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'They Call it a Healing Lodge, but Where is the Healing?': Indigenous Women, Identity, and Incarceration Programming

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‘They Call it a Healing Lodge, but Where is the Healing?’: Indigenous Women, Identity, and
Incarceration Programming

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impacts of state-run Indigenous programming on Indigenous women's cultural identities post-incarceration. Despite attempts to alleviate Indigenous incarceration numbers since 1999, Indigenous women in Canada continue to be one of the fastest growing federally incarcerated populations, as their numbers have more than doubled since 2001 (OCI, 2016; Reitano, 2017; Statscan, 2017). It is projected, at its current rate that by 2030 there will be more than 6500 Indigenous women housed in a federal corrections institution (Innes, 2015; OCI, 2016; Reitano, 2017; Statscan, 2017). However, there is limited focus on the impacts the criminal justice system, incarceration, and Indigenous programming may have on their perceived identity as an Indigenous woman post-incarceration. Institutional program evaluations continue to give secondary status to the voices of those imprisoned while privileging the voices of those who are employed by Correctional Service Canada reinforcing a top-down approach. Inmates serving federal time can be housed across Canada, therefore, many Indigenous women who find themselves in these institutions may not be lodged in their traditional territories, and those who transfer to a healing lodge are transferred to the Prairies. While serving time within another First Nations territory, the Indigenous women have to partake in cultural programming that is not their own due to limited access to a diverse range of knowledge keepers and Elders. At the same time, if Indigenous women want to return to their families and communities sooner, they must engage in programming, and specifically Aboriginal programming to lower their risk status to be eligible for early release. By undertaking this research from the perspective of Indigenous women, state co-ordinated Indigenous programming can be understood through the eyes of those that have lived experience, giving voice to the silenced.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, A.G. Clifford. The stories reported in Chapter 4 were covered by Ethics Certificate number REB19-0914, issued by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the project “Indigenous Women, Survivance, and Post-Incarceration” on September 10, 2018.

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Family and friends – To all those who supported me during this process many thanks are owed for bending an ear, wiping the tears, and standing behind me on this journey.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the participants who trusted me with their lived experiences and stories.

This thesis is also dedicated to my late adopted mom, Sharron Proulx-Turner, without whom I would not be following this path and whose own thesis was sealed; may her words go on to inspire others.

Finally, it is for all the Indigenous women currently moving through the federal corrections system in Canada; may their voices be heard so that the system can change for the better.

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Epigraph

I must break the chains that imprison me in the present, impede my understanding
of the past, and blind me to the future.

— Lee Maracle, *I am woman*

Academics who are to be true allies to Indigenous Peoples in the protection of our
knowledge must be willing to 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 anticolonialism.

(Simpson, 2004, p. 381)

Chapter 1: How the Journey Began

This research seeks to centre Indigenous women's stories post-incarceration, to learn about the experiences and make recommendations to improve programming for Indigenous women while they are incarcerated in Canada. As an emerging white settler researcher working with Indigenous¹ peoples, I must be mindful of situating myself continuously through self-reflection (Archibald, 2008; Chilisa, 2012; Henry, Tait, and STR8 UP, 2016; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008) because "researchers need to know their personal motives for undertaking their research" (Kovach, 2009, p. 114). Elder Reg Crowshoe and late Elder Sharron Proulx-Turner have personally expressed to me that: "we have to know where we come from to know where we are, to be able to move forward" (personal communication, 2014). To understand where I came from and where I wanted to go, I had to sift through my journey to discern how I got to where I am to be able to move forward with this research. Margaret Kovach (2009) said that our motives for engaging with research "are usually found in story" (p. 114). Stories told while engaging with Jo-ann Archibald's (2008) storywork are not make-believe; rather, stories need to be taken seriously as often there are lessons to be learned. Qwul'sih'yah'maht (2015) stated that "all stories have something to teach us" and they "allow us to document truths" (Thomas, 2015, p. 183). It is these stories of Indigenous women who have been incarcerated that this research looks to bring forth through storywork.

When employing storywork, one must move beyond learning the stories and words; rather, a connection to the narrative must be made (Archibald, 2008, p. 133); as "what there is to

¹ The term Indigenous is used with the plural form of woman to encapsulate there are women coming from varied cultural groups in Canada. This is not done to erase their unique identities but to speak broadly about a collection of individuals (Kessler, 2018, n.p.). The preference is to use "specific local terms based on family, community location, and traditional names" as they have identified it (Kessler, 2009, n.p.). The term 'Aboriginal' is used in direct reference to the standards used by the federal government under S 35 of the *Constitution Act 1982*.

know is inextricably linked to an individual's past, present, and future" (Dunbar, 2008, p. 87). For me to understand and form a relationship to the women's stories, I had to contextualize the story of my past, present, and future. After all, Thomas King (2003) maintained that "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (p. 2). As one participant eloquently put it, "I want to be filled with stories [just like the kokums]" (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Thus, our lives are a series of interconnected stories; for this reason, we should begin with the story of how I came to do the work that I am presently undertaking.

It was the early 1990's, on the prairies. A time when Indigenous street gangs² were actively recruiting, and *Starlight Tours*³ targeting Indigenous peoples were standard police practice. I was young and in love with a young man named *Kacy* (a pseudonym). *Kacy* was a *Bill C-31*⁴ kid, had a troubled childhood due to the impacts of forced enfranchisement⁵, residential school⁶, and intergenerational trauma⁷. We tried to spend every waking moment together, much

² In a biography of Indian Posse founder Danny Wolfe titled *The Ballad of Danny Wolfe: life of a modern outlaw*, the author Joe Friesen recounts a timeline detailing the formation of the Indigenous street gang. He also outlines where and when they were recruiting in Regina, Saskatchewan during the early 1990's. Reading this book contextualized some of the events that took place during my youth with my former partner.

³ The term *Starlight Tour* refers to the practice of dumping Indigenous men on the outer edge of a community by police officers in Saskatchewan (Razack, 2012, p. 62). The men were forced out of the back of the police vehicle and told to make their way back to the city. They were offered no support or assistance. The practice was undertaken regardless of the weather and resulted in at least three deaths.

⁴ *Bill C-31* was an amendment to the *Indian Act* to eliminate gender discrimination and the practice of enfranchising Indigenous women and subsequently, her children if she chose to marry a non-Indigenous man. The bill sought "to restore Indian status to those who had been forcibly enfranchised due to previous discriminatory provisions" (Kessler, 2009, n.p.). Upon its passing Indigenous women who were previously enfranchised, and her children were able to apply to the Canadian government to obtain federal status. However, by obtaining status, Indigenous women and their children were not guaranteed membership to the communities they were originally forced to leave due to the discrimination they suffered under the *Indian Act*.

⁵ See footnote 4 regarding *Bill C-31*.

⁶ The residential school system was instituted by the Canadian government in the late 1800's through to the 20th century "to get rid of the Indian problem" (Scott, 1920 cited in *Facing Histories*) and realize the goal of cultural genocide. "The system forcibly separated children from their families for extended periods of time and forbade them to acknowledge their Aboriginal heritage and culture or to speak their own languages" (Kessler, 2009, n.p.). The institutions subjected Indigenous students to torture, medical experimentation, sexual, psychological, and physical abuse. Many children who attended never made it home.

⁷ Intergenerational Trauma is defined as "a collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation-ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation. It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events" (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p. 320).

to the chagrin of my white settler middle-class family. You see the labels he carried, and what my family saw were the criminal record, the high school dropout, and the addict. But I wanted to be with him no matter what.

During this time, Kacy and his group of friends decided to organize themselves in a loosely knit street gang, in the same neighbourhood that the Indian Posse recruited members in the early 1990s⁸. Soon their self-proclaimed ‘name’ and the associated ‘questionable’ behaviour that followed brought about surveillance and monitoring by the police. The police saw me as a partly to it all just by my association with Kacy. As teenagers trying to navigate their place in the world, trouble seemed to follow, but at the same time, we were stopped or targeted by police for being ‘up to no good’ or deviant youth. During these stops, if I, an identifiable “white girl” were present, Kacy would be released on the agreement that he would be leaving *with* ‘me’ as his guardian so to speak. As a young white female, my word meant more to the police than that of an Indigenous youth with a track record of stepping outside the bounds of the law⁹. While I could not see it at the time, I have now come to recognize and acknowledge that my white privilege¹⁰ is what stopped me, and on occasion Kacy, from being arrested.

The relationship was dysfunctional and complicated due to our histories, not to mention how young we were. We had been together for over four years and were living common-law, when on March 13, 1994, I found myself running down the street with no shoes or jacket fleeing

⁸ Argyle Park is the name for an area in Regina. It is recounted in *The Ballad of Danny Wolfe* that this was one of the areas where Indian Posse members resided.

⁹ See Comack, 2012 particularly the sections on racialization and policing, systematic racism and racialization, and police stops: use of discretionary power in *Racialized policing: Aboriginal people's encounters with the police*. Also see Razack 2015, specifically chapters 1 and 3 regarding the Indigenous body as seen through the lens of settler colonialism in *Dying from improvement: Inquests and inquiries into Indigenous deaths in custody*.

¹⁰ See Peggy McIntosh's (2003) anti-racism work titled “White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack”, where “[w]hite privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (p. 191). Also see Verna St. Denis (2007) for her application of a critical race analysis to understand “processes of racialization that have historically, legally, and politically divided Aboriginal communities and families” (p. 1068).

from yet another violent encounter. I wanted to get to a friend's house to make a phone call because I had reached my endpoint and was ready for it all to stop. It was on that day we entered the justice system, where Kacy was charged with assault causing bodily harm, possession, and evading police. I thought the justice system would free me from the pain of the previous four years. I also naively thought that Kacy would receive the necessary support to deal with some of his issues and that I would have a voice in the process¹¹. However, throughout the court proceedings, if I was allowed to speak, it was to the back of Kacy's head, through a lawyer, court worker, or the judge. Finally, a year and a half later, the decision was made, and the gavel came down. It was over and done. Despite my white privilege that had previously served as protection from the justice system, I walked away feeling unheard, unsure who I was, and unable to move forward in any substantial way. I realized all I wanted was to sit and have a conversation. If I, as a white woman felt this way, how can an Indigenous person ever obtain justice. Then I felt if the judicial system did not work for me, how was it ever going to work for someone criminalized by it. I carried this sentiment with me for years to come as I tried to move on while witnessing Kacy's continued movement through the system with little change.

Around 1997, I moved to Calgary, Alberta, for a job opportunity. Most importantly, I left the Saskatchewan to get a fresh start, because I kept colliding with Kacy and our past. However, I still had not processed much less understood what had happened during our time together as I continued to face intermittent struggles about who I was. Fourteen years later, something was still missing. I wanted to pursue post-secondary education.

Therefore, I pursued my undergraduate degree in Law and Society and International Indigenous Studies at the University of Calgary with the intention of going into program

¹¹ I mistakenly thought that victims had a voice during court proceedings. However, in my experience, it became apparent that Canada's criminal justice system does not 'care' about victims during the criminal trial process.

development for at-risk youth. It was there that I began to discern my experiences with Kacy as I learned about Canada's abhorrent history towards Indigenous peoples. My post-secondary journey was what allowed me to truly unpack¹² my past.

At the end of my undergraduate degree, a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous undergraduate students attended the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE). After our return, we partook in a block week Indigenous Studies course to collaboratively reflect on this experience. Throughout that week, late two-spirit Elder Sharron Proulx-Turner was present to witness our progress as students who attended WIPCE. At the end of the week, Sharron held a sweat ceremony to celebrate the class's journey together. This significant event led to a very important relationship with Sharron, which spanned for several years before her passing. It was my deep connection with Sharron led to an unfolding that I have never experienced.

As "Paulo Freire (2008) teaches that with love and humanizing encounters, the oppressed will liberate their oppressor and that dialogue, reflection, and action are pathways to emancipating ourselves from internalized colonialism in how we engage in our partnerships" (as cited in Absolon & Dion, 2017, p. 96). Sharron was seen in the community as a mentor, author, poet, aunty, mother, Nokomis, teacher, sun dancer, lodge carrier, and advocate for the voices of women and children who have little voice as a result of colonization and colonialism. She helped me to contextualize my past to understand my present. As Tim O'Brien (1990) describes: "stories are for joining the past to the future" (p. 38). Sharron, with much love and compassion, gently but firmly guided me to

¹² The term 'unpack' is used in Rossina Liu's (2013) context of working with personal narratives while seeking answers to specific questions in a thematic manner (p. 55). Within anti-racist work, the notion of unpacking is understanding one's personal privileges and how that has come to impact their understandings of how they perceive their lived realities. See also Ermine, 2007; McIntosh, 2003; St. Denis, 2007 for more details on this process.

comprehend who I was, where I came from, and what I experienced so I could move forward. Anytime there was a ceremony, or maintenance of the grounds was required, Sharron extended an invitation to me. I always showed up ready to observe and help in any way needed. I have always questioned what she saw in me, but Sharron often said that I reminded her of herself at my age and we became family.

Sharron eventually asked me to become a lodge helper and fire keeper. Being a ceremonial helper meant that for the next two to three years, we spent considerable time together. It was during these times that she passed along her understandings and teachings she had received on her life's journey. We also often talked about the continued assault on Indigenous peoples through the prison system, and the lack of voices of those who, were and are, incarcerated.

Based on my own experiences, I realized that stories mattered yet, I recognized that some people might not have a voice. This was when I understood "that I had a preference to hear stories and gain insights from words" (Kovach, 2009, p. 123). My own experiences of being a woman going through the justice system, where I walked away more confused than heard, led me to choose to focus on Indigenous women, who have had to manoeuvre the carceral system. Through my relationship with Sharron and reflecting on my past experiences, I began to question the specific circumstances and experiences of Indigenous women who became involved with the Canadian correctional systems, and how I wanted my white privilege to be used so the voices of these women could be heard. It is this questioning and reflecting that led me to want to develop a project that honours the voices and perceptions of Indigenous women who have been incarcerated in Canada.

This project originally set out to analyze the Correctional Service Canada (CSC)'s Circle of Care program (CSC, 2019) which was designed as an “Indigenous stream of correctional programs” for “Indigenous women offenders . . . who have expressed a sincere desire to follow Indigenous programming and spirituality” (CSC, 2019). However, as each of the women who participated in this endeavour resided at the healing lodge, the project shifted focus not just on the impacts of the Aboriginal program, but on their entire experience at the healing lodge. This research was undertaken because of my own experiences and the way that I felt throughout the judicial process and in talking with the participants, the women continuously stressed the importance of experience and understanding. Once again demonstrating to me that stories matter. It also became clear that the impact of the program could not be extrapolated specifically, rather, through the interviews and data analysis, it is the macro institutional culture of the prison and its control of Indigenous programming as a whole that the women stated negatively impacted their experience and their understanding of being an Indigenous woman.

The Need to Examine Indigenous Women's Experiences of Incarceration

Overview of Indigenous female hyper-incarceration in Canada.

The number of Indigenous women entering federal corrections facilities continues to climb despite Canada's political narrative shifting to a dialogue of relationship-building in an era of reconciliation (Government of Canada, 2019). Statistics Canada reported that 55 Indigenous women were admitted to a federal corrections institution in 2001; however, by 2016 that number had risen to 124 more than doubling over fifteen years (Statistics Canada [StatsCan], 2018). By 2018, Indigenous women represented 4.16% of the Canadian female population but represented 43% of federally incarcerated women (StatsCan, 2018). Despite high incarceration rates,

Indigenous women's voices and experiences are rarely considered during the evaluation of the institutions cultural programming (Hannah-Moffatt, 2000).

Just as Indigenous cultures are vastly different across Canada, Indigenous women who enter into federal institutions bring with them their varied cultural teachings; however, current correctional policies offer a pan-Indigenous¹³ or one-size-fits-all model of cultural programming within federal corrections institutions (CSC, 2014). Pan-Indigeneity then "is a process of homogenization wherein all people with certain similarities are treated similarly" (White, 2008, p. 156). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to create a space for Indigenous women to reflect on their experiences with CSC's Aboriginal cultural programming and their understandings post-release. The intention of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of how their experience within a CSC run healing lodge impacted their identity and sense of self as an Indigenous woman. This research also intended to provide a space for participants to talk about their experiences while moving to and staying at the lodge; and subsequently, propose changes to CSC policies within state-controlled healing lodges.

It is well understood that knowledges are steeped in cycles of power, domination, superiority, and assimilation, influencing western society's fundamental consciousness (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008), and influencing how western society has come to construct its penal system (Comack, 2000; Foucault, 1995; Garland, 2001; Goffman, 1961; Martel, Brassard, & Jaccoud, 2011). Due to Eurocentric control of penal culture and institutions

¹³ For the purpose of this research, pan-Indigenous is defined through the lens of Willie Ermine's (2006) conception of 'monoculture' (p. 198). Where it is "the dissemination of a singular world consciousness, a monoculture with a claim to one model of humanity and one model of society" (p. 198). He goes on to state that "[I]n the West, this notion of universality remains simmering, unchecked, enfolded as it is, in the subconscious of the masses and recreated from the archives of knowledge and systems, rules and values of colonialism that in turn wills into being the intellectual, political, economic, cultural, and social systems and institutions of this country" (Ermine, 2006, p. 198). Within the carceral system, Indigenous culture and subsequently, practices are viewed in a singular manner resulting in the elimination and what appears to be the purposeful exclusion of diversity.

in Canada, correctional facilities must be understood as total institutions, as they are regulated through inflexible norms, rules, practices, and schedules that support western perspectives of justice (Comack, 2000; Foucault, 1995; Garland, 2001; Goffman, 1961). All who enter must adhere to the structure and culture of the institution, which is deeply connected to patriarchal western knowledges of dominance (Foucault, 1995). It is because of this that women's voices, specifically Indigenous women's voices, have been silenced or pushed to the margins –ignoring their specific needs for targeted reintegration programming.

Ontologically, this project is rooted in challenging historical and contemporary colonial processes of incarceration which are framed within hegemonic western European white patriarchy (Innes & Anderson, 2015). As a decolonial project, it “challenge[s] dominant constructions of Aboriginality discomforting systemic white ignorance” (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 414). Epistemologically, there is a need to bring forward the voices of Indigenous women who have had to navigate the federal corrections system in Canada, and it is these lived experiences that can shift the lens onto the system itself. With recent national commissions underscoring Indigenous issues within the Canadian consciousness¹⁴, this research looks to bring forward the voices and experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada who have gone through a CSC controlled healing lodge in Saskatchewan.

By the Numbers

The number of women entering a federal institution appears stable; however, Indigenous women entering federal institutions continues to increase exponentially. The fact that the number of Indigenous women entering a federal facility increases so dramatically while white women decreases, demonstrates the judicial systems direct targeting of racialized bodies (Alexander,

¹⁴ See The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) final report and Calls to Action (2015), and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) final report and Calls for Justice (2019)

2012; Razack, 2015) and Indigenous women specifically. For this reason, the system appears to be undertaking “colonization by the dominant illegality” (Foucault, 1995, p. 285). While these high numbers highlight the problem, qualitative research methods through an intersectional approach should be employed, to critically analyze from the perspective of those who experience colonial violence daily. Decolonial qualitative research that centres Indigenous women’s stories and voices can bring forward the experiences of state violence that is often ignored by those who are not aware because they have never had to be aware (Chilisa, 2011; Moosa-Metha, 2015).

Policies of Assimilation

Colonization has inflicted violence onto Indigenous women through western legislation and policies that focused on their removal from traditional spaces of power for hundreds of years. Bonita Lawrence (2000) affirmed that “the results, for Native communities, of this long-term gender discrimination have been disastrous” (p. 79) as many Indigenous women have lost traditional power and influence within their communities, although this is slowly beginning to change¹⁵. Formal assimilation was official Canadian policy, which began prior to the formation of the Dominion of Canada, up until 1973. The first policies included the *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857* followed by the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869*. These two documents were superseded by the *Indian Act of 1876*, which is still in place today shaping the relationships between First Nations status peoples and Canada. These pieces of legislation provided the western legal means for the legitimate codification of race based on the needs and wants of white settlers impacting the ability of primarily First Nations peoples to understand their identity (Lawrence, 2000, p. 78). The most heinous of the policies was that of the Indian residential schools that were created to “kill the Indian in the child,” in order to be remade within white

¹⁵ See Mary Two-Axe Earley, Theresa Spence, and Ellen Gabriel as examples.

Anglo Saxon values and cultures (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), 2012). Therefore, Indigenous identity is validated through the eyes of the colonizer. The result of the loss of culture is well noted to increase Indigenous peoples' vulnerability to violence (Bourassa, 2019). The vulnerability today is felt in a myriad of ways, one being the induction into the Canadian carceral system. Becoming involved with the carceral system contributes to a further loss of identity, through the fragmentation of Indigenous women from their families and communities, but also through the focus of CSC controlled Aboriginal cultural programming. Indigenous women then continue to be assimilated via mechanisms of settler colonialism¹⁶ through the CSC and the multiple ways it looks to recreate moral citizens (Foucault, 1995).

The continued focus on evaluations framed through a western lens needs to shift to include the voices of Indigenous women for true transformation to occur. As Kevin Walby (2017) stated,

prisoners know a lot about criminalization, know a lot about imprisonment, they have experiences. They have knowledge that needs to be shared with the general public and criminal justice policy makers if we want to try to understand harm and conflict in our societies better, and deal with it more effectively and more justly in the future. (as cited in Malone, CBC Media, 2017)

Thus, focusing on those with lived experiences has the potential to effectively influence policy change through a strengths-based approach empowering their voices for future generations.

Secondly, to move beyond deficit approaches to research with Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2012),

Jo-ann Archibald (2008) wrote we should “not swell on the colonizers but focus on how

Indigenous thought and action become transformative” (p. 90). Therefore the need to centre

¹⁶ See Razack (2015), particularly, the introduction and chapter 1, for an insight into settler colonialism through mechanisms of policing within Canada.

Indigenous voices and knowledges within research is a necessary component to decolonial research objectives.

Chapter Overview

This thesis focuses on the experiences of five women who were at one time incarcerated in a federal institution and resided at a CSC run healing lodge. The project centered the experiences of Indigenous women who were not from the Treaty 4 region where the healing lodge resides. The following research question served as a guide throughout: How does the CSC's pan-Indigenous cultural programming impact the identity of Indigenous women? The study intended to provide a space for the women to speak about their experiences and reflect on the impacts the healing lodge may have on their sense of self as well as their Indigenous identity, given, that they had no prior connection to the local territory in southern Saskatchewan. Through the narratives and insights provided effective policy changes can be made to better support incarcerated Indigenous women during their transition back into the community.

Chapter Two focuses on the existing literature surrounding the incarceration of Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women housed in Canadian federal corrections facilities. Specific attention is also paid to the complexities of Indigenous identity and its performativity in Canada. I review and critique the use of pan-Indigeneity within cultural programming, stating that in offering a one-size-fits-all program, the institution endeavours to assimilate Indigenous women via the settler-colonial gaze. Subsequently, it seeks to connect colonialism's practice of targeting Indigenous women to corrections institutional culture which appears to have a formal agenda of assimilation.

Chapter Three details the research paradigm, methodology, and methods used. I describe my research paradigm where I grounded relationship building in the Indigenous methodology of

relational accountability through a decolonial research process. I also recount the application of storywork to empower participants as the knowledge holders during the research process and how the storywork principles guided and informed my data collection process. Data was collected through one-to-one semi-structured interviews, using a life histories approach. Finally, the chapter provides an account of how narrative inquiry was used to examine the data centring participant's narratives in the process.

Chapter Four focuses on the narratives of the five participants, who identified as *not* culturally Cree. The chapter examines their experiences pre, during, and post-programming to gain a holistic understanding of the impacts the CSC's healing lodge may have on their identities as Indigenous women. The chapter demonstrates the impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous women's identities before, during, and after navigating the federal corrections system. I begin by discussing the women's early memories to contextualize their understanding of what they perceive it means to be an Indigenous woman prior to incarceration. Next, I discuss their time at the healing lodge in southern Saskatchewan where three macro themes emerged, including relationships with staff, access to ceremony, and institutional culture. Finally, I discuss the impact these experiences have had on the women's sense of self as an Indigenous woman as well as some of the complexities they face to maintain cultural connections upon their release into the community.

Chapter Five summarizes the analysis and explains why there is still a need to hear from Indigenous women who have engaged with the federal corrections system, specifically the healing lodge, in Canada. Here I present three recommendations put forward by participants that could improve programming and ultimately, the outcomes for women who are moving through the carceral system back into the community. Next, I discuss the limitations and difficulties of

undertaking such a project at the master's level. Finally, I delve into the possibilities moving forward to narrow the margin between narrative and policy: there are many stories but little change. Future research will endeavour to present participants narratives in a format that will empower Canadian policymakers to engage and become a force of positive change for Indigenous women moving through the penal system.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of how settler colonialism is embedded within Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) programming, the complexities of Indigenous identity and Indigeneity, and finally the history of the penal system and culture in Canada. I begin by examining the Canadian states' targeting of Indigenous women past and present and their dramatic overrepresentation in prisons that supports the logics of settler colonialism and the complexities of Indigenous identity and Indigeneity. I follow with a discussion on issues related to pan-Indigeneity and homogenous programming to demonstrate that the Canadian federal corrections system functions with an explicit agenda of assimilation by offering a one-size-fits-all model of cultural programming, erasing Indigenous diversity in the process. Next, I discuss the history of the penal system and the CSC followed by an overview of the pivotal role Indigenous women had in the creation of Aboriginal healing lodges. Aboriginal healing lodges were one of CSC's attempt at responding to the steadily rising number of Indigenous peoples entering the carceral system (CSC, 1990). Finally, I move into the institutional culture of prisons, where I focus on how western European norms and values frame rehabilitation and the construction of the moral citizen.

Settler Colonialism

It is critical not to take stories out of the larger context. Just as the singular and plural are not separate but rather intertwined, the context and story are also intimately connected. As Lynn Lavallée (2009) affirmed: "the story of one cannot be understood outside of the story of the whole" (p. 24). Through informal and formal mechanisms, Indigenous women have been the direct targets of the colonial agenda since contact (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2009; Lawrence, 2000; Lawrence, 2003; McIvor, 2009; Monchalin, 2016). Informal mechanisms

during western expansion, specifically the treaty negotiation process purposefully targeted Indigenous women (Lawrence, 2003). Per western European norms and customs, Indigenous women were excluded and replaced by Indigenous men during the treaty negotiation process, ignoring traditional matrilineal protocols that some Indigenous societies were built upon — dismissing their integral roles within the community.

Indigenous women were leaders and decision-makers in their communities. As Cora Voyageur (2008) explained: “Indian women have been involved in tribal politics as advisors and confidants since time immemorial” (p. xvi). Formal mechanisms of exclusion include a litany of national and international strategies. Global policies include the Doctrine of Discovery, and national policies comprise the *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857*, the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869*, followed by the *Indian Act of 1876*, (which is still used today to govern relations between First Nations status and the federal government). All these policies sought to normalize western heteronormative patriarchy to control Indigenous peoples and their territories (Lawrence, 2003). Each sought to eliminate the influence of Indigenous women by physically removing them from their communities (Lawrence, 2000; Lawrence, 2003; McIvor, 2009; Monchalin, 2016). First Nations status women who married non-status men lost their Indian status and were forced to leave their home community because the legislation “reflected the Victorian view that women were legally the possessions of their husbands” (Gray, 2016, p. 27). Not only were First Nations women who lost their status excluded, but they were forbidden from participating in community politics as they were no longer considered ‘members’ of the community. Therefore, they could not hold their communities accountable for the loss of rights they suffered due to egregious western policies and were categorically denied both their civil and political rights (Lawrence, 2000; Lawrence, 2003; McIvor, 2009).

Gender discrimination in formal legislation stripped First Nations status women and their children of their rights through western European codification of Indigenous race and identity through marriage. As Sharon McIvor (2009) demonstrated: “the Government of Canada could and did discriminate against Indian women on the basis of sex” (p. 375). Essentially, “restrictive racial classification ... straightforwardly furthered the logic of elimination” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388) and as Scott Morgensen (2012) asserted “the settler colonial governmentality that here wrests identity from Indigenous peoples also imposed a patriarchal authority within the law to assimilate them into the settler nation” (p. 63). The state deliberately targeted First Nations women to eliminate their Indigeneity, that of their offspring, and any subsequent generation by forcing them to become citizens of the Canadian nation-state. Once their status was removed, these women were considered civilized via the white settler gaze, and land could be legally obtained with no legal obstructions (Carter, 2005).

In Canada, colonialism continues to be treated by many as an event that took place in the past, i.e. initial contact, residential schools, the 60’s scoop, to name a few. However, colonialism is not simply an event; rather it is embedded within the social structures of the state (Cuneen, 2011; Monchalín, 2016; Morgensen, 2012; Razack, 2015; Wolfe, 1999). According to Patrick Wolfe (2006) “settler colonizers came to stay, invasion is a structure not an event” (p. 388). If one supposes that colonialism is woven through the structures of the nation, then what emerges is that certain configurations, including carceral programming, is a tool to eliminate Indigenous peoples, specifically Indigenous women.

To understand the impacts and connections of incarceration to colonization as an ongoing process, a settler-colonial lens helps to acknowledge that social structures and policies are used to validate the “ignoring or stripping away [of] the identity of the land’s first inhabitants”

(Monchalin, 2016, p. 71). In this context, the carceral system forces many Indigenous women to be removed from their traditional territory and come under the control and authority of the federal government “forcing these people under the governing influence and control of European settlers” (Monchalin, 2016, p. 71). Through Canadian state control, carceral systems then perpetrate continued paternalistic policies, formed within white heteronormative patriarchal understandings under the guise of ‘helping’ Indigenous peoples (Cannon & Sunseri, 2018; Comack, 2013; Razack, 2015). In the process, “the women at the intersections of these social oppressions are more vulnerable to violence (at the hands of both the individual and the state), which often results in their criminalization and institutionalization” (Native Women’s Association Canada [NWAC], 2017, p. 8).

In Canada, Indigenous women, criminalized by the justice system, are exposed to the ruthlessness of the state through its carceral policies of assimilation. As Patrick Wolfe (2006) contented “assimilation can be a more effective mode of elimination than conventional forms of killing, since it does not involve such a disruptive affront to the rule of law that is ideologically central to the cohesion of settler society” (p. 402). As such, the eradication of Indigenous peoples identity, via structures such as prison by means of assimilation, is deemed palatable because it is shrouded in the language of ‘improvement’ which does not besmirch the do-gooder Canadian image. This then helps to mitigate power dynamics of control where “focus[ing] on a hard-to-serve population, the settler state is constituted as generous” (Razack, 2015, p. 80). Penal institutions then distinguish themselves as generous through the provision of culturally relevant programming to Indigenous inmates in an attempt to unburden itself from the historical practices of genocide (Woolford, 2009). Thus, the carceral system helps settler society persist with its

agenda of assimilation while completely eradicating the connection to colonialism, absolving itself of settler guilt. As Paulette Regan (2010) wrote:

Canadians are still on a misguided, obsessive, and mythical quest to assuage colonizer guilt by solving the Indian problem. In this way, we avoid looking too closely at ourselves and the collective responsibility we bear for the colonial status quo. (p. 11)

So long as carceral facilities appear to be ‘rehabilitating’ offenders, settler society is assuaged of their guilt and remain complicit in the states explicit agenda to eliminate various forms of Indigeneity in Canada.

Today, thirty-seven years after the adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982*, Indigenous women and children continue to be targets of settler colonialism through Canadian carceral and social welfare systems. The continued removal of peoples from communities creates fragmentation under the premise of protection¹⁷. The process ignores the underlying contexts that have created the experiences and realities in a similar vein to that of residential schools and scooping policies that targeted Indigenous children and families. Today, Indigenous parents are the focus of elimination, via the ever-increasing number of Indigenous women and mothers that are removed to prisons.

Statistics indicate that more than 40% of women in federal institutions are Indigenous (OCI, 2016; StatsCan, 2018). When viewed through the lens of settler colonialism, the numbers demonstrate the power and control both the carceral and child welfare systems exert through diaspora efforts connected to forced dislocation from home communities (Razack, 2002, p. 127). The continued removal of Indigenous peoples from their families and communities by the state

¹⁷ Section 7 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982*, guarantees that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice”. However, for Indigenous women and children this is used to apprehend or remove them from their communities under the premise of protection.

continues to “influence [*Indigenous peoples*] understanding of their identity” (Lawrence, 2000, p. 75). As such, Indigenous women engaged in state care try to fit the gaze of the colonizer often becoming “uncertain as to who they were and where they come from” (Lawrence, 2000, p. 83). The carceral system has become an effective, efficient, and authorized tool of the Canadian state to continue the removal of Indigenous female bodies from spaces, where the system aids in the development of a fragmented Indigenous identity through an individual’s removal from their community.

Late Métis Elder Sharron Proulx-Turner (2018) summarized Indigenous experiences in *Creole Métisse of French Canada, me*. Here, she discussed her dialogues with Elder Shirley Bear and knowledge keepers about the impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous peoples. She described the experiences where:

most of the adults in indigenous cultures suffer the effects of residential schools. the indian act. enforced euro-mindset church and nation state. power and control. brutality. torture. domination and greed. genocide. one day, though, that will all change. women will teach the young to re-learn. (p. 68)

Settler colonialism continues to impact and control the lives of Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women sentenced to serve time in a federal institution. Due to western policies rooted in settler colonialism, it is important to critically analyze state-funded cultural programming offered in state-controlled healing lodges to assess whether it is infused with western European values. This critical analysis will create a better understanding of the ways in which programming and policy continue to reinforce power dynamics in subtle forms, and the impacts of the programming on Indigenous women’s notions of identity and Indigeneity post-incarceration. Proulx-Turner (2018) emphasized that “now is that time. the women are teaching

the young to relearn” (p. 70). Therefore, as it was Indigenous women that fought for the inclusion of healing lodges to be created, it has been and will continue to be the voices of Indigenous women that will have an impact on the policies of the Canadian carceral system.

Indigenous Identity Formation

Indigenous identity is not easily defined particularly, within a settler-colonial state such as Canada. Instead, identity construction is a complex phenomenon encompassing race, ethnicity, kinship ties, relational networks, geography, location, social capital, economics, and experiences, both direct and observed (Bandura, 1977; Couture, 2015; La Prairie, 1996; Monchalin, 2016; Sinclair, 2007; St. Denis, 2007; White, 2008). As Rob White (2008) explained: “identity is multilayered and complex” (p. 153). In the Canadian context, identity for Indigenous peoples has been and is constructed via mechanisms of racial codification under formal policies such as the *Indian Act* (Lawrence, 2000; Lawrence, 2003; Monchalin, 2016) and through the performance of culture (St. Denis, 2007). The two processes reinforce that Indigenous identity is seen and legitimized primarily through the eyes of the colonizer. Therefore, it is key to “understand one’s identity as a construction, a product, and an effect of social and historical relations” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1070). For Indigenous women in Canada, viewing identity as constructed through settler colonialism is beneficial to deconstruct identity formation as a continuous process and includes any subsequent struggles that may result.

Racial codification via mechanisms such as the *Indian Act* continues to divide Indigenous peoples through western European systems of classification impacting notions of belonging (Lawrence, 2000; Lawrence, 2003; McIvor, 2009). In Canada, it is essential to “understand these identity politics as both the effects of colonialism as well as the effects of some of the contradictions that arise in the context of the movement towards cultural revitalization” (St.

Denis, 2007, p. 1069). Racial classification continues to “determine who belonged and who did not belong, or rather, how one would belong and where one belonged, if at all” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1072). Canada’s attempted eradication of the ‘Indian problem’ resulted in efforts of revitalizing Indigenous culture through a western European hierarchical system, where “it . . . applauds some and discounts others” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1079) The result then is that there are multiple degrees and ways to one's understanding of Indigenous identity and practicing their Indigeneity, that is reliant on both racial codifications (socially constructed) and on one’s personal understanding of cultural performance.

In Canada, to be considered Indigenous one must not only look Indigenous (racial coding) but to be truly Indigenous one must also practice culture in a prescribed manner. “they are not seeing Aboriginal culture; they are seeing the vestiges of colonization and a neo-colonial society’s construction of Aboriginal culture” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 73). As Verna St. Denis (2007) noted

in today's political climate, accentuating authentic Aboriginal cultural identity has become highly regarded. Some of the requirements for cultural authenticity include speaking one’s First Nations language, having knowledge of and participating in a myriad of spiritual practices, and knowing traditional stories and other cultural practices. (p. 1076).

As such, if one does not ascribe to most if not all of the qualities of ‘cultural authenticity,’ one is perceived as being less than in the eyes of the colonizer as well as to those in one’s own community for not acting in a particular way (Henry, 2015).

The consequence of performing to that of what the state expects is that it reinforces standards and stereotypes by delineating what it means to be an Indigenous person. The

homogenizing of Indigeneity within a singular construction creates pan-Indigenous understandings that can be used to validate the authenticity of being. As Verna St. Denis (2007) asserted:

Aboriginal people are no longer – as if they ever were – a homogenous Aboriginal people, but what does tie us together is a common experience with colonization and racialization. The processes of colonization have irreversibly changed and affected our lives; the make up of our families and communities has been changed by the religious practices brought by colonization, by the practices and ideologies of racialization, by economic exclusion, and by many other forces. (p. 1087)

Indigenous identity never has been and is not homogenous, but rather, shaped by a multitude of factors. Rob White (2008) explained, “who we are is, and always has been, an evolving process” (p. 159). Similarly, as Trigger and Dalley (2010) demonstrated: “amidst the rich materials available on understanding indigenous peoples it is clear enough that this is a plural form of multiple asserted identities” (p. 57). Therefore, it is time to acknowledge the shared experiences and histories of colonization, but also recognize the diversity contained within the multiplicity of Indigenous perspectives. The acknowledgement of both can help to seek a diversity of Indigenous knowledges for not just improved models of carceral programming, but stronger understandings of reconciliation nationally.

Indigenous Women, Incarceration, and Cultural Programming

It is globally noted that there is limited data available specific to Indigenous women’s experiences while incarcerated negatively impacting effective policy and programming (Stubbs, 2013, p. 248). The late Patricia Monture-Angus, a Mohawk lawyer, scholar, trailblazer and staunch advocate, made significant contributions to secure and improve the rights of incarcerated

Indigenous women. In 1999, she wrote about the impacts of correctional practices on Indigenous women, and noted that the “double silence regarding the situation of Aboriginal women in prison is of greater consequence as their experiences are often based on the denial of their race/culture and concurrently their gender” (p. 415). Ten years later, in *Confronting Power*, according to Monture (2009):

Never before had the Correctional Service of Canada relinquished so much power to community to be involved in correctional decision-making and no mechanisms were in place to ensure that community members or organizations continued to hold some power. And this is the fatal flaw in our abilities to secure meaningful and long-term reform.

Insufficient power over the long term sat and sits in the hands of the reformers. (p. 282)

Throughout her career, Monture-Angus remained critical of the Canadian prison system and its colonial treatment of Indigenous women. However, despite her research findings and advocacy, there continues to be a significant gap in the experiences of Indigenous women while incarcerated. The lack of focus on Indigenous women’s experiences reinforces both gender and racial power dynamics, where Indigenous women are not able to contribute to policy development for their betterment¹⁸. Thus, the power continues to rest in the hands of the dominant who administer the system.

In 2017, a *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* special issue consisted of 40-submissions written by prisoners on prisons in Canada (Piché, 2017). The submissions were tendered as part of the newly elected federal government’s initiative to seek out recommendations stemming from

¹⁸ In 1990 the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) was conducted as an attempt to provide space for the complexities of women who were incarcerated to be heard. Utilizing a feminist and Aboriginal approach the TFFSW provided recommendations to the government. However, the CSC utilized the report to focus on woman as a single agent of change through choice, ignoring the social aspects that led women to be incarcerated. The second important piece was that the report homogenized the experiences of women, thus silencing Indigenous women’s experiences (Hannah-Moffat, 2000).

the lived realities of incarcerated inmates to ameliorate conditions in the Canadian federal corrections system. Of the 40 submissions, 20% were from women incarcerated in a federal institution, and of that twenty percent only a single article spoke about programming issues for Indigenous women (Piché, 2017). Not a single submission from the women referenced identity as an area of concern for Indigenous women navigating the federal prison system in Canada. The submissions predominantly focused on inmates' experiences and impacts stemming from cutbacks during the previous government's tenure, which saw the implementation of an increasingly punitive agenda. As Josephine Pelletier (2017) wrote:

Once in the federal penitentiary system, I experienced numerous changes as part of the Harper government's "punishment agenda." The negative changes I have been subject to occurred as much of Correctional Service Canada's budget was diverted to expanding its capacity to confine prisoners. (p. 35)

Josephine's statement is just one example of those presented in the journal detailing the impacts endured by prisoners stemming from changes in government policy to reflect a tough on crime agenda. Josephine's comments also demonstrate the consequences of punitive approaches that focus on confinement and not on rehabilitation for reintegration of Indigenous peoples.

The majority of literature on inmate experiences in Canada relies heavily on quantitative approaches with little focus on qualitative research (CSC, 2014; La Prairie, 1996; Office of the Correctional Investigator [OCI], 2016; StatsCan, 2017). Quantitative approaches have a stronger possibility to reduce Indigenous women to numbers on a page effectively erasing their identities and rendering them faceless objects. In *Dying from improvement: Inquests and inquiries into Indigenous deaths in custody*, Sherene Razack (2015) contended that "the overemphasis on the numbers can indicate a reluctance to confront what lies beneath" (p. 193). Systematic erasure of

Indigenous women's identities occurs when focusing solely on numbers, as their voices are eliminated, supporting settler-colonial policies of erasure. Patricia Monture (2009) asserted that the increased incarceration of Indigenous women "is in fact a strategy of colonialism" (p. 275). Focusing solely on numbers may also fail to acknowledge the underlying social realities and diversity that Indigenous women continue to face.

While numbers are effective to illuminate incarceration trends, one must also look beyond to understand the ongoing consequences and impacts that the carceral system and incarceration have on Indigenous women, their families, and their communities. It is even more pertinent today to provide space to learn from the narratives of Indigenous women post-incarceration, as the number of Indigenous women entering a federal institution has more than doubled since 2001 (Statscan, 2017). It is estimated that by 2030 over 6500 Indigenous women will be federally incarcerated (Innes, 2015; OCI, 2016; Reitano, 2017; Statscan, 2017). The perpetual increase in the number of Indigenous women entering a Canadian federal corrections facility demonstrates that it is a structure embedded with settler colonial agenda to remove Indigenous women from their families, communities, and land under the guise of rehabilitation.

Creating the Indigenous through a Pan-Indigenous Settler Lens

Culture and identity are not static, and "it would be a mistake to conceive of Aboriginal identity as a one size fits all understanding and practice sedimented over time" (Proulx, 2006, p. 411). The CSC through its singular Aboriginal cultural programming fails to acknowledge the complexities and diversity inherent to identity. As Carole La Prairie (1996) noted:

there is a tendency to treat aboriginal offenders as a homogenous group, even though we have moved away from this view for the general aboriginal population where a recognition of differences is now an accepted part of the discourse. Within the

correctional setting, however, programming has made certain assumptions about the needs of aboriginal inmates and concluded that the most appropriate emphasis should be on culture and spirituality. (p. 37)

The importance of the carceral system and notions of pan-Indigeneity is illustrated by Ken Coates (1999), where Indigenous communities advocated having culture included within the federal prison system so that their peoples would have an opportunity to heal through Indigenous values and traditions (p. 30). However, due to the control and limitations of producing something for everyone, the CSC created general Aboriginal programming for all. As such, the carceral system in Canada has become the primary mechanism for palatable forms of Indigenous culture to be delivered through the settler-colonial gaze under the guise of rehabilitation.

The homogenization of Indigenous culture within the carceral system seeks to dismantle the specific cultural identities of Indigenous women to be replaced with a colonial approved version of Indigeneity. Therefore, “traditionalism has become the newest coat to cloak their hidden agenda” (Maracle, 1996, p. 39) of simplifying the realities and diversity of First Peoples of Canada. As such, the CSC seeks to disseminate “a singular world consciousness, a monoculture” (Ermine, 2007, p. 198) masking the agenda to embed an alternate form of culture amongst Indigenous women moving through the federal system. “It is a process of homogenization wherein all people with certain similarities are treated similarly” (White, 2008, p. 156).

The CSC’s delivery of a singular form of Indigenous culture demonstrates that there is only one acceptable model to be followed, creating the space where “settler colonialism destroys to replace” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). A pan-Indigenous cultural program is based on the “assumption that all Indigenous cultures are the same” and enables the colonial agenda of erasure

to persist (Monchalin, 2016, p. 77). In this way, the prison imposes a new form of cultural identity on those that move through its doors (Foucault, 1995, p. 236) which enforces the institutions power and continued dedication to the settler-colonial agenda. The fact that the carceral system defines and presents Indigenous culture in a particular way is acutely important within the scope of the healing lodge, as the institution attempts to reconnect Indigenous women to their cultural identities in a space entrenched through hegemonic western European patriarchal values. For Indigenous peoples moving through the federal system, identity is validated through the settler-colonial gaze which seeks to erase complex diversity for simplistic homogeneity. It becomes “discourse that defines the ‘Other’ through a binary logic then wants to replace difference with sameness” (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 415). The CSC’s creation and distribution of rehabilitative programs via pan-Indigenous ideologies demonstrate how “the normalizing and naturalizing of white superiority continue[s] unabated” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1088). As such, Indigenous women who are sentenced federally, find themselves in a colonial space questioning who they are as Indigenous peoples. Sherene Razack (2002) noted that “when we speak of subjects coming to know themselves in and through space, we are speaking of identity-making processes that are profoundly shaped by patriarchy” (p. 13). In providing a singular program within the confines of a carceral setting to Indigenous individuals, the institution dictates what appropriate culture is to participants. In so doing, the institution perpetuates paternalistic standards embedded through continued practices of settler-colonial assimilation. But what is this system in Canada, and how has it been created to rehabilitate those who find themselves incarcerated as moral Canadian citizens again? I turn now to the history of the penal system in Canada, specifically prisons and programming.

The Penal/Prison System

History of the prison system. Since the Enlightenment era of the 18th century, a shift in consciousness has occurred concerning penal practices from public displays of torture and death to “[a] pervasive faith in the ability of punishment to change the offender and restore social order” (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 45). As Ted McCoy (2012) observed “[t]he penitentiary was regarded as a progressive solution to crime, one that would force criminals to do penance for their crimes while also giving them the skills and moral training necessary for their successful return to society” (p. 2). However, it was not until the early 19th century that two predominant schools of thought, the Auburn and Pennsylvania, emerged that greatly influenced Canada’s current modes of incarceration. While both the Auburn and Pennsylvania systems privileged the ‘rehabilitation’ of offenders over purely retributive modes of punishment; they manifested in markedly divergent forms.

The Auburn system was “called the *social* and the *silent* system” (Blake, 1839, p. 3) where prisoners worked together in strict silence during the day but during night hours were separated into individual cells. Whereas, the Pennsylvania system, founded by the Quakers based ‘rehabilitation’ on their religious observance, and was “called the *separate* or *solitary* system” (Blake, 1839, p. 3). The Pennsylvania system observed strict rules of prisoner segregation, which was thought to allow for solemn contemplation, personal reflection, and ultimately, reform on an individual level. Despite their differences, both modes focused on the need to reform the individual into model moral citizens through Christian reform.

During this shift in prison reform the premise was that the prison “. . . shall not destroy his [the prisoner’s] self-respect, nor expose him to corrupt and degrading associations, nor impair his ability to support himself and carry out his purposes of amendment” (Blake, 1839, p. 8). Thus

the purpose of amending the prisoner's moral behaviour became the focus of the penal system through Christian ideologies of repentance. Despite the shifts in penal culture from torture and public display of punishment to a more personal self-reflective model, the need to remake an individual as 'normal' and moral persists. To accomplish this "the individual to be corrected must be entirely enveloped in the power that is being exercised over him [her/them]" (Foucault, 1995, p. 129). Therefore, "punishments and penal institutions help shape the overarching culture and contribute to the generation and regeneration of its terms" (Garland, 1990, p. 249). The institution then holds power to dictate and shape how a "law-abiding citizen" (Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), 1992) should act and is reflective of the dominant society's idea of normalcy.

Today, the prime directive of rehabilitation continues to focus on creating law-abiding or moral citizens (CCRA, 1992) that are reflective of Canadian norms and values. In recent years, with the improvement of prison settings and prisoner rights in Canada, institutions continue to control the lives of those while incarcerated. According to Ted McCoy (2012) "at the same time that conditions improved, however, the institution also expanded its practices of physical and moral surveillance and its exercise of control over the lives of prisoners" (p. 3). Therefore, sentenced individuals who come under the authority of the institution become subjects to be controlled and moulded by the institution into moral citizens. However, whose culture, the terms of inclusion, and the complexities of power dynamics in reshaping identity need to be more deeply explored, specifically as it relates to Indigenous peoples and in particular, Indigenous women. As David Garland (1990) argued "the ultimate questions which need to be faced . . . are not about power or no-power but rather the ways in which power should be exercised, the values which should inform it, and the objectives which it should pursue" (p. 174). Therefore, it is

important to understand the power mechanisms at work within the penal systems in Canada are rooted in western European values and modes of religious repent, and how this ideological understanding of reform impacts not only Indigenous identity but institution controlled Aboriginal cultural programming.

History of Correctional Service of Canada. CSC operates under the purview of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (1992). This legislation outlines correctional policies and practices to work on reforming inmates in order to reintegrate them back into Canadian society. Under the Purpose and Principles section it states in section 3(b) that the federal correctional system is to “assist[ing] the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community” (CCRA, 1992, p. 5). The CCRA (1992) subsequently noted in section 4(g) that “correctional policies, programs and practices *respect gender, ethnic, cultural* and linguistic *differences* [emphasis added] and are responsive to the special needs of women, aboriginal peoples, persons requiring mental health care and other groups” (p. 6).

Embedded throughout the CCRA (1992), the CSC’s stated purpose and guiding principles is the notion of respecting differences for those that come into their care. Under General —Living Conditions Section 69 “[n]o person shall administer, instigate, consent to or acquiesce in any cruel, inhumane or *degrading treatment* or punishment of an offender [emphasis added]” (p. 39). Section 70 which continues this emphasis on dignity where:

the Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that penitentiaries, the penitentiary environment, the living and working conditions of inmates and the working conditions of staff members are safe, healthful and *free of practices that undermine a person’s sense of personal dignity* [emphasis added]. (p. 39)

Based on the principles outlined within the *CCRA* 1992, it appears that the CSC values the diversity of the individual and providing a respectful environment where inmates can rehabilitate and prepare for their reintegration into the community (CSC, 2012). Therefore, the principles of difference, personal dignity, and respect are embedded within the mandate of the CSC.

Given Canada's history of assimilation through legislated mechanisms such as the residential school system, the 60's scoop, and the continued racial codification via the *Indian Act*, it is important to view carceral policies and practice with a critical lens to ensure we are not perpetuating a continued assimilationist agenda¹⁹. Within the federal corrections system, it is important to comprehend, and challenge whose definition of law-abiding is being perpetuated to Indigenous inmates. As David Garland (1990) claimed "it is only by viewing punishment against the background of these wider forms of life and their history [i.e., settler colonialism] that we can begin to understand the informal logic which underpins penal practice" (p. 21). We must understand the context in which carceral policies are enacted upon Indigenous peoples based on Canada's history of colonization, colonialism, and subsequent settler colonialism. Therefore, it is key to use a settler-colonial analysis to understand the impacts of the carceral system, so as to not homogenize Indigenous women's experiences with other women's experiences (Hannah-Moffat, 2000).

The CSC details its approach to women's corrections as creating a space to "empower women offenders, nurture meaningful and responsible choices, *foster respect and dignity, create a supportive environment* [emphasis added], and promote shared responsibility" (CSC, 2019). However, as Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2001) noted, "CSC has redefined and constructed empowerment and notions of shared responsibility so that these are compatible with its own

¹⁹ See Hannah-Moffat. K. (2000).

independent strategy of penal government” (p. 171). Thus empowerment is on CSC’s terms and subject to their norms and ultimately, regulations.

For Indigenous women, the CSC seeks “to build a *positive personal and cultural identity* [emphasis added]” (CSC, 2014) through its Aboriginal programming. However, while CSC policies appear to acknowledge that there is a diversity of individuals and cultures that come through its doors, their Indigenous approaches have been criticized because “emphasis on the cultural and spiritual has resulted in a group rather than an individual approach” (La Prairie, 1996 p. 79), framed within a pan-Indigenous logic of healing. Ultimately, this type of programming leads to “a process of homogenization wherein all people with certain similarities are treated similarly” (White, 2008, p. 156). It would appear that in its efforts to address the increasing number of Indigenous peoples moving through the federal system, the CSC has ignored its own governing policies of diversity and personal dignity. A 2018 report from the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security titled *Indigenous People in the Federal Correctional System* asserted that “while CSC has made some efforts in its current approach, it must do more to respect the cultural differences and specific needs of Indigenous offenders” (p. 27). Heeding then to the Standing Committee’s recommendation, this research looks to fill the gap in drawing out the experiences of Indigenous women who have gone through Aboriginal programming at the *Okimaw Ohci* Healing Lodge, on Nekaneet First Nation and the impact that pan-Indigenous programming had on their aspects of Indigeneity.

History of healing lodges in Canada. In 1990 as the number of Indigenous women entering federal corrections continued to climb, the CSC struck a task force to make recommendations to address female incarceration (Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women [TFFSW], 1990). The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women was created and released its

report, *Creating Choices*, that outlined the specific needs and realities that women and Indigenous women faced prior to becoming involved with CSC. The report recommended the development of specialized programming and spaces for Indigenous women, which were the beginning of healing lodges with the CSC. Healing lodges are described as:

correctional institutions where we use Aboriginal values, traditions and beliefs to design services and programs for offenders. We include Aboriginal concepts of justice and reconciliation. The approach to corrections is holistic and spiritual. Programs include guidance and support from Elders and Aboriginal communities. (CSC, 2019, n.p.)

The CSC has two types of facilities for Indigenous persons moving through the federal corrections system. The first are the CSC controlled and run healing lodges located on First Nations land. The *Ohkimaw Ohci* healing lodge is the longest-running healing lodge in Canada of this type and is located on the Nekaneet First Nation in Southern Saskatchewan. The second type of healing lodge are Section 81 healing lodges. Section 81 healing lodges occur when Indigenous communities or partners or both enter into an agreement with the Minister to provide “correctional services to Indigenous offenders” (CSC, 2019). Section 81 healing lodges then are managed and controlled by Indigenous community organizations, such as Buffalo Sage Wellness House in Edmonton, which is run by Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

In 1995, the first Aboriginal women’s healing lodge *Okimaw Ohci* opened “in the Nekaneet First Nation territory in southern Saskatchewan” (CSC, 2018). The lodge uses “Aboriginal values, traditions and beliefs to design services and programs for offenders” (CSC, 2018) where the “women were to be treated as women” as opposed to security threats (Monture, 2009, p. 280). The original intent of the lodge, envisioned by the task force, was to be a space for Indigenous women to discover and unpack their complex histories of colonialism while being

immersed in a space and place that embodied culture and traditional teachings. All programming offered at the lodge was to be rooted through and adhere to the traditional values and teachings of the Cree people.

With *Okimaw Ohci* under CSC control, it is felt by the community that the lodge has fallen astray from its original intent. As such the “leadership of the Nekaneet First Nation feel that the original vision for the *Okimaw Ohci* Healing Lodge has been lost, and the community has taken a “hands off” position until it is revisited and acknowledged by CSC” (OCI, 2012, p. 23). *Okimaw Ohci* and CSC administration have chosen to operate the facility at arm's length to the very nation on which it is built.

By its actions, it appears that the CSC has chosen a checkbox style pan-Indigenous cultural approach to programming, excluding the Nekaneet First Nation from dialogue, program development, and operational participation. This removal sustains a paternalistic colonial approach, where the state understands Indigenous culture(s) better than Indigenous peoples themselves (Hannah-Moffat, 2000; Henry, LaVallee, Van Styvendale, & Innes, 2018). As one task force member noted the healing lodge “was not to rely on discrete Aboriginal programs to supplement the core programs of CSC” (Monture, 2009, p. 282); however, as will be demonstrated through the women’s narratives this is not what occurs within the Aboriginal healing lodge for women.

As stated, the CSC has removed its community connection within *Ohkimaw Ohci*, impacting how the programs are delivered and contextualized. As Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton (2009) explain, “the development of culturally-appropriate services will not be useful for women who have been excluded from the definition of that culture” (p. 300). As a result of the severed relationships and broken promises to the local community, the lodge reflects its

colonial underpinning, by maintaining and validating what is meant by cultural programming (Martel et al., 2011). For example, the program development process is dominated by western bureaucratic methods, which greatly reduces the ability of Indigenous peoples and communities to co-create, much less envision, new ways of implementing appropriate facilities, programs, and staff training (Monchalin, 2016; Monture, 2009). Program design falls under a ‘certificate model’ controlled by the CSC. The programming that is administered in *Ohkimaw Ohci* was not designed by and with the community, thus excluding the territorial knowledge available in the community. Essentially, the community’s “dreams are limited by corrections expectations” this “is a clear form of systemic and structural disadvantage” (Monture, 2009, p. 417). The creation of CSC run healing lodges and pan-Indigenous cultural programming demonstrates the “creative adaptation of colonial power that sustains colonial rule” (Morgensen, 2012, p. 807). Carceral facilities and programs become creative ways to appear as saviours once again, as the institution dictates that it knows what is best for Indigenous peoples securing their retention of power and control over Indigenous bodies.

In 2016, Lisa Monchalin highlighted that “incorporating traditional approaches or including Indigenous peoples, communities, and cultures in the correctional system is still trying to deliver “justice” within Euro-Canadian systems of governance through Euro-Canadian institutions. It is yet another form of indigenizing the white system” (p. 272). Building healing lodges in Indigenous communities, forces those that work for the system to follow the protocols and practices of the CSC, while the state discounts the culture they are trying to incorporate. By excluding local community knowledges and perspectives, and through enacting the certification of culture, the CSC creates a pan-Indigenous perspective that is controlled and validated through its own lens (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). This pan-Indigenous perspective ignores the diversity of

protocols that exist in Canada and as such proclaims that a specific form of Indigeneity, one evaluated and defined by the CSC, be practiced by all.

Culture of the institution. Prisons are designed to punish offenders but also to retrain sentenced individuals to contribute to society in meaningful ways by becoming upstanding citizens. Prisons, as institutions are “rational organizations designed consciously, through and through, as effective machines for producing a few officially avowed and officially approved ends” (Goffman, 1961, p. 74). The officially avowed and approved ends of Canadian federal corrections institutions are couched in the language of safety, security, and offender rehabilitation (CSC, 2008). Within spaces of security, safety and offender restoration, corrections institutions present themselves as indispensable in addressing the complex task of offender rehabilitation before an inmate’s safe release into the community.

The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (1992) states that it is about “striking a fair balance between control and assistance” (CSC, 2008) while “the principle goal is public safety. This is promoted by proper control of offenders and with programs that help individuals rehabilitate” (CSC, 2008). It is through ‘rehabilitation’ programming that correctional institutions instill what is believed to be dominant society’s norms, values, and culture onto inmates who have to negotiate the carceral system (Foucault, 1995; Garland, 1990; Goffman, 1961; Martel et al., 2011). The norms, values, and culture found within Canadian institutions are embedded in dominant western knowledge systems, where inmates must assimilate to the institution’s version of an upstanding citizen (Hannah-Moffat, 2000; Innes & Anderson, 2015). Penal institutions primary focus is to help with “resetting the inmate’s self-regulatory mechanisms” (Goffman, 1961, p. 71) through rehabilitation programming. Prisons then are total

institutions seeking to acculturate sentenced individuals to western social norms and standards, through acts of rehabilitation.

For centuries, penal institutions have sought to conform the lives of those who have broken the laws set up to maintain order and civility. These institutions became the “apparatus for transforming individuals” (Foucault, 1995, p. 233) as they are “a technique for correcting individual lives” (Foucault, 1995, p. 252). Penal institutions promulgate the dominant society’s norms and standards by looking to reshape and change the behaviours and actions of those confined to those who are moral. As Martel, Brassard, & Jaccoud (2011) maintained, “justice systems are key institutions to teach and enforce a culture’s agreed-upon values and mores, they disseminate a particular worldview” (p. 236). For Indigenous inmates, the Canadian carceral system reinforces and perpetuates settler colonialism by shaping the sense of ‘self’ through the lens of the white settler gaze (Martel et al., 2011). The carceral system successfully conceals the targeting of Indigenous women via mechanisms of settler colonial erasure by focusing predominantly on the institutions ability to meet the rehabilitative needs of offenders, through the production of healthy, productive, upstanding citizens upon their release. Every effort is made “to bring the target group ‘into line’ with the ‘mainstream’. This popular policy process overlooks the ways in which institutions and policy processes themselves contribute to social problems . . . instead [it] emphasizes the need to change and/or reform individuals” (White, 2008, p. 157). As such, the system completely erases its direct connection to colonialism by coming from a place of individual criminalization and victimhood, ultimately, ignoring the root causes of incarceration (Hannah-Moffat, 2000; Razack, 2015).

To address the recommendations from the TFFSW (1990), the CSC used Aboriginal Corrections is to ensure “a federal correctional system that responds to the needs of all offenders

and contributes to safe and healthy communities” (CSC, 2018). To address these needs the CSC looked to support Indigenous inmates with access to Elders, spiritual care, and Aboriginal programming; however, the programs are developed and administered by the CSC and are limited to the availability of institution validated Elders in the territory (OCI, 2012). The prison continues to produce that which it makes (Foucault, 1995; Garland, 1990; Goffman, 1961); an upstanding Indigenous individual connected to and practicing a preconceived settler approved Indigenous culture.

CSC run healing lodges seek to create law-abiding Indigenous peoples enlightened through the institution’s cultural programming. The homogenous approach ignores the distinctive and diverse Indigenous peoples that may find themselves incarcerated. By viewing everyone as the same, differences related to culture can be ignored or minimized maintaining power within the state to validate one’s existence (Hannah-Moffat, 2000; St. Denis, 2007; Wolfe, 2006). Thus, the institution “exercises a power of normalization” (Foucault, 1995, p. 208) by disseminating a singular view of Indigenous culture. If non-compliant or challenging to the views being presented, Indigenous women can be removed from programs which will keep them from their families and communities for longer periods²⁰. Thus, each woman’s Indigenous sense of self can only exist in relation to the programming offered at the institution, while speaking about one’s own culture can result in further punishment. Therefore, Indigenous women’s cultural identities are constructed based on what the institution deems palatable, ignoring the fact that not all Indigenous peoples practice culture or spirituality in the same way (Paradies, 2006).

Having a singular program in the institution tells inmates that cultural identity is important, as long as it fits with the CSC’s ability to validate the existence of culture. The

²⁰ See Chapter 4 for examples from the women’s narratives on how this took place during their tenure at the lodge.

institution deems which forms of culture are acceptable and inconsequential according to their standards of practice through certified programming. This may force Indigenous women to hide and adapt their identity or sense of self to such an extent that they are not able to generate a true self without becoming assimilated into the mainstream to survive the institution. The impact of conforming to get by supports the notion that colonial programming is successful by being validated because of the number of Indigenous women that move through their programs. However, focusing success on numbers of completion ignores the impact that such programming has on individuals once they are in the community and erases their experiences as invalid. Thus, to understand the importance of silencing Indigenous women, I seek to demonstrate how settler colonialism is needed to comprehend why Indigenous women's voices and experiences are homogenized and ignored, resulting in the erasure of difference while preserving settler control of Indigenous culture.

Reluctance to dispose of one-size-fits-all prison programming evokes the privilege of the 'expert' or "white intellectual superiority" (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 421) ignoring those directly impacted by the policies and programs. "Although making efforts towards cultural revitalization is regarded as a positive approach to addressing the effects of colonization, it also helps minimize and discourage analysis of how historical and contemporary practices of racial inequality limit the aspirations of Aboriginal people" (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1080). Within carceral spaces, the institutions deem to know what is best, and there is a failure to act on the recommendations of the very community it seeks to support.

Conclusion

Given the reliance on statistics, the narratives of Indigenous women who move through the system remain notably absent. A settler-colonial lens is a valuable tool to unpack²¹ the issues faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada's federal corrections system. Focusing solely on 'the numbers,' the literature effectively erases the identities of those that manoeuvre the penal system, silencing their voices in the process. It also seeks to mask the underlying agenda of the carceral institution which disseminates settler colonialism under the guise of offender rehabilitation. Upon sentencing, Indigenous women are excommunicated from their communities, reinforcing historical processes of dislocation and removal via government-enforced policies. Once in the carceral system, the women are exposed to state-designed cultural programming embedded through western European values and norms, demonstrating that the penitentiary continues to propagate colonial policies of assimilation. By providing a single pan-Indigenous program, Indigenous women, who are not from the territory, are assimilated through the colonial gaze. The institution designed, developed, and offers a one-size-fits-all cultural program demonstrating that only a single form of Indigenous culture is palatable to the Canadian state. Offering a solitary form of culture to Indigenous women, ignores all other traditional forms or practices and has the consequence of leading to a lack of engagement and confusion about one's identity as an Indigenous woman.

²¹ See footnote 9, however, the term unpack is also used metaphorically in the same vein as Peggy McIntosh's (2003) anti-racism work titled "White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack", where "[w]hite privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks" (p. 191). In the context of this work, I argue that we all carry invisible knapsacks which contain all of our collective and individual experiences. As human beings sometimes we endeavor to take all the items out of our backpack in an attempt to make meaningful connections. Through this process, we lay each item in front of ourselves to determine that which serves us and that which does not on our journey of self discovery and identity formation.

Chapter 3: Lessons of Lived Experience through Story

There is an imperative need for qualitative research that engages Indigenous women who have participated in cultural programming through a CSC run healing lodge in Canada. Carol La Prairie (1996) stated that “there has been little monitoring of the delivery of [aboriginal] programs” (p. 82), and CSC program evaluations do not include the voices of “individuals who have participated in and/or completed them” (p. 82). Therefore, program evaluations continue to overlook the narratives of those who have lived experience. However, such research needs to be done in a good way, so as not to silence or push the voices of the women to the margins. This research is intended to position participants as experts within their experiences (Absolon & Dion, 2017; Archibald, 2009; Henry et al., 2016; Kirkness, 2013); shifting control from the carceral structure to that of those who engage with the structure itself.

As a non-Indigenous researcher choosing and being accepted to work with Indigenous women who were once incarcerated, it was paramount that I understood my unearned privileges that have been afforded to me by the state itself (Ermine, 2007; McIntosh, 2003). For this reason and due to the abhorrent history of research involving Indigenous peoples, it is paramount to be mindful of my social positioning, and the social capital I possess (Absolon & Willet, 2004; Absolon, 2011; Chilisa, 2012; Henry et al., 2016; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). “In other words, we have a responsibility to know our historicity” (Absolon & Willet, 2004, p. 12). As researchers, we must also acknowledge that “who we are as researchers cannot help but influence our choice of epistemological framework and theoretical lens” (Kovach, 2009, p. 122). As such, my research paradigm²² integrates both decolonial theories and Indigenous research methodology.

²² “The term *paradigm* as used within a research context includes a philosophical belief system or worldview and how that belief system or worldview influences a particular set of methods” (Kovach, 2010, p. 41).

Shawn Wilson (2003) stated that “all things are related and therefore relevant” (p. 173). My research paradigm consists of the ontological, epistemological, and axiological teachings that were shaped and gifted by late Elder Sharron Proulx-Turner as well as my adoptive Cree and Métis family. My historical experiences of having white privilege while growing up witnessing the impacts of settler colonialism emphasize the need for a decolonial approach, one that challenges the colonial system that continues to erase Indigenous voices and bodies from the land.

To provide clarity about the differences between engaging through an Indigenous or decolonial paradigm, I utilize the work of Margaret Kovach. She demonstrated that:

It [decolonial paradigm] centres the settler discourse, whereas an Indigenous paradigm centres Indigenous knowledges. While a decolonizing perspective remains necessary and can be included as a theoretical positioning within research, it is not the epistemological centre of an Indigenous methodological approach to research. (Kovach, 2010, p. 42)

As this research seeks to centre the knowledges of the Indigenous participants and the teachings that have been passed down to me, an Indigenous paradigm that utilizes both cultural teachings and decolonial understanding of power dynamics was necessary. As Kathleen Absolon and Susan Dion (2017) argued “if knowledge produced through research is going to be of use to Indigenous communities, it must be framed by Indigenous *and* [emphasis added] decolonizing frameworks; otherwise it is merely another case of hegemonic knowledge production” (p. 94). Given the current state of the carceral system and its over-exertion of power and authority aimed directly at Indigenous women a decolonial approach was needed. However:

to truly ‘decolonize’ research, *Indigenous research* –research that is formulated from an Indigenous perspective (i.e., is based on Indigenous world view and Indigenous

knowledge, and responds to Indigenous needs and inquiries) must begin to play a central role in a broad spectrum of research undertakings. (McGregor, 2018, p. 819)

Therefore, the research paradigm used herein looks to center Indigenous women's knowledges as a way to respond to their specific recollections and needs of Indigenous women who were once incarcerated. The centring and privileging of their narratives can be seen as a direct challenge to CSC's dominant paternalistic discourse, one which is based upon the continuation of settler colonialism.

I chose to follow the work of Kathleen Absolon (2011) and her metaphor of the berry picking basket to frame my research process. In her process, she selected the most relevant ways to engage with community members during the research process. As she contended, "we can become gatherers and hunters for knowledge within the academy or other contexts. We find what we need and bring that knowledge and information forward for others" (Absolon, 2011, p. 83). In this way, she created her own process that maintained validity, but was fluid to allow for multiple ways in which participants' felt comfortable participating. In this project, I employed the same technique as Absolon's berry basket where; I utilized the strengths from different processes while filling my basket to make mine unique to the work that I undertook.

Similar to Kathleen Absolon's berry picking metaphor, Jo-ann Archibald (2008) utilized the metaphor of weaving the strands of a cedar basket. "They have distinct shape in themselves, but when they are combined to create story meaning, they are transformed into new designs" (Archibald, 2008, p. x). The intersectional and bringing together of theories and knowledges are also found within anti-oppressive and decolonial theories. As Mehmooona Moosa-Mitha (2005) described:

I take the view that anti-oppressive theories do not signify separate and “alternative” theorizations; rather, they engage in a conversation with other social theories that is dialectical in nature, where they contest, influence, and are in turn influenced by the ontological and epistemological assumptions of a spectrum of social theories. . . . so that over time it is not always easy or possible to distinguish all the various strands that come together in any one theoretical framework. (p. 38)

Therefore, the methods and theories employed did not stand on their own; rather they worked collectively to push this research forward in a good way.

Participants and Relational Accountability

Relationship building. To build the necessary relationships between participant, community-partner, and researcher, I engaged through the Indigenous methodology of relational accountability which made certain that the relationships supported the research to move forward in a good way (Archibald, 2008; Henry et al., 2016; Kirkness, 2013; Wilson, 2008). To engage with Indigenous women who were once incarcerated, I built a relationship with the community organization, Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan (EFry). EFry actively advocates for the rights of women manoeuvring Canadian carceral systems and their mission states that they:

work with women and girls before, during and after involvement with the justice system to provide legal assistance, access to information and programming, and support for community integration. And advocate for the human rights, dignity and self-worth of all women and girls. (2016, n.p.)

EFry became active participants in the research process through data validation, knowledge translation, and mobilization.

The principles of relational accountability were used to develop relationships with EFry to gain access to potential participants. As an Indigenous research methodology, relational accountability looks to frame research relationships through the four r's of respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity (Archibald, 2008; Henry et al., 2016; Kirkness, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Louis, 2007). "Centering Indigenous knowledge, protocols, and practices in re-search requires movement from understanding the value of relationships, reciprocity, respect and equity to enacting them" (Absolon & Dion, 2017, p. 84). For this process to be successful, respectful relationships must be formed between those involved and extend to incorporate relationships to ideas (Archibald, 2008; Henry et al., 2016; Kovach, 2009; Louis, 2007; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008).

When engaging with life stories, the researcher assumes the "responsibility that the story will be treated with respect to acknowledge the relationship" (Kovach, 2009, p. 97). The research must also be relevant to the participants, community, and research partners. All must see the benefit and be able to connect with it directly for research to move forward in a good way (Henry et al., 2016; Smith, 2012). As Absolon and Dion (2017) noted: "finding a process capable of sustaining both researcher and community needs requires patience, respect, time, energy, and a willingness to work in service of accomplishing each other's goals" (p. 90). This then becomes a space of reciprocity, where those involved are focused on specific goals that the research is to produce.

As with the majority of community-based and community-engaged research projects, it was imperative that in-person meetings be done with EFry and participants in order to build trust early on in the research process. EFry acknowledged at the first meeting that this project was directly relevant to its organizational mission and vision of supporting the rights and improving

services to women while incarcerated (see Appendix A – Letter of Support). EFry were adamant in the early relational process that all participants who engaged in the research were to receive the care and respect that is reflective in EFry’s mission statement. Both EFry and myself, proceeded to negotiate areas of shared responsibility and expectations for the research process. It was agreed upon that I attend their weekly sharing circles prior to research taking place as a way to talk about the research and recruit, with EFry support, women to partake in the research. Participation in the circles was an engagement of reciprocity, as I was there to help the circle leaders with what they needed to slowly show participants that I was not just coming for their stories²³. Reciprocity became a fluid process as I was not just doing research with EFry but supporting the organization by aiding staff with the day to day operations while I was there.

To remain mindful of the paradigm guiding my research, I had to create a “space of critical reflexivity” (Henry et al., 2016, p. 199). As Absolon and Dion (2017) maintained: “we all need to work at being consciously aware of the complex histories, values, goals, aspirations, fears, and anxieties that impact team and community partnerships” (p.93). It was only through the 4R’s of relational accountability that I was able to navigate the research process and support the community partner simultaneously in ways that upheld the teachings and knowledge handed down to me by my adoptive mother.

Participant Overview. Qualitative research and personal perspectives of Indigenous women who have been incarcerated in Canada is notably absent, despite their numbers more than doubling since 2001 (OCI, 2016; Reitano, 2017; StatsCan, 2017). The lack of Indigenous

²³ See Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous Methodologies* particularly chapter 8 for more information. Also see the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) (2019), for a detailed description of the OCAP® principles which “are a set of standards that establish how First Nations data should be collected, protected, used, or shared. They are the *de facto* standard for how to conduct research with First Nations” (FNIGC, 2019). Also see Smith, L.T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies* particularly chapters 6, 7, 8, and 11.

women's voices means that the creation of corrections policies and programming is done without considering the personal experiences and needs those who have moved through the carceral process. Although quantitative research can pull out some aspects to evaluate penal programming, it is the narratives of those who have gone through the system that provides the breadth and depth of its effectiveness.

Due to issues related to access, research time frame, and research ethics approval, it was agreed upon with EFry that the research would focus on the experiences of post-incarcerated Indigenous women. The second reason to work with women who are post-incarcerated was that they can reflect on their experiences and how it has impacted their perceptions and performance of being Indigenous living back in the community. The third parameter of selecting which Indigenous women to interview was that they had to have resided at the *Ohkimaw Ohci* healing lodge on Nekaneet First Nation. This was undertaken, as unlike Buffalo Sage Women's Healing lodge which was created under section 81 of the *CCRA* 1992 and run by Native Counselling Services of Alberta, *Ohkimaw Ohci* is CSC controlled on First Nations land. The fourth parameter was that of working with Indigenous women who were not Cree. This was done because the intent of the research was to understand how CSC controlled programming impacts Indigenous women's identity and Indigeneity. Because *Ohkimaw Ohci* is on Nekaneet First Nation, access to Elders, teachings, and ceremonies that were not Cree-centric are limited due to access and limited availability. Therefore, the women who entered the healing lodge had to follow both CSC mandated and Cree-centric cultural programming. Therefore, the research undertaken could examine the positive and negative impacts of such programming in relation to women who are not from the territory and who entered the lodge both voluntarily and

involuntarily. With EFry's connections to the community, the programs and services they offer, they took on the primary role of recruitment for the project using snowball sampling methods.

In total four women who fit the research parameters were recruited (one Métis, two Saulteaux, and one First Nation). EFry recommended the inclusion of a fifth non-Indigenous woman because she was the only woman in EFry to have been housed at both federal women's healing lodges²⁴. All the women were not originally from the geographic area where the healing lodge is situated, thus providing them with the opportunity to yield a comparison between their understandings of cultural identity and the teachings received at the lodge.

Data Collection

Protocol – more than token gifts. Knowing and incorporating Indigenous protocol into research must be embedded throughout “as an integral part of methodology” (Smith, 2012, p. 15). According to Margaret Kovach (2010) “our doing is intricately related with our knowing. We need only to look to the importance of protocol within Indigenous communities to recognize that how activities (i.e. methods) are carried out matter” (p. 40). How we begin matters; otherwise, the research can propagate a continued colonial process of control and removal of Indigenous voices. To enter research into a good way with Indigenous partners, it is expected that proper cultural protocol is “determined by the epistemology and/or place” (Kovach, 2010, p. 43) be followed. Protocol is described by Walter Lightning (1992) as:

any one of a number of culturally ordained actions and statements, established by ancient tradition, that an individual completes to establish a relationship with another person

²⁴ It will be noted here that the fifth recruit (non-Indigenous) was brought in by EFry to discuss the differences in how the healing lodges were set up and run as she was the only individual that had attended both. Her narrative though was not used to validate the experiences of the Indigenous women who participated. Rather it was used to help inform myself of the ways that programming differs across CSC and Section 81 healing lodges. This information is important as I move forward in this research to better frame future projects and broaden the scope to include experiences at both healing lodges, as well as the experiences of non-Indigenous participants and their perceptions of Indigenous peoples and Indigeneity pre, during, and post-incarceration.

from whom the individual makes a request. The protocols differ according to the nature of the request and the nature of the individuals involved. . . . The protocols may often involve the presentation of something. (p. 216)

Following the traditional protocol of entering into one's territory, gifts were prepared according to the traditional protocol of the Treaty 6 region where the interviews took place.

Informed through the traditional teachings I received from late Elder Sharron Proulx-Turner; each participant received gifts after an oral review of the consent forms (see Appendix C: Consent Form). Margaret Kovach (2009) described that cultural protocols must work together with ethical protocols; one cannot be present without the other (p. 127). As such, participants signed consent forms while receiving tobacco and gifts, which included a blanket and traditional medicines of sage, sweetgrass, and cedar for sharing the stories and knowledges with myself.

In preparation for the project, I harvested and prepared the traditional medicines according to my teachings as it was important to begin in a good way. Late Elder Sharron Proulx-Turner (2014) taught me that sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco are the four sacred medicines gifted by the creator for many Indigenous peoples to use on the Prairies (personal communication). The tobacco signified a formal agreement to move forward together, and it also opens a space to speak the truth (Saddleback, personal communication, May 4, 2018). I was taught that sage is a women's medicine used to remove negativity to release that which is troubling. While sweetgrass is considered men's medicine and is braided in three strands to represent the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual. It is used to balance but also to calm, whereas, cedar is used to clear one's mind. I gifted all four medicines to the women because I was taught that all four medicines were gifted by the creator and are to be used in maintaining balance and one's sense of self while smudging ensures that your prayers are carried up to creator (Proulx-

Turner, personal communication, 2014). The gifting process follows Jo-ann Archibald's (2008) storywork principle where the "learner must ask through protocol" to conduct ethical data collection (p. 37). Therefore, it was important to ensure that I engaged with participants through the protocol to deepen our connection and the understanding that we were moving forward together in a good way.

Semi-structured interview process. The research method employed in the storywork process included semi-structured open-ended questions. I sought to use "story as a knowledge-gathering method" (Kovach, 2009, p. 123). Storywork is akin to Margaret Kovach's conversational method where "an open-structured conversational method shows respect for the participant's story and allows research participants greater control over what they wish to share with respect to the research question" (2009, p. 124). This "enable[s] people to sit together and talk meaningfully about how their Indigenous knowledge could be effectively used for education . . . and to think about the possibilities for overcoming problems" (Archibald, 2008, p. 81). The questions were open-ended to allow participants to control the flow of conversation, while also examining the specific research questions. Questions were designed to examine the life history of the individual with a focus on sharing their experiences in Indigenous programming while incarcerated and its impact on their identity. Life history questioning was undertaken to examine how the participants constructed their notions of Indigeneity prior to incarceration. These questions allowed for a baseline understanding that prior to entering the healing lodge, as most of the women had an understanding of their own local cultural protocols and performances of Indigeneity pre-incarceration.

Three themes were used to categorize the interview guide: 1) identity pre-adult incarceration; 2) experiences while incarcerated; and 3) impacts on identity post-incarceration

(see Appendix B: Sample Interview Guide). The interview guide contained essential, extra, and probing questions (Berg and Lune, 2012, p. 120-121) that functioned as prompts to overcome nervousness. Each interview was audio recorded for accuracy and transcription purposes and lasted between 43 to 93 minutes. Participant names and other distinguishing markers such as home community were purposefully excluded providing anonymity and protecting the women's identity. Instead, participants are identified through a numbering system P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. Participants P1-P4 distinguished themselves as Indigenous, and their identities are further broken down as follows where P1 identifies as Métis, P2 and P4 identify as Saulteaux, and P3 identifies as First Nation while P5 is non-Indigenous and identifies as a “farm girl.” The names of CSC staff members, traditional knowledge keepers, and Elders are also withheld for privacy purposes.

Each participant was advised that EFry will only have access to the final reports unless otherwise specified by the participants. This is an important part of the relational accountability process as it provides a space of responsibility for the research and the participant. “Once individuals have agreed to share their story, the researcher’s responsibility is to ensure voice and representation” (Kovach, 2009, p. 99). As Shawn Wilson (2008) wrote, “while I may be the storyteller . . . the knowledge does not belong to me” (p. 121). Therefore, I am the steward of their narratives and it is up to the women to share their full narratives with who they wish. All transcripts were supplied back to the participants for their own purposes as well for this reason.

The methodological underpinnings of data collection followed Jo-ann Archibald’s storywork principles to examine the perceptions and knowledges of the participants. However, storywork principles do not allow for themes to emerge in a way that can be synthesized for policy development. When working across narratives and Indigenous cultures, it is important to not fall into the trappings of pan-Indigeneity this is where narrative inquiry analysis was

employed. As this research seeks to inform corrections policy where currently, policymakers hear many stories, but there appears to be little change, presenting this as a story would maintain the status quo. I was also “concerned with the creation of written texts that liberate authentic Aboriginal knowledges, voices, and experiences at individual and collective levels” (Absolon & Willet, 2004, p. 10). Therefore, it was determined that an alternate method of analysis be initiated to highlight the specific themes that resonated from the women’s narratives.

Data Analysis

In order to interpret the information across multiple stories, the data collected from the interviews were analyzed using narrative inquiry method (Cruikshank, 1990; Emden, 1998; Kovach, 2010; Taylor & Francis, 2013; Wells, 2011; Wilson, 2008). Narrative inquiry is a systematic exploration of a series of stories to highlight narrated life experiences as forms of discourse, from which we can learn about human knowledge and existence (Taylor & Francis, 2013). The analysis procedure for this research followed Caroline Emden’s (1998) process where:

1. Reading the full interview text several times within an extended timeframe (several weeks) to grasp its content.
2. Deleting all interviewer questions and comments from the full interview text.
3. Deleting all words that detract from the key idea of each sentence or group of sentences uttered by the respondent.
4. Reading the remaining text for sense.
5. Repeating steps three and four several times, until satisfied that all key ideas are retained, and extraneous content eliminated, returning to the full text as often as necessary for rechecking.

6. Identifying fragments of constituent themes (subplots) from the ideas within the text.
7. Moving fragments of themes together to create one coherent core story, or series of core stories.
8. Returning the core story to the respondent and asking, 'Does it ring true?' and, 'Do you wish to correct/develop/ delete any part?' (Emden, 1998, p. 35)

Once interview transcription was completed, I read the interview in its entirety numerous times over several weeks to understand its content. While reading, I continuously wrote memos in the margins. The memos were important as they were used to create cluster themes across the different narratives because:

All stories are composed in a context, replete with history and with culture. Within that context, certain stories may be favoured over others and will be told in ways congruent with the context. (Trahar, 2013, p. xi)

It was important to remember that while reading the narratives I continually checked the meaning as “it is situated or embedded within its own social, cultural, historical and political realities” (Kuokkanen, 2000, p. 424).

For the third phase I removed all interviewer commentary from the text so that only the participants' words remained. Caroline Emden (1998) outlines that once interviewer commentary is removed, then all words that do not contribute to the participant's main idea of the sentence be removed (p. 35). This allowed me to condense the text and centre the women's voices outside of my own. In essence, “I was capturing participants' stories through conversations and chose to relate these conversations in a condensed format yet staying as true to each story, to the voice, as possible” (Kovach, 2009, p. 52). Once all extraneous text was removed, I reviewed the text and

memos again to affirm that what I was seeing was reflected in the narratives on their own and not my words specifically within the interviews.

As I moved through the narratives repeatedly, I added to the memo themes that were being generated, linking memos across narratives to develop macro or core themes. The process of rereading both the text and memos was repeated: “until [I was] satisfied that all key ideas are retained, and extraneous content eliminated” (Emden, 1998, p. 35). “The procedure as it was carried out could be likened to ‘combing’ the data (my term) [sic], whereby data were concentrated (or ‘crystallised’) [sic] in such a way that no key meanings were lost” (Emden, 1996, p. 35). Five macro themes of loss, relationships with staff, access to ceremony, institutional culture, and continued practice post-release became apparent across participant’s narratives. Each condensed interview text contained headings that followed the outline of the interview guide (See Appendix B: Sample Interview Guide) to provide a framework for themes, allowing for each story to move from the past through to the present in a distilled format.

In analyzing each of the five condensed texts, every effort was made to look for commonalities across participants narratives (Atkinson, 2012, p. 38). Narrative inquiry provided a process for the themes to emerge from the data analysis and across the narratives, while remaining true to the personal voices of the women (Wells, 2011). Narrative inquiry analysis sought to draw out common experiences shared by Indigenous women who have been incarcerated in a federal healing lodge to develop a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) as to how the cultural programming may be positively or negatively impacting their identity. Narrative inquiry also assisted in bringing forward the stories of participants infusing the statistics with human experience.

Moving Forward - Knowledge Mobilization

Working directly with EFry's executive director, office manager, and receiving input from participants, a community knowledge mobilization component was drafted. As Rauna Kuokkanen (2000) contended: "we need to address and work both at the grass-roots level and in the academic world" (p. 420). As such, the community knowledge component extends beyond the written thesis and includes the creation of a formal report for dissemination by EFry. It was agreed upon by the women that EFry will be formally acknowledged and recognized with any dissemination of this research including conference presentations, reports or supplemental papers. The completed thesis will be delivered to the Saskatoon Tribal Council and the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, where a presentation of findings will be offered to the agencies if they wish. Both the Saskatoon Tribal Council and Métis Nation – Saskatchewan are political agencies that have a mandate of supporting their constituents within justice reform, and it was in agreement with EFry that they also be made aware of the research findings. The document will be sent digitally and in hardcopy to the Office of the Correctional Investigator, an ombudsman for federally sentenced individuals, and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Participants have expressed that there is a need to present the results to those within the system who have the power to create change specifically Mr. Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, and the Right Honorable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety. Overall, the women want the results to end up in the hands of those that can mobilize change.

Conclusion

This research focused on the personal narratives of four post-incarcerated Indigenous women. By providing a space to share their knowledge in the hopes of improving the future experiences of Indigenous women who enter into CSC controlled healing lodges, the women

have the opportunity to give back and help others. By following both a decolonial and Indigenous research framework, specific attention and detail were spent on the development of ethical relationships. This process was undertaken because “Indigenous research offers a much broader lens, and asks critical questions about knowledge production, generation, mobilization, and who really benefits from the research” (McGregor, 2018, p. 820). Indigenous research should also be decolonial when working within state structures because “decolonizing research analyzes power differences and is necessary because colonial influences are persistent and pervasive” (McGregor, 2018, p. 819). Therefore, the research paradigm was rooted in my traditional teachings and centred the Indigenous knowledges of participants to challenge the dominant discourse of corrections experiences in Canada. Employing Kathleen Absolon’s (2011) berry picking basket and Jo-ann Archibald’s (2008) basket metaphors, in my research process began with protocol and employed the Indigenous method of relational accountability to foster relationships through the 4R’s, ensuring the project moved forward ethically from the outset. The data was collected using Jo-ann Archibald’s (2008) storywork principles of “dialogic conversation” (Kovach, 2010, p. 40). Narrative inquiry data analysis was used to ensure that participant's voices and their Indigenous knowledges remained central. Execution of the work in a good way has provided the opportunity to continue working with and for EFry, supporting future partnerships.

Chapter 4: Lessons Learned from the Other

Stories play many roles in our lives. They can be wonderful tales that transport us away from reality, rekindle memories, delight, enlighten, offend, or wound. As Thomas King (2003) said, “stories are wonderful things. And they are dangerous” (p. 9). The stories that follow contain much-needed lessons for those that administer, develop, and design programming for Indigenous women moving through the Canadian federal corrections system. Change is not possible without retelling these stories; otherwise, the status quo in the carceral system will prevail. The goal of this research is to bridge the gap between narrative and policy, ensuring that the stories do not remain anecdotes; but affect meaningful and substantive change to benefit Indigenous women, their families, and their community.

The narratives brought together in this chapter demonstrate that Indigenous women continue to be targets of colonial erasure through forced removal and attempted assimilation by the carceral system seeking to rehabilitate them. While differences in their narratives exist, parallels such as the loss of a cultural teacher or mentor at a young age, the continued impacts of colonial policies like the residential school system as well as their struggles with identity and continued cultural practice post-release are undeniable. The women’s stories describe the struggles they endured pre, during, and post-incarceration, whereas the narratives also chronicle their resistance and survival despite the Canadian corrections system’s best effort to mould them through the settler-colonial gaze. It is here that the words of Thomas King (2003) are apt because as a researcher, “I tell the stories not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives” (p. 9). These stories will forever be a part of their lived experiences contributing to who they are as Indigenous women; having said that, they also want to be heard so the penal system can change for the better. One participant eloquently claimed, “[the Elder’s]

they're *so* humble, and they lived these long lives, but they were so full of stories. I want to be full of stories like this one day” (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2019). The women are already replete with stories and knowledge which have the ability to transform the system and impact the lives of Indigenous women who have been incarcerated. Their retelling provides a glimpse into their wisdom and expertise.

The chapter follows the flow of the interview guide, ensuring an uninterrupted fluidity to the women's accounts. Leroy Little Bear (2000) argued, “if everything is constantly moving and changing then one has to look at the whole to begin to see the patterns” (p. 77). Due to the continuous flux of the narratives, I intend to demonstrate the complexities of the women's lives as they manoeuvred into, through, and out of the Canadian carceral system. To acknowledge the patterns that emerged through the analysis and to have the narratives unfold, I begin with the participant's early memories regarding their involvement and connection to Indigenous culture and identity pre-adult incarceration. Early memories necessitate the understanding on how the women conceptualized their encounters while at the *Okimaw Ohci* Healing Lodge on the Nekaneet First Nation in southern Saskatchewan providing the foundation for subsequent analysis. Most importantly, this is done because Indigenous women cannot be separated from historical and contemporary colonial realities, as their realities frame the explicit and tacit dispossession from their communities and the accompanying violence (Razack, 2015, p. 127). Disconnecting the women's histories from their carceral programming experiences would conceal connections to settler colonialism and reinforce dominant colonial narratives.

Loss was a core theme stemming from participants early memories; each participant discussed facing a significant loss of a relationship through death, divorce, or removal from their family or community at a young age. Incorporating early memories demonstrates that

participants' narratives are deeply connected to their current lived realities. Without the women's early memories, it would be difficult to discern emergent themes stemming from their encounters while incarcerated in the federal corrections system. The end of the early memory section includes accounts about participants transfer process as this experience had a marked impact on the women's experiences while at the lodge. Next, I focus on the women's encounters with culture and programming while at the healing lodge. Three macro themes emerged from their accounts including relationships with staff, access to ceremony, and institutional culture; all of which challenged their Indigeneity and led them to question their identity as Métis, Sauteaux, or First Nations women. Finally, I discuss the challenges and concerns the women face in relation to cultural practice and their identity as an Indigenous woman upon release into the community.

Early Memories and Identity Pre-Adult Incarceration

A distinct pattern emerged across the women's early memory narratives as each participant identified experiencing a deep loss which fragmented their lives. The women encountered two distinct forms of loss including 1) separation of their families due to colonial legacies such as the residential school system and the child welfare system, as well as 2) the dissolution of a meaningful relationship due to the departure of a close mentor and teacher. The losses directly impacted their familial relationships at young or pivotal ages, influencing their sense of self and identity as young Indigenous women.

Loss through colonial legacies. Colonial policies such as residential school and foster care systems have impacted the identities of Indigenous peoples, as they have and continue to be removed and placed into state care (Bourassa et al., 2009; Lawrence, 2000; Monchalin, 2016; NWAC, 2017; Proulx-Turner, 2018). Two participants (P1, P2) mentioned the intergenerational impacts caused by the residential school legacy on their familial relationships when growing up;

while, three women (P1, P2, P3) focused on negative experiences based upon their removal into foster care. Thus, their narratives demonstrate that the women's lives cannot be extrapolated at a particular juncture of time; rather they need to be understood holistically within historical and contemporary existence because colonial legacies continue to have a marked impact on Indigenous families influencing the lived realities of Indigenous women moving through the carceral system in Canada.

Speaking to the continued legacy residential schools have on many Indigenous families, P1 and P2 described how their identity and relationships with their caregivers were negatively impacted. P1 spoke about the shame family members felt regarding their Indigeneity due to negative stereotypes and direct experiences with the residential school system.

I guess I should say that my stepdad is a white Indian. He's a residential school survivor. His family, like his parents, were residential school survivors. He never wanted to be like that. Never wanted to be labelled, so he worked really hard, but he was an alcoholic. Never attended ceremonies . . . He just does not want to be categorized at all with any of that living, so that added more confusion to my upbringing too. . . .—so they would have like an assembly where people would come in and jig, and I always wanted to learn how to do that. I want to know how to do that. Like there was [sic] kids doing it to get five bucks, but I never was taught how to actually do it myself. I still don't to this day. [chuckles]. Or like sash making. We had teachers coming in to do that with us as little kids, but then it was always just a one-day thing. So then if I'd go home and ask about it: Oh, what the hell do you need to know about that for?! Oh, it doesn't matter anyways. . . . So, mostly from my grandma for that and then just catching snippets from other people around me, but those always sticking but never knowing how I could find out more. But I was always told that: You're Métis. So, I knew I was Métis, but it was never explained what that actually was or what that stood for. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

There were impacts on P1's ability to form a distinctly Métis identity because her stepfather purposefully discounted his Indigenous identity. While she understood herself to be Métis, she was consequentially told her "Métisness" was inessential, thus creating conflict about who she was and her Indigenous identity. At 12 years old, after the passing of her grandmother, all ties to

her Métis identity and community were severed, leading to the inability for her to unpack what being Métis meant as she grew up. For P1, residential schools meant that her stepfather avoided traditional teachings to conform to white mainstream settler society. The result was that her stepfather distanced himself and his immediate family from their Indigenous identity, which resulted in identity confusion for her.

P2 spoke about how residential schools impacted both her grandmother and grandfather's ability to express emotion and demonstrate affection, which ultimately impacted her sense of self-growing up as she struggled to connect with her true self and to comprehend her place within the community.

My grandmother was very Catholic, and my grandfather, who I took as my dad, was very traditional. So, I mean we would go to ceremonies regularly. I grew up going to Sundances, um, cooking for sweets, sweats, and stuff like that. Round dances, pow wows. We'd travel a lot. But also, with my kookoo, she knew the traditional way, right, where like you know go to the Sundance and what the woman's part was to do and all that kind of stuff. But also, she was really connected to the church, so she more or less made me go to the church too, right. . . . At the same time of being like traditional, there's a lot of identity crisis because my kookoo wouldn't let me go to the reserve school. . . . So, like growing up during the week, I'd stay with my kookoo, which is my grandma. Then during the weekend when my dad wasn't at work, I would go over to the farm and stay there or whatever. Both of them went to residential school, so it was kind of like more or less money than affection; you know what I mean. Like they didn't know how to show love, say I love you. I didn't hear my dad say he loved me till I was like 12 years old and my kookoo was very abusive mentally, spiritually, emotional—like every kind of abuse. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Due to their experiences in the residential school system, her grandparents became disconnected from the ability to demonstrate love. While we did not delve into the abuse she may have suffered, she did speak freely about her grandmother's conversion to Catholicism and the impact this had on her ability to connect to her culture as P2 was forced to practice and participate in Catholic ceremonies leading to identity confusion and conflict. The result is that P2 felt she had a foot in both worlds, which further impacted her sense of self as a young Indigenous woman.

Even though her foster-father/grandfather attended residential school, he maintained his traditional culture and practices allowing P2 to engage in traditional Saulteaux ceremonies and culture, thus permitting her to feel whole. The love she felt from her grandfather was grounding and enabled her to form a distinct Saulteaux identity as a young woman. Due to the family's direct experiences with the residential school system, P2 suffered intergenerational impacts as she tried to create a sense of self while growing up. However, family mentors who retained their connection with traditional Saulteaux teachings are what helped her solidify an identity as an Indigenous woman.

Loss through dislocation. Several participants mentioned the dissolution of familial relationships in their formative years, which played a crucial role in their dislocation from the community. Participants had varying levels of disturbance from their home communities, often becoming disconnected or removed after the loss of a loved one. Some women also disclosed their engagement with the child welfare or foster care system as directly impacting their involvement and connection with their home communities.

P3 spoke about her lack of community connection and how this impacted her Indigenous identity. With no relationship to her home community, she was unsure of who she was as a First Nations woman; this was compounded by the loss of both parents while simultaneously being removed from her community.

So, I didn't have any connections to [home community] after my parents passed away when I was 8. I just kind of like moved to this small town, and that's kind of where I grew up. Honestly, growing up, I wasn't really connected to any extended family. The only people I were connected with were [sic] my younger siblings and like my aunt and my uncle. Growing up away from my community or away from my family, I really had no sense of identity. Especially as a First Nations girl or like a woman, I really didn't know who I was for a long time. (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Growing up, the only recollections she had about culture were based on experiences she had while attending high school through morning smudges and circles. She did not have any specific Saulteaux teachings that she could recall. The dislocation from her community and family had a profound impact on her sense of self as an Indigenous person growing up as she felt disconnected and lost.

Another participant, P2 experienced feelings of dislocation when she attended school in a white rural community as her grandmother did not want her attending school in her home community on reserve. P2 attended a non-Indigenous school where she was subject to significant amounts of racism. The result being she spoke directly to the crisis she felt over who she was as an Indigenous woman.

At the same time of being like traditional, there's a lot of identity crisis because my kookoo wouldn't let me go to the reserve school. She made me go to the white school, and there was 4 of us natives there in this whole school. So, I got bullied a lot for being brown. I got called a brownie. I got called a beaner. I got called a honkie lover and stuff like that, for going to that school. From the natives, I'd be getting called a honkie lover, right. I was getting bullied I guess from both races. That kind of made me feel like okay, should I be more white? Should I act more white? [sic] Should I, you know what I mean? And then when I would go home, I wasn't able to associate with people on the rez because they didn't want me too. I always had mixed emotions about the whole thing, but yet when I would be with my dad and going to ceremonies, I was always so proud just so at peace and so humble about what I was doing and where I was and knowing that I was meant to be there. But at the same time, I felt like, should I even be you know what I mean? Should I feel proud? Yeah, kind of mixed emotions all around. But I really felt more or less connected to my traditional side. You just feel more whole. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

P2's narrative aptly demonstrates the impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous identity, as she questioned her sense of belonging and became uncertain on how to navigate in colonized spaces such as the education system. Ultimately, she felt isolated from both worlds, impacting her sense of self and her identity as a young Saulteaux woman.

For the Indigenous women, while dislocation manifested in different ways, each of them was alienated or ostracized from their community resulting in a physical disconnect which led them to turn away from their Indigeneity. Concurrently, the women were unable to contextualize the impacts that early childhood encounters had on their identity formation as Indigenous youth. Upon personal reflection, the women have come to understand the violence and influence that these early experiences have had in their lives, which lead to their involvement with the Canadian carceral system. As Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) noted, “understandings and insights also result from lived experiences and critical reflections on those experiences” (p. 42). The women were able to contextualize the impacts of early memories and events on the formation of their identity as Indigenous women employing a self-reflection process. The reflection process allowed participants to scrutinize their time at the healing lodge and acknowledge the subsequent impacts on their sense of self post-release.

Loss of a mentor and dissolution of self. Identity construction and cultural formation begin during early childhood through associations and mentorship; as our behaviours “are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example” (Bandura, 1977, p. 5). Some of our first memories are of close family members and these interactions contribute to the construction of who we are as individuals in relation to our relational networks. As Bandura (1977) asserted, “the people with whom one regularly associates delimit the types of behaviour that one will repeatedly observe and hence learn” (p. 6). Therefore, the family plays an integral role in the generation of one’s sense of self. All four Indigenous participants recounted how the loss of a family member impacted their ability to connect with or continue connecting with traditional teachings, Indigenous culture, their home communities as well as Indigeneity.

Three of the four Indigenous participants (P1, P3, P4) described this loss occurring between the ages of 8-12.

P1 identified how once she lost her grandmother, she disengaged from traditional Métis teachings and culture. As a result, the relationship to her home community was severed.

Every summer I would go and stay with my grandma, and she would teach me her ways, you know making quilts, Métis farming. And so that's where my teachings of what I did get from the Métis and Aboriginals were only from my grandma. She spoke Michif. So, I could understand it up until I was about 12, and then I lost *all* connection after she passed away. . . . Right away I knew from my childhood that there was something different. . . . So, I was forced on the Catholic religion but never understood that but then would go to my grandma's in [home community] and would watch her with her medicines, eatin' [sic] gophers and talking in her language. So, I knew there was a pull that I felt more comfortable with her. But in the city, I never got that, so I was always confused. . . . My grandma, she was a medicine keeper, teacher. She was the midwife. My grandpa before his passing, he did all of the funerals out of the home. He was the mortician kind of guy. So, she delivered the babies; he dealt with the deceased. She was really connected with Batoche days and was really big on hosting and attending all Métis ceremonies like the jigging, the fiddling and that was always playing in her background, the fiddle music and I never learned about Louis Riel through schools. I learned through her because she had magazines and storybooks and pictures of him there. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

P1's understanding of being 'Métis' came through her grandmother's teachings and by observing her grandmother in her home community. After her death, P1 lost all connection to her Indigenous community and subsequently, what it meant to be a Métis woman, leading to confusion about her sense of self as a young Métis woman. Dislocation from her Indigenous community meant P1 disassociated from what it meant to be a Métis woman resulting in her having to renegotiate her identity as a youth with no support, guidance, or connection.

Correspondingly, P3 expressed how her disassociation was due to her not having a complex cultural understanding before the loss of her parents at a young age.

I kind of knew about it [spiritual practices like smudge and others] because I knew my dad was kind of spiritual before he passed away when I was 8. So, I knew

about it, but I didn't have an understanding about it. It was not there like just not present in my life until I went to high school that offered cultural things like that. That's where I kinda learned how to smudge or go to a sweat and just different medicines and stuff. . . . —it was just basically their teachings, and I didn't question it. And I didn't compare it to anyone else cause I didn't really have anything to compare it to. So, it was just their teachings that I stuck with, and I didn't question. (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Throughout our dialogue, P3 indicated that self-reflection on early memories enabled her to understand that some form of traditional practice was, in fact, present within her family, but ultimately, her age impacted her ability to comprehend it fully.

I still had no idea [who I was as a First Nations girl/woman]. Even now I don't even know Saulteaux woman like who is that? Like what is that? I still don't really know. I don't identify as a Saulteaux woman or like a Cree woman. I do [identify as] First Nations. Status, I don't know whatever [sic]. (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Suffering such a deep loss at a young age impacted her sense of self as an Indigenous woman subsequently, this has carried forward into her adulthood post-incarceration.

For P4, the loss of primary mentors, knowledge keepers, and cultural teachers was felt not just by her individually but collectively within her whole community. She described how her entire community felt a considerable sense of loss as the individuals were highly respected for their traditional knowledge.

I wasn't really grown up [sic] after my grandparents died when I was really young, like all three of them passed in the same timeframe, we didn't really have that traditional connection, so we kind of just lost— . . . Kind of like all the teachings just kind of faded away. . . . Kind of like within the whole community too. There was like no ceremonies [sic]. I don't know. I just feel like after all of the older Elders started passing on no one really took on the role to continue anything and they just kind of left it. Just like nothing. (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Before her grandparent's deaths, P4 had a complex understanding of traditional Saulteaux women's roles and was also actively engaged in ceremonies held in her home community. While we did not discuss the circumstances leading to such a significant loss for her and the

community, it is apparent that there was a pronounced impact on her as well as her identity as a Saukteaux woman. As no one in the community stepped in or could step into the role of teacher, knowledge keeper, or mentor, P4 indicated the community suspended cultural practice impacting her ability to connect to as well as practice her culture. She understood who she was as a young, Saukteaux woman; however, she disassociated from cultural practice as a result.

For P2, the loss occurred after she had a complex understanding of her identity as an Indigenous woman. P2 lost her grandfather, who was her primary cultural teacher/mentor as well as caregiver, and just prior, to his passing, she had a miscarriage.

So, I mean we would go to ceremonies regularly. I grew up going to Sundances, um, cooking for sweats, and stuff like that. Round dances, pow wows. We'd travel a lot. . . . My dad was really traditional. I wouldn't say he was a medicine man or healer, but I mean he could give Indian names when people needed an Indian name they would come, and they would see him. . . . I mean like we've always been really really going down the red path. . . . While I was like drinking and using and stuff like that, I was disconnected. I was really disconnected. I would still go to like pow wow's and stuff like that, but I wasn't dancing no more. I was right up until maybe I lost my baby; I was pretty connected to it. . . . I just turned my back on everything and everyone. Everybody that wanted to help me. Everybody that cared for me loved me: I just I didn't care. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Before losing her baby and then her grandfather, P2 had a complex understanding of her culture and had received teachings related to traditional Saukteaux women's roles and ceremonial practice. She was deeply connected culturally, often participating in local ceremonies and travelling as a participant on the pow-wow circuit. After her profound experiences of loss, P2 severed connections to her culture by no longer participating in ceremony or dancing as she tried to come to terms with her grief. She isolated herself from her culture, as well as those around her.

Overall, each participant that experienced the loss of a close family member who was also their primary model, mentor, knowledge keeper, or cultural teacher developed a profound

detachment from their culture. However, those that experienced this traumatic loss at a younger age seemed to enter prolonged periods of uncertainty about who they were or were supposed to be as young Indigenous women. The women then internalized the feelings of precariousness and isolated themselves from the community as well as their culture.

Arriving at the healing lodge - transfer process is broken down. I feel it would be remiss not to discuss how the women made their way to the healing lodge as these incidents appeared to have had a marked impact on their encounters while at the lodge. As a researcher, I sought common themes, yet I was also “confronted with individual differences” (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 5), allowing me to focus on the similarities as well as the differences to illustrate the impact that the transfer process had on the individual and subsequently, their experiences at the lodge. The women from this study were primarily transferred to the healing lodge through the CSC’s regular system transfer process, which comprises both voluntary and involuntary mechanisms. The themes that resonated for the women as a result of the transport process include 1) positive and negative experiences during transport, and 2) involuntary transfers.

Positive and negative experiences during transport. Through self-reflection, the women were able to provide context vis-à-vis their experiences at the healing lodge as it associates to the transport process. The women’s reflections facilitated my ability to connect their early memories of cultural identity to experiences stemming from their tenure at the lodge and beyond post-release into the community. It also provided an opportunity to bridge participants’ narratives to reports arising from the OCI regarding discrepancies in the CSC’s transfer process once again supporting the need to continue bringing forward women’s voices.

While three of the women had negative transfer encounters, one participant had a positive transport experience. P3 felt humanized during the transfer process as guards sought ways to

foster a relationship with her and the other inmate in the vehicle, essentially, leading to a markedly more positive encounter.

I met with a community parole officer and then she just asked me if I would be interested in the healing lodge and I said, yes. And she checked off a little box and like that was it. And next thing I know I was being transferred there. So, I wasn't expecting to go there... It took me like a month to get transferred. It [the transfer process] was actually surprising! *Like me and another girl, we got transferred together, and it was super weird cause we weren't handcuffed or treated like inmates. We drove in an actual vehicle. They got us Tim Horton's. It was a really good experience. We just drove in a vehicle up to the healing lodge.* (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

The transfer combined with her early memories of not having any specific cultural teachings or identity before arriving at the lodge came to shape P3's willingness to engage in programming without questioning or challenging, as her account is markedly more positive than other participants' narratives.

Despite positive experiences that can occur during the transfer process, the majority of women interviewed felt that the transfer experience perpetuated violence and colonial understandings of Indigenous women as immoral savages. The women did not feel they were given an opportunity to demonstrate the change they wished to see in their lives, which was why some women were transferred to the healing lodge in the first place. Unlike P3's experience in a standard car, the remaining women (P1, P2, P4) were transferred via armoured vehicle or as P2 aptly put it a "rattle shack" where they were "squished" (personal communication, December 4, 2018). Each of the women recalled their transfer experience but for markedly different reasons. The enduring memory for P1 was the veil of secrecy, which resulted in a discorded sense of self. As quoted earlier, P2 felt discomfort and subsequently dehumanized throughout the process, while P4 began to question who she was due to the level of security administered by transport guards directed only at her compared to the other women in the vehicle.

For P1, the transport was cloaked in secrecy because the entire carceral system labelled her a high-risk security problem due to her previous affiliations and relationships to high profiled gang members combined with the nature of her crime.

So, [name of institution] refused to have me because we had gang member girls. So, some of the girls that got arrested with us were in [name of institution] already. And I wasn't allowed to go up there because I was going to cause havoc and more distress and safety at [name of institution]. . . . So, they sent me to the healing lodge. . . . And at the healing lodge, in those times, I was like okay, I think I want to change. I need help; this is not how I want to live. Thank you—well, everything happens for a reason. All my life, I've always thought, everything happens for a reason. The people are for a reason. Everything's for a reason. So, I got to the healing lodge and—as soon as you walk in you know there's, there's just that energy there and I felt good, and I wanted to, but I had no idea how to be. Right?. . . . I secretly got transferred in an armoured van when I got transferred out because they honestly thought I was going to get broken out and escape. I was treated like I was coming straight from Mexico, right. So, I had that in my head. So, do I keep playing this? Like how badass do I have to be? Do I break down the—I don't want to live like this no more. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

The judicial system, as well as CSC's risk assessment processes, characterized P1 as a violent high-security high-risk inmate to be managed accordingly. Essentially, the system utilized the language of safety and risk “to mask their [the carceral systems] oppressive behaviour” (LaRocque, 2010, p. 37). By couching state violence in terms of security and risk, the carceral system excuses the perpetual violence directed at Indigenous women with little regard to the impact upon the transferee which potentially enhances negative behaviours to survive and therefore their ‘rehabilitation.’

Being the only woman in the transport vehicle in full wrist and leg restraints dehumanized P4 as the other inmates were free to move about the vehicle for the duration of the trip to southern Saskatchewan. “It [the transport] was *okay*. I was the only one who was shackled and cuffed, and like all the girls were just kind of feeling sorry for me. It was one of those vans like the metal boxes in the back” (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018). The use of

excessive force and authority targeting P4 during transfer impacted her conduct while at the institution, the consequence of which was that she chose to remain silent and abide by institutional rules.

I just kind of never brought up you know my teachings or something or like—Cause even the language is similar too so I'd like speak that. . . . I kind of just leaned towards like their ways and stuff towards the end, you know what I mean? Cause there was so much similar [about asking questions regarding Saulteaux culture]. That's kind of how it was in the beginning [I'm just going to put my head down and get through]. (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Involuntary transfers. Indigenous offenders are over-represented in involuntary transfers between institutions (OCI, 2018, p. 62) demonstrating the carceral systems over-exertion of control, authority, and dominance on Indigenous peoples upon their admission to the institution. In 2017-18, Indigenous peoples comprised 33.4% of CSC's involuntary transfers (OCI, 2018, p. 62)²⁵. Of the four Indigenous women who participated in this research project, two of them were transferred involuntarily to the healing lodge (P1, P4). As mentioned, one transfer was cloaked in secrecy; while another was misguided by staff when they told her she was being transferred to another institution altogether. It was only upon their arrival that they discovered they were in fact at the healing lodge.

I didn't know about the healing lodge until they took me there. I didn't even know I was going there. I was in [name of remand facility]. Some of the staff told me I was going to [name of alternate institution], so that's where I thought I was going. [chuckles]. . . . I just [my intake] did it over the phone. They just said you're going this day. Have your stuff ready, and they dropped me off. [chuckles]. It was—I guess a little overwhelming cause I didn't know where I was going. I didn't know what it would be like. I didn't even know they had a healing lodge at Maple Creek. (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

²⁵ Through the course of this research, I was unable to locate statistics specific to the involuntary transfer of Indigenous women. All that was available at the time of writing were overall population statistics. However, the overall statistics are still of use for comparative purposes in this research.

The women who were transferred involuntarily had little choice but to follow the rules and programming at the lodge or “get shipped out” (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018). Forced program participation has the consequence of making women question the validity of their traditional teachings and discourages them from positively engaging in the programming itself. Therefore, the two women began to question the worth and value of their pre-existing traditional knowledge and hence their identity as Indigenous women.

Women disconnected from their Indigeneity due to varying levels of loss and dislocation they experienced at young ages. The women’s early memories provide the necessary context to understand the continued assault on Indigenous women through settler-colonial denial and erasure of their specific Indigenous cultures within the carceral system in Canada. Their initial encounters with the carceral system through the transport process formed a foundation for how they viewed the system impacting their experiences on the inside. Those who had a markedly positive experience tended to view the institution more positively; while those who initially had negative interactions had markedly different encounters and chose particular pathways to survive within the carceral setting to keep their sense of self intact. The women chose to disconnect or compartmentalize their Indigeneity as a mechanism of self-protection both before and during their tenure at the healing lodge. As has been demonstrated, Indigenous women continue to be impacted by settler colonialism at alarming rates, thus leading to their engagement with the penal system.

Healing Lodge Encounters

Each of the women interviewed were housed at the *Okimaw Ohci* Healing Lodge located on the Nekaneet First Nation in southern Saskatchewan. Every woman expressed both positive and negative sentiments connected to the Aboriginal programming as well as their relationships

with staff. While most of the women felt they took something positive away from their residence at the lodge, i.e., reconnecting with culture and being given traditional teachings, they also felt that there were aspects which contributed negatively to their perceptions of Indigeneity. The negative experiences often obstructed the women's ability to heal and move forward with a renewed sense of Indigenous self. Some participants felt obstructed from connecting with who they are as Métis, Sauteaux, or First Nations women; often having more questions about their connections to their specific Indigenous identity upon release than when they arrived at the lodge. Their narratives demonstrate a complex web of connections, where three primary themes emerged: 1) relationships with staff, 2) access to ceremony, and 3) institutional culture at the lodge.

Relationships with staff. The most prevalent theme was relationships between the women and various staff members, including behavioural counsellors, management, program facilitators, and Elders at the healing lodge. In analyzing the women's narratives, it became apparent that three sub-themes were prevalent including a) negative judgement and labelling by staff members, b) issues related to Elders and their treatment, and c) poor engagement and moral of CSC staff members. While some CSC staff had a positive impact on the women's sense of self and their ability to engage in the programming in meaningful ways, the negative interactions far outweighed positive experiences influencing their journeys of healing.

Judgement and labelling. The 2007 report conducted by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) "*Federally sentenced aboriginal women offenders: An issue paper,*" focused on the multivariate issues Indigenous women face due to prolonged dislocation from their families and communities. NWAC (2007) found that "in addition to the systemic discrimination, Aboriginal women may also experience discrimination within the correctional

facilities from staff’ (p. 3). Discrimination, most often in forms of racism, were apparent across the women’s narratives in this study. Indigenous women were racialized and discriminated against to varying degrees by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff members at the lodge. However, staff discrimination regarding their Indigeneity had the most significant impact. Participants described how the carceral system and staff at the lodge labelled them based on their crimes as well as their Indigenous identities, leading the women to at times, believe in their immorality as an Indigenous woman. The labels impacted the women’s active participation in Aboriginal programming because they did not feel they belonged or were being ostracized as different.

And then I had the staff fuckin’ [sic] hated me. They didn’t even want me there, you know because now I am a high profile, I’m a high risk to everybody there. . . . So, they had all these labels on me before I even knew what I was doing there or how I was supposed to be acting in a jail or who the fuck I was in the jail! They were already labelling me, and there was just no getting out of that. . . . So then identifying yourself again, starting with the program. I’m a Métis woman of five children, four children. I’m from [location] so that’s how you would introduce yourself. But then getting into the actual programming so identifying your crime and what led you there. . . . So, because I was in for [offenses related to incarceration] I was automatically a prostitute. I was automatically rebellious because I identified as Métis, I was a rebellious aboriginal girl that was on the streets and chose to be on the streets, you know! So, I was labelled right from the beginning when I started my programming. . . . My job at the healing lodge, I was not allowed to work with anybody because they didn’t want me recruiting or causing problems, so I was on maintenance, and I was the only maintenance person. I worked alone. When I wasn’t in programming, I worked alone. I shovelled, I pushed snow, I cut grass, I weed whacked, I painted, all by myself. I went into the bush and collected firewood all by myself. So, for me, I wasn’t allowed to be around people, I wasn’t allowed to socialize nicely, or I wasn’t being taught how to function without you know the gangs. I don’t know if that makes any sense or not, but they just didn’t give me any opportunity they didn’t trust me out there. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

The institution labelled P1 due to the nature of her crime, but she also felt labelled for being Métis. The institution and the actors within saw her as an uncontrollable threat who was there to

play the system, rather than starting anew through a journey of healing. Rather than building meaningful connections with P1, she was viewed by staff through three correctional paradigms including 1) her carceral file, 2) her identity as an Indigenous inmate, and 3) her identification as a member of a low-level crime organization where the penal system often tethers Indigenous women's status in these spaces to prostitution (see Henry, forthcoming). Fundamentally, as staff formed judgements based on Indigenous identity, this influenced how some women engaged in the programming offered at the lodge.

Consequently, P2 described the disdain that particular staff members have towards Indigenous women not from the territory at the institution.

Our ALO, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, she was in two maybe three on a lucky week she would be in the office. Like and very like high and mighty like oh, this is who I am. . . . Yeah and fuckin' high and mighty man [sic]. Holy smokers. You'd think she'd be humble with that kind of position; you know what I mean. Like oh well you should know this. . . . Like if it wasn't her way, it wasn't the right way. Oh, our reserve is the only place that has Sundances for three days. I'm like okay, then why is my family having a Sundance, right now back home, for three days? You know what I mean?! Like it—just very condescending. That totally choked me that time when she laughed at how I was raised and what I believe in. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018).

Staff members who behaved in a condescending manner obstructed the participant's ability to form relationships with others, influencing her ability to engage in meaningful ways with lodge programming.

. . . you have instructors that are judgemental and unrelatable like—it's just a whole other story over there. . . . but I just feel like—they just pass you through. Like they don't take the time to care—some of them, right. It's just like stereotypical—like stereotype right. Everybody is just okay you're a criminal so I'm gonna [sic] treat you like a criminal and that's what you are, right. And it's like no. I mean yeah, I fucked up in my life. It doesn't mean that is who I am altogether, you know what I mean, but that's all that they focus on. That's all that they see. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

P2 expressed how she went along with program requirements or directives from staff to avoid repercussions for being considered non-compliant. P2 made a conscious choice to set aside her

traditional teachings in order to manoeuvre the institution and make the time ‘manageable’ based on her previous interactions with certain staff members regarding her cultural identity.

. . . the way that I was raised Saulteaux women don’t sweat. We don’t. We’re not allowed to sweat, right. Cree’s like or other tribes sweat, right. But the way that my dad raised me was that we don’t sweat because when we have our moon time that’s when our body is cleansing. So, what we did is we would cook for the men, we would sit outside, we would bring them water, you know what I mean? Take care of them, but we wouldn’t be able to participate in the sweat. Doesn’t mean that our prayers aren’t getting answered, you know what I mean, we would pray from the outside. That’s how we did it, right. Over here all the women sweat which is like oh! I was like okay well I mean I never seen a woman sweat, can I just come down there and just watch and you know see how it goes, right. There’s a lodge, a winter lodge or whatever, where they sweat in a building, so I just went in there, and I sat outside, and I listened to them. Then [Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) Name] was like next sweat you better be in there. I was like oh, I don’t sweat. She’s ah hahaha, you will be just wait. She’s like don’t say you don’t sweat. And then I was like don’t laugh at what my beliefs are, right like that’s fuckin’ rude [sic]. I didn’t say anything, and I was like well I’m not gonna [sic] sweat. It’s just the way that I was raised. She’s like you’ll see, you’ll see, you’ll be sweating. She’s just really condescending about other beliefs, right. They didn’t make me go in. They made me carry the rocks though, and I told them well I’m not supposed to do this, right. And they were like you carry the rocks. *If you’re gonna [sic] sit here, you better do this.* [ALO Name]. So, I carried the rocks cause I didn’t want to get in shit, right.” (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

P2 disregarded her traditional Saulteaux teachings for fear of reprisal from particular staff members based on judgement and negative interactions she had with them previously. In the eyes of the Aboriginal liaison officer, P2’s understanding of what it meant to be a Saulteaux woman was to be ridiculed, and it was illogical compared to the teachings offered at the lodge. As such, the women chose who to form relationships with based on the willingness of staff members to openly engage in meaningful ways, including culture during their tenure at the lodge.

Corrections institutions physically displace Indigenous women forcing them to adopt new ways of being and doing according to what the system dictates as acceptable. As such, “the

colonized are removed from their cultural context through enslavement or transplantation, involves the abandonment of culture and the adoption of new ways of speaking, behaving, and reasoning” (Ross, 1998, p. 12). Throughout this research, some participants indicated that they adopted the Indigenous cultural teachings at the institution in part to manoeuvre the system without repercussions. Their adoption of new ways of being became a conscious decision to make the time easier; however, it negatively impacted their notions of self, yet the primary reason Aboriginal programming and healing lodges were created is to help Indigenous inmates reconnect with Indigenous cultural knowledges and teachings. Despite protecting their identity, the women also felt there was a marked consequence on their sense of self, forcing them to question who they were as an Indigenous woman.

She made me feel like I was doing something wrong by not sweating. Like I wasn't whole. I wasn't using all of my culture kind of thing. She made me second guess my own way that I was raised. Like and these are my beliefs that were passed on by my dad, you know what I mean. I'll totally respect everything that he taught me. But yeah it made me like—and then it made me like then okay what's really the difference between Saulteaux and Cree, and you know what I mean? Like I mean we're all the same kind of people. I don't get it like you believe this, I believe that. Okay, whatever, right? We're still—yeah—I don't know.— Like if it wasn't her way, it wasn't the right way. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

P2 aptly describes the shame that became associated with her traditional teachings and protocols; consequently, she questioned the knowledge gained from her home community. The shame she felt caused her to doubt both her cultural practice and identity as a Saulteaux woman because the norms of the institution made her feel inferior which forced her to conform and give the appearance that she supported pan-Indigenous forms of programming.

To avoid preconceived judgement, some participants found it easier to assimilate to the norms of the institution (Foucault, 1995; Garland, 1990; Goffman, 1961) or “play the game” (Bourdieu, 1977). P4 fittingly describes her choice to embrace the local protocols and teachings

at the lodge while compartmentalizing her Saulteaux identity to ease tensions with staff at the institution.

I just kind of never brought up you know my teachings or something or like— Cause even the language is similar too so I'd like speak that. I didn't bring it up because I don't know I just didn't want to listen to saying oh, no that ain't right. You know what I mean?! . . . I kind of just took on like the Cree ways and I even started speaking it and like you know kind of following that way a lot more. I don't know I guess it was just cause I was in that environment; you know what I mean. (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018).

P4 consciously chose to remain silent about cultural differences between her traditional Saulteaux teachings and the teachings she obtained at the lodge. Similar to P4's experience, some women purposefully chose to assimilate to institutional norms to avoid judgement and make their time easier. As David Garland (1990) asserted, "the inmate may embrace the prison subculture in order to avoid becoming a slave of the official system and to maintain a measure of autonomy and self-respect in the face of its disciplinary machine" (p. 173). For P4, specifically, this meant she learned not to mention her individual Saulteaux culture in part to preserve her sense of self but to remain autonomous while maneuvering the institution. The result being that she separated her Indigeneity to succumb to the institution's subcultural form of Indigeneity defined through a colonial lens. The purposeful segmentation of P4's Indigenous identity speaks directly to the power that the institution wields to authoritatively assimilate Indigenous women into 'civilized' or 'proper Indians' according to the norms and standards of the penitentiary as it continues to "kill the Indian" through carceral programming.

Meaningful engagement with elders. Some authors have noted that the role of Indigenous cultural teachings as healing has been lost due to CSC's control of what Aboriginal programming is or should be (Monchalin, 2016; Monture-Angus, 1999; Monture, 2009; NWAC, 2017; OCI, 2012). CSC's Aboriginal cultural programming utilizes Elders or knowledge keepers

to affirm that they are providing proper and adequate Indigenous cultural protocols to inmates. However, the women's narratives, stemming from this research, revealed that mandated Aboriginal programming was designed, developed, and facilitated epistemologically through a western European lens. For appearance's sake, Elders were present (though not in all cases); however, their presence appeared to be superficial or like a checkbox for the institution.

And like for our elders that we have like you know oh there's always the kokum's here. Go talk to the kokums. Go talk to the kokums. Okay, so half the time the kokum's aren't even there. Right like there's been so much circles [sic] that one time I remember three weeks in a row, we had our morning circle with no kokum. So, what we did in that time is one of the girls would just say the morning prayer. Usually, we would only have the one kokum, and you could tell her herself is like overwhelmed cause she has her life outside of work, right?. . . Um—and yeah, it's a two-week program and most of the days was like half a—half a day— half a day for two weeks. For the engagement, yes, there was an elder there. For grief and loss, there wasn't an elder there. I feel like out of all the programs that's the program that needs an elder, right? Cause it's like the most deepest hardest program ever [sic] and you know what I mean, *you're not going to have an elder?! (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)*

Some women noted that Elders appeared to have to be there, yet they were forbidden from participating in meaningful ways. As some participants explained, if an Elder did try to engage, they were silenced by the program facilitator to comply with institutional timing and knowledge.

I definitely think that there are times when the girls need them [the elder's] more than we do [elder's helpers]. Them just sitting there [sic] you know just listening cause in my experience they didn't do much talking or if they did they would get cut off. You know what I mean? The facilitator would be like, oh no, you can't. We need time to do this and stuff like that. I felt like you know just let them talk. If we have to go through lunch, let's just go through lunch to finish what we have to do, you know. My group would, the one I was in program with probably would. (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Some women described how particular staff members, such as program facilitators, would interrupt and subsequently silence the Elders during sessions, reinforcing that the Elder was to be seen but not heard. Healing is a journey that should not be bound by western constructs of time. As Leroy Little Bear (2000) claimed, “interrelationships between all entities are of paramount importance space is a more important referent than time” (p. 77). Binding the lodge through

western conceptions of time defies the intent and purpose of Aboriginal programming to help individuals heal and move forward; rather it demonstrates that the institution privileges a western hierarchical model of knowledge and treatment.

The presence of an Elder provides the illusion of safety which allows participants to engage and communicate; however, not allowing Elder's to contribute in meaningful ways (i.e. seeing their value and time with inmates within allotted time slots much like a doctor's appointment) truly demonstrates the lack of value CSC places on traditional Indigenous knowledge. Within the institution, "an elaborate division of labour has grown up in which specialized agencies and functionaries carve up the various tasks of penological work, often coming into conflict with one another in the process" (Garland, 1990, p. 182). Due to carceral tasks being meted out in a particular manner, staff facilitators essentially have more say than Elders working within the institution. Some of the women shared narratives where CSC program facilitators were outwardly disrespectful towards Elders during program facilitation.

Overall, Elders were viewed positively by the women in this research. They provided mentorship and positive role modelling in ways that were relatable to the women. Each of the women spoke about the ease and comfort they felt with the Elders as opposed to CSC staff and program facilitators.

In the circles, the sharing circles there, I loved the elders. . . . You know, and they just had that pass the butter voice, and they were just calm, and I watched how they smudged, and I watched how you know they would hold the stick like the sharing rock or something, right? (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

In the morning, we would have a circle, and we would smudge, and a kokum would give us teachings or whatever about like this and that. Just like talk to us, I guess. I had a couple one on ones with the kokums, if you requested it. So that was good. It was just nice to sit with them like one on one and just to vent to them and just get a prayer from them. (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Despite the importance that Elders provided to the women's healing, they observed that Elders' roles were diminished. P4 described how "*They [administrative staff] make decisions, and they don't even let the elders know. You know what I mean?!*" (personal communication, December 5, 2018). Participants perceived that having more Elder's in the institution would be beneficial as they recounted significant wait times to gain one on one time with them. However, if a woman happened to be in the role of Elder helper, they would have unrestricted access to the Elders at the institution so long as they were not in programming. If women were not fortunate enough to be an Elder helper, then access was strictly limited to the Elder's availability at any given time. Therefore, Elder's helpers had additional exposure and opportunities to heal, whereas women who had greater needs but were not in a helper role had fewer opportunities to engage and subsequently heal.

Job-fit and job-roles. The majority of participants felt that the CSC lacks quality staff and training for particular positions associated to Aboriginal programming as well as working with Indigenous peoples. The lack of quality staff inhibited the women's ability to trust and engage in meaningful ways with the program. Some staff were knowledgeable, accessible, and relatable for the women, creating spaces of safety; however, most staff gave the appearance that it was simply a job remaining closed off to inmates.

But the majority of those workers—and you know what you could tell which workers are there because they care, and which workers are there because they want a paycheck. You know what I mean? Those are the ones that won't interact. That'll just you know come by, look at you and walk away. Right? There's some that that [sic] actually care, and they'll come and sit with you, and they'll talk, and they'll open up to you so that you'll want to open up to them. Like there's some really amazing people there. (P2, 2018, p. 7)

. . .they call them sisters and brothers vs. your CW's and stuff like that. So, you could go to call, and everyone was Indigenous. The mix of—you've got Caucasian and Native staff there so you could get you know what I mean. You could tell who was more—okay, for example, one of my workers was a white gal,

and she was more of a rodeo gal let's just put it that way, right. Healing lodge got a lot of money to spend here [chuckles], right. But another white girl that worked there, she wore skirts every day, and she used to circle all of us and would come around, and we could smudge every day. So, you could see that diversity of where everyone was on a ladder so you kind of learned who was there for a paycheck, who wasn't there, you know what I mean, and it was alright. (P5, personal communication, November 30, 2018)

While some staff members understood the importance of Indigenous knowledges and teachings to heal, other staff members felt it was just a job, and culture was inconsequential to the process of healing. The women felt that these staff members were there to serve a single purpose regardless of the cultural mandate at the institution. Often interactions with staff members, who did not engage culturally, impacted a participant's ability to connect in meaningful ways. As Bandura (1977) contended "models who possess interesting and winsome qualities are sought out, whereas those who lack pleasing characteristics tend to be ignored or rejected, even though they may excel in other ways" (p. 7). Therefore, if staff members had no traditional background, were not spiritual, not cultural, or relatable, then the women were unable to develop relationships, ultimately, influencing their experience at the lodge.

There's been so many times where I feel, where I told staff I feel I should be progressing here. I feel like I should feel like I'm healing. I feel like I should feel a lot more better [sic] about myself. Like you know address my issues, how do I address my issues? Who do I talk to around here? Like oh, go talk to this counsellor. Okay, this counsellor has 50 other women she has to talk to! When does she have time for me, right? And then when I do, I felt like she couldn't relate on that same basis, she wasn't spiritual or traditional herself, right. She didn't know what sage is, or smudge is, right. And it's like okay, you're working in a healing lodge like?! She didn't know how to light the sage; you know what I mean. Just the stuff like that. . . . I don't know just I don't know some of the staff are cool though. Those are the ones that would be like "okay, so how did you do it back home?" You know what I mean? And they'd be like okay. The understanding and you know want to hear how I did it back home right. Um compared to the ones where it's like yeah it had to be like that, or it wasn't right. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

As expressed by the women, the intention and cultural knowledge of CSC staff had significant implications on their ability to partake in programming and focus on moving forward through healing.

Some of them were just kind of like oh, no you gotta do it this way or you can't do it. [sic] You know what I mean?. . . I don't know its just kind of like it's this way and no other way you know. You could definitely see like the conflict with like the staff and the practices that they teach. Cause you know they teach us to smudge and we could smudge in our houses, and the staff would come through do their rounds, and they would be commenting on how it smells so bad and asking them what they're burning. You know what I mean?! (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Although the women perceived not everyone could be an expert in cultural knowledge; it is the sincerity, humility, and willingness of CSC staff to engage in traditional forms of culture which promoted the importance of Indigenous knowledges in healing that was most important to them. Foucault (1995) asserted, "the power to punish is not essentially different from that of curing or educating" (p. 303). Staff at the lodge, who chose to not engage with Indigenous knowledge and culture demonstrated to the women subtle forms of racism while privileging the superiority of Euro-Canadian thoughts. According to the women, staff who lacked the respect to discern teachings as knowledge were there to 'put in their own time' undertaking little connection to support the women on their healing journey. "Much social learning occurs on the basis of casual or studied observation of exemplary models" (Bandura, 1977, p. 10). As such, staff members putting in time modelled to the women that Indigenous culture and consequently, relational networks are irrelevant compared to western European notions of self-preservation and rules of conduct creating sites of conflict about their Indigeneity.

Access to ceremony limits the healing journey. Like other themes, each participant described their experiences with ceremony while at the institution, either positively or negatively. The women all participated in various ceremonies during their tenure at the lodge,

mostly comprised of smudging, circles, and sweats. The most common micro themes that arose across narratives were limited opportunities to participate in ceremony and the lack of transparency in both the participant selection process as well as ceremonial helper roles.

Limiting ceremonial participation. Despite the lodge's focus to provide opportunities for healing through local Indigenous ceremony, the women described that a gap exists due to limited opportunities available to inmates. Specifically, ceremonies located in the community were restricted to allow only program participants, thus severing the relationship and connections to traditional healing for the women.

Well, there definitely could have been more ceremonies or more opportunities to go to ceremonies. Like I know there is ceremonies on the reserve, but only a select few get to go. Apparently, it's anonymous so—I think if there was more like—I don't know they blamed it on a lot of like volunteers and higher up people why more girls couldn't go. But I feel like if more women could go then like that would have been a lot better. . . . One thing I would like the change about the lodge is just having more opportunities to do cultural things like more sweats or having more staff to take out to community cultural events. Basically, like whenever they wanted to put on a sweat lodge, they would put on a sweat lodge. So, I know there were a couple of months where there was no sweat lodge at all. So, maybe even bringing in people that are willing to do more sweat lodges or calling people in to do more sweat lodges. That would be good. Or just having different yeah just more volunteers to go cause I know in Nekaneet they put on cultural events and stuff but yeah just more staff to bring us there or bring the girls there. Select people would go, I guess. And I feel like that's not fair. People who want to go *should* be able to go. That's why they go to the healing lodge, right? To learn about culture. A lot of it was like community. (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Often it was stated that women could not attend ceremonies due to institutional rules governed by upper management, or external policy and decision-makers. These outside actors decided who had earned the right to take part based on their CSC file and risk assessment as opposed to their need for cultural support and healing.

The only time they would have sweats mainly is when the horse program was on. And they didn't like all the other girls coming to the sweat so they took the sweats

offsite, where a lot of the girls can't go, you know? And they just took the program participants. It didn't sit right with me because you know I think you're supposed to let whoever wants to you know come and stuff like that. I was talking to the Elder about that too, and she said that they shouldn't be doing that, to take it away from the other girls. You know what I mean? It's so limited. (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Ceremonies were restricted to specific institutional program participants, and such exclusionary practices are counter to Indigenous ceremonial teachings which focus on healing. Traditionally, healing ceremonies were open to those wanting, willing, and ready to engage in the journey. However, this does not mean that everyone has access to the same knowledge; rather, specific healing ceremonies are to be inclusive to all (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Consequently, when women questioned Elders about the practice of exclusion, the Elders expressed that there should be no restrictions on ceremonial attendance, rather ceremonies should be open and available to all women residing at the lodge. By moving ceremonies off of the *Okimaw Ohci* site to other locations within the Nekaneet First Nation, the CSC exerts its institutional power and control through purposefully excluding women due to their risk, which detaches participants from the ability to develop and strengthen relationships both to the land as well as relational networks in the broader Indigenous community.

Lack of transparency. Traditionally, community knowledge transpired when individuals worked on themselves while learning from Elders. Knowledge from Elders and access to ceremonies was not an exclusionary practice; rather, it was an open process validated through the ceremony. The women perceived a lack of transparency in the institution's selection process to attend ceremonies and healing opportunities as CSC controls program and ceremonial access at the lodge. By determining who can and cannot have access to healing ceremonies with little input from Elders and knowledge keepers in the community, CSC controls who they believe is ready to begin their healing. Removing Elders, Indigenous leaders, and knowledge keepers from

the selection process maintain patterns of paternalistic control, demonstrating that colonial institutions know what is best for Indigenous peoples, even within traditional Indigenous ceremonial spaces. The women felt that CSC staff maintained a private list that was used to ‘shoulder tap’ candidates into roles offered within the institution. All participants identified that this should be transparent as often the women most in need are the ones excluded from the selection process.

And I guess you can only participate if you’re sitting in like the inner circle in the morning circles, you know what I mean?!. . . . They just pick girls that are spare to the lodge at the time at the day [to help with sweats]. I think it would be easier for them to have more people that are there to help and not just like 2 or 3 of them. Cause there are times when we would be in program that we couldn’t be there, and we would have to do our programming first. I didn’t agree with it cause like I was saying if we need to take care of the Elders, then the Elders should come first you know. I said it. I voiced it to a few people, but I just got in trouble. Yeah, I don’t know I think there was a lot of favouritism within the residents and who staff wants to do what. You know! (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

At the lodge, women in special support type roles such as Elder’s helpers and *oskâpêwis* (Elder helper), are not always available due to the privileging of CSC program requirements over Aboriginal programming which resulted in instances where no support persons were available. As such, participants felt more women should be brought into support type roles throughout the institution to ensure that the needs of cultural programming could be met without disruption or disrespect. Ultimately, they felt that cultural programming should be afforded the same privilege and support as regular correctional programming.

Overall, the women described a lack of transparency in the selection process for ceremonies and supplemental roles such as Elder’s helpers within the institution. The women discerned that CSC staff at the lodge decide who gets to participate or move into particular roles, ignoring traditional protocols that ceremonies be open to those looking to move forward on a

healing path. Even though the women engaged with this research were in special support roles, at one point during their tenure at the lodge, they observed that CSC controls ‘who is ready’ based on CSC perceptions and not those of Elders, knowledge keepers, or ceremonial leaders impeding the women’s ability to engage with the program actively. Thus, women who may benefit the most from healing ceremonies or who are in places of conflict with the institution are excluded from ceremonial opportunities to learn and heal differing from known Indigenous cultural teachings where ceremony helps in healing and where Elder’s observe when an individual is ready to pass down knowledge. Therefore, CSC Aboriginal programming and ceremonies are explicitly controlled through a western European lens of therapy rather than engaging through performative reconnection via relationships that traditional Indigenous ceremonies are built upon.

Institutional culture of control - reimagining culture through a western lens.

Centralizing CSC protocols of security and risk while adhering to western notions of time reinforces the institutions sustained control of Indigenous peoples through western patrilineal mechanisms. Persistent colonial control challenged the women’s previous understandings of culture, thus impacting their concepts of Indigeneity while they sought to manoeuvre through the CSC’s Aboriginal programming.

It’s all Aboriginal based at the healing lodge, so you know you have your smudging. You have the way you go about opening it and like starting your circle or your programming. So that was okay. . . . It’s all Aboriginal teachings. All Aboriginal teachings on there from their land and so and that was another thing, so I questioned them: So, I’m Métis. I believe I am Cree Métis and how do your teachings—are they the same of what I’m supposed to? And they were like no, but because you’re here this is what you’re going to learn, and this is how you’re going to learn it. I asked if we could have a Métis person come in. Could we do something Métis? No, this is Aboriginal healing lodge, so when you go in, you have to agree to their teachings, to their tribe, to their way of doing things and you have to participate 100%. . . . So, you were forced to follow their ways, but if you don’t, you’re not participating. And you’re written up and getting thrown out of

program and if you are kicked out of program and that goes against your parole, and then they don't support you. So, I came in as not knowing who the fuck I was but then always introducing myself as I'm a Métis woman, but now I'm doing these things. Don't get me wrong; the teachings are great; I love them. I love the feeling of being in a ceremony, but I'm still not feeling whole because that's not me. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

Then there's uncle [Name] that's um—but see like I always felt like he never liked me. He would never talk to me. There was always something there; you know what I mean. I would try and be respectful “hi uncle. Like how was your day?” “Oh good.” You know really nose in the air. Like just his wife worked there too, and I don't know. Yeah. They made me feel like—I feel like they felt their way was superior to every other way and that going there, you had to follow that way. I mean, I don't know it was really—I don't want to say it was a waste of time, but it was like you just have to do it cause you have to do it, right. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

The women perceived the existence of a cultural hierarchy at the institution where there was only one authentic way to practice. As Martel et al. (2011) noted “Aboriginal culture is taken to be a bounded, unified set of customs, habits, values and beliefs” (p. 245). The women discerned that their ways of knowing and being were demeaned, which led them to question their Indigenous identities and teachings; demonstrating the power CSC staff held to dictate and shape what appropriate Indigenous culture looks like.

Due to the culture of control and dominance, the CSC's institutional culture created barriers for the women to heal.

Things that I wasn't even doing or think of doing or anything I was being accused of them. So that would set me back even more. I would be doing really, really good. I would be getting no write ups. I would be you know complying. I would be fully listening. I would be 100% engaged. I was manipulating the system. I didn't learn anything or do anything while I was at the healing lodge at all. I put in a voluntary transfer because I was in such a rut that nobody believed I was changing. I didn't want to be a gang member no more. I didn't want to come out and hurt society. I didn't want to come out and hurt my children. I didn't want to come out and be that person that was hurting other people. I didn't want to do that anymore. I wanted to get my education. I was denied school. I could not participate in school at the healing lodge because I was manipulating. . . . So, I never grew, but I just knew I didn't want to be that person no more and every time

I reached out nobody gave me answers because I was not worth it because I was just going to get out and I was going to go back to doing the same thing. Because people like me don't change. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

I just figured like I felt at that time that it [the lodge] would just get me right back into my culture. My traditional way, obviously something that I steered away from and that I needed in my life. So, I figured that would be like the most perfect place to go. They call it a healing lodge, but, in all honesty, I don't see where the healing is happening. There's been so many times where I feel, where I told staff I feel I should be progressing here. I feel like I should feel like I'm healing. I feel like I should feel a lot more better [sic] about myself. Like you know address my issues, how do I address my issues? Who do I talk to around here?. . . . And then you know to get a one on one! I waited four weeks for a one on one with her, and it was like it's like okay, I'm having this issue right now. I'm upset right now. You know in 4 weeks I'm gonna [sic] feel different about the whole thing. I don't know what kind of decision will be made by the four weeks time. It was just ridiculous. (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Participants felt that there was disconnect between the lodge's intended purpose and their experiences within. What is apparent is that to do well in the institution, the women had to conform or 'play the game' (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, rather than focusing on their healing journey, the women sought ways to manoeuvre the institution. The result being that post-release the women continued to question their identity as an Indigenous woman, which lead to further cultural confusion and loss of Indigeneity.

Cultural Connections Post-Incarceration

The women experienced isolation from their communities, families, relational and support networks upon their transfer to the institution. The remote location, combined with multivariate levels of isolation due to being incarcerated, contributed to the women fostering relational networks with Elders, select staff members, as well as other inmates while at the lodge. The women shared positive sentiments regarding their tenure and the cultural teachings they received at the lodge, yet they also experienced disillusionment, frustration, and confusion about how to move forward with this new knowledge and reconnect with their cultures given their new

realities outside of the institution. The women expressed struggling with how to maintain their cultural practice upon release into the community. Participants felt frustrated about not receiving guidance on cultural protocols and practice vis-à-vis knowledge transfer, creating a site of conflict and ultimately greater confusion about their Indigeneity as an Indigenous woman compounded by issues related to cultural appropriation.

I have so many questions about me, but they won't answer them because I need to follow their ways while I am there. I can find my ways once I leave. So, I participated in the Sun Dance. I participated in fasting. It had nothing to do with me as a Métis woman. I never got to go to Louis Riel Day. I didn't get to go to Batoche days. I didn't get to participate. I asked if I could go to Batoche days as an ETA/UTA and it was denied because it's not part of the *Okimaw Ohci* Aboriginal programs, but I was allowed to go fast for four days and dance in a lodge that had nothing to do with me, but it had to do with my programming. So, then I really got confused I'm like okay so—but then I was doing really well. I was participating in every ceremony. I was the *oskâpêwis*, but then I was getting backlash. Oh, why does the white girl get to do that? Why does she get to fuckin do that? You know? So, then I'm like feeling bad. Should I even be doing this? And I don't have the staff backing me up. So, I basically went through the healing lodge not getting answer as to who I was myself, besides sitting in an office with the assistant warden. Just sitting there. . . . So, when I got out, I'm like okay, well I guess I'll figure it out on my own, right?. . . . But then I think — I still struggle with who I am as a woman with my identity. . . . Is it wrong for me to practice Aboriginal teachings even though I'm Métis? Am I pissing the creator off? You know I've never been answered that; I just go with it because it feels alright to do that. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

A program's success needs to focus on a participant's ability to apply what they have learned to their everyday lived realities in positive and strengthening ways. However, the women's narratives regarding their experiences post-incarceration, challenge the impacts of CSC's Aboriginal programming and can be interpreted by some that western norms and values continue to usurp Indigenous culture in the ability to provide support for building moral and civil citizens. Again, as seen by the women, Indigenous perspectives are rarely taken into account when framing Aboriginal programming, which has resulted in the women struggling to maintain a cultural connection upon their release, further impacting their understandings of Indigeneity.

Several women mentioned the lack of community they encountered upon release from the institution. Community for the women was defined as a relational network that provided support, guidance, and continued mentorship. The women felt that at the lodge, they had a built-in network of support comprised of workers, knowledge keepers, Elders, and other women whom they could relate to and seek guidance. By virtue of the lodge's location on the Nekaneet First Nation, some women were able to connect locally by participating in ceremonies held throughout the community even if these opportunities were restricted by CSC rules. However, upon release, the women had to find Elders, knowledge holders, support persons and mechanisms on their own. Due to staff restrictions and CSC conditions the majority of women were not returned to their home community. Some of the women were released to a community they were completely unfamiliar with; therefore, no pre-existing relational network was present. The women expressed how overwhelming it was to acclimate to life on the outside, let alone find the necessary supports, resources, and connections to continue healing through culture. Some of the women also mentioned concerns regarding personal safety in ceremonial spaces with people you have no connection to which are outside of a relational network and community you are familiar with. The women felt that the lack of community in part impacted their ability to continue engaging with and through their culture upon their release from the institution.

Some women noted that transitional housing provided less support than the healing lodge.

That is the thing; I felt like when I got out, I just kinda lost everything [sic] and um just kind of lost myself to the city life or like I don't know trying to be a student, or I don't know. I didn't leave the small towns until like now basically. Just like dealing with everyday life, I guess. I guess that's kind of where I put my spirituality on the back burner. And like right now I'm trying to reconnect with that. . . . It's just a matter of me utilizing my resources, I guess. Just getting my spirituality back on track. . . . So, it's something I definitely need to put in my routine. Get in the routine of like smudging, praying. . . You just gotta [sic]—if you want it, then go get it. (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Um—I met with an elder last week for a quick little bit, but I mean here we go, we’re having the same problem with not enough elders, right. Like not um—I mean ever since the first week that I’ve been out; I’ve been asking my PO can I meet with an Elder? Can I meet with the Elder? “Oh, well she’s too busy. Are you sure you want to be on her caseload?” Like yeah, I’m fuckin sure I want to be on her caseload. Like, come on, man!. . . I don’t feel like anything there [at the transition house] is cultural or traditional; you know what I mean?. . . Yeah, there’s nothing really. We have a spiritual room, and that’s it, right. But like I don’t see one First Nation person there besides the inmates or besides the residents, right?! I don’t know if we call them kokum or what but the Elder comes in like I said I’ve only seen her once in the past couple of weeks—I’ve been there a month. . . . And like I said I wanted to see—I wanted to see an Elder from the moment that I got here right. “Do you really want to? She has a full caseload.” Like that shouldn’t be a question, it should be: “Okay. Yes, I’ll put you on the list right now.” Right? And then when I did get a chance to meet with her, I had to go somewhere because she just stopped by, right. There wasn’t like a set appointment or whatever and I had to go to work that day. So, I mean I met with her for like a quick 10 minutes or whatever and I’ve been struggling too. Like I’m just—my—I don’t know I’m just butting heads with my PO so much and it’s just like ugh.” (P2, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Based on the women’s narratives, the carceral system cannot sufficiently support women in the development of positive relationships and facilitate meaningful connections with local Indigenous communities’ post-release. The women felt they lacked the necessary relational network to sustain their continued journey of healing and cultural engagement.

The shortfall of network opportunities while incarcerated and post-release was brought forward in Michele Mann’s 2009 report to the Office of the Correctional Investigator. Mann (2009) states that “overall, there remains a shortage of links to the Aboriginal community for offenders when they are released from institutions to help them settle and re-engage as mandated by the Continuum of Care” (p. 15). The shortage of relationships to the community holds true ten years later and demonstrates that the women’s “narratives continue to address important questions during a period of industrial and government expansion and social upheaval” (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 339). For women released from a healing lodge, there appears to be no

prevailing relationship much less correspondence with the local Indigenous community to maintain their healing path and continued cultural engagement.

Most of the women indicated that their day to day cultural practice was done on an individual level, often incorporating smudge and prayer. Beyond their individual practice, the women indicated there were barriers, and they had been unable to engage in the local community.

Throughout the day, I try to stay in the present. Stay in the present mind, stay focused, stay grounded. Not to worry about the past, not to worry about tomorrow just to stay present. At work, I will smudge. I will light smudge if somebody comes in and its always good thoughts, bring good thoughts on. And at home, we smudge at night before we go to bed. We will use sweetgrass when we are really having a troubling time, or you know when I got the boys because the sage is more of a woman's side. But like when the boys are really wanting to engage, we'll light sweetgrass. I haven't been to a sweat since I've been home. (P1, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

I definitely know I want to go to another sweat. So — I'm hoping sometime in December if there's a sweat lodge being offered, I would want to go. And I know there's round dances and stuff so maybe going to one of those would be good. I'm talking to the Elder so just staying connected with her. That'll help. I don't think I ever will [reconnect with home community]. Just not a very good place over there. And that's okay. It's not really my home so. So that gives me the opportunity of making my own like to whatever community I want. (P3, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

I guess just like the smudging every day, and you know little daily prayer in the morning and stuff like that. That's the thing that I've been doing. I find it's kind of hard for me to do something, cause normally I would smudge in my house or smudge in my room and it would be good, but we can't smudge in our rooms. We have to go down to a different room downstairs. I like to go to sweats and ceremonies and stuff, but I just don't know the access, and you don't just like doing it on the outside. Cause you don't even know the Elder who is conducting them, and you know. But [at the transition house] they just say oh, you have to go look on the board over here. (P4, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

All the women spoke directly to the lack of relationship to the local community upon their release. The women felt there was no relational network where they could be introduced to Elder's, knowledge keepers, or ceremonial leaders to continue their journey of transformation

and healing outside of the healing lodge. The CSC has a limited number of Elder's in their employ, who often carry heavy caseloads and have restricted amounts of time available for persons released from the institution. However, the CSC also does not appear to have an established relational network with local Indigenous communities to provide continued access to ceremony or traditional teachings upon an individual's release. Therefore, women post-release from a healing lodge must rely on third-party organizations or even their peers in transition housing, both of which fall outside of the system, to facilitate introductions and to gain access to ceremonial opportunities in the local community. As such, significant barriers surrounding access to ceremony and ultimately, healing exist for women who have no or very limited relational networks as they transition upon their release. The women also discussed how the lack of community connection impacted their willingness to participate in local ceremony due to concerns regarding personal and cultural safety when leaders and participants are unfamiliar in ceremonial spaces.

The majority of the woman interviewed described the lack of support and resources available to them upon release from the healing lodge impacting their ability to continue on a path of healing. They felt they had to fight for themselves. Most of the women were not released directly into their home community; rather, they transferred to a halfway house remaining under CSC control. As such, some participants discussed how difficult it was for them to practice culturally while under CSC mandated supervision by way of house rules. House rules dictate that the women are not allowed to engage in certain cultural practices such as smudging privately, rather they are forced to practice their culture according to the rules of the space in which they reside through the dominance of CSC norms and values. Therefore, post-release the women are still not able to engage with their culture without being subject to the control of the institution.

Conclusion

In all, while the women did take some positives away from their experiences at the healing lodge, it also left them confused about who they are as a Métis, Saulteaux, or First Nations woman. They felt that the lodge was more about following the rules of the institution than it was about Indigenous healing, making it appear that the institution uses an add and stir method to incorporate Indigenous culture into CSC programming. Elders were at times perceived as a checkbox, only there to open and close circles during program sessions. If Elders did try to engage in any meaningful way, the Elder was often shut down by program facilitators to ensure punctual program completion according to western notions of time. Silencing Elder's violates traditional protocols demonstrating to women that the Elder, their knowledge, and life experience is less valuable serving to devalue traditional Indigenous teachings and culture while putting western European values at the top of the hierarchy. This value hierarchy continues beyond the walls of the institution and into spaces where the women are released, demonstrating that adhering to the rules is more important than practicing and connecting through culture. Therefore, Indigenous women, post-release into the community, continue to struggle with maintaining their cultural connections due to CSC's culture of control and the absence of relationships to the local Indigenous community. Essentially, the CSC continues to lack sufficient resources and relational networks to support women on their continued pathways of healing as they transition to life outside the institution, ultimately, impeding their ability to engage fully in cultural practice making the women question the validity of their Indigeneity.

Chapter 5: Where We Have Come from to Move Forward

This research sought to create a space for Indigenous women to reflect on their experiences while housed in *Okimaw Ohci* healing lodge, and how CSC controlled Aboriginal programming impacted their understandings of their specific Indigenous culture and Indigeneity. It sought to re-empower the women to be a force for change based on their lived realities and knowledges of surviving the system. As such, it became paramount to include the women's early memories to ensure I was able to contextualize the understandings about their Indigeneity throughout this process. I realized that I could not compartmentalize the women's narratives; otherwise I would be segmenting their realities reinforcing continued colonial processes to silence the Indigenous voice. In analyzing the women's narratives, I came to understand that the Indigenous women who participated continue to suffer from colonial legacies impacting their ability to connect with and practice their cultures learned at young ages.

Not all Indigenous women identified with the cultural teachings offered at the *Okimaw Ohci* healing lodge on the Nekaneet First Nation in southern Saskatchewan. The mandated cultural teachings, which were controlled by the CSCS, led the women to have conflicting ideas about their notions of culture and identity. The culture of the institution forced the women to question their Indigeneity, which impacted their ability to engage with the programming as well as particular staff members in meaningful ways. Participants felt there was only one form of acceptable Indigenous culture allowed at the institution, and all other forms were demeaned and judged as inferior. This CSC pan-Indigenous view forced the women to conform to the norms of the institution or face the consequences for non-compliance within the system negatively impacting parole eligibility. Participants did note that they welcomed the presence of Elders and it was regarded as positive because the women found the Elders relatable and open to forming

relationships, compared to other staff members at the institution. However, institutional rules usurped traditional knowledges, teachings, and protocols, including the role of Elders, demonstrating how the institution privileges western European norms and values while devaluing the culture it is trying to incorporate. Participants felt the institution held the power about who could and could not engage in ceremony, ignoring the crucial role Elders and knowledge keepers have in the selection of participants, violating traditional ceremonial protocols. The women felt that only those who were in specific programs or specifically selected by CSC staff could participate in community cultural events, and therefore to be able to attend they had to 'play the game' (Bourdieu, 1977).

Upon release, participants noted that the carceral system continues to lack relational networks into local Indigenous communities' impacting the women's ability to continue forward on a path of healing. The lack of connection to community forces the women to rely on third-party organizations and peers that they met while incarcerated to forge these connections on their behalf. Subsequently, the carceral system continues to exert control over Indigenous women's lives upon their release, impacting how they can practice and connect with their culture as often women are not released into their home communities. During this research and in analyzing the women's narratives, the carceral system demonstrated that it continues to employ paternalistic settler-colonial logic, where it knows what is best for Indigenous peoples through its design, delivery, and administration of cultural programming in *Okimaw Ohci*. Ultimately, the programming offered at the healing lodge continues to attempt to assimilate Indigenous women through palatable forms of Indigenous culture as seen through the settler-colonial gaze.

This chapter provides an overview of the recommendation's that the women expressed could improve Aboriginal programming and support Indigenous women moving through the

carceral system in Canada. It is important to move research such as this forward and in the spirit of reciprocity to ensure we continually circle back to include the voices of Indigenous women. I speak to potential research trajectories this current project could take; followed by the limitations of undertaking such a project to complete an MA. Finally, I end by discussing how to move the research forward and subsequent forms the project could take.

Wisdom from the Perspective of the Women - Recommendations for the Lodge

After our dialogues about their experiences pre, during, and post-incarceration, the women expressed that they wanted their words to matter. They wanted their narratives to enlighten people in positions of power about the truth of state-controlled Indigenous cultural programming and its impacts on an Indigenous woman's identity. As Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) states, "remembering the stories is important ... to help one continue in a healthy way" (p. 27). For the women to move forward in a good way, ensuring their stories are heard became a key consideration during knowledge mobilization and translation. As such, this project will put forward the top three recommendations the women expressed would better support Indigenous women while incarcerated. The "understandings and insights also result from lived experiences and critical reflections on those experiences" (Archibald, 2008, p. 42). The women want their reflections to inform the current administration about the realities of their program encounters. Each of the women wanted presentations of the data collected to those who have the power to change the system such as the Minister of Public Safety, the Office of the Correctional Investigator, and the warden of the healing lodge.

Recommendation one: pause to listen and hear the stories. The women spoke to the need for those who work in the institution to get to know the individual not just apply a label or check a box. They felt that the institution and its staff need to understand the complexities of the

women's lives, which led to their incarceration, before recommending programming to an individual rather than simply relying on the individual's state created carceral files. By listening to the stories, the needs of the individual can be met, not just the needs of the system. Different experiences can make it difficult to connect to the material and unpack in the group setting; as a result, some participants may choose to disengage. The women indicated that program content should be diverse as each person's experience is unique and different regardless of the similarities. Without program diversity, some women may not relate to the content and disengage from the process, which impacts their ability to move forward on a path of healing. Diversity will also help to meet the specific needs of the individuals creating a more holistic approach to healing and justice. Timing and access to appropriate programming and support matters to all of the participants as at the institution, there is no way to deal with issues in situ. Therefore, timely access to supports and services is key to helping the women as they try to move forward.

Recommendation two: diversify programming, staff, and Elders. Women who are not from the territory where the institution is housed or who have different teachings may not identify with the teachings being provided. The lack of diversity and funneling or flattening of Indigenous culture as the same for all negatively impacts some women resulting in disengagement with the program. For some, pan-Indigenous programming causes identity fragmentation based on personal understandings of being Indigenous. Because the majority of Indigenous inmates are housed within Prairie institutions, and all federal women's healing lodges are located here, there is a lack of diversity and teachings available thus sustaining a pan-Indigenous approach that supports settler-colonial logic where Indigenous peoples are seen as the same and have the same histories. The lack of recognizing diversity negates the importance of

Indigenous knowledges, teachings, and protocols, while cultural understandings of self vary needing to be acknowledged as well as honoured for healing to occur. It needs to be noted that if a participant does not engage in the teachings at the lodge or question the teachings, then they could be documented as noncompliant, impacting future programming as well as parole eligibility. As incarceration is already a difficult time for the women, if they are not able to identify with the teachings that they are told “are Indigenous teachings” only adds to making the experience at the lodge more negative. The women want to ensure that the programming is layered with multiple perspectives or at the very least tailored to the individual while taking into account the women’s unique histories. To accomplish this, the institution should bring in other Elders as not all women are from the local territory and may experience disconnect from their cultural values and teachings leading them to compartmentalize their identity as an Indigenous woman while at the lodge. For those that do not have a complex understanding of culture before entering the carceral system, diversification will provide them with opportunities to connect with their culture to unpack the colonial histories and experiences that may be unique to the individual leading to greater healing moving forward.

Recommendation three: eliminate involuntary transfers. If the numbers at the lodge match those found through this research project, then roughly 50% of the women residing at the lodge may be involuntary transferred to the lodge. This means that half of the women at the healing lodge are there against their wishes and are forced to participate in cultural programming they may not identify with while there. Involuntary transfers significantly influence the dynamic of programming as well as the overall culture of the institution, and this impacts the experience of women who have chosen to be there and are willing to engage through a healing path actively. Therefore, the institution should ensure that only those who want to be at the lodge and have

expressly submitted a request to be there while committing to and ready to engage in cultural programming through the elimination of involuntary system transfers to the lodge. It is because of these issues that more research and information be gathered on involuntary experiences so as to better understand how and why they are used, specifically when moving women to healing lodges without their knowledge of where they are going.

Moving Forward - Other Potential and Limitations

Potentials in research. While this research sought to create a space for Indigenous women to open up about their experiences to analyze the impacts of CSC's Aboriginal cultural programming on their identities, there are ways that this research could be pushed forward to obtain a deeper understanding. This section will look at ways in which the project could expand or spaces that it could move into to understand the women's experiences in alternate forms. One aspect of interest would be to ask the women about intergenerational rates of incarceration. The purpose being to see if there is a correlation between multiple generations and the impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous women's identities and how healing lodges impacted their healing journeys. It would also provide an opportunity to gain knowledge about the women's family members' understandings around Indigeneity as well as cultural engagement or practice.

A second area of focus would be that of same-sex relationships and sexual fluidity once inside of a federal corrections institution. As identity construction is multifaceted, including an analysis of this sort would be interesting to see if traditional notions of gender and sexuality would have a significant impact on an individual's sense of self. Subsequent to this, understanding the impacts of a shifting sexual identity on an Indigenous women's identity post-release would also be useful. As the women participate in ceremony while being housed at the lodge, it would be beneficial to understand how CSC's rules around security and risk then impact

ceremonial spaces and as a result the women's healing pathway. Within the current project, CSC rules and regulations trump traditional Indigenous protocols. Therefore, it would be beneficial to understand if the same applies to ceremonial spaces and the impacts this would have on participant's sense of self. Finally, I would have liked to include a comprehensive sample of women from other provinces and territories beyond the five women involved with this project. It would be nice to include participants from other locations to provide greater comparisons.

Limitations to the current project. While I did not set out to specifically assess *Okimaw Ohci*, the Indigenous healing lodge for women on the Nekaneet First Nation in southern Saskatchewan, this is in fact what happened as all participants spoke about their experiences during their tenure at this particular site. I struggled with knowing what was important and what was not after all these were the women's narratives and their stories meant so much to each of them that it was difficult for me to make choices about what to include so as not to diminish what they shared with me. Compounding the issue further was my status as a fledgling academic who had little experiencing undertaking projects of this sort. Therefore, I kept returning to my research question repeatedly to ensure that what I was seeing was directly related to what I had set out to do. Given the scope of a master's thesis, a project of this type is difficult to undertake in a meaningful way.

The time that it takes to develop and build a relational network to ensure it is being done in a good way is not taken into account by the institution where the administration wants to get you through the program. Therefore, the timing of a master's program to undertake a project of this type does not allow enough time to deeply build relationships, though this is something that I will continue to work on outside the scope of the project as I see this as life work not once and done work. Another limitation was engaging with a community partner that resides outside of the

province, and this provided some barriers to the ability to engage in person. However, it must be noted that the positives far outweighed the negatives in this case as without my current community partner –EFry, I would have had to undertake an analysis of policy eliminating the voices of the women.

My lack of experience as a researcher may have limited the information yielded. As I had not undertaken a project of this type previously. I was not completely comfortable with the process, as such participants may not identify with me and the interview guide. Though this was a first step in gaining experience and comfort in the interview process, it will serve me well moving forward as I pursue a Ph.D. as I have a much better understanding of what the interview process entails and how it may unfold. At the very least, I have begun the relationship-building process with my community partner as well as the women who engage their services. In the future, it would be beneficial to volunteer more frequently with my community partner to develop the relationship as well as be able to give back to the organization in some manner. I also found that not having any experience being in the carceral system except for touring a remand facility as well as a provincial institution, I had limited knowledge regarding how the system functioned. This meant that more time was spent getting up to speed on how things worked within the institution. Moving forward, I would like to spend some time with the staff at EFry to gain a more complex understanding of the carceral process as it relates to federal institutions. Spending more time with the community partner would also create the potential of engaging with site visits to the lodge to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences. Ultimately, I now have some experience and feel better prepared to continue the project through a Ph.D. using this project as a steppingstone and learning tool to move forward.

Continued Dialogues - Pushing Policy into Action

Upon much reflection about the research, I have come to see that it was naïve, not to mention ambitious, for me to think that undertaking a project of this sort at the master's level was conceivable. It has been an arduous journey but one that has been so worthwhile. It has also provided me with the opportunity to initiate the relationships necessary to pursue a larger version of the project through a Ph.D. Without the foundation from this research, the larger Ph.D. project would not even be possible as the Ph.D. project continues to seek a way to bridge the gap between policy and narrative. The project will continue its partnership rooted through the principles of relational accountability with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan and potentially widen the network to other Elizabeth Fry Societies in Canada. A comprehensive assessment of the CSC's Aboriginal cultural programming will be undertaken from the perspective of former participants to develop a theory of change and logic model using a mixed-method approach, combining formal program evaluation processes grounded through relational accountability which frames the relationships through the four r's of respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity (Archibald, 2008; Henry et al., 2016; Kirkness, 2013). There is a need to continue bringing forward the narratives of Indigenous women who have moved through the carceral system as there is a need to narrow the margin between narrative and policy: there are many stories but little change. This research will present participants narratives in a format that will empower policymakers to engage better while becoming a force for positive change.

Conclusion

Indigenous women continue to experience the impacts of settler colonialism. They encounter intergenerational trauma and loss related to colonial legacies such as the residential school and child welfare systems leading some of them to engage with the carceral system where

they participate in state-designed, developed, and run healing lodges and cultural programming. Healing lodges were created to generate an environment where Indigenous women have the opportunity to reconnect with their culture and move forward on a traditional healing path. However, it has been noted throughout this project that the lodge has strayed significantly from its original intent and vision. Often program evaluations are undertaken through the eyes of those that administer the system and have a vested interest in ensuring it continues. Therefore, it is important to note that it is key to bring forward the voices of those that continue to experience and are marginalized by the system. Indigenous women who have had to manoeuvre the federal corrections system and their voices are crucial to understanding the impacts of state-run cultural programming on their concepts of Indigeneity to determine if these types of programs are deleterious to an Indigenous individual's sense of self impacting their well-being. While the women all expressed some positive sentiment regarding aspects of the lodge, some of the women felt it was a waste of time to understanding and unpacking who they were as an Indigenous woman. The women indicated that it was detrimental to their sense of self and overall well-being. The lodge's pan-Indigenous programming and some of the staff made women question their Indigeneity, causing them to compartmentalize their identities. Instead, the women sought ways to manoeuvre the system and its culture of control rooted through western European patriarchal values with their sense of self intact enough so that they could pursue their healing journeys of discovery on their own upon release into the community. The institution caused some of the women to feel shame about their traditional knowledge, culture, teachings, and home communities, leading them to further question who they were as individuals as well as Indigenous women. Systematized regulations pressured the women to conform to the norms of

the institution, which forced the women to accept and adopt a palatable form of culture while making it appear like they support pan-Indigeneity.

The federal corrections system continues to attempt to assimilate Indigenous women through the settler-colonial gaze. When, in fact, the women attempt to resist by playing the game, so they can emerge from the institution with a less compromised sense of self. Ultimately, the culture of the institution and the programming it offers significantly impacts the experiences of Indigenous women that move through the federal corrections system in Canada. Colonialism is not a thing of the past; it is alive and well in the carceral system hidden by the dominant couched through the language of safety, security and risk (Comack, 2000; Martel et al. 2011; Monchalin, 2016; Razack, 2015). As such, there is a need to mobilize Indigenous women's voices to support the well-being of Indigenous women who are forced to manoeuvre the penal system in Canada because they understand the impacts as they have lived it. The women are the knowledge about what does and does not work in the institution. This research argues that the continued assimilation of Indigenous women, which I assert is an example of settler colonialism²⁶, continues to occur through the Canadian corrections system and the administration of its singular Aboriginal cultural programming.

²⁶ See Razack (2015), particularly, the introduction and chapter 1, for an insight into settler colonialism through mechanisms of policing within Canada.

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Appendix A: Letter of Support



Elizabeth Fry Society
of Saskatchewan

November 2, 2018

From: [REDACTED]
Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan
[REDACTED]
Saskatoon, SK, Canada, [REDACTED]
Toll Free: [REDACTED]
<https://elizabethfrysask.org>

Dear [REDACTED] and the University of Calgary Ethics Review Board,

This letter is to inform you that we have agreed to work in partnership with Alicia Clifford (supervisor, Dr. Robert Henry) in her research project – *Indigenous Women, Identity, and Cultural Programming while Navigating the Corrections System*.

After connecting with Alicia through the Saskatchewan Street Gang Strategy Forum (May 2018) and STR8 UP, we have agreed that the objectives of her research coincide with our objectives at Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan. Our members have a tremendous wealth of knowledge in regards to incarceration and experiences with Aboriginal cultural programs offered within correctional institutions. We see this research as a way to support our vision and mission at Elizabeth Fry, to support and empower women who are currently or formerly incarcerated. Alicia has informed our organization that there will be a feedback loop, where she will provide a presentation or report to support Elizabeth Fry's continued effort to advocate for greater support of Indigenous women involved in the justice system.

In partnership with Alicia Clifford we understand our role as an organization and what is expected of her and ourselves.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Executive Director, Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan

Appendix B: Sample Interview Guide

This research intends to understand how Indigenous women have constructed their identities about being an Indigenous woman upon their release from a correctional institution. To provide a more thorough understanding, we are looking to create a space for Indigenous women to talk about their experiences in identity formation. We are looking to understand how one's perceptions of local Indigenous identity may be impacted by the criminal justice system, i.e., what does it mean to be a Nêhiyaw (Cree) woman? Alternatively, what does it mean to be a Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) woman? This interview should last approximately 1 hour. Please remember that you only have to answer the questions that you feel comfortable in answering. I also encourage you to ask any questions of me or the research at any time.

Setting the Stage:

1. What is your name?
2. How would you like to be identified?
3. How old are you?
4. Where are you from?
5. Where did you grow up?
6. What were your connections to the community?
 - a. How did you understand Indigeneity? For example connections to the land, family,

Theme 1: Identity Pre-Adult Incarceration

Theme one focuses on women's perceptions of Indigenous identity pre-incarceration.

1. How did you understand yourself as an (identity of the individual) before going to prison?
 - a. Familial relationships – i.e. medicine people or elders
 - b. what time in your life did you become engaged in the criminal justice system or removed from your family via CW
2. What role did culture have in your life before?
 - a. How did you practice your culture?

Theme 2: Experiences while Incarcerated

Theme two examines how the women became involved in Aboriginal cultural programming within the institution, what their motivations were and how they experienced the programming.

1. Once you entered the prison system, how did you hear about the Aboriginal cultural programming?
2. Why did you decide to engage with the Aboriginal cultural programming?
3. What was your experience with the Aboriginal cultural program?
4. What did the program teach you about (culture of the individual) culture?
5. How did this experience impact your notions of who you were before you were incarcerated?

Theme 3: Impacts on Identity Post-Incarceration

Theme three looks to provide a comparison to theme one by understanding how the women interpret their identities as Indigenous women after being incarcerated and subsequently being released from the institution. It attempts to come from a strengths-based approach asking the women what they would need or change about the program based on their experiences and identities as Indigenous women.

1. Have you embraced the cultural practices that you learned since your release?
2. Do you continue the cultural practices that you learned in the program?
 - a. Can you explain with some examples?
3. What type of impact did the program have on your understanding of being an (identity of individual) woman?
 - a. Explain with examples
4. If you could change anything about the program what would you like to change?
5. Is there anything else you want to say about what we talked about today?

Appendix C: Consent Form



Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Alicia Clifford, Graduate Student, Faculty of Arts, Department of Sociology, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

Supervisor:

Dr. Robert Henry, Department of Sociology

Title of Project:

Indigenous Women, Survivance, and Post-Incarceration

Sponsor:

Social Science and Humanities Research Council – Canada Graduate Scholarship-Master’s Program

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to examine the personal experiences of Indigenous women who have participated in Correctional Service Canada’s Aboriginal cultural programming to understand the impacts that it has had on an Indigenous woman’s cultural identity after they are released from prison. Indigenous women are the fastest growing population in the federal prison system. There is limited information on women who are incarcerated and even less on Indigenous women. There is a need to understand the experiences specific to Indigenous women within a correctional institution from their perspective and their words due to the silencing of their voices through settler colonialism. This project wants to reveal the genuine character of the corrections institution, by looking to highlight the experiences of Indigenous women who have been in the system through their stories to gain a better understanding of the impacts the cultural program may have on their individual Indigenous identities.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

As a participant you will be asked to partake in two one on one interviews discussing your experiences related to your participation in Correctional Service Canada’s Aboriginal cultural programming while incarcerated in a federal prison. You will be paid an honorarium of \$40 per interview. As well costs related to roundtrip transportation and

childcare if required will be covered. All payments will be in line with Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan's reimbursement policy. The interview should take roughly one hour. Interviews will take place at Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan's office located in Station 20, 1120 20th St W Suite 205, Saskatoon. Prior to interviews being scheduled each participant will be gifted according to traditional protocol on the prairies with tobacco, medicines, and blankets. Each interview will be audio recorded. The audio recording is to capture the interview in full. It will then be typed up and reviewed for themes. During the interview process, notes may be taken to enhance the data transcription process. They will primarily be used for reference purposes by the researcher while typing up the interview. You will be asked how you would like to be identified throughout the project at the beginning. Once the first interviews are complete the audio recordings will be typed up by the researcher. This information will be kept on an external drive for security purposes, encrypted, and locked in Dr. Robert Henry's office at the University of Calgary. Any information that contains personal information will be stored on a separate drive and encrypted in the researcher's office at the University of Calgary.

A mixed method approach will be used combining observation, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis. By using a combination of the three methods richer information and findings will result. Observation will include making brief notes during the interview process regarding nuances of speech, tone, and body language. This will add to the interpretation of the information gathered. It will be used to enhance the data transcription and contribute to the analysis of the information. The first interview will have 12-15 open ended questions. Three themes are used to separate the questions: 1) understandings of culture before prison, 2) experiences with the Aboriginal cultural program while in prison, and 3) understandings of cultural identity after being released from prison. The questions will ask about your social, personal, and historical understandings of your Indigenous identity and experience with the cultural program while you were serving time in a Canadian federal prison.

After the interview the information from the audio recording will be typed up. Once the information is typed up and reviewed by the researcher for key themes and findings, a check in will occur via phone or email. This should occur roughly 2 weeks after the data transcription has been completed. A copy of the transcript may be sent to you for review via email. During the check in a second formal interview will be scheduled. The researcher will contact you directly either by phone or email to arrange an appropriate date and time. This interview is voluntary, but the purpose is to validate your story in the transcript of the first interview to make sure that what was heard is correct. The second interview gives us a chance to talk about anything else that may have come up in the first interview, when you reviewed the transcript, or if there is anything else that you would like to add or include. You will also advise on what you would like to see done with the project as far as outcomes. You will have a direct say in where the project goes. The second interview will also be about an hour in length. You will be paid an honorarium of \$40 for the interview. As well costs related to roundtrip transportation and childcare if required will be covered. All payments will be in line with Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan's reimbursement policy. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, you may decline to participate in the study, you may decline during the study, you may decline to answer any of the questions, and you may withdraw from the study at any time up to the point in which final validation has been completed and the thesis is ready for submission. Upon final validation of the narrative, you agree to the submission of material for completion of a master's thesis. If you are unable to confirm your narrative due to unforeseen circumstances Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan has the arm's length to agree to disagree on your behalf. This is a pre-existing policy that is in place with Dr Robert Henry and Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan for research purposes. Withdrawal from the study will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled to such as help, support, and/or services from Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan will not be affected.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your name, age, where you are from, where you grew up, and your cultural identity (ie: nehiyaw, métis, etc). You will also be asked how you would like to be identified throughout the project.

The audio recordings will only be accessible to you, Dr Robert Henry and myself. The recordings will not be shown in public.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

You may quote me and use my name: Yes: ___ No: ___

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

The risks may include emotional distress or potential emotional triggers as you recall a time in your life where you were incarcerated in a federal corrections institution. The questions relate specifically to your experiences with Correctional Services Canada's Aboriginal cultural programs. The goal of the project is for it to be told from your perspective as you are the experts of your own experiences and about the cultural program. If anything should arise during the interview support services will be made available through Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan.

I am legally obligated to report child abuse to law enforcement. All other information will remain strictly confidential.

You will be compensated for your time, knowledge, and expertise. You will receive an honorarium of \$40 per interview. As well costs related to roundtrip transportation and childcare if required will be covered. All payments will be in line with Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan reimbursement policy. If you choose to withdraw from the study you will receive an honorarium of \$20 for a partial interview, your transportation costs to and from as well as your childcare costs if required will still be compensated.

What Happens to the Information I Provide? Only yourself, the researcher, and her supervisor will see or hear any of the answers to the questions or the interview recordings. You own all of the data related to your narrative until such a time where you deem the contract complete. As the researcher, I am simply a steward of this information. Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan will only have access to the final results and reports unless you grant them permission otherwise. You will choose how you wish to be identified throughout the project this includes on the audio recording. Any digital codebooks, transcripts, and the audio recordings will be encrypted and kept locked in a secure cabinet at the University of Calgary only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored in a secure location until you deem the contract complete.

If you should choose to withdraw from the study all information will be destroyed accordingly.

The following options can be added and adapted to the consent form, as needed:

Would you like to receive a summary of the study's results? Yes: ___ No: ___

If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail address, or phone number)

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this

research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Mrs. Alicia Clifford,
Department of Sociology/Faculty of Arts

And Dr. Robert Henry, Department of Sociology/Faculty of Arts

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-6289/220-4283; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix D: Letters Sent to Local Tribal Authorities



FACULTY OF ARTS

Department of Sociology
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4
ucalgary.ca

June 12, 2018

██████████
Minister of Métis Family and Community Justice Services Saskatchewan Inc.
Métis Nation - Saskatchewan

██████████
Saskatoon, SK

CANADA

p: ██████████

e: ██████████

w: metidnationsk.com

Dear Minister ██████████,

I would like to introduce myself, Alicia Clifford, as a Master's student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary working with Dr. Robert (Bobby) Henry. My research topic focuses on post-incarcerated Indigenous women and their experiences with Correctional Service Canada's Aboriginal cultural program offered in federal corrections institutions. The purpose of this research is to understand the impacts of pan-Indigenous cultural programming on an Indigenous woman's identity and to advocate for more effective and suitable programming for Indigenous women who are incarcerated and moving through the corrections system. This research is designed to provide a space of discussion to shift the current dialogue within corrections around cultural programming offered in federal facilities to include the voices of Indigenous women who have gone through the program themselves.

The project will use semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data gathering. It is hoped that the project will involve four individuals who are members of STR8 UP: 10,000 Little Steps to Healing, Inc.. The participants will be asked to participate in an interview about the project (about 1 hour) and a follow-up interview to validate findings and themes that emerge from their stories (about 1 hour). All data will be securely stored at the University of Calgary, and all participants will have the opportunity to create a pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality and ensure anonymity.

As this study focuses on Indigenous women post-incarceration, I am writing to ask for a letter of support from the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan for this research project. The letter of support will be used to explain to the University of Calgary Ethics Review Board that the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan is aware of the research happening with Indigenous women in Saskatoon. I will be asking the Saskatoon Tribal Council to write a letter of support as well. I am currently working on obtaining a letter of agreement from STR8 UP: 10,000 Little Steps to Healing, Inc. to work collaboratively on this project.

I am attaching a brief proposal for your reference and further clarification about the project. A hard copy of this letter and the proposal is being forwarded to the above address for your reference and records as well. I would be more than willing to meet with you to discuss the project further.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by phone at [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Alicia Clifford

Graduate Student | Department of Sociology

p: [REDACTED]

e: [REDACTED]

Appendix E: Brief Proposal Sent to Local Tribal Authorities



**UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY**

BRIEF PROJECT PROPOSAL

From their Perspectives:

Indigenous Women, Survivance, and Post-incarceration

Alicia Clifford

Supervisor: Dr Robert Henry

In 2017, despite representing only 4.16% of the Canadian female population, Indigenous women represented 39% of all federally incarcerated women (Reitano, 2017; Statscan, 2017). To address the growing overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, Correctional Service Canada (CSC) developed the Aboriginal cultural programming in 2013. Even though Indigenous cultures and communities vary significantly across Canada, current correctional policies offers a pan-Indigenous approach within their federal corrections institutions (CSC, 2014). Even though pan-Indigenous education and curriculum training is understood to have negative impacts on one's personal identity, there has been limited research to examine the impacts of the CSC's Aboriginal cultural program on Indigenous women's perceptions of self post-incarceration. The purpose of this project is to examine the personal experiences of Indigenous women who have participated in CSC's Aboriginal cultural programming to understand the impacts that it has had on an Indigenous women's cultural identity post-incarceration.

Recent initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) are attempting to bring forward the voices and lived realities of many Indigenous peoples in Canada. Now is the time to bring forward the voices of Indigenous women who have been incarcerated to help inform correctional policies, given their gross over-representation within the justice system. Their stories become a site of resistance to the colonial tools of assimilation and dominance administered within and across justice systems and programs.

The project will use the principles of relational accountability to connect with STR8 UP in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan to gain access to participants. Relational accountability frames the relationships of the project through the four R's of respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity (Archibald, 2008; Kirkness, 2013; Henry, Tait, and STR8 UP, 2017). The foundation of the project becomes the relationship between the researcher, the organization, and participants. A total of four Indigenous women who have participated in Aboriginal cultural programming while previously incarcerated in a federal institution will be invited to participate. The project will undertake two rounds of semi-structured interviews, resulting in a total of 8 interviews. The women will be compensated for their participation in the project. The financial compensation will be \$40 per interview. The women will also be reimbursed for all additional costs incurred due to their participation in the project including transportation to and from the interview, child care and any other incidentals that may arise. Each interview will be roughly 1 hour in length. Interviews will take place at STR8 UP's office located in KAP House at 226 Avenue V South, Saskatoon. This location is a familiar and safe space for participants to speak about their experiences.

Three overarching themes will be used to categorize the interview questions: 1) understandings of cultural identity pre-incarceration, 2) experiences with the Aboriginal cultural program and 3) understandings of cultural identity post-incarceration. The questions will ask participants about their social, personal and historical understandings of their Indigenous identity. Each series will build upon the next to deepen the understanding of the experiences unique to Indigenous women post-incarceration who have engaged with

the CSC's Aboriginal cultural programming from their perspectives. A draft of the interview questionnaire will go to the community partner for language clarity before engaging with participants. Consent forms will be distributed and reviewed with each participant before interviews taking place. Each interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. At the beginning of the initial interview, each participant will be asked how they wish to be identified throughout the project. All data will be anonymized and securely stored at the University of Calgary on an external drive. The drive will be stored in a locked drawer in the office of Dr. Robert Henry in the department of sociology. Upon completion of the transcription process, content analysis will be undertaken to deduce themes from the participants' perspective. Once the content analysis is complete, data validation will be completed during the second interview by and with the participants to ensure that what was heard remains true to their story and voice. The follow-up interview also provides an opportunity to engage further with participants and to address any missed opportunities in the first interview.

The primary outcome of the project will be a thesis to support the completion of a Master's degree from the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary. However, knowledge mobilization will play an essential and formal role in the outcomes of the research process. Knowledge translation and mobilization will be completed collaboratively with the community partner and participants. Ensuring that they have a voice in where the work is presented and what should be done with it. Working directly with STR8 UP's Executive Director and board as well as receiving input from the participants directly, a community knowledge component will be designed and drafted. The community knowledge component can include but is not limited to a formal report for the use and dissemination of STR8 UP as well as formal presentations for any organization who so wishes. STR8 UP will be formally acknowledged and recognized within the thesis and in any conference presentations, reports or supplemental papers resulting from the research project. Upon completion of successful thesis defence and submission, the potential exists to deliver the finished document to the Saskatoon Tribal Council's Community Justice Coordinator, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan's Minister of Métis Family and Community Justice Services Saskatchewan Inc., and Dr Ivan Zinger the Correctional Investigator of Canada with the Office of the Correctional Investigator.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me either by phone at [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].