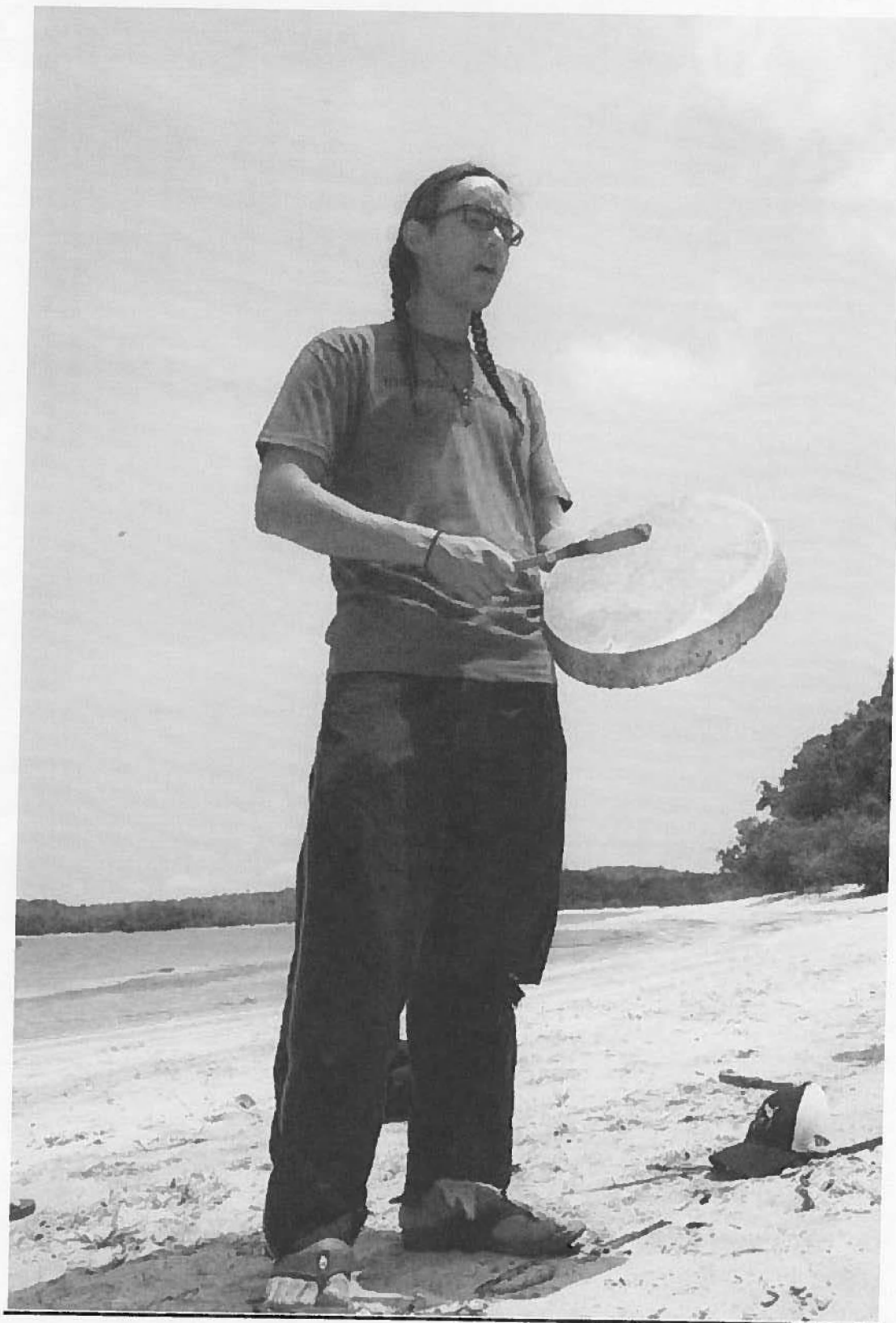
Melissa: Do you think that culturally appropriate healing approaches will be beneficial for First Nations youth in the Yukon?

Uyini Natsat: It comes back to that duality that we are faced with on a daily or even hourly basis. In order to succeed in the world, we definitely need to know who we are. So yes, culturally appropriate healing would be good. It's good for people to get out on the land and to sing and dance, make regalia and carve. Anything that helps reconnect with who they are as Aboriginal people. I think we need more of a connection to our Elders. Ever since I lost my grandparents, I don't feel like I have a connection to any Elder, but Elders are really predominant in our culture, in our society, in our way of life. And I think that it's the Elders that need to lead a cultural revival and it is really going to help people, you know, just like I said, so they can help find their sense of self.

Melissa: Yeah, Thank you for sharing that. So how do you think traditional First Nations ceremony helps?

Uyini Natsat: There have been numerous studies completed on our Elders by the heritage departments within First Nations. We need to have this information readily accessible because it wasn't just created to sit on a shelf somewhere. There is a lot of knowledge that we need access to. This is one project that I am working on with my spouse is to digitize the cassette tapes and VHS archival footage for his First Nation. There is a lot of traditional knowledge that has been gathered and now it's our jobs to listen to it and learn from our Elders from long ago.

Figure 9. Isaiah Gilson (Kluane First Nation) Male Youth



Isaiah Gilson: the Male Youth. My friend Isaiah Gilson embraces his First Nations spirituality and traditionally dances and sings traditional songs and he is a healthy youth role-model. He is from the Kluane First Nation. I chose Isaiah because he will provide a powerful perspective for First Nations Youth. He graduated from the First Nations high school in Edmonton and moved back to the Yukon to contribute to his people because he is a strong believer in First Nations spirituality. Isaiah represents the strong youth paddler sitting across from the other youth and being directed by the Elders and other paddlers.

Isaiah: My name is Isaiah Gilson, born and raised in Whitehorse Yukon, my band is Kluane First Nation. I am a Southern Tutchone of the Crow Clan.

Melissa: Isaiah can you tell a little about your story of living a healthy lifestyle

Isaiah: Being aboriginal in general we grow up around I guess the fact of being the victim almost, we're always told that if we grow up on a reserve, or growing up in the community or not, well sooner or later we come to realize that we're the victims of drugs and alcohol or these different things and a lot of people like to play the blame game. So growing up, I grew up a lot around I guess drugs and alcohol and I really noticed it, how it changed peoples' character. I didn't really like what was going on as a kid, like I didn't, I felt I guess not really compelled to really do it, as a kid peer pressure didn't really bother me because I was always my own character, my own person, and I know I didn't need to do these certain things just to fit in, people did like me for who I was in high school, I was never the most popular person, but people always remembered who I was and because I didn't really try and impose trying to fit in to a certain lifestyle or anything else, I was myself. I didn't try to be the hip hop guy, the rapper, the gangster, or be whatever.

I went to a school in Edmonton, Amiskwaciy Academy, and at the school they teach a lot of aboriginal culture, so going to the school I learned a lot about aboriginal spirituality. Of course I did experiment with drugs and alcohol somewhat and I am glad that I did because of course now I have learned from what was going on and I can now fully understand what people go through and why there is a need for those drugs and alcohol for people to take them because it is an easy escape of life, either their life is too boring or and they just don't basically put any energy into their life to make it worthwhile. So it's more of just me, socially I can fit in. I don't need alcohol to go to a party and try to make it more interesting and today's generation, that's a big part of socializing today is that youth believe they need alcohol to I guess loosen up to fit into the crowd to really be more expressive. I find I like living a more healthy lifestyle

because I find when I drink it just it really changes my mindset into a more really negative way and I don't really like what it turns me into of course, I get more stubborn and it just doesn't make me feel good inside just my spirit, because I do like practice smudging and the ceremony, sweat lodge ceremonies and things like that. So it really conflicts with you, your soul, your spirit, when you try to do those things and I also consider myself I guess a drum holder, I do have a few songs that I do sing. And for me to carry out that duty I have to live a healthy lifestyle or else I'm being a hypocrite to say these songs can be really healing for some people, a lot of people I've sung my morning song to or the morning song, not exactly my song, some people got really emotional and it was very like a healing song for them and so if I'm not healthy enough to sing that song then what's the point. So that's my take on a healthy lifestyle, it's not something I need to escape from it's like you know life is life, you got to find the joy itself.

Melissa: That's great, thank you! What do Yukon First Nations youth need to do in order to heal from the intergenerational trauma or multigenerational trauma of Indian residential school?

Isaiah: I believe everything starts with the family, or either with the youth, if we, if the young person is having, has like a troubled family, everybody has problems, if there is one person in there that is willing to help and is healthy enough to do that then slowly the change can be brought within that family.

I believe we need to bring back a lot of our spirituality as Yukon First Nation Indians. As Yukon First Nations Indians or Yukon First Nations we didn't really have or we're not too big on the sweat lodge or things like that, we did have them, what I'm learning is that we did do these ceremonies, we did sweat baths too, they were more used as a cleansing, not really a spirituality but we did also use them for ceremonies but it's when something really heavy happened within the community, something really bad, and so they would conduct sweat lodge ceremony. But comparing them both, sweat lodge and to the south the Plains Indians today to northern Indians up here, the plains are very strict on protocol how they have to operate the sweat lodge its very organized, up here it's a bit more loosely based. And so for myself what I believe we need is to bring back spirituality 'cause we say we are very cultural in the Yukon, and we do these things but it's not getting through well enough. Sure we are beautiful people, but we need I guess a backing on healing, such as those songs, such as those ceremonies, so if we bring back more ceremony to life, not exactly being sweat lodge, or just as we see life as a ceremony and live a more healthy lifestyle, we'll be better. So for youth to reach that I believe it just has to be shown among peers such as a young person like myself showing people, this is what could be done, and it's giving youth the knowledge, the education of what alcohol does. We're not going to stop most of them by saying "this is what drinking does, it's bad because" and just going on about it and we can make a good point, the youth can say, "You know like I really relate with that," but they're not exactly going to stop drinking right then and there, its' just something that at least if they're aware of what's going on and when they do make it to that turning point in life then they can turn around on that.

But it's just not residential school, and so the residential school, we're in the cycle of families that are stuck in like drinking and just because their parents went to residential school or they went to residential school and so their parents or themselves still have those ill feelings and it passed on to their children, it has to be something we're okay with now. I have a friend, she went to residential school and she halfheartedly sometimes jokes about it like you know it's over now like 'we should stop crying now' and its way past that point of what really happened.

And a friend was telling me he heard a speech about a holocaust survivor, he's telling his story and about how horrific the events that he went through and then by the end of it when he came out of it he told himself he had two choices, he can look back every day always thinking about what happened, or he can go moving on in life, and then he said there isn't a day that goes by that he doesn't think about what happened, but he looks past that with the family that he had with his grandsons and granddaughters, with his sons and daughters, with his family, so he moved on with that. So it's always a choice: we need to be really comfortable with ourselves, and so it's about that life skill of just I guess opening up and not really being so closed and embracing our culture, because our culture is very, very beautiful especially and for all aboriginal people across Canada or across the worlds are basically in general our culture is a really spiritual thing about respect for the land, and for what it has to offer you, cause if we respect the land and in turn it's going to respect us. That's where we get our food and so I know for Yukon First Nations we did have that spirituality. I guess we knew everything had a spirit, and so we left everything alone, we respected the mice, we respected the ants, the spiders, the fish cause we knew we needed them, and so they would also in turn if we left them alone they would leave us alone, and it wouldn't create a problem, and so people are very respectful a long time ago before I guess Western culture came in and started bringing in the idea of materialized wellbeing, that we need so many things in life to be happy, or basically creating happiness as an object that can be I guess be obtained by money or I-Pod or I-pads. But as for us as Aboriginal people, we used to say, you know, just what we need, we don't exactly need all these things to be happy. There are a lot of stories about aboriginal people during the gold rush, knowing where a lot of gold was, but they did not have no need for that, what are they going to do with it, what they needed was basically just food and shelter, and that was all out on the land, and they were content like that and they were happy, but when this I guess Western culture came in it kinda really transformed that and it's just about finding a balance I believe so it's about Aboriginal youth finding about who they are, where they come from, and also living today's culture I guess getting a good job, a good education.

Melissa: Right, I agree!

How are we going to introduce First Nations Yukon youth to culturally appropriate healing approaches?

Isaiah: We're going to have to go into the community, and I believe we have to have the mindset, way of thinking of the Elders because a lot of people are very stuck on I guess... 'we have to keep our culture exactly how it was', so this is how it is, and there is just that barrier and then Youth are not communicating with Elders and Elders aren't really

communicating with youth, and they don't know really why, they don't know where to find common ground, like how are they going to do this... and so for myself, what I believe, I am going to take what I can from my culture, the roots of it and I'm just going to transform it as I see fit, cause it has to do of course with today's culture, with I guess, well yeah, Western culture living in today's mainstream society.

And so culture has always been a thing that is always changing every day, it's going to be different than yesterday and so as the days go on, as the years and centuries, whatever, it's always going to be changing, and so youth really have to just find out, take those roots and transform it how they want to, but of course they have to have a very healthy mindset, a good lifestyle and just a good common, good knowledge of who they are in their area, in their culture, so they can transform it into a more positive way, cause if it's taken into I guess the more negative ways, such as stereotypes, and I guess the rough lifestyle that people, well not really rough, well just rough in the sense that it's like more about drugs and alcohol, and they live I guess the most disgusting lives, almost like if they live in a really rough home, their house is really dirty, they don't take care of their things, they don't take care of themselves, and so if they can't take care of themselves how are they going to transform that culture to keep it as a beautiful thing. And so, I guess barriers need to be broken down with Elders and youth and they need to be brought together, people or someone needs to facilitate saying 'this is what we want to do', 'this is what your job as youth is going to be' and 'as Elders this is how you're going to pass on the knowledge'. So Elders can't push too hard, but youth have to be very open-minded with what's coming to them too.

Melissa: After you graduated from the First Nations High School in Edmonton, you moved back to the Yukon. What are your goals for First Nations Youth, the people in the Yukon?

Isaiah: Well right now I'm doing a lot of youth things, I am part of the National Youth Council for the Assembly of First Nations, and so I am the representative, the Yukon male representative. Then there's a female representative.

When I was, pretty sure I was about 15, I made a goal for myself, saying that I wanted to help Aboriginal people because I really did stick out and a lot of people like to call me an old soul because I'm very knowledgeable of our culture, very respectful, and very open minded to I guess everything, even if it is a negative thing there are going to be some positives within it, so we have to examine that.

I've always wanted to do that and I just want to help people in general, I'm not going to close myself off to non-aboriginal people if they come to me. It's about being together and just working as one, so when I was done I had a plan of wanting to travel and work, but the first year I came back, it'll be a year in October since I've been back, I didn't really do much, I was just kind of hanging around, doing my own thing. I've been wanting to save money to travel, but for the time being I want to try to do a lot for the community, and try and get some momentum going and in a more positive direction because things I believe are moving much slower than they should be. I think it can be

picked up a lot more if people just start picking up the slack, if they really make it their cause or whatever, their goal for the community and really make it their priority, and then it can be reached, but a lot of things come in handy of money business and that is when it gets controversial and it's kind of hard to get these things going and of course with small communities, or even bigger communities, there's always that like working in the band office, working with family, and people just kind of taking the wrong outlook on it, sometimes people being non-professional about it, taking favouritism to those certain employees, if they're the chief, or they're in a high position and their family members are in a lower position they're showing those favoritisms to them, it's not going to work that well. And then again it comes back to Western culture or about ourselves, about being selfishly to get to the top and it doesn't really matter who we step through because it's a dog eat dog world. But I believe it's one thing in life, everyone wants to be happy, so my goal at the moment is I really want to try to do a lot for the community to implement ideas in people like saying 'you know we can do a lot better than this' because I believe if in today's culture in general, not just my own, but just in today's society, I believe we do have the tools, the education and the technology to get rid of a lot of suffering that there really is, so at the moment, I am just going to try to do the best for my community and the community of Yukon right now, and of course work on a National level and offer what I can also to the National Youth Council, to other provinces and/or territories. But other than that, after I am done that for about a year, I'm just going to do my own thing and travel and get my own education, self education.

Melissa: Right, you mentioned to me in a previous conversation that you're interested in providing sweat lodge ceremonies! Do you see that as being one of your goals?

Isaiah: Yes, this year I'm going to be talking to a person up in the Yukon that does sweats because like I said the styles are a bit different, but also I do want to learn the original style that I learned in Alberta, it's almost like training, I still have to approach both of them and ask them if they would be able, would want to teach me about these, but I think, like I said, it is something that is much needed in the community because it is a very powerful thing and it brings us together, and it's not that say church or religion is a bad thing, it's just it's it is viewed as a bad thing. But I believe you know just take the things that you need from it that helps you. Sweat lodges I find are a more traditional thing that more aboriginal people can relate to, in a more deeper level versus the church, or what have you, and so I really want to help implement that, so it can be put in the community and it can help start picking up slowly, so the healing process can begin and I believe people can realize the power of the mind, and what you can do. It's not really, like I said, you don't need all these things to be happy, if you're making just ends meat and if you have food and shelter, if you can be happy and content then it's just being comfortable with your boundaries, happiness is something that's not just on the outside, but it's within, and so you feel how you want to feel, and even though things will always be tough, and you will always have those problems, there is always going to be a solution for a problem so it's not something we should worry about, and if there's no solution for it there's really no point in worrying about it, so it's just going on in your daily life and just trying. I do want to help bring back sweat lodge up here, so I can help just bring it to

the community and people can really experience it. So that's where I hope to lead the sweat lodge if it brings a lot more healing, positivity within the community.

Melissa: Thank you, that's great. How can First Nations Youth Develop and Sustain their individual and collective identity in the two worlds they live in?

Isaiah: Well it's about that balance, you have to find the most common ground, for myself I'll be happy and content if I were just to go out in the bush and build a cabin and just stay there, if I have shelter I would be happy with that because it would be a very simple lifestyle. But the qualities that I had from a young age I wanted to develop and put into the community, so for youth it is just really about understanding yourself and the power of the mind, and so once they help understand what they want in life, and what they want to do, they can find that balance and can lead careers or jobs working within jobs such as a cultural liaison, programmers or whatever and putting it in the community or offering it to non-aboriginal people.

It's just knowing who you are, and talking with their elders and knowing where they come from, and so I myself I like to conduct my life as everyday is a ceremony, so every day I try to start every day off with smudging and ending every night with smudging. So it's just these more positives to start the day with the positive manner and I end the day in a positive manner, but for youth, they just need to find that balance of that cultural knowledge. I myself where I'm at too, I've been approached a few times because of my cultural knowledge, it has got me a job and has got me noticed, so I'm finding that balance of using it for a job, but also just knowing who I am and yeah... having a moccasin on one foot and a sneaker on the other.

Melissa: Right. So you said you're a youth representative for the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council, and being on that council you represent Aboriginal youth, so around Canada there are a high percentage of Aboriginal youth who are suicidal. What is or can be the Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?

Isaiah: Like I said for the spirituality, it hasn't really been brought back, it is talked about, but it isn't really presented in depth and I hear people say 'have respect' and it's kind of ended there. We must have respect for those animals, have respect for the land, but they don't really talk about how to respect it, or why to respect it, well almost it should be known why to respect it.

I guess it is almost as youth we always go through those changes in life, we find things really difficult and we get to a point, well almost a breaking point for youth, I myself almost went to that breaking point when I was sixteen, I thought like you know 'this just sucks and if I can kill myself it would just all end', I wouldn't feel this pain, or have to go through this trouble, but I was smart enough not to do something because I knew how devastating it would be to my family and all my loved ones, and so for youth to really refrain from that is to really surround themselves by positivity, by good friends that they can talk to because it gets to a point where a lot of things are withheld on the inside, and so when we hold those sad things or the negativity and don't really let it out of ourselves

it starts eating away at our mind, at I guess basically, our soul. So we get lost and we find that people don't understand us, but it's not the first time that this has happened and of course there is always going to be someone out there that can help relate with you, and you can talk to them, or talk to friends. So I see spirituality also as not really relating to culture religion, culture and religion kind of heritage. I know for aboriginal people like our culture is not like a religion, it's just a lifestyle, how we live, and so it's like that, but also spirituality, I guess religion kind of like helped implement spirituality by being a good person, but you don't actually need it, religion helps facilitate it, you don't exactly need religion to find spirituality, it's just about the good qualities of being a good person. It's just people finding out about themselves and being good people and they can make it through those struggles and troubled times, not being understood, or at least thinking they're not going to be understood. But of course there is six billion people in this world and I'm sure if anything, there's at least one person that's going to understand them if they go find that person, and then talk with them or talk with their friends, then it just kind of helps let out that sadness or that negativity that's eating away at them that is leading them to suicide.

So it's also about getting more comfortable too because a lot of people we have are not really emo or punks, but they're kind of like those outcasts in school, that wear like the big black boots, the big black trench coat, like just all the black clothes and they carry that with them and their kind of the loner and also they can be a little weird, but it's not that people are weird, it's just that we don't understand them enough to really know where they are coming from, so it's just really talking with people, and I myself I know people from all walks of life, I know punks I know rappers I know hip hoppers, I know metal heads, and I don't really discriminate who they are it's just they are people like anyone else, it's just their lifestyle. Whatever to wear baggy clothes, or wear black clothes or wear whatever, but it just doesn't really distinguish them as being a human being.

Melissa: To conclude, does knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from mental health issues?

Isaiah: Oh for sure, like I said, when I was going to school in Edmonton I found a lot about aboriginal spirituality and it just kind of helped as a base line and a lot of problems that I faced in Edmonton, I knew the right answers and knew what I had to do, and so I kind of worked things out by myself most of the time, and sometimes I would approach my teacher and he would reassure me and give me a little bit of advice, but it's something that I would already know, so I would really look into myself. Looking back on what I've learned from all the teachings of all these ceremonies and they helped guide me and so my culture has helped me a great deal with who I am and I'm very grateful for all the teachers and all the people I've met who have taught me these things and so yeah for sure it has helped me.

Melissa: Great, thank you Isaiah. You're very unique and special and a good leader for First Nations Youth today. Thank you for your time.

Figure 10. Randall Tetlichí (Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations): Male Elder



ELDERS:

Randall Tetlichí: Male Elder. Randall Tetlichí is a family friend, and a spiritual healer/sweat lodge conductor. He is Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations from Old Crow. Randall works for the Yukon College as the Cultural Development Facilitator where he supports students and plans traditional First Nations cultural events at the college. I interviewed Randall because he is an inspirational individual in my life and will provide powerful knowledge for this thesis and for others to learn from. He is a well rounded, respectful Yukon First Nations healer. He is sitting in the canoe and guiding the Youth as well as the rest of the individuals in the canoe, his words help ease pain from mental illness and he heals with his words which help guide the canoe to its destination of a safe harbor by helping it be paddled in unison.

Randall: I'm Randall Tetlichí, I'm living in Whitehorse having coffee here at Tim Hortons. (Laughing)

Melissa: (Laughing) Where are you from?

Randall: I'm from Old Crow Yukon. Old Crow is the northern Yukon, I am from the Gwitchin Nation, and I have worked all my life with people in the healing field.

Melissa: Where did you learn the sweat lodge ceremony?

Randall: I learned from my 110 year old God Mother in Old Crow. Learned there in Old Crow and gained more teachings from Elders throughout the Yukon and across Canada and North America. I learned all my life about the ceremonies. The northern style of ceremonies is different all over, but the prayers are all the same. I learned and use all styles, there are lots in the Yukon too, I was curious about other nations, and so I travelled to learn. I have been leading sweats for thirty years. The north has vision quests and I still use those ceremonies.

Melissa: Okay. Awesome! I would like to hear your story about how you have come to be a healer/helper?

Randall: Yeah, since I was small growing up, the elders used to talk to me, and talk to me day in and day out and they teach me about the traditional ways of life. How to be connected to the universe and what the Creator created. They taught me about all the different laws and the Creator's law, natural law, the tribal laws, they also teach me about the earth and what we use from the earth, they teach me how to collect things, harvest things, store things, clean, clean what I get from the land and how to store it and how to prepare it for food and they taught me some of the songs and I listen to the songs all the time and they teach me them songs. They taught me about stories and legends of the Gwitchin tribe and they taught me how to be connected to the Creator and the Creators helpers, the givers and the helpers of life. And just how to communicate, not only as an individual, but through different ceremonies and through drumming and singing, through my dreams, so they taught me about a lot of things that I use today. They taught me about the medicines that we use for certain things, so the elders who taught me were born in the 1800s and all the way up to 1940s. Today they are not here anymore so, sometime I feel lost because I just can't find any elders anymore. So that's how they taught me, they taught me about the spiritual life, how to be a spiritual person, how to think, how to look after my emotional well-being, and how to be involved in social activities and how to work. They tell me I have to work all the time to survive, they taught me about the traditional ways, and so today I feel grateful. There were many elders that taught me, both men and woman. Medicine Man taught me and he was a good teacher, he's last chief of Old Crow and majority of my teachings are probably from women.

Melissa: Yeah.

Randall: Yeah from the old women. Majority of it and because only teachings I got from men is a spiritual men, medicine men, and spiritual men and men that was reincarnated and that were connected to the universe, so those are the people that teach me and also

the young people the young children between one and five I learned quite a bit from them on how you to build a relationship and just continue with life so, so that is how I was trained, I was trained by people that were connected to understand the universe and they were powerful people so I feel good about that.

Melissa: Thank you for sharing that. I am particularly interested in how you understand mental health in healing particularly First Nations Youth as well as your non First Nations clients. Basically I'm interested in how mental health affects the well-being of First Nations and First Nations youth especially, as well as your non-First Nations clients.

Randall: Well first of all I was also trained to look at how I think. How we think is very important, we have to care about how we think, care about how we see, how we listen, how we talk, that is the first area of healing, it's that area. So when the Elders were teaching me and training me they said the rest of the body is okay, nothing wrong with it. You got to train yourself, you got to discipline yourself and on how you think, how you see, how you listen, and how you talk and how you respond to different challenges that come before you. So how you respond and react will affect how you think.

On the other side, how you think is how you're going to respond. So, the brain is a very important part of the body, sometimes we have to retrain ourselves on how we think, see, listen and talk because that's the only time your behaviors will change. You can never change your behaviors unless you change how you think see, listen and talk. That involves all Nations, not only First Nation, but non-Native, African people and Asian peoples and that's how it works. We got to care about how we think, caring is number one and respecting how we think and sometimes we have to have patience, we got to have patience on how we think because when we have patience on how we think, see, listen and talk then we become more affective in everything that we do, so before people become effective they got to take care of how they think. And it start with you, it start with each person. That development starts from within, not inwards so when I say within that means again how you think, see, listen and talk. That's the biggest part of mental health and healing. So that's what I learn in that area. I mean you can try all sorts of stuff, but for healing I think the holistic approach is more effective than any other approach because when you do holistic healing you deal with the whole body all at the same time and that's how you think, see, listen and talk and, and that's just the holistic approach because today young people respond better to holistic approach, they know what it is and they're beginning to know what it is. There is a big movement towards holistic approaches and we have to use that for our young people, not only Native people, but all people. It's a world movement, world youth movement that they're looking for these things. So of course ceremonies are an important part of healing, the young people are interested to get healing through ceremonies, so more and more young people are going in that route and I think that's what we got to use and like the sweat lodge is important and drumming and singing is important, storytelling is important, talking about legends is important, it's time to even talk about the Creator's law, the natural law, and the tribal law with young people so they could try to, they need to know, so I think that's important, I think that's the best way to go now is to do that so. They got to make time too...

Melissa: Has this understanding changed from the past to present and how do you see healing in the future for First Nations Youth?

Randall: Yeah, this process is forgotten, the holistic approach was forgotten for many years. Maybe I shouldn't say forgotten, it was not in the public eye for many years because they were outlawed in the fifties that's when the Native people were allowed to start practicing their ceremonial practices. But it did change with the coming of missionaries who were the first one to try to stop the ceremonies and after that the missionaries brought residential school, they brought new way of learning, and they developed schools and they were beginning to teach in English, so there was a big change. And now at the end of the road everybody's starting to go back to the traditional teachings and that's coming along pretty good.

Melissa: Has the understanding changed from the past to present, has it changed much?

Randall: Yeah, in the early 1900s we only had to understand one way, that's the traditional way and then the residential schools started and different school started, so now we have to try to understand the modern way. So today people are trying to understand the modern way and also trying to understand the traditional way. So the youth and the young people have to work extra hard to understand.

Melissa: Yeah, like a balance?

Randall: Yeah, so the young people need to get taught and they need to spend time with people who can teach. There are not many people that can teach, so they got to find people to work with so that they can learn, so today there's big movement.

Melissa: How do you see healing in the future for First Nations Youth?

Randall: First Nation youth have to go to their own people for their own healing. They have to go to the holistic approach to get healing for our young people. And getting their own people to help them to overcome their challenges and some of their problems they face today. So the best for First Nations young people is to go to the holistic approach like sweat ceremonies, drumming, singing, and all that kind of stuff. Storytelling and learning some about, some of the protocols around ceremonies around healing and I think they are going to come a long way because more and more young people are doing that.

We're not seeing enough young people in the Yukon and one of the reasons for that is either their grandparents or their parents are telling them that the holistic approach is not our way. So, and that's the biggest stumbling block and they don't know they're denying their grandchildren an opportunity and chance to heal and grow.

Melissa: How in your experience does spirituality work in helping First Nations Youth heal from Mental Health issues?

Randall: Spirituality is a way of life it's not a religion, 'it's a way of life'. The holistic approach is not a religion it's a way of life. So, spirituality is not only going to ceremonies and drumming, singing, potlatch, all that kind of stuff, that's small part of it. Spirituality is how you think, how you see, how you listen, how you talk. You got to care about how you think and you got to respect how you think, how you see, how you listen, how you talk to people around you, all people. That's the biggest part of spirituality. Spirituality is communicating and being in contact with the universe and what the Creator has created. The best communication is just trying to connect, have faith and believe in what you're doing because it's our way. And that's what makes it good. Spirituality is also when you take care of the way you think, see, listen and talk your attitude and your behaviors will become spiritual, become gentle and spiritual and you begin to attract people without even talking. Our attitude it's something else. Spirituality is keeping an open mind and open heart to everything, regardless of how people believe. You are open to all people regardless of what they did yesterday, you accept people, you share with people, you're kind and honest with people, and that's spirituality. Spirituality is you don't favour anybody, you treat all people equal. Like the Creator, in the Creator's eyes we're all equal we're no different, no better or no worse... that's spirituality. Right down to our connection with the land. Today many people are out of touch with the land and they are not on the land, but sitting in Tim Hortons.

Laughing

Melissa: Laughing.

Randall: We're not using our own power. So when we use our own power we become spiritual people and when we use our creativeness, our imagination, all that is part of spirituality.

Melissa: How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in?

Randall: Well first of all you need to get the traditional teachings and you have to spend time with somebody that can teach you and train you and give you healing in the traditional world. Also you need to get everything you could from the Western world. Both worlds are good. We need to understand both worlds, you need to get all the education you need from the traditional world, all the education from the modern world, and we have to do that to survive because sometimes you might have to. Sometimes the traditional teachings and training might be the only one you're going to need, or the Western one, so you got to take all the teachings from these two worlds, all the training, all the healing because there's good teachers in both worlds and these teachers are there to help, and when we get those teachings we being to understand. But first you got to practice what you're taught, if you don't practice it you won't understand it, so everything you're taught you got to practice it so that you can understand it so that you can pass it along. So these two worlds are very important, and the young of today have to try to get the best of both, they can't only go for one, they got to go for BOTH.

Melissa: What are the barriers First Nations youth are struggling with today and why are they taking the black road instead of the red road for example?

Randall: One of the big issues is parents, first of all the grandparents are not doing their role. The grandparents are supposed to be teaching the young people, they're supposed to be training them so that they can survive in both worlds, and the grandparents are not doing that. Number one they're too busy with bingo and some of them are drinking and some of them do drugs so that's one of the biggest problems I see in the Yukon.

Every time their grandchildren try to go to ceremonies, the grandparents say, 'It's not our way'. But then when you ask them 'What is our way?' they can't tell you. But you can't blame them because they went to residential school. So, in some ways they got no control over that and you know one of the other issues is the parents are not doing too much to support their young people, their kids to learn the traditional ways and that's a big thing that's missing with the young people today, so that's the issues there. The issue is that the young people are not getting the training they need that's going to help them in the future so that's what's happening.

The other thing that's not happening is the uncles and aunties are not teaching. When I say not teaching, I'm talking about majority of the people. Some are trying, but majority are not, the aunties and uncles that's their job is to teach their nieces and nephews. So those are the three major issues and in the meantime young people are looking for something so that they can heal themselves. The biggest issues is the grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, I think that's a big one, there's lots of other issues, but I think that's the biggest one.

Melissa: What can be Yukon First Nations Perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?

Randall: Suicide, it's something that's taboo in all nations. It's against the tribal law. Suicide is against the Creator's law, the Natural law and the Tribal law. The reason suicide happens is because people are not looking after themselves, there again not looking after how they think, see, listen and talk. It's how they respond and react to problems, and situations and challenges that come before them. So when they don't deal with those it affects how they feel, it affect the person how they feel and when people don't say how they feel, then it leads to anger, and then anger takes over and that anger leads to fear, and when fear kicks in there's only one thing you could do is destroy what you're afraid of. That's how suicide starts, that's how come people commit suicide. And most of the time they take it out on themselves because some of the pain is too strong. They need to deal with that, they don't need to talk all day about it, you know, as long as they say 'this is how I feel.'

I think people need to start saying more and more how they feel in the positive way that will help people to grow. Lots of time people always talk about expressing your feelings and most of them are negative. We need to start expressing positive feelings because these positive feelings are what helps you and keeps you in balance. When we

don't express these positive feelings and how we feel then it leads to doubt and 'I should of' and 'if only' and all kinds of stuff come up and it leads to different frustration and again anger and then fear, and so the best thing to do is we have to deal with it in a holistic way. That's the best way to deal with it, so that's how I feel because I've been doing it for a long time.

Melissa: Does knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?

Randall: Yeah, when you number one know where you came from, that's natural to know where your heading and in the future. So knowing your background, knowing your history, knowing your culture, knowing your stories, legends, songs, your food, your clothing... That's part of it. When you do those things, it gives you lot of power, power and strength and you become proud of who you are. So, when you go about it in that way then you become stronger. Nothing will bring you down when that happens, when you know your culture, it's important to learn it. It doesn't matter where I go, all the teachings are the same, all the teachings in North America. The only thing different is the culture and the clothing and stuff like that, but everything else is the same, when it comes to human development, human growth it's all the same teachings. So, we need to develop more cultural program, long term cultural program instead of these you know one two three week stuff. We need a full year just on culture...

Melissa: Will culturally appropriate healing approaches be beneficial for First Nations Youth in the Yukon?

Randall: The best place to get healing is on the land because First Nations people are connected, they connect fast to the land, they like to be on the land. When they're on the land their six senses become alive. Everything becomes alive, so on the land programs are good, when you even going out hunting, fishing, and trapping... every time you go on the land it's healthy and what you have to do is use everything from the land, right from caribou, moose to rabbits ptarmigan, ducks, geese, berries, everything. When you use everything from the land you get different energy. You get the real energy from these foods, so that's what makes, make going on the land people heal fast when they go on the land. And it's a good healing.

Melissa: It is!!! I noticed that with me too, like being on concrete compared to going out and walking on the natural earth is a different reality. Walking on the soft earth is more healing then the concrete jungle.

Randall: Yeah it's hard in the cities, when you live in the city because you're disconnected from the earth just by the cement. Your feet no longer touch the earth. So, when you're on the land, it's there and when you're sleeping on it and when you go out sleeping on the land then the teachings and training healing begin because you're getting the natural energy from the land. So that's where it's best.

Melissa: Is there anything else you want to add, any message?

Randall: The only thing I just have to add is that we're running out of Elders now, young people have to work extra hard to learn the traditional ways. And every time they have an opportunity they have to try to make an effort to learn and not let anything get in the way. The Western world will be here, it's always here, but when it comes to traditional knowledge and teachings and training, the young people need to go to these things. Some of the Elders have to stop saying it's not our way, if you going to tell your grandchild it's not our way, then tell your grandchild what is the way because your stopping your grandchild from learning, from growing, from being productive, from being proud, proud of who they are and where they come from. So that has to stop, yeah.

Melissa: Kwanischis

Figure 11. Grandma Angel Carlick (Kaska First Nation) Woman Elder



Grandma Angel Carlick: Angel Carlick is my paternal grandma of the Wolf Clan. I grew up seeing my grandma during holidays or whenever we could take a trip to Good Hope Lake to visit her, she would always be busy tanning hide in her back yard, sewing, or taking part in some sort of traditional activity. I remember smelling her traditional medicine she made on her wood stove and the way she was always telling stories, my grandma is full of knowledge she always wants to share with whoever would listen. I chose my grandma because she grew up living a traditional life, she has witnessed so many changes and I know her wisdom is integral for mental wellness to occur among out First Nations youth. She is a strong Kaska First Nations woman who has lived and taught her children and grandchildren how to live off the land. Most of her children were raised in the Indian residential school. My grandma has lived many years in many different eras, so she has witnessed the different generations of Youth. My grandma represents the Elder on the canoe who is guiding the others to paddle out of the trauma imposed on residential school survivors, as this era was a time when the canoe was flipped upside down. She is telling the story of the dark era and traditional life to help heal the people in order to create mental wellness on the boat by creating a way for all to paddle in unison.

Melissa: What's your Indian name?

Grandma: Noizae

Melissa: What's that mean?

Grandma: Chipmunk. That's my brother give me that name. Frank he call me (Noizae) Noizae means that's, you know stripe, stripe head is? Daddy call me (Nakieau) that's his name (Nakieau) like you know you walking behind people, that's what it mean, he's coming behind. His name (Nakieau)

Melissa: How old are you now?

Grandma: 82, I am the only one left out of 14. I mean 13 gone.

Melissa: Can you tell me what life was like after your children were taken away to Lower Post residential school?

Grandma: Well there was lots of suffer after kids just gone from home. You know house leaders supposed to hold everything together hey. Like my old man he went and signed those kids out

[This confirms that the parents of children that were taken to residential schools also suffered emotionally. This has never been formally recognized. The family breakdown and control was forced by possible law intervention. Grandma confirms that Grandpa Wilson signed the documents for all to go to residential school. (William Carlick explaining what his mom has said.)]

Grandma: But they say got to go, I don't know they want the kids so they can make some money. That's what they want them for. And they don't treat kids good, they never tell me these kids... come back, just like they been nice place, but they never talk about it what kind of life they had. I mean after they getting old then they know what's going on. So, we really suffer when the kids go away.

[It has been documented that the church did confirm they were paid by the government of Canada for each child registered in residential schools. (William Carlick explaining what his mom has said.)]

Grandma: I didn't see our children until Christmas, we had to pay for the bus before they come home, if we don't, well they can't come back, so we do bring them back.

[Christmas was the only holiday where children were allowed to go home. All students that were fortunate enough to have their way paid home were called out and told. . (William Carlick)]

Melissa: You had to pay for their bus ride home?

Grandma: Yeah. They come back with the Cassiar bus, we pay them to go down and pick them up.

[Grandma made sewing and sold it to raise money for our bus fares. She also had enough to buy us Christmas gifts. (William Carlick)]

Grandma: So, it's lot of problem I tell you, I thought it was good when the kids went to school, seems like they doing okay, but not the way everything is hey, but miss them kids lots, but what can you do.

Melissa: How did you cope with them leaving?

Grandma: Well it's hard I tell you to let go of them. I keep Doris for six months and never go back, first one of my kids they took away, I keep her home for six months, they don't know. Then that father come up and he want to take her back to school. He waited for me for me to say okay, two hours he wait for that kid. Got dark like this, and my sister came up for doctor trip hey. Mary my older sister, she waited to catch a ride with father up to see doctor. Father tell me, when you going to let go of that kid, he say I want to go home he tell me. So, I let her go.

Melissa: It's hard.

Grandma: Yeah it is hard to let them take my kids away

Melissa: All your kids went to residential school?

Grandma: Evelyn, Doris, William, Roy and Henry and Wendy. But I wouldn't let go of Merle.

I keep him home and that's when they shut the school off. I took Wendy back because her one leg. She went to a different school with Merle. I keep them home and they grow up at home

Melissa: That's good.

Grandma: Since they close the school, I took Wendy back, she was nine years old I guess, I took her back, or ten. Was in school one year, Wendy.

Melissa: Yeah

Grandma: That's what I say. They should of pay, get some money from them, after this, all that year went by.

[Family compensation for healing should have been made available. (William Carlick explaining what his mom has said)]

Grandma: They suffer all the family, some people they can't go home for Christmas like back in Ross River, they say some people say they never see their kids, in their school all that time. Like something happen to them, they don't know, family don't know with all that stuff.

Melissa: What was life like when they returned from school? Like how were your children's lives changed. Were their lives changed at all?

Grandma: Yeah their lives changed, they act like they scared or something, like you know they not act normal like when they at home. Going to school like any kids, you know yourself I guess, when you stay home your family there, you buddy all there with you. Like you know you feeling happy, but them they take away then they, it's just like

they take away their, something away from them. They wouldn't let them talk their language, they get spanking and stuff.

They got a right to talk their language to each other and they don't stay together, they say they got to be another room. Doris says she get into trouble, nuns make them brush floor with toothbrush. Yeah, that's what they do to the girls when they get in trouble. So, that's what Doris says. She got broken arm, fell off bed too in that school, they never tell me, the kids get hurt there, they never say kids got broken hand or something they never say nothing about kids get hurt.

Melissa: They just kept a lot from you

Grandma: They keep it away, they keep it to their self. It's no good. They say the kids get hurt, they should of say to the family. Doris got broken arm, fell of his bed. Then they never say kids got hurt or anything.

That's how come I wouldn't let Merle go

Melissa: Yep. Your children know how to live off the land because you taught them, so how do you see First Nations youth today achieve cultural teachings in the Yukon?

Grandma: Well right now they want to learn their language hey, like Doris she want to learn her own language again, so she want me tape my language, so she can copy when she want to find my language.

Melissa: How did you teach your children to live off the land?

Grandma: Well they watch you what you do I guess, that's how we learned because dad took up beaver hunting and stuff, we go to me and him like that. Together we go, teach us how to moose hunting, but he always tell me joke stories when we go hunting, hey, my brother. I started laugh, supposed to be quiet when you hunting with dad, can't make, can't talk, can't laugh, he tell me joke, I start laugh hard... "Boy next time you not going to come" (laughing)

Melissa: Laughing

Grandma: He tell me that, but next time I got to come with them again because I keep them company hey. Keep my brother company, but he always tell me funny story to laugh so daddy get mad cause quietly look for moose. Yeah, we have fun with kids. We do our job though. Like you know we get water, feed our dogs and that's why we go. And they cook for us, have to pack wood, go run get water and stuff like that. Then you learn.

Melissa: How do you see the First Nations Youth today get these cultural teachings?

Grandma: You got to go with family to teach you. To teach you when you go hunting and stuff, teach you how to set trap for beaver and stuff and teach you how to hunt quietly and wait for beaver spring time people hunting where big O you wait for them there to

come down the river they stop and daddy know how, we wait, can make us, we wait there, wait for beaver come and even like this, he come down like that. Yeah.

[Location 1139 and big O is a reference to a location on the Liard River as the story occurred around the same time that the Alaska Highway was built. (William Carlick explaining what his mom has said)]

Well we have no toys, nothing, like the time, like now you got everything, that time we got nothing to play with. He could build me sleigh to slide, we have fun that way, if we don't, we go follow people to help cutting wood, so dogs can drag us there, sleigh, little sleigh he make and one dog pull ... (Laughing)

Grandma: My sister and them works holy, Eva and Fanny, when we stay home they cut wood, they make six cord with big saw, way away from house cause they going to go dog team bring it, they cut about five cord, two of them, just to do that. When daddy come back, they haul wood with dog team, go for ride, us we follow already with one block at a time (laughing)

Melissa: Laughing

Grandma: We have fun

Melissa: How are we going to help First Nations Youth heal from the intergenerational trauma imposed on them by the legacy of Indian residential school? You see the people are struggling today because of the residential school even in my generation. How do you think we are going to heal from that?

Grandma: You got to pray for yourself. To God, say help, you pray for yourself and you get help, like what your dad say is true. My dad says that to us when we kids, you treat anything mean, he say even dogs, no good, and you can't treat them mean. You get punished, get mean, kick them around like, you can't do it he say, little kids and dogs because dogs can't they can't get their own food, that's why they just steal food hey, cause they hungry. You use them, you got to treat them good like, these people get punished for doing that they say.

You got to believe in, you believe something, and it's true.

What I want to talk about...that Alaska Highway my dad he's the one fix the road come through, he made that road come through. They never say that when they put it on paper because he's Native and just like, that's what I just really, I want my grandchildren know what happened here in 1942. But you talk about school, it's same way how they treat Native... they just use Native then they come out way ahead them, he did this, this happened, all that stuff, same way that guy that find that gold, they never say this Native find this, they got to be them. That's what I don't like... My dad, that's the one they should make book for about your grandpa, my dad, what he do for living all since he met my mom.

They both work together that's why people work together, they get married, they work together, everything they going to do, and they ask each other what we're going to do. They going to do this, okay they going to do this. Everything go straight together all the time, you see this my picture, he sew by hand, dress him up with all the caribou skin and stuff right to the foot, right to head, he say that caribou not scared of him, he come right up to caribou and he dress up like that. That's what I mean, everything got to work together and everything go straight, everything okay home. That's why, how many kids, 14 of us, they take care of us, no government give us food, government never give money to kids to feed like now a days that welfare cheque, we don't get those. You got to live on our family, on family only, he's got to feed us. My dad use to kick those Indian Agents out of his house cause he, that's why we don't go to school. They took one in the school Ginny his name.

Yeah, I don't know I guess they treat her like that, when she come back she got paralyzed, grade 12. Paralyzed when she got back home...Ginny her name. We all kids, me and her, we were the last one my brother and him, but Ginny, I don't know how old she is, they took her to school, that's why dad he don't want let us go to school no more. He kick them out and just tell them leave my kids alone.

That's why I say, government don't feed us when we kids.

Melissa: But you taught your kids well and now they're teaching!

Grandma: Yeah cause we live in bush, August month they took us in bush till next year come back to town, put up meat.

We go up Rancheria, we go hunting, my dad kill lots whatever he see, and he get it. We dry it off, us kids pack it back home, they got cache on top little house on top, we put it up there for the winter. Little deck inside like that, just put that dry meat on top, no mice can't go up because daddy fix the legs, tin on it.

When they send me up there for rice or sugar or something I sit up there eat lot of dry meat before I come down (laughing).

[Question was about Grandma's children but she makes reference to her childhood and growing up on her dad's trap line at Rancheria. (William Carlick explaining what his mom has said)]

Grandma: Come down, bring something, every time they send me there because lot of dry meat just pile holy, all the fat and everything, just sit there eat, eat (Laughing). Oh we have good life with mom and dad.

Melissa: Living off the land!

Grandma: Yeah when Dad after that finish up October he go set net, save fish for dogs, pile it frozen fish in the cache for dogs, go to Watson Lake he set net on the ice. My Dad

do that. Frank go with him camp by camp, bring just loaded dog sled load fish, they bring back, throw him on the cache, that's our fridge. When the time only save fish, throw him on the cache whole like that, we can eat fish too.



Figure 12. (Left) Angel Carlick, (Middle) Frank Tom, (Right) Liard Tom

Then Daddy go trapping, my dad take us to fish lake, 6 miles from the house, they make funny shed like that logs, campfire in the middle, brush camp, it's warm in there. Fanny and Eva help mom, set net, one time they caught pike about that big, two of them. Just the teeth hanging to the net, two girls before they bring it to the camp, to our camp, caught two pike, bout that big 4 feet, that, they catch big round pike, holy... I tell you, do lot of work for food.

My Mom Eda always work on skin fall time like this, make lot of moose skin and caribou skin. Sew all the time, but he go trapping, I go with my mom and go set trap.

I go with mom. Just go with her, set trap, come back.

Melissa: So you tan your own hide too and sew

Grandma: I learn from my Mom. Well that's how you learn, you just help, help, pretty soon you know what's going on. But when I lost my mom I left home. I took Grandma Bessie for my mom, act like mom anyway so. Grandma Bessie is my old man's mom and Charlie Chief's sister. That's your dad's grandma.

[explains the family tree on Grandpa Wilson family side. Grandma's mom passed on during the construction of the Alaska Highway. A lot of disease was brought around by the army and civilian construction workers. Grandma Bessie was my Grandpa Wilson's mother. Charlie Chief was grandma Bessie's brother. (William Carlick explaining what his mom has said)]

Melissa: How are spiritual teachings and ceremonies helpful? Do you ever, do you know much about spiritual teachings, ceremonies?

Grandma: Not really you just pray, I just pray to myself, just believe in and pray.

Melissa: That's what our youth need to do?

Grandma: That's all you can do, you want to believe something, you believe, you got to pray to believe.

Melissa: How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in, so how are they going to balance First Nations self in a Western world? How are they going to balance their life? From culture to living in a house or? For example, how is Alex going to balance his fun time in the city and life in the bush? Can he find balance? How am I going to live in the First Nations world and white world?

Grandma: Well you got to live with one, you know that's why they lose the land because they want to be white people, but they don't think of their land that belongs to them, that's how the Gods fix it for you to live on it, whatever they made for you to eat, you got to believe that, you never made it and you don't made it yourself, that's how they don't believe that and they lose stuff. You know that's what happened now a days, everyone want to be change, they see other people they want to be like them, but you can't do that, the way you born well the way you supposed to live, not trying to change, you can't change.

1942 I didn't know there was white people around us, I thought just only us, we live in Lower Post, and live in up trap line, we don't know anyone around us, we don't know about this paper work... Laughing

Everybody come and just all at once, they just came like that and war did that. The war is what made this Alaska Highway, people fighting, they fight each other for land, I don't know why but well Hitler say he going to have dinner there, going to have supper there, breakfast there, said he's going to take the land, but where is it. They talk that way but nothing went through. That's why I say you can't talk ahead, you got to think you going to make it, you can't talk just before you get there, that's what I mean, that's I don't think Lord the way he look at it you know, you can't do it they say, well it's true can't do it. That's all I think.

Your great-grandpa, my dad, helped with the highway and they want to tape me, just those people, those white people, I said 'no way I am going to give you anything,' I said 'I am going to do this, I'll do it for my children, my grandkids, but I am not going to just give you my word' and they be show around with it. Well we don't want to show them how to do stuff. They never thank us, so wouldn't tell them. So that's why I say you got to, I tell you all this. My family they just do it and bring moose and cut and make it,

hang him up, hang him up till they dry, we got no fridge nothing, that's the only way they can save food.

Melissa: What's your dad's name

Grandma: Tom, Liard Tom

Melissa: Your mom and dad were hard workers

Grandma: It is, holy, that's what brought us, that's why I am sitting here.

Melissa: So are you, hard worker, and your kids

Grandma: Yeah I did that once, Yeah that's true gee whizzes, I pile wood when the kids not there (away at residential school), I go and pile wood. 60 below was out there to campfire.

That's what I mean, yeah, then come in and sew, make moccasin and slippers and stuff.

Melissa: What about Grandpa Wilson?

Grandma: That's what I mean he cut and go out cutting I go out after and we pile, cut about four cord, he cut one day cut then the next day pile, pile, cheap, holy wood was cheap, only six dollars for green wood, 6 dollars they take 64 cents stumpage, what you get is only five dollars, green wood. And they pay stumpage for dead wood, that's how come they close it, us Indian, holy, they treat, to keep them warm whole house freezing and cutting wood 60 below. Boy that's really tough...

[Cassiar Asbestos mine was the next western cultural attack on the Kaska way of life. It brought alcohol and family violence and early demise of many people who were cutting wood for a living. Cassiar town site was heated with wood from a central boiler in town. In the 1960s ten cords of wood would pay sixty dollars. (William Carlick explaining what his mom has said)]

Grandma: When William left to residential school, Roy just jump in the bus with him and sit down beside him (Laughing)

Melissa: (Laughing) He wanted to go to school too

Grandma: Yeah, he want to go too, he think he going to good place, that bus driver say you got to get off, he want to go too. He jump in the bus, he just sit there. (LAUGHING) Yeah well he left, gee he wants to go but, they wouldn't take him, Gee that's hard when they take kids away, pretty tough. My son Henry, they take kids six years old, I wouldn't let him go, and then they want to take him but no. Him too want to enjoy, want to go but no (laughing)

Melissa: Until they really found out what it was about

Grandma: Until he was seven, big enough to take care of yourself when you're seven hey. Before they take him seven years old, it's hard, so I can't, it's lot of work, I mean, they give you hard time, sometime I cry for them, they go to school but they know you miss them, no more noise just quiet, everybody gone to bus... Never hear from them, you don't know what's doing. They never even go visit no one. That's what they say.

Melissa: What are some issues and problems that affect youth here today? What do you think the problems are with First Nations Youth? How are they suffering today?

Grandma: Well because they don't understand the bush life, some of them hey, nobody taught them how to survive, but you can learn through another people that they know, a lot of old people know, but some kids they don't want to be in the bush, they want to be in TV, just watch TV and playing those games.

So way too spoiled too, kids get spoiled from it, can't do nothing, can't work, can't get help from them.

But me I don't know how that work cause they don't tell me and they come home just like they, everything okay, never track story how they been treat, but after then they just start, trouble start about Mission School then they started talk, like you can't treat people like that. Kids, they not in jail because they going to learn, they get paid for doing that, they took the kids cause they their money, they make money and they looking after babysitter they making money, but us we don't make nothing, they take your kids like they take them to jail then they take care of them and they get paid for it, government pay them. That's the money that do that, you know. That's why those kids were taken cause those people want money, money can do anything you know. Take kids away so they can get rich from them kids, but why they treat them mean, they should treat them good as long as they get paid to look after them better treat them better, feed them good, some of them give them sour milk and stuff they say

Melissa: Sour milk

Grandma: Yeah they eat, that's what they say just, sometime bum food, sometime they go to sleep without food cause they get in trouble

Melissa: Your kids?

Grandma: That's what they say yeah, kids. Doris tell me about it, I told you she brush floor with toothbrush, get mean so they kick her out 15 years old because she fight back, that's why.

They all went to Lower Post residential school

Melissa: Does Knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle, free from negative mental health issues?

Grandma: Well you, if you want to be healthy you got to make Indian medicine

Melissa: Yeah you drink lots of Indian medicine

Grandma: Yeah, that's good, it's good for your stomach. Balsam, Tamarack, Balsam, and caribou weeds, they grow right by my door now, where we bring it then I guess the seed fell down that's why I am going to save it. I can't go down Mcdames, used to get it down Mcdames. There's another medicine up on the mountain those caribou weed, look like caribou horn they say, that's the best for cancer they say, that's what they say, but I don't know, I don't know my sister's son, one of them in Watson Lake got some, supposed to give us some but never go see him, get it from mountain. I don't know. I make any kind medicine anyway. The one caribou eat it, white one, I make juice out of it too, and it's at home.

Melissa: Will culturally appropriate healing approaches be beneficial for First Nations Youth in the Yukon?

Grandma: You get help when you believe in, when you believe in things, our youth need to start believing more. You believe in yourself, you know you want to believe something, you doing that, that's good, same as you want to do something, you want to work, same thing, you wish, your wish come true they call it, you got to believe then your wish come true hey cause you believe. You really work hard in your mind from your heart, your brains, it's good like that, but another thing that those animal, like you know some animal no good, like frog, you can't play with those frog when you kids, then flying squirrel that's no good, no good for, you can't kill them, and when he, night time he fly on you, that means bad luck, you never see them but sometime they do that, that's the kind of game like that you got to believe with animal. They funny sometime.

Melissa: Yeah, lots of people are committing suicide so how are we going to help them, like what do you think?

Grandma: Well the main thing, just like what I tell you, you got to teach them and let them believe, they say people suicide like that, they can't make it to the God, they go to Hell, that's true story, you can't do that, cause God made you when you got to suffer before you leave this country.

This body, Daddy said its old stick, when you leave it's just like you left that stick there lay there. It happen when he was young cause he was silly when he was young. Treat people mean, like you know fight people like hurting somebody then mom said he tough for two days, well he's gone already, said he went, they went two trail like that, that's why I believe they believe the note right in the middle that sign, just like you put up sign, that all what he did was on that. It's not his time, just punish, that's how he believe, he tell us that's, he say he, 'your body's nothing' he say, 'your soul,' he said he went, mom said he been tough for two days, he can fast I guess, he read all what he did on that paper like that, your paper, that kind, so when he finish, read, like somebody turn him around, here he come to that stick was lay there, that's his body, and he come close he

say, like somebody push me in there, he was him, wake up, he come to himself. Well he went through that paper

Melissa: He wasn't done, he still had to do more in the physical life hey

Grandma: Yeah what he did, that's why he got punished, like he confess about what he did, he finish then they turn him around to his body, he said was stick lay there, that's why he live 104 years

You know people got to believe, that's why I tell you, you got to believe, you can't just think that's why...pray for my girl, I don't know why they did that to her, it hurt me real bad, really

Melissa: Our little Angel

Grandma: I don't forget her!

Melissa: Nope none of us will

Grandma: No, I just wish God help whoever did that he find him, why it got to be her... that's what I always say.

Well that's what I mean, that's the only way you got to believe, you believe, like you know your wish come true, that's what your grandpa Tom said, my dad.

Grandma: I want to really make you aware about my dad's story, what my dad did...

Melissa: Tell me the story

Grandma: Yeah my dad, that time I tell you, when we came back in the spring May/June I think from Otter Lake, when we got back from Lower Post in June, I think June or July, plane land in Lower Post River, I don't know how they know my dad those people, somebody must tell them. High people from states, those army, I don't know, I never even look, they just took my dad, never tell us how much they pay him too, he never say how much he get paid, he never tell us, should of told us.

They took him with the plane in July I think or August, July I think they took him with the plane, they took him down Fort Nelson, see where that highway how he come, from Fort Nelson he come back and then he went to up the Rancheria with the plane, those guys. So which way that highway going to come, so that's how that highway came, you see how my dad went, he land in Pine Lake, then Teslin Indian met him right there with army guys, met them right there with horses, and daddy went this way down follow Rancheria, because my dad did that.

If there wasn't Native around they don't know, they wouldn't come that way, know which way to come from Fort Nelson right up to Whitehorse. Native trail,

Melissa: Yeah Native trail

Grandma: Yeah, then they never say on the paper, those star paper, newspaper, just like they did it all by them self. They grab all the Native know

Melissa: All the Natives that knew the land well

Grandma: Yeah, that trail, just like rabbits trail they got hey. Walk that's all they know, they walk they got nothing dog packing, my daddy go to Atlin with dog team from Rancheria, go shop in April Month. Holy how far from Rancheria up to Atlin... where the store sell fur, him and mom just two of them, dog team.

The guys they know my dad in Teslin those people that, one of those old ladies still alive yet before that I met that guy who know my dad, he said he met my dad in Pine Lake for that guide for that highway, he tell me that, then he got bump, he got killed in here in town. That guy I know, his wife still alive.

Melissa: Pine Lake is all the way in Junction hey!

Grandma: Yeah, that's what I mean, they say, those white people think they did it them self, nobody say nothing, just keep in like that, they don't want us up, they want to keep us down.

They want to be better, they always want to be better and us they push us down... that's what I tell those kids, it's true, that's what's going on... if you make something best, they take it away from you like they did it. They going to say... yep... can do it even now, they don't like Indians cause they know Indians grow up with tree... we grow up with those stand tree out there.

Us we never see that many people before, that's what those people say same thing that take me lunch up there, they talk about this land here belongs to them, but it's too late I guess they sign everything to them maybe... I don't know... I don't think Kaska did, they don't want to sign nothing

Melissa: No they didn't settle Land Claims

Grandma: No they just, they just stuck over here, and they don't sign treaty. They just don't want it, they don't want to take money for land claim, they want to keep the land, that's what they say... moneys gone, the land be there. So they got to keep it that way, just leave the money alone and keep the land

Melissa: For the future generations

Grandma: I don't know about this treaty... nobody want treaty, I don't know what that mean treaty, I just don't understand what a treaty mean

Melissa: It's like a promise, as long as the grass grows and the river flows promise they make. It's an agreement between the First Nations and Western people who settle here

Grandma: We don't need no promise, we live here, we don't need nothing, we just got to live the way we were before, before the highway, we just live, nobody talk about land, nothing, no boundary line, no line at all, since they came they make all kinds fences, that's what daddy say, he tell that Indian Agent 'What you think I am, you put me in one little ranch, I'm not horses.'

He mean that Indian reserve, that's what he mean, that, he made house down Liard, that Indian Agent already bring books, sign this paper for village... he throw him out and his paper and all and they put big sign (village) in there... he (dad) tore that down and paint them all up... it's not little village, if you want to make village he say the whole Canada can be Village, that's what he want, that's why he do that, no use one little pocket, what we going to do other side, behind that, around it, that's why he said 'I'm not horses' (laughing)

Melissa: Laughing

Grandma: 'I'm not animal you can't put me in fence' he tell them, threw him out his paper and Indian agent, they still put the sign up at Liard and go to work her paint that up, I don't know what he do, he said down Lower Post he build house too, he bought all the lumber and built house then he open, when he finish he open ranch 1945... All the white people come for dancing and winding music

Melissa: winding music?

Grandma: Yeah winding put record on it, that kind (laughing) and everybody come, dancing. Like my brother-in-law Kenny, Mary's husband, everybody come, here the cop came along and kick all the white people out, I don't know what time, daddy was mad, holy, he tell me he tell them you don't want to live with us, he say you mine as well, I don't know what he tell them and he sold that house to Bob Kirk for 600 dollars... And he build another one up by Liard, that's when they burn him down, log house hey, those drink people burn it down, nearly burn him too, was two bedroom hey, in the kitchen that's where fire start, drink people, let people in, drink drunk people...

So that's what I mean, he build that house and already Indian agent came and trying to make him sign paper, he throw his paper out and he kick him out too... guys do that too down Lower Post, said you guys don't want to live with us just get out of here (laughing)

Melissa: laughing

Grandma: He kick him out then they put up sign (Indian Village) it say, he paint that up too (Laughing) they never bother him.

My dad he's funny always, he just never back up, not scared of anyone, just...one time Charlie say, when he visit Charlie Chief, nobody drink, nobody drink beer or anything, nobody go to the bar and bring, take beer out of the hotel, like Indian don't drink and I guess somebody else drinking in the bushes (laughing) in the bush, they left empty bottle,

they drink it up hey, I guess this cop hear people making noise, so cop went back there, who's that, he want to catch them I guess, well all the beers gone, empty bottle inside, and the people all ran away in the bushes, he don't know, here he bring empty bottle to my dad that cop, he tell him, 'holy, first time that police man bring me beer' he say (laughing) he put empty on the floor hey, he look at it, he look inside, was empty, he say 'why you bring empty bottle to me (laughing) just take him to garbage' he say, 'I don't want it.' (laughing),

He said that, he thought that cop, he thought 'whose going to tell him who bring that hey,' dad tell him 'why bring me garbage can, I mean empty bottle, its garbage,' he tell him just get him out of here (laughing) he had to pack it away, he don't know... how silly that cop will be hey, why bring empty bottle to him, 'why you bring me empty bottle, its garbage' he say, he thought he bring him beer, but was nothing in there, he want to know who packed, who's drink back there, well my dad doesn't know who's back there, how the hell he's going to know, kids, young boys I guess, white people buy them, he give them white people money, he buy you drink, they want to catch who's the bootleg, well he don't know... who's going to tell him, my dad he stay home, he don't know what's going on back there (laughing) in the bush
Pretty silly

Paper tore us away from our people

While I was interviewing Grandma Angel, my uncle Roy stayed in the other room while I was interviewing Grandma. He knows what I am researching and he has a lot to share as well. I did not interview him, but my uncle Roy did provide me with a paper he wrote for a class he took at the College in Terrace a few years ago. This is what he had to say.

September is the month of colourful leaves, bright sunny days and happiness. The season of harvest for wild game, ripe wild berries, and medicine plants. The time for celebration and feasting with the abundant harvest. The people would be out on the land hunting and gathering in preparation for the long cold winter. This is also the time to get ready for the bus trip to that far away boarding school. (LOWER POST Indian residential school) The bus will be coming to bring separation and sadness to the children and families. The month that is so full of life and colour is stained with the darkness of that fall day, the sadness of this time still lingers in the children and families.

I wash up with my brothers using a basin of hot water from the large tub on the wood stove. My sisters are busy with a hand held mirror. We all put

on our new clothes and shoes, so we will look our very best. Mother is preparing breakfast and makes everyone sandwiches to carry on the bus. We would talk to mother and dad just to hear their voices. We start out walking slowly on a trail that leads to the main road. There is a mountain creek flowing beside the trail and continues on to a culvert under the road. I stop by the creek and bend down to take a drink. The water is ice cold and refreshing. The leaves are turning yellowish red and the colours are brightening up the mountain valley. The blue mountains on both sides of the valley have a covering of fresh snow on the rocky peaks. Geese are honking and flying low to the lake looking for a rest stop on their long journey south. Squirrels are busy shattering away and running up and down the spruce trees picking up pine cones. The fall air is filled with the acrid smell of decaying leaves and wild cranberries. There is a frost mist in the air and the fog is burning away with the first rays of the sun touching the valley. I turn around and look back at our house. Blue smoke is rising up from the stove pipe on the roof. I can see the familiar places where I played with my brothers and sisters. I turn to my brothers and sisters, and we look at each other, knowing that a long time will pass before we will see our home again. We reach the main road and set our suitcase down. There is a feeling of sadness starting to settle in as we stand together by the road.

In the distance we can hear the first faint sound of the bus shifting gears as it struggles up the steep hills of the gravel road. The lone sound of the bus on the remote bush road pieces the air and echoes off the valley and mountains. The bus finally comes into view about a half mile down the road. We can see the early morning sun reflecting off the windows as it travels through the long shadows cast by the trees along the road. The engine noise grows louder and the gravel rocks make clanking noises bouncing off the fenders of the approaching bus. The bus arrives and pulls over to the side of the road stopping alongside us. The doors of the bus opens with a whoosh, and the driver steps down the stairs on to the gravel road. He says, "Hello, how many do we have here" and glances around to see. He talks to our parents and writes something down on a clipboard. He opens the side luggage doors and starts loading our suit cases and boxes. My mother starts hugging and kissing each one of us and says goodbye. I don't want to let go and there is a feeling of helplessness. There were hurried words exchanged of "take care", "see you again", "love you", "I'll write to you" and "Good bye." The sadness takes hold like a clamp on my chest, a lump in your throat, hard to breathe, eyes start to water, holding back the tears, this is not happening. This separation will be for a long time, and we will be lucky to be back home at Christmas if our parents can afford the bus fare. The feeling of helplessness returns knowing we cannot change what is happening. Young children are leaving home and mother is letting her children go.

We find a seat on the bus by the window and look out to see our parents by the road. They are waving and have forced smiles on their faces. You could see the sadness in their eyes. We wave back and talk to them out the window. The bus driver gets in and closes the door. We look at our parents and want this to stop, wake us up; this is not happening. We wave again to get our parents attention just to see their faces and find something to hold on. The bus begins to move, shuttering and shaking, as it starts to pull away onto the gravel road. We look back through the window straining to see mother waving, and she is trying to see where we were sitting. The bus turns a corner in the road and our parents disappear behind the trees. The emotions and the tide of sadness is over us, we cry out in our minds for someone to help us, to let us stay. We sit in the bus, feeling numb to our surroundings, as the bus bounces down the road. Our parents and mother are all alone now, no children's laughter, only silence. I wonder what our parents were thinking as we left on the bus, and what did they do to help them deal with the hurt and pain?

The sadness of that September day is still with us today. When the leaves turn yellow, the snow covers the top of the mountains, the cries of geese that are flying south, and the frosty mornings and the children getting ready to go back to school. That feeling returns to us, bringing back the memories and emotions of waiting for the bus. We feel like the bus will be coming to pick us up and we will be leaving. That experience and feeling is with us and with our parents and mother today. Mother still gets sad to see the birds leave, the geese flying south, the snow on the mountains, the leaves turning yellow, and the cold weather coming. Now I know that this not only affected us, but also affected our parents, the wrenching experience of children being separated from mother, and mother from her children.

My Uncle Roy's paper speaks loudly and impacts me emotionally, thinking of my dad, uncle and aunties getting on the bus and saying goodbye to their mom and dad and feeling helpless. I love the beautiful fall season, but at the same time I do feel uneasy during the fall season as I think about this essay. This essay has surrounded my thoughts of my dad and his brother and sisters sadness around fall time. But, they also seem to be happy too because my dad and his brothers and sisters meet in Good Hope Lake at their mom's house, my grandma Angels house to laugh, visit and go hunting for some delicious moose meat.

A MOM & A DAD:**Figure 13.** Lori Duncan: A Mom of Mixed Origin (Ta'an Kwach'an Council)

Lori Duncan: Lori Duncan is a mom and works as the Council of Yukon First Nations Health as the Social Director, and is actively involved with First Nations Health in the Yukon. I chose Lori to represent the mom participant because she is of both First Nation

and European ancestry, she knows and understands both worlds and works for Yukon First Nations. Lori knows and understands the health of First Nations in the Yukon and is well-respected as her work is recognized. She represents the Mom on the canoe who is being guided by her Elders and then teaching the Youth on the canoe the life lessons and information they need in order to achieve mental wellness.

Lori: Hi I am Lori Duncan, member of the Ta'an Kwach'an Council, and I am the Health and Social Director here at the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Melissa: Great, thank you for taking the time to be interviewed, my first question is what is your view on Yukon First Nations Youth Mental Health?

Lori: I think it's an area that is largely ignored, there isn't a lot of mental health programs or anything...services for anybody, let alone Yukon First Nations with Mental Health and especially in the First Nation communities it's pretty slim out there so, I think that it's an area that's ignored and it needs attention.

Melissa: Yes that is what I think... where do Yukon First Nations Youth need help the most?

Lori: I think that Yukon First Nations Youth need to be supported and in whatever method in which they need support. For instance if they have family problems and that sort of thing, they should be given some sort of counseling or support so that they can carry on with what's going on, also peer support is always very good for youth to know that they're not alone and there's so many others that have issues as well and that they are very similar and so it would be really nice for them to have a peer support group or something like that.

I think that education wise, education's lacking, services are lacking in the community, they don't get the support they need to, 9 times out of 10 they get put into a general program without being aware or the parents even being aware that they're being put in a general program, and so you get a lot of what they call social passing and ends up that when they pass and if they eventually do get into grade twelve, they end up having to do college prep to get themselves ready to go and to be like equivalent to grade twelve. So there's a whole bunch of that, especially in the communities where they just don't have the time or the resources to spend time with a lot of youth and that sort of thing.

Melissa: Okay, how does an understanding of the normative course of a youth's social and cognitive development coupled with an appreciation of the course of identity development shape a youth's emerging sense of responsibility for their personal past and commitment to their future well-being?

Lori: I come at it with identity and if a Youth knows who they are, where they come from and has a really good foundation about that and the parents or whoever may be raising them also have that sense of identity then that passes on and it gives a youth more self-esteem, more confidence, their ability to be more confident in what they do, and the more stable they are, the better their future is going to be. So, and again it goes back to the support, if they have the support, wherever it may be, if they have somebody to support them through whatever they may be going through then I think that support speaks volumes in how their future will be. So, for instance, if they're having trouble in math, if they have somebody to help them and guide them through math or something like that then they feel more confident about it, they pass it and they get more self-confidence. If that, if it's something emotional they have somebody that they can talk to, about things, then that you know enables them to feel more confident, then they can do much more, much better, also when you talk about social and cognitive development it really helps with that because it increases your knowledge, it makes you more confident that you can have that knowledge, and I think that that speaks volumes, it will enable them to do anything right.

Melissa: Right. Okay, in your view, how are Yukon First Nations Youth able to balance the two worlds they live in a healthy way for a stronger future, for all Yukon people?

Lori: So, again you speak back to the identity, right and for some, even like if they don't have some sort of knowledge of where they come from, they lose that and then they don't have that throughout their life until they decide that they're going to get it back, and for instance I know that there are some First Nations youth that have never been out on the land, and ones that are more urban here, they've never gone harvesting a moose, or anything like that, and or knew others that have not had the opportunity. So if they were given that opportunity, first I think that's much easier to balance who you are, where you come from and you're stronger for that. If you don't have that you're sort of, you're missing, you're missing half of that and you know that that's largely sort of what happened to my own scenario when I was a child. My father was First Nation, my mother not, but my father was largely not with our family for other personal reasons, so I was raised what they call the "white way" right, and so it wasn't until later on that I discovered the First Nations part, and even now I'm discovering new parts of that and it's so empowering to know both sides of where you come from, and it really makes, speaks volumes about having your identity and that is so much needed and it does create that balance of the two worlds otherwise if you don't have that strong foundation of identity you hide the other one, right?

Melissa: Right!

Lori: When I was growing up you weren't proud to be First Nations, now you are, so that's good! I'm trying to instill that in my children, right! Like, be proud of who you are, where you come from, even you know, you're not full-blooded First Nation, but you know you still have that piece and that's part of your ancestry so you need to know that sort of thing, so try to instill that and so they have that sense of identity.

Melissa: What are some issues, problems that affect First Nations youth here today?

Lori: Well drugs, alcohol are major and it's easy to get steered down the wrong pathway and there is still prejudice, and racism, it's alive and well, very strong, it's in the school systems and you see that everywhere, and you see it even in the peers, even my children have you brought home that they wouldn't want to be in that group because they won't want to be in the First Nation group sometimes because they're pegged and identified as 'this is the First Nation group,' and there's racism that's involved with that.

The other issues that I spoke of briefly before is the education system within the communities, the lack of services, the lack of recreation programs in the communities, also the lack of recreation programs that people can afford even in the communities and in Whitehorse. It costs money to go to Canada Games Centre, you know that sort of thing, and it cost money to go to be in soccer, things like that.

And one of the biggest things is the risky behavior that happens, you know with a lot of the youth, it's referred as injury, injuries that happen in Yukon are high they're higher than anywhere in Canada, its huge here. So and then the drugs of course are stronger these days, you know, there's nothing safe anymore either, so it's scary.

Melissa: Suicide's not a big problem here in the Yukon, but it is in the rest of Canada, and a lot of places in Canada so, what is or can be the Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention? What do you think we can do, what kind of example can we set kind of thing?

Lori: So I'll go back to even what I was talking about, the risky behavior! A lot of you know that risky behaviour sometimes can be like accidents and that sort of thing could be like the potential suicide that it had been happening and that sort of thing. So, I do think that there are some suicides here, there also some attempted suicides and those don't get recorded right.

Melissa: Right.

Lori: So there is some and I was nursing before this, almost thirty years ago, right, so for twenty years of those I knew of suicides, there was a few that were youth suicides, in our doors, and we saw things like that happening. I think that, if you are balanced, again you have that foundation, and that means spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically, if you're in a balance, then you're not even going to think of the suicide, and I think, what happens in the south as well is you get like copy-cat type suicides, so you get that closer knit communities are that if so and so does it, well I'm going to do it too. You know and then and then they do. So, again just the foundation is just key and being in balance and trying to, to have that support mechanism, that support system you know family, friends, whatever you have.

Melissa: Right! Would you think that culturally appropriate healing approaches would also help?

Lori: I think that land based programs and stuff like that, if there is something you know within each First Nation would be fabulous and I think they're even fabulous for people that aren't First Nation because why do we have so many tourist that come here, try to come on the land, and that sort of thing... because it's very therapeutic and First Nations have always known that, it is very therapeutic, right, so they go out on the land, and they do things like that, so I think that would be the ultimate thing to do is that. Unfortunately our system here, like the traditional medical system is like a medical model, it's not spiritual based at all, or culturally holistically based, so it's something that has to come from your First Nation, you know if your part of that. And you know like culture camps and /or whatever have you, because that's the method in which that's what makes me heal. Is going out on the land, that's the best thing in the world for me so

Melissa: Me too

Lori: Yep. I love that, I'm going Wednesday night.

Both: Laughter!

Lori: Five Days,

Melissa: Okay, How can traditional First Nation Ceremony Help?

Lori: So every First Nation has different types of ceremonies and some are adopted in, and you know things that people have tried to start to gain more cultural, well-being. And so it just depends on what the ceremony is, and if it helps you spiritually then go for it, I think, and like for instance smudging is not always been part and you know sweat lodges and things like that, they say they used to do them long-long ago, but they haven't been done for a long-long time, but yet it's being instilled in, smudging and has been instilled in some of the cultures here, it works for people so, if it works, then it, it should carry on, and we should adopt it that way. As well there's a lot of people that have lost their traditions because of Indian residential school and assimilation, and oppression and so they try to seek some sort of ceremony or something that helps them and enables them to carry on and I think that we should encourage that

Melissa: I agree,

Lori: Yep.

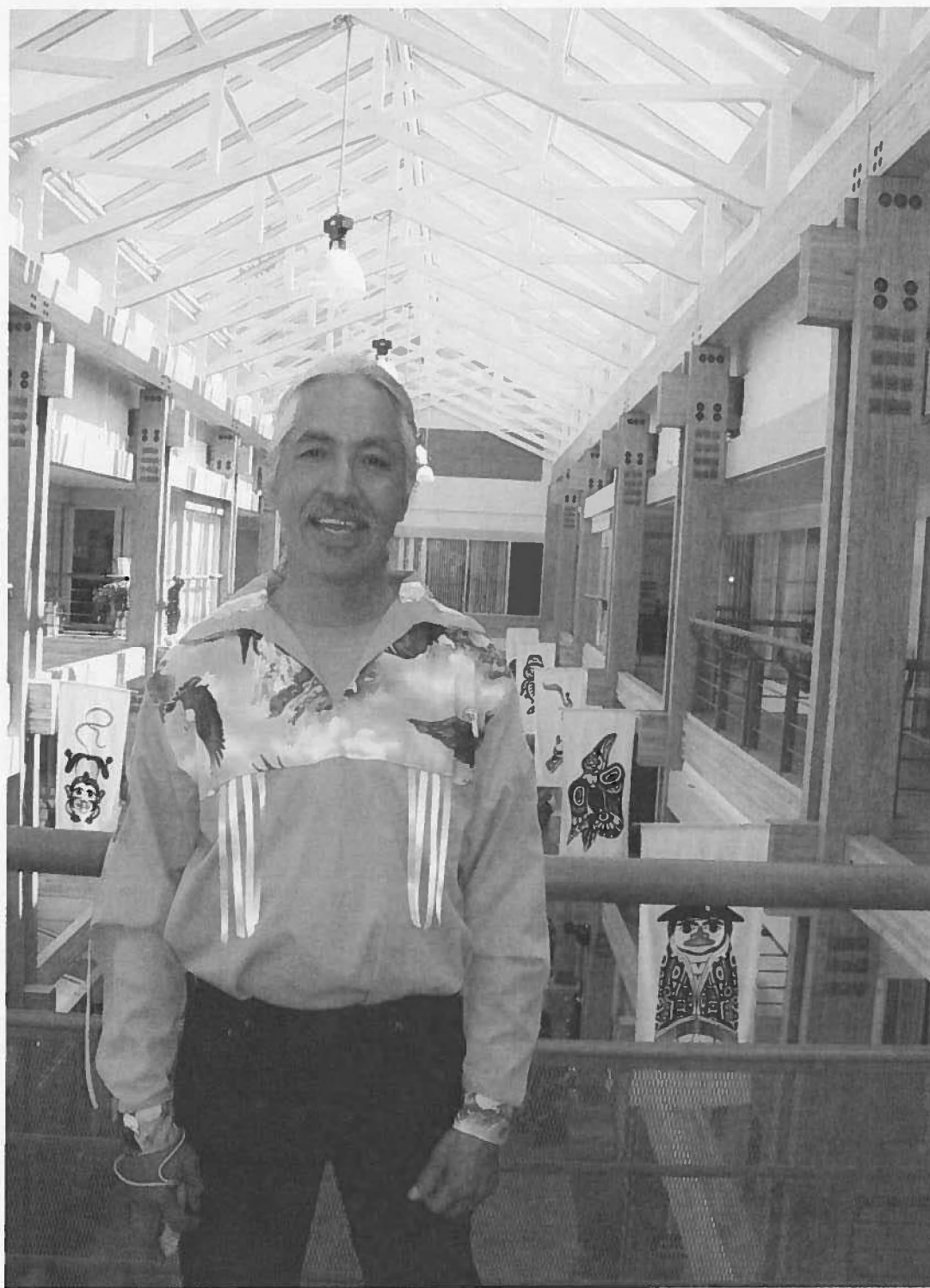
Melissa: It would be great for our Youth to take on

Lori: Yep you'll see stronger youth, you will see some youth that have captured this and then they become a stronger person you know or different for doing things like this. So it's getting them there, seeing value you know getting them there and trying to show them their value of that sort of thing

Melissa: Showing them the power of it

Lori: Yep

Figure 14. William Carlick (Kwanlin Dun First Nation): A Dad



William Carlick: William Carlick, my dad is a husband to my mom Kim, a grandpa to my nephew Terence, and is an Indian residential school survivor. He is Kaska and

Tahltan First Nations of the Wolf Clan. He is an Electrician Supervisor for the City of Whitehorse, and Director for the Kwanlin Dun Development Corporation. I chose my dad because he is a huge part of my life just as is my mom. He found healing through spirituality and his perspective is powerful in the development of my thesis. My dad is learning from the Elders on the canoe, his healer Randall and his mom Angel and then he is looking to the Youth to help heal the youth through spirituality while working towards unison.

Dad: I am William Carlick, my mom's Kaska from Watson Lake, Liard area, and my dad is Tahltan from Telegraph, Dease Lake area.

Melissa: Okay, please tell me your story of your Indian residential school experience.

Dad: That's from 1961, I was sent to Indian residential school. I was 6 years old. I remember Indian residential school before I went to school as my older sisters were already attending. I remember one time in the fall my sisters leaving to residential school when the leaves were turning yellow. We were living just a few kilometers west of the small community of Good Hope Lake and a small bus came to pick up my sisters. I just decided I wanted to go along and I jumped in beside my sisters Evelyn and Doris who were already seated. I just jumped right in because I wanted to go along too. So I sat in there and I remember Doris was laughing, she thought that was kind of funny that I would want to actually want to go with them to such a place as a residential school. But they took me back out and told me that I couldn't go. I never understood why I couldn't go and where were they going.

I was taken out and watched as they drove off. Another time we were living in the bush near a dirt road used for hauling dry wood. I was living with my mom and dad and my younger brothers Roy and Henry. This was before going to school, in the fall the thick wet snow falling, we were living in a tent in the wood camp. Our older sisters were playing with us and then a bus came, they jumped in and drove down the gravel road. I remember looking at the toys that they were playing with and saw where they left them. They were gone and I could not understand where they went. I stood near the gravel dirt road and watched as the wet snow was falling and wondering 'where did they go?' I was missing them after they left. Mom and Dad did not say anything and they were very quiet. That was how we lived back then in a canvas tent with a wood stove made from an oil barrel and we survived. Spruce brush for flooring, in the corner we had a woodstove, and a wooden box that contained our food. My sister Evelyn, she was older than me and my oldest Sister Doris.

I always wondered when they were coming back. And after a while I guess at that age you forget about them because they are gone for so long. Another time before I went to residential school, it was in the fall, it was near Good Hope Lake and we were living down a place called Bob Williams. Dad was working for a Gold Miner.

When I finally did get to the age where they did take me I can't remember the journey to that big white building with many windows. I often wonder how I survived that time because when I look back I was with a lot of strange boys and yet I was alone. I was not able to talk to my sisters even though they were just a few doors away. I was never given the opportunity to visit with my sisters. I was able to see them only when we ate but we're always made to sit at another table in a large cafeteria. One time near the first year all the little boys were in a room in a basement of this big building and then there was this skinny looking man, he was hollering at those little kids. I thought to myself 'who are you and why are you hollering at all these kids'? Then I came to realization that after a while that this individual was what they call Brother Guy. And for many years later he was a part of my life. He pulled me, just a little body, around by firmly holding my ear and pulling as hard as he can to a location he intended I should be. And he showed me how he could control children behavior with a lot of anger and no love at all. He hollered a lot and did not hesitate to send anyone to bed early. He was mean to everybody. I remember that experience and how bullying by what we called 'the big boys' was always on going. There were groups similar to gangs with a leader that made life that much harsher.

There were some good experience; we were able to watch a movie every Friday. Every Friday we would go down to a basement hall and watch a movie. It's an office now, but it used be our classroom up above and then below it was a place, a hall and we used to go down there and they'd show us these old, old movies. We'd sit there and the people that were lucky enough to have money they went and bought chocolate bars and what not, but we never had any money so we just enjoyed the movie. And these were the happy times which were very few.

In the spring when the days were getting longer, at 9 o'clock every night we were sent up to our bedroom which was up on top floor and were told to go to bed. My bed was in a long row of beds from one side of a large room with walking space in between. There was row after row of beds with white bed posts.

Brother Guy would close all the blinds, but you could still see its daytime outside. We can hear the kids from the village that didn't go to residential school outside hollering and playing and enjoying life, but all the ones that were in residential school, all had to go to bed at 9 o'clock. Every morning the routine was always the same, the voice of Brother Guy would awaken us as he hollered loudly to get up get dress and wash. When all the little boys were ready we would line up and when Brother Guy gave the go ahead we would all go down to the place where we ate, and they fed us mush every morning. We were all given a place to sit and the dining hall was large with rows of tables. There was a person at each table who was the server and in the morning it was bowl of porridge in these white bowls and then there was these white jugs of water down milk. These

ceramic jugs they were filled with powder milk. Another time we were served food that did not look too appetizing to eat. They served us what was called tapioca. And I looked at it and I couldn't eat it and they had this real mean sister, Sister Alico, she used to supervise during the meal times and she would watch over everybody. She made sure everyone would finish eating all their food and if you didn't eat it, she'd make sure you did.

Everyone would need to stay in the dining hall, until that last person finished eating. Sometime if you didn't finish eating, she would grab you by the back of your head and stick your nose in that food, she thinks that there is something wrong with the food if you didn't want to eat it. So I remember I really didn't want to eat that tapioca, because it didn't look too good. So I had to sit there for a long time while everyone waited until I finished eating it. So that's the way they treated us and I remember there was a little room to the far end of our dining room where all the staff used to go and eat. Sometimes you would be able to see all the good food they were eating. You were wondering why were they getting such good food and we were getting what we were eating.

Those were the days that I kind of look back on and wonder and say you know it's just some of the things we were stuck with. And then in the start of summertime we would go home which was a very happy time for all. Mom was a very strong person who was always there to take care of us. She went through some very hard times with us and there were brutal times for her. Dad had a very terrible struggle with alcohol. He once said that he will never quit drinking alcohol until his dying day. He followed through with that as he suffered a severe and deadly head injury while he was drunk. He was living with my youngest brother Henry at the time Mom had left him. He was drinking with his younger brother and a fight broke out over a bottle of whiskey. He received a blow to the head and died as a result. Mom was very sad at the funeral that took place in Good Hope Lake. For some reason I was not really that sad even though I remember dad treated me really good. I was working near Hazelton BC on the railway when I heard the news and took time off to attend. But I think about it now because even though our dad spent all the money on drinking, and he had an alcohol problem all his life, there were times when my grandmother and her family made homebrew and they would all get very drunk for days. Alcohol was always in our lives as we grew up. Relatives took their lives and lost their lives while under the influence of alcohol. One summer we lived near Cassiar at a place called Four Mile. It was a place where mostly First Nations people did what they were good at. That was cutting four foot length of dry wood. The wood was loaded onto trucks and hauled to Cassiar to provide steam heat year around for the mining town. At Four Mile there was a big drinking family event and the next morning a lot of sad relatives were talking about the passing of an uncle. He was very young at sixteen and he had taken a truck from the mining town and drove down the highway and lost control near a place called Rats Lake. This is not far from Good Hope Lake. We also spent our summer living on a ridge near Quartz Creek as dad was working at the gold mine. We received word that our cousin who was six years old had drowned in Good Hope Lake. His family were all drinking at the time.

But mom struggled with all of that too, because she put up with a lot of violence from dad. A lot of hard times and yet she was a survivor that taught us a lot. She would sew and sell her sewing so she can pay our way home at Christmas time. So we didn't have to stay at Christmas time in that sad place, I remember going home at Christmas time and we were really happy because we get to go home and see mom and dad, he was good when he was sober. The good thing near Christmas time too was the air force from Prince George used to come up to Lower Post residential school. They used to fly to Watson Lake and then we'd practice a play for months to perform for them. The main person operating the school use to be in the Air Force. He knew the group and would invite them up at Christmas. We would all be part of the play and as little actors we would dress up with the costumes we made. Christmas usually was happy times even in a place like Lower Post. All the air force people come up and they'd fill that hall up. They would watch the plays and at the end Santa would arrive. Then after that we knew that Santa was bringing Christmas wrapped gifts. All the presents they brought was donated to them down in Prince George. And so all these presents with our names on it were called out and Santa gave it to us, we were really happy, there was candy. I remember those were the good times.

And then sometimes they would load us in to a big green truck and then we go up to what they call Lucky Lake. Go on a picnic. We'd all load in the back of a truck like cattle. We were all happy because we were going somewhere. Getting away from that school and fenced in place.

One fall when all the leaves were yellow and red my younger brothers Roy and Henry and I had just arrived back at Lower Post residential school. We were sitting together on a long bench against the wall in what was called the play room in the basement. It was such a sad place to be that I remember crying and they sat by me probably were just as sad seeing their big brother shedding tears. When Roy and Henry went to the school, I was now with some family and they were not alone. Before that I don't know how I was able to make the whole year by myself with all the boys. Some of them were mean, some of them were bullies, I see the ones that were bullies today they are really struggling, and some of them had gangs, and ones that had a leader, their gang, today I see them still really struggling. So I guess at the end of the day, there is a price to be paid by how they carried on even at that young age.

But, it was a time that I don't think anyone would want to live that kind of life as a small child growing up in that kind of lifestyle EVER. We never had any control over the situation because they just sent us there, and we were stuck there, kids would run away and the police would chase after them and then they would catch them and bring them back.

When I finally finished going to the Lower Post residential school after I left to Whitehorse. After six years I finally got to come to Whitehorse to Coudert residence. Coudert residence was just like going to a resort because they treated us really good there compared to the treatment at Lower Post. When, the first year that I went there, everybody that was there the year before all went to Expo 67. They all had their suits and their little travel case; they all got on the plane and flew out in the fall. They're all going to Montreal to Expo 67. I wished I could go, but I missed it by a year. I stayed at Coudert

Residence for four years. It was closed and I moved across the street to Yukon Hall. It was while living at Yukon Hall luck was with me because a few years later there was a student exchange program. Student exchange was from Britain. All the students from FH could not go because they missed too many days that year. I was going to Christ the King High School, so they asked if anyone over there was interested. The principle for Yukon Hall recommended someone from Yukon Hall should go. I got along really good in school so he put my name forward and the director for Territorial Education picked my name. I found myself off to Britain that summer for a month. Was able to see a lot in a very different country. That was nice, that was a good part of going to that residential school. A lot of my child experiences I don't remember probably forgetting may have been a good thing. You tend to forget the not so good experiences.

Melissa: What was your number in residential school?

Dad: 186 and your Uncle Roy's number was 177.

Melissa: How have you come to where you are today after years in Lower Post Indian residential school, or how many years did you spend there and how many years did you spend in Coudert Residence?

Dad: I spent six years in Lower Post and I spent from 67 to 74 in Whitehorse at Coudert Residence and then Yukon Hall. Last two years were basically out of residential school, staying in an apartment so it wasn't too bad. It got better and better as the years went on and our personal freedom became normal as we see today, things changed for the better to where I am today!

Melissa: How have you come to where you are today after spending all those years there?

Dad: I look back on my life experience and I go through a thought process of comparing the not so good and try to find the good. Life must have a balance and it was there. When I think about it back, when I was growing up I really never had a role model per say to teach me. My mom was the only good teacher. She would always say to us that we had to treat people and animals with respect. She would always end the teachings with **OR YOU WILL GET PUNISHED**. She never explained what kind of punishment we would get. Later on in life I understood who was going to do the punishing and they were the Grandfathers working for the Creator. There were a lot of teachers around at Lower Post whether it was a supervisor or the older boys that were always around. I can't say their teachings were of any use in dealing with day to day relationship with others around me. We were all just basically just surviving. And I remember when I graduated out of FH Collins I was working part time at a local restaurant. My brother Roy was also working part time during the evenings with me so, just to get spending money. When I finally graduated I went back to Cassiar to be with mom and dad. My graduation with my brother Roy was not a very big event. We had no family attending and there was no group gathering or speeches. We just moved on. When I arrived in Cassiar where mom and dad were living I saw what kind of condition they were still living in. How they were still living in a tent and alcohol was still big part of their life. When I saw the way they

were living I realized I just did want to be a part of it anymore. I told myself I'm not going to continue on with this so I just turned around and hitchhiked back down to Watson Lake. I bought a bus ticket to come back to Whitehorse. While I was waiting I met this American guy who was going up to build Alaska Highway pipeline in Alaska. He had a job waiting for him and he was driving up. He lost control of his car and ran into the ditch. He used the last of his money to get his car on the road. He was stuck for money. I agreed to pay for gas if I could get a ride to Whitehorse where he was to get some money wired in. He said okay. So on the way up there we got to get to know each other and he decided he wanted to sell his car, so I decided to buy the car, it was an older car but it's still running so I bought it. Came up here went back to work where I was working all year. Spent the summer working here and then went to Carmacks and worked there for the winter. That was the coldest winter the Yukon ever had as far as I can remember. That winter there was almost -70 below -69 below for a whole week. And my job was working in the old Coal Mine coming in and out of that underground in that cold weather. And I was able to do it all winter. And after that I quit and I went to Prince George. Mom was living there with Roy and Henry and my younger sister Wendy. I went to work at CN Rail for the summer and then came back up to Whitehorse, started working at Whitehorse Copper, that's where I met your mom and then I went down to Alberta to get training in the Gas Pipeline business.

And it was down there that actually I finally met a role model, when I say a role model, somebody that kind of opens the door of understanding for you, in your way of thinking and doing things. That role model was a fellow by the name of Lester. He had long hair and he shared stories and teachings. When I got to know him a little better he was a Pipe Carrier. He explained to me how he got to earn the pipe, and his explanation was that he helped out an Elder in Saskatchewan. Cutting wood, packing water and helping him all for ten years he helped him. So he earned that right to carry that sacred pipe. So with his shared teachings he started to open up a whole new way of looking at life and a different way of thinking. From there when I came back to Whitehorse I was kind of looking around for the same kind of teachings and that's where I met Randall from Old Crow who was in Whitehorse. He came to Whitehorse and we met and he put on a ceremony. We went to it and I've been doing that ever since for 14 years now. Having a ceremony all those years I've been receiving teachings and gaining understandings to make the necessary changes for the better.

Melissa: How are Yukon First Nations Youth going to recover from the ripple effect of Indian residential school that is evident in so many of them today?

Dad: I think the ripple effect is just a creation of the individual that experienced the residential school, how they allow all the negative teachings they received to be a big influence on their daily lives. When I say the negative teachings I am referring to the tools one uses to manage their day to day challenges. Anger and using jealousy and using violence are all tools used regularly. It is used a lot without really acknowledging its use and destructive results. When one continues to use such negative tools they don't understand without the proper teachings from somebody that's a role model that those things are damaging their own spirit. And as long as you damage your own spirit you

become that much weaker. The ripple effect also has to be understood as to who is responsible to make that that ripple stop. When I look at it, I can only speak for myself, ripple effects for me was when I thought back on all those negative things that I lived through and I swore to myself when my children were small that I'll do everything I could to make sure that they will never experience that EVER. There's a couple things that pushed me in my struggle, the thing that pushed me in my struggle was when I was small and my mom was being traumatized by violence from my dad, in his alcohol binges. The helplessness, helplessness I felt, when you're small and you're helpless. And then when you're hungry and you have no food and your made to work hard, and you look at what your options are and there's none. When you experience these lie situations you start enjoying good things more.

I remember one time I was looking at a catalogue and there was a bicycle and I was just wishing to myself, 'I wish that I could have a bicycle.' And I never did own a bicycle, never. But the thing is when you're that way and you say things and you think things and eventually work hard to get them, and then you could when you're older. But another thing that really helped influence me and I feel better about was my grandma. Mom always made time to visit our great-grandma Jinny. And our great-grandma Jinny I watched make her favourite chewing tobacco mix with ashes. I still believe she helped me survive my stay in Lower Post residential school.

Grandma Jinny that was Grandma Charlie's and Uncle Alfred's mom and Alfred Jakesta and Charlie Chief, that's their mom. She was special. We'd always go and see her, and mom always take us to her. In Lower Post residential school I woke up in the dark dorm and something told me to get out of my bed and go over to this young fellow that was from Ross River. 'Go over there,' so I went over there and crawled in bed beside him and somehow I felt safe there, something happened that night. In later years I realized that a lot of boys were abused. I remember another time when I was small I woke up and I listened and I got really frightened. One good thing I learned at that residential school was praying. We were forced to go to church, every Sunday. And I didn't mind going to church because I knew after church we'd go down to the dining hall and we would have corn flakes, so I thought that was great as we would not be eating mush. We're going to have corn flakes. So we waited hungry through the long mass and then we go down and have corn flakes. One thing about that church is that they taught me how to, how to pray. And I remember some little kids passing away there in that school and thought they never got to go home, never got to see their parents. And one time I woke up and I started praying really hard saying I don't want to pass into the next world here in this place. I prayed really hard, my prayers must have been heard. Those are the special moments I remember.

But with the younger generations today the problem with residential school generational trauma is the way I believe it is our Elders were asleep when we were in residential school. When I say they were asleep I was referring to a trend of not teaching and living our ancestor's spiritual ways. They've been traumatized also by the Alaska Highway and their way of life changing by the traders before the highway. So they've been traumatized and basically a lot of them, they all kind of like went to sleep. So now what needs to

happen is they need to start waking up. And the younger generation needs to also wake up and start picking up and preparing themselves.

Melissa: How are we going to get Yukon First Nations Youth to experience and heal using culturally appropriate healing approaches?

Dad: They are going to start healing; I guess when they decide they want to start healing. There's so much, there's so much distractions out there in the real world that they forgot about their culture. And a lot, even our elders are all saying that we lost our culture, but in the actual fact, we didn't lose anything. All we need to know is still there; it's just that they are not going after the culture and spirituality as one, that one without the other is not fully effective.

That's a struggle right there. To understand the struggle and get through it, but most of the younger generations going to have to wake up, they're going to have to wake up and start following as one day there is going to be no one to follow. They will be the ones in front. And the culture, culture is something they're going to have to start looking at seriously. I can only speak from my own experience, it's just when I look for the answers to overcome my challenges. When I look really hard for the answers they may not come to me as expected. I have to have a clear and open mind to receive the answers. They do come by to help solve my personal struggles. Usually my personal struggles are created by myself. I am always on this path of seeking understanding. The most motivating goal for me is when I leave this world I want to work really hard to make it into the next world. Where all good people go...the one thing that keeps me going is the thought that in the bible Jesus forgive those bad people, even on a cross, just before he left this world into the spirit world. He forgave them right at the last hour. So to me that gives me the hope that no matter how things turn out that one can be forgiven. That's my goal is to make it to the next world, there is a lot of things the younger generation must understand that what we do to our spirit in this world has a lot to do with how we go to the next.

I think the biggest problem with the youth today is that there are not too many believers. And that's how they choose to be, they don't want to believe. When I'm on this path I believe the Creator always sends messages to reaffirm the things I really want to know.

One time I really wanted to know if there was such a place as in the bible called Heaven. It has different names and I imagine that's where all happiness lives when we leave this physical world. The thing is to always take things seriously like experiences through the dreams, teachings to keep moving once you get on this path of seeking understanding. If you're on the path in a good direction, then that experience doesn't always come to you as much. It's not because you're not on a good path, it's just that you're already moving in that direction that you're supposed to be travelling.

I think that the thing is for the young generation today, they really have to start understanding that we have a purpose here, in this physical world everybody was put here

for a purpose. We all have to seek out that purpose. And that's the whole goal that keeps us going, the only way we're going to find that purpose is with a clear mind. You don't know when they are going to come to you, you don't know how they're going to come to you, and if you're not in that moment of time of understanding then you wouldn't be able to pick it up either. That's the real good thing about it, is it makes you feel good when you catch those experiences and you understand what they represent.

I don't know if I could share them because sometimes you can't talk about certain things, you compromise the blessings that you get so you have to be careful what you share and what you talk about. What you're able to if you feel comfortable to talk about and share then other people will find it easier to believe and understand.

Melissa: How can Yukon First Nations Youth develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in?

Dad: I don't think there is a balance in the two worlds. The Western world it's like a square and the First Nations world is a circle. You bring those two together they will not fit. It was said that one cannot have one foot in the First Nation canoe and another foot in the non-native canoe. Decision has to be made somewhere on your path to take either or, but for them, for their survival they will have to go back to their circle, their circle of understanding, to understand the circle of life. And once they've gone back then they get all the teachings they need in order to survive. Today there's a real struggle, there's a struggle that people don't understand. Those that do understand it, they know what their struggle is. That struggle is the Western culture is all about materialistic values and what that materialistic value does is it distracts you. The distraction, when it distracts you, it takes you away from understanding your true identity which is your true purpose. Helping others to understand and listen to other teachers helps one seeking their path. I understand my path, I understand my struggles. But I believe eventually I will come to a place along my path where those changes will be made. And when those changes do happen I will have enough strength from Creator and all his helpers to be able to continue. At the end of the day, we have to make a choice of carrying the message and teachings for all those youth coming up and to create the programs and create the opportunities for them. So they may experience things they would normally not experience on their own. So that way it opens up their mind, once they open up their mind then they can start understanding. Understanding from their own perspective. But there are a lot of things they still have to struggle against. Powerful creations like alcohol, drugs, and all the negative things the Western society uses as self serving tools. You have to understand the Western society is made up of negative tools. There is what they call Power, which is not real Power. It's just power that people give themselves, delegated power, real power shown by nature and mother earth. The sun is real true power. That's the real power, the wind, the water, the animals, those are the real power. You have to understand that, and the negative tools the Western world use allow them to think they are normal. Jealousy, anger, greed, pride are negative tools. That's another one Pride, they say you have to be proud, but what do you have to be proud of? You have to be humble, not proud. Being humble is the toughest of all challenges because it means you give up all the things that you work so hard to be. To be able to listen well and to be

nonjudgmental. Being humble means you have to be able to not use all those negative tools against anyone. Not to take advantage of others, not to steal. I think the best thing for the youth to do is to seek out the Creator's laws, the Creator made some laws for all people and those laws should never be broken.

Melissa: What are some of the laws?

Dad: Some of the laws are that you have to always respect all living things. Law is to respect all the Creator's creations right from the smallest bug to the biggest animal. From the water, the trees, everything has a purpose, everything is connected to the people and people connected to them. When we start understanding that what those laws are, then they'll start understanding that people will be able to get along, they will be able to help each other, because all those laws will tell how to behave amongst others. And the fact that we have to accomplish a number of things in this world. We have to get our First Nations name, we have to know our language, because when we leave this world that's how they are going to communicate to us. They are not going to call your Western name or your English language is what I believe. These are important goals to have and understand as things that have to be done. You have to seek out the ceremonies and help at the ceremonies; you have to go to ceremonies. That's where all the teachings flow from, out on the land is where the teachings flow from also.

Yesterday I decided to spend my day hauling sweat wood. While everyone else was enjoying the beautiful day and enjoying life. But I knew there was a purpose to doing that.

Melissa: What is or can be the Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?

Dad: Spirituality is the core, the foundation; the lack of it is the cause of all the other problems and struggles. Spirituality grounds a person, spirituality is a belief system, starts mainly with believing, and it means you have to believe something without any physical facts available. That goes against the Western core belief. Once you believe in something that you don't see, may never see, that you don't experience all the time, once you believe then the teachings and understanding come to you. Once you get the teachings and understanding, then all the other side effects have a way of being taken care. Whether psychological struggles which are the main cause of suicide, it all starts with believing. And that spiritual path will not provide any evidence just because you want it. It will only be provided when you are ready. Suicide is the direct cause of not following the Creator's law. Creator's law said you're not supposed to take anyone's life, including your own that is the Creator's law. If the people understood that was the core law, Creator's law, they wouldn't contemplate on doing that. And if they understood and followed the spiritual path, the teachings would help them from using that as a way of dealing with daily human struggles. The teaching would help them provide the understanding so they can find the tools to deal with the struggles in life. Other than thinking that they're taking the easy way out and they're giving up. They have to understand that the Creator is the only one. Creator's law is that it's the only one that is allowed to take our life, our

physical life. When they understand that then they will be able to seek ways to deal with issues that they struggle with. And one of the best tools to deal with any kind of struggle is prayer. Always pray, pray to give thanks foremost to the Creator to give thanks for what he gives us. And pray for the ones that need help as when we pray for those ones that need help we also pray for ourselves. That is the most powerful prayer is when you pray for others. Especially the ones that work against you, you pray for them because you become stronger. You do not become stronger than them, but stronger to overcome your struggles if you pray for them. So things that people think is a way out, it's actually a dead end. The other alternative is a spiritual journey that can go on and on to as far as you want to take it. It's a sad way to when one decides to end his physical life on mother earth before his time. To assume this would be the final answer to struggles thought to be too large. There is no problem that is too large for the Creator to deal with to help us. All we have to do is prayer for his assistance.

Melissa: Will Culturally Appropriate healing approaches be beneficial for First Nations Youth in the Yukon and how can traditional First Nation Ceremony help?

Dad: Culture, that's the problem with society today is the identity of certain things as a culture. If one pursues the Western culture, accumulation of paper money would be the ultimate goal. Western culture makes one believe that this also represents the only power. When you look closely you will see that this is not true. Money will never stay in ones possession for very long. Very few people in this world have created the ability to accumulate monetary wealth. Everyone else becomes a servant for the few. For someone to choose to live this way is the result of knowing the Western culture or those that do not fully understand. For understanding Culture from a First Nation perspective one must accept believing the unknown and the unseen. To live according to First Nation ancestors beliefs that include language, ceremonies and stories are very important. Living on the land and taking care of the land and all that lives on it is a large part of First Nation culture. In contrast Western culture has no problem destroying the land and water and as a result the animals that live on it. The way we as a people used to live, we used to live in harmony with everything around us. We had all the cures we wanted from all the people that understood and were gifted to understand what was available naturally. That's our culture, all the animals are there to help us and also nourish us... that was our culture. That still is our culture, all our answers that we need is out there on the land. When our ancestors left, they didn't take everything with them in the spirit world, they left everything behind for us to pick up and carry. It's all out there, it's all out there to be picked up and used again. They're always saying we lost our culture, we didn't lose our culture, it's just everyone fell asleep. We need to wake them up; once they wake up we can start picking up where their ancestors left off. We will be that much better off as a people. First Nation culture is a spiritual culture, the core of who we are is our spirituality. Our physical self is just a shell and yet Western society spends so much time on how we look as a shell and not so much time as to how we are a spirit person. To understand that when we hurt other people, we hurt our spirit, we don't hurt other people. We only hurt our spirit. And when we hurt our spirit, then we are not doing what the Creator's law called for, which is look after our spirit. We must look after our spirit, every individual has a spirit. And that's what's being lost today is that in a culture we

must believe in looking after our spirit. This is key for the younger generations to understand and believe as very important. Including the ones not yet born, is to be able to pass that knowledge and experience on to them so that they have the tools to survive. That's all they're going to have is just the culture to help them and survive. Like little grandson, he's going to have all the help he can get as things are not going to be as good for him as it is for us. But he will survive as long as he understands that his spirituality part of his culture will be there to carry him through.

Melissa: Does knowing your own culture teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?

Dad: I feel blessed sitting here today thinking about where I am. I understand and believe and work to prepare myself. I understand that I need other people, healthy people also to teach me. I understand that those that are out there struggling are also teachers. Homeless people struggling with alcohol addiction, violence, that they're there to teach us. They are paying the price of hardship daily to show how I could be if I should choose. I thank them for that, they pay the price so I can learn. They pay the price so I could see how I could be. So I'm thankful for that because I am thankful for a lot of things. I'm thankful for healthy family. When you think in terms of all the other families that are struggling, it's never perfect. Nothing in this world is perfect. I'm not perfect; the Creator did not create anyone perfect. That's why he said nobody can judge, except him. Only when you're perfect you can judge others. That's why I feel that I'm not perfect but at least I am able to cope with the struggles and the challenges. He has blessed me with a number of good things that I thankful for every day. Blessed me with ceremony, has blessed me with good people at work. We teach each other, has blessed me with a beautiful homeland. He's blessed us with good memories of our son and brother, and he also blessed us with a grandson to help us to keep going. To continue giving us a purpose in life. When things don't always go as good as we would like. Our grandson will remind us 'hey I'm here grandpa, don't forget about me.' And that, as long as you have a purpose, it gives you the strength to keep going. You must have a purpose in the physical world and a purpose in the spirit world. They are both important.

Melissa: Is there anything else you want to add?

Dad: Believing in our ancestors. Just because they left the physical world doesn't mean that they are not there to help us. To believe that nothing is hopeless. To be able to forgive people, that's another good powerful tool. And the struggle to get over always living yesterday, that's another challenge. To overcome greed and selfishness because there is a power in giving, that's power. When you give that's power. When you're kind, that's power, that's true power. When you're humble, that's true power. When you understand the difference between the negative and the good tools then you are on your way. When you're able to let go of all the negative tools, you're on your way. When I see all the traps that all the other people are struggling in I feel so blessed that I was able to understand and I pray I never will be in a situation of giving up. When you walk on the path, spiritual path, you're walking on a very, very fine edge. And if you don't stay close to the Creator all the time you will fall off. And that's the way the Creator made it so you

don't forget about him. When you don't forget about him you're always close to him, when you're always close to him you'll never fall off. Even the worse struggles that anyone can have, by praying and working on it, they can be overcome. I always believe that. He helps us to overcome them. And the ceremonies are such a good school, such a good place to learn in ceremony.

When I think back on my life, if I wanted to fail, there are so many excuses I could have had, so many. I could have had so many to use. But somehow the ancestors were there to help me. I think that's what carried me through all those scary times in my life. I remember one time I, I believe there was no god. With all those things I experienced in residential school when it was over, I said there couldn't be any God. How can God allow all of this hardship to go on? But then again when I think back on it now, it wasn't God that allowed it, it was the people. The Creator gave people the power of making the choice. And those were the choices they made based on greed. That all was based on greed. The dominant European cultures that came over and wanted to take over this rich land, resource rich land were behind the cultural genocide. The only one standing in the way was the First Nations people and their reverence for the land. When you're successful in taking over countries in other parts of the world, by doing the same thing it was an overall goal of getting rid of the people first. They thought they were going to get rid of us, but they forgot that you can get rid of the physical people. But you can get rid of the spiritual people. You can never, never ever get rid of the spirit, they never understood that. The people that come from this land are connected to this land spiritually. And we will always be here because of that. No one has any power to get rid of that spirit. And all this land is thousands of years has built a relationship with us, spiritual relationship. If all those Youth knew that and understood and believed that they'll make it. Grandson will make it

Melissa: Yep he will, because he has a strong grandpa and grandma.

Dad: But the thing grandson understands is that he is loved, that's another key, being loved. Everybody wants to be loved, one must love yourself and you must love others. One must love the Creator. When you love others, you love the Creator. It is not possible to say you love the Creator and not love others. That's like saying that the sun doesn't shine. It's just so obvious, it's the key, if you love the Creator, and you must love everybody, even the people you have no use for because the Creator is in them too. The Creator is in everything, in the wind, the clouds, sun, he is in everything. So we are never alone because we are surrounded by the Creator.

SERVICE PROVIDERS:

Winona Polson-Lahache (Algonquin and Mohawk): Female Service Provider



Figure 15. (Left to Right) Shoshona Kish [Winona's Sister-in-law], Winona Polson Lahache, Louise Lahache [Winona's Mother], Dawn Ottereyes-Lacasse [Winona's Sister-in-law]

Winona Polson-Lahache: I met Winona through my work with the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council and I am honoured she is a part of this thesis. She has done so much for Aboriginal people across Canada as her work as the Mental Health and Addictions Research and Policy Analyst for the Assembly of First Nations directly relates to mental wellness. Winona is a young adult who is genuinely determined to create mental wellness among Aboriginal people and is leading the way for many Youth across

Canada. She travelled to Whitehorse, Yukon to work with Lori Duncan and other Service Providers. Winona is paddling the canoe by listening to Elders and guiding the youth.

Winona: My name is Winona Polson-Lahache, the name that I carry is Wyahawe and it was actually my grandmother's name, she gave up her name for me and it means 'she brings fresh fruit', and I like to think of it as a metaphor for some of the work I do. I'm Algonquin and Mohawk, I grew up in Long Point First Nation, more commonly known as Winneway Quebec, and my mom's from Kahnawake. My clan is the Turtle. I work for the Assembly of First Nations as the Mental Health and Addictions Research and Policy Analyst. In relation to some of the work that I will share I was also a research officer for the National Aboriginal Health Organization in the First Nations Centre. I also used to run the youth program for the Odawa Native Friendship Centre in Ottawa, so I actually have urban experience; although, in the past I'd say ten years it's been pretty much on reserve.

Melissa: Can you please tell me what your experience/story with First Nations youth mental health and what solutions you have found to be beneficial for First Nations Youth?

Winona: In terms of mental health, my direct experience would really be primarily around suicide prevention. Around suicidality itself, addictions and probably intergenerational effects of residential school trauma, so those are, I mean in terms of the term mental health, is pretty inclusive of a broad range of different things ranging from very simple to very complex disorders, so it's primarily around the area of suicidality that I've been involved. At first as a service provider level, but in more recent years a very policy oriented level, and also a research oriented level as well, so a lot of the work that I've done in recent years has really been around research, not conducting research, but a lot of secondary analysis of research, and producing knowledge translation pieces based on existing research and evidence around suicidality and suicide prevention itself.

National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy NAYSPS funds all these different projects across Canada and you look at something like right now it's funding, one of the projects it is funding is CEPS, and CEPS is based on the idea of building cultural identity amongst youth, it's based on the idea of building leadership, but the curriculum itself is designed within a cultural framework which is so essential to our identity that I mean it's like, you ask anybody who's got any cultural foundation and they will know what medicine wheel teachings are and that's what CEPS is based on. So, CEPS in Manitoba is one of the projects that's being funded right now and they're coming out with some really exciting evaluation results on how successful their project has been and its implementation, and so that's really cool, right, it's just there is so much emerging research that's coming out right now.

A lot of that work that I did at the time was associated to the National Aboriginal Health Organization and the First Nations Centre in NAHO, but in terms of identity and it's relation to mental health and youth, it's a really big question. It's an immense

question, so within the context of your research that your conducting right now, and the core of it being around identity and the role of identity in mental wellness itself, I'd say that within suicide and suicide prevention itself, identity has such a huge role in whether or not a youth would even begin to contemplate suicide, and so this is something that is researched a lot in the field now and in the work that I had done was really around secondary research, so reading a lot of I guess emerging research is what you can call it because a lot of the research that has been conducted around mental health and youth has really, and its relation to identity I guess has really been in recent years, and the big one starting with Chandler & Lalonde's research of course and linking cultural continuity, but that sort of changed what happened in First Nations Youth and mental health in the field of it, it sort of shook the ground and it changed everything that we were doing on a knowledge translation and transmission scope.

The work that we we're doing at NAHO at the time and producing information resources about what works in suicide prevention, was really, really shaped by research that was being conducted at that time, and it's really interesting because I think that it's for many, many years, that is something that as First Nations people we already knew, but we never had research that sort of made that evident, or approved it, and it really changed a lot of work that was being done around suicide prevention at the time.

One of the things that I had worked on when I was at NAHO, was the development of the Honouring Life Network, and we looked at developing the Honouring Life Network, we talked about notions of suicide prevention and mental wellness of youth and we talked about what suicide prevention actually looks like, and we had to go well above and beyond your sort of common approaches to suicide prevention being delivery of assisting training, or things like that, kind of like gate-keeper training and looking beyond that and saying what information resources exist that we can supply communities with when trying to work within First Nations Youth and mental wellness. And we started to pull together resources that had a lot to do with community development for one, which was kind of different in the nature of suicide prevention and sort of unexpected for a lot of people, a lot of folks kind of thought, well your working on suicide prevention, why are you pulling together information resources on community development, it doesn't make any sense!

But when you look at the nature of what increases resiliency of youth, and you look at suicidality and youth and things that influence suicidality and youth, there's all of these risk factors that increase the likelihood of a youth attempting suicide or contemplating suicide, but in addition to that, you have to look at the environment in which we already live in, and as a young person living in a First Nations community, your living with intergenerational effects of residential schools, your living with constantly seeing lateral violence and lateral abuses occurring in your community, in many communities the education systems are not at the level that they perhaps should be or community members would like them to be and just as kind of like colonized nature, that people are living in this like disempowerment, and I mean the big one being, not really having any control over the development and delivery of your own community programs, and it results in this state of hopelessness and communities, and so when you

look at communities and your average community and a young person living in a community, it's like, I mean never mind the risk factors, look at the community itself, like you add just one of those tiny risk factors on top of it, and it's like the needle on the haystack.

When we sort of thought about what suicide prevention actually looks like then we were like 'Okay it includes community development, it includes making sure youth are provided with an opportunity to learn about their culture. It includes after school activities' and suicide prevention became more than just taking intervention training or taking pure counselling training and it became so much more than that and that was a really, really, it was a very innovative thing for us to be doing in certain areas of some of our partners that we worked with. They were actually very surprised, there were several times where I had gone to present at the Canadian Association on Suicide Prevention.

So going to the Canadian Association on Suicide Prevention that has this national conference every year and going and presenting on First Nations approaches to suicide prevention and we're walking in and we're like 'Yeah it's all about running after school programs and running leadership programs and cultural camps,' and people were like 'but that's not suicide prevention' and they couldn't understand it, and so it really influenced the area of suicide prevention and so I mean, mental health is so broad, but within I guess just sort of pick one suicide prevention, that was probably my proudest achievements, was being able to have influenced things in that way where we took a much more cultural approach, we took an approach of being holistic, of not just looking at suicidality as a problem, but actually looking at youth as a whole and everything their connected to and changing the entire connectedness of what they're all about, as opposed to just, you know (well this is wrong you know the emotional and mental part of yourself you know). And so we actually took a whole look at the individual and not just the individual, but their family and their community and that was very, very different and it really changed the field, like you look at policy that exists now in suicide prevention, it is actually pretty cool. The National Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy for Health Canada is based on four tiers: one of those tiers is prevention and through advocacy like the AFN and stuff like that. Programs like after school programs and cultural camps can actually be funded through NAYSPS now, so it's pretty neat in that sense. So I mean it's like, it didn't change the face of what was out there and available in terms of intervention approaches, but it definitely changed peoples' attitudes around what type of approaches they should be taking and I like to think anyways that it's sort of de-stigmatized some of that, and its opened a lot of doors and I think that's something that's very unique about mental health and addictions, and I always group those two together because there's this natural progression that's happening right now in the field of mental health and addictions as sort of like these two separate fields. But they overlap in so many ways that there's just this natural progression that seems to be happening right now where there not collapsing, but their co-existing as systems and the whole idea of like comprehensive and integrated approaches is something that's really unique I think for mental health and addictions. I see it happening in those files or in those fields far more than I see it happening in other areas. I think that it's kind of cool and it's kind of setting a precedent for other areas to

kind of move towards. So I'll leave it at that because that's probably my proudest achievement, it was a lot of fun.

Melissa: That is amazing.

Winona: Thanks to other people who had the visioning to be engaging in that kind of work, like Chandler & Lalonde, I mean without their research, there is no way the field could have changed so much!

Melissa: In your view, what is the relationship between identity and healing form Mental Health issues?

Winona: It's crucially important, if you look at some of the work that is being done, there is a research study that is being conducted by the a couple of folks, I can't remember right now if it is the Mental Health Commission, First Nations, Inuit and Métis Advisory Committee, or if it's just a few members on it, there just seems to be some overlap, but basically it's Carolyn Tait and Bill Mussel who are spearheading some research right now, it's sort of been a collaborative thing between the Native Mental Health Association and the First Nations Inuit and Métis Advisory Committee to the Mental Health Commission of Canada and I think they may also be partnered with the Mood Disorder Society of Canada, but they're conducting, they are working on this initiative right now called Building Bridges and they're doing some work around trying to increase networks and partnerships amongst all of these different partners and mental health and primarily around mental health, but they've included some areas, some key partners in addictions and they've engaged in some research around cultural competency and they put together this video and I would highly recommend that you check it out, I don't even know if it's been made public yet, I might have seen it at the screening of it, but what they delved into exploring the impacts or importance of cultural competency in mental health service delivery itself, so looking at the way services are delivered and sort of seeing how successful they are based on whether or not they are culturally competent and you've actually, in the research they're starting to find they are building this evidence really around the fact that, if your service delivery approaches are culturally competent and include cultural approaches to healing or not even necessarily cultural approaches to healing, but are just culturally competent then they are more successful and are better in their relation to the client themselves and so, and these aren't rocket science kind of things, they are not like 'you got to bring in, you know, you got to bring in this healer with all this experience' and all this stuff.

One of their participants was sharing and I don't want to tell her story, it's her story, but she was sharing how important it was for her after seeing therapist after therapist after therapist, who kept asking her what was wrong with her, to seeing this Indigenous therapist that just sat down and didn't say anything to her and she had this amazing breakthrough because it was culturally competent, she wasn't being forced to find out what was wrong with her. So, the process in which she was invited to disclose was not a process where she was being asked 'what's wrong with you', she was just being provided with an opportunity to say whatever she wanted and she had this amazing

breakthrough, and so I think the way we conduct ourselves is part of our identity, the way we conduct ourselves and our relations is part of our identity and so relationships and the way those function, if they're a reflection of our identity, then it proves that there's a very strong link and so that's one example.

There is the example I mentioned around youth and suicidality, cultural continuity I guess, keeping in mind that in Chandler & Lalonde's research continuity takes on a different meaning, but within that same research, they also established that the likelihood of suicidality in an individual is actually decreased if there is access to cultural activity, so cultural identity as well like I mean it's one of the really important things that if you look at something like the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy NAYPS funds all these different projects across Canada.

Just another point, every time I talk about research or evidence, I'm also very conscious to ensure that when I talk about evidence that also includes our evidence, evidence that's produced through Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing, and ways of generating new knowledge, right. And so, there needs to be some recognition for that as well, and so we already know that identity and mental health are linked, all you need to do is you just need to talk to Elders and they will tell you, and they can demonstrate it, it doesn't need to be sort of like academic methodological research that demonstrates or validates what we already know, we already know those things so I am always quick to sort of add that every time I talk about evidence and research and that.

Melissa: What is your view on the need for the development of culturally appropriate healing approaches for First Nations Youth?

Winona: I think it's absolutely essential, some of the stuff I already talked about really demonstrates how much I think it is essential, but one of the things that I will note though is that I in good conscience have to also say that as a result of the environment in which we find ourselves operating, and by that I mean funding restrictions or even the way that a government designs policy, right, we constantly sort of all get painted with the same brush, we all land up being pulled into this like, pan-Aboriginal approach, right and policy and how programs are funded and how policy is designed right at a federal and national level and if you break that down even further, we're sort of like, I've heard people call it pan-Indianized. I don't know if I like the term, but we're all cast with the same brush, so I as an individual who comes from communities, like an Algonquin and Mohawk community in Quebec, will definitely have a lot of commonalities in Indigenous approaches to healing and mental wellness as say the community that you come from right, that's straight across the country, right. There is definitely some commonalities, but there are definitely some distinct differences and we continually run the risk when we're painted with the same brush. We continually run the risk of limiting our ability to be able to design Indigenous approaches to healing that are designed to meet the specific needs of our communities and our own distinct nations and that's just sort of something that I feel like I have to in good conscience put out there, as well that you know while it's so important to sort of take an Indigenized approach, we also sort of have to keep in mind

that there are distinct differences that exist in between nations and we also have to honour and respect those as well.

Melissa: What have you found within your research and work that is a respectful engagement model for urban aboriginal groups in Canada?

Winona: A lot of the work that I've done has been, I'm not sure if it's really made a distinct difference between rural and urban, or on reserve off reserve or you know what I mean, I think it's just the work that I've engaged in at least has sort of just tackled the issue and tried to be as broad and respectful as possible, so that it's not exclusionary, but rather its inclusive and broad enough to try and be applied in different settings whether you're a First Nations group operating out of a community, or operating out of a friendship centre, you would be able to apply the work that I've done anyways and things that I've produced in an either/or setting, right.

In terms of engagement models, I will be honest, the engagement models that I've either designed or applied have really been focused on engagement of First Nations on reserve or in communities, and while that sort of excludes me then to adequately answer the question, right, I will say that I think that there is not a whole heck of a lot of difference between First Nations on reserve and First Nations off reserve as individuals. The big difference is in the structures that restrict us in each of those settings, and so the identity that I have as someone who grew up in a community who now lives in rural Ottawa, just on the outskirts of Ottawa, in my own little house and all this kind of stuff, right. I'm still the same person, I still live by the same value system, but the structures in which my life has to exist within is really, really different. And so the way in which I as an individual access community is very, very different than if I were to be living in Winneway. If I was living in Winneway, I'd be immersed in community all the time, there is all kinds of events going on all the time, right, whereas in Ottawa it would be a very different experience, it would be going to the Friendship Centre and if you're lucky they might be having a craft night or something, and so you really have to go out of your way to try to access community. So myself as an individual, it's either/or, I mean I am pretty much the same individual, so in terms of engagement models, I would expect that you would have to look at the structures that exist there and you would have to look at ensuring that an engagement model can actually be applied to the structures that exist there. In a community, the trust building and all that kind of stuff that accompanies engagement, it might be very different in an urban setting, so if you were going to use for instance the Friendship Centres, conducting a research project for engagement might be a very different thing. You might be able to walk in and get people in, you might not, but in a community I know for sure there is all of this trust building that has to go on and everything else, so it's a very different environment. You're still dealing with the same people, but it's a very different environment.

Melissa: How are First Nations youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds?

Winona: I've always lived in two worlds, I will tell you why, it's because I grew up in Winneway and when I was growing up in Winneway I was always different, I was always different than the other kids because my mother was Mohawk and Winneway is an Algonquin community, and so I was always treated differently by the other kids and I always felt like I belonged, that's where I was born, that's where I was related to half of the kids who even treated me different, but I always felt like there was something about me that was different and I was always made to feel that way by the other kids too. When I was a kid, kids would tell me like 'oh you're only half from here, your half Mohawk' (laughing). They would tell me all kind of stuff, but I grew up in Winneway and I didn't really know what it meant to be Mohawk, or you know what I mean like, I was like Mohawk, I am the same as everybody else here, but sort of always knew that there was something that was a little bit different.

I spent a lot of time with my grandmother in Kahnawake, a lot of summers over the years, learning about a lot of things, about many things, my grandma on my mom's side was one cool lady, she was a cool-cat (laughing). She was relatable to me as like a kid, as a teenager, as a grown woman. I loved growing up with her and she was just so relatable to me that it never felt like a kid and an adult, and she always talked about 'us and them', and 'the way we do things' and 'the way they do things' and you know how we have to keep conscience of that right. I'm often reminded of this every time I see the symbolism of the Two-Row-Wampum, so the Two-Row-Wampum is basically it's a Wampum belt that was a treaty basically, created between the Haudenosaunee, which is the Iroquois Confederacy and European settlers when they first arrived here, and they were representatives of the Queen at the time, and this agreement was made and it's the Two-World-Wampum. What it is, is this long belt that's made of Wampum shells, but there is another name for them, but they are purple and white the shells, and so the way that they're used, is there used to make beads and they make beads in either white or purple right, and then they make all of these designs, and the Two-Row-Wampum is this like band of white, purple, white, and that is all it is, it's just this long belt with all these beads.

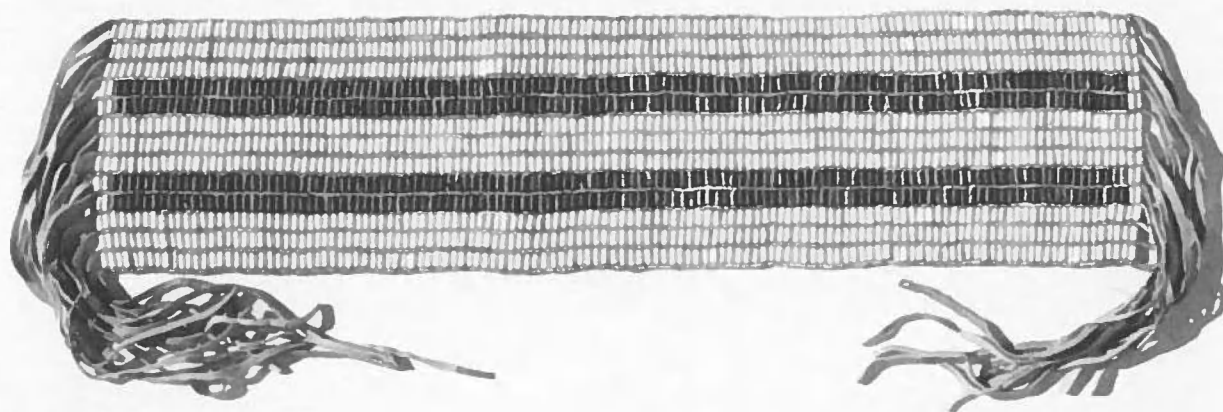


Figure 16. Two Row Wampun Belt

In Mohawk, it is called the Kaswenta, and what it is, is that agreement was made and the agreement is that European settlers arrived in ships and we had our canoes, and what the agreement is that we agreed to travel our waters side by side, and their ship would travel on one side, and we would travel alongside them, and we travelled on the same river in a forward motion, but the agreement was that they wouldn't step on our boat, and wouldn't step in theirs, and that teaching is something that you always hear these things about Mohawk Woman and you know what I mean like, these crazy Mohawk women, but that teaching really, really is very central to Haudenosaunee identity. It's central, and so that sort of shapes a lot of the values, a lot of the way that you conduct yourself in this world as a Haudenosaunee person. And that agreement that was made is something that has never been forgotten. People still live by that to this day, and so two-worlds means a very big thing to me because there's two-worlds that exist on so many different levels.

An example, I talked about research and ways of knowing, right, so Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous ways of knowing are not widely recognized by academics or by folks that use evidence and research findings, like government or by whoever else. And sort of like the notion out there is that evidence has to be scientific, methodologically produced knowledge, that's what evidence has to be and that's the only thing that in our society today people are willing to except as evidence. But that doesn't mean that our evidence and our knowledge isn't true or real evidence, it's just that the science in which we use is the methodology and the science which we use to generate knowledge is just done in a different setting, it's done in a different way.

So, you look at a sweat lodge and all of the activities that are conducted in a sweat lodge ceremony, the conductors for example, the conductor or a sweat lodge ceremony, you don't just like 'you know what, I seen this guy, he told me how to do it, I am going to do it.' Only cultural practitioners are allowed to be sweat lodge conductors and there's all of these things that you have to do before you can become a sweat lodge conductor. You have to be a fire keeper, you have to be a lodge builder, you have to be a helper, you have to be the person who comes and brings the water and brings it to the woman for the blessing and you have to be the person who hands out all the tobacco, you know and there is all of these things. They're not just like 'okay I've done it,' they're not just mechanically done things, you do those things and you do them until you learn the value in doing them before you can move onto something else, and the value in doing them means that you learned all of the teachings that come with fulfilling that role and then you continue to move along and you move along until you become somebody who shadows and you shadow the conductor, the sweat lodge conductor and you do that for a long time before you can even become a conductor because there is a whole science to what we do. Because we don't write it down and publish books, doesn't mean that it's not true science, right, doesn't mean that it's not real knowledge and doesn't mean that it's not evidence. It just means that it's experiential knowledge. It's experiential evidence and if you ask me I think it's even better because it's not cheating. You don't get to have a book that you can pull off your shelf and just reference later on, you have to know this stuff.

And so there is this whole science to it, how do you co-exist, how do you conduct work in this world, while also honouring that world, and that's walking in two worlds, it truly is. An example of it is right now the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) framework. The program framework for NNADAP at a federal level is undergoing a program review and one of the things that one of my colleagues and I've been really, really tough in ensuring that we carve out is recognition of Indigenous knowledge and it's been a major, major achievement for us to have Health Canada, to get to a point where Health Canada is willing to agree 'Yes communities do have a right to identify what knowledge is and use their own epistemologies to generate that knowledge.' And so that's kind of like walking in two worlds, you know what I mean. And it's the same thing I think, it's that identity. And it's that keeping it at the forefront of your mind, that you're constantly doing it, so it doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter if you're living on reserve or off reserve, it doesn't matter if you're doing policy work, it doesn't matter if you're doing front line work, it doesn't matter if you're going to school, being conscious that you're always walking in those two worlds, you have to have solid cultural identity to be able to do it. And that is the best way that I can answer your question, is that it's completely reliant on identity, both individual identity and collective identity because I mean your individual identity is relational to your collective identity as a peoples, right. To me that's sort of like the trick is always being conscious that you are walking in two worlds, you know. Like there isn't anybody sending anybody back on no boats, we have to right, we have to live in both worlds. How do we actually do that, right!

Melissa: What is or can be First Nations perspective on Spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention? So basically how can spirituality help with mental health issues and in turn help with suicide prevention?

Winona: Spirituality, it's interesting that you chose Spirituality because I think a lot of people would have chose culture in that question, but I am just wondering did you choose Spirituality intentionally as opposed to culture.

Melissa: Yeah

Winona: Okay, I actually really like that you chose spirituality as opposed to culture just because culture can refer to, it's such a broad thing, right, and so culture is kind of like how we conduct ourselves as communities and the practices in which we conduct as communities and as families and as individuals. But spirituality is actually like culture, but a whole other level, spirituality is relative to the individual, so spirituality is sort of like this level of kind of self-awareness of knowing yourself on a spirit level. Spirituality doesn't mean that you go to a pow-wow on Friday night, spirituality can come in many different forms, but characteristics of spirituality are all based on having a relationship with yourself right, and that's why I find it so interesting that you chose spirituality because spirituality can actually be facilitated in many different ways. It can be facilitated in self-reflection, there's all of the different cultures and religions across the world, all have components of spirituality and that's what they all sort of aim to achieve is for you to develop a level of spirituality within yourself. And the way in which people do that is

in many different ways. I mean it's relationship between spirituality and mental well-being and suicidality itself, right, you can't separate it, you can't, you have to ensure that you're doing well spiritually to be able to achieve mental well-being. I mean it's engrained in our teachings, you look at like the medicine wheel and what four quadrants we have that make us a whole right, and the spirit is one of those quadrants and you can't have wholeness and whole health without all of those pieces and so I mean the relation is undeniable.

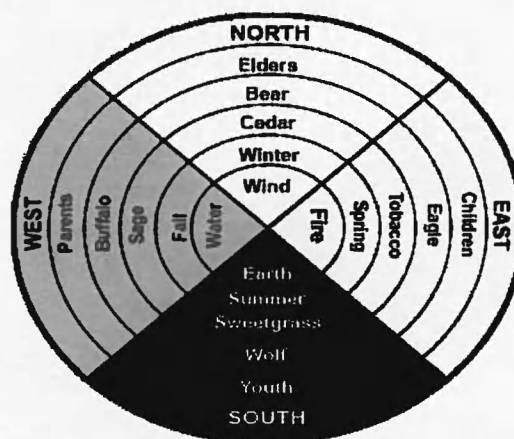


Figure 17. Medicine Wheel

Melissa: You make a lot of sense because you are right... if you take away one of those aspects it messes up your wholeness and well-being which in turn leads to imbalance and leads to things like suicide.

Winona: Yes, absolutely.

Melissa: Does knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?

Winona: Yeah, I actually... something that I'll share that actually I really don't share with anybody really is that when I was about fifteen years old I was having some trouble at home, was having some trouble with my parents, I was acting out, I was an angry teenager and I started seeing a counselor and we were just talking through stuff and she would ask me 'Why are you here?' 'I don't know my parents think I should come here and you know whatever else, the whole thing.' And she's like 'What's the problem with you and your parents then?' She was a really good counselor, she would always just ask me one or two questions and that was it, and then she would just let it all come out and I was seeing this counselor for a little while and then I was struggling with something and it's kind of hard to describe it when I think of it retrospectively now, but I was struggling with something and as a result of that struggling, I was very angry and my parents were the closest thing in my life, at that time, and they got the brunt of it. I was constantly mad at my parents, constantly fighting. I was a teenager right, but I hit a point where I told my parents that and I didn't know why, I was telling them you know 'I don't even know what I'm doing here', 'I don't even know why I'm here.' I was like 'I don't even

know why I need to be here.' And they were like 'well what do you mean'? And I sort of confessed to them that I was actually contemplating suicide and I'd say I think I was around fifteen years old at the time and my poor mother, when I think of it today you know, she couldn't understand why, she was like we provided a good life for you and there is nothing wrong with you in school, there's nothing wrong in your life, like what is going on, right.

So I was hospitalized, but it was like assessment, I wasn't tied to a bed or anything like that (laughing), but they put me in. I didn't know why, I couldn't figure out why and I can't even remember what instigated it, but I thought about what if going back to where my frame of mind was at that time, I thought about 'what if I did it?' 'what would happen?' 'like nobody is going to miss me anyways', I was all angry, so I was thinking nobody is going to miss me anyway.

And I start thinking about my baby brothers and I started thinking about my family back home, my grandparents and my parents and I start thinking about literally what I actually saw was literally like a drop in the water you know and just the ripples that come out and that's literally what I saw and I scared the shit out of myself.

I was like I love everyone in my world so much that that's actually what stopped me. So after the assessment was done, and that happened while I was under assessment, I was actually like under 24 hour watch and stuff and I ended up checking myself out, everything was okay and I went back to this counsellor and I explained to her everything that happened and when I talked to her about that she was saying then, so why did you actually want to do it then...did you figure it out? And I told her because I don't know what I'm doing here, I really don't know what I'm here for, I don't know what I'm supposed to do, what my life and the world in which I live, I don't know how I fit in my world, I don't know.

I understood collective identity because I was raised in a very culturally founded family that was based on like Indigenous identity like Anishinabe identity, but I didn't understand my individual identity and when I told her that I didn't know what I'm doing here, I don't know who I am, I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing, she was like 'holy smokes your having a mid-life crisis,' she's like 'and your sixteen years old, how is this even possible.' I realized that my individual identity was the one thing that once I figured out who I was and how I fit into things and all this stuff there was no stopping, there was no stopping me, I was trying to conquer everything that was in my path, but I didn't know, despite being raised in such a strong family, I didn't know how to develop my own individual identity.

So I grew up knowing those teachings, but how I actually applied them in my everyday living, I didn't know how to, and I didn't know how to do that. I didn't know how to relate to them. So I had to actually build that relation to those practices, to finish forming my own individual identity, my own personal identity before it actually landed up feeding into my resiliency and I'm framing it as resiliency because resiliency is the most crucial factor in suicide prevention. And so how I actually related to that was

critically important and lucky I had a good counselor, lucky I had great parents you know that knew to step in when they did, lucky that I was willing enough to actually talk to my parents... A lot of youth don't have that.

Melissa: Thanks for sharing that, wow!

How can traditional First Nations Ceremony help?

Winona: You have to pick a ceremony, I am actually going to pick ...it actually relates to what I just talked about is our ceremonies that we have, like we often sort of think of ceremonies as this sort of thing that all these protocols are attached to and all this, there has to be a big feast and has to be all this, everybody wearing a dress (laughing), and we focus so much on the protocols that we forget that a lot of times ceremonies are integrated into our everyday living and we forget about those things.

But actually I want to talk about a specific ceremony that has a lot to do with identity, and that's when a child goes from being a child and most specifically a young woman goes from being a young woman and becoming a woman, and those coming of age ceremonies. Those coming of age ceremonies are so important, and the ceremony that we have is called an isolation ceremony. And what it is, is once a young girl starts experiencing her first moon time, she's put in isolation with no men around her at all and our moon time is a very, very... it's kind of like a funny thing that today you can be watching TV and there's all kinds of ads for like blue liquid being poured onto all kinds of things, right, but when you look at what it means to us culturally, our moon-time is like such a sacred thing. We had lodges built just for us to be in at that time because that's when we were so strong our men couldn't even be around us, we were so strong at that point in time that our energies would hurt the energies of men if we were around them, and there is a lot of teachings where I come from around when you are on your time and you're in your family's home, adjustments that we had to make over time because we don't have those lodges anymore, so you know you're all sitting around in the living room and your brothers sitting on the floor and he's got his legs out, you don't cross his legs if you're on your time, you go and you walk around him and if you need to walk by him, you walk around him and you don't cross over him because your energy is so powerful at that time, you'll mess with his energy and so there is all of these protocols that sort of happened or like all of these practices that sort of happened as a result of having to change our lifestyles right, but the significance of that time is so strong and its related to our entire universe. I mean there is a reason there are thirteen moons, you know there is a reason there is a full moon every 28 days, like there is a reason why our cycles are every 28 days right and so it's the gift that we have as life givers and that is so critically important.

So when a young woman first experiences that time she gets put in an isolation ceremony and she doesn't go to school, she doesn't go to hang out with her friends, all of those normal everyday things she does stops for four days and she goes into four days of isolation. What happens at that time is all of her aunties, all of her grandmothers, they all come and they all give her the teachings of womanhood at that time, and we come and we

bring her skirts, we bring her bundles, we bring her our teachings, our experiences, she learns about life, she learns about womanhood, she learns about children and birthing and she learns about (and this is personally my favourite) she learns about love. All of the aunties come and tell her what it's like to fall in love, what it's like when you find the man that you are supposed to be with. They come and they give her all of those teachings and it helps her (you know like I've heard so many stories of young woman that don't know what they're going through when it happens), and so those ceremonies are so important in feeding into who we are and forming who we are and the role in which we play in our world. And so if we are not able to conduct those ceremonies then that has an effect on our ability to form our identities.

It's the same thing for our young men, they go in their isolation, they go in their isolation on the land, and they introduce themselves to the earth as a hunter. Those ceremonies start from a very young, they start from when you are born, there's all of these 'the rites of passage ceremonies', so your common ceremonies would be like when your born, the placenta is buried or it hung in a tree, when you first step foot on the earth, there is a ceremony for that because when you're a young woman you're introduced to the world, you're introduced to the world, when a person is going to be a life giver. When you're a young man you're introduced to the world as somebody who is going to be a hunter, so at a later point in time, the animals give themselves up to you, when you're a hunter. There's all kinds of stories, old stories about kids who didn't have their walking out ceremonies, they call that the 'walking out ceremony.' So boys who didn't have their walking out ceremonies are really bad hunters after because the animals don't know who they are and they don't give themselves up to them. The adulthood rites of passage ceremonies, the Elder-hood rites of passage, and so all of those ceremonies are all so critical.

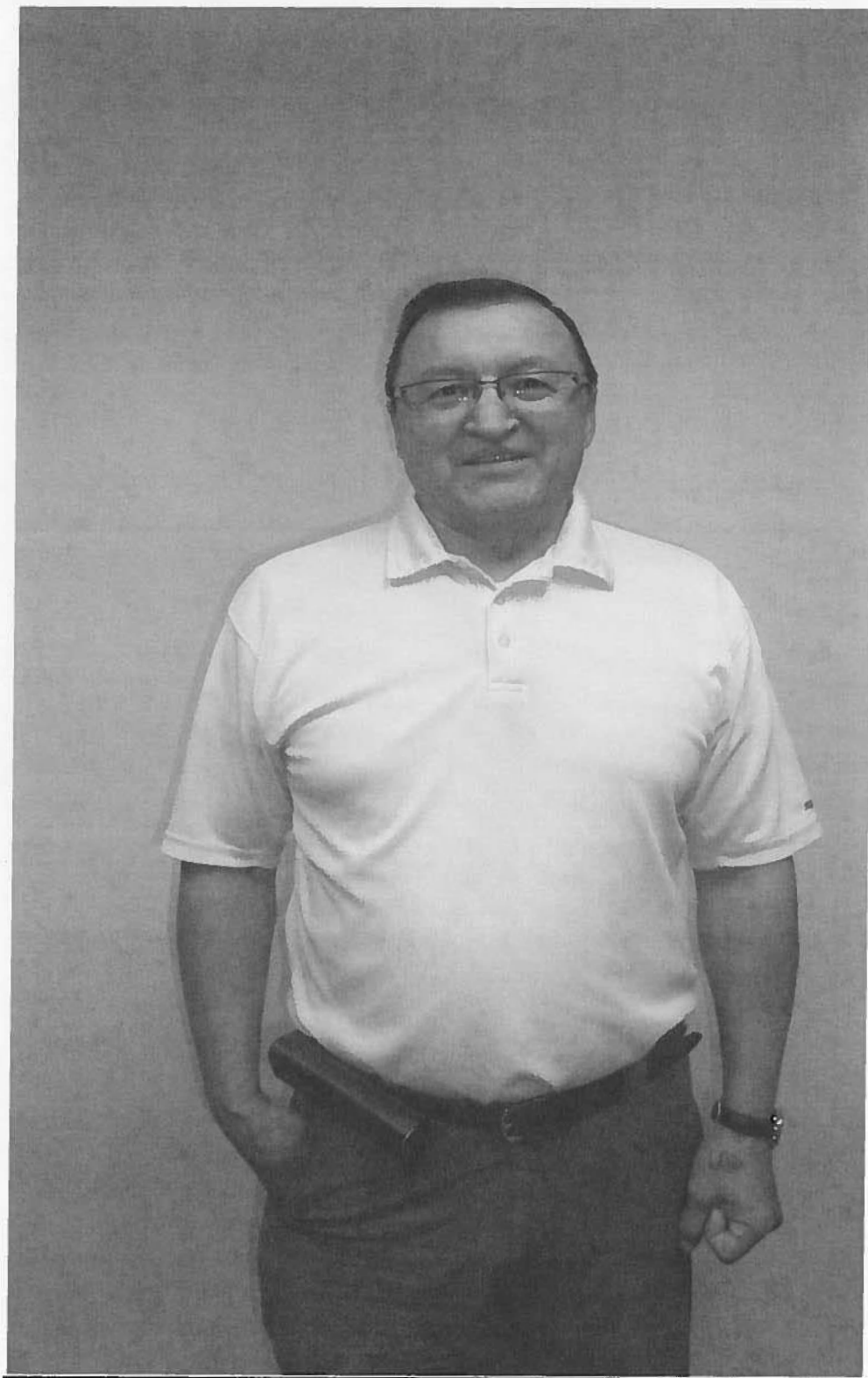
In youth it's especially critical because that's when you're forming your identity, that's when you're figuring out how you fit in this world, and if you're not guided in that process and you don't have access to that, it makes it so difficult for you to figure out how you fit in everything right.

Melissa: I like how you tied that back to the youth. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Winona: Just that I am really, really, really glad that this is the field that you're going into (laughing). You know doing the kind of work that I do, I was just at a meeting on the weekend, during this week and we were talking about this NNADAP renewal process and the leadership team that's going to guide the implementation and this leadership team has almost twenty people on it, it's a humungous team and at the meeting we had we were giving this update on it and this woman says 'You guys don't even have a youth rep on there.' I was like 'oh man' (laughing)... and she says 'You need to make sure you get youth reps on there' and you she is going on and on, right, and somebody else was saying 'you know it's the people on this team who were chosen because they understand the landscape, they understand the policies, they understand implementation, so they have experiential knowledge that they're going to need to apply, and you know you don't want

to have just a youth sitting there wondering what's going on'... I got so offended (laughing) and I went up to that lady after and I said I was highly offended by what she shared and I let her know that I'm sure she hadn't meant it that way, but what it came across as was that she thought youth wouldn't be able to participate in a process like that because they are not smart enough to understand it. I explained to her that technically if I even look at the terms of reference of where this person was appointed from for their youth council, I said I am actually still a youth on your youth council until March and she said 'What? You're that young'... (laughing). I was like, 'well yeah.' But I'm sharing this because it's truly been an enormous challenge to be working in the area of mental health and addictions and to be a young person and it's just in the field there is a lot, a lot, a lot of silver hair in the field and they, something I hear constantly at different tables is the need for young people to get involved to start stepping up to the plate and mentored into the field because there is a shortage of young people who are interested in getting involved right now and so I'm truly very happy that this is what your actually looking at doing because there's not enough young people in the field right now and despite it being a challenge, it's a pretty good career movement. You will be the youngest person involved.

Figure 18. Andy Nieman (White River First Nation/ Ta'an Kwach'an): Male Service Provider



Andy Nieman, the Male Service Provider: Andy Nieman is a family friend and is the Yukon's Child and Youth Advocate and is passionate about Youth and I thought his knowledge would be a strong paddle in formulating a powerful thesis based on his answers to the questions. His life story will be tremendous because as a youth he came through foster care, group homes, residential school, alcohol and drug addiction, and is now many years clean and sober. He is an Ordained Minister with the United Pentecostal Church International, and is doing so much for his people within the Yukon and beyond. Andy represents a paddler on the canoe who is listening to the Elders and guiding the Youth in the canoe to learn from his experience and make healthy and wise choices with his help and blessings. His paddle is helping formulate unison by working with all people.

Andy: I am the child and youth advocate for the Yukon. I am of Northern Tutchone ancestry. I'm of the Crow Clan and come from the White River First Nation in the Yukon. I was born and raised in Whitehorse here and married, two stepsons, two grandchildren, four daughters and two cats.

Melissa: Can you just tell me a bit about your, well you told me about your background, do you want to tell me a bit more about your background?

Andy: Okay, I was born in Whitehorse and went to Lower Post Indian residential school for three years. Came out of there, got addicted to alcohol when I was twelve years old and basically had to run away from home, I guess to escape the violence that was there and became an alcoholic and drug addict for about twenty-seven years. Lived on the street in Vancouver for over ten years, and I did a total of ten and a half years in various jails in Canada.

Then I gave my life to Jesus and followed the bible and that is what changed my life. And went back to university, got a degree in social work in the year 2000 and I am also a minister at the United Pentecostal Church. I'm a pastor.

I worked for the Kwanlin Dun First Nation as a therapist, community wellness program. I worked for the child treatment services with Yukon Territorial government for almost three years and went into private practice for about nine years and then got this job here just about six months ago I guess something like that. Seven months ago.

Melissa: It's going well?

Andy: Yes it's going really good.

Melissa: As the Yukon's Child and Youth Advocate can you tell me about your experience working with First Nations youth in the Yukon? Or youth in general?

Andy: I'm finding that you know the children and youth in the Yukon, when we look at the youth who have been accessing our services, the majority to this point have been non-First Nations youth. And my work with the youth basically ensures that their voice is heard and that their rights are upheld and respected because Canada is the signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and as a signatory then that means children legally have rights, there's four basic rights that they have a right to: One is the right to be safe, they have a right to be healthy, they have a right to be educated and they have a right to be heard. And every other right comes under those four basic main rights that they're entitled to.

Yeah at this point we're basically educating the public and the youth, doing tours of the various schools throughout the Yukon. And this first years really going to be about educating the public as to what our role is and our role basically is to inform, advise, assist and support children and youth to access various government services that they're entitled too. Also another part of advocacy is to do the individual advocacy, if a child or youth is having problems with the service then we advocate on their behalf to dissolve or resolve any problems or issues that they're having with that agency. And it's primarily for youth and children who are receiving, or want to receive government services. Then the third part basically is systemic advocacy, which means that if a worker, government worker sees a flaw or gap in the system that is basically denying the need or a right to the children and youth that their entitled to, then we can advocate also on behalf to look at ways of changing that and addressing the flaw in the system.

Melissa: Oh okay.

Andy: Primarily, you know, with young people and the cases that we're involved in, they are really complex cases in that I've been dealing with two mental health cases so far, and one case which involves child and family services. So they can be quite complex.

Melissa: Please tell me what made you choose to live the life that you do?

Andy: Well I know that I've been given a second chance at life because I was severely hooked to heroin, cocaine and alcohol and living on skid row and I basically, because of what happened to me at the residential school, I basically didn't care if I lived or died or if I caught AIDS or whatever, it didn't matter to me. But I know that I've been given a second chance and the core of my heart is to help First Nations people. So that's why I worked hard at getting a degree because I know that because of what happened at the residential schools, I know that First Nations, the families, individuals and communities are impacted so severely that it's going to be going on for generations yet to come. The

trauma that was experienced back there, the loss of parenting skills, the inability to trust and express your feelings, you know not having any positive role models in their lives, you know you grow up to, you have a hard time getting in touch with your feelings, with your emotions and so you're basically spending, wanting to or learning how to get over, to get to feel basically because you stuff your feelings so much in there that you don't really know how to get to them anymore. And, I basically chose this field simply because I primarily help First Nations people and families.

Melissa: I would never have known that you went through that life right now like your just so, such a good person.

Andy: Yeah it's amazing

Melissa: I have so much respect for you. You hit rock bottom and are a completely different person today and a good advocate for our youth.

Andy: Thank You

Melissa: What are your views on culturally appropriate healing approaches?

Andy: I think they're very valuable because it helps people to get back to the land and when people get back to the land, the land has its own healing qualities, it doesn't matter how traumatized people may be from their childhood experiences, going out on the land allows them to just be out there allows them to take down some of the barriers and some of their fears are forgotten for a while and there's a healing quality out on the land that is just, you can't find anywhere else.

And when you look at the cultural teachings, the universal teachings in First Nations culture, it is basically respect for all things, respect for the land, for the animals for people and that there is no colour difference, there's no colour variances, we're all human beings and we, you know we all have a spirit and primarily we have a soul which primarily is, you know we feel, we have feelings, we cry the same tears, we have the same colour blood, we walk on the same land, we rise to the same sun, but yeah you know learning to respect yourself first of all and then from there learn to respect others. But primarily what is really valuable about the cultural teaching is respect for God, God as being number one. And he has love that is unconditional and everything that we see basically is a testimony to God's love or the Creator's love for us, like the land and all the things that we have to survive today, yeah.

And when you look at the cultural teachings, another valuable aspect that I find very valuable is the respect for Elders and just not treating them as 'old people' who, you know, 'you did your part and now you're not valuable'. Where the First Nations culture really uses them and acknowledges the wisdom that they have, they have accumulated. And also takes good care of them.

Melissa: How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in today?

Andy: Okay, well there has to be some parental control and discipline and teaching in their lives. And the parents have a big responsibility to create the balance in their lives. For instance, like the games kids use, I know for our grandson who lives with us, we limit him on that, and we have a timer, we bought a timer that you know he can't stay on it for more than an hour at a time. And we make sure that he goes out and plays or goes and visits a friend or has a friend come over.

And then also, you know things like fishing and hunting, take him fishing and hunting as well. But you know holding onto those core beliefs, the cultural beliefs, which is respect for the land and for God, for animals and each other and learning to survive on that land are extremely valuable.

But also looking at the mainstream you know, not only education, but the mainstream technology that we have and that they grow up in is so much more technologically advanced than the one that I grew up in.

The balance really needs to be created by the parents in my opinion because they need to set the boundaries, establish the boundaries, so that the children can learn the boundaries. You know there are boundaries to living out on the land. There's such as you don't take more than you need, you don't waste. There are boundaries also in society in terms of technology. You know there's so much out there that you can easily get caught up in it and get so mesmerized and actually addicted to it, that it basically encompasses your whole world, right and it gives you, can give you tunnel vision. And the internet can then become your world and if a child is left on his or her own, they can basically get lost in that world, so there has to be a balance created by the parents.

And make it fun, it's so important to make it fun, you know to have the teaching, but also to include fun and not to overburden children, it's all about learning, and you got to give them space to have some fun as well.

Melissa: What do you think are the issues and problems that affect Yukon First Nations Youth here today?

Andy: What I think is a loss of identity, and again it relates back to the residential school, but just a sense of not really knowing who they are and where they belong. And I say that because what happened at the residential school, the loss of parenting skills that happened there, we still see the evidence in the fallout of that today because a lot of children are going into the welfare system and as a result it's basically similar to what happened at residential school. However some of those young people have a little more structure and kindness in their lives, where as in the residential school it was mostly, it was all structure and control.

And when the children came out of there, the first thing when they turn of age, when they become 19 and they become adults, the first thing they want to do of course is go back to their family to their community, to find out basically who they are, who their relatives are, but when they do that they find that they don't belong there. They don't feel

like they belong there because they don't have the connection that they need to have. So that perpetuates, you know, digression towards alcohol and drug addiction because what has been lost, that connection to family, that love and that support.

For instance, case and point there's a young man who returned to one of the communities up north and found out that his mom just passed away shortly after he had gotten back home. And his dad was long passed on and they gave him a house, but a house is not a home. They gave him a house and they couldn't figure out well how come he still has all these addictions, problems and they didn't realize that it was simply because he was disconnected from his community, from his family, from his bloodline. And what happened was he went out to a camp for a weeklong camp, they killed a moose and that, and he started to understand more about his culture by cutting up the meat and getting involved with the conversation and how to take care of the moose, he started to get a sense of identity and started to feel much better about himself.

But you know when you take a child out of their community, and away from their family and if you adopt him out, and he goes to another country or whatever, he's still not going to feel that he belongs there as well because you know if it's a non-First Nations family, well he's First Nations, and there's obviously not only the colour in skin, but the teachings that are placed upon him are foreign in a way that his bloodline, his family come from living off the land and being close to the land.

So yeah, I see that as loss of identity and also a lot of unresolved childhood trauma that affects young people today and so therefore, they turn to alcohol and drugs. And a lack of communication, there's a lack of communication skills in terms of our young people being able to say how they feel because the parents who came out of the residential school were never encouraged to express how we felt, it was to hide feelings and don't show how you really feel, don't talk about it. It was basically don't talk, don't trust, and don't feel is what you learned in there.

Mélissa: Yeah I noticed that with people, they don't want to cry or...

Andy: Exactly and they don't say 'I Love You' because you can't give something that you don't have, if you don't, if you're not taught a certain skill, you can't pass that skill on right. And communication is a skill, it's a learned skill. That has to be role modeled for you, a child has to be shown and encouraged to talk about feelings.

Melissa: What is or can be Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?

Andy: Okay, well you know spirituality is everybody's choice, their own choice. You know when you talk about religion and spirituality, everybody basically has their own definition of what that means. From, you know, a Christian perspective, spirituality means, well you know the bible, Jesus, following the principles that are laid out in the bible.

Spirituality could also be going out on the land and just feeling, feeling free out there and connecting with nature and connecting with God through nature, through his creation. And spirituality could be, you know there's so many different beliefs out there, each would have to find out and define for themselves what spirituality would mean. In terms of mental health, you know mental health is, in my definition would be having peace of mind, but also being able to know right from wrong, and be able to make decisions which are healthy decisions in terms of not harming others, not harming myself, being aware of my actions, also means good nutrition, and it means regular exercise. And also mental health means to be making a healthy contribution, to fulfill what my role is and to assist others to a better quality of life.

And also suicide prevention, you know again it relates back to residential school because when you know it's all related to hope. When people lose hope, then that's up, you know it what else do you have really when you lose hope. But if we can, and if young people can instill hope in themselves, and in others, then that is so important for their well-being. You know people who have been to the bottom and have come back need to tell their stories, I believe, need to be promoted and documented and shared. I was thinking of well actually in this position, I may be able to initiate something like that, but I'd rather not share it actually because I want to still work on that.

Suicide prevention also would be connecting with supports being able to reach out and say 'I need help.' Which for young people can be quite difficult, especially First Nations people because they, they already feel they're looked down upon.

Melissa: First Nations have the highest suicide rate in Canada right?

Andy: Yes

Melissa: Do you find that knowing your own cultural teachings helps you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues or balancing your religion and culture? Like how would you define it? What would you say?

Andy: Yeah, well the culture that I basically have come into is a bible based culture, and it was a bible based culture that gave me my identity and also gave me reason to live and it also helped me to get in touch with who I am inside and also to be able to really have the compassion that I didn't have most of my life because my self-esteem was so low I just felt that, you know, there was hardly any good people in the world, but once I started my healing I was able to have compassion on others and to, you know there's a saying in the bible that 'you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free' and that's what of the bible principles that I realize is so true and I started to speak the truth and realize because my life was, I lived such a lie before, I was always covering up, but realizing that it was time for me to start speaking the truth because that's where the freedom is, so when you start dealing with the truth, it also means that you need to be facing the fears that you have. And real freedom comes when you face your fears. And knowing that God was there and that he was real and that he was on my side and he wasn't this guy who was, had all these thunder lightning bolts lined up to strike me down. When I realized that he

was kind and compassionate and cared for me and wanted the best for me, and that he would protect me and take care of me, then I realized that I could be safe and I could do things and go places and be honest and be open where I couldn't be before. So the fear, I learned to face the fear, to go through the fear and to, to control it and rule it and not let it control me.

And the bible culture that I'm involved in is one of forgiveness, is one of love, is one of being kind to everybody, it doesn't matter who, or what situation they're in, doesn't matter the colour of their skin, their background, you know their position or their intelligence that has nothing to do with it. It's, you know, we're all human beings, and we all have struggles, and we all have good days, we all have bad days, and we all have hard days, we have easy days, some days we're up, some days we're down, sometimes we laugh, we cry, we get angry, we're all the same right? And our job is to love God first and to love each other. Primarily when you live by those, by that culture then it speaks to, it develops and gives you the option to live with integrity, doesn't make you, it doesn't push you or force you, it's all a free, love's all about a free will, right? Real love is all about free will. And so when you come in contact with that love that God has, which is unconditional, it's free, we can't buy it, we can't afford it, then we realize that you know he, there's nothing we could do to deserve his love, there's nothing we can do to make him stop loving us, nothing bad enough, then it allows us to understand that this love really is a good thing and it's real. So then you're able to treat people the way you want to be treated because you love yourself, you love God and you love yourself and you love others, yeah. So it's really a culture of love and if there's one thing that's missing in our First Nation communities it's not a lack of love, it's an overabundance of fear that comes from the residential school because in there they controlled us through fear, violence and threats, okay, and shame as well. So, you come out of there with that fear-based thinking and even though you have love in your heart, and you know what's right and wrong, you still, even though people will have the best intentions you can misperceive that love as being taken advantage of...you know... because in there, your abusers came under the guise of, they were the ones who were supposed to care for you and nurture you and they turned up, wound up like abusing you. So then when you get affection, right away, you can shut off because you fear that, that affection is you want the person giving the affection wants something right? But when you come to God and realize that, you know that his love is unconditional then you learn to also love unconditionally. And unconditional love means loving you and not wanting anything in return, not expecting anything in return, but I just love you as a human being and I'll do whatever to help you.

Melissa: How can traditional First Nation ceremony help?

Andy: Well there's many traditional ceremonies, you know there's coming of age, there's a woman having her first menstrual cycle, but I believe those ceremonies help people to ground themselves, allows them to go inside themselves and to kind of acknowledge a turning point in their lives okay, and it's kind of like a transition period. And there's going to be a treatment program that I am going to be part of and one of the ceremonies we're going to do is a welcoming ceremony and it's helping them transition from their old way and we're taking a new step into a new beginning right. It helps people to understand that 'I could be grounded,' that 'there's support around me and that I can

move on and move on in a good way.' Like it helps to make you look inside, whereas the residential schools took that away and made us not, you know focus on the inside of us.

It also involves community, it involves people, the residential school cause us to isolate ourselves, to be disconnected from family, culture, the land, spirituality and as a result, people who have come through the residential school and through that trauma and who have come through the abuse have a tendency to isolate themselves and even today there's people like that in a lot of our First Nations community who will only come out for the basic necessities to get food and just whatever they need to survive and then go back home. So that's why the gatherings today are gaining momentum and they're so important. Yeah.

Melissa: That's great, do you have anything else you want to add, or any message you want to send?

Andy: Just that, you know, as First Nations people we're all on a journey of healing and it's a journey that we need to start doing together, so we need to get connected, we need to reach out for help, we need to never be ashamed to ask for help and we need to overcome the shame based thinking that the residential school instilled in us and we do that by developing a humble attitude and by forgiving others, and understanding that you as an individual have something very important to offer. It doesn't matter how down you are, how low you may feel, that everyone of us have been born with a gift and that gift may be good listening skills, that gift may be humour, that gift may be artwork, that gift may be working hard, that gift may be caring for others, that gift may be laughter, you know but everyone has a gift and you'll find it if you keep looking and don't give up.

Chapter 5. Conclusion: This Way Forward ~ “Rowing in Unison”

Fraser (2007) has said, “Our ancestors believe that “we are all leaders, born of greatness’ ... we are all leaders of the canoe. The ancestors are the spiritual guides who guide the Elders, the Elders lead the upcoming leaders, those leaders lead the paddlers, and the paddlers collectively row in unison to their destination.” The eight people I have interviewed likewise have shared their wisdom and experience to collectively steer, paddle and guide our Yukon youth through the rough waters to a safe landing, sharing how they have arrived at a safe place through their experience. Our First Nations Youth can use the guidance of these eight paddlers so that they can see that they too can become strong leaders of change for the better. I now understand there is much work to be done in order to heal the First Nations Youth and each one of us who takes on the initiative for positive change is making the water that much calmer for balancing and healing lives.

I feel a profound sense of satisfaction knowing that the First Nations Youth like Uyinji Natsat and Isaiah Gilson are becoming leaders and strong mentors for our people. Many youth are paving the way and acknowledging the difference they can make in the world for their people. It is clear that many of our First Nations youth are suffering with mental health issues. One only needs to look at current statistics to realize that Aboriginal youth are not prospering at the same rate as non-Aboriginal youth. In writing this thesis, I needed to understand how culturally appropriate healing will be beneficial for the development of mental wellness among First Nations youth. For answers I turned to First Nations Theory and History and relevant writings, and then (in Chapter Four) to my participants perspective, using the dugout canoe created by First Nations Youth in the Yukon as a framework to show how youth, elders, parents and service providers can help

us paddle upstream through the rough and troubled waters colonization and residential schools have created so that we make a safe journey and landing.

I was surprised by the answers and revelation that many of the participant paddlers provided. Prior to my interviews, I was confused about the fact that my grandma Angel followed the Catholic belief system and not only her own Kaska spirituality because she is such a traditional Elder. Afterwards, I realized that she balances the two worlds because she is very traditional in utilizing traditional medicine, she tans hide, hunts and much more while also practicing the Catholic belief system to connect with God/the Creator. My grandma Angel and the male Service Provider Andy Nieman both utilize Christianity. Originally, prior to my research and interviews I believed Christianity was embedded into the First Nations people through colonialism and residential school, and although it is associated with colonialism and residential school in some sense, there are aspects about Christianity's belief system that are similar to First Nations ways too such as caring and love for one another, forgiveness and prayer. First Nations people did go through much difficulty with the introduction of alcohol and abuse that came from residential school and colonialism, and alcohol and drugs changed First Nations peoples behaviour entirely, but it was not Christianity itself that was bad in Colonialism or residential schools, it was the way the people chose to use and practice Christianity when teaching the First Nations people. When Randall mentioned he learned his sweat lodge ceremony from his 110 year old God-Mother that shows she was affiliated with Christianity and she taught him traditional sweat lodge ways, so he follows and lives a traditional Spiritual path while also integrating Christianity into his life by having a God-Mother. It is clear to me now that Christianity is connected to the First Nations way

because First Nations accepted it into their spirituality. The First Nations way is accepting, their accepting quality is evident within their traditional ways. I was surprised to hear my dad say that the one good thing residential school did was teach him how to pray. My dad is a very spiritual individual, but he does thank the darkest part in his life for teaching him how to pray to the Creator/God. I had some recollection that Andy Nieman, the Male Service Provider, had a troubled past, but I did not know to what extent or that after such a challenging time in his life, he became a Born-Again Christian to turn around his life and this brought him to the strong place where he is today.

The participants shared very frankly some of the hard times they had gone through. I had no idea before the interviews that Uyinji Natsat, the Female Youth had gone through such tough times as a child, or that the Male youth Isaiah Gilson had come close to rock bottom, or that the Female Service Provider Winona Polson Lahache had been hospitalized in her youth to prevent suicide. So many of the interviewees are examples of people who have gone through very tough times but have come to use their inner strength and core to come to a place of healing and a place where they are strong role models for others, strong paddlers of the canoe to take us through the rough waters of life to a safe place. They use the best of their traditions and some of them blend that with the best of the Christian faith to paddle the canoe to safety.

The participants all acknowledge the fact that youth need to prosper in their own identity and need to balance their two worlds in order to have mental wellness. Each interview unfolds the power of balance. The female youth Uyinji Natsat's life journey is coming together in a strong and healthy way after such an emotional rollercoaster upbringing, because she is balancing her traditional lifestyle while living in a

Westernized world. It is evident that a re-focus on cultural teachings helps her as others ground our First Nations Youth in the Yukon as their lives have also been impacted by colonization. The youth today are calming the ripples and rip tides caused by Indian residential school and colonization by going back to their cultural teachings, listening to their Elders and learning to combine the two worlds. As Uyinji Natsat stated,

our generation being the first to not go to residential school and we're aware of what happened to people I think we're really trying to make a difference in our lives to make sure that, you know, if we have kids now or some day in the future that we give them the best possible life that we can you know and just keep persevering.

Uyinji Natsat has deciphered what needs to be done and understands that there is a need for connection with Elders to formulate identity that will in turn benefit First Nations Youth mental wellness. She said,

I would like the youth to also know themselves and have a strong sense of identity. I would like to see more cultural programs. We need to embrace our identities as native people and also to work together with modern society to protect our ways of life. In order to succeed in the world, we definitely need to know who we are. So yes, culturally appropriate healing would be good.

First Nations Youth mental wellness requires balance which means going back to believing in our traditional ways, but also utilizing all we can from both worlds. Once we work with all individuals in our community and Canada, we achieve mental wellness and the canoe travels well.

Isaiah Gilson (Male Youth) is paving the way for positive change among First Nations youth, noting it is essential to begin with the family to heal. Isaiah balances the two worlds as he is very traditional and follows the spiritual path in life while also being educated in both worlds through his schooling and traditional practices. Isaiah brought forward the connection between the Holocaust and residential school because he believes

it is time to move on after such a dark part in history and look beyond that ripple effect that keeps the First Nations Youth from progressing in a healthy way in life. According to

Isaiah:

everything starts with the family...if the young person has a troubled family, everybody has problems, if there is one person in there that is willing to help and is healthy enough to do that then slowly the change can be brought within that family.

Isaiah also believes in the importance of bringing back spirituality to find balance.

It's about that balance, you have to find the most common ground, for youth is just really about understanding yourself and the power of the mind, and so once they help understand what they want in life, and what they want to do, they can find that balance.

The Elders work with youth and both Randall Tetlich and Grandma Angel

Carlick understand and truly grasp both worlds, but most importantly still know and understand the importance of the traditional life because they lived it and prospered in it.

Randall spoke about how mental wellness begins with the individual. We each need to work on ourselves and train our entire body on the way we live each day. Randall is guiding the people to become humble and balanced. Randall said,

how you think is how you're going to respond. So, the brain is a very important part of the body, sometimes we have to retrain ourselves on how we think, see, listen and talk because that's the only time your behaviors will change. You can never change your behaviors unless you change how you think see, listen and talk. And it starts with you, it starts with each person. That development starts from within, not inwards, so when I say within that means again how you think, see, listen and talk. That's the biggest part of mental health and healing. First Nation youth have to go to their own people for their own healing. They have to go to the holistic approach to get healing for our young people.

Both worlds are good. We need to understand both worlds, you need to get all the education you need from the traditional world, all the education from the modern world, and we have to do that to survive because sometimes you might have to. But first you got to practice what you're taught, if you don't practice it, you won't understand it, so everything you're taught you got to practice it so that you can understand it so that you can pass it along.

Grandma Angel has taught us about the devastation of residential school, yet she has taught us the importance of cultural teachings for mental wellness. Grandma Angel explains that you

got to go with family to teach you. To teach you when you go hunting and stuff, teach you how to set trap for beaver and stuff and teach you how to hunt quietly and wait for beaver spring time people hunting

You get help when you believe in, when you believe in things, our youth need to start believing more. You believe in yourself, you know you want to believe something, you doing that, that's good, same as you want to do something, you want to work, same thing, you wish, your wish come true they call it, you got to believe then you wish come true hey cause you believe. You really work hard in your mind from your heart, your brains, it's good like that.

The Mom is of both European and First Nation ancestry so she truly lives in both worlds and practices her First Nations legacy just as much as her European legacy. As a Mom she has explained the simple measures it takes in the community and she helps set the precedence for First Nations Youth mental wellness in the Yukon through her work, family and tactics. Lori explained that Mental Wellness is lacking in the Yukon and it is largely ignored and it is important to have more land based healing. She states that:

I think that land based programs and stuff like that, if there is something you know within each First Nation it would be fabulous and I think they're even fabulous for people that aren't First Nation because why do we have so many tourists that come here, try to come on the land, and that sort of thing... because it's very therapeutic and First Nations have always known that, it is very therapeutic, right, so they go out on the land, and they do things like that.

Every First Nation has different types of ceremonies and some are adopted in, and you know things that people have tried to start to gain more cultural well-being. And so it just depends on what the ceremony is, and if it helps you spiritually then go for it.

My dad also balances the two worlds. He has been through a lot in life and has become a strong mentor and advocate for his people. His words help paddle the canoe to achieve

mental wellness by explaining the integrity of culturally appropriate healing approaches for First Nations in the Yukon. He said,

They are going to start healing; I guess when they decide they want to start healing. There's so much, there's so much distractions out there in the real world that they forgot about their culture.

Spirituality is the core, the foundation; the lack of it is the cause of all the other problems and struggles. Spirituality grounds a person, spirituality is a belief system, starts mainly with believing, and it means you have to believe something without any physical facts available.

Both Service providers share recollections of going through rough times, which taught them that balance is essential, and knowing where you come from is number one in understanding the world we live in. Winona, the female service provider, shared her deep personal history and provided a national perspective on mental wellness and the importance of identity and balance and the integrity of culturally appropriate healing approaches. Winona said,

looking at the way services are delivered and sort of seeing how successful they are based on whether or not they are culturally competent and you've actually, in the research they're starting to find they are building this evidence really around the fact that, if your service delivery approaches are culturally competent and include cultural approaches to healing or not even necessarily cultural approaches to healing, but are just culturally competent then they are more successful and are better in their relation to the client themselves and so and they are not, these aren't rocket science kind of things, they are not like 'you got to bring in, you know the, you got to bring in this healer with all this experience and all this stuff'.

Being conscious that you're always walking in those two worlds, you have to have solid cultural identity to be able to do it. It's completely reliant on identity, both individual identity and collective identity because I mean your individual identity is relational to your collective identity as a peoples, right

The male service provider Andy Nieman shared the story of his life where he hit rock bottom then to find his way back up through becoming a born again Christian. This I had not known about before, but going through despair and addictions has helped him to

become a strong mentor and service provider in the Yukon for Youth. He has provided us with insight on the importance of believing in ourselves. He has found it important for youth to heal on the land for mental wellness to be achieved. Andy stated that:

when people get back to the land, the land has its own healing qualities, it doesn't matter how traumatized people may be from their childhood experiences, going out on the land allows them ... to take down some of the barriers and some of their fears are forgotten for a while and there's a healing quality out on the land that is just, you can't find anywhere else.

The balance really needs to be created by the parents in my opinion because they need to set the boundaries, establish the boundaries, so that the children can learn the boundaries.

As First Nations people, we're all on a journey of healing and it's a journey that we need to start doing together, so we need to get connected, we need to reach out for help, we need to never be ashamed to ask for help and we need to overcome the shame-based thinking that the residential school instilled in us and we do that by developing a humble attitude and by forgiving others, and understanding that you as an individual have something very important to offer. It doesn't matter how down you are, how low you may feel, that everyone of us have been born with a gift and that gift may be good listening skills, that gift may be humour, that gift may be artwork, that gift may be working hard, that gift may be caring for others, that gift may be laughter, you know, but everyone has a gift and you'll find it if you keep looking and don't give up.

The participants have all been through many difficult situations in their life, some are survivors of abuse of one form or another and yet they have come out STRONG and have overcome the trials they experienced which makes them strong mentors and healers for our First Nations Youth. Some participants had contemplated suicide. Suicidal thoughts had played a bigger role in the lives of the leaders I had picked as participants than I expected. They healed themselves through going back into their history, through spirituality, both Christian and traditional, and adding ceremony that wasn't necessarily the same as that practiced before by their people. The participants each unfold mental health issues in their life that they have healed from. It was not only residential schools

that rippled through the generations and created turmoil, it was colonization, the introduction of alcohol and drugs, and children placed in care of the ministry. Yet they are not bitter. Forgiveness is key in the interviews as is recognizing the equality of everyone. Everyone combined their two worlds, beliefs and ways to establish healing for themselves and for the future generations. For example, Uyinji Natsat mentions the importance of living a clean and healthy life for her and her child, she was given the strength to achieve mental wellness in her life because her grandmother embedded the culture within her and now Uyinji Natsat is grateful to her grandmother for showing her that role; then upon her becoming a mother made Uyinji Natsat truly strive to be a positive role model for her child.

Each participant has a connection to the land, and knows and understands the value in that connection. The power of tradition, land, singing, drumming, and language is part of healing. The interviews provide a vital example of the importance for people to look at their situation and relate to others, so they can also come out of the mental health issues and become positive healthy individuals and role models. Winona mentions the difference Chandler and Lalonde made for access to mental wellness and healing as they found in their research that seeking to regain control of traditional land reduces significantly the amount of youth suicide. The land embodies spiritual healing, and the connection of spirit and the land. The love, care and concern for the little ones is strongly shared throughout the participants' interviews. The youth are a positive force in the participants' lives and Randall believes there needs to be more Youth involved in ceremony to heal from the mental health issues.

Randall mentions that too many people believe the sweat lodge is “not our way” and that is holding back healing for many individuals. Randall became a pipe carrier by learning at a young age when he listened to elders as they taught him about the traditional ways of life and how to connect with the universe and the Creator and helpers, the givers and the helpers of life. He was taught how to communicate, not only as an individual, but through different ceremonies and through drumming and singing, and through his dreams. The Elders taught Randall about the Creator’s law, natural law, the tribal laws, about the earth and what to use from the earth.

Isaiah Gilson, the male youth, mentions the plains sweat ceremony because that is where he participated in sweat lodge ceremonies while attending high school in Edmonton. The plains sweat lodge ceremony is widely used among different First Nations across Canada. Isaiah joined me in one of Randall Tetlichich’s sweat lodge ceremonies over the 2010 summer; afterwards, Isaiah mentioned to me that Randall’s ceremony is different from what he was used to in Alberta because that is the style he initially learned. Randall mentioned in our interview that the styles across Canada and across North America are different, but the prayers are all the same. My dad said that he met a healer while living in Alberta, who is the individual that introduced my dad to traditional ceremony and helped my dad begin his healing journey. The sweat lodge ceremony and medicine wheel concept has spread across our nation because the teachings are medicine for our people and these teachings are what will help make a difference for our youth who are struggling with mental health issues which the paddlers themselves have experienced and overcome.

This balancing of the two worlds is also summarized by (Bruyere 1999, p. 177) in (Sinclair, Hart, Bruyere, 2009, p. 20) “‘You cannot change the past,’ the argument goes. The point that is obviously missed is that the past is still with us in many ways and must be acknowledged in order to be accountable and responsible for the present and future.”

We the Indigenous peoples of Ininewi-Ministik, have been confronting Amer-European colonialism for centuries. Although colonial processes have significantly influenced our way of life, we continue to preserve and live our identities, beliefs, teachings and practices, and we have started to carry our collective wisdom into academia and professional practices (quoted in Sinclair, Hart, Bruyere, 2009, p. 26)

First Nations Youth are our future and our present; therefore, it is integral to make sure they are given the necessary tools to continue life with a connection to who they truly are. The connection means their spiritual connection and identity, many of our Youth are suffering because they do not have the necessary tools to know or respect who they are or where they originate from. The large gap between Youth, identity and health is caused by imbalance, which in turn is caused by the ripple effect of put downs and Indian residential school.

Youth are capable of gaining a lot of knowledge from the profound stories the participant paddlers have shared. They have gone through tough stuff, many very tough stuff, and they have come out as role models who can show troubled youth how to get through the rough waters. For Uyinji Natsat it was the memory of her grandmother that anchored her into being a strong mother, despite the dysfunctional parenting she received from her own parents and foster homes. Grandmother Angel recalls the fun times when she wasn't supposed to laugh at her brother's jokes when her Dad was hunting. All these

stories remind us of the richness of the traditions of care and compassion that are part of traditional culture.

First Nations Youth mental wellness requires culturally appropriate healing approaches for the betterment of everyone. Uyinji Natsat is energized by being on the land whether it be fishing, camping, she is healed and is given a clear mind by the land. Isaiah says he would be happy and content living on the land and creating culture programs. Elder Randall connects to the land because healing begins on the land through ceremony, drumming and singing. Grandma Angel enjoys the traditional lifestyle, utilizing traditional medicines, hunting, and gathering, tanning hides and sewing. Lori believes culture camps and healing on the land is important and it is what makes her heal; going out on the land is the "best thing in the world" for Lori. My dad lives off the land, he connects and heals from the land through ceremony, stories and taking care of the land and all that lives on it, he humbles himself on the land through ceremony. Winona uses her traditional teachings and applies them to her ever day life now after learning how to build on the relation and the practices to formulate her own identity.

Reviving cultural ways of life in the mental health field is imperative because the Indian residential school syndrome greatly affected First Nations Youth mental health and established the large disconnect from their roots. Once the connection is re-established and there are culturally appropriate healing approaches offered by the mental health professionals, there will be a more positive outlook for the Youth. Living a clean life free from alcohol and drugs in the end is most rewarding in gaining mental wellness.

Times are changing and First Nations recognize the impact of forced assimilation. I understand the importance of the "voice to heal" that Randall mentioned and the

importance of survivors telling their stories, yet my Dad hadn't ever talked about residential school to me before, showing how the effort to leave that history behind sometimes means it is covered up and not acknowledged. The survivors continue to resist the oppression set upon them. First Nations are working towards revitalization through language, spirituality and communal practices. These fundamental acts of healing reveal that all approaches regarding mental health promotion with First Nations peoples need to consider the use of tradition to assert cultural identity.

Ceremonies are a huge part of First Nations people: Uyinji Natsat used circle ceremony as a child and now utilizes her traditional dancing and language as ceremony. Isaiah Gilson uses smudging and sweat lodge ceremony as a huge part of his everyday lifestyle. Grandma Angel uses her traditional medicines and customs as ceremony. Elder Randall Tetlichichi utilizes the sweat lodge ceremony and medicines to connect with the Creator. Lori Duncan utilizes the land, camping and makes use of her traditional practices as ceremony. My dad practices the sweat lodge and traditional medicines as ceremony. Winona Polson Lahache knows and understands her traditional practices and customs and shares the importance of knowing those songs, dances, stories, customs for the betterment of our future. Andy Nieman uses the bible based culture ceremony and also uses and understands the importance of healing on the land as ceremony. Both Winona Polson-Lahache and Andy Nieman recognized the importance of coming of age ceremonies because these ceremonies are essential in creating value and self-esteem in and among youth. There are Elders and spiritual healers who still practice and pass on their traditional knowledge, collect medicines, and heal people naturally. Not all participants

sought healing through sweat lodge ceremonies as it was not routine for everyone; however, they each were healed through other ceremonies.

What the participant paddlers said agrees with the studies that reveal there needs to be a re-focus on cultural teachings such as entire community initiatives to fill the gap that exists. Uyinji Natsat understands that it is essential to embrace cultural teachings because this is what her grandparents have done for her and they paved the path for her and taught her family how to live a traditional lifestyle, saying, "Definitely, when I get a chance to go out on the land and connect with the ancestors either through singing and dancing or walking on the trail or going fishing or hunting or whatever, any of those activities really help me for clarity, balance, and just having the structure of community in your life that you can connect with and understand what you're going through" (Uyinji Natsat). Isaiah Gilson helps set the precedent for First Nations Youth by acknowledging how he is going to take what he can from his cultural roots and transform it to give youth the knowledge, the education on what traditional healing does for our people. The fundamental message Elder Randall shares is that healing by means of the holistic approach is more effective than other approaches because holistic healing deals with the entire body or being. Randall also shows the essential truth in the need to teach our individual bodies to control how we think, see, listen and talk; therefore, we need to take this teaching as youth and connect it with our mental wellness to become healthy youth that are progressing forward instead of backwards. Grandma Angel shares the empowerment of traditions, stories and culture. She has shared the importance of youth taking the initiative to watch and learn, taking the time to watch and listen to learn the traditional way of life. Lori Duncan has enabled people to understand that there is an

essential need for First Nations Youth mental health to be made a priority in the Yukon because it is largely ignored, and she shares the benefit of learning your identity, noting even if you were raised in one world you benefit from knowing and understanding both worlds because it will enable youth to carry on healing. My dad William Carlick has set the stage for First Nations Youth to work in collaboration with Elders and work hard to understand our purpose here because purpose gives us strength to keep going. Both the physical and spiritual world are the necessary tools to heal and we need to acknowledge the fact that power is not in the physical world, it is in the spiritual world, and there is power given to you through that connection. Winona Polson-Lahache is actively involved with First Nations Youth at a national level and has been working to integrate positive change for First Nations Mental Wellness which is a direct reflection of who she is as an individual. She has established a foundation for change. She sets priority on spirituality, cultural teachings and balancing the two worlds by recognizing the agreements made in the past that has the European and First Nations rowing side by side. This is still relevant for the people today: the path to healing is by means of knowing your identity, seeking truth from within and knowing that you do walk and paddle the canoe in two worlds.

Another strong point made was that it is essential to become aware from within in order to progress forward. Andy Nieman acknowledges that everyone has a choice to choose what path to follow regarding religion or spirituality, or whether to choose both. No one needs to be pushed into a religion or spirituality, but it is essential to understand that we as First Nations people are walking in a journey together and so we must work together on our journey to heal. We need to develop a humble attitude and we need to

understand that we all have something important to offer the world we live in as we are all born with a gift that we will find if we keep looking and don't give up!

The Cultural, Economic, Political, & Social (CEPS) programming described in Chapter Three and other ceremony and programs can be beneficial tools to be integrated in the Yukon for Youth in general and for Aboriginal students who are not doing well in the mainstream educational system, and for youth who are incarcerated. This is because CEPS is a powerful training tool for Youth that incorporates a lot of the back to the land based practices the participants have found to be important.

The development of this thesis was truly inspiring because the information gained from the interview participants' flowed into what the literature review stated, which then flowed into the route outlined in the SSWG Directions. I have found the paddlers of the canoe each paddle with different strengths with regards to healing, some take the spiritual sweat lodge ceremony, while others follow a variety of different ways of connecting with their identity through family connections, being on the land or simply balancing and living in both worlds. I am truly inspired by what I learned from the interview participants, they each have taught me something new in order to keep living a healthy lifestyle. Randall has taught me to train the way I think, see, listen and talk, it is vital for me to keep training myself. My grandma Angel has taught me the value and power of following my own spirituality and respecting the power of Christianity too because at the end of the day, prayer and believing is what will provide healing, we each have different beliefs, yet we look up to the same power, the Creator/ God. Uyinji Natsat has taught me that no matter what happened during an upbringing positive change and healing is possible and essential; we each have a choice to lead a good life and not dwell in the past.

Isaiah Gilson has taught me that youth can be sociable without consuming alcohol just to have fun, we need to integrate positive solutions and encourage our youth to enhance their leadership skills through becoming more involved with their identity and nation.

After interviewing my dad, I felt all kinds of different emotions, I was grateful to learn more about my Grandpa Wilson who is my dad's dad because I never knew or heard about him much before. I didn't know who he was or how he died. After the interview I missed him and felt a connection with the grandpa I never will physically meet. The interview with Winona Polson-Lahache has made me aware of what is happening at a National level and how it is up to us to keep up with technology and teachings for youth because we need to transform our knowledge into what works for youth today. Andy Nieman has taught me that it is up to the individual to choose what path they will follow, and that the power of hope and healing is possible even after such a hard time. It is never too late to turn life around and start climbing up again.

Reflecting on what the two youth, two parents, two elders and two service providers said, each participants' paddle leaves a wave of thought. We can see the need for cultural healing to continue. The recommendations suggested by the eight participants are:

Paddler 1: Uyinji Natsat: the numerous studies completed on our Elders by the Heritage

Departments need to be readily accessible because they have a lot of knowledge that we need access to, and "it's our job to listen to it and learn from our Elders from long ago."

Paddler 2: Isaiah Gilson: “we need to bring back spirituality because we say we are very cultural in the Yukon, and we do these things but it’s not getting through well enough.” Isaiah wants barriers to be broken down between Elders and Youth because they need to work together. Youth need to be open-minded about what is coming to them.

Paddler 3: Randall Tetlich: wants the youth to be taught and spend time with people who teach about their traditional way of life. Youth need to work extra hard to learn their traditional way.

Paddler 4: Grandma Angel believes Youth need to start believing more. “You believe in yourself, you know you want to believe something, you doing that, that's good, same as you want to do something, you want to work, same thing, you wish, your wish come true they call it, you got to believe then your wish come true hey cause you believe.”

Paddler 5: Lori Duncan: Youth need to seek some sort of ceremony that helps and enables them to carry on in a good way.

Paddler 6: William Carlick: Elders and Youth need to wake up and start picking up what was left for them to learn from and prepare themselves for what is ahead. “Youth need to start understanding that we have a purpose here, in the physical world.”

Paddler 7: Winona Polson-Lahache: There is a need for youth to be more involved in healing from mental health afflictions and addictions.

Paddler 8: Andy Nieman: First Nations people are all on a journey and this journey needs to be taken together. First Nations need to be connected: “we need

to reach out for help, we need to never be ashamed to ask for help and we need to overcome the shame based thinking that the residential school instilled in us and we do that by developing a humble attitude and by forgiving others, and understanding that you as an individual have something very important to offer.”

Paddler 9: As steersman for this project, my own recommendation is to see the participants’ have their strong voices made readily accessible as an online resource to help guide youth through their trials to mental wellness. The more accessible the knowledge the participants’ shared becomes, the better the four R’s of Respect, Relationship, Responsibility and Reciprocity will be fulfilled, helping us row towards calmer waters by paddling in unison towards healing.

What the participant paddlers said obviously supports what Sinclair, Hart and Bruyere have said:

First, we must acknowledge the existence of, and work against colonial oppression. Second, we need to work from our hearts while reaching for our peoples’ dreams and visions, where our hearts are firmly rooted in our peoples, traditions and cultures, and our dreams include peace for our people. These two commitments require us to be exceedingly clear about what perspectives, theories, approaches and practices we are following and how we use them (Sinclair, Hart, Bruyere, 2009, p. 41).

“Our Elders remind us that in order to know where we are going, we have to know where we have been” (Sinclair, Hart, Bruyere, 2009, p. 19). The message from these three authors resonates loudly. Fraser (2007) in her presentation “Lead-her-ship” speaks essentially to my interviewees’ messages fundamentally formulating the experience of the history, challenges, journeys and aspirations of establishing resources

for our First Nations youth in the Yukon. Using the dugout canoe framework, each participant represents a paddler and the canoe reflects what occurs when rowing together in unison. The canoe and the paddles are an effective way to honour the First Nations cultural way of life and the history of our people, even when negotiating past the difficult journey of residential schools. The canoe and paddlers became the framework model for incorporating the responses in this thesis.

I close echoing further words of Sinclair, Hart, Bruyere (2009, p. 24): "In the spirit of our ancestors, I offer these perspectives and suggest that readers take what works, perhaps adding useful insights to be applied in your work in a good way. Build upon these ideas, offer suggestions and leave the rest." Joining the strengths of our people together we will be able to paddle our canoe safely through the troubled waters for the benefit of everyone and especially our youth.

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Appendix A

Yukon First Nations Youth Mental Health & The Development of Culturally Appropriate Healing

Informed Consent Form Please circle the Yes or No

Do you understand that you have been asked to participate in this research for the purpose of contributing to Melissa Carlick's Master Thesis in First Nations Studies at UNBC?

Yes No

Have you read and received an information sheet about the Thesis?

Yes No

Do you understand these interviews will be recorded?

Yes No

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in participating in this study?

Yes No

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about or discuss the research?

Yes No

Do you understand that you are free to remove your interview and the information collected during the interview at any point in time? Neither reason nor cause is needed for the removal. Have you been made aware of this?

Yes No

Has the issue of anonymity been discussed with you in regards to this research?

Yes No

Do you want your name to be used?

Yes No

Do you want a made-up name to be used?

Yes No

This study has been explained to me by Melissa Carlick, Graduate Student, University of Northern British Columbia

I agree to take part in this study:

Signature of Research Participant

Date:

Print Name of Research Participant

Date:

Signature of Witness

Print Name of Witness

I believe that the person signing this form understands the study and research I am completing for my Masters Degree in First Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia. They have been provided with all the information and all concerns and questions have been addressed in relation to their voluntary participation in the research project I am conducting.

Date:

Signature of Researcher

Appendix B

Interview Questions

YOUTH:

Uvinji Natsat

1. Please tell me about yourself, how you were raised?
2. Do you think that a lot of that trauma was because of Indian residential school or?
3. How has embracing your culture helped you follow a healthy lifestyle?
4. Do you want to tell about your group...Your dance group?
5. What made you decide to join a traditional dance group or were you always a part of that?
6. Who are your most inspirational teachers in life?
7. Do you think it is easier for Youth here than if you lived a more urbanized way?
8. What is or can be First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention? I remember you touched on suicide, so do you have anything else to add? Do you think spirituality would help mental health and in turn help suicide prevention, or knowing your culture, do you think that would help?
9. Do you think that knowing your cultural teachings helps you maintain a healthier lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?
10. Do you think that culturally appropriate healing approaches will be beneficial for First Nations youth in the Yukon?
11. How do you think traditional First Nations ceremony helps?

Isaiah Gilson

1. Isaiah can you tell a little about your story of living a healthy lifestyle
2. What do Yukon First Nations youth need to do in order to heal from the intergenerational trauma or multigenerational trauma of Indian residential school?
3. How are we going to introduce First Nations Yukon youth to culturally appropriate healing approaches?
4. After you graduated from the First Nations High School in Edmonton, you moved back to the Yukon, what are your goals for First Nations Youth, the people in the Yukon?
5. How can First Nations Youth Develop and Sustain their individual and collective identity in the two worlds they live in?
6. So you said you're on the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council, and being on that council you represent Aboriginal youth, so around Canada there are

a high percentage of Aboriginal youth who are suicidal. So what is or can be the Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?

7. Does knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from mental health issues?

ELDERS:

Randall Tetlich

1. Where are you from?
2. I would like to hear your story about how you have come to be a healer/helper?
3. I am particularly interested in how you understand mental health in healing particularly First Nations Youth as well as your non First Nations clients. Basically I'm interested in how mental health affects the well-being of First Nations and First Nations youth especially, as well as your non-First Nations clients.
4. Has this understanding changed from the past to present and how do you see healing in the future for First Nations Youth?
5. Has the understanding changed from the past to present, has it changed much?
6. How do you see healing in the future for First Nations Youth?
7. How in your experience does spirituality work in helping First Nations Youth heal from Mental Health issues?
8. How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in?
9. What are the barriers First Nations youth are struggling with today and why are they taking the black road instead of the red road for example?
10. What can be Yukon First Nations Perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?
11. Does knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?
12. Will culturally appropriate healing approaches be beneficial for First Nations Youth in the Yukon?
13. Is there anything else you want to add, any message?

Angel Carlick

1. Can you tell me what life was like after your children were taken away to Lower Post residential school?
2. How did you cope with them leaving?

3. What was life like when they returned from school? Like how were your children's lives changed. Were their lives changed at all?
4. Your children know how to live off the land because you taught them, so how do you see First Nations youth today achieve cultural teachings in the Yukon?
5. How did you teach your children to live off the land?
6. How do you see the First Nations Youth today get these cultural teachings?
7. How are we going to help First Nations Youth heal from the intergenerational trauma imposed on them by the legacy of Indian residential school? You see the people are struggling today because of the residential school even in my generation. How do you think we are going to heal from that?
8. How are spiritual teachings and ceremonies helpful? Do you ever, do you know much about spiritual teachings, ceremonies?
9. How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in, so how are they going to balance First Nations self in a Western world? How are they going to balance their life? From culture to living in a house or? For example, how is Alex going to balance his fun time in the city and life in the bush? Can he find balance? How am I going to live in the First Nations world and white world?
10. What are some issues and problems that affect youth here today? What do you think the problems are with First Nations Youth? How are they suffering today?
11. Does Knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle, free from negative mental health issues?
12. Will culturally appropriate healing approaches be beneficial for First Nations Youth in the Yukon?
13. Lots of people are committing suicide, how are we going to help them? What do you think?

A MOM & A DAD:

Lori Duncan

1. What is your view on Yukon First Nations Youth Mental Health?
2. Where do Yukon First Nations Youth need help the most?
3. How does an understanding of the normative course of a youth's social and cognitive development coupled with an appreciation of the course of identity development shape a youth's emerging sense of responsibility for their personal past and commitment to their future well-being?
4. How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to balance the two worlds they live in a healthy way for a stronger future, for all Yukon people?
5. What are some issues, problems that affect First Nations youth here today?

6. What is or can be the Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention? What do you think we can do, what kind of example can we set kind of thing?
7. Would you think that culturally appropriate healing approaches would also help?
8. How can traditional First Nation Ceremony Help?

William Carlick

1. Please tell me your story of your Indian residential school experience.
2. How have you come to where you are today after years in Lower Post Indian residential school, or how many years did you spend there and how many years did you spend in Coudert Residence?
3. How have you come to where you are today after spending all those years there?
4. How are Yukon First Nations Youth going to recover from the ripple effect of Indian residential school that is evident in so many of them today?
5. How are we going to get Yukon First Nations Youth to experience and heal using culturally appropriate healing approaches?
6. How can Yukon First Nations Youth develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in?
7. What are some of the laws?
8. What is or can be the Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?
9. Will Culturally Appropriate healing approaches be beneficial for First Nations Youth in the Yukon and how can traditional First Nation Ceremony help?
10. Does knowing your own culture teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?
11. Is there anything else you want to add?

SERVICE PROVIDERS:

Winona Polson-Lahache

1. Can you please tell me what your experience/story with First Nations youth mental health and what solutions you have found to be beneficial for First Nations Youth?
2. In your view, what is the relationship between identity and healing form Mental Health issues?
3. What is your view on the need for the development of culturally appropriate healing approaches for First Nations Youth?

4. What have you found within your research and work that is a respectful engagement model for urban aboriginal groups in Canada?
5. How are First Nations youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds?
6. What is or can be First Nations perspective on Spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention? So basically how can spirituality help with mental health issues and in turn help with suicide prevention?
7. Does knowing your own cultural teachings help you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues?
8. How can traditional First Nations Ceremony help?
9. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Andy Nieman

1. Can you just tell me a bit about your, well you told me about your background, do you want to tell me a bit more about your background?
2. As the Yukon's Child and Youth Advocate can you tell me about your experience working with First Nations youth in the Yukon? Or youth in general?
3. Please tell me what made you choose to live the life that you do?
4. What are your views on culturally appropriate healing approaches?
5. How are Yukon First Nations Youth able to develop and sustain their individual and collective identity by balancing the two worlds they live in today?
6. What do you think are the issues and problems that affect Yukon First Nations Youth here today?
7. What is or can be Yukon First Nations perspective on spirituality, mental health and youth suicide prevention?
8. Do you find that knowing your own cultural teachings helps you maintain a healthy lifestyle free from negative mental health issues or balancing your religion and culture? Like how would you define it? What would you say?
9. How can traditional First Nation ceremony help?
10. Do you have anything else you want to add, or any message you want to send?

Appendix C

Direction from Stikine Wholistic Working Group (SWWG)

29th Direction: Meet the basic food needs of the community- community kitchen, feasts and sharing,

30th Direction: Maximize community food production and storage through innovative “Green” approaches

31st Direction: Provide Emergency preparedness education and training,

32nd Direction: Establish a Youth Committee, this will enable youth discussions that focus on their needs and help with the developments of leadership skills, and helps gain skills to listen and have others respect their voice (SWWG, 2009).

33rd Direction: Youth committee to create and operate income generating projects, as youth have voiced that they have a sophisticated sense of needing to develop income generating activities, and this will also ensure they gain skills to become self sufficient and independent from other funding sources (SWWG, 2009).

34th Direction: Educate and encourage youth to explore opportunities outside the communities (i.e. education, sports, arts),

35th Direction: Have Aboriginal youth (role models) present career planning to High Schools,

36th Direction: Support employing Aboriginal teachers in schools and utilize existing school facilities,

37th Direction: Increase community activities for youth and children because there is a gap when it comes to children and youth activities, and is one of the main reasons

families feel then need to move to urban centres. Youth need to be entertained in order to stay on a positive journey and entertained (SWWG, 2009).

38th Direction: Develop summer and holiday programs specifically for children, youth and families. This will be a good time for programming to be implemented into the communities, such as celebrations, and the community would be able to prepare fun, educational activities and workshops for these times to ensure the community is informed (SWWG, 2009).

39th Direction: Residential school healing and sharing! The project revealed a need for this because group discussions identified the residential school impacts on the communities and this is one of the most significant obstacles to some individuals and community achieving their goals. There is a vital need to address the issues associated with residential schools, so in order to move forward, community members found there is a need to understand what the impacts were and still are today (SWWG, 2009).

40th Direction: Address Lateral Violence,

41st Direction: Community Action against Drug Dealers and Bootleggers,

42nd Direction: Eliminate Addictions in the Community,

43rd Direction: Further partnerships with Governments and non-Aboriginal peoples,

44th Direction: Address funding inefficiencies and develop integrated model,

45th Direction: Provide services for all Kaska and Tlingit people regardless of trans-boundary issues,

46th Direction: Collaboration within community and throughout region,

47th Direction: Continue development of working relationship with MCFD,

48th Direction: Work in partnership with Northwest Inter-Nations Family and Child Services (NIFCS),

49th Direction: Support and take care of existing community services staff and resources,

50th Direction: Invest in community by training members,

51st Direction: Hire or train a Proposal writer,

52nd Direction: Support most vulnerable members to become self sufficient and employable,

53rd Direction: Increase work opportunities for community members,

54th Direction: Develop community capacity by maximizing Dease River First Nation's lumber mill,

55th Direction: Make needed improvements to existing hockey rinks,

56th Direction: Address Telegraph Creek community infrastructure needs,

57th Direction: Repair Good Hope lake school to create a facility for the communities
(SWWG, 2009)