

RE-SEARCHING METIS IDENTITY: MY METIS FAMILY STORY

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Abstract

This research explores Metis identity through the use of a Metis family story. The participants of this Metis family were my father and his two sisters and his two brothers. As children, they lost both their parents at the same time in a car accident. After the death of their parents my participants all encountered the child welfare system, through adoption, orphanage, and foster care. Through adoption, the two youngest participants were separated from their siblings, and any knowledge of their Metis heritage, until they were adults. Individual interviews were conducted with each participant to gather their life stories. Two additional gatherings of the participants were completed in order to share individual and family stories. The second and final gathering was conducted as a talking circle. A culturally congruent qualitative research process was created with the use of stories, ceremonies, and the strengthening of family relationships. Analysis was completed with the use of Aboriginal storytelling guidelines. The themes examined through my family's story include trauma, the child welfare system, and Metis identity. A significant piece of the research process was the creation of a "Metis psychological homeland" (Richardson, 2004, p. 56), a psychological space of both healing and affirming Aboriginal identity. This dissertation is an example of how research can be completed in a way that does not perpetuate the mistrust between Aboriginal people and researchers, and that works to improve this relationship.

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All my relations. Ninanaskomoon (I am grateful).

Dedication

This story is dedicated to all of my family, and to all families.
Keep your stories, tell your stories, the good ones and the sad ones;
they will help guide you, define you, carry you, and heal you.

I know mine have.

All my relations.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Who am I? Who are my ancestors? Where am I from? Where am I going?

My name is Tara Turner. In my family I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a niece, a partner and a mother. My son Alexander is two years old and I have joined the ranks of mothers who could go on and on about their children. I am a horse woman and an admirer of all animals. I am working towards a personal understanding of Aboriginal spirituality.

I am Metis. My father's ancestry is English, First Nation and possibly Inuit, as well as Scottish and Irish. My mother's ancestry is English, French and Danish. I am completing this research on my father's family. As far back as the late 1700's, many people on my father's side worked for the Hudson's Bay company, surveying, as middlemen, running forts, building boats and various buildings. My family has lived as far east as Ontario and as far west as British Columbia. I grew up in the Kootenay region of B.C., and I lived in Southern Alberta for a few years before spending the last ten years in Saskatchewan. I feel at home in Saskatchewan as my great-great-great-great-great grandfather spent time here at Cumberland house, spent a winter in Ille-a-la-Crosse, and Turnor Lake is named after him.

I am a graduate student in the clinical psychology program at the University of Saskatchewan. I have chosen the profession of psychology as part of how I will fulfill my responsibilities as an adult, to my family, and to my community. When this research is complete I will pursue my registration as a psychologist.

In the Aboriginal tradition I have introduced myself and shared a bit about my family and my heritage. In the Western academic tradition, I will now introduce the reader to my research. I will outline how my research ideas grew out of my life experience, why I think this research is meaningful, and the main areas that this dissertation addresses.

This research is a qualitative study of Metis identity, as understood through the stories and experiences of myself, my father, and his brothers and sisters. I grew up on the stories of how, following the death of their parents, my father and his brothers and sisters were, as children, torn from their family, each other, and ultimately from their Metis culture. The loss of my paternal grandparents marked a transformative period in the history of my family; one that saw my father and his siblings thrust into the child welfare system to be separated, adopted and institutionalized. It was many years until they were reunited as a family again, and not until they were adults.

This difficult piece of my family story is what has the most impact on my desire to do this research. It has had implications for my father's generation, my generation, and future generations. We all live with the fallout from that time in many ways, including our family's understanding of our Metis identity. With the loss of access to family and to their stories and lives, my father and his siblings were without firm ties to their Metis heritage, and without the knowledge to share with their own children about their culture. This has created a situation in my family that many Metis people find themselves in, one of knowing their ancestry, but not being certain what it means.

These events that happened in the generation before my birth have had a great impact on me. I used to wonder if I was the only one who found it confusing and unsettling to be of Metis ancestry, and be raised in an environment that was not a traditional Metis environment. I wondered what a traditional Metis environment would look like. I would ask myself, what right did I have to be Metis? Why identify as Metis when I can easily pass for White? Why is it that this part of my mixed blood heritage impacts me so deeply? What does being Metis mean to me and for my life? And do other Metis people feel this way?

Questions like these furthered my drive to examine the impact of Metis identity on myself and others. Many conversations I have had, and written works I have read, suggest that many Metis people struggle with issues of identity. I have been both saddened and comforted by the knowledge that others experienced the pain and confusion of this as well, that it was not just me. Sharing my personal experience of the times of feeling lost, and the coming to a personal understanding of what it means to be Metis, will help others who are still navigating this process, including members of my own family.

These are some of the reasons why I chose to share my personal family story for my dissertation. Our story is unique in many ways, but it is also the story of many families. The events and plot lines might be different, but the themes are the same; families broken apart, families kept from their heritage due to the effects of colonization and racism, people searching for who they are, and people finding who they are. It is also reflective of the story of the Metis people, who suffered so much for so long, and who are now gaining strength in numbers and cultural pride. In July 1885, Louis Riel is said to have prophesied "my people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they wake, it will be the artists that give them their spirits back." I hope

that by telling this story in this time of awakening that there will be an increase in understanding of Metis people by those who read it, and that some people see themselves reflected here.

An overarching theme throughout this research is one of stories; the importance of stories for Metis people and the role of stories in cultural connection and identity. Story telling and story sharing became a core aspect of the research methodology. Richardson (2004), a Metis researcher, says that stories perform an important cultural function for the Metis, and these stories being told and available to Metis people, lend validity to the experience of being Metis. Additionally, and importantly, the recording of my family stories will ensure that members of the present generation of Metis Turners will leave their stories as a legacy to the generations to follow.

My chosen discipline of psychology has much to say about identity. But it says nothing about Metis identity. This research will be one of only a few studies in psychology to address Metis identity. Researchers from the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan, Dorion and Prefontaine (2001) argue that many more case studies are needed to help with the understanding of the Metis identity dilemma. This research is one more addition in the growing call for Metis specific research and stories.

Thomas King (2003), a writer of Cherokee and Greek ancestry, said in his book *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, that “once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell” (p. 10). It is not without trepidation that I prepare to tell this story to you. It is a story about my family, about people that I love. In preparation I have asked for and received permission and blessing from members of my family; I have completed ceremonies, including a four day fast under the guidance of an Elder; I have worked to put my best efforts behind completing this work in a way that is respectful to my family, both the living members and those who are already in the spirit world; and I have promised myself to always put my family before my research goals.

Some of this story is very sad. Parts of it were painful for me to hear and transcribe into this dissertation. Parts of it might be painful for you to read. After writing about his own family story, Thomas King said “I tell the stories not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained to these stories as long as I live” (2003, p. 9). You will see that our stories can be powerful forces in our lives.

Because it is about my family, this research story is about a contemporary, urban, Metis family, one that has experienced a rupture in the continuity of their family stories. There are many types of Metis stories and histories, including ones where there have been no such breaks in their understandings of who they are. Since I am the researcher and writer of this story, this research is reflective of the questions I wanted to answer for myself and my family.

Given the sometimes contested nature of Metis identity, I offer a description of my intentions for this research. Metis experiences and identities can be complex. I struggled at times to not shy away from sharing my thoughts on Metis identity as it can be a divisive topic rather than one that brings us together as Metis people. It is my contention that having many Metis stories that are widely shared, helps, not hinders, the creation of greater understanding of Metis issues of all kinds and levels. I share my own experience and understandings of Metis identity that I have come to through the incorporation of readings, conversations, thinking, experiencing, and researching that I have done for this dissertation. I offer my research in the spirit of wanting to add my voice to those already existing as a way of showing my interest and my caring about the topic, not by way of declaring firm answers about Metis identity.

Further, this research represents my understanding at the time of its creation. It is likely that my understanding of the issues covered in this dissertation will change as I compile new experiences, read more stories by other Metis, and as many people add their collective abilities to solving some difficult debates. I will continue to try to expand my understanding of this topic throughout my life as it is an important aspect of my own self-understanding.

Even stories that will continue to evolve need a beginning. This story is a long one and requires a variety of background material in order to bring it all together. To arrive at a place of understanding of this story as a whole, I begin with an overview of Aboriginal identity, including what is written specifically about Metis identity. This is followed by an overview of the research context and the methodology. Chapter four contains my family story. It begins with some family history and then moves through the research that I conducted, presenting the interview and family gathering transcripts chronologically. In the discussion, chapter five, I expand on the main themes of the research. The final chapter looks back over the entire research with some concluding thoughts.

Chapter Two: Metis identity

As a student of psychology, I searched within my discipline for help in understanding Metis identity. I soon found that there is a complete lack of written information about the Metis in the field of psychology. As an example, a search of a large database of psychology literature, psycINFO, in July 2009, with the keyword “Metis” returned 63 results. The articles were on topics of recidivism, mental health issues, and assessment. Even more telling is that only a very few of the articles were specific to the Metis. Most of the articles pertained to all Aboriginal people, which includes Metis, First Nations and Inuit people.

Although there is a dearth of information in psychology to provide some understanding to the process of identity creation for the Metis people, there is no shortage of theories in psychology about identity, including cultural identity. Yet few of these theories speak to the particular factors related to Aboriginal identity, or to Metis identity more specifically. Readings from disciplines outside of psychology suggest that an account of identity that takes issues of ancestors, interconnectedness, place, stories, the medicine wheel aspects of the self, resistance and colonization, and that speaks to the experience of Metis people and other Aboriginal peoples, would contribute an important piece of knowledge to the literature within psychology. Rather than trying to fit Metis identity within existing psychological theories, which come from a mainly Western worldview, Metis identity should be considered on its own, and in this way, be explored for its own nuances and complexities.

Aboriginal identity theories

Although the base of research is small, a number of Aboriginal scholars have written about Aboriginal identity. Metis scholar Cora Weber-Pillwax (2003) argues that concepts and explanations of personal identity are complex and are not delineated in ways that can be transferred from one system of thought to another (Western to Aboriginal). She states, “... one society’s way of becoming or of being a ‘person’ cannot easily be transferred, interpreted, or understood to mean the same thing as another society’s way of being or becoming a ‘person’”(p. 16). She contends that the presence of ancestors is imbedded in Aboriginal identity formation, and intergenerationality is seen as a core aspect of identity formation. Intergenerationality is not considered in Western psychological theories of identity. She further links Aboriginal identity to land, education systems, economics and governing systems, languages, values and spirituality.

Weber-Pillwax (2003) states that embedded within the social context in which Aboriginal people live is the individual and collective trauma they have experienced. Because of the importance that social environment has upon personal identity, Weber-Pillwax argues that personal identity must be expanded to include the social environment as well, as ...“each is involved in shaping the other” (p. 17).

For Aboriginal people this is especially problematic because the social environment is one that remains embedded in colonialism and colonial values and institutions. The effect of colonialism, another factor that is not considered in Western psychological theories on identity, is addressed by Damm (1993), a First Nations writer. She states:

Who we are has been constructed and defined by Others to the extent that at times we too no longer know who we are. The resulting confusion, uncertainty, low self-esteem and/or need to assert control over identity are just some of the damaging effects of colonization (p. 11).

Kim Anderson (2000, p. 15-16), a Cree/Metis writer, proposes a process of identity formation for Aboriginal women. She links her theory to Aboriginal thought in terms of how time is connected, past, present, and future. In each of the steps in her model she asks a variation on questions often heard in Aboriginal circles:

- resisting negative definitions of being; (Who I am not);
- reclaiming Aboriginal tradition; (Where have I come from?);
- constructing a positive identity by translating tradition into the contemporary context; and (Where am I going?);
- acting in a way that nourishes the overall well-being of our communities. (What are my responsibilities?);

Her process offers a path towards the development of a positive Aboriginal identity that incorporates important aspects of Aboriginal worldviews, that gives credence to resistance (who I am not), and that allows for the dynamic nature of culture (translating).

A further important addition to the discussion of identity as it relates to Aboriginal people, is the use of narratives as a key component. As Thomas King (2003) says “the truth about stories is that’s all we are.” (p. 2). Stories and narratives are used to transmit cultural thought, to teach lessons, to share histories, and to celebrate who we are as a people. Though the narrative quality of identity has been recognized as central in some Western psychological theorizing (e.g., McAdams, 2009, chap. 10-12), it remains largely neglected.

Gone (2006), a member of the Gros Ventre tribe in Montana, states that American Indian identity was initially seen in terms of race, that of racial purity and blood quantum, but that this way of understanding identity has been overtaken by new models of identity. He indicates that most of these newer models can be placed on either dimensional or discursive lines.

Dimensional models tend toward some version of a continuum between “traditional” and “acculturated,” and although some of these models have increased in complexity, with some allowing for multiple cultural identities, they still do not allow for the full experience of identity as it is lived day to day (Gone, 2006). Gone further asserts that these dimensional models tend to see identity as relatively static and created within the individual, rather than a dynamic process that is taking place in discursive social interactions.

These dimensional models can also be damaging if used in ways that pass judgement on people’s right to their identity. I personally have found these models deeply invalidating of my identity. Dimensional models fail to encompass the understanding of history and the loss of the availability to have “cultural markers” that result in a “score” of an acculturated identity. And as Anderson (2000, p. 27) points out, “For many of us, part of being Native is feeling like we aren’t!”

To try and answer to these shortcomings, Gone, Miller and Rappaport (1999) developed the “Gone” model. Their model outlines how identity is constructed by people drawing on the cultural resources of their communities, and that these constructions are guided by community histories, traditions, and institutional relations, essentially “asserting that culture and identity constitute one another (i.e., make each other up).” (Gone, 2006, p. 65). They add that another marker of their model is the recognition that identity is developed through the use of narratives in social interactions. They recognize as well that identity is often shifting in order to accommodate for the particular social situation one finds oneself in (e.g., meeting with an Elder, meeting with a non-Aboriginal person wanting to learn more about culture, or being in an environment that is hostile to Aboriginal people).

Gone (2006) further suggests that due to the local nature of identity as developed from community, it may not be possible to speak of a generic Indian identity. He also acknowledges the urbanization of most Aboriginal people, and how the differences in experiences of urban people need to be understood in terms of their urban Aboriginal identity. People can choose to seek out the knowledge of their community, their ancestors, their histories, and their spirituality,

if that has not been a part of their life, but not every person who feels they have an Aboriginal identity seeks this. As such, there are sometimes no clear markers for what helps to constitute an Aboriginal identity, and yet people can still claim this identity for themselves.

King (2003) suggests that “the question of identity has become as much a personal matter as it is a matter of blood” (p.55). It may not be possible to neatly capture all forms of Aboriginal identity within existing theories, whether they stem from Aboriginal or Western thought, or by dimensional or discursive models. Gone (2006) may well be right in his assertion that there may not be a generic Indian identity. The absence of common markers of Aboriginal identity should be seen as an opportunity for further exploration in understanding Aboriginal identity issues. Without looking beyond existing theories, we risk missing or miscategorising people who fall outside of our current definitions and understandings of Aboriginal identity.

Factors in Metis identity

As a graduate student in psychology, I soon learned that in order to further my personal search for understanding my own Metis identity, I needed to start by looking outside the discipline of psychology. I also needed to meet and talk to people who were engaged in thinking about and sharing their views on Aboriginal issues. Conferences provided an excellent meeting and sharing grounds for new ideas, including ones related to identity. Some questions I heard early in my graduate education at a conference for Indigenous graduate students provided me with a starting point for thinking in a new way about identity. These questions are:

- who am I?
- where am I from?
- who are my ancestors?
- where am I going?

As related by Kim Anderson (2000), these are common questions that one hears from the Aboriginal community. They resonated with me and I felt a strong pull towards finding out how to answer these questions for myself.

Richardson, a Metis researcher, delineates how she understands what she calls “the sense of Metis self” which is created and based in Metis culture (2004, p.2).

“I consider the *self* to be a compilation of one’s being, including the mental, the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual. A *cultural* self refers to the sense one has of being interconnected, interdependent, and imbedded in one’s culture. The two are not different, except for the explicit acknowledgement of the cultural context in the cultural

self. Thus the formation of a healthy Metis sense of self is challenging, and this challenge is characteristic of being Metis.” (Richardson, pp. 14-15)

Richardson’s definition of self, as a compilation of the aspects of the medicine wheel, further underscores the difference between Western and Aboriginal notions of identity. She uses the theories of symbolic interactionism and post-colonialism as a guide for her understanding of the creation of Metis identity, a combination which she says involves an understanding that the Metis live, learn, and experience their lives in a non-Metis world. That so much of life is lived in a non-Metis space has important implications for Metis identity.

Richardson’s conceptualization of the environment in which Metis people are engaging in this process of creating a cultural self, includes her use of the idea of “cultural spaces” (p.47). The first space is a White space, where being Metis is often challenging and a space where some people choose to deny their heritage to avoid difficulties. The second space she describes is a First Nations space, a space of First Nations storytelling, Aboriginal worldviews, and colonization experiences. Richardson says that this is a space where the Metis often visit, but where their mixed blood heritage is often ignored or underplayed - and in my own experience, sometimes ridiculed and shamed. The third space is a Metis space, defined by a Metis specific understanding of an Aboriginal worldview. In this space, separate from the others, the Metis story is about “the integration of various ancestries for the purposes of survival and wellness” (p. 48).

The importance of the third, or Metis space, is that it is a space for the development and strengthening of Metis identity, in an environment that is supportive and understanding of Metis history and experience. Even in this third space, Richardson states that the formation of a sense of being Metis is happening in a non-Metis “place,” a Canada without a homeland for the Metis (p. 48). However, she also argues that the creation of Metis spaces allows for a “Metis psychological homeland,” which she describes as a “... moveable feast [which] can be invoked whenever Metis people gather, spend time together, share stories, food, cultural activities, and generally celebrate Metis identity together” (p. 56).

Richardson shows a direct link between the listening and telling of stories and the process of identity creation for the Metis, stating “the transformative power of stories is reminiscent of the Native belief in shapeshifting. Many stories and legends talk about beings changing shape from one form to another. In some ways, stories help people change their form, or identity.” (p.

19). Metis stories can be transformative for Metis people, perhaps most especially for those who have not had access to their culture throughout their lives, and are coming to this identity as adults, as is the case for myself, and my father and his brothers and sisters, to varying degrees. It is also the case for many Metis people today.

It may be that there is no generic Metis identity, rather many Metis identities, due to the diverse and dynamic nature of Metis culture and its people. Ensuring Metis spaces and places (including psychological ones), creates the environment for the continued evolution of all Metis identities, now and in the future.

Defining Metis identity

The question of who is included in the term Metis is one that is difficult to delineate. There are, in fact, a number of ways to answer the question of who is Metis, none of which are universally accepted by all Metis people in Canada. The debate over who is included by the term Metis was one of the controversies that contributed to my own confusion about my Metis identity early in my journey. It confuses me still to some degree. Since there is no universally accepted meaning of Metis in Canada, it seems that many others share this sense of confusion. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to address fully the multiple and complex understandings of who is Metis, and to offer a definitive answer to this question (See Adams, 1975; 1995, Campbell, 1973, Chartrand, 2002, Dorian & Prefontaine, 2001, RCAP, 1996, Richardson, 2004, Webber-Pillwax, 2003, for more discussion of Metis identity and definitions). However, I will outline some of the issues around who is considered Metis.

Metis communities can be found across Canada and in the northern United States (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP), 1996). Not all of these communities of people who consider themselves to be Metis are accepted as being Metis, in particular by national political entities such as the Metis National Council (MNC). The most restrictive definition of membership is the one adopted in 2002 by the MNC (metisnation.ca). The definition reads: “Metis means a person who self-identifies as Metis, is of historic Metis Nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is accepted by the Metis Nation.” The definition is further detailed as to who the historic Metis Nation are; Metis or half-breeds who resided in the historic Metis Nation homeland, which is the land in west central North America that was used and occupied as Metis traditional territory.

The RCAP definition from 1996, allows more room for different types of Metis, suggesting that every person who identifies themselves as Metis, and who is accepted as Metis by the nation of Metis people with which that person wishes to associate, on the basis of criteria and procedures determined by that nation, be recognized as a member of that nation for the purposes of nation-to-nation negotiations, and as a Metis person for that purpose. There is no mention of a specific geography or history, opening the possibility of being Metis for people who would not be accepted as such by the Metis National Council.

The historic origins of the Metis has been a neglected area of research (Dorian & Prefontaine, 2001) with only a few books written that attempt to address a full view of Metis history in North America. An important result of the lack of focus on the historical understandings of the Metis is the implication that has on current understandings of who the Metis are, and on individual and collective Metis identity. Most written works have focussed on the Metis who historically resided within what was known as Rupert's Land. Less is written about the people who have been called the "other" Metis, from places ranging from Montana, to the North West Territories, the Pacific Northwest, and as far east as Labrador. More needs to be published to address the diversity of Metis people, in history, culture and self-understanding as Metis.

Richardson (2004) points out that Metis people are often defined by non-Metis, people who have little knowledge of who the Metis are, and who therefore categorize them inappropriately. She acknowledges that this pressure often results in Metis creating false categories for themselves. "Imposing new names, categories and social values was one of the hegemonic privileges of the newcomers to Canada during the colonial period, when European values were firmly implanted." (Richardson, 2004, p.15). Unfortunately, this history often contributes to a situation where the Metis do not have a common understanding of who they are, and where those who do not fit the strictest definitions of Metis can encounter a great deal of additional grief and uncertainty.

Defining who is and who is not Metis still remains a challenge. At the Metis Nation Legislative and Annual General Assembly in November 2009, concerns about citizenship were discussed (Read, 2009). The problematic nature of determining citizenship, even at a local level, was illustrated by the debate generated by a motion to allow citizenship applications to be signed by area directors or presidents. One person voiced their concerns about how this process has been

abused in the past where Metis people were wrongly refused citizenship. Another person supported the motion, stating that they would rather put their trust in local people who have knowledge of the people and the history of the area. Another concern was the time and capability to determine Metis ancestry. The motion was defeated with 43 against and 28 for it, further illustrating the depth of concern and divisions on citizenship issues.

Definitions of who is and is not Metis, and what constitutes Metis identity, are likely to continue for some time to come. Although my family history is one that fits within the current definitions, I would not deny a sense of belonging to other mixed blood people with different ancestries. Choosing a sense of “Metisness” is a deliberate and spirit-driven process and the rights and abilities of people to make that choice should not be discounted.

Other identity challenges

For many Metis people, the process of maintaining their Metis identity has been challenged by the responses of the government and society. Governmental policies that resulted in stripping Metis people of Aboriginal rights and any hope of a homeland, and which devalued the Metis people, meant that the Metis were left to find their own way. The impact of these colonial practices included the disconnection of many Metis people from their cultural identity.

The history and current realities of racism and discrimination against Metis people heighten the tricky and difficult nature of creating a Metis identity for many people. Yet the importance of understanding what the phrase “I am Metis” means becomes of greater importance as more people claim this identity for themselves. The 2001 survey indicated that there was a 43% increase in the Metis population, and that a number of factors, including increased awareness of Metis issues, have fed into this increase (Siggner, 2001, as cited in Richardson, 2004). Metis people accounted for approximately 30% of the Aboriginal people in the census.

This increase in numbers of Metis is occurring despite the fact that the Metis still suffer from the Eurocentric writings of history, past and continuing colonialism, and contemporary racism and discrimination. Some examples of this are reflected in facts like the following: Metis people have their children taken from them and placed in care at higher rates than non-Aboriginal people; and Metis people are less likely to finish high school, or go to university; more likely to go to jail; earn less money on average; and have higher unemployment rates than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Richardson, 2004). These factors, and many others, make it understandable and even predictable that Metis people today, especially those who are “new”

Metis, often find it difficult to understand what their identity is as a “Metis person,” what it means to them, and especially how to have a positive sense of Metis identity. Richardson (2004) adds that the amount of their lives that is spent in non-Metis, often in marginalized positions in society, creates a situation where the Metis are at higher risk of encountering problems in their lives.

This social context influences the great variation in how people feel their Metis identity impacts their lives. For some people, their Metis identity is seen as an integral part of who they are, and that they feel its impact in their daily lives. Others may not have the same sense of the centrality of Metis identity in their lives, or it may be something that is shared with other family and close friends, but not celebrated publicly. Dorian and Prefontaine (2001) state that all mixed heritage groups in the world struggle with issues of self-identity, and the Metis are no exception. The solution, they propose, is the improvement of the social status of Metis, and the overcoming of systemic racism - essentially, a process of decolonization.

As rooted as the sweetgrass

With the factors related above, the disconnection from their Metis cultural identity experienced by people like my family and myself seems difficult to overcome. And yet, reconnection with their Metis identity is something that many people experience, even people who have been disconnected from their culture their entire lives. Like so many people without a historical Metis community to turn to and ask questions, I turned instead to stories and poetry written about, and by Metis people. A poem by Gregory Scofield (1996), a Metis writer and poet, captured for me the feeling of reconnection that he experienced as an adult.

ekospi ka-tipiskak (that night)
the first seed
sprouted
then another and another
until my flesh, my bones
were as rooted
as the sweetgrass
swaying
as far as
the eye could see

Excerpt from 1986

Knowing you are Metis by ancestry can be quite different than feeling that you are Metis, that you are as rooted as the sweetgrass. Despite my lack of connection with other Metis people, and despite the racism I knew ran deep in the society within which I lived, I longed for a sense of myself as Metis that was genuine, strong, flexible, and grounded. I knew that if I could find my own identity that I could be a guide and support for others who were searching. I wanted to connect more fully with Metis culture and to feel I was a part of that world.

Although I always knew I was Metis, some Metis people discover their heritage only as adults. Sometimes that heritage has been kept from them by well meaning parents and relatives, who themselves experienced the shame and racism associated with being Metis, and want to shelter their family from the same experiences. I have heard stories of when a parent or an older relative is dying, the connection with a Metis heritage is revealed. For some people, they say they always knew there was something waiting to be discovered.

Regardless of how this new information is revealed, for many it places them in a difficult situation of reconciling their past lives as white people, and their new identity as Metis, a person classed as Aboriginal, and often “less than” in Canada. Bonita Lawrence (1999) writes of her experience of realizing for the first time in her 30’s that all was not as it had seemed in her family history.

With the eyes of the white society, I had learned to see the Native people around me as “other.” But with my mother’s stories in my ears – and with the numbers of Cree Metis women I met in Moose Factory who reminded me of her – I began to feel a confused sense of connection between myself and these “others.” This sensation left me feeling increasingly at sea, hemmed by negatives - for if I gradually began to realize that I was not white, there was no certain way that I, with my years of light-skinned privilege and my unexamined notions of who or what was “Indian,” could understand myself to be a Native person. (p. xvi)

Discovering an Aboriginal identity as an adult can be disorienting. Even with my lifetime of knowing of my Metis background, found that there was no easy way to understand myself as Metis. Again, for me, it has been by turning to written stories such as Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed*, Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree*, and the poetry of Gregory Scofield that I could find guidance for what I was feeling. Another poem by Gregory Scofield (1993), a Metis man whose heritage was hidden from him as a child, speaks to the impact of culture, history, and the experience of making of new connections.

God of the Fiddle Players

The wilting sun catches them centre stage, taking a
Well-deserved breather. Safely shielded by the big top,
Easy for me to applaud for more. An old-timer's
Favorite, my mom would say.

Surveying the dance floor, my generation is damn-near
Lost. Even me, I don't know how to promenade
Properly, let alone take that quick heel-toe-on-the-spot
Step. Gyrating to a techno-beat is more my history.
Then again, who can dig roots in the city?

I have to ask a friend about being Metis, what there is
To be proud of. Because she's an elder, she says just
Watch, listen. Later, we join the pilgrimage to the
Graveyard, go to the museum.

They have a special show using mannequins to
Re-enact the Northwest Resistance. Weeping openly, I
Got to meet the heroes I was ashamed of in school.

That summer, the God of the Fiddle Players visited
Batoche. I bought my first sash; wearing it proudly
Around the house, practicing the ins & outs of jigging.

I went to Batoche for the first time in 2004. I returned the year after with my father, and
the year after that with both my parents. For me, a Metis woman who grew up in B.C. with no
clear ties to other Metis people, going to Batoche felt like a journey to a sacred place. It was my
first experience of being in a Metis space, surrounded by other Metis people.

Metis identity and my family

The main themes explored in the literature about Aboriginal and Metis identity, although
varied, all come from an Aboriginal worldview. Ancestors and interconnectedness, place, loss of
place, stories, and the medicine wheel are all concepts familiar to Aboriginal people. Oppression,
trauma and racism are also deeply felt aspects of a collective Aboriginal identity. Common as
well to understandings Aboriginal identity are resistance, responding to change, and
responsibilities. Other than for my father, I had very little sense of what, if any, of the themes of
identity found in the literature would resonate for my participants. Would their understandings of
themselves be reflected in the literature that exists? Or would their identities be diverse and
divergent and unique to each of them? Taking what I had learned about Aboriginal and Metis

identity, I began to develop a research process that would allow me to explore Metis identity with my father and his brothers and sisters.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Aboriginal research background

There is an extensive and too often problematic history of research in Aboriginal communities and with Aboriginal people that continues to seep into the present research context. This history has been well explicated by many Aboriginal scholars. The depth of the feelings about research in many Aboriginal communities is summed up by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, author of a seminal book on the subject, who wrote that “the term ‘research,’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (1999, p. 1). Although Smith’s statement holds true, and Aboriginal research methodology and ethics goes largely unrecognized by Western psychology, Aboriginal academics working within the area of Aboriginal research are constantly moving forward with their understanding of these areas as they relate to their people. Ermine, Sinclair and Jeffery (2004) report that:

Indigenous peoples are now poised to assert the Indigenous perspective on research and reclaim a voice that contributes to the dismantling of an old order of research practice. The old order of research - positivist, empirical, and driven by the agenda of the academy, has not served Indigenous populations whose interests are currently geared towards surviving and thriving through self-determination and control over resources including cultural and knowledge resources. The shift to new paradigms of research has been the result of the decolonization agenda that has as a principle goal, the amelioration of disease and the recovery of health and wellness for Indigenous populations. The emerging paradigms utilize Indigenous knowledge and worldview for the development of the ethical foundations of research (p. 9).

Aboriginal research concepts have guided my research since its inception. These concepts and methodology have helped in creating a research process aimed at being decolonizing and empowering for myself and for my participants.

I have also relied heavily on mainstream Western psychological research methods, and my training in clinical psychology to do this research. Grande (2000), a mixed-blood Peruvian Indian woman, speaks to the dual nature of learning in academia, by writing of her appreciation of the Western theoretical language that she learned and the advantages of knowing that language, while at the same time also recognizing the costs of that learning. My education has not always been considerate of my desire to incorporate Aboriginal worldviews into my learning. But I too am grateful for my academic training for the opportunity and the skills it has given me to design, complete, and write up this research.

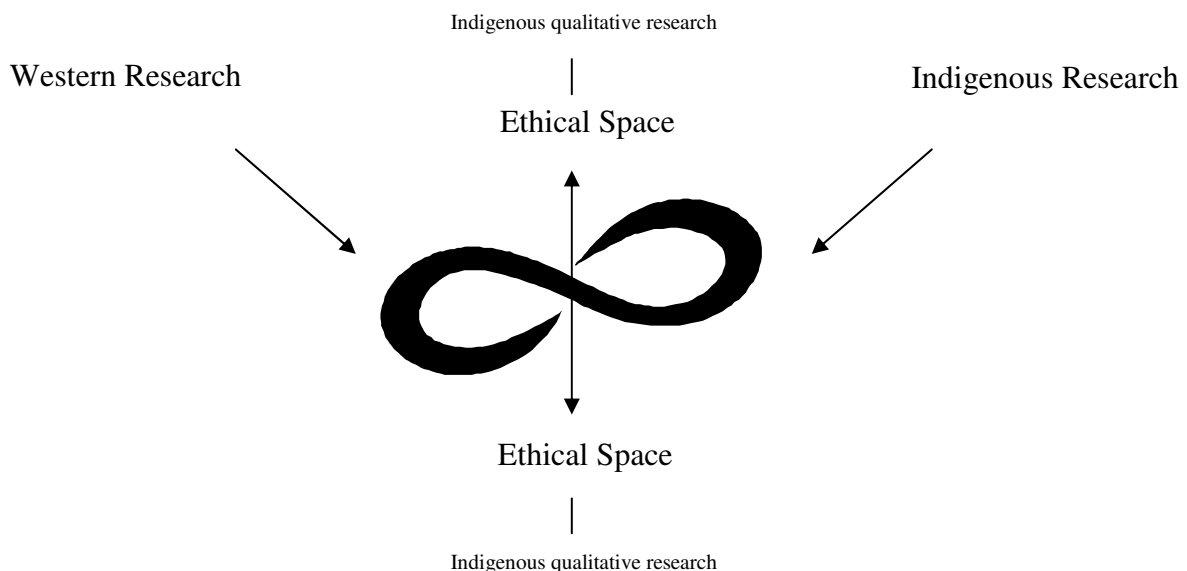
Metis research

Most of the current work in Aboriginal research comes from a First Nations worldview, and Metis people are almost always considered together with First Nation and Inuit people in research. Yet projects driven by Metis specific worldviews are key for creating an environment that allows and encourages the incorporation of Metis culturally congruent methodology. Richardson's concept of a third, or Metis, space is a space where she says "... history can be retold from a Metis perspective; a Metis centred analysis can be refined." (2006, p. 63). In this space, Metis interpretations of Metis research breaks with the colonial tradition of outsiders doing the research and interpretation, and creates a zone where Metis knowledge can be shared with other Metis people.

Another Metis researcher, Lavallee (2007), discusses her conceptualization of Metis research that came as a result of teachings she was given within an Indigenous research community;

Just as it once was when western explorers and fur traders married Indigenous women who then helped them master the Canadian economy and terrain, engaging in Indigenous qualitative narrative research is like a marriage between western and Indigenous pedagogies, epistemologies, and paradigms. This Métis symbol united and infused the ideas of Indigenous and western research and formed a free flowing and ever-evolving space for thoughts and feelings, and a union of the best of both worlds. This union between Indigenous and western worldviews formed a reciprocal relationship based on mutual respect and equality.... A meeting point, a starting point, and a never-ending point and relationship fostered between nations and research paradigms. (p. 39-40)

Lavallee created a diagram of her ideas, titled "A Union Between Two Paradigms."



This diagram is an elegant example of the integration of Western and Aboriginal research methods, in a way that creates the “ethical space” (Ermine, 2000) or the “third space” (Richardson, 2004) for Metis research, and for the bringing forward of Metis specific methods of research. This is a space that is non-assimilating, reaffirming of Metis culture, and respectful of other traditions. In Gregory Scofield’s poem, *Between Sides*, he writes, “my way is not the Indian way or white way – I move in-between – Careful not to shame either side” (1993, p. 81).

The elegance of the concept of the Metis infinity symbol as a paradigm for Western and Aboriginal research is that it allows me to position myself wherever I need to be at any given time. I can find myself at any point on the infinity sign, even on the Western side, without feeling that I am ever disconnected from being Metis. I am as Metis when I am completing a literature search and constructing a methodology section as when I am smudging or sitting with others in a circle. It is a place where my voice can be one of resistance, reconnection, and reclaiming of my Metis identity, while continuing to honour all parts of my heritage and my educational training. This is a place of decolonization for me.

Participants

The participants for this study are five siblings from one Metis family; my father and his two brothers and two sisters. Choosing to work with my family comes from a place of love for my father and his siblings, and from a deep sense that we all would experience healing and transformation while working together. This research has intense meaning for me in a way that it would not have had if I had chosen participants that I did not know from the general Metis community.

The life of my father and his siblings was a natural place for me to look at Metis identity, as they are a significant part of my own identity, and as they had varying degrees of knowledge about their Metis ancestry. The three oldest had always been aware of their Metis background, although I was not sure how they would describe their heritage for themselves. The youngest two, who were adopted early, were raised without the knowledge of their historical ancestry. My participants ranged in age from one year to thirteen years old at the time their parents died, and therefore had significant variation in the amount of time they had spent in the company of their family and their culture.

I am saddened that I know so little about my grandparents, great grandparents, and my extended family, and I wanted to ensure that the stories of the present generation are preserved.

Having and sharing family stories is imperative for understanding our family's Metis background, and for transmitting this to new generations within our family. The opportunity to work with my own family created a space where we could focus on our Metis heritage, a chance that I could not turn down.

Telling one side of a story

I present the stories in this dissertation as they were remembered and told to me by my participants. I did not attempt to include non-Metis family members in this dissertation, and as such am limited in interpretation by the lack of their stories about the events in which they were a part. Overall, my intent is to give voice to the Metis side of my family, a voice that has long been silent.

The details and accuracy of the stories as they exist in this document might be disputed by other people who were involved at the time. Additionally, it is not my intent to vilify any person or persons, either in the past or in the present. Nor is it my intention to cast judgment, either positive or negative, on actions of any of the people mentioned here. I invite and welcome any comments or concerns by any family members who are impacted by these stories. Beyond its academic purpose, this dissertation will remain a living document for our family, where voices can be added and stories continued.

Procedure

The process of undertaking this research drew energy from my desire to continue to explore, for myself, and for my family, our Metis identity and culture. In order to undertake this personal search within the research dimension, I wanted to have a cultural and spiritual guide. I was fortunate to meet Maria Campbell, a Metis Elder from Saskatoon, who agreed to work with me as my Elder and mentor. I had been searching for someone who could provide me with a chance to delve into Metis culture and traditions in a way that I would never find in books. Since my family had been removed from cultural teachings and stories, it felt like it would be important to be a point of connection for them through my own learning. I knew that I had many more questions than answers about Metis culture and ceremonies. Maria's deep connection and understanding of Metis culture, stories, traditions, and ceremonies would provide the grounding and spiritual guidance needed for this research. She suggested that I fast for my research and participants. I completed a four day fast with Maria, with my father as my helper, in 2006. I have met with Maria at different points throughout this research and have continued to learn from her.

I spoke with all my participants over the phone about their interest in being involved in this project. My father had already spoken with each of them and told them that I was hoping to talk with them about sharing their life stories with me. When I called each of them, I described for them the process we would be engaging in, my reasons for wanting to complete this project, and what I hoped to accomplish from it. I told them about my desire to gather our family stories, and that I wanted to know about their experiences and thoughts of being Metis. I talked to each of them briefly about my own search for my Metis identity and how I had so often met other people who were trying to understand their identity for themselves. I also explained that I would be using their words and experiences to complete this research as a part of completing my education.

At our initial meeting for our individual interviews, I gave them information including a short description of this study, what they could expect in terms of their involvement, and their consent to participate (See Appendix A). The interviews were audio-taped and the tapes were transcribed. In addition, the group interviews were videotaped in order to preserve a visual record of the participants for the purpose of preserving family stories. Participants received copies of their typed transcripts. After having the opportunity to make changes, the participants were asked to sign a data transcript release form (See Appendix B). I made a phone call to my aunts and uncles within a few days of our interviews to check and see how they were doing, and if they had any questions or concerns.

Although written forms for consent were completed as per the requirements of conducting research in a university, I also maintained the understanding that my family trusted me as a member of the family to not act in a way that would be harmful to anyone. I understood as well that as members of a family, that it would be easy for any of them to feel pressured to participate since I was asking them as a group to share their stories with me. In order to attempt to deal with these issues, I worked to keep consent an ongoing process and to remain sensitive to how my participants were experiencing the process. I talked with them at our group meetings about the trust they were placing in me and that I wanted to ensure as fully as possible that I was acting in accordance to their individual wishes. I reminded them at each meeting, and in each phone call about the dissertation that they could make any changes or additions they would like, and that I would try to address any concerns that they had.

The complete transcripts have been provided to each participant, but only approximately half of the text from our interviews is included in this document. The remaining text still

approaches one hundred pages in length. I knew the transcripts could not be kept in their entirety due to their length. I tried to edit them in a way that preserved the flow of our conversations, and highlighted the areas of focus for this dissertation. Admittedly it was a subjective process where I tried to be true to the words of my family, and to our collective story. There may have been parts of the transcript that I excluded that would have contributed to the dissertation, and there may be pieces that I included that I could have left out. Just as my participants could only tell me parts of their collective life stories and memories, I had to choose only parts of the transcripts to include in the dissertation. Examples of things that were left out were stories that were about other people in the neighbourhood where they grew up and some details of their individual lives. In the hours we spent together, there were times when we did get quite off topic, or where we talked about things like birthdates, that would be of interest only to those of us around the table in the moment.

In some places I have summarized what we talked about rather than presenting the complete transcript. Where I have edited the text and not provided a summary of the transcripts, I have used three spaced ellipsis points (...) to show its absence. Where I have left out text between sentences in a paragraph of text, I have used four points. Otherwise the texts that are presented are not altered from their original transcriptions. I wanted to preserve, as much as is possible in print, the characteristics of thought and speech for each of my participants. Where I needed to insert information for clarification, I have used square brackets to show that the information was added to the transcripts.

Once the interviews were collected and analysed, each participant was given the opportunity to read and respond to my analysis and critique the results. Sadly, my aunt Judy died before the analysis was completed, so I worked with her son, my cousin, on reviewing the dissertation in her stead. The dissertation was also reviewed by my participant's cousins, Geri and David, as stories of them and their parents were included in the final write up. Maria Campbell, the Elder I worked with for this research, also reviewed the dissertation. Any suggestions for changes, deletions, or additions, were included in the final draft. Including the participants in the analysis, results, and the sharing of my own story was done in order to ensure in as full a way as possible, that this research process is one of openness and collaboration.

After each interview session, I completed a journal entry tracking my thoughts, feeling, and observations about the interview. In general, journaling was used throughout the writing of

this dissertation in order to help me track my own thoughts and the impact that this process was having on me as an individual, as a family member, and as a researcher.

I travelled to the homes of each of my participants to complete the individual interviews. The interviews were done in order of convenience, as a round trip covering three provinces, and totalling over 3000 kilometres was required to meet with my father and my aunts and uncles in their homes. Although the general form of the interview was open ended, a set of questions and prompts was used in order to assist participants in telling their story, and to ensure that general areas of interest to this research were covered (See Appendix C).

Both group interviews were conducted at my eldest aunt Judy's home due to her health and mobility challenges. Judy was in a wheelchair and used oxygen to assist her breathing. When we met for the first time as a group I presented each of the participants with these gifts; a Metis sash and sweetgrass braid from Batoche, a sage bundle that I had gathered myself with prayers and offerings, and an eagle feather that my father had decorated. These gifts are culturally significant items, and were in keeping with the tradition of presenting gifts to people who share their knowledge and stories with you. They were also congruent with the process of creating openings for reconnecting with aspects of the Metis culture as a part of this research. My uncle Brian was unable to attend the first group meeting.

Before the second group interview, all persons reviewed and approved their individual transcripts and the transcript of our first group meeting. I then distributed a copy of the individual transcripts and a copy of the first group transcript to the participants. I asked that they read this package before we met again. Although it might be unusual to show participants transcripts to each other, I felt it was important for them to have a more complete sense of what the lives of their siblings had been like, and for my youngest uncle Brian, to let him know what was talked about in the first group gathering that he was unable to attend. It further felt like in sharing the stories with each other that we were all fully informed of where we were in the research process and that we were all working together towards creating a meaningful result.

When we met again for the second group interview, I presented my youngest uncle, Brian, with the gifts that I had given to the others when we met before. For this meeting, I brought the sweet grass braid that I had made for my deceased uncle Vern (who had died just before his birth in the car accident that also killed his parents), as a way to include him in our stories. We used this braid of sweetgrass as the object the speaker held for our talking circle. This session was

conducted as a talking circle, with the order of the passing of the sweetgrass going from the oldest sibling to the youngest. I drew from the individual interviews and our first group gathering for specific areas I wanted to cover, but I also asked that anything anyone wanted to talk about should be brought forward. We took breaks and went for walks around the neighbourhood in between rounds when we needed to. When everyone felt that they had talked long enough, we went outside and smudged together with the sweetgrass we had used in our talking circle.

The process of moving from individual interviews to an unstructured first group interview to a talking circle format for the last group interview was reflective of the evolving nature of the research process. As I completed each step it felt like the emotions were becoming distilled, and that the last gathering was going to be very powerful, but also very painful. My personal experience of being in talking circles is that they allow each person the space and the support to share whatever it is they are experiencing without feeling pressured to present their words in any particular way or in a particular amount of time. I believe that being in the circle together created a sense of being in ceremony with each other, and with our ancestors, and that the inclusion of the spiritual dimension provided further support and protection to help deal with the emotional pain.

All of my participants, as well as my mother, played an integral role in the completion of this dissertation. They were my co-researchers, and the dedication of their time, energy, spirit, and the stories that they shared were gifts of the most extraordinary kind. My father and my mother contributed significantly to the process of this dissertation. My father was a participant, but he was also my helper for my fast and my travelling partner for the interviews. He provided and ran the video equipment as well as audio equipment. He also did much of the phoning and organizing with his siblings to arrange interview schedules for the individual interviews and the group interviews. My mother completed all of the transcribing of the interviews. Her skill as a transcriptionist, her devotion to this project, as well as her knowledge of the participants and their voices, meant I had detailed and accurate transcripts to work from. My mother worked to create family timelines and family trees that I could work from, with accurate dates and details for me to refer to. Both my parents have acted as research assistants in chasing down information I wanted about our family, both historical and present day. They also acted as editors, reading my work as I went along. Essentially any task that I asked them to complete in service of this research they did with skill and dedication.

Analysis

The use of story

My approach to this research is one of story. Murray states “the telling of narratives is closely intertwined with the shaping and maintenance of personal identity” (2003, p. 100). The use of story is also ideal for the understanding of cultural identity, and is a culturally consistent method of gathering data for research. Aboriginal cultures, including Metis culture, are oral cultures. Although much has changed in the generations since the early beginnings of Metis people, oral culture, often expressed in family stories, remains an integral form of cultural transmission.

Rappaport (1998) speaks to the use of stories as powerful resources for empowerment of community, and how stories about individuals and communities are resources for stability and change. Using narrative for research can also address power inequities in research, as the narratives that exist for, and about people who lack power, whether social, economic or political, are often negative and written by people outside of their culture (Rappaport, 1995). Rappaport (1998) states that social scientists can serve to amplify the voices of people and communities that have historically not been heard by listening and writing about what they have to say. The story of this project is written from an insider’s perspective, and was written and developed with my participants, rather than about them.

For this dissertation the main narrative was created by the use of interview transcripts. This was supplemented by my use of journaling, which included my reflections of the research process as I went through it. I also sought guidance from the literature relating to Metis identity and culture, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry and music. Stories and data took on various other forms for this project, with the sharing of family trees, and genealogy books, pictures from both the past and the present, and the sharing of ceremonies.

Aboriginal storytelling analysis

When I came to choosing a particular method of analysing my data, I found myself searching for something that did not appear to exist in the literature. I wanted to use a method of analysing the transcripts that was consistent with the storytelling tradition in Aboriginal culture. I searched in the growing body of research on Indigenous methodology, and within qualitative research methodology more generally, but found no guidance on how to complete an analysis in relation to storytelling tradition or concepts.

I felt pressured to not risk straying too far from accepted versions of qualitative research. Yet I continued to feel resistant to completing the analysis from within existing qualitative frames. I did find some assurance and guidance in Indigenous research methodology writings that others were asking some of the same questions, and feeling the same pressures. For example, Stanfield (1994) speaks to how the Western academic tradition has preferred to impose its own “enlightened” cultural constructs and theories of research with the “other,” rather than allowing the creation of Aboriginal theories and methods for research, data interpretation and knowledge dissemination (p. 176). He further argues that whenever diversity issues are addressed, it is done through existing Western theories like symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, or Marxism, rather than in inquiries created from the worldviews of Aboriginal peoples. Stanfield states that the reliance on Western theorists in cultural studies constitutes a serious flaw, and that research should be carried out from culturally unique paradigms and methodologies.

There are many examples of excellent Aboriginal research that rely on Western theories, but what Stanfield is pointing to is what I also found myself bristling at for this research; the lack of choice for relying on anything but Western theorists for analysis. Many Aboriginal researchers see parallels between some of the concepts of Western theorists and Aboriginal knowledge, and these parallels are undoubtedly the reason that some Western theories, like qualitative methodologies that focus on narratives, are seen far more often in Aboriginal research. This however, brought me to a place of a new problem. If there are so many parallels between some Western theories and Aboriginal theories, why are the Western theories the ones that are credited with being the basis for the research that is being completed?

Stanfield (1994) suggests that there are two levels of critique that should be employed in evaluating Western knowledge. The first is at the level of the paradigm, with the attempt to revise the cognitive map of a particular discipline. The second is what he calls the “knowledge production critique,” which involves the examination and perhaps revision of formal epistemologies, theories, methods, data interpretation styles, and patterns of knowledge dissemination” (p. 182). Weber-Pillwax (2003), a Metis researcher, speaks to both of these levels of critique in her identification of foundational principles of Aboriginal research (p. 42-43).

...The source of a research project is in the heart/mind of the researcher, and ‘checking your heart’ is a critical element in the research process.... A ‘good heart’ guarantees a good motive, and good motives guarantee benefits to everyone involved.... Indigenous researchers ground themselves knowingly in the lives of real persons as individual and social beings, not on the world of ideas. Any theories developed

or proposed are based upon and supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology. We as Indigenous scholars who wish to participate in the creation of knowledge within our own ways of being must begin with an active and scholarly recognition of who our philosophers and prophets are in our own communities. These are still the keepers and teachers of our epistemologies....

Despite the fact that Western knowledge does not always contain the necessary knowledge or language to address Aboriginal issues, it remains the dominant method for researching, often only allowing other worldviews if they remain marginalized (Ermine et al, 2004).

Stanfield (1994) states that “the purpose of creating the new baby is not to bury the old one, but instead to create a family of qualitative research paradigms and derived theories, methodologies, and styles of data interpretation that more adequately reflects the plural character of American society and the global community” (p. 185). Smith (1999) agrees, writing about storytelling that “Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying” (p. 28).

It is in this spirit that I embarked on the creation of the analysis for my own data. Although I have worked to be thorough in my search and understanding of Aboriginal methods of analysis, I make no claims that my method of analysis is the only way it can or should be done. This sentiment is echoed by Roberts (2006) who asserts that in the Western knowledge system, understanding entails defining an expertise on a subject, while Aboriginal peoples often begin their explanations with the phrase “this is how I understand it,” outlining that what is being expressed is their own opinion and creation of the topic under discussion (p. 24).

The starting place for my analysis was beginning to think through what I had learned about storytelling, mainly from local Elders. I thought about the importance of the verbal presentation of the story, and the relationship between the storyteller and the listener. When a story is told, there is no judgement as to what is important to take from the story, as that is expected to vary between people, and it is understood that different meanings may be found in the same story, by the same person, at a different time.

Part of doing this analysis relied on my experience as a Metis person, and on the knowledge of Aboriginal issues and worldviews that I bring to the task. Just as every researcher

brings their life experiences and understandings to their research, I bring my understanding of being Metis, of storytelling, and of the cultural teachings I have received. I also bring my training in research from the Western system, which gives me a basis for understanding Western theories of methodology and data analysis.

In completing my analysis, I relied on audio versions of my interviews for the individual interviews, and audio and video versions of the group interviews. I also used the written transcripts for all interviews. This format of analysis kept me closer to a storytelling experience. Hearing the individual stories and hearing and seeing the group gatherings provided a much more powerful connection to what was being said than by looking at transcripts alone. Working from the audio files for the individual transcripts gave me the additional information of the tone of our voices, patterns of speech, how long the pauses were, laughter and crying. The video files added even more layers, and provided such a sense of re-experiencing the interview that I found it emotionally difficult to continually watch and re-watch some of the sections of the video where the most painful memories were being discussed. I listened to each interview a minimum of five times in their entirety, and to part of the transcripts many more times than that. Each written transcript was reviewed at least ten times. Each time I listened for the pieces of the stories that were applicable to this research. I created outlines of themes from interviews, and then chose portions of the transcripts that corresponded to the chosen sections of the story to include in the results section.

Research strength and subjectivity

Polkinghorne (1988) says “an argument is valid when it is strong and has the capacity to resist challenge or attack” (p. 175, as cited in Richardson, 2004). In order to create a strong research project, I have attempted to be as genuine and transparent as I could be about the process of the research. I have lived with this research for as long as I can remember, asking questions about my identity when I started hearing my father’s stories. I began my search of the literature while completing my grade twelve in college, I have sought out the voices of other Metis people, and I have seldom taken breaks from this pursuit. I know as much about my research topic as I am able to know at this time.

I worked to remain true to the academic world, the world of my family, and the realm of the spiritual. I have taken the guidance of my education and the literature on the process of conducting quality research. I strove to be sensitive to the needs of my participants, to consider

how they were experiencing the research, and how I could ensure that they benefited by it, and were acknowledged for their contribution. I worried about how they were doing, and how the research would affect them. I guided the sessions and remained vigilant for any indication that it was going to be too emotionally difficult for any of them.

I gave them gifts in accordance with our culture to say thank you for their stories and knowledge. I have completed ceremonies for this research, my participants, and all of my family. I have fasted, smudged, and offered tobacco at various times during this research. I have tried to create a place for a Metis psychological homeland in each of our interactions, where we could experience being Metis together without fear or judgement.

Bishop (2005) says that objectivity is a denial of identity. He goes further to explain that the relationship that is developed between the researcher and the participants provides the members with their ability to participate, and that to stand aside from this would be a clear sign that a colonial process is in play. The stories that my participants shared are strong stories. They are stories that could be interpreted in a variety of ways, and this is as it should be. Different people may take different messages from them, and the same person might see different themes in it at different times in their lives. My analysis of these stories is my interpretation of them at this particular time. My interpretation of them may change with time and new insights and as my own understanding of my identity shifts.

As a Metis woman working towards a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, and completing research with my own family, this project combines the personal and academic worlds that I inhabit. My connection with this research is deep, not only in the sense that I am Metis, and have, and continue to navigate how I consider my identity and what it means to me, but also in the close personal connection with my family members, with whom I worked on this project.

This closeness to my topic provides both benefits and points of caution. My relationship to my participants made it easier for my participants to tell me their story. As family, there was a high level of trust and connection between us from the beginning. They also believed in the importance of sharing their family stories for the benefit of each other and the future generations, and they were invested in helping with this work. McCracken (1988) indicates that the researcher's own experiences can help them to understand the information provided by the participants. My experience as a Metis person and a member of my family gives me an understanding and connection to my participants that no other researcher could replicate. The

ongoing relationship with my participants made me extra vigilant to ensure I was being fair and respectful to them in all aspects of this research process as I was invested in maintaining and strengthening our personal ties.

A potential concern regarding my closeness to this topic was that I had to remain conscious of the various vantage points that I simultaneously occupy as a researcher, a Metis person, and a family member. My closeness to the topic and to my participants may have created larger than usual blind spots in this research. Journaling while collecting data for the project, and writing my dissertation in a way that strives for open, honest, introspection, has assisted me in navigating these methodological challenges, but does not eliminate them.

One of the potential blind spots is that I gathered only the stories that people chose to tell me. It is generally easier to share stories of happy and positive times than of difficult or traumatic times. My questioning around some areas of pain and difficult memories undoubtedly elicited more of these stories than I might otherwise have heard, but I only framed my questions to gather information on particular subjects. There were stories of alcohol abuse, spousal violence, affairs, suicide, and trauma that were included in this dissertation. There were also stories that were thought to be “just for family” and ones that did not pertain to this research that were put aside from this dissertation. All of the stories that were not included in the dissertation will be included in a separate document containing the complete transcripts for our family. Overall, the transcripts and the stories in this research do not represent the entire story of my family, only a part of the story that provides a glimpse into the lives of my participants and me.

A related point is that to work in a respectful manner with my participants and in remembering that these relationships will last beyond this dissertation, there have undoubtedly been times that I have focussed more on the positive aspects of these stories in my interpretation of them, and in my interpretation of the research as a whole. I believe that what I might lose in terms of critical analysis due to my closeness with my participants is more than made up for by power of their stories and their trust in me to “do the right thing for the family.” As well, I wonder if Metis stories written with strength and hope are needed to act as a counterbalance for many of the historical stories that have been steeped in racism.

Researching alongside my family has been a great privilege, and yet, the toll has also been higher than I expected. I found I was more emotionally impacted by the interviews I conducted than I would have been if I had been interviewing strangers. Asking people I care about deeply to

share some painful points in their lives, and to do so in the company of both myself, and of their brothers and sisters, has been very difficult. I found reviewing the transcripts and completing the analysis emotionally taxing. Many times I have sat at my computer and cried for my family and their pain. I imagined them all as children through their stories and experienced their memories in my own way. All along though, I believed in the process, and continued to push through the pain, feeling intuitively that it was the right thing to do. I hope that my decisions have been good ones for all of us.

My connection and understanding for my participants grew throughout this research. I have gained a great deal of personal knowledge about my own history, and I continue to work to gather together stories, dates, documents, and references to create a compilation of family history that will endure beyond this project and will be shared with my family. I have always loved my father and my aunts and uncles, and spending this time with them furthered my admiration for their capacity for caring. I am proud to be a part of this family.

My Metis mix

This dissertation is focused on the Metis heritage in my family. It is important to note that the “Turner Metis mix” includes not just First Nations heritage, but also English, Scottish, and Irish ancestors. My paternal grandfather was Metis, and my grandmother was not. I also add my mother’s family ancestries of French, English, and Danish to the mix. My mother’s ancestors spent generations in Quebec during the time of the fur trade, and some of her family ended up in the United States, along trade routes frequented by the Metis at the time. Although my mother has some information to indicate Metis heritage in her own family, she has been unable to make the links with actual documents like she did for my father’s family. All aspects of our family ancestry are important to honour and respect, and to acknowledge that there is much to be gained from learning about each of the cultures that we are from.

I have focused on the Metis cultural heritage in my family for a number of reasons. For one, the other pieces of my family mix are all cultures that are steeped in the written tradition, and finding out about them is a relatively easy task compared to learning about Metis culture, which is from an oral tradition. Fortunately, in our family, many of our European ancestors left behind letters and journals where we can learn about them. They mostly came from a background of wealth, were educated, and writing was a part of their culture. There is also relatively easy access to books about the culture and history of the English, French, Scottish and Irish people.

For Metis culture and history, much of the written works about the Metis were written by cultural outsiders, some from a Eurocentric and racist viewpoint. As well, very little personal writings have remained from the Turner family other than a few precious letters.

It was the Metis culture of my participants that was lost in a way that the other aspects of their heritage were not. Part of the reason behind this loss is the denial of their Metis heritage by a number of extended family members, likely as a result of social pressures at the time. My great-grandmother was said to have called herself French, rather than Metis, and I have heard of stories from other Metis families who were told they were French or Scottish, not Metis. The other ancestries, such as French, English, Scottish and Irish are all cultures that are accepted, and celebrated, by the mainstream Western world. Racism in contemporary times, although much improved on the past, continues to create an environment where Metis heritage is still sometimes hidden, denied, or celebrated only in private.

As Richardson (2004) reminds us, most of our lives are lived in non-Metis spaces. We are immersed in the Eurocanadian context and culture almost all the time. These non-Metis spaces are often spaces where Metis culture and identity are not welcomed, and where Metis people often choose to deny their heritage in order to avoid racism and discrimination. The need to create Metis spaces, where people feel comfortable and supported to explore their Metis heritage, is a significant factor in choosing to focus on this aspect of my participant's ancestry, and in completing this work in a way that is respectful of Metis worldviews.

My identity journey

My personal journey towards where I find myself today in my understanding of my Metis identity is an integral influence on why I began this project, how I approached the process, and how I interpret the stories that resulted. I felt that my own story did not fit within the actual interviews, in the same way as the transcripts of my participants, as the voices of the participants stood on their own. I have tried to include my thoughts throughout the dissertation without presenting my own separate life story. Including some of my own story here is a way to help inform the reader of my identity process, and what experiences and thoughts have influenced me. It was also important to me to experience the discomfort that can come with exposing ones life to the eyes of others, like I asked my participants to do.

As a child I knew that I was Metis, or at least that there was some 'Indian blood' in the history of my father's family. The stories that my father remembered about his grandparents gave

me glimpses into what that meant. “My grandmother had beaded gauntlet gloves that she kept in a chest in her room,” my dad would tell me, “and there was a bearskin rug on the floor.” My father talked about his grandfather teaching him and his siblings to make bows and arrows, showing them the right wood to use. It was more than the words in these few stories that I took to heart. It was the look in my father’s eyes when he told them, and the emotion that always went with them.

He told me about his parents being killed in a car accident after being out drinking, and that my grandmother was nine months pregnant when she died. I heard stories about his time in the orphanage, and when he ran away from there. When I was older, I remember the pain that was in his voice sometimes, and the guilt, or uncertainty, he felt about fighting in the orphanage, stealing chocolate bars and pop, and mostly, about not being able to protect his brothers and sisters and keep them together. I also began to understand his intensity around keeping his family together, and reuniting with his younger brother and sister who had been adopted out as young children.

In elementary school I told my friends that I was part Indian. The word Metis had not become part of my self-understanding. I was called ‘chief’, and I was partly proud and partly ashamed of the label. It was a strange mix of emotions that I can still conjure up. Mostly I kept ‘it’ to myself. I didn’t know what my background meant, and I didn’t have the language to express how I felt. So I didn’t talk about my Metis heritage except to a few people, and then in only the most general of terms. “Ya, there is some Native blood in my family, but I don’t know very much about it.” I would spend time trying to figure out “how much” Indian I was.

My adopted brothers are both from First Nations families. My oldest younger brother is clearly First Nations. He has raven-black hair, and eyes so dark that it is hard to see his pupils. Even my youngest brother has dark brown hair and dark chocolate eyes and skin that would make you think that he is ‘part something other than white.’ My sister and I, the two biological children in our family, have medium brown hair, light coloured eyes (blue and hazel) and skin that is also somewhere in the medium range, although we tan easily in the summer. I experienced the negation of my identity when being told “you don’t look Indian.”

I wonder now what impact the general feeling of racism towards Aboriginal people had on me. The impact was especially strong in my teen years as I worked to become many of the

stereotypes of what Indian girls are; I drank, slept around, left home early, dropped out of high school, got into abusive relationships. I too often felt stupid and inconsequential.

Eventually everything started to settle. My parents were always there, welcoming me home. I moved away to Alberta with my current partner. Discovering that there wasn't much high paying work for a high school dropout, despite my General Equivalency Diploma, I decided to take my mom's advice and stop in at the local community college. The student counsellor signed me up for the next semester for grade ten English, math, social studies, and science. The Alberta government would pay for my tuition and books, and some living expenses.

I was very scared during the first few weeks of college. I wasn't sure I was smart enough to be there, and I was worried about not being able to do the work. It turns out I was not only able to do the work, but I was good at it and enjoyed it. It was in college that I first came across a book called *Halfbreed*, by Maria Campbell. I was writing about the Metis for my paper in social studies. I was struck by the book, and read it a couple of times. Like so many others, I felt a clear connection and kinship with this woman and her story. But also, I felt that she was very Metis, and that my own experience did not echo that of a Metis person. I felt her connection to horses, and the word 'neestow' a Cree word in her book, was one of our horse's names. Beyond that I felt like I wasn't really Metis because I didn't grow up like her. I didn't suffer like her, and I didn't have a community in the way that she did. Despite the terrible and painful experiences she had, I felt myself envying her, as she felt the connection to her Metis community in such a profound way.

This slow and often painful process of trying to understand for myself what it meant to me to be Metis intensified during my three years as an undergrad at the University of Lethbridge as I completed many Native Studies courses. I began to talk more publicly about being Metis, and to search for more information about Metis people. I joined a Native American student group and learned about the Blackfeet and their culture as Lethbridge is their territory. I still did not have the understanding to fend off attacks on my identity, like being told by a Blackfoot woman that the Metis were just poachers and they were responsible for the loss of the buffalo on the plains.

The process of building my Metis identity became derailed in the first few years of graduate school, at least in terms of a public search. I marked the box beside Metis on my application for graduate school. I worried about how much that played a role in my being selected. I met another Metis student soon after beginning school. We admitted our heritage to

each other in a private conversation. He said that he didn't check the box, and that he wouldn't have because he didn't want to be here if it wasn't by his own merit. I met other Metis graduate students, but we never talked about our backgrounds. I also worried that the department would be disappointed that I didn't look more Indian, that I wouldn't be a "visible" enough minority. Some overt and some covert early experiences with racism in school suggested to me that it was best to keep quiet about being Metis. I retreated ever farther into privacy around my identity.

A few years later, after a meeting with a First Nations psychologist who suggested I check out this group in the United States, the Society of Indian Psychologists, a new phase of my self-understanding began. The first conference of that group that I attended was overwhelming. I felt uncomfortable in the talking circle, I went outside to avoid the pipe ceremony, and I could not see the psychology in their conference. I felt terribly uncomfortable, but also very supported. In my journal I noted that I wished I hadn't gone to the conference, that I didn't fit in, and that maybe I should give up trying to understand my Metis identity.

But I didn't give up, and I returned there the following year. That next year I also secured funding with the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre to support my dissertation research. Then I had the group of psychologists in the United States to learn from, and a local group of academics and fellow students involved in various degree programs here in Saskatchewan. I had a supervisor who I felt supported me, and my dissertation committee was composed entirely of people who I felt understood my topic and the importance of doing my research in a way that was respectful of Aboriginal research ethics.

All of these events led me to a place where I became certain enough to work on understanding myself as a Metis person in the process of doing my dissertation research. I began meeting with an elder, Maria Campbell, to talk about my research. She read my transcripts and shared her emotions with me. She has helped me understand Metis people and our history. Being privileged to work so long and intensely on this research on Metis identity, and to be able to work with my family and our collective history and stories, has significantly impacted on my understanding of my own Metis identity.

I write from a different place now, one which is much more comfortable. I no longer feel the burden of not being "Metis enough." I realize that I am who I am - Metis, a mix - and that I don't have to be a certain way, or do certain things to be Metis. This research and the passage of time since its inception have helped solidify my identity. It's been a long journey to get to this

place, and my footing isn't always perfect. I can be unsettled in a group of traditional women who are all speaking Cree and talking about what they learned from their grandmothers, and sharing stories of their lives steeped in their culture. But then I remember that I can learn what my grandmothers would have taught me by seeking out grandmothers now. I remind myself too, where I have come from, who I have come from, where I might one day be, and to whom I owe thanks. Now, with my first child, I see my responsibility to pass on our family heritage and stories.

Chapter Four: Our family story

I begin the Turner side of our family story as far back as the beginning of our time in Canada. It is the start of the Metis heritage in our family, and explains the particular journey of our family. It helps me to answer the question “Where/who are you from?” for myself, my family, and my readers. Our particular family history helps to shape our family story and our Metis identity.

The information for the following section comes from three main sources. Almost all of what we know about Philip Turnor, the first Turner in Canada, is contained within the 1968 book *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* compiled by J. B. Tyrrell. This book was first published in 1934, and contains the journals of Philip Turnor that as an employee of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), he was required to keep. The name Turnor changed spelling to Turner a few generations after the arrival of Philip Turnor in Canada, for unknown reasons. I am indebted to and inspired by family historians who spent untold hours creating, without the benefit of computers and the internet, large volumes of information on our family. These volumes are: *Across the River: A History of the Turner, Thompson, and Campbell Families*, by Pearl Weston (1995) and *The Artisan’s and the Mountie: A Family History of the Coutts and Turner Families of Fort Saskatchewan*, by Reg Turner (2001). On his final page, Reg passes the responsibility for continuing the family stories to the next generations, and it is with pleasure that I am able to work with my parents and my aunts and uncles to add a chapter to our collective story.

Philip Turnor: My great-great-great-great-great grandfather

Up until the late 1700’s, the Hudson’s Bay Company and independent traders from Montreal, had competed for furs inland from York Factory, to the Saskatchewan river, and for “600 miles up that river to the country of the buffalo hunting Indians on the Great Plains.” (Tyrrell, 1968, p. 60). The independent traders were cutting into the profits of the HBC, and the officers of the company wrote to the Governor and Committee of HBC in London to let them know that they were trying to retain the trade. To do this they were sending their men throughout the vast unknown country to follow the Indians to their lands in order to secure their furs before they took them to the independent traders. The Governor and Committee of the HBC decided to send surveyors into Rupert’s Land to map the rivers and lakes that their men would have to navigate, the positions of their settlements, and those of the opposing traders, and to understand

more clearly the conditions and difficulties that were to be encountered in obtaining the furs inland (Tyrrell, 1968).

In May of 1778, Philip Turnor was contracted for three years of service as the first surveyor to be employed by the HBC (Tyrrell, 1968). He was described as “aged about twenty-six years, of Laleham in Middlesex.” (Tyrrell, 1968, p. 62). Philip sailed on a HBC ship called the King George, and arrived at York Factory in August, 1778 (Tyrrell, 1968). York Factory was located at the mouth of the Hayes River in Northeast Manitoba. He completed an inspection of York Factory after he arrived, and then set out for Cumberland house, an inland Fort in Northeast Saskatchewan. He arrived at Cumberland House on October (Tyrrell, 1968).

In the years to follow he spent time working and surveying at Moose Factory, at the south end of James Bay in Ontario, and at various other HBC forts in the area (Tyrrell, 1968). He lost his sextant when his canoe overturned about 90 miles from Moose Factory on the Abitibi River at a place still called Sextant rapids (Tyrrell, 1968). He eventually surveyed and drew maps for areas from the rivers around Moose Factory in Northeast Ontario to Slave Lake in central Alberta. Turnor Lake in Saskatchewan is named after him. The maps that he produced upon his final return to England were to be the basis of the majority of maps in Canada until technology changed the manner of map making (Tyrrell, 1968).

Sometime around 1784, Philip became involved with an Aboriginal woman (Turner, 2001). Weston writes in her book that a John MacDonald of Fort Hope wrote that “during his latter life Philip married an Eskimo woman and as far as we know they had three children - two boys and one girl.” (1995, p. 17). It seems more likely that she was Cree, but there is no way of knowing for sure (Turner, 2001). They were likely married “according to the custom of the country,” not necessarily overseen by the church, but a marriage none the less (Turner, 2001). Records from England record a marriage between Philip Turnor and Elizabeth Armstrong in 1785 at a church in England (Turner, 2001). It is impossible to know if this marriage refers to Philip’s country wife, as he was in Canada at the date reported to be his marriage day, or whether the date was entered incorrectly and he was married to an English woman after he returned there (Weston, 1995; Turner, 2001).

In 1787, Philip returned to England, and there is no evidence as to what happened to his country wife and children (Turner, 2001). He reenlisted with the HBC for three years beginning in 1789 (Tyrrell, 1968). The winters of 1789 and 1790 were spent teaching David Thompson to

survey after David had fallen over a bank and broken his leg and had to take the time to heal (Tyrrell, 1968). He also taught Peter Fidler to survey in 1790 (Tyrrell, 1968). He returned to England in 1792, where he taught navigation, and continued working on the maps of his surveys for the HBC (Tyrrell, 1968). He died in early 1800 around the age of 48 (Tyrrell, 1968).

Joseph Turnor Sr.: My great-great-great-great grandfather and Philip, my great-great-great grandfather

One of Philip's children was his son Joseph Turnor Sr., who was born around 1784, where Frederick house would be located once built in Northeastern Ontario (Weston, 1995). Joseph began working for the HBC at age fifteen, first as a labourer, and over the next few years he became the master of Frederick house (Weston, 1995). Joseph married a woman known only as Emma (Turner, 2001). Among their children, was a son named Philip, born around 1812 at Kenogamissi (Turner, 2001). Philip also worked for the HBC as a middleman and carpenter, at Moose Factory (Turner, 2001). Philip married Jane Chisolm Boland at Moose Factory in 1837 and one of their children was named Joseph Alexander (Turner, 2001).

Joseph Alexander Turner: My great-great grandfather

One of their children of Philip and Jane was Joseph Alexander, who was born in 1838 at Moose Factory in Manitoba (Turner, 2001). Joseph travelled from Moose Factory to Portage la Prairie at the Red River settlement in 1854 at the age of 15 (Turner, 2001). He married Jane Whitford in 1862, and in 1864 he left with his wife and two children, the youngest only two weeks old, to go to Fort Victoria (Turner, 2001). It was a journey of over 1200 kilometres, measured by modern roads, and likely in a Red River cart. They were among a group of 25-35 Metis families that moved to the Victoria settlement that year in the hope of finding good land and opportunities, and to avoid the growing political and social tension in Red River (Turner, 2001). Fort Victoria had been started by Reverend George McDougall in 1862 in Alberta, on the North Saskatchewan River, not far from present day Smoky Lake (Melnicky, 1997). Joseph worked for the Hudson's Bay Company and built the Clerks Quarters at the settlement (Turner, 2001). The clerk's quarters building still stands today at the Fort Victoria Heritage Park. They relocated to Fort Saskatchewan in 1884 and built their home by the river on the site of what is now Turner Park (Weston, 1995).

Robert William Turner: My great-grandfather

Joseph and Jane had twelve children, including my great grandfather Robert Turner. Robert was born in 1870, right in the middle of a smallpox epidemic that took the lives of 320 people at Victoria settlement (Turner, 2001). He later married Catherine (Kate) Brown. Kate was the daughter of a Magnus Brown, a HBC boat builder from the Isle of Hoy, Orkney Islands in Scotland. Magnus built river scows at Athabasca Landing for the HBC. They lived in the country outside Fort Saskatchewan, where Robert worked for a local farmer. My great grandfather has been described to me as a gentle, laid back man. I have been told that he was a man who could “fix anything.” Kate is described as “feisty,” a woman who loved fast horses, had hunting dogs, and was a great shot with a gun. Reg Turner (2001) writes that his mother told him that Kate was Fort Saskatchewan’s version of “Calamity Jane.” Kate died on Christmas Eve day in 1954, and just over a month later, on January 31, 1955, Robert died.

Fredrick Edgar (Ed) Turner: My grandfather

Robert and Kate had ten children, one of which was my grandfather, Fredrick Edgar (Ed) Turner. Ed was born in 1910 at Fort Saskatchewan. October 4, 1941, Ed and Winnifred (Winnie) Adamson were married in Edmonton, Alberta. Winnie was the daughter of an affluent English family in Fort Saskatchewan. Her father was the magistrate at the Fort. Ed was from a working class family, and he worked at a creosote plant in Edmonton. His family did not own their own land, and were half-breeds. Ed and Winnie lived in a two bedroom home with their children, on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta. Ed and Winnie were in a fatal car accident on July 30, 1955. Winnie died that day, as did her full term unborn child, Vernon. Ed died the next day, on July 31, 1955. Ed and Winnie’s living children were Judy, Bob, Ed, Brian, and Doreen (changed to Debbie through adoption).

My research starting point

It is in the generation of Ed and Winnie’s children that I have focussed my research. I never knew my grandparents or great grandparents, except through my father’s stories and my mother’s searching for their ancestry. Most of the writing about the Turner family stops after mention of my grandparents. The generation of Turners that includes my father is the one that most directly impacts on my answer to “who am I” and to “where am I going” and “what are my responsibilities?” It is also a generation of people who I can meet with and ask about their stories.

My father, Ed, was eight years old when both his parents died in a car accident. My grandfather was driving and he had been drinking. The day of the accident, my father's eldest sibling, Judy, was thirteen, Bob was eleven, Brian was three, and it was Debbie's first birthday. My father's mother was a week overdue with a baby when she and the baby died. These deaths came less than a year after the death of my father's paternal grandparents and the death of their paternal aunt Jenny, who was a close family member.

My father's mother's family, the Adamson's, were an affluent and respected White family in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Despite their financial resources they did not become involved with the welfare of the orphaned Turner children. Our family stories say that the Adamson side of the family had not approved of the marriage of their daughter to a half-breed man, and after the accident they thought it best if the children were not taken in by the Adamson side of the family. My father knew that, at least for him, his parents had arranged for an uncle and aunt on the Adamson side of the family to be his godparents, but that they never followed through with this commitment. It is likely that the Adamson's were well aware of the negative view of the Metis from the White community in which they lived, and given the times, and that they were unhappy with the marriage, they may have shared these majority views themselves. Rightly or wrongly, I grew up with a sense of the Adamson's choice as an unjust one, and one that cost my father and his siblings dearly.

The relatives the children went to stay with after the deaths of their parents were Turner relatives, Metis relatives. Although this side of the family had few financial resources, they worked to keep the children together for as long as they could. My youngest aunt went to stay with one family, and her three brothers and eldest sister went to another. My father told me stories of his aunt Barb and uncle Harvey, who they lived with, and what great people they were. There were also hints of discord and infidelity as uncle Harvey was described as a ladies man, and everyone seemed to have a story of how handsome he was. I also had a sense that things went really badly at some point, since Barb and Harvey's own children had ended up in care and had suffered greatly as children because of that.

Within a year of their placement with their aunt Barb and uncle Harvey, circumstances dictated that the youngest, Debbie (then known by her birth name, Doreen), was placed in her adoptive family; the boys, Bob, Ed and Brian, were in the orphanage. My eldest aunt, Judy, had already been in the orphanage before moving into her first foster care placement. She chose to

leave her aunt Barb and uncle Harvey's home early to give them some more space for the boys. After more than a year in the orphanage, Brian, my youngest uncle, was placed in an adoptive home. My father Ed and his oldest brother Bob remained at the orphanage for almost four years before being placed in foster care.

The oldest three children stayed in touch throughout these separations, but it was not until he was an adult that my father found his youngest brother and sister. Prior to the beginning of this research, since they were separated as children, they had all been together in one place only once, in 1996, for a family reunion. They had never gathered to talk about what had happened in their lives as a result of their parent's deaths.

Growing up, I heard from my father the stories about his grandparents, his parents, and his extended family. He told me too, of being in the orphanage, of running away from there and living on raw food from gardens and stolen wagon wheel chocolate bars, and of how good the meal of pork chops, mashed potatoes and creamed corn tasted when they gave up running away and went to his aunt Barb's house before returning to the orphanage. He talked about losing contact with his two youngest siblings through their adoptions, and of his determination to find them when he was grown.

I heard of how we had Indian ancestry. My dad talked about the bear skin rug in his grandmother's room, of her beaded gauntlet gloves, her skill with a gun, and her love of fast horses. As a person who knows one of the best ways to cure anything is to go for a gallop on my horse, I always felt close to my great-grandmother, even though we never met. My father told me about his grandfather, how he spoke Cree, and of his Cree nickname from his grandfather "wapistikwan," little white head in Cree, because his hair was so light when he was young.

Not long after my birth, my mother began completing the genealogy of my father's family. My father did not have any clear information about his heritage, other than what he knew of his paternal grandparents. My mother was not able to get any information from any Turner relatives probably due to a mix of not knowing the answers themselves, as well as not wanting to identify as having Indian blood in their history.

My maternal grandmother came from a family who were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). It was through the LDS church records that my mom began to trace the Turner family line. My mother also had a friend who was attending the University of Edmonton and who had mentioned that she was entering scrip information onto computer at the

university. My mom asked her to keep an eye out for information relating to my father's family. Her friend sent her copies of the scrip documents for my great-grandfather, Robert William Turner, and his wife, Katherine, as well as for my great-great grandfather, Joseph Alexander Turner. It was the first solid evidence that the Turner family was Metis. As my mother continued working through the genealogy of my father's family, I learned about Philip Turnor, and how he came to Canada as a surveyor for the Hudson's Bay Company. I saw how I could trace myself back to this time.

I learned to be proud of my heritage, but with great uncertainty of what it meant. What do I, a light skinned woman with Metis heritage but no relatives to teach her what Metis means, do to understand this concept? My parents were my only "community" when it came to understanding about being Metis, and my father had been separated from his own parents and grandparents so early that he too was searching.

Gathering the stories

I was also searching, and hoping that from this process of interviews with my family that I would make the connections that I needed to flesh out my family story. What follows is the process and excerpts from the transcripts. I have presented the results in the order of completion of the interviews and in a chronological order, as a way to give the reader the most accurate account of this research process, and to build a greater understanding of how this research unfolded and what changes were occurring in my own thinking and that of my family along the way. In keeping with the belief in the essential nature of stories for understanding identity, the results themselves become a story, the story of completing this research, and of a specific period in time for my family.

In order to help understand who the participants are, their backgrounds and relationships to each other, some additional background information is needed. Before each individual interview is presented, a short synopsis of each person is presented to help orient the reader to the important events and people in each interview, and to situate the interview in the context of the entire family. For reference, I have compiled a timeline of events that are pertinent to the participants and the timeframe that is covered by the research (See Appendix D). I have also created a family tree, beginning with Philip Turnor's arrival in Canada, ending with my participants, and including short information summaries for each generation. The synopses for each participant that begin their interviews are reproduced in the family tree (See Appendix E).

Within the transcripts I have used short pieces of the text as headings, to highlight the topic under discussion, and to make these long transcripts as accessible to the reader as possible.

My journey to gather these family stories began in July of 2005. My father came to Saskatoon, and we left to complete individual interviews with everyone. I recorded in my journal both my excitement and my uncertainty about how the interviews would go. My uncertainty related to a number of areas: would my questions be welcomed? Will the process be too painful for anyone? How can I make this into an academic dissertation? What is it that I will discover about my relatives and myself? Despite these questions, I felt blessed to be going on this journey, and to have my father there with me, and I believed that capturing everyone's life stories would be an enriching experience for the entire family. My father and I talked a great deal about family during the trip.

Brian's story

The first day we arrived at my uncle Brian's home, I was struck by how little I really knew my youngest uncle, and how long it had been since I had seen my cousins. I felt a bit unfamiliar with him and his family. My uncle Brian looks very much like a Turner, with dark hair and skin, and bright blue eyes that remind me of my uncle Bob. His voice too, and his humour made me feel at home, and reminded me that I was talking to a member of my family, even if we did not know each other well. I remembered the stories that my dad would tell me about Brian in the orphanage, about how much he missed him and worried about him, and how he went to find him when he learned where he lived. The story of finding Brian's parents is one of the stories that I knew by heart from childhood. Dad told me how scared he was to approach Brian's parents, but that his need to know that his little brother was okay was stronger than the fear.

My dad, aunt, and my cousin all headed out to do some shopping, and uncle Brian and I settled in to start our interview. I was the most nervous at the outset of this interview, partly by the virtue of it being the first one, and also because I knew the least about my uncle Brian. The interview went smoothly despite my jitters, and uncle Brian was a gracious and willing interviewee. I started out by asking my uncle Brian to tell me about himself and his life.

Synopsis:

Brian was born on May 7, 1952. He was three years old when his parents were killed. Brian was the fourth child born to Ed and Winnie. After his parents' deaths, Brian lived with a Turner family relative (along with his brothers) for a year, and he was then moved to the orphanage.

After approximately a year and a half in the orphanage, Brian was adopted by Jim and Ruth Kinloch of Wetaskiwin, Alberta. He has one adopted sister, Maureen. Brian married his wife Wendy and they have two children, Greg and Stacey. Brian has worked as an RCMP member for his entire career and he has recently retired.

I was born Brian Keith Turner

Brian: I was born Brian Keith Turner, but I didn't really find that out for years. I think my earliest memories would be – I can remember coming out a kitchen in an old house, sort of clapboard sides, and into a back porch.... And going down a long sidewalk, that would be on the sidewalk in front of our house up towards a little creek. I can remember being in an uncle's truck, a panel truck, and going to grandma and grandpa's house, or coming from grandma and grandpa's house, I think I was about two. I was excited about going to grandma and grandpa's house. I can remember dad, he had a railway engine and Bob and Ed and I were playing around the stacks of railway ties and Bob got to go up into the railway engine room with dad and I was really upset about that I couldn't go up to the train engine too. The next thing I knew they were hosing us down with a fire hose from the train engine, and apparently it was a steam crane. Dad operated the crane for the creosote plant for dipping railway ties in creosote. I don't remember mom. Dad, that image I remember of dad, up in the train and hosing me down with the fire hose, and I can remember I did an awful lot of swearing, I had a potty mouth.

My cousin's place and the orphanage

Tara: Do you have any idea of what age that memory was?

Brian: Three or four maybe, somewhere around there. My next remembrances would be at our cousins' place in Edmonton. We were all living there. I don't remember staying there a long time - a couple of weeks or a couple of months, I don't remember. I can remember it being summertime and being there and the long staircase down from the second floor, of a wartime house. They had TV and there were lots of kids - they had a bunch of kids of their own, and Bob and Ed and Judy and myself. I remember Debbie as a baby there but I didn't remember her name until I was told years later..... I could remember that there were cousins there, but I couldn't remember who they were.

And then to the orphanage in Edmonton. I could remember that we were in the front part of the orphanage upstairs, in a big long room with all the boys of different ages, and then there were areas for the girls too in a different part of the house.... We used to play in a little clump of willows out back and there was a big car, and it was great to play in the dirt around the car. Sitting down for meals, there was a big, long table with all the kids, and we all said grace together. We were afraid of, or I was afraid of, the man and woman who ran the place. We'd get spankings.

I remember one time Bob went to go downtown with one of his buddies and I wanted to go too. Bob started to walk downtown and I'd follow him and he chased me back and I'd call him names and he'd call me names and he'd spank me and I'd run back to the gate of the orphanage and he'd start walking back downtown and I'd go chasing after him and that went on and on and on, and finally I got the message and stayed at the orphanage.... I remember going to a church, all the

kids from the orphanage, and we got there down in the basement, and Santa Claus arrived, and I got my first toy, a Greyhound Straddle Cruiser bus. (Hmmm) I have a picture of that Christmas party, your dad found it for me, and then I found again when I went to the provincial archives. It was a picture of me and the black boy I hung around with, we're beside the piano, someone is playing the piano. Part of the Christmas party I guess. What else do I remember about the orphanage? I remember getting spanked lots because of my potty mouth.

It was sort of funny, years later, when Wendy and I were married, we were driving around in that part of Edmonton looking for Defers Furniture, and we came across the tracks, and I looked, and there were the hedges for the orphanage, and the pillars for the gate, and further down the street was the school. The garage was still standing but the orphanage was gone. But you seen the tracks, the Cautions Van Lines, the house going down the hill towards the orphanage, the sidewalk, the hedge and the gate, and I knew that was where the orphanage was. That would be in 1970's sometime.

The strength of his memory for the location of the orphanage struck me. Despite his being gone from the orphanage for so many years, and that it was no longer even there, he knew that was where it had stood. It is a simple thing, but it seemed to me to illustrate the significance of his memory of that time in his life.

There is something about saying goodbye

My next remembrance was Judy brought me down stairs, and I was going to meet my mother and dad. I was apprehensive but I was excited too. I met these people, Jim and Ruth Kinloch. I can't remember whether there was more than one meeting, or if that was it. I was going with them. There is something about saying "goodbye" and I couldn't remember being able to say goodbye to my brothers and sisters and they wouldn't let me take my bus, the only toy I had—I knew where it was. It was out in the willows, but the lady that ran the orphanage said, "let the other kids play with it now, you'll get new toys"

...

Tara: So, how old were you when you were adopted out, do you remember?

Brian: About four or five.

Tara: Pretty young still.

Brian: There's not a lot I remember about being in the Turner family. I knew I had brothers and sisters. After a while I forgot Debbie's name. I knew Judy, Bob, and Ed. I just sort of fit in with the Kinloch family, and I can remember when I turned 16, mom called me upstairs, and dad was sitting in his chair, his recliner. Mom sat down in the other chair beside him and she looked real nervous, and they asked me to sit on the couch. I thought I had done something and they had caught me, darn it (laughs). After some humming and hawing dad said, "I don't know if you know this or remember this, but you were adopted." I said, "yeah." So he was a little relieved at that point and he said, "I hope you realize that we love you, and we raised you as our son." I said, "I'm your son." And then he says "Do you realize that you have brothers and sisters?" I said,

“Yeah, Bob and Ed and Judy.” It sort of shocked them. Dad said, “they’ve been in touch with us and they want to know if you want to meet them.” I thought “Hey, that’d be neat.” When you are adopted you don’t know where your brothers and sisters are, you sort of like to get to know them and sort of fantasize about them. Ed will be a rich guy, and Bob will be even wealthier. (laughs)

Tara: Boy, oh boy, were you wrong.

Brian: I guess everyone has those stupid fantasies. It was sometime after that they came to Wetaskiwin and stopped at mom and dad’s house, and they got reunited.

Tara: So, what was that like seeing your brothers and sisters for the first time after several years?

Brian: A little awkward at first, but I knew they were my brothers and sisters and I was interested and wanted to know who they were.

....

I looked like a little Indian

We talked for a while about his experiences growing up in the Kinloch household. Brian’s sister Maureen was ten years older than him, and he describes a house where he was loved and spoiled by his family. There were lots of friends, sports, church, and activities. His mother and father divided their activities traditionally, as homemaker and breadwinner. Signs that he may have had a different heritage from his parents first surface after he was away at summer camp, although they were easily explained away at the time.

Brian:In summertime mom and dad like to golf and their vacation was when I went to summer camp. I don’t know why. (laughs) I’d go to the United Church camp at Sylvan Lake, for about three years. I remember the first year I went there I had a real good time, I was a little homesick at first, and then it was all right. A lot of the other kids from camp were from Wetaskiwin too so we were all buddies anyway. I can remember when mom and dad came to pick me up and I had been out in the sun for a whole week, and I was just black. The counsellor, or someone made a comment that I looked like a little Indian cause I was so dark. And I think he said to dad “I expected that he was from a Native family, and that a Native family would pick him up.” But dad tanned real easy too. I think having the Native heritage, I noticed, you really do tan. (laughs)

Hi, I’m Ed, Brian’s brother

Tara: Did your parents know what your background was?

Brian: I don’t think so, unless Ed told them. He gave her quite a scare. Apparently when he turned sixteen and bought a Volkswagen, he found out where I was and he drove and parked across the street and was watching the house, and when I left for school he went to the house and rang the doorbell and mom answered the door. He said “hi, I’m Ed, Brian’s brother,” and she said

she nearly about fainted and fell down the stairs.... Mom phoned dad at work and he came home and they got introduced. I didn't know about that until after I turned sixteen myself....

It is kind of interesting, getting back to bonds, and the kind of bond between me and Ed, and hearing things about my childhood. It rang bells and jogged memories. And your dad got me a picture of our dad in his crane engine, and boom, I remembered that incident in the creosote yard and being hosed down by the fire hose from the train engine - it wasn't just a dream, it really did happen. Over the years it sort of felt more like a dream than reality. Seeing a picture of grandma and grandpa standing in front of their house, and I think I remember their house, and Judy talking about the smoked fish in the barrel, taking a smoked fish as you were going out the door. Maybe that's why I'm not fussy about fish to this day. (laughs)

Tara: So, after that, did you have much contact with Judy, Bob, and Ed?

Brian: Uh, not a lot. Your dad was, still seems to be, the main contact. He phones around and asks, "have you been talking to so and so" or whatever. That sort of reminds me that I do have other brothers and sisters and I should be calling them. Sort of keeps the family together. When Wendy and I were going out with each other was the next time we had contact, and I think Bob had invited me to go up to Gran Isle, and Wendy's brother had a tent trailer, and I had a car with a trailer hitch on it, and we borrowed his tent trailer and went up there. There was a little bit of a kafuffle with our parents, because we weren't married. And we drove up to Gran Isle and stayed there, visited, and had also gone up to Prince George, too, either that trip or another trip. Met Emile and Judy and Shauna and Richard were kids then and they lived in their old house. I can't remember when that was, but by the time we had moved to Smithers Judy was already in the new house and Emile was dead.

...

We talked for a while about his time in university, signing up with the RCMP, stories of his basic training, and the starting days of his career. He talked about meeting his wife Wendy, his father's illness, his children's births, and the places where their family had been posted.

It was a matter of fact

Tara: So, you don't know that your parents necessarily knew what your background or heritage was. Did you have any sense of that yourself?

Brian: No. I can remember as a kid, I'd play with anybody. That was probably from being in the orphanage.... The first time I ever had any exposure to racism or anything like that, a kid moved in to the house next door to us, after they moved away, and while I was playing in the playground there were a couple of Indian girls playing on the swings and we were on the swings. He started to make racist comments about them being savages and stuff like that and I sort of jumped on the bandwagon. Afterwards, I think I knew it wasn't right. Otherwise, no, there was always lots of Indians around Wetaskiwin. The only ones you'd see were the ones that were drunk and were passed out beside the Whales hotel in the dirt. I never had any negative experiences with them, any conflicts with them.

Tara: Did you ever look at a time when people were talking about having Indian blood, or being Metis or anything like that, with your brothers and sisters?

Brian: Yes. Just with Ed and Bob and Judy. I think the thing that came back to me was mom and dad saying that I tanned just like a little Indian. The first time I was picked up at Camp and the counsellor saying that he expected Brian's parents to be Native.

Tara: Did it surprise you?

Brian: Hmmm. I don't think so. It was a matter of fact. Here I am finding something about my background that explained why I tanned so much in the summer. (laughs)... I don't think it ever bothered me. The only time it bothered me, one time, we were on a bus going through Regina, after going shooting, and the guys were making comments about the ones we were passing on the streets of Regina and talking about the 'spearchuckers' out there. Should shoot some of those 'spearchuckers'. I turned to my pit partner and said I was part 'spearchucker' and the next thing you know, he turned to them and said we have a part 'spearchucker' here, let's shoot him. (laughs) After that I felt embarrassed and felt I should have kept that secret to myself. (laughs)

Sometimes it comes in handy. (laughs) I tan real well, and one time I was sitting in a café in Loon Lake and an Indian woman behind us was quite drunk. She started talking to us in Cree. I said, "awas." She said "How do you know Indian talk?" I said "I'm part Indian myself." She said "Say something else." I told her "I don't want to talk to you." (laughs)... On and on, she thought I was Indian. (laughs)

I found in Loon Lake I got along better with people there than in Foam Lake. I think I was in two fights in Loon Lake. One I settled quite nicely with my flashlight. The other one I kept the guy on the floor until he got tired. (laughs) But, when I went to Foam Lake, all it was, was rich farmer's kids, a lot of drinking, and fighting, and it seemed like every week I had to break up a fight. I just hated working with White people. At that point I was ready to go back to Loon Lake, I'd rather work with the Indians. I don't know if it means anything or not.

Tara: Do you spend much time thinking about it, about being Metis?

Brian: I've often thought I should follow in Ed's footsteps and pursue a membership. I don't know whether it might benefit Stacey and Greg. I don't really worry about it or think about it a lot.

Tara: Not a big part of your everyday life?

Brian: No. I think it helps me be a lot more tolerant working with Native people. As you get older, you get more conscious of the proper things to say and do. I think I am growing up into that now. I get a lot of exposure as there are four reserves in the area that I service, Thunder Child, Onion Lake, Loon Lake, and Mystic River.

Tara: Do Stacey and Greg know that you have some Native...?

Brian: Stacey likes it cause she gets a good tan. (laughs)

Tara: I like that part too. (laughs)

Brian: Greg doesn't like it cause he can't tan. (laughs) His sister and I got it all. All he does is burn. We went to Stacey's graduation and part of the ceremony, the Native friendship centre had some representatives there, and they called up about eleven kids from Stacey's class that were Native or part Native and gave them an eagle feather. I thought - my daughter could have been up there. I thought that I should have done something about that.

Tara: What would it have been like with that connection with your parents and your grandparents?

Brian: I don't know if Stacey or Greg ever had any experiences or if anyone has ever given them a rough time about it. I certainly haven't taken any flak until my pit partner.... (laughs)

I sort of felt that I've been cheated

We discussed the process of talking to me, and the uncertainty over knowing what I wanted, and the difficulty of putting one's life in chronological order. Uncle Brian remembered to add his experiences in Air Cadets growing up, and his dad's passion for sports. He expressed feeling cheated, for himself and for his kids, when his father died, and when thinking about the loss of his biological parents.

Tara: When did he pass away?

Brian: In '75. Wendy and I got married in November of '74 and he made up his mind that he was going to gain ten pounds and make it to our wedding, and he made it. In March of '75 he passed away.

Tara: He never had a chance to meet your kids?

Brian: No.

Tara: That would have been good.

Brian: Yeah. I sort of feel like I've been cheated, with something like that. I often wonder what I would have turned out like if mom and dad Turner hadn't been killed. The way I swore and carried on. How would I have turned out? (laughs) Would I have been on the other side of the cells, looking at the Mountie? (laughs)

Tara: Well, I think there's been a few Turners on the other side of the cells over the years. You're probably the only RCMP. (laughs)

Brian: Or, would Judy have been able to bash me into shape?

Tara: Yes, she might have - it sounds like she was a force of nature. I think in lots of ways, it is definitely a unique experience to this family but in reading and thinking about Metis people and identity and whether people have that identity as part of their day to day, or not, or whether it is something that is sometimes there, or whether it's a matter of manoeuvring in some ways. So the family story is unique in a sense that the parents were killed and everybody was so young, but in lots of ways, lots of Metis families have had that happen too, either by death or by poverty breaking families up. Or just people deciding that it's easier to integrate into society to put that piece aside because it wasn't very helpful at the time.

What I was trying to articulate, and could not find the words for, was that the loss, or setting aside, of one's identity as Metis was experienced by many people, not just our family. Luckily my uncle Brian is a perceptive man and picked up on the general thread from my confused thoughts.

Brian: Yeah. We've actually, in Loon Lake, considered adopting a young Native boy. Social Services was pestering me to adopt a little boy. I knew his dad and had dealt with him for years. And I see his name quite often in fingerprints that come across my desk and it makes you wonder if I should have been more into it or more inclined and, stepped in when we have the opportunity.

Tara: It's hard to know...

Brian: They turn down other people that try to adopt Indian children. The Mounted Police, when you get transferred out of the community, is the Native community going to allow you to take the child that you are caring for? Just as a foster parent sort of thing. We weren't sure that we wanted to get attached to a little boy and not be able to take him with us.

I found it interesting that although my uncle Brian said that his Metis heritage didn't have much day to day impact on him, he had a number experiences that seemed to show his connection to his ancestry, and a general connection with Aboriginal people that seems beyond what many non-Aboriginal people have. I felt the pain of his experience of sharing his ancestry with his colleagues and having been teased for it, even though he didn't feel it impacted him much at the time.

Also knowing my father's story of going to find Brian, and how scared he was to approach Brian's parents, but of how desperate he was to reconnect with his baby brother, made me wonder if Brian knew how much he was loved and missed by his siblings. I wondered as well what my cousins would choose for themselves in terms of their identity. Would they seek out this part of their family history or leave it as an interesting, but not critical, footnote of their past?

The next day dad and I said our goodbyes, took a few pictures, and headed out to Fort Victoria, Alberta. At an interpretive centre there I was able to see and go inside the building that

my great-great grandfather Joseph Alexander Turner built after he arrived with his family in 1864. It was the first permanent building at the fort, and its Red River frame construction has stood the test of time. My great grandfather, Robert, was born at Fort Victoria.

Dad and I walked down to the river where the ferry crossing used to be. We smudged and said a prayer for our ancestors who had been there, and left some tobacco on the site. It felt very good to be there where our family had been, especially to be there together on this trip about family. It was easy to feel connected to the past in this quiet place, and to imagine their lives there. I wondered about the life of my great-great grandmother, and how it was for her. It struck me that the women are often forgotten as the partners in the creation of our history.

We drove on to Athabasca and visited the grave of Mason Brown, my great grandmother's father. He was a HBC boat builder, from the Isle of Hoy in the Orkney Islands in Scotland. We went to the archives where they had pictures on the wall of Mason Brown in the process of building one of the big scow boats that the HBC used to transport goods up and down the rivers. It was a picture we already had, but it was nice to see it hanging in the archives. After spending some time there, we went to Fort Saskatchewan for the night.

In the morning we headed to the museum and looked up the obituaries for my grandparents and great grandparents in the Fort Record newspaper from 1954 and 1955. Dad showed me the places where he went when he ran away from the orphanage, and the cannon monument that he had slept under for shelter. It was really good to see the things I had heard about so many times. I had always pictured his stories in my mind, but being there with him, hearing them again, made them very real and even more intense for me.

We went to the Fort Saskatchewan cemetery where we saw many Turner's headstones, including the one for Joseph Alexander Turner, my great-great grandfather. We also went to the cemetery in Edmonton, the Evergreen Memorial, where my grandparents, my uncle who was not yet born when he died in the accident, and my great grandparents are buried. We spent a long time there, smudging and praying, talking and crying. It was hard for my father, and hard for me. We left sage and tobacco there for them.

We later went to the home of the woman who was the daughter of the family for whom my great grandparents, grandparents, and great uncles had worked for on their farm. The house and farmyard still show the affluence of the family, even in its state of wild overgrowth. The beautiful old brick house and many shops, barns and garages are becoming dilapidated, but

Grace, the daughter, although aging herself, is a treasure, and so generously shared her memories of my family with me and my dad. Dad brought the book of family pictures to look through with Grace. Grace said that dad really had the Turner laugh. She told a story of how Kate Turner, my great grandmother, used to drive up with her horse and buggy at the end of the day and yell out “daaaad-dy” to great grandpa Turner to get him to come to the buggy to go home. We went out into the shop where they used to work, and took a picture of my father’s uncle Frank Turner’s signature on the wall. It is always comforting to be there among all the tools, the forge and the heavy equipment that they used there. Dad and I both took a memento for ourselves from the shop with Grace’s blessing.

Trickster

Dad showed me where he went to school in Edmonton, the homes where he and his family and friends used to live, and the site where the creosote plant where his father worked used to be. The next morning, when we were leaving our hotel to go to the museum and archives, we discovered that someone had been through the car. A number of things had been taken, including the video camera, but the most serious loss was the photo albums, including the one that my father had worked on for years to piece together of photos of his family that had been lost with the separation of their family. There was also an album of photos from mom and dad’s retirement party, and those photos too, put together by friends, were irreplaceable. We searched for a few hours in parks, garbage bins and in alleys, with no luck. We went on to the museum and archives, but we were really down, and our hearts were not in the day.

I was questioning whether a trickster was trying to tell me something about my project and whether I should proceed. I felt terrible for my father on the loss of the album that was so important to him, and I felt very responsible that it was gone. It felt like we had already been on such a roller coaster ride of emotions, and we had only been on our trip for a couple of days. How could it be that this album could be lost on this very trip to collect and share family stories? Was I not meant to gather these stories? Was I getting a message to “leave it alone,” that the wound was too big for me to manage and that I should not be reawakening old memories? All of the precious photos gone, some of which took years to gather, the video camera gone, and along with it tapes containing details of memories that were now lost. We both felt sick about the loss, but it felt like we should continue and do what we came to do. After spending the night with Dad’s foster niece and her partner, whose light hearts and welcome cheered us up, we headed off to Prince George.

Bob's story

I interviewed uncle Bob the next morning. It is impossible to convey with the written word my uncle Bob's gentle demeanour, his gravelly voice, and how just listening to his voice makes me feel calm and comforted. I had spent more time with my uncle Bob than any of my other aunts or uncles on my father's side of the family, as we had seen more of them when we were children. Also, for a period in my late teens I had lived close enough to my uncle that I could visit him and his family, and I often did. My dad also had more stories of my uncle Bob since he had spent more time growing up with him than my uncle Brian, and all of his stories of Bob were of how he always looked after everyone, and of how generous his nature was.

Synopsis:

Robert (Bob) was born on March 14, 1944. He was eleven years old when his parents were killed. Bob was the second child born to Ed and Winnie. After his parents' deaths, Bob lived with his brothers at his aunt and uncle's home. He then was moved to the orphanage for three and a half years and then into a foster home with his brother Ed. Bob decided to join the military and he served overseas. Bob married Pat and they have two children, Danica, and Brooke. Bob and Pat were divorced and Bob also became a single parent of his two girls. Bob spent most of his working life repairing heavy duty equipment in northern areas, including Yukon, and he is now retired from his work as a care aide. He currently lives with his partner Caren, in Prince George, BC. Bob is the proud grandparent of three grandchildren.

I couldn't cry

To talk we settled into a spare room in their house, and I asked uncle Bob to share with me the story of his life. He started by telling stories of the games they would play as young children, like cowboys and Indians, the fun they would have with their friends, and his first schoolyard crush. I could just imagine how cute a little boy my uncle was, with his black hair and bright blue eyes. Then he told his remembrances of what happened when his parent's died.

Bob: ... I remember going, when my mom and dad got killed, I was nine or ten, I knew it was a fact and nothing was going to change that, I just started walking around outside, and I was going to go down to see my friends. I remember trying to cry, but I couldn't cry, but I felt there should be someone shedding a tear for them. It seemed strange to see the Hickeys [neighbours] and all the in-laws, everybody there. We must have stayed at home for two or three days before uncle Harvey came to pick us up. When they picked us up we went to the Dawson Huts in south Edmonton.

I remember there was something just missing out of your life and I used to be pretty energetic and had a lot of get up and go all day. That day, I just, I don't know. It seemed like it was forever until my aunts dropped by to pick us up. (tears) My uncle Harvey came by and took us kids. It's quite a hardship, taking five kids into one household. You can see where my uncle Harvey and

aunt Barbara were coming from, they were pretty hard stressed in them days too, for looking after kids.... Me and Ed and Brian were at uncle Harvey's at the time and we used to have a good time with uncle Harvey and aunt Barb. They were great people.

Looking too Indian

Uncle Bob talked about being at Barb and Harvey's, and playing with their cousins. He then related a story of being asked to be adopted into a different family, his experiences in the orphanage, foster care, and his remembrances of how he felt about being Metis.

Bob: And then I don't know what happened, there was a neighbour, I used to get along very well with him, and they were talking about going overseas, and seeing their birthplace. And they wanted me to be a part of their family. I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea. I told aunt Barb about it, and Judy was there, she started crying, she didn't start crying right away. But when I left I could hear her crying. So I thought, nah, I won't bother going there with them. I just told them I was going to stay with aunt Barb.

I never thought too much about being Indian, but I remember that taking pictures it showed up that I was darker skinned than most kids. I was kind of self conscious about being part Native, looking too Indian, I guess at that time. It wasn't the popular thing to be at that time and but now it's more acceptable and it is a proud heritage. I have my Metis card now I go for all the benefits and I like to go to the powwows and that around town. When I see native people around town now I like to talk to them and get to know them a little better. Just a more grown up way of looking at things.

I never had any bad feelings from any of my caregivers

But going back to my childhood days, I remember after living with aunt Barb and uncle Harvey in the wartime houses, it was too much eventually for aunt Barb and uncle Harvey and we were moved up to the orphanage. First my sister went to the orphanage, and she must have found it very difficult. She wasn't out there with all of us, so I think she would have found it more difficult.

Then we were moved up there and seeing this great big house. The way it is, with time, it really goes by slowly when you're a child and I thought were there for quite a few years. Actually it really was maybe just a year or two at most. I remember Mrs. McPherson, we called her mother McPherson. She said, "Bobby, you and Ed go and introduce yourself to the boys downstairs." We had to walk through the girls section. I put my hand out, shaking hands saying "Hi, I'm Bob Turner," then I came up to the bully. This bully kept putting his hand out and then slapping me in the face. I figured that this would never have happened in our neighbourhood. (laughs) This happened about five times before I figured it out. Before I knew it, I gave that guy a real shiner, and he went running off to mother McPherson. She came down and tore a strip off me. I just stood there with my mouth open. I didn't say boo, I didn't know what to do. Anyway, I did see Mr. McPherson later after we were grown up, I could have settled it, I could have reminded him about it, but I didn't. I enjoyed being in the orphanage. For me it wasn't any arduous thing. I used to figure if kids go out of there and become members of a family, that's nice. I never figured

myself into that sort of scenario, I figured I'd be there until I was old enough to get out on my own. Then Ed went to Lloyd and Beth's place, and not long after that I went to Lloyd and Beth's.

While I was in the orphanage, I had a younger brother named Brian, and he was with us all the time. I felt it was incumbent on me to take him for walks and what not, and occasionally I did, but not often as I should have. That was a sore point for a long time. I was glad that he did move into a regular home and got proper care.... Then one day, mother McPherson said that Brian was adopted out. When I went out there one time, I asked her about Brian and if we would ever see him again. She started to cry and so I didn't bother asking her anymore after that....

Then I left for Lloyd and Beth's. Ed was too lonesome to stay on the farm there without his brother there. Apparently I took on a good deal of the masculine chores around there and my brother was a bottle washer for the kids and a babysitter. I felt pretty bad about that after Ed told me about how he felt about being there with Beth and Lloyd. I told about going hunting with Beth and going out to Billy's and having a cup of tea at their place. And eating cookies that were like dog biscuits. Ed, he missed out on all that, you see. I could see it in his eyes, "how come I wasn't part of that?"

....

Bob: When I moved from Lloyd and Beth's place, Ed moved to Wynndel, B.C. with Lloyd and Beth. I stayed with Vida and Hughie Jones, Beth's mom and dad. It was a good experience for me, I enjoyed them both. They were near and dear to me too. I'm sure they felt well about me too. I never had any bad feelings from any of my caregivers all through the years.

Uncle Bob talked about joining the military, and how the regimented routine fit well with what he was used to. He told stories about basic training and the time he spent in Germany. After, he talked about working in a logging camp, and his decision to become a mechanic. He talked about when his children were young, and they lived as a family in different places in Yukon, while he worked in mines, before returning to B.C. He told stories of his children, and his grandchild, as well as of the ending of his marriage. He talked about meeting his new partner Caren, and his new career as a long term care aid.

Being Native wasn't very cool at the time

Tara: When you think back about everything, do you remember there was anything when you were little, that you thought about being Indian or part-Indian? You said about looking darker in pictures than other kids. Were there other times in your life when you thought about it?

Bob: I was very shy and being Native wasn't very cool at that time. I figured well, maybe we were – I don't know that I felt that we weren't good enough – I felt inferior. I didn't like being Native. I felt we should have been more White – I shouldn't show it. When we had Danica, Pat, she phoned her mom, she was living with me and we just had a kid and her mom asked, "does she show?" That hurt Pat quite a bit.

....

Tara: What do you tell your kids, or did you tell your kids, about being Native, or part-Native, or Metis?

Bob: I tell them they have some Indian from my dad's side. That maybe grandma was part-Indian, I'm not real sure about that. My dad and his dad were very close, just like us guys.

Tara: What do you think about that Indian history now?

Bob: Well, actually, Ed does a lot of my thinking for me. After Ed mentioned that he feels good about it, it is something to look on and sort of say, things weren't really all that bad. We were good citizens for this country. We were doing our share before the White people came into this country. We helped the White people a good deal, getting very little thanks for it too...

We talked about the process of sharing his story, and what the next steps would be. I felt emotionally spent after the interview, and shared a few tears with my uncle Bob about all the losses he had sustained, and I told him how special he is to me, and how I admire his gentleness. I told him about my first remembrance of him. I was pretty young the first time Bob and his family came to visit us, and I think us kids were sleeping on the floor in the living room, probably to give them somewhere to sleep. I remember waking up when they arrived quite late, hearing my uncle's voice, and feeling happy and that his voice was like a warm hug. It must be because of my father's stories of his brother Bob that I would have felt that way without even seeing his face.

Again I asked myself if what I was doing was a good idea, digging up the past, and asking my relatives to tell me about their pain. I again found it impossible to be distanced from my uncle as an interviewer, and I found the experience of interviewing my relatives much more tiring than interviewing strangers. I felt uncertain about asking about their Metis heritage when it seemed like that was a bit unknown as well as unwelcomed in the sense that having that heritage had not been seen as a positive, and I had the sense that some of the negativity of having an Aboriginal background still lingered.

Judy's story

There was not much time to ponder on my uncertainty though, as that afternoon I interviewed my auntie Judy. I knew my auntie Judy only a little. I had been to a reunion at their place as a child, and I had spent a weekend with her at a family reunion a few years prior to our interview. I am sure I saw more of their family when I was small, but I do not really remember it well. My dad told me about how strong Judy was, and how fierce her temper could be. He always

laughed to tell how Bob had a couple of scars on the back of his head from things Judy had chucked at him. With Judy being the oldest, I knew she would remember the most, and I was not certain how she would react to my questions. I went to her place and we had a short chat and got some coffee before starting the interview.

Synopsis:

Judith (Judy) was born on May 8, 1942 in Edmonton, Alberta. She was thirteen years old when her parents were killed. Judy was the first child born to Ed and Winnie. After her parents' deaths, Judy lived with two different members of the Turner family. She was then moved to the orphanage in Edmonton, Alberta, and she lived in various foster homes. Judy worked as a telephone operator until she met and married Emile. They had two children, Richard and Shauna. Judy and Emile lived most of their lives in and around Prince George, BC. Judy was a stay at home mom and Emile was a carpenter/contractor in the area. Judy became a single parent after Emile's death in a vehicle accident. She was also a foster parent and she assisted many First Nations families around Prince George. Judy also was a proud grandmother of three grandchildren. Judy died in 2007 at the age of 65.

Very early in my life I felt a very secure feeling

Judy:.... I remember standing on the seat of a big, big, truck that my dad used to drive, a cattle truck or a seed truck. He was hauling for Mix Brothers in Edmonton, and he had an old, flat, tweed cap and he took it off his head and put it on mine and I remember standing behind his shoulder standing on the seat and smiling at him and him smiling back at me with this big cap on my head.... Parties. On weekends there would be lots of aunts, uncles, and cousins at our place or at aunt Jenny's. There would be guitars and mandolins and mouth organs, music and beer and rye. (laughs) Most of them drank. There was a lot of singing and on weekends, the cousins and relatives always got together somewhere on weekends.

Very early in my life I felt a very secure feeling. I remember one time I was going to the outhouse, we didn't have indoor plumbing, and it was a nice, warm, spring morning and mom had this rinse tub upside down outside the kitchen window and I was sitting on it. It felt nice and warm against my legs and I could hear the meadowlarks. I can still remember that feeling, it felt like the whole world was my oyster and everything was perfect.

Then my dad got TB when I was nine. That was very traumatic. I think it must have been the first time that I felt really insecure. When he went into the hospital with TB, he was in there for ten months. I was just learning how to write and I used to write him letters and he would write back. Your dad had impetigo when he was a kid and dad was in the hospital and he couldn't say impetigo, he's say "tago," and dad wrote in one of his letters, "you tell Eddie-Peddie that he'd better not be kissing my mommy with that tago." (laughs)....

That part of it explains what our life style was.... I remember one time sitting on dad's knee, and he had been reading me one of those little Golden Books and one was a song book "Jesus Loves Me" and I was sitting on his knee and he was giving me a kiss and a hug and telling me that I was his princess, and mom was walking by, she was putting things away in the buffet in the living

room for our good dishes, and he grabbed her by the arm and pulled her down and gave her a kiss and said, “you’re my queen.” They were both very affectionate, very open like that. Mom would be doing the dishes or such and dad would say come look at this sunset and they’d be sitting on the back step watching the sun go down. (laughs)

...

Tara: Do you have other memories of what it was like before the accident, before they were killed?

Judy: I remember my mom, I was always – I’d get into a fight with somebody and mom always said to treat them with kindness, do unto others as you’d have them do unto you. Those were her words, and if they smite the right cheek, turn the left. Always full of bible quotes. And dad, his theory was if you run into a bunch of bullies get the biggest one, beat the crap out of him, and the rest will leave you alone. (laughs) I liked dad’s theory better. I always had a bad temper.

Tara: Slightly different philosophies. (laughs) Do you remember anything about your grandparents?

Judy: One memory I have of grandpa – he always had Clydesdale horses, and whatever horse he had, he always called them “Queenie.” (laughs) My earliest memory of grandpa, was me being on the back of this horse and with my legs stuck straight out, (laughs) on those wide Clydesdales, and he’s holding me by my back and he’s got the reins and he is walking me around the yard on this horse. That is my earliest memory. He was a kind, gentle, person. I forget how many kids were in the family, ten, I think, and they said, “grandpa never laid a hand on any one of his children.” I asked dad if that was true, and he said, “yeah, but grandma sure made up for it.” (laughs) She was a feisty little thing. She was only about 4 foot 11 inches, and with us kids she was very soft and mellow, but with her sons, she was a little cantankerous at times. (laughs)

.... I remember one time with aunt Florence, she was a little slow, mentally challenged, and they’d moved into town for a little while, I can’t remember for what reason, and they lived about a mile and a half, a couple of miles from our place. It was in the winter time, and grandma told aunt Florence how to get over to our place, but she couldn’t remember how to get back home. She told her to take a stick and run it in the snow all the way over, and then follow the line on the way back home. I thought that was the neatest thing.

Tara: Pretty smart.

Judy: I remember going berry picking with grandma. The memories of grandma - I wasn’t around grandma as much as I was grandpa.... Grandpa he stayed with us for a long time when grandma was in the hospital.

Tara: So that was when he was staying with you, towards the end of his life?

Judy: Yeah. I remember one time when Bob and I were making bows and arrows and we were making it out of the wrong kind of tree, and I remember him telling us, “no, that’s not the type of tree that you make the bows from.” He showed us, I think it’s birch that you make the bow from, and willow you make the arrows from. (laughs) I wish I was older when grandpa stayed with us,

cause he told us so many stories and I don't remember any of them. He was so interesting to listen to.

I loved hearing these stories of my grandparents and great aunts and uncles. It was comforting to hear that our family was close, and to feel that my grandparents clearly loved each other and their children deeply. Hearing these stories about my family began to make them feel more real to me, their personalities adding life to the black and white photos that were the only images I ever saw of any of them.

It's hard to explain

Tara: So, how old were you when they died?

Judy: I was thirteen when mom and dad died, so right around there....

Tara: And then your grandpa died not long after?

Judy: Yeah, not long before his birthday. He was eighty-five when he passed away, grandma was seventy-nine.

Tara: So what do you remember from around the time when your parents died?

Judy: I'm trying to remember. It's hard to explain. The night my parents died I was babysitting and uncle Bill came to the door. Uncle Bill was actually our cousin but he was called uncle Bill. He came and he wanted to know if dad had come home. It was about 10:30, 11:00. And I said, "no." Not long after he got there, the RCMP came, and they said that they had been in an accident, and that Tommy had been killed outright, and that my mom and dad were critical, and taken to the hospital. My girlfriend was staying overnight with me so she stayed with the kids. Bob woke up and asked me, "what's wrong?" and I told him that mom and dad had been in an accident, go back to sleep, and I'll talk to you when I get back home. So we drove over to my cousins, Doug and Mable's, then over to my aunt Alice's, and then off to the hospital. By the time we got there, mom was dead, and there were three doctors working on dad.

The next day when I went up there with aunt Barb on the bus to see dad and he had died just before I had got there.... Early morning Dave and Ethel, Grandma Arnold's son, came in. My aunts and uncles came to cook us supper, and Mrs. Ford, they were our neighbours, she came.... Once Mrs. Ford and uncle Harvey were there I called the kids into the bedroom and told them that mom was dead. Debbie went with aunt Alice. It wasn't easy.

Tara: No, I bet not. You had a lot of responsibility for a thirteen year old girl, eh?

Judy: Yeah. I remember one time I was washing Brian's hands before supper, at Aunt Barb's, and he said, "Judy, where's mom and dad?" and I said, "they have both gone to live with Jesus." He said, "where is that?" I said, "way up in the sky, way up past the trees." A couple of weeks

later I wanted to see if he remembered what I had told him, so I asked him “where’s mom and dad?” and he said, “up in the trees.” (laughs)

Tara: So, Debbie was just a little baby then?

Judy: It was her first birthday, the day the accident happened. July 30th.

Tara: Really?

Oh, he’s been adopted out

Judy: It’s so funny. When your dad found her, we went to meet her at your mom and dad’s. I was so nervous. I just wanted to turn around and come back, and she said she felt the same way. If it wasn’t for your dad, I tell you, you’re sure lucky you got him. If it weren’t for Ed and Sylvia, then all of us probably wouldn’t have found each other. (laughs)

Tara: What were you scared of, do you think?

Judy: Uh, maybe that she wouldn’t approve of me. Brian, when we went to meet Brian, Ed said that, like I knew where Brian was all along. People used to take kids out of the orphanage for visits and bring them back and he didn’t come back. He didn’t come back and didn’t come back and we were getting worried about him and I decided to ask my social worker about him. So, I was over at aunt Barb’s and I phoned my social worker and she said, “Oh, he’s been adopted out.”

Tara: Never had a chance to say goodbye or...

Judy: They didn’t even have the decency to come to us kids and explain that - especially Bob and Ed were younger than me even then. I was lucky, aunt Barb was there and she was raised in an orphanage during the depression, and was treated really mean and shipped around from one foster home to another and she was sent out to work at farms where they worked hard labour every day, and she went to school with no shoes. She explained that when people adopt children they don’t get paid for that, they take them because they want a child of their own and they want to love them, with two people to love them. She said Brian has a second set of parents now, and if you love your brother, wouldn’t you want him to be there with two people who love him? She described some of the places she had been in it made it a lot easier. Someone should have come and told all of us that, we were just kids.

Tara: Yeah.

It seems that I could have come up with something better to say than “yeah,” but that is all that came to me at the time.

Judy: The way the Welfare system works it just really – Child Welfare. Yeah. Boy. They don’t have a clue.

Tara: So was Brian adopted out first?

Judy: Yeah, Brian was adopted first, and then Debbie. I went to see Debbie at my aunt Alice's – she's another one - she never had the decency to phone us kids or come by and say Debbie had moved or anything. "Oh, Debbie's not here anymore." They came and took her away, you know. So, I phoned the social worker again and found out she'd been adopted. Not like Brian, I went to talk to the orphanage to tell Bob and Ed, and I told Mother McPherson that I was there to tell them that Brian had been adopted. She accidentally on purpose told me, she would have been in trouble if she had told me, said, "I wrote Mrs. Kinloch, in Wetaskiwin, (laughs) to see if you children could see Brian sometimes, but I've not heard back from Mrs. Kinloch from Wetaskiwin." (laughs) I said, "well, I hope Mrs. Kinloch does write you soon." (laughs)

Tara: So you always knew the name and the place of the people where he had gone?

Judy: I didn't tell Bob and Ed right away cause I wanted to wait until Bob and Ed were about fourteen and sixteen, and I didn't want them to go there and to spoil his home and while he was in school.... We all went over to Wetaskiwin together to meet Brian when he had completed school...

Tara: What about Debbie, how did you guys ...

Judy: Mom and dad had bought – a salesman had come around to the door, selling these burial plots at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery, and my dad had bought eight of them. My grandparents are buried on two of them, and mom and dad in two, then your dad had the idea of selling the other four and get a headstone for mom and dad. I agreed that it would be a good idea, and Ed kept bugging me, and bugging me, and bugging me. (laughs) I said that I'm going to send you the deeds, and you do it.... Ed took it to a lawyer or something, and we all had to sign a release form. So we sent Debbie's to the Public Trustee as she still had money coming from dad's estate when she turned twenty-one. And the trustee sent it to Debbie's parents telling them they could do what they wanted with it, and Ed's name and address were in there. And Verna and Stewart asked Debbie if she would like to write him. They said they knew there were five children all together but they didn't know how many sisters and how many brothers....

I got a call from Ed and he said, "are you sitting down?" I said, "no," and he said, "well, you'd better." He said, "I've found Doreen, only her name is not Doreen any more, now it's Debbie." (laughs) So, that was great. Bob and I got together, Emile couldn't get away, cause summer is his busiest time. We took the kids and went down there to Ed's in Bob's new station wagon. It's just like we became one big family in two to three minutes. Verna and Stewart, Debbie's adopted parents, are really great people. (laughs) Debbie and Brian only grew up eighteen miles apart and knew a lot of the same people. It's a wonder they didn't start dating or marry each other or something. (laughs)

It was interesting to hear these stories that I had heard so often from my dad, from a different perspective. I was also struck by how each of them had expressed fear and uncertainty about meeting each other again. I realized that I did not have a good sense of what that would be like to be meeting a sibling again that had been taken away and raised by a different family. I also

could not imagine being thirteen years old and placed in the position as the eldest in the family, and feeling like I had to look out for my siblings.

....

I went to aunt Barbara's first

Tara: Did you go to your aunt Barbara's after your parents died, or did just the boys go?

Judy: Bob, Ed, Brian, and I went to aunt Barbara's first, and Debbie went to aunt Alice's.

Tara: Okay.

Judy: We lived in what we called a war time hut. They were three bedroom places and she had a live in babysitter, so she had one bedroom. The six boys were in another bedroom, and aunt Barb and uncle Harvey had one, and I slept on the couch. One day when I came in from outside, I was in the kitchen and aunt Barb and uncle Harvey were in the other room, and Evelyn and Eddie were offering to take some of us kids. Aunt Barb said she didn't want to split us up.

Tara: So who was it that was offering to take some of you guys?

Judy: Aunt Alice's daughter. Evelyn and her husband, Eddie Balch. So, I offered to go stay at Evelyn and Eddie's, and that way all the boys can all share a room. It seemed like a pretty good plan. I thought it would be a lot easier for aunt Barb, she was a wonderful person. She was my aunt by marriage.

Aunt Judy talked a bit about her time at Evelyn and Eddie's, and how she didn't like being there with them. After an argument with Eddie, Judy went back to her aunt Barb's.

Judy: I walked all the way to aunt Barb's. Maybe about six miles, maybe more. And, it was in the middle of town, and when I got there I told her I wanted to go in the orphanage.

Tara: Uh. So what was it like in the orphanage for you?

Judy: Oh, they were good. There was supposed to be forty-five kids there, but sometimes there were as many as sixty. It was overcrowded but the people that ran it were really good people and they had a cook and two nursemaids and a girl that should have been out of there but she helped in the sewing room.... We had chores to do. My chore was, me and another girl we cleaned the boys' ward and cleaned the bathroom and changed the sheets and scrubbed the floor on Saturday. Then we took turns at dishes. We were allowed to go to the show on Saturday or go shopping.

We got I think it was a dollar a week allowance, and I'd go to my aunt's to see my brothers on the weekend. They weren't mean to us or hit us or beat us or anything. The most they would do if we misbehaved would be to ground us. The food wasn't that great. I think a lot of the food that was supposed to go to us went to her family, a lot of the fruit and things that we should have had. That's what the cook said- I knew the cook years after - and all the things she was supposed to have to cook never came to us at all.

Tara: Interesting.

Judy: Years later, after those people retired, other people took it over. There was a big scandal, sexual abuse. They closed it right down and tore it down. From there I went to my first foster home.... There, I had a chip on my shoulder – “you’re not my parents, don’t tell me what to do.” Part of it was my fault, part of it, also, I didn’t figure it out until years later, but my foster father was also an alcoholic. He had weird mood swings you know. You never know where you’re at....

My second home.... They had a five year old daughter. They really wanted a girl about her age, but they got me. (laughs) Phil, he had mumps and she wanted more children, that was always a big subject with them, and he couldn’t give her more children. That was always a big topic of conversation.... At least once a week they were taking dancing lessons, and he was going to show me how to do this dance one time. So, he showed me this dance, and then he asked me what I’d do if he broke in my room that night. (laughs) I couldn’t stand him. I told him I would hit him with the heaviest thing around. He said it in kind of a joking way, but I was scared.

When Judy told this story I felt how vulnerable she was at the time. A young, beautiful girl, with no parents or protector. I did not know how to voice that feeling at the time, but it was strong.

....

Soon I moved to my last foster home. The lord was looking out for me, he gave me a second set of parents. Beautiful people. They were just absolutely the best. Yeah. They both had been married to somebody else before, so I guess they had a chance to treasure a good marriage, because I never saw two people treat each other better than they treated each other. (laughs) When I first came there what I liked best was the trust she showed me right away. The social worker said whatever time my curfew was, was up to the foster parents, and Gwen said we would be able to work it out, and when their daughter came out to help me move my things in, she was talking about all the things that we could do together. It really felt like I had a home again and it made me feel wanted....

I talked her head off the first day I was there, and I never stopped. We still do that when we get together. My first foster mother, she says the first two weeks that I was there she said she never got five words out of me. (laughs) Gwen sure couldn’t say that. She was wonderful. My first foster home, for Christmas, us three girls got chenille bedspreads for our beds. When I moved out, they never packed it or sent it with me, but it didn’t matter, I never thought about it then. (laughs) My last foster home, Christmas, I can’t remember what I got from Len and Gwen and Patty, but I even got a present from the dog, a travel alarm. (laughs)

Tara: That’s nice that you ended up in such a nice place. How long were you there for?

Judy: Till I left to get married. I started working and I asked them if I could stay there and room and board, and they said “sure dear.” I got my check and they didn’t want anything. So the other girls were paying 75 to 90 dollars, so they said I could pay 50. Half the time I was borrowing it

back, or part of it. (laughs) Then one of my girlfriends wanted me to move into an apartment with her and I was thinking about it, but we'd been together for four to five days and we'd start nit picking with each other, and I told her "no, it'll ruin the friendship." But eventually we were going to move in together, and Gwen said that would be nice, and a good experience. Let me know if we can help, and if it doesn't work out, remember you always have a home to come back to. This is always your home. One day I was coming out of the bedroom, and dad was coming out of the bird room and he said "I hear you're moving out," and I said, "no, I've changed my mind," and he said, "oh, that's good dear, cause we'd sure hate to lose you."

Tara: They sure sound like good people.

Judy: Just super.

....

It can't happen twice

Judy:I've had a pretty good life. I've got people to love, that I care about and care about me, friends and family. The worst part was losing my parents. Losing my husband. I lost my husband. When they built the Yellowhead Hotel, the building trades were around there and he started stopping for a couple of drinks, after work, if he'd see someone's truck there. Before that a case of beer would sit in the fridge for a month or two unless somebody came over, he wouldn't touch it. To see a social drinker turn into an alcoholic. First he was going for a couple of drinks after work and staying till suppertime, and then Friday nights and then Saturday afternoons. Fridays and Saturdays, and one or two days during the weeks, and then I blew a gasket, and then he started just Friday nights again.

And then he went to a funeral and he lost his driver's license because he went for a drink after. He was pulling away with a rented car when the cops stopped him and suspended his license for six months and a fine, and he had his license back for a couple of months and then the accident happened.

When he didn't come home, supper was getting later and later, and finally I went to the bar and he said "are you coming to take me home mommy?" I said "ya" and I was mad, and when I'm mad it shows on my face, I can't hide it (laughs) and we got out to my truck and he said, take me to the side of the road where his truck was parked so he could get some stuff out of the box and he said, "what are you mad about?" And I said, "why do you have to sit here – till you were going to drive home," I said "why didn't you phone me to come get you at closing, or something." It just happened that he and his partner had bought insurance on each other. They signed the 50,000 dollar policy. I said this drinking and driving – something's going to happen, you're going to hurt somebody or you're going to get hurt, or something. You can't do that for ever without something happening. So he said, "well, that's okay, I'm better off to you dead than alive anyway, I just signed a 50,000 dollar life insurance policy." I said, "oh, good, get out, and I'll run over you." (laughs) He said, "well, I'll drive myself home then." So I went home and he didn't come and didn't come, so he didn't come home.

A friend of mine was staying with me taking some courses. Usually I left the kitchen light on for him and I thought he fell asleep out in the truck. I got dressed, climbed in the truck and went back

and his truck was tipped over on the side of the road. I just saw the carriage underneath. A guy was standing there, and I said, “is that a truck?” He said, “yuh.” I said, “is it light blue?” he said, “yuh,” I said, “that’s my husband’s truck, did the ambulance take him to the hospital?” He said, “no, he’s still inside.” He was hanging upside down, his foot was caught on the steering wheel, hanging there upside down. He said, “he’s okay, he’s still alive.”

When the ambulance came and the tow truck, pulling the truck apart, they told everybody to stand back, and then somebody came and got me and told me to go up and sit in the ambulance. A guy opened the door and tossed me a box of Kleenex and said, “here go ahead, cry it out,” and I said, “no, I’m okay and he is going to be alright,” and he said, “I am afraid he’s not.” I was thinking, it already happened, he will be o.k., it can’t happen twice. I thought he was pulling my leg. (laughs) (pause) They wanted me to go to the hospital because of the shock. This one guy asked me if there was anything he could do for me and I said, “will you phone my husband’s partner, and tell him to get down to the hospital.”

I just was in shock and I didn’t know what to tell the kids. I just went home. I phoned everyone, I must have phoned everybody I knew. I don’t know why I felt that everyone had to know right away. Bob came just as the kids woke up, thank god. I’m glad he came. I didn’t have to tell Richard, he just knew. As soon as I looked at him he asked, what happened to dad? Then some nights he’d wake up and ask “why my dad, why my dad?” When I talked to him I said, “well, maybe if your dad was never in an accident he’d live another 30, 40, 50 years, and he’d get stomach cancer and it’d take him a year to starve to death. Your dad never knew what hit him and he never felt any pain – he was a good dad to you, and you loved him, and a good husband to me. If he has to leave us, he never felt any pain, and he’s gone to a good place, where grandpa and grandma are. To know he’s not hurting, you wouldn’t want that for your dad and he knows we still need him and he’ll still be there for us, he’ll be watching over us.”

Tara: It’s nice that you were there to provide him with support, that you would have liked to have had when your parents were killed.

Judy: That could have happened to us on the way back from skating practice with the kids. But I could have been married to someone for 40 years like Mr. McKewan who would beat me up every week, or uncle Harvey, running around all the time. (laughs)

Tara: That’s true.

Judy: I have a lot of good memories. But alcohol makes me angry, especially when someone is drinking and driving. It makes me angry.

Tara: It has caused a lot of pain for our family.

Judy: It sure has. A lot of unhappiness. Richard is a non-practicing alcoholic, he has a beautiful wife and three beautiful kids, and everything there is to be happy. They get along so well and communicate, and the kids. They get along so well for three siblings. They do argue a little bit, they’re not perfect, but they get along really good. (laughs) I love my family, all of them.

Tara: Yeah, a pretty nice bunch.

Judy seemed very matter of fact when talking about the death of Emile. I appreciated her strength and common sense approach to helping her own children deal with the loss. It was also clear that the pain lingered in her anger at drinking and driving. At the last reunion where we all gathered at Turner Park in Fort Saskatchewan, I remembered that she told me how she would react with fear every time she heard emergency vehicle sirens, immediately worrying about her children and grandchildren. Her losses had left their mark.

If it wasn't for Ed, I'd be missing half my family

Judy: Your dad, he's just awesome, pulling the family together like that. If it wasn't for Ed, I'd be missing half my family, Brian and Debbie.... Debbie and I are so close. She'll phone me and say, "I need a sister talk," or I'll phone her and say, "I need a sister visit, when do you get some days off?" When she took her long term care aid course, and she had to come up here to take it, and she stayed with me for four months, and she said, "don't go grocery shopping, we'll split the groceries." She came up and we went grocery shopping and everything, right down to brands, we picked the same things, even cleaning supplies and everything. It was just amazing. Isn't that something?

Tara: Makes you wonder if there is some connection that is there, you know, I don't what you'd call it.

Judy: Emile used to say when Debbie used to come up to visit us, and when she used to come to visit us, and we'd sit with a bottle of Vodka, the three of us, and we'd be talking and he said that Debbie reminded him of me, and even though we talked we'd finish each other's sentences, we'd go to say the exact same thing at the same time.

Tara: So Auntie Debbie must have been eighteen when she first wrote dad?

Judy: We celebrated her eighteenth birthday at your mom and dads. Our family reunion, first time we were all together, since Christmas 1955. [shows me a picture] Forty-two years later. After we took those pictures, we're all giving each other hugs and had tears in our eyes. (laughs) We finally did it. It was so awesome.

...

It hasn't harmed me any

Tara: What do you remember about being told, or knowing about your Native background? Did you think of it as Indian, or Metis or part-Native?

Judy: I knew as far back as I can remember. I don't remember how I knew. Probably through grandma and grandpa Turner, I imagine. I don't think grandma was very proud of the fact of being Indian. I remember her, grandpa told us lots of stories and taught Bob and I how to speak Cree. I don't remember grandma mentioning it, but I don't remember her not mentioning it either. I don't know where that feeling that she wasn't proud of it comes from, whether

somebody told me that. Grandpa was very proud of his Native heritage. I've always been proud of, never shy about being Indian. I got in a few arguments at school over it, but I was still proud to stand up for, and proud of being Native....

Tara: So where do you think you got that fortitude, that ability to feel proud about your heritage, in spite of the times, because when you were growing up, it wasn't very cool to be Indian, eh?

Judy: You know, my mom's family, the Adamson's, they thought the British were God's chosen people, and they wouldn't speak to my mom, her own brothers and sisters, for years, because she married my dad, and he was part Indian. My mom and dad they taught me never to belittle anyone because of their nationality and they taught me to be proud of who I am and what I am. I always said to my kids whether some is yellow with purple polka dots, they should be very well treated. And one time one of our friends who was of black heritage, African heritage – I was mad at her about something and I called her a nigger – and my mom heard me. Boy, I really got my backside paddled over that and was told we are all God's children and that she's just as good as I am, and in fact, she's probably better than me, if I would call her names like that. I don't know where it comes from, I think maybe from grandpa, cause he taught us a lot about our Native heritage and he always made it sound really good. He was always very proud to be a Native.

Tara: Do you remember what sorts of things he taught you, or was it just sort of a general feeling that he was proud?

Judy: I remember he taught us how to make bows and arrows and I remember him telling us stories too about his life and the things he did.

Tara: You don't necessarily remember the story itself, but you remember the feeling around it?.... What have you told your own kids about the Native side?

Judy: They know that I used to be able to speak Cree. I tell my own grandchildren a few words of Cree, Kokum means grandma, and kewatin means north wind, and neheyoway means speak Cree. Api means sit down. (laughs)

Tara: I know kokum and api. (laughs) A few more but not much.

Judy: Wawa is egg. Grandpa used to call your dad wapistikwan, white hair.

Tara: He was a pretty blond little boy wasn't he?

Judy: Yeah. He was called wapastikwan. Topastikwan means red hair. (laughs)

Tara: Having that as part of your heritage, what has that meant in your life?

Judy: It never meant anything really special. It hasn't harmed me any.

Tara: That's good. Do you think it is part of the way that you see yourself as a person?

Judy: Not really. I wouldn't want to be seen any other way. People used to know I was part Indian, and they used to say that to me. "Are you part Native?" I never realized how Native I sounded on the phone, listening to my voice, the Native tones are there, does it sound to you, the Native tones? Does it sound Native to you?

Tara: Yeah, and looks too. I see it in the clan.

Judy: We all got the Turner nose. (laughs) Grandpa's nose.

Tara: A heck of a nose. So it sounds like that kind of that the way that you think about it is who you are, you don't spend any special amount of time thinking about it or whatever.

Judy: It's just a part of me. (laughs)

Tara: It makes sense. Well, probably you got to remember the most about your grandpa cause you're the oldest, eh?

Judy: Yeah, I think so. My brother used to roll his cigarettes, and I used to roll a cigarette with a big, long roller, and it made five cigarettes, and I rolled one or two and they were really tight, and Bob was going to roll cigarettes, and he said, "no, Judy can roll them cause she rolls them really tight." I was so proud of that. I can roll grandpa's cigarettes. So I rolled up the tin for him. (laughs) Boy, that was a big deal. He was well loved. All his grandchildren loved him. Grandma too, but she wasn't with us as much, I think she was busy cooking for everyone. (laughs)

Tara: Yeah, maybe grandpa had more time. (laughs)

Judy: When I remember grandma it is around the stove.

I was impressed at the strength of Judy's identification and pride at her Indian/Native ancestry. Despite all of the social pressures at the time to not identify as such, or find pride in being Indian, and even when many of her own relatives would publically deny their ancestry, Judy maintained her sense of herself as a mixed blood person. The influence of her grandfather, and the beliefs of her parents in the equality of all people, became deeply set in her. I was even more surprised at the strength of her identification as, other than the time she spent with her grandfather, she had no significant guides to First Nations culture in her life. We then moved on to talking again about the accident.

The baby's name would have been Vern Daniel

Tara: I think dad remembers your mom being pregnant almost term, almost due to have a baby, when the accident happened.

Judy: Yes, she was overdue. The baby's name would have been Vern Daniel, it was a boy. He died of loss of blood and shock. They took the dead person and the walking person first, cause

they had to pry mom and dad out of there.... I gave that baby both his names. When mom was pregnant we would sit around trying baby names. I told Debbie it was funny, cause I wanted her to be named Debbie, but they wanted to name her Doreen after one of the nurses when dad was in the hospital with TB. She used to be so good to us. I liked Debbie. (laughs)

I did not click to the significance of Judy's memory of the name they had picked out for the baby ahead of his birth. Vern had always been nameless, and although my dad had talked about his death, he had somehow never become a full sibling in the story. I think Judy's naming of the baby helped all of us to bring him more fully into our lives as we continued to meet and to talk.

Tara: In the end, she was named Debbie. (laughs) So, it was your grandma, and your aunt Jenny who died first?

Judy: Yeah. First it was aunt Jenny died Christmas eve, grandma died New Years Eve, and then grandpa died the last day of January.

Tara: And that's the three, and then your mom and dad died.

Judy: Yes, mom and dad died in July.

Tara: And then there was another aunt and a baby?

Judy: Aunt Florence and little Ricky. That was either the winter of 55 or early 56. I was living at Evelyn and Eddie's and I wasn't there very long, a couple months.... Aunt Jenny lived a block from us, she was a great person.

Tara: That's your mom's sister, right?

Judy: No, dad's sister. They just lived a block over from us. Her and dad were close, and her and mom were close too. We dropped in to aunt Jenny if we wanted something good to eat, especially something cold, cause we didn't have a fridge at home, if we needed something to be real cold, we'd take it to aunt Jenny and she would put it down the well.

Tara: Dad was seven when they died?

Judy: When mom and dad died he was eight.....

Tara: So you guys didn't see any of the Adamson's after your mom and dad died?

Judy: Uh huh. Once in a blue moon. Unless somebody come to town, to take one of these kids, have us over for dinner. (laughs) Whenever aunt Norah came to town, she'd phone me and say "Aunt Bud wants to know if you want to come over for dinner."

...

Tara: Did your mom's parents forgive her for marrying your dad?

Judy: Granny, I don't know if granny ever had anything against it, but granny was just like that. A baby, she was always taken care of. She grew up with a nanny, and she was always mollycoddled, and I don't think she ever had a thought of her own. (laughs) Did what she was told what to do, more or less. But my aunt Norah, she came to my mom's and stayed at my moms when they came to town. She'd sleep at one end of the couch, and the boys at the other, and that was packed. (laughs) A two bedroom house, five kids.

Tara: Wow.

Judy: Her and uncle Mel they'd sleep on the other couch.... Aunt Norah and uncle Mel took me over there when I went to Calgary, the summer after I lost my parents, and I went down, aunt Norah invited me down there, they wanted me to live with them, but my brothers were still in the orphanage and I didn't want to leave them.... Tom and Eileen, and aunt Nan came out once but whether she wasn't in town or not, I don't know. Maybe she just wasn't around. Aunt Ona used to try and keep in touch. I don't have many very fond memories of the Adamson's. Granny I do, she was a little sweetheart, didn't know what was going on in the real world though.

All of the names, dates, and people, were still difficult for me to track. I was trying to learn how each one was related in my family, in time, and how they were involved in my dad and his siblings lives. Again, hearing more about them helped me to begin the long slow process of creating my own narrative of my family's history. I remembered that my dad also had good memories and feelings about his granny Adamson. He always said she was a real lady. In a picture I have of her where she must be in her sixties or seventies, she is a very beautiful woman with kind eyes. I was glad that some of the connections with the Adamson's were with positive memories.

....

Getting through some of the emotions

Tara: What was this like, this process?

Judy: I liked it, it was kind of a cleansing thing also. Getting through some of the emotions, like why I do things, like overeating, it's almost like I sabotage myself. I don't know. Maybe I need counselling. Maybe I have a lot of anger that I never realized was still there, or never knew it was there.... When he [her father] died it was like the bottom dropped out of my world, all of your security, everything, is just gone, and they're sitting there talking about, like my aunt to Mr. Hill's of the social services offices, they're talking about what they are going to do with us kids and how Mr. and Mrs. John's, my aunt and uncle, saying we'd be better off in foster homes. Just like they're going to sit and cut up our lives and like we just lost our parents, and not only have we lost our parents, but now they're going to take us and split us up as soon as they can. Just

sitting there talking like I'm not there, nothing to it. Just a piece of meat I guess, we don't have any feelings or thoughts about it or any say over it....

Tara: You all went through a lot because of that one thing.

Judy: Bob and Ed are, I think they - Bob feels things so deep, so deep. Ed too, like he was just lost, absolutely lost. I was old enough to have memories and I kind of tried to be there for the boys, just mother them. Eddie was just like a boat in the ocean without any oars. I can remember things like stubbing my toe and then cuddling up to mom, and the softness, I can remember that, I wonder if Ed can? Come home from school and your hands and feet were cold and line em up by the stove and put our hands under her chin and on her bosom. I couldn't with my kids, its too darn cold. (laughs) But I remember mom doing it. I remember one time, dad used to take us to the creosote plant with him on Sunday, every second Sunday to wash the boiler out in the crane, a steam operated crane. I remember when he told me I was too old to go, and he told me I had to stay home, but he said he'd give me a dollar if you make me a cake, so I made his cake and his favourite cookies. Baked up a storm with my mom all day.

Tara: So what do you think holds all you kids together, Debbie and Brian won't have many memories. Debbie maybe even none.

Judy: What holds us together?

Tara: Yeah.

Judy: That's funny, I don't know. I know from my point of view, just loving my family, loving to be with them. Quite sure Bob and Ed are that way too, and Debbie and Brian, I think it's that way too, but I don't know why, they don't have the memories. I have memories of them, and Deb was always the family favourite, and in the orphanage we were really close to them. Bob and I tried to protect them....

Tara: Well I'm glad that you can share your stories with us. I think that is important to not lose that again. We don't have any stories from your grandpa, we lost it the last time, but your grandkids will know your stories.

Judy: My grandkids are the most important things in the world to me. They're my treasure. My golden years. And they're my gold. (laughs)

After these interviews were done, I thought about what this process was really about. It seemed to me that it was about healing, in the sense of bringing people together to share their stories. There seemed to be a power that went along with that.

Debbie's story

The next day we travelled to Williams Lake to aunt Debbie's house. Debbie cooked us a nice meal and I got to try her rhubarb chutney. We went for a good walk after and had more

chance to talk. It was nice to learn more about her. I had met my aunt Debbie a few times growing up, and had spent some time with her a couple of years before at a family reunion. I had heard the story from my dad about how he found Debbie, and how when her picture fell out of the first letter she sent to him, my mom was wondering who the pretty girl was sending him her picture. Debbie reconnected with dad just days after my birth, and due to that connection my parents gave me the same middle name as hers. Williams Lake is a pretty community, and aunt Debbie and uncle Henry have a nice yard and garden. But I was getting tired from the emotions and the travelling, and by the time the interview was over, I was getting ready to have a little break.

Synopsis:

Debbie (prior to adoption her name was Doreen Rose), was born on July 30, 1954. Her parents were in the car accident on her first birthday. Debbie was the fifth child born to Ed and Winnie. After her parents' deaths, Debbie was moved to a Turner home, she was then moved to a receiving home, and at twenty-two months old was adopted by Stewart and Verna Grasdahl, of Bawlf, Alberta and she has one sister, Carol, who was also adopted by her family. Debbie married Henry Gogolin and they have one adopted son, Christopher, who is of Sucker Creek First Nations heritage. Debbie was raised in Camrose, Alberta, and she has lived most of her married life in Williams Lake, BC, and she works as a care aide. Debbie is the proud grandmother of three grandchildren.

My first memories of being with mom and dad Grasdahl

Debbie: My first memories of being with my mom and dad Grasdahl, that is the only mom and dad I remember, in Kelsey. I remember eating ice cream and a little lady with a hairnet and glasses. My mom told me that lady was at the local general store and she liked to see me eat ice cream because she was taken with the way I ate it so neatly for a little girl. My mom and dad adopted me at about twenty two months. I grew up in Bawlf, just outside Camrose, a little small town at the time. Carol and I, and mom and dad.

Tara: Carol's your sister?

Debbie: Yeah. Grandpa Grasdahl sometimes stayed with us, my dad's dad. He would sometimes stay with us and sometimes stay with my dad's brother. He was a good grandpa he was pretty crippled with arthritis but he always had time for us. Friends, and my mom's brothers and sisters all lived in the same area, so we had a lot of extended family. My auntie Selma and uncle Leon had two daughters and one son and the one daughter is about my age, so we were like two peas in a pod, her name is Wendy, and my cousin Trudy lived in Calgary, and was about our age, and Judy, Trudy's sister was a little bit younger, so we are all close cousins and we had a lot of family times together. That was our entertainment, spending time with family, fishing, camping, and mom and dad entertaining friends.... Carol and I had kind of an attic bedroom we shared. It was so cosy looking back at it now.

Tara: How old was your sister compared to you?

Debbie: She was a six years older than me.

Debbie: Mom and dad. Mom said that when they first went to pick me up, it was kind of embarrassing because I wasn't dressed the best. When mom and dad and Carol came to choose a child they had to go to Edmonton, so of course everyone had their Sunday best on, and here was this little rag doll person. (laughs)

Debbie talked about her father, and how much she respected and loved him, and how he tried to teach her right from wrong. Aunt Debbie shared more memories of her early years with her family, and her sister. She was close with her sister, and was well loved by her parents. It sounded like a happy childhood, one her biological family would be glad that she experienced.

Debbie then told the story of how she first heard from her siblings.

I don't know what to say

Debbie: I guess I was working at a family restaurant when I, mom and dad, first got the letter from Ed.... And I can't really remember when we were told we were adopted. We were in Bawlf, so I was pretty little. I remember mom and dad showing me the papers, and it did say on there that there were other children but we never knew how many, or that we were Metis, or coloured or anything. Probably if they would have known that, maybe mom wouldn't have taken me. I don't know about dad so much, but mom would say "Oh, they are just as good as us, those coloured people." But the first time I brought home a Native boyfriend it didn't fly too well.

But anyway, I got this letter, or we got this letter, and it said Edgar Turner, Wynndel B.C., wants to - that was when he was trying to sell those grave plots. So I phoned dad, "what's this about?" He said just wait till we get home and we can talk about it. When they got home that night we were talking about it, and we didn't know these guys kind of thing. And I think mom and dad's concern was if someone was out to scam me or hurt me or whatever. Then after some discussion, mom asked me, "Well, would you like to write them?" And I was like "well, I don't know what to say." I didn't want to hurt their feelings. I remember going through an age, maybe around twelve where I was kind of curious about my family and who else was out there. But it kind of passed and I never gave it much thought. And then when mom asked me that, I'm like, "well what do you think?" She said "well I think it would be a good idea to write and find out what's going on, if there are other kids because there are supposed to be, and where they are and what's happening and whatever." So I was writing this letter and I can remember sitting at the kitchen table.... Anyway, we were sitting there writing it, I am your sister, I was your sister, ahhh... So mom helped me word this letter, and she said I should put a picture of myself in there, so the family would have a picture.

So like I say I was working as a waitress there, and I was waiting for a phone call from them to see when I was going to work, and your dad phoned. Your dad told me that he went to see you when you were born, and dropped the mail off with Sylvia. I guess Sylvia opens the letter and out drops this picture of me. In those days I was better looking apparently. (laughs) Anyway, Ed

phoned and asked “is Doreen Turner there,” and I am thinking about work and I said “no, I’m sorry” and I was just about ready to hang up and he said “I mean Debbie Grasdahl?” he didn’t quite know how to say my last name. And I said “yeah, that’s me.” And he said “hi little sister.” I was sitting on a stool, and I thought I would fall off that stool. And we got to talking and he was explaining where Bob was and Judy and Brian and telling me about everything. By the time I got off the phone and mom and dad got home that night I knew that I had a sister and three brothers, but do you think I could remember where they were at?

Tara: So who was all in Wynndel when you went to meet mom and dad?

Debbie: It was just, Bob and Judy came down, and Ed was there. Brian I met later back at our house. Mr. and Mrs. Kinloch brought him over. Of all the kids though, I think I have spent the least amount of time with Brian.... Richard asked me at that family reunion that you missed, we were sitting around the bench, and everybody was mulling around and talking, and he said, “What’s this feel like? Does this feel like your family?” You know, as far as my family as compared to my natural family. I said “It does, but it’s not the same, it’s not the same as the family I grew up with.” I guess just more memories and more time spent with them and everything, I don’t know. But it’s not a whole lot different either.

Like I can certainly see... Like when we first adopted Chris too, I used to be kind of fearful of meeting his mom and all. But I can certainly see where now I could do it, there definitely was some fear there. I don’t know why there was then, I guess just because he was little, and I wondered what kind of influence she’d have over him. But now, maybe it would be a better influence on him. God knows we’ve tried. (laughs) He’s been a joy, for sure. I’ve loved every minute of it. In some regards I wish we would have adopted a second child, but at that time, it was a ten year wait to have another one. And Henry was like, well, it took five years to get Chris. And the time we got Chris there was a moratorium on babies at that time, they said we would get a two to four year old we were not expecting to be lucky enough to get a baby....

So anyway, we got Chris at 21 days. It took five years. Definitely worth the wait! We had our home study all done and everything and then the social worker moved and her cases disappeared and we had to start back from square one..... I think I’ve been pretty blessed overall. I’ve got two families that love me, I think, (laughs) and I love them. It’s been pretty good. As far as Metis go, I didn’t know we were Metis growing up. It’s only in the last few years since we had Chris that I have been thinking more about culture and what that means...

....

Tara: How much older is Judy than you?

Debbie: Twelve years older.... It's interesting, you wonder what Judy has been through twelve years old when that happened, it must have been pretty traumatic. For me, I don’t remember mom and dad. Your dad had pictures, he showed when we first met. He wouldn't tell me who was who. That one of my dad was familiar. It was like one reoccurring dream I had. I remember a little house, it has a slanted roof, wallpaper and a rocking chair, but I could never reach that person in the rocking chair. Judy said that it sounds similar to what their house looked liked in the kitchen. When I see a picture of mom, I don’t remember her at all.

Tara: You were eighteen months old when you lived with your [biological] dad?

Debbie: It was my first birthday [when they were in the accident].

Tara: Oh, wow.

Debbie: Apparently they were coming back to our place to have birthday cake or something. I think that's what Judy told me. Mom and dad went one direction from the fort [Fort Saskatchewan] and our uncle and aunt came back in another. Mom and dad should have got home before them, that was the night of the accident. Brian says he has memories of dad more.

Tara: I think he was four or five when your mom and dad were killed. A little bit older anyway.

Choke cherry jelly

Debbie: I don't remember coming home with my [adoptive] mom and dad or any of that, I just remember, I guess my earliest memories, are of that yellow dress. That was so pretty. And mom waxing the hardwood floors (laughs) and us scrambling around the hardwood floors in dad's work socks. (laughs) I remember mom sewing me a nice coat, my mom could really sew.

Tara: Umhuh.

Debbie: The first time I heard my mom swear she was cooking choke cherry jelly and she had on a new dress that she got from the States. I don't know why she was wearing a new dress to make choke cherry jelly, (laughs) but it boiled over and she went to take it outside so that it wouldn't boil over on the stove and her dress flew up and got choke cherry jelly all over it. "Damn," (laughs) my mom swore, it must be very quiet serious. (laughs)

Debbie shared more stories of growing up in a rural prairie place and how tough her mom was. She then told of how her father's health started to fail, and what it was like to lose him.

Debbie: In her senior years mom fell and broke her collar bone, that was after dad died and she drove herself home and decided maybe the next day she should go to the hospital.... I think mom was braver than we ever gave her credit for when dad was sick with cancer and he was suffering. (long pause)

Tara: Tough thing to lose your parents eh?

Debbie: Yup, Dad was so sick for so long it was about a year and half after he got diagnosed, he suffered and he got pretty demanding at times and mom was pretty good about it. Even after dad passed she was really strong. I remember after the funeral riding in the back of the car looking at everyone busy in the streets and I was thinking didn't they know my dad was dead why didn't they stop what they were doing? Funny the things that goes through your mind as you're grieving. The first Christmas after dad died mom and I put up the Christmas tree together and it

was one of those that you had to stick the branches in, we had no clue cause dad always used to do that. (laughs) We were laughing and crying trying to put this Christmas tree together, and it was freezing cold out and we were trying to put Christmas lights up outside and I said it's too cold out, but mom said "then go in you baby." Mom stuck it out and put those darn Christmas lights up around the house outside. (laughs)

Tara: Was your dad sick for long?

Debbie: Yeah. He was sick for ... we got married in October and mom and dad's anniversary is December 4th and I phoned to wish them Happy Anniversary and dad was sick then. He got diagnosed that week. Anyway, very shortly thereafter and they gave him a year and a half before he died. That's when chemo was fairly new and he did really well on the chemo therapy but because he did so well towards the end there, the last six months, he was doing so well on the chemotherapy, instead of having him back for three days in a row, they gave him a three day treatments in one day. He had big holes in his hands and up his arms. It was awful. The last six months were awful.

I was working in the kitchen at the lodge and I got the weekend off and we'd drive home every month or so. Mom said my sense of humour helped dad. I'd tease him about wearing his pj's and getting mom to tuck him in, etc. Dad was pretty strong about it all. He didn't want to talk about death. One time when I had come home and mom was at a funeral I sat on the couch and dad starts crying I asked dad if he was scared. He just nodded. He wouldn't talk about it further. Mom said he only talked once about where he wanted to be buried. He said it didn't matter Fairy Point or Camrose. Mom didn't think that was a good idea because Ferry Point it was a little country church, most of mom's family and dad's family were buried there but it wasn't always kept up. She thought it would be better if they were to be buried in Camrose because the grounds are looked after.

It was after Dad's death that I found my need for God in my life. I missed my dad, when I found out I had a heavenly father that I could talk to everyday, who loves me, I wanted that. Anyway mom won't talk much either about death or what her wishes are. (laughs) One time, not too long after she moved out of Park View into the Rose Alta. I can't remember if Carol was with me, she gave me her Legion dues, she asked me to "go pay this cause when I die they'll do the sandwiches." (laughs)

Tara: There you go, that's planning. (laughs)

Debbie: Carol said, "a typical Norwegian, have yelly and yam sandwiches, for the occasions, and coffee." My granny used to say that cause she used to say her "y's" for her "j's." (laughs) ... We used to have fun when we were going to granny's out on the farm, there was wooden steps and Wendy and I used to make mud pies and we'd put straw in them and we'd put them on the wooden steps and that was our oven. Mom would give us heck for making a mess on granny's steps and granny would say "Nay, leave them now, they dry, just sweep them off. They're just playing." (laughs) Granny was not was very demonstrative, never one to say she loved us, we just knew.

Tara: Uh huh.

Debbie: That's the way granny was. Mom often said she was never told she was loved, it just wasn't done in those days, and to this day mom never tells us. "Oh, I love you mom," "yeah, okay, bye." You know she does. Dad was more the demonstrative one. (long pause)

I did not realize it at the time, but it felt strange talking about Debbie and Brian's lives with their adoptive families. I understand now that I had always heard of them in the context of my father's stories, of them within their biological family home. I think this, at the time unrecognized feeling, along with a growing emotional tiredness on my part, meant that I wish I had been more responsive to my aunt's stories about her family, especially at her pain of losing her father.

I remember my mom being surprised I was Native

Tara: I'm glad that you had a dad that you got to know and love him. So when was it when you first found out that you had a Metis background? Was it when you first met [my] dad?

Debbie: Yeah.

Tara: Do you have any memory of that?

Debbie: I don't remember when the subject really came up. I don't think it was the first time we met. It must have been though, cause I remember mom being surprised I was Native. I remember dad in the trailer after saying, well they certainly don't show the Native. (laughs) I don't know if that was relief or what.

It never really became important to me until after Chris was born, and we went to pick up Chris, when we first seen him, and a picture of him, and the social worker went to get the keys so we could drive over and see him at the lady's place that he was staying at, and I said "oh, isn't he beautiful." Henry, and Henry kind of says what he thinks and he says "he looks pretty black." (laughs) Anyway, by the time we got Chris home and went back to his mom's, he was just a puddle of jello. (laughs)....

Getting back to the Native thing, I thought it was important for Chris to know his heritage and I kind of wanted to know more about the Indians and what their beliefs were so I started talking to Ed and your mom learning more about the Native beliefs to learn more about the Medicine Wheel, and all that comes, that's a very spiritual thing as well, although I was brought up with a belief in God and I follow that more, I think it's just another way to worship God..... Anyway, I love bannock. (laughs)

Tara: Who doesn't? Especially when it's fried. (laughs)

Debbie: A native lady sitting next to me at the stampede was eating bannock, and I said "where did you get that?" (laughs) It smelled so good.

Tara: I just have it every once in a while at powwows.

Debbie: Go to many of them?

Tara: Not much, my schooling has been pretty busy, the first four years I just did school solid, but now, I'm starting to do more with gatherings and things and I especially enjoy meeting other Metis people and it is kind of neat and to see the results of different ways of being Metis.

Debbie: Metis, is that like, it doesn't matter what nation you're from, but if you're part something else, that makes you Metis, right?

Tara: Well, it depends a little bit, some of it is political, right, as far as how Metis is defined, but I think, in the most traditional sense of the word, that it's that mix that emerged out of the fur trade and then the people that are descended from those people.... So, with our family, it was actually an Englishman, right, that came over, Philip Turnor, and it began from there.

Debbie: I think that too, I feel that whole family reunion in getting to know our heritage and stuff, stirred up those feelings too, as far as interest in my family roots and where I come from, and pride in that.

Tara: It's kind of neat to have that.

Debbie: I'd like to see have Carol have that. She found out that she comes from Scottish people, but it is so interesting to know. Okay, so that's your mom and dad, but what's behind that? What shaped them in the people they are? Sure, you can write all the names down, on a paper, so and so begat, and so and so begat, but who they were and what they did for a living, and what kind of people they were, that's what I find interesting.

Tara: Yeah. That's part of my process in being interested in interviewing all of you, is because I'm saying, where am I from? Really, it's a tie-back, and some of my questions, and some of the questions the Elders will ask is who are you, and where are you from, and who are your ancestors, and where are you going? But, you can't leave out the "who are your ancestors" question. And I think part of who I am and where I am going, is where I am from. Sounds like just how people identify and don't identify, that stuff.

I am amazed at how poorly I describe what it is to be Metis, although I think it reflects fully my own confusion and certainty that remained as I started this project. It is also amazing, but fortunate, that my aunt is able to somehow follow my thinking, and add her own experience to it.

Debbie: For that reason too, I think it would be good for Chris, to have a better connection with his natural roots. Maybe it's because of my grounding, maybe it would help him to figure out what he wants out of life, or as much as he wants, grounding does kind of help in that regard.

Tara: Do you think your Metis background influenced your decision to adopt a Native child?

Debbie: No. (laughs) It wouldn't have mattered the color of skin. We just wanted a child to love....

Tara: So what did you share with Chris, about your own background?

Debbie: What I knew, that mom and dad were killed in a car accident and I had brothers and a sister and that I was Metis what I have learned about our heritage, and after I knew about Philip Turnor and all that. Beyond that, I don't know. About his own adoption, I answered his questions as he asked them.... Chris was pretty dark when he was a baby. He has the straightest hair. I remember when my mom first came to see him, I think she was trying to make him more white, trying to curl his hair. She put a curler into it and as soon as she took it out it just went 'pooing' [went straight]. (laughs)
....

Tara: I think getting back to what would be your mom's generation, anywhere, this seems like it was less a - there were a lot of negative stereotypes that still exist, I mean they exist, they're not gone, but there's lots of people that are more...

Debbie: I even find that in the Natives themselves, for example, driving the bus, there was a Native couple, First Nations, (laughs) whatever, I don't know how to say it without offending anyone, I don't want to say Indian. Anyway, we were discussing a large group of people in the park. It was said there was party in the park. I said "it's a wedding, they are celebrating," and he said "but they don't drink." It's almost like a given, that people think that they have to defend the Natives - they don't drink or they do drink or whatever. It wasn't what I meant but it was assumed that was what I was saying... Would they say that about White people?

Tara: No.

Debbie: It's so ingrained.... I don't know. You see people in the park, they never say something at Whites, but Natives, are always marginalized. A Native fellow, he was very loaded and having a tough time keeping up his pants, and the Native people were making fun of the Native people. But for the grace of God there go I. I used to drink as much as anyone in my teen years. It's so true, I drank pretty good in my teens. I think if I would have stayed in that situation I could be that person in the park too. I guess my drug of choice is food, same difference. I'm not saying I'm any better than anyone else, I guess it is just more acceptable habit than alcohol or drugs.

Tara: There's a lot of Turners who are pretty big folks. There are certainly some genes there that aren't helping a whole pile, but there's certainly...

Debbie: I wonder if it's a fear of isolation thing, or a loss thing. Even for me, when I'm by myself, that's when I eat.

Tara: Yeah.

Debbie: I wonder if it's a loneliness thing, and abandonment issue, could be that as a baby could have that abandonment issue and carry that through? Could it be that is why we all of us eat, for all of our losses? (laughs)

...

Where was everybody?

Tara: If there is any sort of memory, it would be interesting to look into that, but because those periods in time are so important in development, and attachment and those sort of things, that it wouldn't be a big surprise to me that there, even though there is not an actual memory attached to that, that there is somehow something - like your dream you had.... Can you remember your stories that you have been told?

Debbie: Just what I've been told. I don't remember mom and dad coming to get me. Carol helped pick me out. (laughs) They asked the mothers to pick one and mother said I looked the most hopeless. (laughs) Maybe the most pitiful. They had me in a long dress and these big shoes and I guess my feet weren't developing properly cause my feet had been pushed into smaller shoes.

Tara: So, where did you go first after your parents were killed? Did Judy tell you, do you remember?

Debbie: I think it was Alice's? I don't remember her at all.

Tara: What do you think about it, you don't have any memories, but you've been told stories from your brothers and sisters about what that was like, and that they worried about you?

Debbie: Your dad told me about the orphanages. I think it must have been very traumatic for him. Your dad was so angry I think at being separated. Like he said, what could they be thinking. I wonder too why would they separate them (US) [(US) added by Debbie after reading her transcript]. Thank God we found each other. How horrible. Judy told me about how they had the car on display as a warning to others, but how thoughtless! Where was everybody? Our church? We were all torn apart why didn't anyone help? From a practical end, how did the older ones cope to lose first their parents, their brothers and sisters, it's really a wonder...

Tara: Yeah.

Debbie: It's important for me, for sure, but I think it must be more important for them eh?

Tara: Well, they remembered you, so they knew you were there.

Debbie: Yeah. I often wondered why mom changed my name. I think she didn't like the name Doreen Rose. (laughs) I often wondered how does a little kid respond to a change of name? I don't remember being called Doreen Rose. Cause, at one year old you must be used to hearing your own name.

Tara: So how old were you when you were adopted?

Debbie: Twenty two months, almost two. All that time I was with aunt Alice I think. Probably Judy would know.

I'm kind of me I guess

Tara: So what influence, if any, does the Metis history play in the way you conceptualize yourself, or is it just sort of there?

Debbie: I don't know that I live my life any different. I'm proud of the fact that I'm Metis, and if someone asks me what my heritage is, I'll certainly tell them. I'm kind of me I guess. Influence me, maybe in that I am more aware of how Native people are treated by some.

Tara: Just as part of who you are?

Debbie: I guess. It's probably not something I dwell on in that regard. As far as going to potlatches, I've been down here to powwows. I really enjoy them, I wish I could hear what he is saying so you could understand the story better, what they're doing and why they're doing it. I've always enjoyed it, even before I knew that I was Metis.

Tara: It's kind of different, for you guys mostly, and for myself, because we haven't had that family connection.... No real reason, nobody to teach you to be proud, of you heritage, and basically more negative understandings of First Nations and Metis.

Debbie: It was certainly, growing up, we were never around Natives, nor do I ever remember any Natives ever going to our school. I think the first Native I ever ran across was in high school, and she was an Eskimo. She was a tough nut. And Peter, I brought him home once, and that was short lived anyway. I used to hitchhike to Wetaskiwin and the Hobema Indians were around there, but I didn't socialize too much with them. Young Swedish people I grew up with. Lots of lefsa and lutefisk. (laughs)

Tara: I don't know, that lutefisk doesn't sound very good.

Debbie: Ooh, it's awful, you don't even want to get near the smell of it. (laughs)

Tara: Not like bannock?

Debbie: No, no, lefsa on the other hand, I like lefsa. (laughs) My grannie made the best lefsa. I try but it's not as good as grannies.

Tara: So where do you think that sense of pride in your heritage comes from?

Debbie: Maybe it's a sense of belonging. I'm quite happy being Metis, I have no problem with it. People will say what nationality are you? Well, my mom and dad are Norwegians, but my other mom and dad were...what do you say? (laughs) Where does one outweigh the other, what you grew up or what your blood relatives are? There's a question for your thesis piece for you. (laughs) I wish I knew more about them, the Metis, what their belief systems were, what the

cultures were, belief systems. Makes you wonder too, how come some people have such an easy time getting their Metis status? I've been three years waiting for mine.

Tara: And you have the same paperwork that dad would have had?

Debbie: Yes, and I had my adoption papers, and Judy and Bob's numbers. Some people get it in a matter of weeks.

Tara: Maybe its just resource based, and having somebody in the office.

Debbie: They say around here, "Chilcotin time."

Tara: Well, I don't think I have any more specific questions for you. I guess, one thing I'd like to ask you, because of you been in a different situation of not having memories of your home, now that you're an adult and you know you have this two sides of the family, and looking back, what impact do you think that has had on your life. Having these experiences as a family and then as a young adult.

Debbie: I think it is important, and a good thing, if you can't grow up with your natural family, then, yes, sure, go for adoption, but then let that child find their roots, encourage them to find their roots, and maybe it will help them identify more who they are and not feel like they are floating out there with no roots to identify who they are. I think it helps in, how they grow up, finding their own self identity. It's an added bonus really. That's what my mom and dad said too, they were so good about it. When we found all my brothers and my sister, mom and dad said they just had more kids now. That was how they always viewed that and I will always be proud of them for that.

Tara: That's so nice.

Debbie: And both of them felt that way.

Tara: Yeah.

Debbie: I got to meet my brothers and sister. I wonder if well it sort of bothers me that ... not guilt really, but why can't I remember them? When we were young and together as a family I don't remember them. I feel bad about that. I had my mom and dad, and raised in a comfortable environment, I guess they had good homes here and there but, well, for sure, not as much.

Tara: I guess auntie Judy is your memory pot.

Debbie: Yes, for sure, I spend a lot of time with Judy, and Ed too learning about our growing up years. With Carol, finding out so late in life about her roots affected her somewhat I think, like if your building, if you don't have something to build a foundation on, it is less complete maybe?

Tara: It's good that it's worked out so well.

Debbie: I've had some people that - When Henry was having heart surgery and we were talking at the Easter Seal House with strangers that I met there. We were talking about how many calls I had had and about my natural family etc. Their experience wasn't as good as mine meeting their siblings etc. The first time I met all of them, Bob, Judy and Ed, and they left that night, and I thought I'll never see them again, and then they came back when Bob forgot his cap or camera or something and I was embarrassed cause I was sitting there with red eyes.

It's good to celebrate who you are

Tara: If you have anything that you can think of that you would like to add?

Debbie: Nothing that I can think of. I guess about adoption, to influence somebody about White babies going to Native families, or Native babies to go to White families, as long as you love them, what does it matter what color they are? Kids are kids, it doesn't matter, black, brown, yellow, or white. That's my feeling anyway. It's good to know who you are and where you come from. Maybe it helps you find where you are going. It's good to celebrate who you are. Encourage everybody to be the best you can be. (laughs)

Tara: Do you have any questions for me?

Debbie: What do you hope to gain - what do you see as the outcome of all this?

Tara: The most important part for me is collecting the stories for myself, but partly because I love my dad so much and I see how hard all this is for him. So I don't want that, and I don't want him, and I don't want any of you guys, and I don't want any of my cousins, and any of my second-cousins and all that, to lose that too. I think that we've lost a lot of that actually, by not having the connections to who our relatives are. That's what I think. And, thinking, that one small way, that there'll be some foot prints that the family can share with each other. That's probably where it is, umm, so that's probably the most important piece for me. So I guess it's kind of a bonus that I get from my dad in some way, and the family in general, and for myself, and I want to know who I am and where I came from and what those stories are.

Debbie: I was speaking on the academic side.

Tara: From the academic side, I think this has happened to lots of families. I don't think that it's often been looked at from the Metis perspective and from the perspective of understanding about different cultures. So, I think that that's important because it's not the only family who's had this experience, it can happen to many families, either through death, or poverty, or through whatever.

Debbie: I guess in that aspect, growing up in a White family I've lost some of my family traditions, Native culture. I didn't, I wasn't raised, and didn't know about that. Maybe if you were an adopting parent, adopting someone of a different nation, it would be a good thing to help them keep that part of their heritage. Like your mom and dad, with the boys, they took them to powwows, keeping their heritage, and have kept and preserved and they not lose it, be it Native or Scottish or whatever. Have roots.

Tara: That interests me and also interests me why people identify as Metis, or First Nation, or status, when it has not been part of their daily existence. So lots of questions and then I can write my dissertation. (laughs) But, yeah, for me I think it is just to know my roots, and I think it is interesting. Why not be proud of it? Why do people take part in it, if they haven't grown up with it? Something we have to think about....

We spent the night at aunt Debbie's and then we travelled to Creston. The next day I interviewed my dad. It was good, but hard. This was the easiest interview for me in some ways, but also the hardest. I know my dad the best, and feel so comfortable with him, but I am also the closest to him as he is my father, and I was most affected by the emotional aspects of his story. It also made me think about interviewing my mom too, and how I wanted to honour both of my parent's memories and know both sides of my family and their history. My mother's life story is full of twists and turns, hard times and surviving, and full of giving. I would have loved to be able to ask my mom's mom to tell me her story, but she died years ago. Having my mom's story recorded feels like a natural next step. But first I needed to finish my father's interview.

Ed's story

Synopsis:

Edgar (Ed) was born on March 5, 1947. He was eight years old when his parents were killed. Ed was the third child born to Ed and Winnie. After his parents' deaths, Ed lived with a Turner family and he was then moved to the orphanage. Ed lived in two foster homes and he moved with his first foster family to the Creston, B.C. area. Edgar married Sylvia and they have four children, Dawn, Tara [me], Travas, who is adopted and he is a status Dene from Ross River, Yukon, and Todd who is adopted and has Gitxsan from Prince Rupert, B.C., where his grandfather was a hereditary chief. Ed lived and worked in the Creston, B.C. area his entire working career. He is a journeyman carpenter, worked for Highways, and he retired after working twenty years with the B.C. Ambulance service. Ed is the proud grandparent of four grandchildren.

What I remember of my mom and dad

Ed: My earliest memories are from when I lived with mom and dad on 66th Street, north Edmonton.... What I remember of my mom and dad - my memories of my mom have faded. I don't remember a lot about mom. I remember, for a treat, she use to make me an icing sugar sandwich.... I mean, I can see her face, I don't remember any conversations with her or anything she said. I just remember her being there. With my dad, I don't remember particularly talking to him. I remember some of the things we did together. I remember him taking us up on the roof of the house and watching the fireworks at exhibition time from the peak of the roof.

I remember the house had no running water. We had some barrels out at the front that a truck used to come around and fill up. I remember chasing the ice truck to get a piece of ice to suck on. 66th Street was just a gravel road out there and 137th Avenue was the city limits. We had

electricity, but it was obviously a house that was wired after, it wasn't wired during construction, so the wires were all throughout the house.

I remember my dad being in the hospital for a long time with TB. I don't know how long. I'm guessing six months he was in there.... I remember the night mom and dad died, people coming to the house, and aunt Alice was there. I can't remember who all else, but I remember them telling us mom and dad were dead. I don't remember feeling anything. I don't remember anyone ever talking to me about it. It is just kind of a blur.

I remember going out to Fort Saskatchewan, to my grandpa's house in Fort Saskatchewan. Often the trips were a little hairy because dad had been drinking and he'd hit the ditch or the side of the old bridge going in and out of there. But we had some good times there too with grandpa and grandma.

I remember grandma being able to speak Cree. In her trunk upstairs she had gauntlet gloves with the flowers beaded on them, with the fringes and a pair of moccasins. She had a bear skin rug beside her bed. I remember dad going out in the bush with us, and with the 22. We found a porcupine sitting up in a branch about three feet off the ground. Dad just kept us back and he went up there very, very slowly, ever so slowly and gently and reached out with the 22 and stroked the back of the porcupine with the barrel of the 22, just very, very slowly, and then he reached out with the other hand and he pulled some quills out of the porcupines tail. I remember him showing them to me and telling me to be very, very careful because they were sharp, but I stuck my finger with them anyway. I remember shooting the 22 out there at the farm. It was a single shot 22 bolt action and when I shot I got my thumb underneath the bolt, it was cocked and the bolt came back and hit my thumb. Ow, that hurt. (laughs)

Dad shared stories of Judy learning to drive, and almost running him over, and a sleigh ride with Uncle Frank where one of the cousins fell out. He talked about his aunt Jenny and uncle Jule, and the store bought bread they had. He remembered the families in the neighbourhood and the kids they played with.

When mom and dad died

Ed: When mom and dad died we moved in with aunt Barb and uncle Harvey for a very short time, maybe months. I don't remember any conversations about that, Bob and Judy would remember more. But they had three kids and to take on another four or five. Actually there was six of us kids, because when my mom died she was nine months pregnant, so there was actually six of us kids. That's something that always bothers me yet, what happened with the baby, what did they do with the baby? Was the baby buried with mom?

I did not tell my father anything that Judy had told me about the baby. I needed to wait until Judy had read her transcript and given me permission to share her words. I knew it would just have to wait until the time was right.

.... My baby sister, I don't know whether she ever was at uncle Harvey's but she ended up at my aunt Alice's, I know, for a while, then she was adopted out. Adopted by a family and that was the last I seen of her. I don't know, she was a year or eighteen months the last time I seen her till she was eighteen years old.

The rest of us went into the orphanage. Just figuring when mom and dad died and when I got out, I must have been there for three or four years in the orphanage. Mother and father McPherson we called them, the people that ran the orphanage, then there was an older gal there, Clara, she was one of the maids. Dorcas was the cook, I vaguely remember her, and I think there were about forty kids in there.... At every meal time we had to say the same prayer, Our Father we thank thee for this food and for Thy gifts. Amen. (laughs) We said the same at every meal. I remember breakfast, we always got porridge and a couple of pieces of toast, that was breakfast. I hate porridge to this day.

Dad talked about the schedule in the orphanage, cleaning day on Saturday, getting to go to the circus or other events because they were orphans. He told stories about going to the movies with their allowance, and playing in a playhouse by the river bank. He also talked about "the stick" that the caretakers would carry, and him being the carrier in a diphtheria outbreak, and their fear that it was Brian who was ill. He remembers feeling self-conscious of their poor clothes they wore to school and stealing better clothes from new kids who came to the orphanage. He remembered the kindness of people who took him home for Christmas and bought him some new clothes and a bike, and how he still has contact with them today.

....

Ed: My cousin Harvey Rains, he used to call around and take us kids out of the orphanage and take us to Elk Island Park, or take us to aunt Lizzie's, or take us to some relatives for a visit. He'd take us for a car ride, or take us to the beach swimming. He was very good to us. My uncle Willard, he used to come and take us kids out once in a while, and I remember uncle Frank coming to the orphanage. Willard was good, he was exceptionally good, he'd take us out quite often. He was a bachelor, so I thought that was pretty good of him to do that. He continued contact with me until his death. He was certainly a favourite uncle because he always cared about us, never forgot about us.

One uncle on my mother's side, uncle Johnnie, I remember him coming one time to bring some fruit to the orphanage. I just felt like he was doing his Christian thing. I remember being very proud that that was my uncle, and him barely acknowledging me. No show of affection, no real acknowledgement to me there. In later years I found out more what his attitude towards us was. He and my aunt Bud (Ethel) were kind of the head of the family, and everything went through them. They kind of felt that we were better off just left in there and forgotten about or let it go through and be adopted out or fostered out or whatever. They never, ever approved of my mom and my dad being married, because my dad's family was considered half-breeds and they were a more elite family at the Fort, so the marriage was never really approved of. I never remember any Adamson's coming to our house when we were little. My aunt Norah did come but that was the

only one that ever came to our house from that family that I know of. So, I think they were quite happy to just leave us in the orphanage. We did go to aunt Bud's once in a while, to see granny and Judy must have taken us there.

Tara: Was that your granny Adamson?

Ed: Yes, granny Adamson. I don't think the Great Spirit put a nicer lady on the earth. She was just a perfect lady and all the time I've known her I've never heard her say a bad word about anybody. She's just the nicest person I've ever known in my life, and a very, very beautiful lady. She was just beautiful. I loved granny. I'm sure we all did. Judy has her eyes.

....Judy, I think she had the toughest time, 'cause she was the oldest, and she tried to protect us and she'd do things for us, and she was really powerless. (pause) Another time in the orphanage, I had pneumonia, and I was so sick I couldn't get out of bed. I wet the bed, and I was beaten for that. Then I was taken to the hospital by ambulance. Bob, he was an awful good brother. He's the kindest man, always a big softie. He always was. I know I'd blow my allowance right away, and Bob saved his. He saved up, and saved up, and I remember one time he gave me some of his allowance to go for an ice cream cone. He wanted Brian to have one too, and I thought why do I have to take Brian along? It's fine to have an ice cream cone, but why do I have to take Brian? He was a pain in the ass, the little brother. Not long after that we lost Brian, because he went to a family for some holiday and I guess they just fell in love with him because he was a cute little bugger, everyone loved him, and I can't blame them for falling in love with him, and so he never came back. They adopted him. I always felt a little bad because... (upset) Funny I always remember that one incident. I felt for so long that I was a bad brother to him. Bob's always been very kind and very generous, always. Couldn't ask for a better brother, and I think that he had a tougher time too, more things to remember, he was the protector, well he and Judy.

My heart went out to my dad, for the depth of feeling he had for his siblings. It made me think back to uncle Brian's interview, and how I hoped reading the stories of how much his older siblings loved and missed him would resonate for him. My dad always had a hard time telling me the story about not taking Brian along for that ice cream cone. I think it hurt so much since he was lost to them soon after, and without any chance to say goodbye.

....

Then some people came and were going to take me out of the orphanage, and I thought it was for a holiday, I absolutely thought it was for a holiday, out to a farm and I could have a pony and all this stuff. I was really excited until we packed some clothes and got on the bus, and I think before I left I went downtown with mother McPherson and she bought me some clothes, and that's the only time I ever remember buying clothes with her, so I should have clued in then. But, it was not till after they had picked me up and we were going on the city bus to her mother's place in Edmonton, that I realized that this wasn't a holiday and that this was for keeps. So I started raising holy old hell and I didn't want to go for keeps, for a holiday was fine, but not for keeps, because I didn't want to leave my brother. So, we got to her mother's place and I was still raising a fuss so she phoned her husband in Athabasca and he said, "well, bring the other one too." After

she phoned the welfare and whoever she had to phone, they agreed that Bob could come too. Then it was o.k., then we went home. I got promised lots of things too, to just shut up and go. And none of those things have ever materialized. (laughs) I never did get that pony.

I went to Grossmont, they had a farm there, and I started school in Lahavel. Bob came out eventually..... Mostly, at the farm there, I never did much farm work other than to look after the chickens and get in the wood. Mostly I was the domestic help – wash clothes, did dishes, scrubbed floors and stuff like that. I guess it was better than the orphanage, and we ate pretty good.

Dad told some stories about being at this foster home, about another foster girl who was there, and life on the farm. He talked too about moving around, and starting new schools. The additive effect of hearing from Judy how Brian and Debbie had both been adopted out without their knowledge, and without even getting to say goodbye and then dad's story of being taken from the orphanage to a foster home without even asking him reignited my anger at the child welfare system. It was like they were just objects, goods, items that could be traded for or given away on a whim.

....

Ed: I don't think we were there very long and we went to B.C., to where Clyde and Peggy [the parents of his foster father] lived in Wynndel and they wanted to know if I wanted to go along. Bob didn't want to go to B.C. so he stayed with Vida, but I didn't know, I went along, because I didn't know anything else to do. Scared of the unknown I guess. So I went out to B.C. with them, and I remember that as being (sigh) one of the worst parts of my childhood was out in B.C., alone, because I didn't have anyone, and I felt really, really lonely. (upset) I didn't feel like I was part of the family. (upset-pause) Aunt Vida would send packages, care packages, and we'd all gather round and look for stuff and there was something for everyone, all of the kids, but she never sent nothing for me. So I remember that just added to feelings I already had.

....

For some reason when I went over to Clyde and Peggy's to pick strawberries, and I never went back to Lloyd and Beth's, I just stayed there with Peggy. I was there for two or three years before Peggy even got the application to have a foster child. I remember my life changed a lot when I went there. I was happy there. I was treated good. Clyde told me just to call him Pop. I mostly called Peggy, Peggy, but then eventually just started calling her mom, and that was it. I was pretty happy there, I sometimes still felt lonely, but I started to grow up there a bit. Clyde taught me many things, morals and work ethics and some of the things he used to say to me. We'd get into some arguments sometimes, he was a rough, tough, old guy, but everyone loved Clyde, he was just a kind man. Mom, she was just a really good kind person. And I remember her hugging me, and I felt like I was loved. (upset) I think my life got better there.

Clyde always said, “I don’t give a god damn if you’re a ditch digger, you be the best god damn ditch digger on the job.” (laughs) Things like that he used to say. And I was told if I go to work for someone, “don’t stand around with your hands in your pockets, you keep your god damn hands out of your pockets.” I sometimes got pissed off at some of the things he said, but I always hung on to them. He always said “you make damn sure if you’re working with somebody, or a crew of men, you made damn sure you do more than your share, always do more than your share.” He also said if you’re in a fight and the guy is bigger than you, pick up an equalizer. And he always taught me about honesty and that your word is your bond, your word has to be worth something. If you shake hands on something that’s a deal, you can’t back out of that, it’s the same as a signed package. He was a good guy.

It was good that my father, at long last, had found a way to be a part of a family again. His foster father Clyde died before I was born, but his foster mom Peggy lived in the town by where I grew up, and we saw her from time to time. Although she was always a very sweet lady, I never really knew her or felt close to Peggy while she was alive. My dad had told me these stories before, but somehow this time I understood how important these people were to my father. I then understood how important they were to my life, as they helped to shape my father’s character, and to help him learn how to be a parent. Later, when I was on my own, I said some words of thanks and deep gratitude to Peggy and Clyde in hopes that they would hear them.

....

I think he was just glad to have us half-breeds out of the family

Ed: I still packed a lot of shit from the old days. From the rejection from the Adamson’s. I found out years later that Johnny and Bud had stopped other family members from adopting any of us kids. I think he was just glad to have us half-breeds out of the family. I have a cousin that was raised by Ethel and Johnny or Bud and Johnny. He was aunt Ona’s son and he was raised by Bud and Johnny and he just can’t say enough about how good they were and what kind people they were and I just bite my tongue and let him talk, because it’s not my opinion of them. He had no control over that or no knowledge over that. I packed a lot of resentment towards them for a long time, for all the Adamson’s, because when we were in that orphanage for however long we were in there, none of the Adamson’s ever came and took us out, like for Thanksgiving dinner or Christmas dinner, or to the beach or, you know, that just didn’t happen. They would just rather be done with us than anything. I’ve been back to the house, after we were married we went to visit them and I still feel that undercurrent like I’m not wanted.

....

Dad told me about the early days in his relationship with mom, the cars and the motorcycle he had, and the dances they would go to. He talked about going to vocational school for carpentry, mom winning the Blossom Festival Queen, and him buying her an engagement ring for 100 dollars, and paying for it 10 dollars a month. He recalled the events around the birth

of my sister and me, and the adoption of my two brothers. He re-told me the stories about the carpentry projects he worked on, then going to the gravel crusher, and his move towards first aid training and being a paramedic. He talked about the difficult memories that have come from being a paramedic for many years, and shared too, some of the most difficult times in his adult life. Dad remembered the foster children who lived with us, the big reunions at our house, the good friends and neighbours that were close.

Hi, I'm Brian's brother

Tara: What do you remember about meeting your brother Brian again?

Ed: When I was sixteen or seventeen, sixteen I think, I went to Edmonton to visit my sister and I remember she told me that mother McPherson had told her that these people were from Wetaskiwin and their name was Kinloch, and that they had a K on their screen door, on a certain street. Judy said that one time her and someone had drove past it and they had seen that house. So I went into Wetaskiwin and drove up and down the streets to see if I could find that house. I knew he wouldn't be there, it was a school day, and he would be in school. So I parked out from the house and walked in and knocked on the door, I didn't know what to do, I was scared to death. I was really scared. But I wanted to... (tears, pause) I didn't even really care if I got to see him, I just wanted to know he had a good home. I knocked at the door, and this little lady came to the door. I didn't know what to say, so I said "Hi, I'm Brian's brother." Well her knees just about buckled and she didn't know what to say. I forget what we said after, but finally she said "come on in." I told her I wasn't there to make any trouble, I just wanted to know my brother was o.k., and that he had a good home.

She phoned her husband at work and he came home. They took me downstairs and showed me his room, and I saw some of his artwork that he had done in school, pictures of him and his sister, pictures of him in air cadets, and school pictures. They said they wouldn't mind us getting together, but they wanted it to be after he was eighteen. I said that was fine with me as I knew he had a very good family. Then after that I wrote to them and they wrote to me, and when I went through I phoned from a telephone booth, and if the coast was clear I went to see them. They were good people.

When he turned eighteen, it all got arranged, and Bob and Judy came down to our place and we all went out there together. I was really excited about getting to meet my brother, finally getting to see him again. We stopped at someplace in Wetaskiwin, some park or something to get cleaned up before we went over there, and then I started to get scared again. I was really scared to go over there and meet him again. We went over and Art and Maureen were there, his sister Maureen, her husband, Brian, Jim, Ruth, Bob, Judy, Sylvia and I and nine month old Dawn. We were all together there and we had a good visit. I've been in touch with him ever since then I guess. That was how I found my little brother.

Doreen, I tried different ways to try and find her but I didn't know how to find her. Dad had bought eight cemetery plots in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery on payments in 1953, but they were life insured. So then when my parents died, the plots were all paid off. By that time

grandma and grandpa were buried in two of the plots and mom and dad were buried in another two, but there was four left. We agreed that we would sell them and put a headstone on mom and dad's grave. I got the titles for them from Judy and took them to my lawyer and he got a thing drawn up for everybody to sign these plots over to me to do with as I pleased. I sent them to Bob and Judy, and they signed them and sent them back, and Brian, he signed them and sent them back. I didn't know where to send Doreen's, so my lawyer sent it to the Public Trustee.

Coincidentally, about the same time, she got her inheritance from my dad's life insurance.... They sent her a check for her share of the inheritance from the Public Trustee and my lawyer sent my letter for her to the Public Trustee in Edmonton.... So the Public Trustee sent a letter to her mother, to her folks, saying that there was an Ed Turner in Creston trying to get in touch with them. Debbie wrote me a letter and sent me a picture of herself. And at that time mom was nine months pregnant with you and I was working in Sparwood. She was nine months pregnant and she gets this letter from this chick in Camrose, and she opens it up and this picture of this sweet young thing falls out (laughs), she didn't know what to think about that for a while, she wasn't thinking it was my sister for a while anyway. (laughs) Then she read the letter, so I phoned home and she told me about it.

I went home and that night she went into the hospital, so, you little bugger, you kept me up all night that night. Then in the morning, after I got home from the hospital after you were born, I phoned my sister and talked to her. Not long after, a few days later, her mom and dad brought her out.

I knew all of these stories, and had heard them many times before. But I never tired of hearing them, and the repetition of them helped me to remember.

....

I knew there was something there about Indians

Tara: ...I have some questions specific to the Metis background.

Ed: When I was a kid – uncle Frank, I always thought he was an Indian. The Simmons' - uncle Frank worked for them, my dad worked for them, my grandpa worked for them, and they were always good people. They were always rich people and I always felt a little bit under class and I knew there was something there about Indians. Then it wasn't long before I learned how much the Adamson's disapproved of dad marrying my mom and of course my grandma spoke Cree and my grandpa spoke Cree too, so I knew they were Indian. I remember my grandpa showing us kids how to make bows and arrows and what wood to use, and all that stuff, but I wasn't old enough to remember what he told us. I remember him doing it. I remember the skins and the buckskins, the beaded gantlet gloves and things like that, that grandma had.

It wasn't until later on in life that I thought much about my Native heritage and mostly through my youth I thought that I just came from a bunch of drunks, a bunch of drunken Indians was all we were. It wasn't until later that I found out that we have a pretty proud heritage. I felt a lot different about it when I saw what kind of people my ancestors were and what they did and what

they accomplished, and of course, that they had to sign away their Indian heritage so they could become a White man and go in the bar and own property.

I want to learn more about being Metis side of me, the part I never had a chance to learn. I know my grandma and grandpa would have taught me, and even my dad, I'm sure, he had to have spoken Cree because he lived with them for so many years and I know that my one uncle, uncle Willard, who was so good to us, he said he didn't have any Indian blood in him at all, he said he was French. He always said he was French. When he grew up it was such a dirty word to be half-breed. I had an aunt who was like that and she wouldn't have anything to do with being Indian, and her daughter never told any of her children that there was any Indian blood in the family. Only recently have I had a conversation with her son, who is also a paramedic and told him of our Metis background. He now has his Metis card.

My heritage was lost through discrimination and forced shame on the Indians. Coming from the Metis and the Red River, like the treks they made, like the trek that my great-grandfather made in a Red River cart with his family, all the great accomplishments. I'm thankful to Reg Turner for writing that book, and allowing me to learn a little more about our family history. I'm sorry that I never got to know my grandmother. I wanted to hear the stories, learn about her life and my grandfather's life.

I guess I feel a little bit like an apple Indian. I didn't know what to do about that for a long time, because the Indians would say, "you're just another Indian wannabee." Now, I think that I'm not going to let anyone tell me what I am and what I'm not. I'm going to go with what's in my heart, and if I'm an Indian in my heart than I'm going to be an Indian, a Metis. No matter what anyone else tells me, I know who I am and who I'm not.

....

So, now I am Metis and proud of it, proud of my Native ancestry. All those White people can sit and drool because my skin is darker and they have to go tan or sit in the sun and get burnt. (laughs) I think it's so funny now because everyone spends so much money to get their skin dark, but they don't want to be Indian, or didn't anyway. So I would like to learn more, I'm glad that you're doing this and learning more about it. It's a hard way of doing things, when you get around to it, and I want to get around to it now.

Tara: It's a big old journey heh?

Ed: Ya. I don't have much faith in organized religions, I've never felt comfortable there, I always felt that they were so hypocritical. I guess I always felt that I've never seen many good Christians. I guess there's some alright, and I respect them for that, and I guess Christianity and churches work for some people. If that works for them that's great, but it doesn't work for me, and I don't want to call myself a Christian, I like what I learned about the red road from my friend in Lethbridge, she taught me some. Another guy told me a long time ago, he said "you just leave all the religions over there on the other side of the fence and you stay over on this side with your higher power." That works good for me too. The great spirit or whatever I choose to call it. I haven't had good experiences with Christianity. Christians were the ones that packed the sticks in the orphanage and I can't identify with that, it doesn't make sense to me. Looking after the spiritual side, looking after mother earth, things like that make a lot more sense, and just trying to

do what's right. I guess that's part of finding out who I am again, what was lost, what we lost, by being taken away from our family, our heritage, and told we should be this and told we should be that.

Tara: What do you think of telling your story? How was that experience?

Ed: Well, I'm glad it's done, I'd like to see the story passed on. By losing my family and my contacts with my parents, my grandparents and my aunts and uncles, I know that a lot of that story was lost to me, and how much I appreciated what Reg did, that's all written down and we can carry that on and keep it written, and keep it, then that's good. The good times and the bad times. I have a lot of trouble talking about it, I don't know why. The pain of the past I guess. I think it's strange that at my stage of life that I still feel the pain I felt as a little boy, I don't know why. Maybe it's good therapy too, or I'm hoping its good therapy too.

....

Ed: Slowly I'm making contact with all my relatives that I'm able to. I want to make contact with the aunts and uncles and cousins on my mother's side. I guess it was, I mean, back in the day, at one time, people thought slavery was o.k. too. Back in those days, maybe it was a dirty thing to be a half-breed, I don't know. It was a way of thinking. It's gone by the wayside now. I don't want to carry any hatred or animosity towards them. My mother wouldn't want me to do that and my grandmother would not want me to do that.

I went to the Cook Islands to see my aunt, my mother's sister, that I had met for about an hour once, but I wanted to really get to know her a little bit. I wanted to hear her stories. I think my mother would like it that I did that, so that's why I went there. I have met the rest of my aunts and uncles that are still alive, but I still have lots of cousins to meet.

Tom and Eileen in Edmonton, and you know they never, ever, we lived in that same town for so many years and us kids were up agin' it, we had nobody, they never come to see us. But that's something that they got to carry, I'm not going to carry it, that's theirs. Their baggage, they can have it. But their children and their children's children and my other aunts and uncles children, they didn't have anything to do with any of that stuff. Any that I've met, I've been welcomed and had a good time with them and it's been nice to meet them. I've never been roused out of anyplace. But I'll never let them make me feel snubbed or less than they are, not anymore.

I think that being Metis and getting in touch with my heritage, that's important to me and you kids. It's important for my father to see that I want to follow the red road and for my grandfather and my grandfather's grandfather.

Also there is my mother's side of the family. She had an equal share of bringing me into this world and for giving me life and she deserves equal respect and treatment, and admiration. So, I'm going to try and meet her side too. Try to be a family. My one cousin Monie, she was the first person, the only person in the Adamson family, that ever even suggested that there was wrongdoing, and I respected her for having said that that was wrong, what they did, that wasn't right. She didn't have anything to do with it neither. I just want to honour my mother and father equally. I've made lots of mistakes and hurt lots of people in my life but I hope I did a little good too. Anyway that's the past so now I just try to live a day at a time.

After the interview with my dad, I was tired and relieved to be done all of the individual meetings. I did not really know what I would do with what they had told me, or how to proceed next. It felt like I needed time to let everything sink in, and to begin the process of living with their stories.

I stayed in B.C. for a week, transcribing and visiting. I talked to each of my aunt's and uncle's a few days after the interviews to check in and see how each of them were doing. Everyone seemed to be doing well, aunt Judy said it was just what she needed, and aunt Debbie asked where she could get some more information about Metis history. I am relieved that it appears to have been a positive experience for everyone.

Trickster returns

Amazingly, the photo album that had been taken out of our car in Edmonton was found and returned to dad. The photo album had been placed on the steps of the Legion near where we had stayed in Edmonton. A janitor found the album and was showing the pictures to some people inside the Legion to see if anyone knew who it belonged to, and George, a man who had been neighbours when the Turners lived in Edmonton recognized some of the Turners and their relatives in the pictures. The only person he was still in contact with was dad's cousin Geri, so he phoned her and asked if she knew who the album belonged to. Geri said it must be Ed's, and soon we were on our way to Edmonton to visit with George and his wife and retrieve the album. It was incredible that we got all the pictures back. It made me feel like I must be on the right track again if I was off it in the first place.

After I returned home, I went to a friend's place to collect sweetgrass and sage for myself and my family. I made bundles of male sage for my dad and my uncles, and bundles of female sage for my aunties. I also collected enough sweetgrass for a braid for my uncle Vern, who died as a baby. I hoped we will get to burn it for him sometime when we visit the cemetery again, or in a ceremony for him.

In August, 2005, a month after all my interviews, I felt a need to be alone. I found a cabin up by Batoche, and spent three days on my own. I think now that I was preparing for my first fast that was to come.

December 2005: First gathering

I went back to Prince George in December of 2005 to do the first group interview. Dad had phoned and said he was concerned with aunt Judy's health, and thought we should get together before Christmas. I flew to Prince George and met my dad there. We spent the day and evening visiting before starting the interview the next morning. Before we met for the day I smudged with my father, and asked for guidance and help with healing. Smudging helped centre me and quell my nerves.

Uncle Brian was not able to make it as it was short notice and they had company coming for Christmas. I gave everyone else their gifts of sage and sweetgrass and a sash when we gathered at aunt Judy's. We talked about the significance of the sage and the sweetgrass, and I told them about the process I had gone through to collect it for them. I talked too about gathering a sweetgrass braid for Vernon, and how I hoped that we could burn that for him sometime. We talked about the Metis sash, the meaning of the colours, and the use of the sash in daily life in the days of our ancestors. I shared with them some of my conversations with Maria, about culture, and about how culture is many things, not just the symbols, but how people are together, how they care for each other. Dad brought them each an eagle feather that he had decorated for them. Everyone appreciated the gifts, and Debbie seemed particularly touched.

It was a fluid type of interview. It seemed like they mostly needed to talk and share their stories. It was a time where questions were asked and answered and some of the pain about what had happened was shared. There were a fair number of tears, laughter that covered for tears, and laughter for its own sake. It seemed to meander between telling of happier times and good family stories to the more difficult times, especially when their parents were killed and the aftermath of that. It was a good experience, and I got to know more about my own family.

I was sorry that Brian was not able to be there, but it was important to start the process given Judy's poor health. I hoped that there would be time for more meetings like this. We all gathered at Judy's place for the interview.

Sharing gifts

Ed: Okay, are you going to bring this meeting to order, or what?

Tara: I'm gonna try, I don't know how much good it will do.

Judy: Okay, everyone, Neheoway.

Debbie: Neheoway?

Judy: Speak Cree.

(laughter)

Tara: That would be a good way to start. I want to say thank you for everyone for coming here today, and for meeting with me before too, because this has been something I have been thinking about for a very long time, and then I managed to make it into a dissertation, which is nice enough, and then to have everyone agree to go along with me and share your stories with me. Because it has been something that I always kind of thought about, heard about and wondered about and always wanted to know more about. What that process was like for you guys and in that way too, I've learned a lot more about your parents and grandparents and that's been a really good process....

Then we'll share each of your transcripts with each other and then maybe have another gathering in the spring so we can hopefully get uncle Brian here too because he is missing here today. But, poppa made a little gift for each of you of an eagle feather, so you can hand those around.

My father, Ed, handed around the gifts, beginning with the eagle feather that he had decorated with leather and beads for each of them. It was an emotional gift, particularly for Debbie, who had tears in her eyes.

We just wanted to have something to say thank you and to thank you for being part of this process with us. I think the eagle feather is by far the most beautiful of the presents, but also, we went "Back to Batoche" and so I have a sweet grass braid for each of you to have. We'd start with a smudge but we don't want to create another family tragedy because of the oxygen around!

(laughter)

Debbie: Where do they grow this?

Tara: It grows out in different places. I guess it likes wet, so sometimes it grows more where it is wet. My friend Rose has a place that I gathered some sweet grass from, and you can kind of – it's a very thin grass and when you rub it, it smells like sweet grass. She also had sage. Now, apparently all sage is women's medicine, of course, because we are so wonderful, but this in particular is women's sage, so I have women's sage for you guys and a bundle of man's sage for uncle Bob and for dad. I gathered that this summer, with the appropriate prayers and offered tobacco. There was one little sweet grass bundle [showing bundle] that I got from my friend Rose's and I thought I would bring it along for when we were talking about the baby, that now has a name thanks to you, auntie Judy. So this will be his sweet grass braid and so at some point we will burn some and say a little prayer and when we go to the cemetery maybe we can take it there for him. So we'll keep this aside until we start talking about the baby, Vern. I don't know if you all want to put your stuff...oh, there is one more thing I almost forgot, these sashes that we got from Batoche. Here's the sash we got for you uncle Bob, that we got at Batoche.

My dad leaned over to smell the sweetgrass braid that Debbie was holding. In a typical Turner move, Debbie switches her armpit for her sage.

Judy: That was a mean thing to do to your brother. (joking)

Tara: Ya, you can keep order auntie Judy.

Ed: A nice guy like me...

Tara: And a sash for you auntie Debbie.

Debbie: Ahhh... Now I really feel like I belong. (laughs)

Tara: ... I guess that is my way of saying thank you to you for being willing to share your stories and your lives and your tears and your laughter with me. I really appreciate being part of this process and I feel really honoured that you all have trusted me with your stories.

....

Debbie: What about the colours, what do they represent?

Tara: Well, different things, but I've heard that the water is the blue and the grass is the green, and the sun...

Ed: The red – the red was representative of the blood spilt at the battles in the Riel rebellion and that sort of thing. I thought there were some of them had black in them too.

Tara: Ya, they do.

Debbie: I wondered about the colours because I have seen some with black in them and I wondered if that was for a higher up elder or whatever.

Tara: I think different places have different sashes too. I know one girl from Ontario that I know has quite a different sash. They were cultural items but they were very practical items too. You could carry things with it, or use it as a thread if you needed one and you were on the trail. You could use it to wrap stuff with or to carry something on your back.

Debbie: So it wasn't just for ceremony.

Tara: No, it was a very practical, everyday thing. Which is one of the things I like about the Metis culture is that it is very practical and very people based. I was talking with Maria Campbell, a Metis Elder in Saskatoon, about culture and this process for me and meeting with you guys and what my worries were about making sure this was a good and helpful process even though it is a hard process too. And she talked about...

Judy: I know very little about our culture and I'd like to learn a lot more.

Tara: Well, and she reminded me that the culture isn't just about these kinds of objects, it's about how you guys lived and it's about how you still care about each other, despite being torn apart at that time, that you somehow managed to all hang together and that is a big indicator of it [culture]. I mean you were talking in your transcript auntie Judy about the parties and the music and the aunties and uncles and the cousins coming over. Uncle Brian was talking about the fish in the barrel on the porch, or something?

Judy: The which?

Tara: Fish. I don't know if he remembered it right but he said that he used to go by this big barrel on the porch of the house in Edmonton and there was some food of some sort in there.

Ed: That was all our drinking water.

Bob: Horse drinking water. It was for horses.

Tara: Oh, he thought it was fish. Maybe the water and the fish...

(laughter)

Tara: So all of those things are part of the culture, not just the spirituality part of it, she reminded me that all of it is a part.

We had a good laugh at Brian's mistaken memory of the fish in the barrel, and would have teased him about it if he was there. I was still falling far short of being articulate about what I felt about being Metis, but I was getting closer and my brain was finally starting to make the connections it needed to create the words for what I was feeling in my heart.

Early memories of home

Judy: I remember on the porch we had drinking water, we didn't have running water in the house, so the water man used to come to all the houses in the neighbourhood, once a week, and we had two big barrels.

Bob: One was a metal one and one was a wooden stave.

Debbie: You didn't have a well?

Bob: No. Dad painted the metal barrel, on the inside, with silver coloured paint, to get rid of the rust, eh? The wood stave barrel, I remember drinking out of that in the summertime and boy that was nice cool water all the time.

Judy: That wood barrel, at first, it was an old molasses barrel and they had to soak the molasses out of the barrel. Mom made rum. (laughter) Mom was giving rum away to everybody in the neighbourhood. There were a lot of happy people around. (laughs)

(laughter)

....

Debbie: Judy was saying about not remembering much about the spiritual or Native culture and I grew up predominately in the Norwegian culture and don't know much about their culture either. I wonder if the baby boomer generation is losing some of that history? Is it becoming not so important to us at the time and as we grow older we know more of the importance of it?

Judy: I think if mom had been Cree, instead of dad, I think we would have learned more about our culture. Dad didn't know that much about his culture, not like aunt Jenny did. Aunt Jenny, she used to go pick all the herbs and knew a lot about Indian medicines. I remember going out in the bush with her to pick herbs but I wasn't old enough to remember what plants or what they were for.

Bob: Geri said they used to go to the woods and pick herbs for medicines and what have you. I guess it sure saved a lot on the doctors' bill, and it was effective, too, apparently.

Judy: All I remember is, I think, it was willow bark she used.... She'd boil it and make tea out of it for headaches.

I think we are here to learn something though

Tara: I wanted to ask you each to talk about the process and what this process has been like for you. You talked about it a bit at breakfast auntie Judy and what it has meant to you.

Judy: I was talking about how it felt like a whole weight was lifted off my shoulders, like letting go of something. I don't know if I had such anger at losing mom and dad, or what it was. But I felt at peace with myself. What do you think? I really felt, there, it's done.... I think we are here to learn something though. I think God has a plan for each of us and I really think we are here to learn something about each thing we go through. I was a foster parent with Andrew and he brought so much joy into my life, and if I had not been a foster child myself, I probably would have just gone past that, but I did it because I remembered what it was like, being there, and I wanted to do him some good. I really think when we leave here, we're not going to die, when I leave here, I'm graduating. We're here to learn, and to go to a higher school. If we get something out of each thing we go through in life, even giving birth, is painful, but we learn something out of it, and we get something beautiful out of that. Losing somebody is painful.

Tara: How about you, uncle Bob, how did it affect you, digging up old bones?

Bob: I didn't really think that it affected me much. I remember when mom and dad got into the accident, the next day I was out on the road walking around, and I was in kind of a daze. You don't really feel much, or anything really, or I didn't anyway. It didn't have a real hard effect on me, I didn't think at the time, it might have. As far as our growing up goes, I remember we didn't have a whole lot, but we always had plenty of love in the family. That's something that mom and dad had both instilled in us kids. I remember we'd be playing around mom and dad and dad would be sitting back in his easy chair and reading a weekend magazine and we'd ask him to read

comic strips to us. We'd gather up on his knee while he read us comic strips. We'd start to play cowboys and Indians around the house, and Ed had a funny way of looking at us with an imaginary machine gun and the special look in his eyes. We all cracked up. (laughs)

Ed: I was always a man ahead of my time. (laughs)

Bob: That's the way we looked upon our younger siblings, eh. They were our source of entertainment. Brian, he always chummed around with a coloured girl, Pauline, who lived down the street, and we'd call him Bimbo after that, because it sort of went with the old song, "going down the road to see your little girleo." Doreen, she's now Debbie, she was born and she was the pride of our whole family. We'd all gather round...

Debbie: Still is of course. (laughs)

Judy: Everybody's doll, everybody's baby. Ed was the clown of the family. From the time he was born he held his bottle between his feet, never held it with his hands, always with his feet. (laughs)

Ed: Can't do that anymore. (laughs)

Judy: The whole neighbourhood would crowd around his crib watching him hold his bottle with his feet. He always walked around with his shirt up to here [indicates the top of her stomach], still does that, I bet eh? (laughs)

Tara: How about you, poppa?

Ed: Yeah, I think it was good for me and it helped me to understand a little bit more about how I was feeling in life. I think I grew up pretty angry, I used to get into lots of fights, and that was never a good idea cause I was never a good fighter. (laughs) I had a terrible temper and I think it was good for me to understand how I felt and why I felt the way I did, and how I felt as a kid, looking at it from my adult eyes now. Remembering some of the feelings, painful at times to remember, mostly I'm grateful you're doing this because this is going to record our history and how things were and how we lived. I wish that I had this for my dad's family and for my grandfather's family, we get snippets from the Hudson's Bay Company about how they worked. Different stories from folks about how our ancestors grew up. That's nice and I'm glad this will be left for our children and our children's children.

So that's what it means mostly to me, I'm grateful it's being recorded, and it's a bit of a legacy. I'm grateful just being a part of this. I don't remember as much about being at home and mom and dad. The little things, I don't remember – I was happy there I guess, I remember some painful times, but mostly it was good, I know it was happy, and I know that mom and dad were good parents and they loved us, and dad was a hard worker and a good provider. I don't have the memories that you two have of them.

Judy: If you were another couple of years older you would have remembered more. Like Bob said, we didn't have a lot but we never knew that we didn't have a lot, we never felt that. We were just as well dressed and always clean as other kids.

Ed: I remember that after mom and dad died and we ended up at aunt Barb's and uncle Harvey's place and I remember thinking that they were rich because they had running water and they had a TV, you know, I thought they were rich.

Judy: One thing, there was always love in our family and we always felt that, we always knew there was a secure place to go if you were hurting, you know.

There was no one to talk to if we were hurting

Debbie: Did that change after mom and dad were killed?

Ed: Uh huh.

Judy: Oh yeah. We didn't have any of that security. There was no one to talk to if we were hurting.

Ed: Things are better now. If that happened to a family now, there would be counselling for them, but there was nothing then.

Debbie: That's different than my story, that was kind of an awakening in editing it. I read, how could they have done that to them? Them, that was us!!! (tears)

This felt like an important revelation for Debbie, and one that I am grateful she shared with all of us. It represented a significant connection with her biological family that had been previously unrecognized. Debbie was so young when she was separated from her siblings and was so well bonded with her adoptive family that she had seen herself as a person outside of the story. It reminded me again how different the experiences were of the youngest two, both who were adopted into new families.

Judy: The way Brian was adopted out, (emotional) they'd just come and take the kids home for the holidays and then bring them back, and in the summer, Brian left for a holiday, and he didn't come back, and he didn't come back. The boys were getting worried about him, and I was too a bit. I phoned my worker and she said, "oh, he's been adopted." She said it just the same as if an old coat had been given away to the neighbour. Nobody had the decency to come and to sit down with us and explain that your brother Brian has been adopted to people who really like him and want to give him a home, explaining that he could be shifted from home to home if he was in foster care. They could have helped us to understand that he was better off for where he is. I'm so thankful that he was adopted into a loving home.

Ed: I remember being angry at the time, but I know it was the right thing to do, but it was just done in the wrong way.

Judy: But for us to not be told, you know.

Tara: So the next time you saw Brian, you never saw him again, after he was adopted, and then you found him? So he was just gone.

Ed: Gone.

Judy: The same with Debbie, she was at aunt Alice's. I used to go see her once or twice a month. I went over to aunt Alice's one day, and she said, "oh, they took her away," and that's my own aunt. She didn't like me anyway, and I phoned the social worker and she said Debbie was adopted. We didn't see her until she was eighteen.

Tara: How old were you when you were adopted out?

Debbie: I think I was twenty-two months when I was adopted.

Judy: Yes, twenty-two months.

Debbie: I don't think mom and dad got me at aunt Alice's, cause they said I was in a foster home before that, for a while. There were three kids to pick from and I guess I was the most pitiful, and my sister picked me. (laughs)

Judy: You were the most gorgeous one cause you looked like me. (laughs)

....

Tara: Were there other things you thought of, auntie Debbie, when you were looking through your transcripts, thinking about this meeting?

Debbie: A lot came to mind. How fortunate I was, you know, and growing up I didn't know about the Metis family, and there weren't that many Natives around when I grew up, but mom used to say, "they're real people too." We were starting to become enlightened how to treat each other, but I think it was still a very segregated society, and still is to some degree, but I think it is important to learn about my roots....

Ed: Did you always know you were adopted?

Debbie: Yes. I don't remember how old I was when they told us. I remember one time mom bringing out the papers, and I was old enough to read the adoption papers and I knew mom and dad were killed and there were other kids in the family, and that's all I knew. They too wished they could tell me more but they didn't know.

Bob: The way the adults treated us, I don't think they meant any harm by the way they treated us, but they should have handled it a lot differently, and it was kind of a cruddy thing to do to kids, and just keep it hush-hush. They wouldn't have done that today.

Debbie: A lot of stuff was kept hush-hush.

....

Debbie: You were talking about baby Vern, was that the last baby?

Ed: Who? Vern?

Judy: The baby Vernon Daniel, he would have been Vernon Daniel.

Ed: I didn't know that.

Judy: Yes, Vernon Daniel, and he died of loss of blood and shock. I picked both his names. We sat around the table when mom was pregnant and we picked names. I wanted Debbie for her name, but they wanted to call her Doreen after a nurse that the guys liked in the hospital, and she looked after dad. She got Rose after granny. I wanted Debbie.

Ed: What happened with the baby?

Judy: The baby is buried with mom.

Ed: I didn't know that.

Judy: You didn't? She was a week overdue.

pause

....

Tara: Did the baby live very long after or no?

Judy: No. He was dead by the time they got to the hospital. When the accident happened, they took the walking person and the dead person first, and had to cut the vehicle to get mom and dad out, and when they got mom to the hospital she was dead, and when I got up to the hospital, there were three doctors working on dad.

Debbie: Who took you to the hospital, Judy?

Judy: A whole bunch of us went up. I was home babysitting, and uncle Bill came, 'cause mom and dad were supposed to go to a party, and they had been drinking at the bar in Fort Saskatchewan. In Edmonton they couldn't sit together, they had to sit on opposite sides of the bar, men on one side and women on the other, so they always used to go to the Fort. Evelyn offered to drive his car home, and a couple of others offered to drive him, but when dad was drinking he thought nobody could drive like him. When he was sober he'd let anyone drive his car. Uncle Bill came to see if mom and dad had come home, because they were all supposed to meet them at aunt Alice's, and they didn't turn up.

That was about 10 o'clock or so and right after he pulled in, the RCMP pulled in. They said they'd been in an accident and that Tommy Coward [a good friend of the family that had also been in the car that night] had been killed outright, and Mr. and Mrs. Turner were in critical condition. Bill went across the street to tell my uncle Jule and aunt Jenny. My friend stayed with Bob and Ed, Brian and Debbie while I went to the hospital. Then we all stopped at Doug and Mable's and from there we went to Alice's and then they all went up to the hospital. I was sitting

with Mable and she had her arm around me when they came and said that mom was dead and there were three doctors working on dad. Then we went to tell granny Adamson and then we went back out to Alice's and from there we were there quite a while. Myrtle came to stay with me, she's a year older than me eh, and they dropped us off at our place.

(pause)

Ed: I just remember I was sleeping on the couch and waking up and there were a bunch of aunts and uncles were there and mom and dad were dead.

Debbie: It was up to you to tell these guys?

Judy: I called the kids into mom and dad's room and told you. I wanted to do it. I wanted to do it myself.

Bob: I remember we were in the Dawson house with uncle Harvey and aunt Barb.

Judy: Aunt Barb and I just got back from the hospital and we told uncle Harvey and we went out on the back step.

Bob: Brian said, "where's dad?" and I said, "up in the trees," and he just took it like that, in the trees.

Tara: How old was uncle Brian?

Judy: Brian was three.

Debbie: I thought he was four or five.

Judy: I was born in 1942. I was ten when he was born in 1952. In 1955 he was three.

Debbie: I was born in 1954.

Judy: It was your first birthday the day they were killed, July 30, 1955. Brian was three.

(pause)

They all shared stories for a while, about the pot bellied stove and how it would glow red when it got really hot, using waxed paper off the bread to make it shine, about their mom ironing with a flat iron, and the first time she got an electric iron. They remembered the coal oil lamps, their dad making knife handles out of Elk antlers. They shared stories of times they got into trouble when they were kids, of spankings, at home and in the orphanage, and their mom's baking. Dad asked Judy what kind of pattern their mom used to cut vents in the pies, and shared

that he did his pies like that too, and that he thought that was how his mom did them. We took a break, and made some coffee before starting back.

I don't know that much either

Debbie: I didn't know that there was female sage and male sage. How do you tell?

Tara: It looks different. The male sage has a different shaped leaf, can you see the difference?

Judy: Can you tell me what the eagle feather is?

Tara: Well the eagle is considered to be flying close to the creator. That's why the eagle is the one that sat on the tree of life, and is a symbol of a protector animal that sees everything so that's why the eagle feather is so special. I don't know that much either.

Judy: My foster son, after his funeral, at the cemetery, there were four eagles circling, swooping and landing and taking off, and everyone there was in awe of it, and so happy to see it.

Tara: The number four is a significant number too. Each of the directions, the medicine wheel, mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional, it is a pretty powerful number. Four eagles...

Judy: In dreams, before Andrew had passed away, about a month before, I had a dream and I was sitting in the first house Emile and I had, and Andrew was with us, and he was just a little guy, about two, and he had his diaper on and he had long hair. Across the road it was all bush but in my dream and there were humungous blueberries, as big as grapes. Berries all over. In the bush I could see bears there popping up in the bush, a huge bear too, the biggest bear of them all. I was looking out the window, the high window and I see Andrew going across the lawn towards the bush and at the same time I saw the big bear ambling across the road and I went running to the door to rescue Andrew by the time I got to the step, he was sitting down eating berries and this big bear was sitting down beside him and was eating the berries from the same bush as him. The night before the viewing, after we had picked out the casket for Andrew, Andrew's dad and everyone was staying in my trailer, and I told them about this dream I had and we all kind of looked at each other and nobody said anything. To me, that meant that Andrew was leading the way for somebody.

The next time I had a dream was about two months and a year ago, there was a brook and it was really clear and you could see every rock, and Andrew was standing in the water, and it was a really clear day and he was holding the reins of two big Clydesdale's, pure white, and they were both stallions, and he was just standing there just staring off in the sky waiting patiently with these two horses. I told Lillian that to me that looked like he was waiting to take somebody across. But to myself - Andrew's grandfather was the biggest bear of them all, 'cause he was the hereditary chief, and the next funeral was Andrew's grandfather, and he was named Andrew also, and he was the biggest bear of them all. Before mom and dad died, I remember having a dream, mom and dad were way down by Perry's store and they were walking, I'm feeling pretty desperate and I want them to wait for me. They are standing there waiting for me and I'm running and running and running and I still couldn't catch them.

Debbie: I've had a lot of dreams like that, where you're running and running but you can't get anywhere.

Bob: Where you want to go to is getting further and further away.

Tara: There are Elders that know a lot about dreams and they see dreams as one way of speaking with that other world, the spirit world.

....

They shared stories about the kids they remembered from the orphanage, and of the childhood scars they got from riding bikes and from Judy throwing things at Bob. They talked about stories from the orphanage, and dad and Judy shared their stories of running away from there.

.....

I remember when I first went into the orphanage

Bob: I remember when I first went into the orphanage, I remember getting homesick. It sure was a weird feeling for me. Everything seemed to be much larger than it was and I remember walking out to the window and looking out and everything was going very slow and then very fast, everything was going too fast or too slow. And everything seemed to be so big. I didn't get any sleep that night I was so homesick.

Debbie: Probably you had the weight of the world on your shoulders.

Bob: I thought I was losing my mind.

Judy: I really think you were having a nervous breakdown or close to a nervous breakdown, and when Brian was adopted out, even Norma said to try to do something about Bob, there's something wrong, ever since Brian has been gone, I think he might be having a breakdown. You talk to him and he doesn't hear you, doesn't answer you.

Ed: I remember, lots of times when I was little, laying in bed looking up the ceiling and everything got closer and closer and closer. The same thing with looking at the wall for a long time. Isn't that weird, I haven't thought about that for years.

Bob: I remember, I did break down one time, a couple came and I went there on a Christmas get away and I was eating normally and everything was going along smooth. And then the turkey fell in my lap and I started to cry and I couldn't stop. I felt kind of foolish about it, but I couldn't stop. It must have been a breakdown.

Tara: I wonder if it was extra hard on you, uncle Brian disappearing like that. Because it sounds like you kind of looked after him.

Ed: He did, he looked after all of us..... I remember that I would blow my allowance right away and Bob would save his money and give me some money to go buy an ice cream cone and I like the ice cream but I didn't want to take Brian with me. (laughs) After Brian was gone I felt really bad about that. (emotional)

Tara: It would have been nice to have uncle Brian here so he could hear these stories about how people felt about him. I'm sure we'll do it again.

Debbie: It's kind of funny and like I was saying in my letter [transcript], and I felt bad when I was reading it, (tears) I just don't feel like I know Brian very well. (emotional) We're just talking about these guys and Bob saving his allowance for Brian and Ed to get together for an ice cream cone, but he didn't want to take Brian and Ed was saying how he feels bad about that now. I was looking forward to Brian coming cause it would be a time to get to know each other better. (tears)

Judy: Brian is kind of a friendly stranger. Brian was kind of a pet when he was little.

Ed: Yeah, he was the favourite.

....

Tara: What do you guys think you were scared of when it came time to meet Brian and Debbie again? Each of you have talked about how you'd rather have turned around and gone home. What do you think that was all about?

Ed: I don't know, but I've heard this from other people who have gone through similar things, like people who are meeting their biological mother for the first time, but I remember how it was meeting you guys for the first time, and going to Brian's for the first time. Fear of the unknown?

Bob: For me, it was ego, I didn't know if I would live up to their expectations.

Judy: Me too, and whether you're going to be accepted or not.

Debbie: I think it is a fear of rejection. I remember driving out there, and we were close to Wynndel, and I said, "I wish we could just not do this." My dad said "bullshit," he was always saying if you started something, finish it, no use just going half way. I wanted my ears pierced, and when I finally got to do it, and we were walking down towards the jewellery store and I said, "I don't think I want to do this cause it's going to hurt," but he said, "You're doing it," and I did it. I harped so long about it.

Stories were shared about raising their kids, and the trouble the kids got into. They remembered the neighbourhood dog where they grew up, and stories about the neighbours.

I don't remember being at all familiar with the term Metis

Tara: Was there any talk about you being Metis?

....

Ed: I don't remember being at all familiar with the term Metis until well into adulthood.

Bob: It was always Indian.

Ed: Yes, half-breed. I remember that grandpa and grandma were Indian, I knew grandpa showed us what kind of wood to use to make bows from, and grandma had beaded stuff, and her bear skin rug, and I remember thinking that uncle Frank was Indian, because he was so dark, and uncle Willard, and Alice, and Doug Henry, I remember them being so dark, but I didn't think dad was dark. The last time I thought about that was when I was at Brian's, and I was talking to Stacey and she thought I looked quite Indian, but not her dad. I think Brian is quite a bit darker than me. (laughs)

Judy: Dad had the color of skin of Bob.

....

Judy: I knew we were Indian, or part Indian, but I never had a sense of being Indian, I was just Judy. Were you ever conscious of that Bob?

Bob: I was darker, because of my darkness, and I was shy of the camera.

Judy: That's why you were like that. Look at all of the pictures when you were a kid. You have a look like you were about ready to cry or something, and not a very happy look on your face.

....

Tara: You said your grandparents spoke Cree a bit, eh, and he taught you and Bob to speak Cree a bit?

Judy: He never taught his own kids to speak Cree. He wasn't well when he was with us and he had lots of time and he'd tell us stories and teach us words.

Ed: I wish I would have got to know them, to know them more.

Debbie: I think that's another reason this is important. Maybe even our grandkids, we want to pass our knowledge on to them, and the kids don't value that stuff. My mom and dad wanted to teach me how to talk Norwegian and that wasn't important to me then, and it is now.

....

It was a really nice healing time

Tara: Do you think having this process of telling your stories and having me ask questions about being Metis, whether you thought about that, whether it changed anything in the way you think? Does that have any influence in the story telling process?

Judy: It didn't change the way I think, but it did bring out a lot of things that I had forgotten about, and it's nice to have more memories to remember, good and bad ones. I talk more about it,

sometimes I make my parents sound like saints, and sometimes I don't talk about the bad memories. It's easier to remember the good ones.

Bob: Sometimes I think a person needs to think about the bad times, it gives a person something to bitch about or something. It is good to talk about the bad times. I think that's the way it is with me anyway, something to feel sad about.

Ed: I think this process for me has made me think more about being Metis, and my Native ancestry and that, but for me, I have been more involved with you and have gone to Batoche a few times and to Athabasca and saw great-grandpa Mason Brown's grave and Joseph Alexander's headstone, and great grandma Turner's headstones and read through that book that Reg Turner wrote, the book on our family, and also, I've been on line, with Alberta history. You go down through there, and there's little articles about them, when grandpa was born, Robert William was born at Fort Victoria to Joseph Alexander and it is written there, we are part of the Alberta heritage, and looking more at the Hudson's Bay Company and digging in the archives. So I think it's...

Judy: Grandpa, did he work as a blacksmith?

Ed: He was a teamster more than anything. I think he probably done everything.

Judy: Remember he had that forge?

Ed: I think he done everything. There was a forge at the shop at Simons and according to Hec and Ched Simmons the Turners could fix everything and he talked about how nobody else could set up the threshing machine up like the Turners. I should bring that video up about Simmons talking about the Turners.

Judy: I know Hec said to me too, "your dad was a wonderful man, and your uncle Frank was a good mechanic and he could fix anything, but your dad was a wonderful man."

Ed: Hec said to me about uncle Frank and dad too, "if a Turner couldn't fix it, it wasn't worth fixing." (laughs) He talked very highly of the Turners, of dad, grandpa, and grandma, and he told me when he was a kid grandma came up in the buggy and got him and some other kids and she'd shot a prairie chicken up on top of the haystack and she couldn't get it down, so the boys climbed up there and got it down and she gave them twenty-five cents to get them down. He said if he'd have got a nickel he'd have thought they were rich, but 25 cents! When Hec was a kid, it was a heck of a lot of money.

Debbie: As far as my heritage and that, the stories and the writing made it more personal and for sure, and receiving all this... [gifts]

Tara: There is something about those things that make a difference and the last little bits of things, then something about the last little pieces of the roots, and when you met these guys you felt root there, and something as special as an eagle feather really roots you.

Debbie: I feel like I belong. (crying).

....

Ed: One thing I wondered about, I remember always Cree coming up, but I never heard about speaking Metis, Michif, they have their own language, and I wonder if that's more the French Metis. Do you know?

Tara: I used to think it was all just one thing, but it's not.

Judy: Isn't Metis just having Native ancestry?

Tara: Being a part of the Metis nation, and one that grew up in that whole tradition, it used to be a mix of the whole process of the fur trade and having that set aside and the people see themselves as a separate nation, like Cree, like Dene, like whatever.

....

Debbie: It made it so much more personal I think, and receiving these gifts, it makes me feel, I internalize it more and I feel a part of my roots. Yes, it's my roots, and it's good to know more about yours roots but when you internalize it you feel a part of your roots. Rather than an outsider looking in.

Tara: That's the reason that I'm doing this in the end, I started off feeling why do I care that I'm Metis? I didn't meet your parents or your grandparents. I guess we all have to thank mom for doing the genealogy and it is really a good gift for our family, and for me, I get to experience that and I was always wondering where does this connection come from and why does this matter to me? It was always a strong pull for me even though I didn't know why, and I know what you're saying, okay, yah, yah, that's right, that's who I am and I don't have to make excuses or understand it in my mind and not in my heart. I'm really glad that that feels better for me now, I don't have to - and working with Maria Campbell what your upbringing was, whether rural or an urban centre, Metis people moved around and did what they had to do, and you can be connected with that even you weren't a part of that, and maybe there are memories that we don't understand, connected with that, even though you get the sweet grass, sage and the eagle feather and there is something that connects for you. That's hard for me to explain.

Debbie: I've always enjoyed native drummers, it's like a pulse within you, and it has always appealed to me.

Tara: Some authors talk about the tribal memory, or a racial memory, and I think there's something there, a part of that is sweet grass for Vern and uncle Brian that our ancestors are still around us and that energy. I talk about the winter being time for stories, and here we are, in December, still sitting around and sharing stories, all these years later.

I just see lots of strengths that you've all carried. Everyone talks about Judy like she is a force of nature and for uncle Brian, and for the baby that never got to live, being the eldest you are the memory keeper for all the younger ones. Uncle Bob who is so kind, and being happy wherever you were and going through that whole process as a kid and deciding not to go with that family that was going to adopt him because it would hurt his brothers and sisters and continually making those choices to look after everyone. Everybody talked about dad being the scrapper, who kept

bugging everyone and for finding uncle Brian and finding auntie Debbie, about you, as a little one, and having your name from that connection, and meeting with uncle Brian, and he is someone that I don't know as well. He is just such a Turner, and he reminds me so much about Bob, and I really wanted him to be here.... So I hope we can all do this together again.

Debbie: Did you interview Brian?

Tara: Yes, and I hope that we can do this together again. That process and I guess just a chance for you guys to talk to each other and say how you felt and what it is like.

Debbie: It was a really nice healing time.

....

Tara: Thank you so much for being here with me.

Judy: Thank you.

Bob: I want to thank you.

Judy: I wanted to thank you, Ed, for pulling this family back together.

Ed: Oh, it would have happened anyway.

Debbie: And Sylvia.

Judy: We are so precious together and we need to be together.

Tara: Just need to have your brother Brian.

Judy: We need brother Brian here.

Ed: I would like to thank mom and dad and grandpa and grandma.

Tara: How to care about each other.

Debbie: I would like to thank my mom and dad.

Ed: I would too, cause they kept good care of my baby sister.

Debbie: (crying)

[Everyone laughing, teasing Debbie]

Debbie: You're not supposed to pick on your little sister.

....

Afterwards, aunt Judy said that she felt like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders. Uncle Bob phoned about a month later, and said that he had always thought of his heritage in terms of “drunken Indians” and was beginning to see it in a more positive way. That was really great to hear.

April 2006 - Second gathering and talking circle

In April 2006, I went back to Prince George to do another group interview. Uncle Brian came this time, but aunt Debbie didn’t think she could make it because of her work. My dad and uncle Bob met me at the airport, and we waited for uncle Brian’s flight to arrive. After supper we were at aunt Judy’s visiting when aunt Debbie phoned and said she could come after all. I was so excited to think that they would all be there, together for only the second time since 1955 and the first time as a group to discuss their feelings together. I gave thanks to the grandmothers for organizing things and making this happen.

We gathered together for some pictures the next morning, and then had an early lunch. After that we went to aunt Judy’s room and began the interview. I started with a prayer and thanks, and passed the sweetgrass so people could smudge. We didn’t light it due to Judy’s oxygen, but Maria had shown me before I left how to smudge without lighting it. We used the sweetgrass braid I had made for Vernon for the talking circle, as away of including his spirit in the day, and went in order from oldest to youngest. We took three breaks and walked around the block. It was a beautiful day and it felt like everything was as it should be. There was lots of emotion, and you could feel the intensity of the connection around the table.

Tara: So, I wanted to start this with a little prayer, to ask for some healing to happen here today, and in order for that to happen we ask the creator and our ancestors, our family that has gone before us that aren’t here with us today, our grandparents, and grandmothers for us women, and Vern Daniel, your brother that’s not here today, to come and spend some time with us today with this process, to help lighten the healing a bit and that they go home with each of us and keep them with us as we travel on in the rest of our lives. So, uncle Brian did not get to come last time, and I’ve already given everyone else these things. We did go back to Batoche and got some sweetgrass, and I went to my friend Rose’s last summer and gathered some sage, and a sash from Batoche. And dad made you an eagle feather.

Brian: Oh, thank you very much.

Tara: So you’re the last one to get your gifts. Okay, so I thought maybe we’d start with kind of an open round, and then I have some specific questions and then we can go outside and smudge if you like. With the talking circle, we’ll just use the sweet grass that we’ll smudge with later, and you can talk as long as you want, or you can just hold it and think what you want and pass it on.

Judy: A Turner that doesn't want to talk? (laughs)

I want to say how good it has been to be in the most loving family

Tara: I just wanted to open it up to general comments, and then I was thinking we'd go oldest to youngest and then we'll just go around the table. Does that make sense?

Judy: I'd like to say that the two most important things to me are my God and my family. I think we're all here in this life to learn whatever we are going through, it is a learning experience, and when we leave here, we don't die, we graduate to our higher life. I want to say Christianity or God isn't the same to each of us but we all end up in the same place and "in my house are many mansions," and we'll all be there. The people that went before us will be there and people that will come after us are going to be there and grandma and grandpa are there and mom and dad, and it's wonderful knowing that and it's so soothing. I want to say how good it has been to be in the most loving family, you guys are so precious to me, everyone, and maybe we weren't always together, but you gave us all back to each other.

Brian: Well, you did pretty good, cause I don't think I could have got through all that without blubbering. (laughs)

Bob: When I was going through life, and I got thinking later in life, I think back, and there is some value in this thing, to the saying to treat each other pretty kindly, because we're not on this earth for very long. We're made in God's image, and that's my belief we are all equal, and no matter what we have in our pockets there's no one better than the next guy and the only reason we make fun of one another is we have to make ourselves look better or something. I've done it and I don't feel very good about it but that's the way it was and I can't turn back the clock. I'm really pleased that through Ed that I got to know you guys. (crying)

Ed: I'm really grateful that we have each other and that we're all together again. It means a lot, it means a lot. I'm grateful for Judy that she kept all those precious documents, dad's documents and letters in dad's box and we can pass that on through photocopying and the things that were part of our family before. If it hadn't been for you taking care of that stuff all that history would have been lost, so I'm thankful for that. For me, I know I carry a lot of baggage from the past, part of the healing process... (emotional) Our stories, for me it is important, for me, to pass my stories on, cause I didn't have my dad's stories and my grandfather's stories, and my great grandfather's stories, it's what we can dig from the past, going through the history books, we can find a lot about the Turners.

I used to think, when I was a kid, that the Turners were just a bunch of drunks, and I'm very proud now, and it is easy to find history in Alberta and I'm sure we'll find more of it as we go along. I want to go down east to Winnipeg and look up more of our family history, and some of our ancestors contributed greatly to this country. I'm proud of that and that we all got together again. I think for me it is important for mom and dad, so they know we're all together again. That's why I go see all of mom's relatives, that I held ill feelings towards for so many years, but that was our aunts and uncles, and I don't think that they did right by us, but that's their baggage, they can deal with that. Their children, our cousins, they had nothing to do with that. I like to go meet my cousins now and renew those relationships and to be part of the family again and they

can accept me, or, they got to accept me cause I'm going to be there. I'm thankful that you all came.

Brian: I had a few memories that the family broke up and was pulled apart, and I knew you were out there all the time, and I was wondering if I had some rich brothers and sisters that were important people out there. Mom and dad Kinloch were real good to me and I had a pretty soft life, and I got spoiled real good. (laughs) As I get older I realize it doesn't matter how rich or famous you were, the fact was you were there and that you were my brothers and sisters, and it's nice to have that extra family. So it's nice to have you. (crying) I just about did it. [made it through without crying]

Debbie: (laughs) I agree with Brian, we're lucky to have two families to love and to love back.

Brian: That's right.

Debbie: I'm looking forward to this opportunity to get to know you all better. Through this I've got to know all of you a little bit better. I was saying to Tara, it seems kind of weird to not really have memories of your brothers and sister, but it's neat to get to know the history and to get to know you. Through the years we have met I've felt closest to Judy because I got to spend more time with Judy and I'm looking forward to knowing you more, Brian, cause I haven't spent that much time with you. So I'm really looking forward to this day and getting to know you better. Thank you, Tara.

Judy: Thank you Tara.

Throughout this whole exchange, there were tears shed by everyone. I had not really expected the first, and open, round to be so emotional. I think I should have expected it since everyone had been reading each other's transcripts, and thinking about this get together. This was also the first time they had come together to talk about their lives together. Although I did not really feel prepared, it was a really bonding start. I then started a round that I knew would be painful. I wanted to talk about the impact of Brian and Debbie being adopted out, particularly for Judy, Bob and Ed. I knew it would be hard, but I also knew that there was a lot of pain that the older three needed to share, and that the younger two needed to hear.

Oh, Brian's been adopted out

Tara: I think one of the things that really struck me when I read your transcripts, and when I went and did interviews with everybody, and at the last family meeting, was some of the pain that the oldest ones felt for Brian and Debbie. You felt a lot of responsibility and felt pretty bad about not doing a good enough job, to look after them, even though you were doing everything you could, and you didn't have parents to do that. So, I was wondering, in the process of reading Brian's transcript, and hearing from Brian in more detail that he had good parents that treated him really well, and he was really lucky. The same with Debbie, that you were okay, you both were okay and it was a hard thing but you were okay.... I wonder if we could take a little bit of time to

speaking to that, particularly for the oldest and, but just too, your reflections of reading your brothers and sisters transcripts, and not getting a chance to say goodbye, that's a pretty big piece. That's pretty heart wrenching, that you didn't get a chance to do that and now, looking back, what you're thoughts are.

Judy: The part that really got me, I had to phone them to find out where you were, you were supposed to have gone away on a holiday, and you didn't come back and didn't come back, and I phoned a social worker and she said, "Oh, Brian's been adopted out," and she said it like it's really none of my concern. They could have been telling me a story about the neighbours. To me, how could anybody be so unfeeling?

Brian: No empathy at all there.

Judy: No, and the same with Debbie. Not just social services, cause when I went over to my aunts, where Debbie was staying and I went over to see her, and she said, "Oh, they took her away." My aunt never came and told me. So again I phoned my social worker who said "Oh, Debbie, Doreen she was then, has been adopted out" and I went and told the boys, and you know, how, why?

....

Bob: That was something to deal with. They took Debbie and put her in another place, and I couldn't see that happening cause we had so many relatives and they'd come over to the house and they'd drink and party with mom and dad and everybody would be so chummy. I thought that was really strange, to send my sister off where I'd never be able to see her again, I figured that was pretty dirty, (emotional) and then Brian, I was more in tune with Brian, because you were younger Debbie, and I remember (crying heavily). I remember we were going to uncle Harvey's and aunt Barb's from the orphanage and it was pretty cold out them days.

Brian: I have a faint memory of that.

Bob: (crying heavily) Can't stand myself when I do this. (laughs)

Debbie: I love you because you do it.

Bob: We had to stop just about every block to put Brian's hands into my shirt on my chest, to try to warm them up. Brian didn't really want to go see uncle Harvey and aunt Barb, and I don't remember Ed being with me. I think only you were with me.

Judy: Maybe Ed was in the hospital then.

Bob: Could have been. I remember we did stop quite often along the way, and you were crying and I was trying to keep you warm and you didn't think it was a good idea and wanted to turn back.... Anyway, we got down there and we had quite a walk where they were, from 118th to where auntie Barb was, but we got there, and that was the hard part, getting over there, and it was real cold winters then. That was one time, and another time I remember I wanted to go somewhere and Brian wanted to come, and it was quite often I didn't take you.

Brian: You were going uptown with one of your buddies, I wanted to go with you, but you wouldn't take me. I remember calling you every name under the sun, and then you'd chase me back to the gate. I'd go hide behind the gate, and then I'd come running out again. (laughs)

Judy: You told me that story a couple of times.

....

Ed: I remember Bob always being so generous and kind and one time he gave me some money for an ice cream cone and some money if I took Brian for an ice cream cone. I'd already spent my money and I really wanted that ice cream, but I had to take Brian too. (laughs) I thought about that afterwards, and I should have spent more time too, just much like you.

Judy: So you owe Brian an ice cream cone? (laughs)

Ed: He got the ice cream cone. I don't know, it just always was important for me that we all get together again. After I'd been to your house and talked to your mom and dad, I just felt a lot better, cause I knew you were living a healthy, well rounded life, sort of thing, a normal life.

Judy: Taken care of. I think about that picture of you in Air cadets, from your mom.

Ed: When I went there too, that lifted of me, worrying about you, and I felt that about you too. Just living a normal life, and that felt a lot better. I knew that five kids is a big responsibility, and I know that aunt Barbara couldn't pull that off, even if they had a good relationship. It would have been very, very hard. And over the years I've come to appreciate the Turners, because the Turners, they're the ones I remember coming to the orphanage. Uncle Willard, he's the one who came to see all of us, kept in touch with all of us, no matter where the hell we were, in Creston or Prince George, and Vancouver, and he came to see us. He used to come to the orphanage and take us out, take us to aunt Liz's and cousin Harvey used to take us to Sturgeon River, or aunt Liz's. Harvey, I always felt cared about us.

I went to visit uncle Ron, not that many years ago, in Nanaimo, and I said, "on my baptism certificate it says you and your first wife (Germaine) are my God Parents, and he said, "I guess I fell down on that a bit there," and I just shrugged. I thought, that's your baggage pal, not mine. (laughs) I'm not going to worry about that. I remember uncle Tom Adamson, he lived in Edmonton, still lives in Edmonton, probably in the same house, and all those years, I never remember seeing him, until I was married with two kids and living in Wynndel. He came around the back of the house where I was working and said, "Do you know who I am?" I could tell he was an Adamson, I couldn't tell which one, but I could tell he was an Adamson. So why didn't they have us over for Christmas dinner, or Thanksgiving? I don't remember seeing any of the Adamsons, well, I went to Bud and Johnny's because granny was there.

Judy: When one of the relatives would come from out of town they'd invite us for dinner to show how they were looking after Ed and Winnie's kids.

Ed: I never felt warm or welcome at Bud and Johnny's ever, but I think that's their baggage, and they're going to have to deal with that. It makes me a little more proud of our family, at least they cared about us, pretty well all of them, the aunts and uncles on dad's side. Well, uncle Frank

maybe not, but he had his own bag of snakes, but he was a good guy, pretty well most of the Turners were. I suppose some of the Adamsons were too, good people, but they didn't have the balls to stand up against to uncle Johnny and aunt Bud.

Brian: We're going to wear this thing out Tara. [the sweetgrass braid] Listening to Judy, how she worried about us. After I left the orphanage, I thought about you people, always wondering where you were. As a kid you remember only certain things, what you remembered, and I don't see how you could have done anything different. What can a girl or fellows your age do to look after Debbie and I in our situation? You certainly shouldn't think of taking any blame on yourselves.

Bob: I never blamed myself.

Judy: I never blamed myself, and I'm glad that you both were adopted out. I'm happy about that, but I wished social services would have explained to me the way aunt Barb put it to me, and that they would have put that to me and Bob and Ed that way too. It would have made it easier.

....

Brian: I've had more regrets as I get older than when I was young, just things like not going to see grandma Adamson in Fort Saskatchewan or spending more time traveling to visit you folks.... You mentioned that aunt Bud was getting sick and I should make an effort to go see her. Now the opportunity's gone and I never did go see her. (emotional) I can't look at you [Tara].

Debbie: She has piercing eyes. (laughs) I feel the worst for you older ones too, cause I feel that was a heavy responsibility to put on you kids. An unfair expectation to expect you to understand, and I certainly hope that society has learned to do that better for our future generations, cause there are still families that are being split up, unfortunately so. I don't know much about Metis people and the heritage there, and I think about the loss of Metis people, and I think that society has a point to have Native kids to go to Native homes, and maybe there's a valid point in that and that there is a valid point too in the fact that we were allowed... (emotional) You were talking about the Adamson side, Ed, and how you felt kind of cheated by the Christians. (crying) They weren't very Christian to not do something for you kids, and that's so true, and that's really challenged me cause I claim to be a Christian. To me that means Christ living in me, and I should be more loving in my actions and loving the way he would love them and I don't think Christ would want the Adamson's to set you guys aside the way they did. That will be for God to judge, and like you say, their baggage. I can only take care of today what I can take care of today.

I hope this whole situation of putting down our thoughts, maybe we can make a little better pathway for our future generations, and have good memories to leave with our families. I so appreciate being together and am so glad I came, and feel this is a real healing process. The more I learn about the Turners, the more proud I am of my heritage and maybe it's easier for me to be Metis because I didn't get the color and I didn't get the ridicule that some Metis people get. I'm white so I can pass for White. Whereas I think some Metis people really got put down and marginalized. Maybe if we all treat each other a bit better in our own little corner of the world and we can make it a better place. That's all I have to say.

Tara: My next question is about that rejection from the Adamsons. What was that like? What do you think about that? If there's something that you want to add, and some of you have already

talked about it, and you can pass. So the Adamson side, and the Turner side, and all the aunts and uncles who were there on weekends, and more about the extended family.

Judy:I used to feel quite bitter about them all and nobody jumping in, because I thought, gee, all these aunts and uncles on both sides, somebody would be there. I thought everybody would be there. When I look at it now I think it was like that now, if it was me, and one of my siblings died and they had five kids, you better believe it I'd be there, Johnny on the spot and take them all home with me. Life is a learning process, but if I hadn't been through it myself and something had happened to my siblings and I had three kids and a spouse and just enough money to get by, would I be so quick to jump in and take on these five kids with such little space, and not have enough money to get a bigger place? I don't know, probably not, though really, would I have the empathy? It helps me to not be so quick to judge....

At the time I was very much against them and even now, as I'm saying these words, I still, I know that's right, what I'm saying, but I still have a hang up against the Adamsons. I can't feel close to them, I still feel bitter against them, I don't know why just the Adamsons and not the Turners, but I know the Adamsons were more affluent and more able to care for us, so maybe that's why. Uncle Mel and aunt Norah, I love very much, but most of them I have very little use for. And that's the truth. I can't help that, it's the way I feel.

Bob: Actually, I didn't expect the Adamsons to help us out. I knew they were sort of self-important people, and I knew we were from a different realm, Turners. I was more looking for the Turners to help us, and I don't mind living in an orphanage and it was kind of regimented, and had three square meals a day and it didn't bother me that much to live there. But for younger guys like Ed and Brian, and you needed somebody to talk to. But I never really thought too much about the Adamsons one way or the other.

....

Ed: I had a lot of resentment towards the Adamsons, because they turned their backs on us, and I think in some ways they were relieved that we were out of the family, not sullyng their family any more. Again, I think we have to remember that was the older generation and the younger generations, they were kids too, the same as we were, they had no control over that, and they didn't differentiate between us, unless what they heard in their home. I have since met lots of cousins in Vancouver and at aunt Ona's ninetieth, and cousin Moni and others, I felt at home with them, and even on par with my billionaire cousins, Margo and Hank. I feel good with them, but then I don't let them feel better than me, at least not while I'm there. They don't put on any airs or seemed like they felt better than me and I think that was the older generation, and I'm still like Judy, I feel resentment towards them, but I'm not going to feel resentment towards my cousins.

The Turner side, the uncles and that, I think that they did care and they made some effort, and uncle Frank, bless him, he was tied up to that bottle so tight that he couldn't have done anything, but I'm sure his heart was there, but it screwed up his whole life. Uncle Willard, he made a valiant effort, and he always cared about us, he even left us money in his will.

I think that I feel bad for mom, because she must have felt pretty bad about her siblings, too, the way they treated us. I went to visit aunt Nan in the Cook Islands a few times, and talked to her

about it, and she said she wasn't there, but I know that she came back to Edmonton, because that's where the headquarters was, for Christmases and reunions. I've seen pictures of them, and they didn't try to include us in that. I just turned it over and let the higher power look after it and they can look after their baggage and I'll look after mine. I'm still going to enjoy my cousins and the rest of my family.

Brian: I have no ill feelings about the Adamsons, or the Turner relatives, and they had no way of getting a hold of me, or looking after my interests, especially when I was that small, and then I was adopted out they wouldn't have been able to find me.

Judy: They probably had never even seen you.

Brian: Aunt Norah came by once, in Lloydminster, after she had been diagnosed with cancer, and she commented that she had cancer and she knew she was dying and she wanted to go to see the people that she should have seen through her life. I don't know if she came up to see you folks or not.

Judy: I was down visiting in the summer with aunt Norah and uncle Mel, a year after mom and dad's accident, in Calgary during the Stampede. Their children are Mark and Debbie, and they wanted me to come live with them. I didn't want to cause I didn't want to be so far from my siblings. At least they offered. (laughs)

Debbie: I'm like Brian, I have no memories of the Adamsons, but I gather that they were more affluent, but I think it was a shame that you didn't get more help from them. I think of myself as a caregiver, but some people make better care givers than others, and affluence doesn't have anything to do with it, and I'm glad you didn't have their influence, and maybe if you would have had their influence, you wouldn't have been the wonderful people that you are today. God has a way of looking after us.

Ed: Just talking about the Adamsons and aunt Norah brought up the story when I was looking for Debbie and I went to see aunt Alice. Aunt Alice, if she didn't know the truth, she made it up, and she said that one of the Adamsons had adopted you. So I kind of narrowed it down, and I knew it had to be Norah. I went to Calgary and visited them, and they had a daughter named Debbie, so I thought I'd found you. Again, I was scared shitless, but when I asked whether that was our Debbie (Doreen) and she was about the right age. I decided to say it right when their daughter was there, and I said I thought my aunt had adopted our Doreen, and I thought that we'd found Debbie, and she told me that she hadn't adopted one of us. I felt a little embarrassed. (laughs)

Brian: Did you believe her?

Ed: Yes, I did, and that was the last time I saw her Debbie. I felt she was telling the truth.

Debbie: Is that her natural child?

Ed: Yes.

Judy: Debbie looks a lot like our Debbie. Aunt Norah and mom looked enough alike to be twins too. Aunt Ethel [Bud] and uncle Johnny were the head figures in the Adamson family. I guess Tom and Eileen wanted to adopt you [Debbie], Tom and Eileen Adamson, mom's brother, but they went and, of course, talked it over to uncle Johnny and aunt Ethel and they said, "No, not to do that, she was to be adopted out," and the way I heard this was through aunt Ethel's daughter-in-law, Donna and Peter.... When you were saying they were better off with your mom and dad [Debbie's] and your mom and dad [Brian's], and I think of Tom and Eileen, he was such a cold person. I always said every time I prayed, it was answered, it may not have been answered, well, what I wanted, I want you to do this and do that, he didn't always answer that way, but when I look back I didn't always get what I wanted, but I always I got what I needed. I can't imagine a better mom and dad for you both than the ones you had. So, once again, the Lord is so smart. (laughs)

Ed: She won't let go of it now [the sweetgrass]. (laughs)

Debbie: You'll have to take it from her Tara. (laughs)

(laughter)

I just felt really alone

Tara: That comes from being the oldest I guess, I can say that, cause I'm not the oldest. I have a couple more questions in reviewing your transcripts, are the themes of separation and loss and trauma, and that's one of the harder pieces. All of you talked about what it was like when your parents died, some more than others, but I'd like to just take a chance to go over that again. Not so much who did what, or who went were, but what did that feel like when you were a kid, what went on for you, and for the ones that won't have that memory or not much of it, what's your reflections on what your siblings say before you? A more reflective piece, knowing what you know now. Does that make sense? So I guess, just asking you to just share what that was like for you at the time and how that has impacted on you in your life.

Judy: When mom and dad were alive, we had the security of knowing that they were there no matter what, (tears) and just getting up and knowing that mom and dad died it just felt like the bottom had dropped out, cause there was just nothing, nothing, nothing there. I felt so all alone, I felt really alone. I can't even say I was scared, I wasn't scared, I just felt really alone. Like there wasn't anything left.

Bob: I kind of felt empty like I've only felt empty in my life, about twice like that. I kind of felt it was neither here or there, you're just out there, you become quite aware of your surroundings. I remember looking at the ground and noticing every little pebble on the road, and you look around and you say, well, it doesn't matter, cause they're dead, and it didn't, it just didn't matter anymore, and I didn't know what the heck I was supposed to do. (emotional)

Ed: I felt the same as both of you, and I had the same feelings of loneliness, I was really lonely, and I was scared. I don't remember, just little bits and pieces of the actual event, and where we lived after, and it seemed like I don't remember crying over it. I don't remember being particularly sad over the event, just putting one foot in front of the other and going through life.

When I ran away from the orphanage and went to Fort Saskatchewan I just walked around the streets and I remember feeling I was just there and feeling like I didn't belong anywhere. Then years later when I went to visit Dawn in Edmonton, I went as an adult, Dawn was working and I went to Fort Saskatchewan and I walked those streets that I walked when I was nine or ten years old, in Fort Saskatchewan and some of those feelings come back. It was just a feeling of being lost, totally lost, lonely. (emotional, laughs)....

I guess that I never really felt that I really belonged anywhere until after I was with Clyde and Peggy, and I felt much, much better. I felt like they genuinely cared about me and then when I met Sylvia and we became like one and married and then things were better. I felt much better and I did belong and this was my family now. Years later I got attached to Peggy's family, her oldest daughter was like a sister to me and we were close to her kids. The next fellow Peggy married after Clyde died, their family, we're kind of tight, and I decided that I can be part of a family if I wanted it be and they accepted me. And a family doesn't necessarily have to be biological, it can be who you're close with. Johnny is my brother and Darlene, his sister. But mostly after mom and dad died I was just a lost soul and in my teen years I was angry and I didn't believe in God much.

Judy: Churches are man made.

Ed: What kind of God would do that anyway? I never had good experiences in churches and stuff, and for me, a friend told me once, you just leave all that religions on that side of the fence and you stay here on this side of the fence, with my higher power, and that works for me. I think I'm pretty happy for the most part, even with the old baggage I carry. (laughs) And I think this is helping with that.

Brian: I don't remember mom and dad dying, and the first time that I have any remembrances of thinking of it was when I was adopted and Jim and Ruth took me to grandma's house in the Largarno area there, in Edmonton. I was in her kitchen and she'd watch me play on the floor and she asked me if I knew what happened to my mom and dad. I told her they were in a car accident and hit a gas truck and there was an explosion and they died in the fire. Years later I could remember that conversation and I didn't really know how mom and dad Turner died until you folks got a hold of me and explained the accident.

You were talking about how you were wandering around feeling lost and, being a policeman, I've had a few of the post traumatic stress occasions, and I sure know how you felt, it's the trauma afterwards. I wanted to respond to something else you said and I can't think of what it was now. Looking for a place to stay, and feeling you belonged. I think one of the reasons I've stayed in Lloydminster as long as I have, and turned down promotional opportunities, is so Greg and Stacey (pause) would have a home. (crying)

Debbie: I'm so thankful that I don't know what's it like not to belong, I've been looked after and had two parents that made me feel like I belonged. I can't imagine how lost that feels. I have, I don't know why, a little bit of resentment to God and I feel that dad made that choice to drink, why did he choose to drink, instead of staying home and loving us? (crying heavily) Why was that bottle more important? (crying) I say that with my heart but I know with my head that

alcohol is a disease, and it is a very hurtful one. Maybe it's a good thing I'm fat instead of a drunk. I guess my drug is food. We all choose our crutches, but when we do choose our crutches, we should take note of who else it hurts, and look at that as a little bit more important.

We took a break then and walked around the neighbourhood. It was a beautiful sunny day, and it was good to just spend time chatting and walking. When we came back together, we had a round to talk about their feelings about their parents and their grandparents, to speak about anger and disappointment, regret and guilt at doing some of the same things themselves in the past. They shared their favourite stories, about their dad and the porcupine, their grandpa and his fiddle, grandma's beadwork and bearskin rug, and her skill with shooting. After that, we turned to talking about Vernon Daniel, their brother who died before his birth.

I didn't even know he was a boy and he had a name

Tara: I think besides the loss of your parents that day, there was the loss of Vern Daniel, your brother, and my uncle, and it's easy to forget that baby cause it's hard to think about, but it's important to remember that there's another sibling that's not sitting there. To think about that, that you actually lost a brother that day too.

Judy: I can't say that I ever thought about it that much, I guess the fact that I never got to know him, and the fact that there was so much going on that time, maybe I didn't have room for any more thoughts, nothing mattered anymore anyway, except my siblings.

....

Ed: I didn't really give it much thought, and I knew mom was nine months pregnant, and later I thought about it more and I wondered what happened to its' body. Its' body, I didn't even know he was a boy and he had a name, I'm glad we do now. And I just got this yearning for a few years now, to put another plate on the headstone with his name on it as well. I haven't investigated much about it yet, but I would like to someday. The other thing that bothers me is that grandma and grandpa are buried right beside mom and dad and they don't have a headstone. I suppose it doesn't bother them, but it bothers me, and I just want that. I'm going to do something about that some day.

Bob: My unborn brother. What I remember most about newborns around our place. The last born was always the star person in the family. He was always so much loved, more than us. (laughs) I guess I'll probably miss (crying hard). There I go again, you know, I get crying about something I didn't expect to cry about. (laughs) I just want to say I'll probably miss not getting to see his little star. That's all.

Brian: I wasn't aware that mom was pregnant until we got together there at Wetaskiwin and you told the stories and gave us a copy of the newspaper clippings. I guess Ed and I were talking when we were following you folks around the neighbourhood here [during our walk at the break], about not having mom and dad there to nurture us, and there is another person who could have added another potential to the world and to our lives.

Debbie: (crying) I was just thinking I have no one to pass it [sweetgrass braid] to. If Vern was here, I could pass it to him. I'm sure he is a little angel in heaven, watching over us. I look forward to getting to meet him.

Tara: I don't like having to ask the questions after those rounds. I think unless somebody wants to have a chance to say anything more, I'm going to move on to talking about the next thing I'd like to ask today. Do you need to take a break? Okay. There are a couple more areas I would like to go into, and I think the ones that we've done is the most intense ones, there are a couple of other areas that I want to talk to about you today.

I was glad that we brought Vernon into our circle. I think Judy was correct in saying that there just was not room to grieve for him at the time when there was so much happening in their lives. I knew my dad had always wondered about the baby. I loved uncle Bob's description of how the last baby was always the little star, and how he would miss seeing "his little star." I appreciated as well Brian's sentiment about what Vern would have added to all our lives had he lived. It was strange when Debbie said what she did about not having anyone to pass the sweetgrass braid to, because I was thinking the exact same thing when it was in her hands. I too miss my uncle Vern.

What does being Metis mean

I do want to talk about being Metis or being Indian, and what you thought about it at the time when you were young, and some of the experiences that you had during that time. What struck me in all of your stories was that, even you two, Brian, and you Debbie, who didn't have the knowledge that it was part of your background, you both have ended up with genuine sensitivities to Aboriginal people.

You [Debbie] adopting Chris, and him being Aboriginal, and Brian and Wendy had considered adopting an Aboriginal boy, and spending the time up in Loon Lake, and always kind of just feeling that connection with First Nations people, whether its just walking down the street, or whatever the situation might be. I thought that was quite powerful, even though you didn't have that connection, that there was something there, whether you knew it or not, and maybe some part of that is that intergenerational knowledge, that we're not always so aware of, and also hearing stories of feeling a bit disconnected from the culture, and feeling like maybe you don't know much about it.... I guess my question is to ask you each to speak a little bit about that as you see it now as relating to yourself.

My Elder advisor talked to me about how this story is a story of the Metis people, and how they were rejected from White and Native society, and how they just went about and did their process and did their thing. I guess I see that as reflected in this family, in that you may not have been immersed, but it just is, and the connectedness and the caring for each other, is part of that and who you are and about the culture. Culture is not just about a sweet grass braid, it is about who you are and what you do and how you live. So, if you could just comment on what does that

mean to you? What does being Metis mean. I've heard the stories you've told, but just going and doing these interviews, and bringing it up, what are you feeling about it just now?

Judy: I don't think I'm ready.

Tara: Do you want to be the last auntie Judy?

Bob: I remember looking at the cowboys and Indians shows when I was a young fellow, and seeing the Indians coming over the hill after taking the scalps of the White people thinking my goodness, I hope that the cavalry hurries up, cause there's going to be heck to pay. I was always cheering for the White guys, I didn't realize that I'm an Indian too and I should be cheering for the Indians. That's one aspect of it, and another aspect of it is the way I look at Indian people now, I didn't think I'm any better than anyone else. I never was any better than them and they are all a very good part of society. And I take a look at their values. I have a real good Native buddy, he took the engine out of his car at my place three times and we just enjoyed being with each other as a project. We got it going. It was just a pleasure working with him and I enjoyed the company. They have the same heritage as I have and I don't know that much about my heritage. I'd like to get to know more about my heritage. I'm going to be busy this summer taking a trip, and after that I'm going to be attending powwows and learning about my heritage.

Ed: I think most of my life I knew I was Indian but I spent more time fighting with the Indian kids at school rather than associating with them and getting to know them. I guess I felt like an apple Indian, red on the outside and white on the inside, cause that's the way I was raised. I was raised White. I do want to continue learning more about it. I'm very proud of being Metis now. All over the place I run into people, and I was standing in Las Vegas, and these two Indians come by me and he put his hand out and said, "Another skin, how you doing there," and we started talking and we had a great time. They were Navahos. It's good, I have more Native friends now and my children are Native.

And this internet has been good for me because I can research Alberta history, and I can read about my grandfather and I want to go to back to Cumberland House and to York Factory, and some of these places where our ancestors were, and see what other history I can pick up. We want to go to the Hudson's Bay archives in Winnipeg, cause there's a tremendous amount of history in our family. I don't remember jigging and stuff like that being part of our life, but I remember grandpa playing the fiddle and music being a big part at our family at our house and grandpa and grandma's house, but I'm sure that back another generation, it was. I feel what it does to me inside to my heart when I hear the drums at a powwow, I feel that, it surges in my blood. It must be the culture or drums calling, it comes back, it's in there, I know it's in there. I want to do more powwows and stuff like that and get more involved in it. I want to do it, do my crafts, and pick sweet grass and braid it myself, and some sage, and I don't pray as much as I used to and smudge as I should, but I need to get more into it too, and all that information is just right there for us, we just have to look.

Brian: Getting back to the movie theatre. I remember being in the movie theatre and watching the B type Western, with the cavalry coming over the hill, and the little Indian boys in the theatre, and their cheering just like we were, and the guys I was with saying, "Why are they cheering, they're on the other side?" I never imagined myself as being Native, and it's just absorbed from

the family, and the physical similarities we all have in the family, and even the genetic ones, the character traits that we all have, and I suspect that the Native background is bound to show in the way we believe.

Reading Debbie's transcript, and the others, I've never really found Christ but I've felt that nature has a way of taking care of us, and that's going back to the Great Spirit, or the land, and I got an awful lot of churching when I was a kid. I don't know where I belong. I was baptized Anglican, raised in the United Church, and spent my adult life in the Catholic church. (laughs) I was all over the map. I got to get to know more about this stuff. This is a very big honour receiving the eagle feather. Thank you. (tears)

Debbie: That's how I felt getting mine too. I didn't know about female sage and male sage, and I knew about the eagle feather, and that it was a symbol of the higher spirit. I have conflicting feelings about smudging, being a Christian, is that being disrespectful to my Christian side, but the same time, part of me thinks I don't mean it disrespectfully, and it's just a different way to worship. I think all religions should be respected for how they worship God. The Native way of worshipping our creator God is probably a bit more practical sometimes than the Christian way, and it shouldn't be that way, but it just is, just in the way we conduct ourselves.

I feel proud of being Metis, and I don't know why, and people ask me what I am, and mom and dad were Norwegian, and then there's my birth side. What does that make me? I guess I'm a sum of all parts. I guess you need to be how you are the best way you can be. I would really like to pursue my Metis status, and the government still tells me that I'm not Metis. I need to work on that and I need to make sure I have the information down right, maybe that's where I'm messing up. I still don't have my Metis card. I'd still like to do that. It would benefit, as you said, Stacey and Greg, and it would benefit Chris, and he is trying to get an apprenticeship, and also just to know about who you are.

Ed: You're feeling this confusion about worshipping and smudging, and I have lots of Christians Native friends, and they go to their church, and they still smudge and pray to their God, and call him whatever you want.

Debbie: What does the smudge represent?

Ed: Kind of a cleansing of yourself before you pray.

Debbie: A symbolic offering of your prayers?

Tara: And the smoke will take your prayers up to the spirits.

Ed: There are still lots of Native people who smudge and follow their traditional ways and they are still Christian.

Debbie: Thank you.

Tara: How do you feel about being Metis [to Judy]?

Judy: It's never had any impact on me one way or another. I've never run into any problems being Metis. I'm proud of who I am. I am proud of every aspect of who I am, and being Native heritage, and my British heritage. So, I guess there were a couple of times, I remember aunt Ethel, when she'd come over to our place, she'd almost take out her hankie when she came over to our place. She'd sit very straight and on the very edge of the couch, getting ready to run, like she was expecting a tomahawk or something. (laughs) Lately, in the last few years, I've tried to learn more about the Native heritage, and I've gone to some powwows and took some lessons in Cree, one winter, but I didn't want to take the car downtown at night, it was dark. I'd really like to know more about my Native heritage.

It seemed like I was finding my words in this area much easier, and so was everyone else. It was also good that Debbie felt she could share some of her reservations about smudging, and the mixing of different ways of thinking about spirituality. I know many people struggle with that. Her approach that it is not disrespectful if it is not meant in that way was nice and makes sense to me.

I think this has helped all of us in the healing process

Tara: Thank you. I think my final rounds of questions are related to this process. So doing the individual interviews, the meeting last time and the meeting this time, and if you just make a comment about what the process has meant to you, if anything?

Judy: For me, it is getting to know a lot about what each of us went through, and the years we were separated, and the feelings that we had that I didn't know about. With Ed, I always thought he was too young to remember much of mom and dad so it didn't really bother him, that's the way I thought. Bob, I knew he was feeling lost, and he was always trying to keep his feelings from me, and he was always trying to take care of all of us. I think this has helped all of us in the healing process, helped getting us to know each other and what we were feeling, not just what we looked like, inside as well as outside. I really thank you from the bottom of my heart for it. You're very special.

Bob: That goes for me too. I want to thank you, Tara, for bringing all this into light for me, because I didn't know what Ed was thinking, and Brian, and Debbie, and Judy. It sure is nice to get to know their own deep feelings, that they don't really share with us that we never knew, because we never had the chance to talk about it. Sorry about having these deep feelings, I always cry you know, even watching a sad movie on TV. I'm such a darn suck.

Brian: That's where I get that from.

Judy: That's what this time is for, letting our feelings out.

Bob: That is really quite revealing when I come to realize that I did just about have another little brother. And I didn't think I'd cry for a little brother I never even knew. Something I didn't do for mom and dad, but did for him. (crying)

Ed: I've got to keep being reminded about this process.

Tara: What has it been like and what has it meant to you?

Ed: It's like, in some ways, pulling scabs off some old wounds, but it's made me realize that Bob feels the same pain, and that Judy feels the same pain as I do. I always thought I was the big wuss of the family. Every time I'd go to the cemetery I'd bawl my eyes out, and so it's helped me in that way. As far as crying, I went through other experiences where I cried everyday, (emotional) but I come to understand that the great spirit gave us crying for a reason, that's our pressure valve, and when I cry, then I'm good again for a while. I guess one of the bigger things that this has done for me, is that we lost our family, and I want it back. I hope that this does pull us back together, being close together again. We still have our retirement years, well, not you [pointing at Debbie], you have to work. (laughs) We have lots of years yet, where we can still be a tight family and I want us to, I don't know, get back on the red road a little bit, and show us where our ancestors have been and how we would have lived, and where we would have been, if we had lived through with them.

Bob: That's where a good Indian song would come in handy.

Ed: That's mostly getting some of the stuff back that we lost back, and getting each other back.

Brian: How's this process affected me? The different times that we've been together, as a group or one or two together, I've always been amazed at how much you older kids got bumped around, and how well you turned out. The set backs you've had, and I appreciated how lucky I was, and seeing your thoughts in writing and taking the time to read it, and sitting here today talking about it, really reinforces how much you have gone through, and how much we need to know each other. My family, the Kinlochs' are getting smaller, and pretty soon you are going to be all I have for an extended family. (emotional) I was going to try to say ...It's good to have those memories and not be selfish and think about yourself all the time and think of others. There's been some tears here today, and I'm glad we went through it and I'm not going to look at you [Tara] anymore. (laughs). She could really bend you around her finger, couldn't she.

(Laughter)

Debbie: Just think of her as an onion.

Tara: It's my job to make you cry. (laughs)

Brian: This is how I am going to remember you. I'm happy that we went through this, I'm glad. Thank you.

Debbie: Tara is our little onion, that makes us cry and helps us peel off the layers and have a good look at ourselves, and I thank you for that. Ed is Elmer, the glue that keeps us together. Bob is a big teddy bear, cause you're soft and understanding and always there for us. I'll never look at an owl again without thinking of Judy. (crying)

Judy: Owl?

Debbie: Cause you're so wise. (crying)

Judy: Thank you.

Debbie: Brian, this has been such a good time to get to know you, you had a story so close to mine, and how we never met up, when we lived so close together, so strange. I feel almost a little bit guilty cause we had such a good life and these guys got bumped around so much, and we were so fortunate. To have the mom and dad's that we had and our sisters.

Bob: How come you had such a good time?

Brian: Little stars get taken care of. (laughs)

Ed: You guys owe us big time. You have to buy the beer after. (laughs)

Judy: The best part for me in this too, was getting to know you Brian. Before, I just started to get to know you and then you were gone again. To get to know your feelings, and what you're thinking.

Brian: I've never been much for throwing a word away, it takes a lot to get me talking and I've just about worn myself out today.

Debbie: I think we're all cut from the same cloth, and we're all kind of softies. When you look at how we spent our lives, all in the care field, caring for others, that's kind of interesting too.

Judy: All things to do with other people.

....

Tara: I think we're getting pretty close to being talked out and I think we're all getting a little bit tired. I want to comment to you on what the process has meant to me cause I'm the moderator. So, we'll do personal comment, and a last round, and let everybody have a last say and then maybe we can go outside and if you want to smudge, then you can smudge....

This story has really been a story of my life too that I've heard since I was little, but I'm one step removed, I have some distance, because it didn't happen to me, and I have some training that gives me the tools to do this stuff with you, and to be o.k. about doing that. I think this is a story of resilience, because you guys are all okay and you have found each other, and to have good stories too. To hear what happens when things fall apart...

Hearing Brian's story and listening about Stacey, and him watching the First Nations kids when they were getting their eagle feather and feeling that Stacey should have gotten one too. And what are we going to be passing on to the next generation. We can't know why your parents did the things that they did, but your kids and your grandkids will know a little bit about you and will be able to read those stories. I think, in terms of the Metis piece, and the separating and the coming back together of this family, has a lot of historical value, and a lot of present day values and there's a lot that they can relate to.... I don't have to worry about whether I'm Metis enough

and whether I know enough. I think there is something that gets passed down, and I get to relieve some of that pressure and go and enjoy and learn. Maria is going to help me and I'll do a fast in May, it will be my first fast. I'm excited and scared at the same time.

For me, engaging this as a part for this research, and to not leave Metis out of the research, that we can include our culture in the research and maybe someday somebody will want to know something that I've managed to learn in this process, from Maria. If your grandkids or my cousins want to come and talk and so there is someone who has started this too.

My dedication to continuing this process, that isn't the end, and maybe it is part of my journey, to do this, and I see this as really important. I see it as going with my cousins, and with siblings, and with extended family and grandkids and that sort of stuff and constantly working to expand that circle, so that we are increasing rather than decreasing in size....

Like I say, this is my life story too, and I didn't know what I was getting into in some ways, and in some ways it's been really hard to come here and make you all cry.... I wouldn't do it if I didn't believe in the process, I do believe in getting together, so that's made it okay, though it's been hard for me too. I really do think that crying is really part of healing. I am really grateful for your tears, I think they're gifts. This idea of trauma and PTSD and there's a concept of intergenerational trauma and I think that's true, and there can be trauma and doing the healing part is starting to stop those wounds that might otherwise continue.

I guess I was thinking about what you had said Debbie, trying to think how it all fits together, I was thinking Metis means to mix, so maybe that's just part of that, coming from different places, and that's what Metis is.

Debbie: I'm pretty mixed up, so I should be good with that. (laughs)

Tara: Just thinking about you guys and when you were kids and how important it is for kids to have that security, of having parents. That's been provided with your kids, having a place for them where they belong, and that's been provided by my parents. How important it is for kids to have that security and their parents and to feel that they belong. That Wynndel place, that was my home, my stable base, and I knew that was my home and now my home is wherever I am and where my mom and dad are and I'm really grateful for that base. I had that flexibility cause I had that real strong base, and that stable base provides for the next generation.

Judy: Doing little things with kids too, like dad sitting down and him teaching us how to play cards or going for a walk after supper.

Brian: Teaching us how to be parents, we missed that.

Tara: I think that's been an experience for lots of families and lots of Aboriginal families. We see what's happening on reserves that are happening today and that's how I understand what is happening, that they didn't get those teaching about know how to parent and there is so much hurt and abuse that is carrying on. It is an intergenerational thing, and doing things like this helps stop that process. Just the healing of being together and I think the grandmothers and our creator had something to do with all of us getting here today, because we really didn't think we were

going to get to have you here today Debbie, and that we're all able to do this. We didn't think we were going to get all together, and it is a pretty powerful thing.

To say "thank you" to my mom, it was her that started it, doing all the research and making those connections and I don't know who would have done it if she didn't do it, so I'm really grateful for her. I do too, see dad as Elmer, the glue, that lost feeling is being found again, in this process. Bob, it sounds that you are like your dad and your granddad, a caring, sensitive person and when you lost your parents that sense of being empty shows how hard that was for you, there was a disconnection that happened for you as a little guy, because you were a little guy. That's how I understand that. For uncle Brian, I'm just so happy that you had such a good life, and it's amazing in meeting and seeing Stacey, seeing myself in Stacey and I think we look alike. I could see myself in her. When I call and when I hear your voice I know you are a Turner and when I see you coming through the gates [at the airport], you look like a Turner, I know that you're a Turner too. Letting me get to know you better too, and for auntie Debbie, this is a process and to get to spend the individual time with you, and to see your family grow as you have your grandkids, that's been really special for me. For Judy who is our eldest here in this immediate circle, you are a memory holder, and there are lots of memories about your parents and your grandparents. That's an important part of the process and there are many memories we wouldn't have if you weren't here today. You had the most memories and I hear you talking about that feeling, that empty feeling, and having it happen twice is incredible and very painful for you and your kids....

I think in the separation, part of what was lost was that being raised in that way and having access to some of that knowledge, and some of the ceremonies, I think ceremonies are so powerful as a healing process. But that didn't happen for any of you.

That's why it was important for me to have a chance to sit down and talk about what happened. Lots of times when we get together we talk of reminiscences, or funny stories, but you guys hadn't sat down and really talked about the impact of what really happened on all of your lives. That's why this, I guess. I thought that was really important for you to do....

We took another break and then resumed talking. Talk was more general, touching on various issues, including Brian's family and Debbie's family. They talked about their personal history, of Bob's time in the army, Brian's time in cadets, what their birthdates are, thank you's were exchanged, and my mom's part in the process acknowledged. It was good to sit back and see them chatting with each other and filling in the gaps that were missing in their collective pasts.

Afterward we went outside and smudged and prayed together. We smudged with the sweet grass we had used in our circle, the one I had made for their brother Vern. It was a good end to a day that felt very powerful, protected, and healing. If we had only that day this whole project would have been a success. We went out for a big family dinner that night with all my cousins and second cousins.

My fast

In August of 2006, my dad came up to Saskatoon to be my helper for my fast with Maria. I fasted with eight other women, each of us on our own chosen site. The land we fasted on was land that had once been Metis land, and which had recently been returned to Metis ownership after being purchased by one of the fasting women. My fasting site was on the point of a high bluff overlooking the river. It was as beautiful a place as I could have ever chosen. The sage brush grew on the slopes of the bluff and I could see for a long way up and down the river. It was a time of reflection, of personal learning, and of being in ceremony with other women. It gave me a new relationship with the land, the river, and the prairies. I gained a new understanding of how Metis people can be connected to the land. I have a much greater appreciation for water and how it gives us life. I had a dream while I was there, about riding a white horse at a full gallop. I could tell that I had never ridden this horse before, but that we were going to be together for a long time to come.

It was not all easy. I was nervous and uncertain about the experience of the fast. I learned that I did not crave food, only water, and that my beautiful, exposed site was also very hot in the August sun. I consider myself a relatively composed and calm person, and was surprised by the extent of the anger that I felt in the last couple of days. I was angry with the flies and the heat and the unrelenting silence and the lack of interesting distractions. I was bitten by an ant and stung by a bee. I was angry with the deer and cattle for going to the river and drinking their fill of water. I envied the birds and their ability to fly where they wished. I fantasized about sliding down the side of the bluff to the river. I learned a small lesson about suffering, and the Elders reminded us that many of our people experience greater suffering in their lives every day. I at least had the relief of the end of the fast, of the first drink of water, and of spending time in the river surrounded by water. The fast was hard, but I know it was important, and it continues to stay with me. It seemed like the right path to be taking, learning more so I am more able to engage my family with more understanding of Metis culture. I will fast again.

Geraldine and David

In September 2006, I went to Vancouver and did an interview with two of dad's cousins, Geraldine and David. Geraldine is my father's aunt Jenny's daughter, the aunt that my father and his siblings probably spent the most time with growing up. Geraldine is the oldest in our family,

and had many memories of the family. Judy would often tell me that I had to talk to Geraldine, that she would remember more stories than Judy could.

Geraldine talked about the prejudice in Fort Saskatchewan when she was growing up, and how the Turners were very quiet about the Indian side. Geraldine said the Turners were called “breeds” and looked down on by the English people in the town. She told a story about how uncle Harvey, the uncle that my dad, Bob, Brian, and Judy went to stay with after their parents died, would get mad about how he went to war for his country and he came back and was called a breed. Geraldine said that some of her aunties didn’t admit at all to having Indian blood.

Geraldine said she was always proud of being Indian, as was her mother, but that her mom also warned her against talking about it to certain people. She remembered that even her grandmother Kate (who is also my father and his sibling’s grandmother) didn’t admit to having Indian blood, once coming in angry and saying “that man called me an ‘Inyan,’ I’m not Inyan, I’m French.” Their grandfather was very different, telling them Indian stories about the sun, the moon, the stars, thunder, and giving them traditional names. She said that her grandfather was an artisan, making and repairing harness and repairing shoes for people in the community. She also shared his sense of humour, since the name he gave one of her brothers translated from Cree to English as something like “little itchy ass.” She said her brother never could sit still.

Geraldine said that her mother was trained in the use of traditional medicines by her grandmother, and that she grew up following her mother around gathering medicines and preparing them and using them at home. She talked about sleeping under a ceiling full of drying plants and herbs. I wish she had more time with her mother to learn about the herbs, and that she could have taught me.

She remembered stories of Winnie, my grandmother, as well. She talked about how kind she was, and what a good baker she was. She said that one day a week she would bake bread, buns, cinnamon buns and pies. Hearing her stories of watching her auntie, my grandmother, baking in an old woodstove, with flour and cinnamon flying makes my grandmother seem more real to me.

Geraldine talked about the way they grew up, gathering what they could, like wild garlic and onions, sharing and preserving meats, and winnowing grain left in the fields. She told how her mom would get scraps from the suit makers in Edmonton and make quilts, and how the

batting for the quilts would be old rabbit skins that were too worn for other purposes, and the heaviness of those old quilts.

David is one of three boys from dad's aunt Barb and uncle Harvey's family where dad and his siblings stayed right after their parents were killed. Aunt Barb and uncle Harvey split up after the boys left for the orphanage, and her own boys were put in an orphanage for a while. Aunt Barb, who everyone remembers as the kindest woman, committed suicide by jumping from the Granville Street bridge in Vancouver in 1961. It's hard to imagine the emotional pain she must have suffered to leave her three boys who she loved so much, and to take her own life. Barb and Harvey had meant so much to my father as well, and through him, to me. We went to where we could see the bridge while we were there, and left some tobacco for her. I could feel her spirit there. It seemed so much more personal knowing the stories and after spending the time hearing David's story.

Judy's illness

In November of 2006 my dad called me and told me that auntie Judy was very ill in hospital and was non-responsive and on life support. I was so sad to hear the news and I prayed with the sweetgrass that Judy loved so much to send my prayers and thoughts to her and to the spirit world. I wrote in my journal about how grateful I was to have had the time with Judy and to feel so close to her. All of my uncles and my aunt, as well as my sister, my parents, and me went to Prince George in the hope of getting to spend some time with Judy before she was gone. Within a few days Judy was responding and was even able to speak. I brought her some sweetgrass and some purple cloth that I had taken with me to my fast. I got to tell her how much I loved her and how much I appreciated getting to know her better and listening to her stories. She told me that she loved me and that I was a special person, and she thanked me for the work I had done with her and her siblings. It is difficult to describe the impact of being able to have a few moments together when she was so ill.

Within a few days Judy's health rebounded, and although she was often in and out of hospital, she was certainly doing much better than expected. Dad and I went to visit her again in January 2007. She was in the hospital but doing okay and we had a good visit and she told me more stories while I was there. I took my audio recorder and recorded the stories she told, and the answers to the questions I took with me.

Judy dies

May 26th, 2007 my auntie Judy died at the age of 65. It was so sad for all of us to lose her so young. I was comforted by knowing that she felt she was ready to go, and that she was not afraid to die. I was sad too for her siblings and her children and grandchildren, and all who loved her. I did not go to her funeral. I had recently found out that I was pregnant with my first child, and I was anxious, exhausted, and ill. I was glad that I had been able to visit with Judy so much in the preceding two years, and I burned sweetgrass for her during the time the funeral was taking place in Prince George. My dad gave the eulogy at her funeral on March 31, 2007. In honour of Judy's memory, I include the transcript of the words my dad shared that day.

Ed's eulogy for Judy

Family & friends thank you for coming to help us celebrate the life of Judy Montpellier.

My sister, Judith Kay Turner was born May 8th 1942, into a Metis family in Edmonton, Ab. She was the 1st child of Fredrick Edgar Turner & Winifred May Turner (Adamson). She was always her dad's "princess." Later she would have 5 more siblings of which 4 of us are still kicking. Bob is now our Elder in the family, with his partner Caren. Judy introduced Bob and Caren to each other. They live in PG and have been tremendous supports to Judy in these last years of her life. For those of you who don't know me I'm Ed Turner. I'm 1 of Judy's brothers, and my wife Sylvia is here with me today and we live in Creston. Judy was a teacher and in our early years together she patiently taught Sylvia to crochet. Our little brother Brian is here and his wife Wendy and they live in Lloydminster, Ab. Our little sister Debbie and her husband Henry are here and they live in Williams Lake.

Judy's son, Richard, and his wife, Linda, and their three children, Adam, Matthew, and Lisa, live in PG. Judy's daughter, Shawna and her partner, Chris, also live locally and we join in with them to honor this valiant woman.

Bob remembers him & Judy playing in the yard when he was about 5 years old sitting on little wooden chairs having a tea party & pretending to be Mrs. Fedorko & Mrs. Litvin, our Ukrainian neighbors, "Oy yo yo yo yo if you could see my little Jimmy." They jabbered back & forth in their best little Ukrainian accents & our mom was just joyfully taking all this in.

I don't know if any of you are aware of this but my dear sister was also known to have a bit of a temper. If you think I'm lying check out the scars on the back of Bobs' head. One time he wouldn't wait up for her coming home from school so he got a lunch bucket in the back of the head. Another time when she was baby sitting us we wouldn't help her with the dishes. We made a break for the door but a Mason jar caught Bob on back of the head on the way out. He never did rat her out though. In fact she got a lot of praise from Dad for the way she looked after her brother when he accidentally got hurt. You know, Bob in later years, served in the military, even went overseas, & came back to us unscathed, due in no small part, to how well Judy taught him to duck.

We had wonderful, loving parents of which we have many fond memories. Unfortunately we didn't have them long. Our parents were killed in a car accident when Judy was 13 years old, along our yet unborn brother Vernon. She became the Elder in the family & she was strong for us. Judy carefully noted where all her siblings were and kept track of them for the family, and she did her best to keep us together.

Shawna mentioned that her mom loved to play scrabble. I can attest that my big sister always had a way with words. I remember one time when we were in the orphanage & one of the help gave our little brother Brian a spanking with a stick. Judy was able to explain to her how very beneficial it would be for her not to do that again & you can bet she didn't. Brian was 3 or 4 at the time and was the pet of the family. I guess cause he was the cutest. Of course that was a long time ago.

Judy was a force to be reckoned with.

Now she has returned to the spirit world. I wish they had e-mail in the spirit world, I could at least warn them.

Judy grew up to be a beautiful young woman, while living with her special foster family, Len, Gwen, and Patty. She worked as a telephone operator. Like all beautiful young women she went to parties & it was at one of these parties she met & fell in love with a blue eyed, suave, hard working French guy named Emile Laurent Montpellier. Emile later proposed to Judy at a barn dance as the band played Whispering Pines & they were wed on the 2nd of May 1963. Judy loved her mother in law and Emile's family and she felt very accepted by them. On Nov. 29th 1963 they became proud parents of Richard.....Wait....that can't be right.....
May, June, July.....Oh what does it matter?

When Richard was 6 mo. old they moved to P.G. & on June the 17th 1965 Shawna was born.

Richard & Shawna remember being in bed with Judy as she read Green Eggs & Ham to them. They were blessed with great parents. I remember Emile's infectious laugh & how he loved to tease. I remember how he would tease Judy & she would get so angry & he would laugh all the harder & soon she would have to give up & join in on the laughter. I guess he learned early in the marriage not to tease her too hard when there was anything at hand that could be used as a weapon because he faired far better than Bob did living with Judy.

Sadly we lost Emile on Nov. 19th, 1976 in another motor vehicle accident. He was 36 years old. Judy was now a single parent.

Judy's house was always full of young people. Richard & Shawna's friends & she also foster parented many children. Like a mother hen she took kids under her wings. She formed life long bonds with some of these children among which were Andy & his sister Andrea. She became Grandmother to Andrea's children.

She liked to play bingo though I'm told she often nodded off to sleep between numbers being called. She amazed her friends by still managing to win a few games.

My sisters & brothers were scattered to the 4 winds in various foster & adoptive homes after the death of our parents. We weren't raised together & didn't see or hear from each other for many years. But eventually we all found each other & bonded again, learning of our proud Metis heritage along the way. The family bond was most apparent between Judy & Debbie, and they are loving sisters. Judy had a hand in lining Debbie up with her husband Henry. I remember Debbie talking about occasional visits to P.G. cause it was time for a sister talk.

Recently our daughter, Tara, has been working on her PhD in Clinical Psychology and for her dissertation she chose to tell the story of our family. During this process we were fortunate enough to have a number of family gatherings during which we reminisced and recorded family history. Having Judy's story recorded for history is very special.

Debbie remembers all the laughter they shared, the practical jokes Judy use to love to play on her, & her knowledge of the English language & history. Debbie feels that came from reading all those romance novels.

I never realized they were educational in that respect.

Debbie fondly remembers the family reunion at Ft. Saskatchewan especially the trip back with her & Judy driving with the windows down singing their lungs out. Personally I'm just darn glad I wasn't in that car. Can you imagine? I bet to this day there are still people in Hinton that talk about those 2 crazy ladies that blew through town making all that noise.

Judy was always all about family. She loved her children & was so very proud of their accomplishments. She was never shy about telling those she cared about how proud she was of them & how much they meant to her. In fact she was never shy about telling anybody how she felt about them.

And, oh how she dearly loved her grandchildren and she called them "her gold." She could bore you to tears bragging about her grandchildren. She brags about her grandchildren with good reason as they truly are wonderful people. Linda & Richard have done an exceptional job of raising them, except, of course, they still have not got a horse for Lisa. But, I'm not one to meddle. Her grandchildren need to remember how lucky they are to have had such a Grandma for as long as they did. The rest of us need to remember how lucky we are for having known her & for having been loved by her.

Judy had a strong Christian philosophy and she talked about death as being a graduation to a better place. Debbie mentioned that she knows her God is going to say, "Well done my good and faithful servant, come and enter your rest, the best is yet to be".

I thank the Great Spirit for welcoming our daughter, sister, mother, Aunt, foster mother, grandmother, & friend home to the Spirit world. And I thank you all for coming & listening.

My father always has the right words, and the right mix of poignancy and humour. I still miss auntie Judy but I feel I can draw on her strength and wisdom whenever I need her. I have found myself talking to her whenever I feel I could use her straightforward thinking and insight.

My son Alexander arrived on December 27th 2007, and following his birth, I took a year off to spend time with him. Becoming a mother increased the empathy I already felt for my family and their experiences. I understood for myself how much parents love their children, and how vulnerable children are.

The story doesn't really end here, but it does for this research. It has been five years since the start of my interviews with my family. Judy is gone, but she had her family around her, including her siblings, a lot in the last couple of years. I have seen everyone draw closer together, and spend more time with each other. All of the events in my family's history have been made clearer for me. I can now rattle off dates and events, and remember the little stories attached to each person. Less and less do I have to make a phone call and ask about dates and details. I am learning more still with long distance calls to Geri. I am planning a trip this year to go back to Prince George and visit with my uncle Bob, aunt Debbie and my expanding group of second cousins. I am incredibly grateful for this time, these people, and this process. It has made a permanent impact on my life.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This is our story. It's a story with good and bad parts, loss and reunion, pain and laughter. It's a story that reaches back in time, and looks forward to new generations. There are parts of the story that are missing forever. Our history back as far as Philip Turnor's arrival in Canada is known only in pieces and by written record, mainly thanks to Philip Turner's journals for the HBC and to scrip records. From these written records we know of the development of the Metis ancestry for the Turner family. But I will never know my grandparent's stories of their history to share because they were gone too soon to pass it on.

The story tells of the marriage between my grandfather, a Metis man and my grandmother, an English woman, and the rifts in the family this caused at the time, echoing the discord between Metis and non-Metis worlds at the time. There are stories of their everyday life, of how they loved each other, their children, and their extended families. It's a story of how that all falls apart one day, and the repercussions that had for the children left behind, for their lives, and for the lives of their families. It's about how they came together again as a family, and about trying to come together with their culture again. It's also a story of the creating of a story, and of the use of that story to create a space for experiencing being Metis, for this generation and the ones which follow.

A number of themes were salient for me in this family story. The way the research was conducted and how it unfolded was central to it becoming a healing process for me and my participants. I share some of my thoughts on how this research is different than most research projects, and why that was important in this context. Trauma, loss and grief were all present in my family's story, but previously had not been discussed to any great extent. Here I spend some time going over different aspects of trauma, loss and grief as they relate to my participant's experiences. A related theme is the separation of my participants from each other, and their placement into the child welfare system. I discuss some of the impact of their separation from each other, including the social context of the time, and then comment on the present day situation of child welfare in Canada. The final theme explored is that of Metis identity. I share my views on Metis identity as it was expressed to me by my participants, and end with a cultural model of Metis identity.

Western and Indigenous psychological research

The completion of this research was an experience of working with Western and Indigenous methodology, and creating a research process that was right for me and my family. I learned as I went. Towards the end I began to realize that like the sentiment expressed by “this is the way I understand it,” that is so often heard in Aboriginal circles, there was not a “right” way to do this research, there was only the way I was doing it at the moment. I did my best to make sure I was working to be true to Western and Metis worldviews, that I was being true to myself and my family, and that I was being true to the spiritual and physical realms I was working within.

Some of my choices were not in keeping with basic tenets of mainstream Western psychology research methodology. Much of the time I worked like an explorer, reading the signs, finding my way, using my instincts, and I often could not be certain of my final destination. I believe that in completing this research the strength of my feelings and intuitions were as important as the ability to use my intellect. This study defies replication, and that is not a limitation, it is simply a fact. Rather than taking the stance of the objective outside observer, I worked with people I am very connected to and not at all that objective about - my family. I did not try to keep the anonymity of my participants, choosing instead to honour and privilege the stories they shared. These stories are, after all, their stories, and they deserve the acknowledgement for sharing them with us. I shared significant parts of my own life story with my participants and with my readers, both to “walk my talk” and to join with father and my aunts and uncles in their sharing.

I held myself to the ethics of research within the academy and to them added the ethics of researching with people I love, including those who reside in the realm of the spirits. I measured the success of this research by the level of respect I showed my participants, by the healing it created in all of us, and for the opportunity it provided for all of us to experience some level of transformation. This research created a Metis psychological homeland for my family (Richardson, 2004, p. 56). The sections that follow expand on how this research unfolded, and what I learned as it did.

Spending time

The data collection phase of the research began with the three province round trip I made with my father. Travelling by car and staying together with family and at hotels gave us a lot of

time to talk. He retold me old stories, and I learned new ones. We had the freedom to stop at places of significance to our family, and reflect on our past. We spent time with each of my aunts and uncles as we travelled, and we sat around kitchen tables and talked with them and their children and partners. I flew twice to Prince George for the group interviews. We spent a few days there each time, so there was plenty of time for visiting after the research was done. I flew to Prince George another two times after the data collection was finished, to visit with Judy when she was ill, and to visit with my uncle Bob and aunt Debbie and my cousins. I have spent more time with my extended family on my father's side in the last few years while doing this research, than I had in many years. I realized that "spending time" is an important part of research, whether you are working with your family, a community, or participants who you do not know. Spending time, visiting, sharing food, telling stories, all helped to emphasize our interconnectedness, and made the experience richer for us all.

Spirituality, ceremony, and the giving of gifts

Incorporating aspects of spirituality and ceremony such as smudging, praying and the talking circle, was reflective of being respectful to the realm of the spiritual. It was also meant to provide an experience of what those things are like. I remember as I was learning about these ceremonies myself being so uncertain and unsure of how to smudge, what I could or could not say or do, and feeling very insecure about just about everything. Smudging, praying, and other similar ceremonies are only a part of Metis culture. I have learned that there are many, many different ways that people engage in ceremonies, and there are many people who never do, but people should have a choice to learn about ceremonies and spirituality if they wish. Creating the opening for learning about Metis spirituality and ceremony is one more way to help strengthen a sense of identity.

Smudging, praying, and the use of the circle and the braid of sweetgrass made for Vernon all helped to centre and focus us together on our task of sharing. It helped provide a reflective, protective environment for the bringing up of significantly painful old memories and for giving each person the chance to share.

There was a positive impact of incorporating gift giving. The gifts resonated most strongly with Brian and Debbie, the youngest, and the ones with the least connection as children to their Metis heritage. Brian emotionally acknowledge the honour of receiving the eagle feather, and Debbie talked about feeling a sense of belonging to the family, rather than feeling like an

outsider looking in. These personal, physical objects that were representative of Metis culture were a way to say thank you for the time, emotion and stories that were shared, and were a recognition of their heritage that exists in its own way in each of them.

Healing research

One sign that research is useful, ethical and worthwhile is that it has a benefit in the lives of the people who are involved in it. This research, by being a healing process, has benefited me and my participants. This research story has the potential to benefit other people as well, particularly other Metis people and families who are still struggling with unresolved pain from the past and the present. Healing is more than the alleviation of symptoms; it is about creating a balance of the medicine wheel aspects of the self. It means working towards understanding one's gifts and responsibilities, at every age. Healing in this research came from sharing time together and sharing stories together. Healing also happened with ceremonies like smudging, praying, fasting, and asking our ancestors to share our circles and help lighten the pain. Anyone who has spent time with Aboriginal people knows that laughter and teasing appear to be fundamental to living and healing. Laughter and teasing are always present wherever Turner's gather. These ways of healing are ones that are congruent with Metis culture, and in engaging in healing with stories, ceremonies, laughing and spending time together, and respecting our ancestors, further open paths to a cultural understanding. This as well, is healing.

My father and my aunts and uncles shared their thoughts about the healing nature of this research. At different points in our time together, I asked each of my participants to share what the process had been like for them. I wanted to know what their experience was of the research, and whether I needed to hold steady or make changes. After our individual interview, Judy said, "... it felt like a whole weight was lifted off my shoulders, like letting go of something... But I felt at peace with myself... I really felt, there, it's done." It felt like that for me as well. It seemed that Judy needed to share her stories, to have them recorded, and that she was ready to have that happen.

Towards the end of our last gathering, while we were still all in the circle, I asked them again what they thought of what we had done together. Judy stated;

For me, it is getting to know a lot about what each of us went through, and the years we were separated, and the feelings that we had that I didn't know about. With Ed, I always thought he was too young to remember much of mom and dad so it didn't really bother him, that's the way I thought. Bob, I always knew he was feeling lost, and he was always trying to keep his feelings from me, and he was always trying to take care of all of us. I

think this has helped all of us in the healing process, helped us get to know each other and what we were feeling...”

Bob too talked about the power of hearing his sibling’s stories. He said, “...I didn’t know what Ed was thinking, and Brian, and Debbie and Judy. It sure is nice to get to know their own deep feelings, that they don’t really share with us, that we never knew, because we never had the chance to talk about it.” My dad, Ed, talked about what it had been like for him to be part of this research;

It’s like, in some ways, pulling scabs off some old wounds, but it’s made me realize that Bob feels the same pain, and that Judy feels the same pain that I do. I always thought I was the big wuss of the family. Every time I would go to the cemetery I’d bawl my eyes out, and so it has helped me in that way... I guess one of the bigger things this has done for me, is that we lost our family, and I want it back. I hope this does pull us back together again, being close together again.

Brian shared his thoughts on being part of this process;

...seeing your thoughts in writing and taking the time to read it, and sitting here today and talking about it, really reinforces how much you have gone through, and how much we need to know each other. My family, the Kinlochs, are getting smaller, and pretty soon you are going to be all I have for an extended family. (emotional) ... It’s good to have those memories and not be selfish and think about yourself all the time and think of others. There’s been some tears shed here today, and I’m glad we went through it...

Debbie added her thoughts, “I hope this whole situation of putting down our thoughts, maybe we can make a little better pathway for our future generations, and have good memories to leave with our families. I so appreciate being together and am so glad I came, and feel this is a real healing process.”

It was sad and painful to hear how much they had missed in each other’s lives, and how healing hearing each other’s stories were. Because of the time they spent separated, sharing of each person’s life story, and old memories and old feelings were of particular importance. Rather than feeling alone in the pain of the past, and its occasional appearance in the present, they knew that others were feeling the same way. With the old stories and remembrances, my father and his siblings, and myself, could fill in some of the significant gaps in their knowledge about each other. It was a time of creating new memories to share as a family. I was moved by the depth of healing created by sharing stories and making connections. I thought of all the families who could benefit from a process like this, and will never get the chance. There are Metis families

other than my own for whom their only Metis community is their family. Strengthening family connectedness is related to strengthening cultural identity; as we learn from each other we remember how caring and helping each other is a part of Metis identity.

There is a strong tradition in Western psychology that recognizes the healing power of stories and storytelling (McAdams, 2009, chap. 10-12). Not surprisingly, it is also well represented as a healing modality in Aboriginal psychology (BigFoot & Dunlap, 2006). Mehl-Medrona, an American Indian physician, says that “within any healing art, whatever else we do, we treat by telling a story.” (2006, p. 6). This research will help me remember that stories of all kinds have power and should be respected. Creating stories for sharing, like this one, means that it has the potential to create healing for other family members who read it and gain a deeper understanding of their family. People outside my family, both Metis and non-Metis can also share in the knowledge of how stories help all of us heal.

My experience with the research process: Search, research, and vulnerability

Katz (1999) says that to tell a story we must experience it, and that part of that experiencing involves vulnerability. He explains that vulnerability entails letting go of our assumptions of how things are and coming to a new vision. I experienced vulnerability in different ways and with different intensities throughout this work. The lessons I learned from vulnerability included responsibility and humility.

Completing this research meant that I had to expose my own struggles with coming to understand myself as a Metis woman. It meant squirming uncomfortably reading my own inadequate attempts at explaining Metis identity to my family. I was humbled by the challenge of understanding my own identity, and of the process of sharing that with others. It meant accepting where I was at each stage, and continuing to work towards greater personal understanding of my identity as I completed this dissertation. My research on identity and my personal search for identity became one (Katz, 1999).

I also had to feel and experience the way my father and his siblings understood their Metis identity. I had my own experience of the complexity of identity as a guide, but their life experiences were very different than mine, and required me to stretch my understanding further than ever before. My vulnerability felt intensified because of my close relationships with my participants. There would be no anonymity of false names and no distancing of myself from my participants after my research was completed. I had to concern myself with the responsibility to

tell a part of my family's story, knowing that how I did that could be healing, or harming. I had to come to recognize and respect the power of words (Katz, 1999).

At times, including my own thoughts and experiences in this dissertation was uncomfortable. Although I have read many great examples of research that includes the personal lives of the researchers, much of this type of research exists at the margins of mainstream Western psychology. In some ways, including my personal thoughts made the writing easier, and in some ways it was harder. It was a challenge to admit so openly and publicly parts of my own life, that I do not have everything about identity figured out yet, and that I cried at my computer many times writing this dissertation. Including parts of who I am were necessary for this research; it was a way to connect the "head" to the "heart" of the research.

One of my biggest struggles with vulnerability over this project was over my relationship with the more positivistic sides of Western psychology. It was a vulnerability that began before this research, and will probably continue after it, but I felt it most strongly during this research. I have dedicated many years towards the goal of becoming a psychologist, and many people have supported me for the entire journey. Psychology is a discipline that has taught me a great deal about healing, and it has become a significant part of my story. The clinical and research skills I have learned are ones I use all the time in my life. I have learned how to learn, and that I am capable of finding out the answers to things I want to know. I have learned how to contribute to the healing of persons by honouring their personal stories, their pain, their purpose and their strength. These skills carry with them tremendous power, which I can take, and as in this research, make them my own. I am grateful for the opportunities that advanced degrees have and will afford me and my family, and I know that where I am is a place of privilege. I believe that I am meant to be a psychologist, a Metis psychologist, a woman who advocates for Indigenous people and their healing.

Although I have gained much in my training, I have also felt very much separate from mainstream psychology. It is a discipline that forgets that it has its own creation story, forgets to ask those important questions: Who are you? Who/where are you from? Where are you going? What are your responsibilities? (Anderson, 2000, Mehl-Medrona, 2006). I sometimes feel there is little room for my voice in Western psychology. It is uncomfortable to feel like such an outsider in my own discipline.

Trauma and its impact on my family

Historical trauma

Trauma is too often a salient experience in Aboriginal people's lives, both in terms of the history of colonization and in contemporary contexts. American Indian scholars Eduardo and Bonnie Duran (1995) propose that there is a relationship between the trauma of history and the traumas people live with in the present day. The notion of historical or intergenerational trauma, or the soul wound, has become a well known, if not well studied, concept both in Canada and the United States (Gone, 2009). Historical trauma encompasses genocide, racism, oppression and the impact of acculturation (Duran, Duran & Brave Heart, 1998).

Duran and Duran (1995) explain the concept of the soul wound in this way:

The core of Native American awareness was the place where the soul wound occurred. This core essence is the fabric of soul and it is from this essence that mythology, dreams, and culture emerge. Once the core from which soul emerges is wounded, then all of the emerging mythology and dreams of a people reflect the wound. The manifestations of such a wound are then embodied by the tremendous suffering that people have undergone since the collective soul wound was inflicted half a millennium ago. (p. 45)

This soul wound echoes through the generations and continues to impact Aboriginal people today. Although different nations, communities, and individuals will have differing experiences and levels of trauma, both historically, and present day, trauma touches us all to some degree. Intergenerational trauma shows itself most clearly in this research in the impact of racism in the time of my grandparents, and how the influence of the society at the time made a terrible situation worse for my father and his siblings. There is no proof, but stories and whispers say that their status as a half-breed family played a role in their separation from each other. Even before the accident, the older children were becoming well aware of what society thought of their ancestry. Many of their own extended family denied their heritage as a way of lessening its negative influence in their lives. Some of them went to their graves with their denial.

Intergenerational trauma is also a piece of my generation. I am certain that I am not the only child of my father, my aunts, and my uncles, to feel the pain of the past expressed through our parents. I think the true impact of intergenerational trauma will be seen when trauma is additive, like that experienced by my participants.

Family trauma

My family is just one example of one of the stories of trauma and loss in Aboriginal families and communities. The trauma that surrounded the loss of my father and his sibling's

parents and their brother is a central and unavoidable piece of my family's story. I knew already from talking with my father that he felt significant intensity when he talked about what happened to him when he lost his parents. For my dad, he can still feel the initial trauma quite strongly at times, and can find that disconcerting. I expected that at least Judy and Bob, being the older children, would possibly still feel the emotional tremors of this time in their lives. A memory that Bob shared highlighted the extreme trauma that he was experiencing at the time of his parents' death. He said;

I kind of felt empty like I've only felt empty in my life, about twice like that. I kind of felt it was neither here or there, you're just out there, you become quite aware of your surroundings. I remember looking at the ground and noticing every little pebble on the road, and you look around you and you say, well, it doesn't matter, cause they're dead, and it didn't, it just didn't matter anymore, and I didn't know what the heck I was supposed to do.

I knew less what to expect from Debbie and Brian's experiences, given their younger ages when their parent's died.

It is an area that has emotionally impacted me as a researcher, daughter, and niece. Having to continually read, listen to, and watch, my father and his siblings talk about the impact of that time has been more difficult than I could have anticipated. Facing their pain has helped me see the importance of providing some illumination around this dark time for my family. I wanted to provide some clarification on the impact of trauma, how it can resonate far beyond the initial hit, and how it is not a sign of personal weakness.

The loss of one parent, sibling, grandparent, or other figure that is close to a child is a significant and difficult event. For my father and his siblings, the losses they sustained in less than one year, all of close family members, were tremendous and numerous. On Christmas eve 1954 their paternal grandmother died, followed by their aunt Jenny on New Year's eve. Just over one month later, on January 31st, 1955 their paternal grandfather died, the man the older siblings describe as such a kind, gentle man, and the one who they took their strength and Indian identity from. Seven months from the death of their grandfather was the accident that took their parents and their brother's lives. It was on Debbie's first birthday, July 30th, 1955.

Death of a person who is a main caretaker, sudden death, multiple deaths, and lack of follow up support, are all shown to be factors in increasing the sense of loss and trauma felt by children and adolescents (Abrams, 1999; Adams, 2002; Bowlby, 1988; Granot, 2005; Sheeringa

& Zeanah, 1995; Silverman, 2000). The variables of multiple losses, loss of both their main caretakers, loss of their sibling, the sudden nature of the deaths of their parents and brother, and the lack of support and guidance, created a terrible perfect storm of grief for my family.

Granot, a leader in the work of bereavement and loss, and who worked as the National Head of Psychology in Israel's Ministry of Defence, wrote a book on children and loss. She states that "when a child loses both parents at the same time, the sense of calamity and loss is absolute. The child's entire world is instantaneously shattered, and he feels he is left alone in the world." (Granot, 2005, p. 135). The hurt of traumatic loss and its effects can be carried throughout life, and leave children and adolescents with memories and feelings that are indelibly marked within them (Adams, 2002; Granot, 2005). Granot adds that other siblings can help decrease the feeling of being alone, especially if a sibling is old enough to act as a parental figure. At the age of 13, Judy was the one who told her siblings of her parents deaths, and who tried to keep track of her siblings. She was too young to act as an adult caregiver, but certainly added significant stability to the lives of her remaining siblings.

Loss of both parents is often followed by the intrusion of strangers who need to attempt to provide them with their basic needs (Granot, 2005). She adds that although their basic needs may be met by the systems such as foster care, the children can remain feeling disconnected and without roots for many years. My dad shared a story of feeling that way, going to visit my sister when she was an adult and living in Edmonton. While she was working, he spent the day at Fort Saskatchewan. He said;

When I ran away from the orphanage and went to Fort Saskatchewan I just walked around the streets and I remember feeling I was just there and feeling that I didn't belong anywhere. Then years later when I went to visit Dawn in Edmonton, I went as an adult... I went to Fort Saskatchewan and I just walked those streets that I walked when I was nine or ten years old, in Fort Saskatchewan, and some of those feelings came back. It was just a feeling of being lost, totally lost, lonely.

Researchers like Christianson and Lindholm (1998, as cited in Siegel, 1999) indicate what we intuitively know to be true, that children lack the psychological and emotional resources to deal with trauma on their own. A sensitive caring adult is needed to help them process and navigate the trauma and its aftermath. Granot (2005, p. 12) state that "without a doubt, the most important external influence on the emotional state of the child and how he copes with his loss is the parent or adult who raises him." The failure to provide the needed support by the adults in the lives of my father and his siblings following the accident was likely a reflection of the beliefs

about children at the time, and the lack of resources available to the adults who were acting as caregivers. Even now, adults often feel that they are saving the children from distress by not discussing death, and this mixed with their own anxiety and uncertainty about how to deal with the subject, results in it not being addressed at all (Webb, 2002).

Debbie and Brian were able to find security in their new homes even though they were not guided through the trauma. The safety of their surroundings was likely protective and healing for them. They both experienced a deep feeling of connection and belonging with their adoptive families. For the older siblings there was no such protection and no guidance. Judy was left to try and be there for her brothers. She remembers what it was like to try and be the parent, and give them memories in the aftermath, “I was old enough to have memories and I kind of tried to be there for the boys, just mother them. Eddie was just like a boat in the ocean without any oars. I can remember things like stubbing my toe and then cuddling up to mom, and the softness, I can remember that, I wonder if Ed can?”

The experience of trauma for my father, and for his siblings, ideally would have been normalized, validated, and worked through in the days, months and years following the death of their parents and brother. Not one of the siblings shared any memory or story of talking through their feelings of trauma with an adult figure they trusted. The lack of support and discussion around the issue of trauma has meant that it has remained a stronger force in the lives of my father and his siblings than it might have otherwise. Bringing my father and his siblings together, talking about the loss of their parents and their brother, as well as spending the time trying to make some sense of it in the present, is an attempt at providing support and information, even at this late date. It should also highlight the importance for being proactive when dealing with children and trauma, to prevent them from having to face the aftermath on their own.

The accident has had a significant impact on each of these participant's lives. It alone changed the trajectory of their lives in a way that could never be repaired. The personal trauma that ensued has impacted each of them in profound ways. They lost the security and love that was present in their lives. Surviving through the trauma and loss they all experienced also make up a part of their identities. Coming together as a group to talk about it so many years later was much too late, and much too little, but there was a healing power of finally getting to share their experiences with each other.

Loss and grief

There has been significant loss and grief that has followed from the death of my participant's parents. They were forever separated from their parents and their nearly born sibling. The fallout from that time resonates into the present day lives of each of them, and through them, into the lives of their children and grandchildren. The hurt that followed from that time has always been a part of my life, from my dad's stories. I have felt and understood the weight of that pain more fully as I have become an adult. I am able to see my father as his own person, and to imagine him as a child.

Children's grieving

Granot (2005) stresses that grief and loss is a lifelong process, with continuing adaptation and adjustment to the effect of loss on the particular stage of life. Children may experience this even more strongly than adults, since children are constantly moving through new developmental stages. Children also tend to express their grief differently than adults, particularly for children that have not yet reached the stage of adolescence (Granot, 2005).

Granot (2005) states that the process of grieving is more complicated for children than adults, and describes characteristics of grieving that are unique to children. Shock is the initial stage, but Granot emphasizes that although it can look like the shock that can be seen in adults, it is qualitatively different. Shock in children is a state of non-responding or minimal responding due in part to a lack of full understanding of what has happened. Granot indicates that in the early days after a significant loss, often even the adults are overwhelmed and unable to cope themselves. Sometimes the adults are pleased that the children are not reacting, erroneously thinking that they do not understand at all what has happened. Children sense that the adults are stressed and may choose not to bother them with additional questions. Children may react with fear to the events and to the reactions of the adults around them, and feelings of anger and guilt are common. Physical responses like stomach aches, headaches, loss of appetite can also appear.

The stage of mourning is begun once a child realizes that their loss is irreversible. Granot (2005) says that in this state children may express their pain by crying, having sleep problems, not eating, or withdrawing from friends. Their emotions can also range widely and quickly. Some children show detachment from their grief, but that does not indicate that their grieving is complete, and that they will return to the grieving process another time.

Granot (2005) suggests that the third stage of loss and grieving for children is one where they come to terms with both the loss and the impact that it will have in their lives. The author indicates that this phase of readjustment is a process that can continue for years, and over a lifetime. For children who experience loss, how they grieve can be mirrored by their age and stage of development.

Debbie, the youngest, was one year old at the time of her parent's death. She spent the first year of her life in an environment of the love of her parents, her siblings, and her extended family. By one year old she would have created strong attachment ties to all the important people in her life, but particularly to her mother, who she would have spent the most time with and relied on for comfort and for food. By one year old, children have strong preferences for their attachment figures and will fight separation from them, particularly if scared or stressed (Bowlby, 1988; Gaensbauer, Chatoor, Drell, Siegel, & Zeanah, 1995). Having your parents both leave the house, and not return, would have created significant distress to Debbie at her age. At three years old, Brian may not have been able to fully understand the meaning of the deaths of his parents. Children of that age often react with anxiety, confusion and concern to what they perceive as the inconceivable disappearance of their loved one (Abrams, 1999).

Although Brian was two years older than Debbie, both of them were in a time of great deal of changes developmentally, including attachment, language, social and emotional development, and brain development. Schore (2001, p. 205) states "development may be conceptualized as the transformation of external into internal regulation." This highlights the importance of primary caregivers as attachment figures, and their role in helping their child learn to regulate emotional experiences. It can seem insignificant in the span of a life, but dysregulation experiences, especially those that are relational in nature, such as the loss of a parent or caregiver, can impact on the development of the emotional centres of the brain which are important sites of development in infancy and early childhood (Schore, 2001). The additional two years that Brian spent in the company of his siblings, and the protective and loving environment Brian and Debbie found with their adoptive families likely mediated the effects of the loss of their parents.

Although Debbie and Brian have no explicit memories of the accident, the emotional experience would have created some sort of a memory. From the day we are born we are aware of our environment and are able to demonstrate recall of experiences (Siegel, 1999). These implicit memories occur before our memories and minds develop to a stage where we can

actively recall an experience. Even by a child's first birthday, the age Debbie was when her parents were in their accident and never came home again, implicit memories are strongly engrained (Siegel, 1999).

Around two and a half to three years old, children have the ability to register verbal memories and to later retrieve them, fully or partially (Terr, 1988). However, even before that, children can have emotional or behavioural memories of events that they cannot verbalize (Gaensbauer, 2002; Terr, 1988). Brian, who was three when his parents died, does not have many memories of his parents' deaths. He did talk about telling his adoptive grandmother what happened to his birth parents. Brian was adopted in to his new family when he was about five and a half years old, so his memory would have been for sometime after that. He said;

I don't remember mom and dad dying, and the first time that I have any remembrances of thinking of it was when I was adopted and Jim and Ruth [his parents] took me to grandma's house in the Lergarno area there, in Edmonton. I was in her kitchen and she'd watch me play on the floor, and she asked me if I knew what happened to my mom and dad. I told her they were in a car accident and hit a gas truck and there was an explosion and they died in the fire. Years later I could remember that conversation and I didn't really know how mom and dad Turner died until you folks got a hold of me and explained the accident.

It is likely that Brian was remembering what he was told of the actual event, or that he had at least a partial verbal memory of it. His parents did die in a car accident, and a particularly violent one. Newspaper clippings telling of the accident say that the top of the car was sheared off when it hit the back of a gravel truck that was parked on the side of the road. Terr (1988) says that memories of the traumatic event can be changed to include developmentally meaningful symbols, that can make their account sound inaccurate - but what they are portraying is their account of the actual event, not a fantasy. It is not clear if Brian was using play to re-enact the accident when his grandmother asked him that question, but it seems possible that he was, and this prompted her to ask him what he remembered. Children will often use play to enact a traumatic event that they do not have the verbal memory or verbal ability to describe (Gaensbauer, Chatoor, Drell, Siegel, & Zeanah, 1995; Terr 1988; 1991).

Ed was eight, and Bob was eleven when their parents died. Judy, the oldest, was thirteen. They were all old enough to have clear memories of the events following the accident, and their thoughts and emotions in the ensuing days. Children of these ages who experience loss often find themselves flooded by emotions like anger, fear, and sadness in a way that they are unprepared

for and can not process on their own (Granot, 2005). Without help from an adult to sort through their emotions and to validate and support them, Bob, Ed, and Judy were left to deal with their grief more or less on their own.

Granot (2005) suggests that the experience of loss affects children in two general areas. The first relates to feeling the pain of the absence of the person who died, and the second is the fear, insecurity and anxiety that the child feels when realizing that everything has changed and that the security that was provided by the adult in their life is gone for good.

Judy, Bob, and Ed were old enough to understand fully the reality of death, and to fear what was going to happen to them. They all talked about the feeling of the loss of security. Judy said;

When mom and dad were alive, we had the security of knowing that they were there no matter what, (tears) and just getting up and knowing that mom and dad died it just felt like the bottom had dropped out, cause there was nothing, nothing, nothing, there. I felt so alone, I felt really alone. I can't even say I was scared, I wasn't scared, I just felt really alone. Like there wasn't anything left.

Bob echoed those emotions, and the feeling of loss and emptiness that comes with grief.

...when my mom and dad got killed... I knew it was a fact and nothing was going to change that, I just started walking around outside... I remember trying to cry, but I couldn't cry, but I felt there should be someone shedding a tear for them.... I remember there was something just missing out of your life and I used to be pretty energetic and had a lot of get up and go all day...(tears)

My dad, Ed, said "I had the same feelings of loneliness, I was really lonely, and I was scared."

Loss of their brother

In addition to the loss of my participant's parents is the loss of their brother. My father's memories about the time of the accident always included the fact that his mother was due to have a baby at the time of the accident, but beyond that we never talked much about the baby.

Although none of the children had actually met the new baby, their stories say that the newest baby was always cherished and loved. The children would have known about the baby for months and been excited about its arrival. During my individual interview with Judy I learned that the baby had a name. Judy said that they had sat around the kitchen table when her mom was pregnant and picked out names. She said that she had chosen them for the baby, and that his name was to have been Vernon Daniel. At our first group meeting, Judy shared with her siblings

the name of their lost brother, that he had died on route to the hospital, and that he was buried with their mom.

Davies (1999) writes about the grief of siblings, and how that throughout life, recalling the story and aspects of the death of a sibling can result in deeply felt grieving and tears. She points out that this is not evidence of unresolved grief, but the long lasting sadness of losing someone that you love. Prior to our getting together for this last group meeting, I had gathered enough sweetgrass to make a small braid. At the beginning I explained to them that I had brought the sweetgrass braid to represent Vernon's spirit and that by using it in our circle we could include him in the day. The use of the circle and the sweetgrass helped to bring out strong emotions around the loss of Vernon, with all the siblings present.

Some of the reasons that Vernon seemed "forgotten" in a sense were voiced by Judy. She said "I can't say that I ever thought about it much, I guess the fact that I never got to know him, and the fact that there was so much going on at that time, maybe I didn't have room for any more thoughts, nothing mattered anymore anyway, except my siblings." My dad, Ed, shared "I didn't really give it much thought, and I knew mom was nine months pregnant, and later I thought about it more and I wondered what happened to its body. Its body. I didn't even know he was a boy and he had a name. I'm glad we do now." With so much grief and confusion and loss of security after the death of their parents, grieving for Vernon was set aside.

My uncle Bob was deeply moved by the memory of his unborn brother. He said;

My unborn brother. What I remember most about newborns around our place. The last born was always the star person in the family. He was always so much loved, more than us. (laughs) I guess I'll probably miss (crying hard). There I go again, you know, crying over something I didn't expect to cry about. (laughs) I just want to say that I'll probably miss not getting to see his little star. That's all.

Brian added that the loss of Vern was the loss of another person who could have added his potential to the world and to their lives. In our circle, the sweetgrass braid was passed from oldest to youngest, and Debbie, who is the youngest since Vern didn't survive, cried and said "I was just thinking that I have no one to pass it [sweetgrass braid] to. If Vern was here I could pass it to him. I'm sure he is a little angel in heaven, watching over us. I look forward to getting to meet him." I have missed getting to know my youngest uncle, uncle Vernon. I wonder if there would have been more children after him to add to the family.

Ideally, children need help and guidance to grieve fully and to know that grieving is a process that may change over time, and that the feeling of loss may always be a part of their life. They need accurate, clear and honest information about what happened in age and stage appropriate chunks (Abrams, 1999). They need adults to model for them how to grieve, and to help them remember the people who have died (Granot, 2005). The need to deal with children's grief and not ignore it or assume that they have forgotten about it is difficult, painful and important.

Separation, orphanage, adoption, foster care and reunion

Separation from each other and the child welfare system

All of their losses were intensified tremendously by their separation from each other. The Turner family did try and keep the children together. Judy, Bob, Ed and Brian all went to their uncle Harvey and aunt Barb's house. It was a small wartime house with two bedrooms, and they had three children of their own. It is probably because of space and because Debbie was so young and would have required more attention, that instead of going with her brother's and sister to their uncle Harvey and aunt Barb's house, Debbie went to her aunt Alice's house. With three of their own boys, not much money, a small wartime house, and marital discord and violence, my great uncle Harvey and great aunt Barb couldn't keep all the children for long. Within a year, the orphanage, foster homes and adoptive homes received them instead. Harvey died in 1960, four years after his brother's children left his home, and his wife Barb committed suicide in 1961. Their own children then became foster children with no family to care for them.

After five months at her aunt Alice's, Debbie was placed in a receiving home for children who were to be adopted, and a few months after that she was adopted when she was twenty-two months old. Even though Debbie was initially placed with family, she was still adopted out without the knowledge of any of the other children, or without anyone being able to say goodbye to her. Judy used to go and visit Debbie at her aunt Alice's, and one time she went to see her and her aunt told her that Debbie wasn't there anymore, that she had been taken away. Judy phoned the social worker and was told that Debbie had been adopted out.

Judy stayed with her aunt and uncle in their initial placement with her brothers for only about a month, sleeping on the couch while the six boys shared one bedroom, before moving to the home of other relatives. She stayed there for five months before that deteriorated and she asked to be placed in the orphanage in the spring of 1956. By December of that year she was

placed in her first foster home where the foster father was an alcoholic. The next spring she ran away from that home and was placed in a home for delinquents for a couple of months before getting another foster home placement where the foster father made sexual advances to her. In November 1957 she was placed in her third foster home with people she loved, and which became her home until she was married in 1963.

The boys, Bob, Ed, and Brian, all stayed at Harvey and Barb's for a year before they were placed in the orphanage. Brian was adopted from the orphanage less than a year and a half later, at the age of five. Bob and Ed remained in the orphanage for over three and a half years before moving into a foster home in 1960. My father was almost separated from his brother Bob at that time. Some people had come to get him out of the orphanage, and he thought they were taking him for a holiday, and that he would be coming back to the orphanage after. The woman who picked him up had told him they were going to a farm, and that he could have a pony there. It was not until they were heading away from the orphanage on a city bus that my dad says he figured out what was happening. He said "I started raising holy old hell and I didn't want to go for keeps, for a holiday was fine, but not for keeps, because I didn't want to leave my brother." In a display of his personal strength, even as a child, he created such a fuss that the family agreed that his brother Bob could also come and live with them. My father never felt at home with them, and saw his role as mainly domestic help for the family. Ed and Bob both had two foster home placements in 1960, and at the end of 1960 Bob enlisted in the Canadian army. Bob said he never found any hardship in any of the places he stayed. My dad, Ed, found a home and some security with his second foster family, and he stayed with them until he married my mom in 1966.

Brian too disappeared from the orphanage without his siblings being told he was being adopted, even though Bob and Ed were in the orphanage with him. Brian was five years old when he was adopted from the orphanage and in his interview he remembered "there is something about saying "goodbye" and I couldn't remember being able to say goodbye to my brothers and sisters...." Bob shared his memories of Brian leaving the orphanage;

While I was in the orphanage, I had a younger brother named Brian, and he was with us all the time.... Then one day, mother McPherson [the woman who ran the orphanage] said that Brian was adopted out... I asked her about Brian and if we would ever see him again. She started to cry and so I didn't bother asking her anymore after that...

Judy shared her memories of Brian disappearing, saying;

People used to take kids out of the orphanage for visits and bring them back and he didn't come back and we were getting worried about him and I decided to ask my social worker about him. So, I was over at aunt Barb's and I phoned my social worker and she said, "Oh, he's been adopted out."

She said that she wished someone had sat them down and explained that Brian was going to a home where he would be loved and cared for, but that she was thankful that he was adopted into a loving home. My father Ed expressed his feelings about Brian being adopted out, saying "I remember being angry at the time, but I know it was the right thing to do, but it was just done in the wrong way."

Brian and Debbie both had adoptive families that loved them and made them feel like they belonged in their families. They both told stories of having a good childhood, with love and fun, and of feeling that they fit well into their families. Although my father and his siblings agree that it was best that Brian and Debbie were placed in adoptive home, taking them without their knowledge or consent caused tremendous pain for all of them. Once again they were left to deal with separation from members of their family that they loved, and without any guidance from the adults in their world. They grieved the loss of contact with each other alone as they were swept along in the system with little control over their own lives.

A pre-sixties scoop

In addition to the pain of separation from each other, being placed in orphanage, foster care, and adoptive care contributed to the further alienation from their Metis heritage. In a colonial system, they were split apart from each other and their culture, further contributing to their personal trauma, and resonating deeply into the collective trauma of Aboriginal people. In our family, it was after the loss of their parents that the children ended up in the system. For many Aboriginal children in Canada from the late 1950's to 1980's, they ended up in care as part of the "sixties scoop" (Sinclair, 2007). The sixties scoop involved high numbers of Aboriginal children being placed in non-Aboriginal homes, and sometimes being taken without the consent of their parents or communities (Sinclair, 2007).

Sinclair (2007) indicates that many children's backgrounds were recorded inaccurately, for example, recording that a First Nation's child was Metis, or that a Metis child was French, possibly to make the child more attractive on paper for adoption into a White home. There was

also recordings that listed children as not having any siblings, even if they did, again likely to make them seem more adoptable.

Debbie remembered her parents telling her about being adopted, information they knew about her family, and she wondered how her parents would have reacted if they had known her heritage. She said, “I remember mom and dad showing me the papers, and it did say that there were other children but we never knew how many, or that we were Metis... Probably if they would have known that, maybe my mom wouldn’t have taken me.” Debbie had a wonderful and loving home, with good parents, but she is pragmatic about the level of racism that existed at the time, and even in her family. At five years old, Brian was old enough when he was adopted to remember his sister Judy, and his brothers Bob and Ed. He had less of a memory for Debbie, who he would have seen only occasionally or not at all after his parent’s deaths. He said, “I remember Debbie as a baby there but I didn’t remember her name until I was told years later.”

We do not know why Brian and Debbie were not adopted out as siblings, or why their ancestry was not recorded. I can’t know what role their Metis heritage played in their treatment, or in the choice of most family not to come to their aid, but I can strongly suspect it was involved. Much of the Turner family lived in poverty, and they all experienced the racism and discrimination that was openly a part of society at the time. I have never considered that my family history was part of the sixties scoop, and maybe by the strictest definition they were not as they would have been adopted at what would have been the beginning of the sixties scoop. But they certainly were treated the same as the children of the scoop. As my father’s cousin Geri related, the Turner’s were known as “breeds” so they were identified as an Aboriginal family by others. Clearly their identities as Metis were never recorded, and Brian and Debbie were adopted out as “singles,” not as siblings. If Judy had not kept the information on how to find Brian, and if they had not been able to contact Debbie through the public trustee, they could have been lost to them forever, and Brian and Debbie would have never learned of their Metis heritage.

The orphanage was clearly not an ideal place to be for children, and Ed and Brian both remember being fearful of the people who ran it, and getting spanked with a stick. My father, Ed, tells a story of being so ill he could not get out of bed, and being beaten for wetting the bed, only to be taken to the hospital by ambulance with severe pneumonia. My dad remembers not having clothing that was decent enough to not make him stand out in school, and Judy remembers the poor quality of the food and of hearing years later from a cook who had worked there that some

of the best food was kept by the family instead of going to the children. Although the orphanage kept the children fed and sheltered, the people who ran it were not able to deal with the children's emotional needs in any way. This is not to say that they were without kindness entirely, as evidenced by mother McPherson's tears when Bob asked her if he would ever see Brian again, and she gave Judy information that helped them find Brian.

Reunion

After Judy found out that Brian had been adopted, she came to the orphanage from the foster care home she was in, in order to tell Bob and Ed that Brian had been adopted out. She said that she went to tell mother McPherson that she was there to tell her brothers about Brian. Judy said that mother McPherson knew that she could get in trouble for giving her any information about where her brother Brian had gone, but that she said to Judy, "I wrote to Mrs. Kinloch in Wetaskawin to see if you children could see Brian sometimes, but I have not heard back from Mrs. Kinloch from Wetaskiwin." Judy kept this information to herself until the boys were older, as she didn't want there to be any upsets until they were all more settled in their lives. It was a great kindness for Mrs. McPherson to have given that information to Judy at a time when it was the norm for adoption records to be completely closed, and for no information to be shared with the biological or adoptive family.

When my father Ed was a teenager, Judy told him about what the woman at the orphanage had told her about where Brian was placed, and my dad was able to find Brian's home and talk with his parents. Brian's mom phoned her husband who came home from work. They showed my dad Brian's room, pictures of him, pictures of his adopted sister, and after that they kept in touch by mail, and my dad would stop at their place if he was going through town. They asked him not to contact Brian until he was eighteen, and my dad respected their wishes.

When Brian turned eighteen, my parents travelled to Wetaskiwin with my sister who was nine months old, and met with Brian and his family, as well as Bob and Judy. My father said he had tried several ways to find Debbie, but he had no success. Debbie recalled her first contact with any of her biological siblings was after receiving a letter from the public trustee, who wrote that Ed Turner was trying to contact her. After finding Debbie, they were all together again. But they were not all gathered together in one place at the same time until a reunion in 1996.

My father worked so hard to find everyone again. Despite his fear and uncertainty, he made sure they were reunited. All of his siblings talked about how important he was in bringing

them together as a family again. In our last group interview, he shared part of his motivation for bringing everyone together, “I think for me it is important for mom and dad, so they know we’re all together again.” I am sure their parents are proud of all of them and their coming together as a family again. The story of their reunion as a family is a story of resistance. The forces that pulled them apart could not keep them apart.

Child care in Canada today

Although there is much that could have been done better, it seems miraculous that my father and my aunts and uncles managed to avoid significant abuse in all of the places they were living, from family homes to the orphanage, to foster care and adoptive homes. It certainly is not because of the child care system that everything worked out reasonably well. I am angry at the system that was in place at the time and its failings in taking better care of children when their worlds fall apart.

I wish I could take more comfort in the present day system and feel like children are provided with an appropriate level of care and security when they need it, but it is often not the case. Aboriginal children are hugely over-represented in out of home care in Canada. Estimates suggest that they make up from 40 to 80 percent of children in care, despite the fact that Aboriginal people represent only 5 percent of the Canadian population (McKenzie, 2002, as cited in Trocme, Knoke & Blackstock, 2004), and more Aboriginal children today are placed in out of home care than what was seen at the height of the residential school times (Blackstock, 2003, as cited in Trocme et al, 2004). Children are also in care longer, almost exclusively placed with non-Aboriginal families (McKenzie, 2002, as cited in Trocme et al, 2004). Sinclair (2007) states that although Aboriginal children are no longer being adopted into non-Aboriginal homes at high rates, they are ending up in long term care and with multiple foster families instead.

It seems unimaginable that Canada is so quickly repeating the mistakes of the past. While the Canadian government was apologizing for the residential schools, and the damage they created, Aboriginal children were facing multiple foster placements in non-Aboriginal homes. Out of home placements at the rates that are being reported will continue to have massive consequences for Aboriginal people, and Canadian society as a whole, not unlike that of residential school. The Metis are often left out of these statistics, or seriously under-represented, so the true scope of the problem may well be greater than we currently understand. The influence of Canada’s colonial and racist history, residential schools, the sixties scoop, poor policies and

severe underfunding and neglect of services, all contribute to the disruption of families ability to care for their own children. With family disruption and children placed in foster and adoptive home comes further problems for the generations of children who are born to people who never learned how to parent from their own parents, and who may be further disconnected from their cultural heritage. Most importantly, these are children, sacred beings who are entrusted to us to care for and protect them. We are failing them.

Identity

Survival

It seems that after the loss of their parents in 1955, and the separation from each other, my family went into survival mode. Like the Metis nation itself after the resistance in 1885, they each went their own way, trying to keep together what they could, and tried to just live a successful life. They had all been reunited by 1972, and they had seen each other from time to time in the ensuing years, but had never been all together in one place at the same time until a reunion in 1996, forty-one years after the loss of their parents. In 2006, our gathering for this dissertation was the second time they were all together, and the first time they had come together to talk about their lives as a family.

Naming

In this time of survival for my family, strengthening, maintaining or reclaiming cultural identity was not a main priority. When the youngest two were found again, and learned of their cultural heritage, there was no one there to teach them much about the meaning of that history. The word Metis had not been used yet in my family, only Indian, Cree, Native, or part Indian. My mother is responsible for completing the genealogical searching that led to the evidence that my family was Metis. She uncovered the scrip documents and historical records showing the history of the Metis line in my family when I was a small child in the 1970's. It wasn't until I was beginning university and began to read a lot about Metis history that I started to identify more with the term Metis. In this process I also shared what I was learning with my family and this may have influenced my father Ed's sense of himself as Metis.

It is not uncommon that instead of saying they are Metis, people will identify themselves as "part Native," "part Cree," or as "having some Indian blood," or being "1/8 Indian" or similar descriptors. Richardson (2004) says this reflects the European leaning towards quantification and compartmentalization. She also reminds us that it is people's right to identify as they see fit. Her

grandmother chose not to identify as Metis, and Richardson does identify as Metis, but she respects her grandmother's right to choose her own identity. My father's cousin Geri says that their grandmother Kate denied her half-breed ancestry, stating that she was French, even though she reportedly also spoke Cree. But in the few pictures we have of her, she wears leather gauntlet gloves beaded in the Metis style, and my dad remembers her moccasins and her bear skin rug. It may have been that her Metis heritage was a private matter for her, or one to be shared only with family.

For Judy, Bob, and Ed, the time they spent with their grandfather, who spoke Cree, and the young age at which they lost their main cultural contacts, influences their identifying themselves as Cree, or Indian. My father is the only one who has consistently used the word Metis for himself, although he has also referred to himself as Indian, Cree and Native. I use the word Metis to describe that part of my identity, but I respect the right of people to choose to describe themselves as they want to. I also reserve the right to change the way I describe myself if I choose. The language used to describe identity is always changing, with new terms, and with people changing how they refer to themselves to ways they feel more accurately reflects how they think of themselves at the moment.

Overt racism

In the generations past, the desire to avoid racism and discrimination and to take care of their families was a driving force for many Metis people in passing as White or denying their heritage. It was an extreme event that caused the main rift in their culture for my family, but many other people have lost their identity through the racism and discrimination in the social context of the time. For my family, my father's grandfather, and their paternal aunt Jenny seem to have been the two main guides and transmitters of cultural information while they were growing up. Although other aunts and uncles were alive after the death of my father and his sibling's parents and grandparents, none of them were open about their Metis background. Some of them denied having any Indian blood at all, or said that they were French. The negative messages about Metis people in the past have endured even in contemporary times of relative acceptance. Too many people continue to have the experience of having Metis ancestry as a family secret.

Metis identity is often complicated by societal racism, both historically and in the present time. My father Ed stated it clearly and strongly, saying, "My heritage was lost through discrimination and forced shame upon the Indians." He and his siblings have all felt the impact of

racism at different points in their lives, and the intergenerational effect of societal racism. Bob shared his thoughts about being Indian when he was a child; “I was kind of self-conscious about being part Native, looking too Indian, I guess at the time. It wasn’t a popular thing to be at the time...” My father, Ed, shared the negative stereotypes of Indians he carried with him as a child, saying “It wasn’t until later in life that I thought much about my Native heritage and mostly through my youth I thought that I just came from a bunch of drunks, a bunch of drunken Indians was all we were.” Even Judy, who was unwavering in her pride in her heritage, did not escape having to deal with the racism from others. Judy said, “I’ve always been proud of, never shy about being Indian.”

Brian and Debbie both only learned that their heritage was something other than only White when they were eighteen years old. When they were told of their Aboriginal roots, it was information provided with no context other than their own life experiences, and the racism that was around them. Debbie shared that her mother’s spoken belief was that all people are equal, but when Debbie brought a First Nations boyfriend home Debbie said “it didn’t fly too well.” It would not be unusual for a person of Debbie’s parents’ age to have absorbed some negative societal views on Aboriginal people, even though they tried to teach Debbie to not be prejudiced herself.

Brian’s main remembrances of First Nations people when he was growing up was seeing them drunk around the local hotel, a difficult image for developing a positive Metis identity. He said the only time he felt racism directed at him personally was the time a fellow recruit called him a “spearchucker” after he told him he was part Indian. That experience is an example of the difficulty in navigating identity and sharing it with others in an environment that is not always welcoming. Brian said, “After that I felt embarrassed and felt I should have kept that secret to myself.” It can take a lot of strength and support to identify as Aboriginal after negative experiences like that, particularly as a younger person with very little information about your heritage.

Covert racism

There are many ways that identifying as Metis is discouraged more subtly than the overt racism of stereotypes. For example, Debbie said she was proud to be Metis, and that she had no problem telling people about her identity; but when you have almost no information about the Metis other than perhaps the racist stereotypes that were taught in schools, it is difficult to

navigate conversations with others about being Metis. I remember when I began to claim the name “Metis,” but how uncertain I felt about what that meant. Among other Metis or First Nations people I felt like I didn’t measure up to some imagined level of Aboriginality, and I felt like I didn’t really have a right to claim that identity since I lacked cultural knowledge.

Some non-Aboriginal people would say “well you don’t look Indian” or “how much Indian are you?” These were statements and questions that I did not have responses for at the time. The need to endlessly explain your Metis identity can be an onerous task. I found it made me more cautious about who I told when I was learning about my heritage, and that it really became more a private matter until I felt more confident in my identity. Even close family and friends may have difficulty understanding the Metis person’s desire to identify as Metis and as an Aboriginal person if that has not been part of their identity previously.

Colour

Everyone has the right to identify in whatever way that resonates for them, but whether they can identify as White necessitates that they look white. I can pass as White, and so I have the choice to identify publicly or not. There is privilege that goes along with being light skinned but it also has its costs. Passing as White for long periods of time can be isolating, and it can be hard to find your way back. I used to also feel guilty for not having to face the same racism and discrimination that people who were darker skinned did, especially at times when someone made a racist comment about Aboriginal people not knowing that I was Metis and I did not say anything. I find that I am cautious with new people I meet until I know whether or not they are going to make racist comments, and I sometimes realize that I am steering conversations away from topics that might be dangerous territory. I’ve had to learn to deal with unexpected racist jabs, but I still find it hard to be prepared for them, especially when they come from people I know and like. Being light skinned also leaves me open to people’s evaluations whether or not I look Metis. Having confidence in my identity makes it easy to find my voice, and to use the privilege that goes along with being light skinned with responsibility, and to not forget that the distinction does exist.

Colour distinctions often exist even between siblings. Bob talked about feeling shy about the colour of his skin, avoiding pictures, and wishing he was whiter. He recalled his mother-in-law’s concern that their children might have darker skin, asking “does it show?” when their first baby was born, an extremely damaging comment. To me, Brian is almost as dark as Bob, but the

only time his skin colour ever came up from him was from the comment from his camp counsellor that he tanned just like a little Indian. Judy and Ed both embrace looking Aboriginal, and as happy to be recognized for who they are, and enjoying the connections that they feel with other Aboriginal people who recognize them as Aboriginal.

Debbie is fair skinned, a good fit with her adoptive family who had Norwegian heritage. She has had experiences with negative reactions to colour, recalling some of the reactions of other people to her adopted First Nations son's dark skin and straight black hair. Debbie's parents were very welcoming to all of her siblings after they met, and were unconcerned with the fact of their collective heritage. However, she remembers her father saying "well they certainly don't show the Native" and her uncertainty if that was a relief to him. She wondered if her parents would have chosen her if they had known she came from a Metis family. Debbie reflected on her own skin colour and what it may mean in her life, "... maybe it's easier for me to be Metis because I didn't get the colour and I didn't get the ridicule that some Metis people get. I'm white so I can pass for White. Whereas I think some Metis people really got put down and marginalized."

Experiences of racism and discrimination, and the difficulty in navigating with a new Metis identity, points to the importance for having Metis spaces where Metis people can gather and learn about themselves and each other. Most Metis are urban, and for most of us there are no reserves, Metis communities, or Metis homeland to go to and gather for learning and sharing. Richardson (2004) says we can create a Metis psychological homeland by creating opportunities to come together with other Metis and celebrate being Metis. This reminds us that for many of us, our homeland is where we create it, and that it can be anywhere that we gather to be who we are, even if it is simply with our own family.

Lateral violence

Even the Metis psychological homeland can be a place of disconnection and exclusion when people make judgements about who is the "most Metis." I remember not really understanding the difference between French Metis, English Metis, half-breeds, Scottish Metis, Red River Metis, and wondering if I could call myself Metis if my background was English. I was not sure if half-breeds were really considered Metis. Focussing too much on the creation of exclusionary criteria for who cannot call themselves Metis creates barriers to people claiming this identity as their own, particularly for people whose Metis identity is new. The danger of

distancing people who wish to claim their Metis identity is not worth the small risk that some few people might falsely claim that they are Metis, a fear I often hear of, but seldom see examples of.

Political definitions are the clearest example of exclusionary definitions, although there can be cultural standards or other arbitrary measures that people use to include and exclude people from the Metis nation. I now know to avoid circles that wrap hostility in a blanket of culture, and instead seek places of welcome and where there is an understanding that we are all learning. Politically, I remember how important it was to me that I had my Metis card, and that we had the scrip documents for my family. Even though I didn't fully understand the history or meaning of those things, I felt like they were proof that I was Metis. I have since learned that getting Metis status can be fairly arbitrary, that many records of genealogy and scrip have been lost, and only some people ever participated in the process of being "recorded." Debbie, who has the same records of her genealogy as her brothers and sisters, remains unable to get her Metis card. We need to have faith that we will recognize each other, and welcome each other into the homeland.

Identity theory

I struggled with the thought of trying to fit my family's story into a theory of identity. I felt that I was in a similar place to when I was trying to find a method of analysis from within the pre-existing Western methods. A quote from Marker (2004) resonated with what I was trying to understand. He says "It is exceedingly difficult to make Indigenous knowledge, which is place and experience-based, relevant in an academy that exalts the most abstract of placeless theories about reality." (p. 107). This data that I gathered is very much experience based, a journey to the heart of the matter.

I am reminded of what Cora Weber-Pillwax (2003) said about the complexities of personal identity, and how understandings of personal identity can not be translated or transferred from an Aboriginal way of thinking to a Western one. While there are many markers of identity that I can explain in a Western way, some are more difficult to reveal with words. I can not capture the sense and power of ceremony, the participation and guidance of spirits, the deeply felt sense of intergenerational connection, and the intergenerational trauma, in a way that makes sense in a dissertation. These things are experiential and felt, rather than thought.

Creating a theory of Metis identity was not the true spirit or intent of this research. However, it is worthwhile reflecting on how well my family story is captured in the existing

literature on Aboriginal identity. Models of Aboriginal identity suggest guidelines and indicators of identity, many of which are reflected in our family story, and which may be helpful guide posts for people trying to understand their own identity.

Weber-Pillwax (2003) identified ancestors, land, education systems, economic and governing systems, languages, values, spirituality, individual and collective trauma, and the social environment, as all being linked to Aboriginal identity. Having a connection to family, nurturing those relationships, and remembering your ancestors was a key part of this research and of the stories my participants shared about their lives. The idea of being connected to a Metis community became for me the understanding that your family can be your community. I saw how racism, social context and the process of colonization played roles in people's lives. The significance of intergenerational trauma and loss was also central, both in terms of the loss of their parents and their separation from each other, but in their separation from the knowledge and teachings about their cultural identity. Metis people have often been left out of, or have had to struggle significantly in order to be a part of, education, economic and government systems. Difficulties with those systems can play a role in defining the experience of being Metis. Many Metis from the western provinces share a history of lost land through the scrip system, and far too many Metis have experienced the loss of the languages of their ancestors.

Kim Anderson's (2000) delineation of the four important questions of; who I am not, where have I come from, where am I going, and what are my responsibilities are guiding questions for me in my life, and for my own identity. She states that asking "who I am not" is about resisting negative definitions of who you are as an Aboriginal person, and this is extremely useful tool in navigating in a society where racism is alive and unwell. The related question to "who I am not" is of course "who am I," a question that also speaks directly to identity. Bob shared with me his shaking off of the belief that their family were drunken Indians, and how he had come to see the most positive pieces of his family and their history. "Where have I come from" ties back again to our ancestors and traditions.

Anderson says the question "Where am I going" helps us to create a positive sense of identity by seeing tradition and culture as dynamic systems that can be translated into contemporary life. Seeing the past, the present and the future as understood dynamically lets us avoid the difficult trap of ossifying ourselves as culture beings, and allows for an identity that is flexible and shifting. Asking "what are my responsibilities" reminds us that we need to act in

ways that are ethical and thoughtful for our own lives and the lives of others. My participants showed their understanding of this in many ways, including their caring for each other, and how they have taken care of so many others.

Gone's (2006) assertion that dimensional models do not allow for the experience of identity as lived day to day was reflected in this research. Attempts to classify people along a continuum from "really Metis" to "not really Metis" is constrictive and unwelcoming. These types of models further contribute to people's uncertainty about their identity. It is not possible to capture the identity of myself and my family, and I would argue, many other Metis people, by asking about attendance at ceremonies, whether or not they have a sash, or if they eat bannock. Heritage can be shown in many different ways, including caring, sharing, humour, and in connection with each other and other Aboriginal people.

The "Gone" model, developed by Gone, Miller, and Rappaport (1999), talks about how people draw on the resources of their communities, and are guided by community histories and traditions. In our modern context, these ideas contribute to understanding Metis identity as long as the understanding of community is wide enough to include family, friends, or any other loose gathering of people who help to contribute to a positive identity. Gone et. al. (1999) add that they recognize that identity lives through narrative in our meeting and talking with each other, and that identity can shift depending on who we are talking to. Many people are sensitive to the social situation they find themselves in, and/or the person or persons they are talking with, and how that influences what they share about their identity, and potentially how they feel about their identity. This relates to Richardson's (2004) concept of a third, or Metis space.

Richardson (2004) reminds us about the implication of how so much of life is lived in non-Metis spaces, and the impact this has on identity development. My own experience is that my expression of my Metis identity shifts according to what context I am in. When I am in a Metis space, with my Indigenous friends, with my family, at a gathering where it is mainly Metis or Aboriginal people, I am unguarded about my identity, and I spend much more time talking about Metis and Aboriginal issues and themes. The importance of this for Metis people is that it is in these Metis spaces where we can share and grow and learn to feel more comfortable with our identities if we are struggling or feeling lost. We need to work to create these Metis spaces, this Metis psychological homeland, in small ways and in larger ones. Sharing stories of Metis people and their lives is a significant way to contribute to the creation of our Metis homeland.

Richardson (2004) invokes the ideas of Metis storytelling as helping to create the ability to shapeshift one's identity. She asserts that Metis culture is not always celebrated in an overt manner, and that the people she interviewed for her research considered a story to be something bigger than their family remembrances. This is true for my family. The story of my family didn't seem to be a Metis family story when I was growing up. There were bits and pieces that seemed Metis, like stories of my great-grandfather speaking Cree, and of my great-grandmother wearing her flower beaded gauntlet gloves and of her bearskin rug. My great-aunt Jenny sounded Metis with her gathering medicines. Growing up I also felt the presence of the stereotype of drunk Indians given the involvement of alcohol in the death of my grandparents.

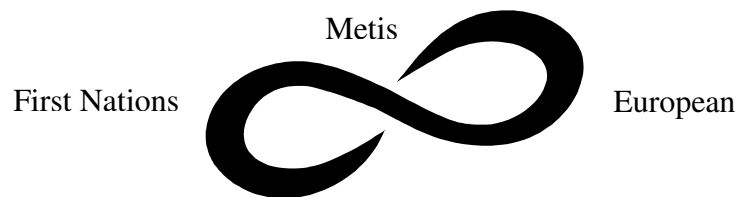
Metis culture and Metis stories are not always recognizable, even to ourselves. But it is more than the use of cultural symbols, ceremonies, or speaking the language. Metis culture and stories may seem lost in the urban and modern context of our present lives. It isn't until there is some effort made to gather a story together that it can be seen as a story. For my family, their Metis story had to be gathered together from fragments; family stories and parts of family stories, information from books, pan-Indian traditions, and searching out cultural teachings. Bringing together the different threads of this story has allowed for the weaving together of our Metis family story. This creates for us a stronger base for remembering about ourselves, and for teaching all of our relatives about their Metis story. While this experience of gathering together of a story out of pieces is not unusual for many Metis people, there are families and communities where their collective history is known and is unbroken from the past. All Metis have Metis stories.

The voices of my participants speak to the different ways of being Metis and choosing their identities in clear and piercing ways. Judy said, "I'm proud of who I am. I am proud of every aspect of who I am... Native heritage and British heritage." My father Ed stated, "...I'm not going to let anyone tell me what I am and what I'm not. I'm going to go with what's in my heart, and if I'm Indian in my heart then I'm going to be an Indian, a Metis. No matter what anyone else tells me, I know who I am and who I am not..." Bob spoke to how he sees his identity now; "When I see Native people around town now I like to talk to them and get to know them a little better. Just a more grown up way of looking at things." Debbie shared how she understands herself and her biological and adoptive heritages and cultures; "I guess I'm a sum of all parts." "I'm kind of me I guess." For Brian; "I never imagined myself as being Native... it's just

absorbed from the family, and the physical similarities we all have in the family, and even the genetic ones, the character traits we all have, and I suspect the native background is bound to show up in the way we believe...” All of the ways they express their identities as people are valid and valuable. Expressions of Metis identity are as diverse as the nation itself. King (2003) suggests that identity is a personal matter, and I tend to agree. People have the right to their identity, whatever it is at the time.

Infinity model of Metis identity

To conceptualize Metis identity that makes use of a model, I use the Metis infinity symbol as Lavallee (2007) did as a way of understanding research, and place it instead as a representation of identity. The infinity sign is a cultural symbol, standing for the joining of different cultures, and for the Metis people forever. With the infinity symbol as a model of identity, a person can place his or her identity anywhere on the symbol as it represents European, First Nations, and Metis heritages, histories, and stories.



This also allows us a way to honour the cultures of all sides of our heritage and to move strategically as we have always been able to do. It is representative of the identities of Metis people whether they are constructing their identities, like my family, or if they are from a community or family with a strong continuing relationship to their cultural history and land. Thinking of identity this way removes judgement from identity. It also allows for easy movement anywhere within the symbol and its representative identities. The Metis infinity symbol as identity model stands for the fluid and dynamic nature of identity, one that has the capacity to forever be in motion. It leaves us free to be Metis in all the different ways that are available to us, with a model representative of our culture, and without our identity being imposed on us. Historically the Metis were sometimes known as the free people, or the people who owned themselves. We deserve this freedom to choose our identity for ourselves.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

Research as search

This research represents my search to understand myself as a Metis person. I asked my father and my aunts and uncles to join with me in my search but I did not know how important my family would be to the answers I was seeking. At the beginning, I had no clear vision of what would happen at the end. The process of completing this research, using cultural and spiritual practices, created space for a “Metis psychological homeland” (Richardson, 2004, p. 56). I could sit with my father and my aunts and uncles as a group and be Metis together. It is an example of how research can be healing for the people involved in it. Completing this research in a culturally congruent way creates openings for further forays into the Metis psychological homeland, for my family now, and for generations to follow.

There will be people who do not recognize the psychology in this research. I empathize with this position since I have felt that at times myself. It looks different than much of the research that is done in mainstream Western psychology. In positivistic traditions of Western psychology it is often preferred to study concepts that are more easily measured and not constantly changing and in motion, like Metis identity. I did not wish to choose a path to this research that would take me so far from the mainstream of my academic training but I was continually guided to complete it the way that I did. Of course, the idea of being guided by some force from the spiritual realm is also not usually understood within some arenas of psychology. I can only say what my experience was.

This research is psychological research. It includes the theory and practice of psychology from Western and Indigenous perspectives. Western and Indigenous psychologies are integrated within me and my understanding of them. After years spent learning conventional Western psychological research models and devoting just as much time to learning the principles of Indigenous psychology and research, I choose what I need from both traditions. I hope this research can be an example of how we can begin to heal the rift between Aboriginal people and communities and research by conducting research in a way that can move outside regular research methods and ethics, a move to vulnerability (Katz, 1999). Research can be a sacred search, where we collect data like we collect plants, with respect, prayers, offerings, and when we try to leave the ground more fertile than it was before.

While mainstream psychology feels monolithic to me at times, it is composed of many traditions, and an even wider variety of practitioners. I am finding that many psychologists are great listeners, as they should be, and often make great allies in working towards improving Aboriginal mental health. Mainstream psychology as a discipline sometimes forgets where it comes from and that it has a creation story, but I can remember that it does. With the Metis infinity sign as my guide I can encompass and move within the worldviews of mainstream psychology and in Indigenous worldviews, with appreciation and recognition of the healing stories from both traditions. Without losing my sense of identity as Metis person I can continue towards my goal of becoming a psychologist, a person who helps others heal. To do that well, the story I need to remember the most in becoming a psychologist is my own story, and my family story.

Suffering

Trauma and loss is one of the experiences, like colonization, that unites Aboriginal people. Other Indigenous people, and other groups of people in the world both historically and in our world today have suffered, and still suffer because of who they are. It has been a reminder to me that trauma, loss and suffering are experiences that few of us will escape, if we live long enough. It has made me wonder about people in a new way, wondering what they carry with them, what they have lived with in their lives. Aboriginal people know the importance of suffering, and that it is sometimes necessary. Some ceremonies include suffering. I understood that part of fasting involved suffering, an offering of personal suffering for the reason I was fasting, my family. Although there was healing that happened for my family during this research, scars remain. Some losses create grieving that will never truly be complete. As each family member has read the write up of this research, they have cried again, and for some they have felt a degree of the feelings they had long ago as children experiencing so many losses.

We cannot even save our children from suffering now. But children need protection and guidance from adults in times of suffering, trauma and loss. They also need to have access to methods of healing, whether that is a caring adult and a secure environment, counselling, or ceremonies. When bad things happen and they are separated from their families, we need to provide them with safe, loving homes where they become who they were meant to be. They need access to each other, even if they can not be all kept together, and they need to have access to any family who can support and love them. They also need access to their culture and to their stories.

Without access to their cultural stories, children can not know how to pass on their culture when they become parents. Parenting is a fundamental way to transmit culture, and we should guard the rights of children to have this as part of their future. Children rely on us to have an eagle view for them.

The loss and trauma that happened in my father's generation will continue to resonate for generations in our family. It speaks to the importance of resistance and responsibility in stepping up to take care of one's own family. I had to look to the future and consider what more could be done for the younger family members. Gathering and creating this story is an attempt to create understanding of one piece of our family history, and to leave a trail to our combined cultural ancestry. Leaving a written Metis family story that is accessible by all family will help keep our family stories from this generation alive.

Resilience, resistance and strength

For a long time, even through much of this research, when I thought about my father's story, I thought it was mainly about tragedy and loss. I have learned that it is at least equally a story of love and connection, and the power that can bring people together who had been split apart. I needed to learn about their early life with their parents and their extended family, and to hear about how they were loved and cherished. I had to come to understand that this good start that their parents gave them has served them well their entire lives. I also understand that sometimes just surviving though tragedy is a mark of resistance and strength.

I saw the caring and sharing spirit my father and his brothers and sisters have with each other. I learned more about how they shared their love and caring with their own families, and with foster and adoptive children. Even though tragedy separated them from their siblings, Debbie and Brian's adoptive families loved them and provided them with a good life. Judy, Bob and Ed all eventually found foster families they could feel a part of. My father and my aunts and uncles are all sensitive, kind, and empathetic individuals. They understand the importance of connection and belonging in a way many people do not. All of their experiences in life had amplified their gentle and generous natures, and created a depth of empathy and understanding for each other and for other people that would be the envy of any family. They have all lived good, full lives.

I have come to see the good parts of this family story with as much clarity and feeling that I used to experience the tragedy. I have known for a long time that there was much to be proud of

in this family, but this research immersed me in that knowledge. Reviewing the journals of Philip Turnor and the generations that followed gave me a deeper sense of appreciation for the part that my own family has played in the history of this country. Hearing so many stories about my parents, grandparents, my father, his siblings and their extended family breathed life into their memories for me. Rather than just hearing the stories, now I also see them in my mind. I can imagine my grandmother on her baking days, and my grandfather teasing her. I can see all the kids running around and going about their lives. I imagine the neighbourhood and their extended family and neighbours. I can hear my great-grandmother Kate calling for my great-grandfather from her buggy at the end of the day. I can tell that the traits and spirits of all these people and so many more are within my father and my aunts and uncles, and all of my family. I can fully feel the loss of my grandparents, my uncle, and other extended family in my own life. It feels like I finally was able to meet them after all this time, it feels like a gift from my ancestors.

Metis identity

I went through a long journey to come to some simple conclusions about Metis identity. This research story is about Metis identity because it is about a Metis family. The members of this family all identify differently, and mostly not as Metis. They all have their own identity, they know who they are, and they have the right to identify as they choose. Identity can be indefinitely fluid, shifting, and dynamic, just like culture. There is no reason or evidence that Metis identity must be only one way, or that once claimed and decided upon, that it must remain that way.

As we create Metis spaces for ourselves, we need to guard against the use of no trespassing signs to keep each other out. Respecting each other and our different histories may show us a way out of the problems we currently see with the divisive nature of deciding citizenship. While creating a Metis women's group with women with many different ancestries, one of the questions Leclair, Nicholson, and Hartley asked themselves was: "What is it that we all have in common?" (2003, p. 56). That may be a question we could all ask ourselves. Many, if not most of us, are a mix of Metis and non-Metis. My father is Metis, my mother is not. I am Metis, my partner is not, our son is a mix of us. Like the infinity symbol that is representative of the Metis people, we respect all sides of our heritage and know that the mixing of cultures that will continue through the generations in no way diminishes our Metis family history.

Metis family story

This particular story is about one family, but their lives are connected to other Metis people and families. Many Metis have lost touch with their culture or their families, or both. Maria Campbell's book *Halfbreed* is really the quintessential example of how one story can resonate with so many people over time. The themes of survival and resistance, diaspora and renewal are continuing themes for my family and for the wider community of Metis people.

In this research I rediscovered the pleasure of hearing family stories told and retold, even the ones where you know every nuance and word that is coming, ones you could tell perfectly yourself. I enjoyed the anticipation of what would follow when a sentence started with "I remember when." There was also power in the sharing of sad and tragic stories, stories of death, alcoholism, suicide, family violence, infidelity, and family break up. Some of the story of this dissertation shows those imperfections in our family. This research did bring our family closer together, but not perfectly so, and within a year of all our gatherings together, we lost Judy to the spirit world. It is not a story about a perfect family, but it is a reminder that none of us are alone in our stories and that we are all flawed and human, and our families love us anyway.

I know our story much better now than I ever have, and I am starting to feel comfortable being part of the next generation's family history keepers. I still look to my mom and dad when I forget a date, or how this person is related to that person, but I am growing into my role as storyteller. I believe that being one of our family history keepers is one of my responsibilities. I will be proud to pass our story on to my children and to share what I know with others in my family.

I see this work projecting down the generations. I see my cousins looking at their background, and having a piece of their parents to carry forward with them for their children, their children's children and so on. I understand now the importance of that for any family, but particularly as a form of cultural transmission of one's heritage. As a family member, and a new parent, how I understand my Metis identity will impact on the generations to come in my family.

I want to share one final short family story. About six month after our family gatherings were completed, Judy became too ill to stay in her current apartment. I had returned to Prince George because Judy was so sick and in hospital. A number of family members had gathered to help pack up Judy's place to be stored until she knew where she would be staying. My young second cousins, Judy's grandchildren, were helping pack. Judy's granddaughter found Judy's

sash, sage, sweetgrass and eagle feather, the gifts she had received during this research. This young girl asked what they were, and was answered by one of my older cousins who said “they are part of our Metis heritage.” Nothing more was said, but to me it represents a small but significant planting of a seed with the hopes of future curiosity to grow from. With more and more people claiming the identity of Metis as their own, the transmission of identity to the future generations is vital not just to my family, but to all Metis people in Canada.

Richardson (2004) says that “culture is the blanket that protects us, and stories are the threads of that blanket” (p. 69). As Metis people we need our stories for all the reasons we have always needed them, to guide us, to help us connect to each other, and to help teach our children who we are. We need all types of stories, historical stories, contemporary stories, and stories that will help take us into the future. Anderson (2004) says that once we have done the work on the past we need to turn our attention to creating healthy stories for our future as a people. As Metis people, we still have lots of work to do on the past, but this story also makes me feel hopeful for lots of healthy stories in the future.

To quote and paraphrase Thomas King (2003, pp.29, 60, 89, 119, 151, 167): Take this story. It’s yours. Do with it what you will. Get angry. Tell it to a friend. Forget it. But don’t say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You’ve heard it now.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Being Metis Well: The Breaking and Making of Many Tender Ties*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher and Supervisor:

Researcher: Tara Turner, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Saskatchewan
Phone and Fax:(306) 492-2384, Email: tara.turner@usask.ca

Supervisor: John Conway, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus
Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Saskatchewan
Phone: (306) 665-5605, Fax: (306) 966-6630,
Email: john.conway@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of this study is to understand your experiences and remembrances of your life story in general, as well as, what, if any, impact has your Metis heritage had on how you understand yourself. In order to gather this information, I (the researcher) will be conducting at least one individual interview with you. This interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. Approximately 2 to 4 hours of your time will be needed. This research will be conducted with you and the other participants by way of a partnership with the researcher, and you will be given the opportunity to respond to the inclusion of the information you provide as well as the research findings more generally before the completion of a the final document. A small gift will be given to you as a way to say thank you for your time and your knowledge.

Potential Benefits and Risks: The benefits of this study include the opportunity to share your personal life story and to have a permanent record of this to keep for yourself and your family. As well, the completion of this research project and possible published material and presentations from this research may benefit other people of Metis heritage who are working to understand the impact, or lack of impact, of their Metis history on their self-understanding and wellness. This project may also begin to expand the understanding of culture, identity and well-being in Western psychology. However, these benefits are not guaranteed.

The only foreseeable potential risk is that for some people, discussing their past experiences can increase thoughts of the past for some days past the interview. If some of your memories are emotionally difficult, this may cause some psychological discomfort. As a safeguard for this possibility, I will be in contact with you within two days of our interview to check on the effects of the interview on yourself, and to provide referrals for appropriate services (e.g., counselling services).

Confidentiality: Information collected for this project will be used to complete my dissertation. As well, publications or presentations may result from this research. Data will be reported mainly by way of direct quotations from the interviews I complete with you. Because the participants for this study have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom are known to each other and related to each other, you will be identifiable to other people within your family and possibly people outside your family, on the basis of what you have said. To be sure you are comfortable including what you have said, after your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. You will also be given the opportunity to review and edit my interpretations of what you say. Information will not be included in the final report unless you are comfortable including it, and any information that you wish to exclude will be destroyed, and will remain strictly confidential between myself and you.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the interview, you are free to refuse to answer any individual questions you do not wish to answer. As well, any changes or new information regarding the study that may impact on your decision to continue as a participant will be disclosed to you. If you withdraw, any completed information given by you to the researcher will be removed from the study and destroyed. All information gathered by the researcher that contains identifying information will be securely stored by John Conway (supervisor) in a locked cabinet for a period of five years, at which time all information gathered will be destroyed.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (306-966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. If you are interested in the findings of the study, we will schedule a follow-up visit to share the results.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Participant

Date

Tara Turner

Date

APPENDIX B: DATA/TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

Data/Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have been contacted by Tara Turner and have been given the opportunity to review the complete transcript of my personal interview for this study. I understand that I have the right to withdraw any or all of my responses and will be given a copy of any revisions of my transcript to review and revise. This transcript accurately reflects what I stated in my interview with Tara Turner and I authorize Tara Turner to use this transcript in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript release form for my own records.

Participant

Date

Tara Turner

Date

APPENDIX C: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

Interview Guideline

Beginning Point:

I am interested in having you tell me your life story, beginning with your memories and/or stories about your childhood, all the way to the present day, as well as what you see for your future. If you are uncertain where to start, or would like some help with your story any where along the way, I am here to be a facilitator of your story. Although I may ask some questions, you are free to not answer anything you do not feel comfortable with. Also, in telling your story, you are free to choose what you share and/or don't share. Please do let me know if there is an area you are not comfortable talking about, even if I bring it up. Remember, this is a voluntary process and you can choose to stop at any time, and/or withdraw any and all of what you say. You will be given the chance to look over our interview when it is transcribed, and I will involve you in the process of writing up our interview into my dissertation so you will have final say and control of anything that I include about you and our time and talks together. I will be reminding you along the way of the voluntary nature of your involvement and your right to decide not to continue or withdraw entirely at any time.

Potential question prompts for specific areas:

Separation from Parents:

- What do you remember about the time period surrounding the death of your parents?

Orphanage/Adoption/Fostering:

- What do you remember of your time in the orphanage/adoptive transition/foster home transition?
- What impact on you overall do you think those experiences had?

Metis Heritage:

- Do you think about your Metis heritage?
- Why do you think you do or don't think about your Metis Heritage – what factors bring you to it or keep it distant from you?
- How important is it to you in your life?
- Do you think you would have felt differently about it if you had more time with your biological parents?
- What do you tell your children about your Metis heritage? Or do you?
- What part, if any, does being Metis play in how you understand yourself and your personal sense of well-being?

APPENDIX D: SELECTED DATES FAMILY TIMELINE

Turner family timeline, selected dates: 1954 through 2007

1954	December 24	Grandmother Kate died
1954	December 31	Aunt Jenny died
1955	January 31, 1955	Grandfather Robert died
1955	July 30 and July 31	Mother Winnie, brother Vernon and father Ed died The ages of their children were: Judy, 13, Bob, 11, Ed, 8, Brian, 3, Debbie, 1
1955	August	Judy, Bob and Ed go to stay with their aunt Barb and uncle Harvey. Debbie goes to her aunt Alice
1955	September	Judy moves to her cousin's place
1956	February	Debbie is placed in a receiving home to be adopted
1956	February	Judy leaves her cousin's place and goes to the Alberta Protestant Home Orphanage
1956	May	Debbie is placed with her adoptive family
1956	July	Bob, Ed and Brian all placed in the Alberta Protestant Home Orphanage
1956	November	Judy ran away with a friend from the orphanage
1956	December	Judy placed in first foster home
1957	April	Judy ran away from her foster home. She was found and placed in a "Good Shepherd" home
1957	June	Judy placed with her second foster home
1957	September	Ed ran away from the orphanage with a friend
1957	November	Judy placed with her third foster home
1957	November	Brian was placed in his adoptive home
1960	March	Uncle Harvey died
1960	April	Ed and Bob placed in the same foster home
1960	July	Ed moves with his foster family to B.C., Bob stays in Edmonton with a new foster family
1960	November	Bob enlists in the Canadian army and leaves foster care
1961		Ed moves in with his second foster family
1961		Aunt Barb died. Barb and Harvey's three children placed in foster care
1963	June	Judy marries Emile and leaves foster care
1965		Ed makes first contact with Brian's adoptive family
1966	July	Ed and Sylvia are married and Ed leaves foster care
1970	August	Brian was reunited with his siblings
1972	July	Debbie is reunited with her siblings
1976	April	Grannie Adamson died
1976	November	Emile Montpellier, Judy's husband, died
1996		Family reunion where Judy, Bob, Ed, Brian and Debbie are all together for the first time since the Christmas after their parents died in 1955

2006 April

Second research gathering and the second time all
the siblings have been together

2007 May

Judy died at the age of 65

APPENDIX E: TURNER FAMILY TREE

One Branch of the Turner Family Tree

Philip Turnor: Came to Canada from England in 1778 as a surveyor for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). He had three children with his Inuit or Cree wife, one of which was Joseph Sr.

Joseph Turnor Sr.: Born around 1784 in North eastern Ontario. He worked for the HBC as a labourer, trader, and carpenter. One of the children he and his wife Emma had was Philip.

Philip Turnor: Born around 1812. He was also an HBC man, working as a middleman and carpenter. He married Jane Chisolm Boland, and one of their children was Joseph.

Joseph Alexander Turner: Born around 1838 at Moose Factory, Manitoba. Joseph worked for the HBC. He moved from Moose Factory to Portage la Prairie. Joseph married Jane Whitford, and they moved with their first two children to Fort Victoria in Alberta. Joseph built the HBC Clerks Quarters at Fort Victoria. The Clerks Quarters are still standing and can be toured as part of the Fort Victoria historic park. In 1884 they relocated again to Fort Saskatchewan. Joseph and Jane had twelve children, including Robert.

Robert William Turner: Born in 1870 at Fort Victoria, Alberta. Robert married Catherine (Kate) Brown. Kate was the daughter of Magnus Brown, a HBC boat builder from the Isle of Hoy, Scotland. Robert worked for a farmer in the Fort Saskatchewan area. Kate died on December 24th, 1954 and Robert died on January 31, 1955. Robert and Kate had ten children, including Fredrick.

Fredrick Edgar (Ed) Turner: Born on February 14, 1910 at Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Ed worked at a creosote plant in Edmonton, Alberta. He married Winnifred (Winnie) Adamson, and they lived on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta. Ed and Winnie died as a result of a car accident. Winnie was pregnant and past her due date with Vernon when she, and Vernon, died on the day of the accident, July 30, 1955. Ed died the following day, July 31, 1955. Their children were my research participants, Judy, Bob, Ed (my father), Brian, and Debbie.

Judith (Judy) Turner: Born on May 8, 1942 in Edmonton, Alberta. She was thirteen years old when her parents were killed. Judy was the first child born to Ed and Winnie. After her parents' deaths, Judy lived with two different members of the Turner family. She was then moved to the orphanage in Edmonton, Alberta, and she lived in various foster homes. Judy worked as a telephone operator until she met and married Emile. They had two children, Richard and Shauna. Judy and Emile lived most of their lives in and around Prince George, BC. Judy was a stay at home mom and Emile was a carpenter/contractor in the area. Judy became a single parent after Emile's death in a vehicle accident. She was also a foster parent and she assisted many First Nations families around Prince George. Judy also was a proud grandmother of three grandchildren. Judy died in 2007 at the age of 65.

Robert (Bob) Turner: Born on March 14, 1944. He was eleven years old when his parents were killed. Bob was the second child born to Ed and Winnie. After his parents' deaths, Bob lived with his brothers at his aunt and uncle's home. He then was moved to the orphanage for three and a

half years and then into a foster home with his brother Ed. Bob decided to join the military and he served overseas. Bob married Pat and they have two children, Danica, and Brooke. Bob and Pat were divorced and Bob also became a single parent of his two girls. Bob spent most of his working life repairing heavy duty equipment in northern areas, including Yukon, and he now works as a care aide. He currently lives with his partner Caren, in Prince George, BC. Bob is the proud grandparent of three grandchildren.

Edgar (Ed) Turner: Born on March 5, 1947. He was eight years old when his parents were killed. Ed was the third child born to Ed and Winnie. After his parents' deaths, Ed lived with a Turner family and he was then moved to the orphanage. Ed lived in two foster homes and he moved with his first foster family to the Creston, BC area. Edgar married Sylvia and they have four children, Dawn, Tara, Travas, who is adopted and he is a status Dene from Ross River, Yukon, and Todd who is adopted and he is part First Nations from Prince Rupert, B.C. Ed lived and worked in the Creston, B.C. area his entire working career. He is a journeyman carpenter, worked for Highways, and he retired after working twenty years with the B.C. Ambulance service. Ed is the proud grandparent of four grandchildren.

Brian Kinloch (Turner): Born on May 7, 1952. He was three years old when his parents were killed. Brian was the fourth child born to Ed and Winnie. After his parents' deaths, Brian lived with a Turner family relative (along with his brothers) for a year, and he was then moved to the orphanage. After approximately a year and a half in the orphanage, Brian was adopted by Jim and Ruth Kinloch of Wetaskiwin, Alberta. He has one adopted sister, Maureen. Brian married his wife Wendy and they have two children, Greg and Stacey. Brian has worked as an RCMP member for his entire career and he has recently retired.

Doreen (Debbie) Gogolin (nee Grasdal) (Turner): Debbie (prior to adoption her name was Doreen Rose), was born on July 30, 1954. Her parents were in the car accident on her first birthday. Debbie was the fifth child born to Ed and Winnie. After her parents' deaths, Debbie was moved to a Turner home, she was then moved to a receiving home, and at twenty-two months old was adopted by Stewart and Verna Grasdal, of Bawlf, Alberta and she has one sister, Carol, who was also adopted by her family. Debbie married Henry Gogolin and they have one adopted son, Christopher, who is of Sucker Creek First Nations heritage. Debbie was raised in Camrose, Alberta, and she has lived most of her married life in Williams Lake, BC, and she works as a care aide. Debbie is the proud grandmother of three grandchildren.

Vernon Turner: Died at birth as a result of the car accident that took his mother and fathers' lives. Vernon was reportedly overdue to be born when he died. He would have been the sixth child born to Ed and Winnie.

Ed and Winnie and their children

