

**‘DOGS HAVE LOVE MEDICINE’: A CASE STUDY EXPLORATION OF
THE DOG-HUMAN INTERFACE IN A REMOTE SASKATCHEWAN
COMMUNITY**

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By

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ABSTRACT

Many northern, remote and Indigenous communities in Canada report challenges with care and control of dog health, welfare and populations. Concurrently, these communities typically experience inadequate access to health and welfare services for dogs. To support optimal outcomes at the dog-human interface, we sought to understand the contributors to and determinants of these outcomes by understanding the dog-human relationship and the strengths and opportunities in current approaches to dog care and control in one northern Saskatchewan region.

A team of researchers, service providers, decision makers and community members conducted a decolonizing qualitative case study incorporating Indigenous methodologies. A community-oriented approach was taken to ensure community priorities and empowerment were the focus. Data sources included 20 conversational interviews; 9 reflective journals from high-school students; 9 key informant interviews; and documents including relevant legislation; local dog bylaws; and local humane society records. Collaborative thematic and content analyses were conducted to derive themes. Rigor was maintained through member checking, data triangulation, team reflexivity and generation of usable outcomes for the study community.

Findings reveal multi-dimensional dog-human relationships illustrated by an extended medicine wheel model where each domain (physical, social, emotional and spiritual) represents an element of relational health. The model allows consideration of the needs for a healthy relationship, and the proximal, intermediate and distal determinants of dog care and control. In this region, dog care and control concerns are mediated by inadequate access to resources and support for dog health and welfare. Dog health and welfare engages multiple sectors, and gaps in dog care and control are determined by local, provincial, and holistic or systemic factors.

Challenges at the dog-human interface require local, regional and systemic capacity-building. Balanced relational health can be achieved by attending to factors that bolster each domain. The needs of dogs must be met at individual and community levels to ensure dog health and welfare, and this will require creative changes to practice and policy. Holistic influences on outcomes between dogs and humans draw attention to sociopolitical contexts and stakeholder approaches, providing opportunities for improved relational health overall.

CO-AUTHORSHIP

This dissertation was written by Dr. Jordan Woodsworth with considerable support from her supervisor Dr. Tasha Epp (Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan) and dissertation committee members Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan), Dr. Stryker Calvez (College of Arts and Science, University of Saskatchewan) and Dr. Rose Roberts (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan). The members of the community-based research team who were integral to all aspects of this project and informed many parts of the writing are mentioned in detail within the document. Their names and affiliations are Genevieve Candelora-Kustiak (Northern Animal Rescue Humane Society); Ann Ratt (Lac La Ronge Indian Band – Councilor and member); Kelsey Carlson (Lac La Ronge Indian Band – member); Lisa Mayotte (Lac La Ronge Indian Band – Community Health Nursing Manager and member); Kara Schneider-Ross (Senator Myles Venne School – Teacher); Brandon White (Air Ronge – resident) and Leonard Herb Isbister (Lac La Ronge Indian Band – member). Throughout this dissertation I use the pronouns ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’ in reference to our team, as this work was not done independently and in fact would not have been possible without all members of the team. While this dissertation was composed by me as sole author, using these pronouns to denote co-authorship is essential in acknowledging the community-oriented nature of the work.

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DEDICATION

To my parents: thank you for raising me with the ability to think critically about the world around me, and to see inequities and know that I have a responsibility to challenge, expose and fight them.

To my children Everett and Eloise: you amaze me daily with your brilliance, kindness and wit. I hope you never lose these, and that you continue to use your voices to stand up for what you believe in, even when it sometimes makes parenting you a bit more challenging.

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Finally, to the dogs, communities and individuals that continue to live without access to the resources they need to live well together – I hope this work will contribute to some meaningful changes so that the dog-human interface can be a place of love and safety in all homes and communities.

‘A dog will teach you unconditional love. If you can have that in your life, things won’t be too bad.’ – Robert Wagner

‘When the world of dogs is out of order, so is ours’ – Michael Yellow Bird

‘In a world driven by inequity, medicine could be viewed as social justice work’ – Paul Farmer

‘Health cannot be a question of income; it is a basic right’ – Nelson Mandela

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACO	Animal Control Officer
APO	Animal Protection Officer
APSS	Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan
AVMA	American Veterinary Medical Association
CBPR	Community-Based Participatory Research
CHASR	Canadian Hub for Applied Social Research
CHN	Community Health Nursing
CIHR	Canadian Institutes of Health Research
CKC	Canadian Kennel Club
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019 (SARS-CoV2)
CVMA	Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DVM	Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (veterinarian)
KT	Knowledge Translation
LLRIB	Lac La Ronge Indian Band
MHO	Medical Health Officer
NAR	Northern Animal Rescue
NITHA	Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority
NSAD	Northern Saskatchewan Administration District
OCAP	Ownership, Control, Access and Possession
OIE/WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
POR	Patient-Oriented Research
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RVT	Registered Veterinary Technologist (veterinary nurse)
SCPOR	Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research
SDoH	Social Determinants of Health
SHA	Saskatchewan Health Authority
SHRF	Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation
SVMA	Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
U of S	University of Saskatchewan
Usask	University of Saskatchewan
WCVM	Western College of Veterinary Medicine
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSAVA	World Small Animal Veterinary Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Dogs are ‘man’s best friend’, and in many respects, they live up to this name in homes, workplaces and communities across the world. In Canada, there are a variety of ways in which dogs might play roles in the lives of humans: as companions, work partners, physical and spiritual guardians (Constable et al., 2010), mental health support, teaching tools, and others. These roles all confer positive connotations at the dog-human interface with dogs supporting the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of their human counterparts (Chalmers & Dell, 2015; Hodgson et al., 2015; Hodgson & Darling, 2011; Lem et al., 2013; Lem et al., 2016). These benefits of dogs to the lives of humans are encompassed by the term ‘zooeyia’ (Hodgson & Darling, 2011). Zooeyia considers the relationship benefits of animals to humans (the ‘human-animal bond’) to be influencers of holistic health, including the mental, physical and emotional aspects of individuals, families and communities (Hodgson et al., 2015). Zooeyia is an important contributor to One Health, which strives to ‘balance and optimize the health of people, animals and the environment’ (World Health Organization, 2017).

1.1.1 Dog Companionship: A Determinant of Health?

Multiple authors in varied disciplines have recognized the positive effects of canine companionship on the health of humans. Physical health benefits related to dog companionship include increased motivation to engage in physical activity such as walking (Epping, 2011; Peel et al., 2010; Toohey et al., 2013), improved management of type 2 diabetes (Hugues H et al., 2016; Peel et al., 2010; Wells, 2012), increased survival time with diagnosed cardiovascular disease (Chowdhury et al., 2017; Levine et al., 2013), and improved Body-Mass Index and sleep

scores (Mičková et al., 2019). Dogs provide psycho-social benefits to their human counterparts, with increased social contact, reduced loneliness and improved mental and emotional wellbeing reported by people with dogs in their lives (Dell et al., 2015; Hodgson et al., 2015; Knight & Edwards, 2008; Netting et al., 2013). Animal-assisted therapy has shown remarkable benefits to the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of physically and neurologically diverse individuals (Elmacı & Cevizci, 2015; Moretti et al., 2011), with dogs capable of supporting improved patient progress in therapy where compliance or patient mental states such as fear or anxiety previously presented barriers (Elmacı & Cevizci, 2015). Dog companionship also has a protective effect against incarceration, substance misuse, and depression amongst street involved individuals (Lem et al., 2013; Lem et al., 2016). Additionally, elder adults living alone or in extended care facilities experience a greater quality of life and improved mental and emotional wellbeing in the presence of dogs (Alfonso et al., 2017; Elliott, 2015; Knight & Edwards, 2008; Moretti et al., 2011). Clearly, humans can derive considerable benefit from interacting with dogs, finding support for mental, physical and emotional wellbeing within the human-animal bond. When dogs simultaneously have their needs met, these benefits are mutual and support a productive symbiosis and rewarding, often loving relationship.

1.1.2 Dog Problems in Underserved Communities

When dogs' needs are not being met because their human counterparts experience marginalization through structural barriers preventing access to appropriate resources and care, this symbiosis is disrupted. Historically in northern and remote regions of what is now Canada, dogs held important roles associated with the traditional ways of life of the First Peoples of these lands (International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2018). With colonialism, the move to reserves, and the introduction of Western hunting and transportation technologies, dog's traditional roles

have been largely disrupted in parallel to the colonial disruption of traditional ways of life for humans. Structural barriers associated with colonialism mean many communities experience ongoing contemporary issues with dog population, health and welfare management, particularly in the absence of regular or even intermittent local veterinary care (Schurer et al., 2015c). Where services and resources to support dog and human health and welfare are limited, the dog-human bond is challenged and the benefits inherent in zooeyia are overshadowed by risks to human wellbeing and reduced animal welfare.

It is often in systemically marginalized communities, which are generally underserved¹ by animal health and welfare professionals, that dogs become a ‘problem’. What isn’t understood is who defines these problems, who claims responsibility for addressing them, and what services and resources are available to communities wanting to address issues around dogs. Further, the consideration given to the benefits dogs and humans bring one another, even in the face of ‘problems’, has not been characterized. How can communities change the conversation about dogs, celebrating and leveraging zooeyia to address their unique dog challenges? The dog-human interface is highly complex, so defining local dog challenges, identifying causes and solutions, and implementing interventions can be fraught with barriers. It seems natural for veterinarians and allied professionals to be involved in problem solving, but the tools, cross-cultural skills and resources to do so may not be easily accessible. The ultimate development and oversight of successful and sustainable solutions should lie in the hands of communities themselves.

Communities have an opportunity to work together with animal health and welfare professionals

¹ This term does not have a universally agreed upon definition in veterinary medicine; see Roberts, C., Woodsworth, J., Carlson, K., Reeves, T., & Epp, T. (2023). *Defining the term “underserved”: A scoping review towards a standardized description of inadequate access to veterinary services* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. for a scoping review proposing a definition based on current literature.

to identify contributors, define and assess current management strategies, harness strengths and co-create solutions that are relevant from a regional and cultural perspective (Dhillon et al., 2016). Regions and populations experiencing gaps in services to support dog health, welfare and population management need locally derived and developed data about dog management to drive practice and policy changes in working towards optimal health and welfare for dogs, people and communities.

1.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this decolonizing community-oriented research study was to collaboratively discover, with a community-based research team and Research Advisory Circle, the factors that benefit and challenge the care and control of dog population, health and welfare in the Tri-community area of La Ronge, Saskatchewan. The project aimed to help us understand the human, animal, practice and policy factors in the Tri-communities that influence the current state of dog care and control. With this information, the hope was that decision makers could make targeted efforts to address factors that stand in the way of optimal health and welfare for dogs and humans in the community, while harnessing existing capacity to support community health and wellbeing in consideration of dogs and their relationships and shared lives with humans.

1.3 Research Objectives

Drawing on Indigenous and Western research methodologies, this Case Study will aim to:

- a) Understand the dog-human interface in the Tri-communities

- b) Illustrate the current state of dog care and control in the Tri-communities, identifying strengths and challenges in working towards dog care and control goals, and
- c) Identify factors that benefit and challenge the health and safety of the dog-human relationship in the Tri-communities

1.4 Research Queries

The following research queries address community-defined priorities as specified by members of the Research Advisory Circle. These were derived from multiple conversations during the period of July 2018 through October 2019. These queries evolved over time, and their final versions are identified in Chapter 3. The ‘what, how and why’ queries below are well suited to case study methodology, as indicated by Baxter and Jack (2008) and Yin (2014b).

1. What are the locally defined roles of dogs, and how do local people understand and achieve health and well-being for dogs?
2. What are the factors that inform and influence current approaches to dog care in the region, and how do these support or challenge population control, health and welfare for dogs?
3. How do current approaches to dog care and control support or challenge the health and safety of human-dog interactions in the Tri-communities?

1.5 Self-Location

This project is, more than anything, about relationships. Throughout the research process, it has become clear that everything we have done and will continue to do comes down the building, fostering, repairing and redefining of relationships. My veterinary career has always

been about relationships, the personal development work I have engaged in as an accomplice in decolonization and reconciliation only occurs through relationships, and relationships are what sustain and support my everyday life in personal, professional and academic spheres. The centrality of relationships as the overarching theme for this work is clear even in the use of the word 'we' (referring to the research team) instead of 'me' or 'I'. Though *I* chose to pursue graduate work in a particular topic area, the ultimate design and execution of this project has been a collaboration that is founded on, and gives rise to, relationships. As I try to illustrate how I locate myself in this project, it is important to understand that for me, relationships are the driving force, central theme and paradigmatic stance behind my role in this work.

Being raised in a Euro-centric, upper-middle class, highly privileged household and neighbourhood led to the development of certain implicit biases that I have been working to recognize, unpack, challenge and change for as long as I can remember. I do not know precisely when this process began for me; I think I have always been critical of the ways in which people might be viewed as 'less than' while others are 'more' in our society, but I didn't always have language for these discussions. When I began working at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in 2012, and began creating the Northern Engagement and Community Outreach (NECO) Program (previously called Service Learning), it was crucial for me and for my learners to develop cultural awareness and humility before, during and after working with clients, both First Nations and non-, in underserved communities. I made this learning a priority as I understood the importance of good relations between us 'outsiders' and the consumers of the services we planned to deliver. I knew that to go in with our own ideas, agendas, and unchecked biases would cause harm. This would have been the wrong approach, so we had to focus on humility, curiosity and relationship building for the program to be successful.

This was the start of my own process of self-decolonization and learning to be an ally and accomplice, building on my fundamental belief in social justice and equity. That this was even required speaks to the systemic inequities present in our colonial system, which has been built on a foundation of white supremacy and serves to marginalize and harm Indigenous folks and other people of colour based solely on socially constructed ideas of race and racial hierarchies. Thanks to mentors and friends who have taught me so much over the past decade, I now have the language to speak about this and what it is for me. Self-decolonization has many definitions, but I like this one, from Maggie Kovach who says: '[Self-decolonization] means exploring one's own beliefs and values about knowledge and how it shapes practices. It is about examining whiteness. It is about examining power. It is ongoing (p.169)' (Kovach, 2010b). This definition speaks to the critical self-reflection necessary in decolonizing work, and that a 'decolonized self' is not a destination, but a life-long process of self-examination, fostering humility within one's self, and learning from mistakes. Reflecting on my upbringing, I realize that my travel along this personal and academic path is no accident. The teachings I received, both implicit and explicit, in my formative years have shaped who I'm becoming as an adult and what I aim to achieve as a professional and academic.

As a child and adolescent, our family dinner table held frequent discussions of oppression, marginalization, advocacy and human rights. I grew up understanding that not everyone has the same access to opportunities in this world, and those of us with power and privilege have a responsibility to work hard and remove barriers so that everyone is taken care of equitably in society. My younger sister Julia has developmental and physical disabilities, and her suboptimal access to educational support and responsive, compassionate, and appropriate healthcare have required constant advocacy by our parents to push back against a system

inadequately structured and resourced to consistently provide even basic needs for disabled people. Julia is 34 now, and recently moved away from home (into a 24/7 staffed group home) just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the advocacy required by my parents has changed slightly in its focus, they still engage in frequent battles to ensure my sister has access to the support and care she needs. Often this requires challenging the ‘status quo’ of systems so entrenched and difficult to move that it can take decades to make changes meaningful to the lives of people like my sister and their families. Luckily, my parents are persistent and strong with considerable societal privilege, and their approach to raising and supporting my sister and me has engendered a deep sense of accountability to others.

I acknowledge the privilege I hold, simply by being who I am. I am a white, educated, financially stable, cisgender, able-bodied woman in a heterosexual marriage. My privilege has been mostly handed to me based on systems intentionally structured to enable people ‘like me’ to achieve and succeed. Thanks to my privilege and a few years of academic effort, I have been a veterinarian since 2008, and started my career in a job where the financial bottom line and the individual animal and family were the main drivers of everyday practice. In 2012, I transitioned to a job where my skills and knowledge benefit wider and more diverse populations of pets and people, and where I am fortunate to have a hand in shaping the next generation of veterinarians. These aspects of my current position at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine have been transformative for me; my job now provides me opportunities to leverage my power and privilege to work towards equitable, accessible veterinary care in my province and city. In building relationships with clients, colleagues, and my patients, I rely heavily on tools such as open inquiry, non-verbal awareness, active listening, empathy, and compassion to guide my practice and ground my work. These skills facilitate relationship building, which in turn fosters

respect, responsibility, and reciprocity, which I have used as fundamental tools in my approach to the work described in this thesis.

1.6 Project Significance

The research described herein contributes to the ongoing dialogues concerning ‘what can be done about northern dogs’ in Canada. These conversations happen primarily from an outsider perspective, whether between veterinarians, or other animal health and welfare professionals, or frontline ‘rescue’ workers, or policy makers. In many cases, these conversations happen without the involvement of community members who are left waiting for answers and solutions. This research privileges the voice of the community, resulting in community-led strategies for addressing the ongoing and pervasive issue of dog management in northern, remote and Indigenous communities. The community-driven and community-oriented nature of this work is unique in the body of literature that currently exists on the topic. The lived experiences and community dynamics illustrated in this study have the potential to inform sustainable, culturally and locally appropriate policy change and program development to support the health and welfare of dogs and humans in communities unserved or underserved by veterinarians and allied professionals. Policies and programs designed by and for communities will open the door for the identification, development and harnessing of local capacity to address these gaps internally, with and without external support.

1.7 Thesis Overview

Chapter 1 introduced the topic and provided rationale for the research. Chapter 2 will provide background and context for the study through a review of the literature on community and animal health, dog care and control, and access to animal health and welfare services in

Indigenous and northern or remote communities. Chapter 3 will introduce and describe the theoretical background, including a discussion of research paradigms; a framing of Patient-Oriented Research (POR) with a community as the patient; and a description of the instrumental case study methodology. Chapter 3 also describes in detail our team's unique approach to carrying out this study within the context of a community with self-defined 'dog problems', including the study design, data sources, data collection and analysis approaches. In Chapter 4, the roles of dogs and other contributors to the dog-human relationship in the Tri-communities will be characterized, as the foundational chapter to help describe the 'case'. This chapter also presents a model to describe the health of dog-human relationships factors at multiple levels contributing to relational outcomes at the dog-human interface. Chapter 5 takes a detailed approach to illustrating the varied needs of dogs and the community to ensure optimal relational health between dogs and humans. Chapter 6 conceptualizes the care and control of dog population, health and welfare in the Tri-communities through a socioeconomic determinants lens, considering proximal, intermediate and distal factors influencing outcomes at the dog-human interface. Chapter 7 discusses our findings in the context of current literature, then turns to the strengths and limitations of the project, recommendations for stakeholders at the community, regional and provincial levels, and future work to come based on connections that have formed through this study. The thesis will conclude by presenting outcomes of the study, including a curriculum-aligned and culturally grounded education program; a community art project aimed at accessible translation of our findings around the dog-human relationship; and publicly available news stories about the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW, BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 Dog Health and Welfare: Paradigms at play

To effectively describe and discuss the dog health and welfare in the Tri-communities, we must first understand the concepts of health and welfare themselves. As the tri-community region of La Ronge is an area with diverse worldviews of both ‘western’ (Eurocentric) and Woodland Cree origin, it is essential to describe health with this diversity in mind. Health paradigms are not homogeneous; accordingly, a discussion of health and welfare within Indigenous and Western models follows.

2.1.1 Indigenous Health Paradigm

Dogs have been part of the social fabric of many Indigenous² societies since time immemorial, and dogs are considered to support the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples as companions, helpers and protectors (International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2018; Jennings & Lowe, 2013). Many Indigenous cultures have a teaching that wolves were the initial protectors of humans, who needed help on earth and could not survive without support (International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2018). These wolves, after living for a long time with humans, became domesticated and were the ancestors of the dogs we now know and love in our homes and communities (International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2018). How then do Indigenous Peoples understand the health of dogs, and how might this understanding relate back to the larger model of Indigenous health illustrated in contemporary health literature? For our purposes, it is

² The term ‘Indigenous’ encompasses the three distinct groups of First Peoples in what is known as Canada: Inuit, Metis and First Nations. Throughout this thesis, ‘Indigenous’ is used to refer to common experiences, beliefs, methodologies or histories of all three groups, or of Indigenous groups globally. When speaking specifically about First Nations groups, including the Woodland Cree in the Tri-communities, I will specify First Nations, Cree or Woodland Cree.

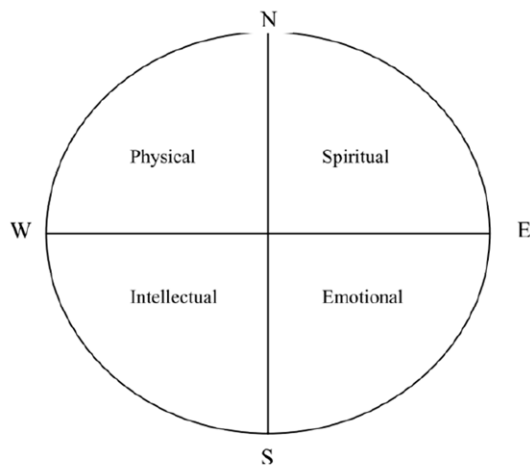
important to describe what we know about First Nations health perspectives, and how these can inform our approach to understanding how people in the La Ronge area may perceive and work towards healthy dog-human relationships.

Cree perspectives on health provide essential grounding for a project collaboration with team members and participants possessing a Woodland Cree worldview. Holly Graham, a Plains Cree nursing scholar from Thunderchild First Nation in Saskatchewan, along with co-authors has described health, and mental health and well-being, from a Plains Cree perspective (Graham & Martin, 2016; Graham & Stamler, 2010). Graham's work identifies that health is understood holistically amongst Plains Cree people, and that the Social Determinants of Health is a useful framework for addressing health concerns and disparities amongst the Plains Cree (Graham & Stamler, 2010). Graham and Stamler identify that the Cree understanding of health generally follows the Medicine Wheel framework, and that Cree individuals attend to the four domains of personal health through preventive or secondary (interventional) approaches (Graham & Stamler, 2010). These authors assert that the Medicine Wheel is itself 'an Indigenous methodology that can be applied to issues related to health and wellness' (Graham & Stamler, 2010, p. 14). Graham and Stamler also illustrated that the social determinants of health aligned with their data such that general links exist between Cree understandings of health and the social determinants framework used in health discourses within a Eurocentric Western context (Graham & Stamler, 2010). Identification of this culturally grounded contemporary model of health offers health care workers and policy makers the opportunity to create and deliver health promotion and intervention programming that will best suit the needs of patients holding a Cree worldview.

Rose Roberts, a Woodland Cree nursing scholar, has similarly described health using a holistic model. According to Roberts, '[t]he Medicine Wheel is an Aboriginal framework in a

visual shape of a circle divided into 4 quadrants; each quadrant represents a direction along with the teachings for that direction. An individual is also comprised of 4 areas; these are the physical, the emotional, the intellectual and the spiritual aspects' (Roberts, 2005, p. 92 Figure 1). Roberts' work with people from her home community of Stanley Mission, a member community of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, demonstrates the integration of western and traditional approaches to individual and community health management amongst Woodland Cree people. Interestingly, one of the determinants of health for the Woodland Cree appears to be the maintenance of good community relationships (Roberts, 2005). This finding is reflective of kinship systems as one of the determinants of Indigenous people's health (Reading, 2015) – an interesting concept considering animals as participants in kinship systems within many Indigenous worldviews (Legge & Robinson, 2017).

Figure 1.1 Medicine Wheel (Roberts, 2005, p. 66)



Indigenous scholars and health professionals support the medicine wheel as an appropriate framework for understanding health amongst First Nations people. Rather than seeking a complete absence of ailment, health is understood as a state of harmony between all four quadrants (Roberts, 2005). Achieving health and wellbeing through supporting these

quadrants may be difficult when factors external to oneself exert strain on one or more areas of the medicine wheel, disrupting the state of harmony. This is where the various determinants of Indigenous health intersect with the medicine wheel to provide a robust model of health and its determining factors.

2.1.2 Social Determinants of Indigenous Health

The Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) are ‘the broad range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that determine individual and population health’ (Canadian Council on Social Determinants of Health, 2015). The ‘mainstream’ list of determinants includes twelve factors (Canadian Council on Social Determinants of Health, 2015) which are modifiable and, when altered, can change the health of individuals and populations (de Leeuw et al., 2015). Sarah de Leeuw and colleagues note that the existing SDoH framework is neither complex enough nor nuanced enough to adequately reflect the factors contributing to ongoing health disparities experienced by Indigenous individuals and communities in Canada (de Leeuw et al., 2015). Author Charlotte Reading encourages us to consider determinants of health at various levels, using a tree as an analogy, taking into consideration proximal, intermediate and distal determinants of health (Reading, 2015). Proximal determinants (such as income, education, culture, and gender), while the most visible and direct influencers of health, are symptomatic of causative problems elsewhere in society (Reading, 2015). Intermediate determinants (such as health promotion, health care, and social supports) influence health through connections between distal or ‘structural’, and proximal determinants of health (Reading, 2015). Distal determinants are those representing the ‘historical, political, ideological, economic and social foundations from which all other determinants evolve’ (Reading, 2015, p. 5). Colonialism has been a major force in shaping the determinants of health for all Canadians since the time of contact, and can

itself be considered an important distal determinant of health, particularly for Indigenous people (Czyzewski, 2011). The outcomes of the colonial influence on the health of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada is discussed prolifically in the literature (Czyzewski, 2011; Marmot et al., 2008; Reading, 2015; Sasakamoose et al., 2017; Shahram et al., 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), but little attention is paid to how colonialism as a structural determinant of health may influence the health and welfare of companion animals. It is possible that, viewed through a decolonizing lens, ‘dog problems’ in remote and Indigenous communities can be considered as a function of colonialism, reflecting the distal determinants of health that shape the status of individual and population health in humans and in animals.

2.1.3 Western Health Paradigm

The mainstream ‘Western’ understanding of health has been defined by the World Health Organization as ‘...a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (World Health Organization, n.d.). While this definition captures the importance of holistic wellbeing, there is no reference to the importance of harmony or balance between the various components of health. The message is that to be healthy, an individual must not experience any reduced wellbeing in their mental, physical or social selves. With longer life expectancies and high rates of chronic illness worldwide, this state of ‘complete wellbeing’ is unrealistic, and could reduce individual and collective wellness simply by setting unattainable health-related goals (Huber et al., 2011).

Instead of the notion of ‘complete well-being’, some authors suggest an updated definition of health, focused on individuals’ ability to cope with various health conditions, and maintain a sense of wellbeing through dynamic balance between all aspects of personal

wholeness (Huber et al., 2011). Further, health can be construed as the ability to adapt, as defined by each individual, based on their unique and dynamic needs (The Lancet, 2009). Within a One Health framework, the health of humans, animals and the ecosystems in which they co-exist are inextricably linked, with changes to one member of the triad influencing the equilibrium and wellbeing of the others (Hodgson et al., 2015; Wolf, 2015; World Health Organization, 2017). Within a Western paradigm, the social determinants of health are recognized as playing a significant role in individual and population health for humans (Marmot, 2013). Without attention paid to health determinants of humans worldwide, interventions aimed at improving health outcomes will fall short of intended short and long-term goals (Marmot, 2013).

2.1.4 Social Determinants of Animal Health

The social determinants of health within a Western paradigm apply to animals as well, and understanding this concept is fundamental to productive participation of veterinarians in One Health (Card et al., 2018). Inequitable distribution of power, wealth and resources have marked effects on the reported health status of human and animal populations (Card et al., 2018). For many communities in Canada, these inequities show up as structural violence (Galtung, 1969) in the form of lack of access to resources and services that support health and wellbeing (Card et al., 2018). This is where the present discussion fits into the picture. It can be asserted that the current Western definitions of health and their determinants, and how these relate to the health of companion animals (particularly dogs), are reflective of the holistic understanding of health within an Indigenous paradigm. With the inclusion of structural violence as an influencer of health within a Western paradigm, it is but a short leap to suggest colonialism as a root cause of the structural violence experienced by northern, remote and Indigenous communities citing challenges with dogs secondary to lack of regular access to veterinary care.

2.1.5 Dog Health Defined

Animal health is defined as ‘a state of physical and psychological well-being and of productivity including reproduction’ (Studdert et al., 2020, p. 516). Health indicators are often recognized as the readily observable signs that correlate to a state of physical well-being. These include eyes, ears, and nose clear and free from inflammation or abnormal discharge; skin and coat clean and shiny; teeth clean, gums pink, breath not unpleasant; regular bowel movements and urination of normal colour and consistency with normal effort; and body and muscle condition scores within the ‘ideal’ range for the species. Other quantitative indicators of dog health are typically observable or measurable only by skilled and trained individuals using equipment and technical approaches limited to the practice of veterinary medicine (Government of Saskatchewan, 2009). Increasingly, behavioural health is an important indicator of psychological and social well-being for animals, and for dogs this is particularly important as they tend to live in intimate settings with humans. When dog behavioural health is compromised, the human-animal bond is often disrupted, sometimes catastrophically following events such as aggressive dog-human encounters (Murray et al., 2021; Owczarczak-Garstecka et al., 2018). Contributors to psychological well-being for animals include exercise, housing, adequate space and enrichment to express normal behaviours, and freedom from cruelty, including psychological harm (Murray et al., 2021; Studdert et al., 2020). The definition of dog health thus considers the physical, psychological and social indicators of internal and external well-being, and can be measured through observation and collection of qualitative information from owners, care-givers, and other knowledgeable individuals.

2.2 Animal Welfare: Definitions and Oversight

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association defines animal welfare as ‘... the physical and psychological, social and environmental well-being of animals’ (Ryan et al., 2019, p. 11). This definition encompasses the physical, mental and emotional needs of animals under the care and stewardship of humans (American Veterinary Medical Association, n.d.). Beyond attending to the physical health of an individual animal or population of animals, ensuring good welfare means attending to the behavioural and emotional needs of animals as well. Veterinary and animal welfare organizations remind us that all members of society are expected to treat animals with respect and dignity, providing proper sustenance, handling, health care and environmental conditions to meet the needs of animals in their care (American Veterinary Medical Association, n.d.). Veterinarians are perceived by society as experts in animal health and welfare, and are expected to provide for the wellbeing of all species, accounting for the determinants of health and their various influences on animal health and welfare (Acutt et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2019). Barriers preventing access to adequate animal care resources in northern, remote and Indigenous communities directly impose welfare deficits on animals in these regions by reducing the ability of animal caregivers to attend to all factors necessary for good animal welfare. With clear links between the wellbeing of animals and that of their human counterparts, reducing barriers to animal welfare would result in improved human health and wellbeing – a matter of concern for everyone, within and outside of animal health care fields (McCrindle, 1998).

Oversight of animal welfare is dictated jurisdictionally, and in many provinces in Canada this oversight falls within the mandate of the provincial Chief Veterinary Officer, who is responsible for appointing officers for the enforcement of animal welfare legislation

(Boissonneault & Epp, 2018). Provincial animal protection laws are varied across the country, and legislation at the federal level is enshrined in the Criminal Code (Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan, n.d.-a; Fraser et al., 2018). In Saskatchewan, enforcement of the Animal Protection Act is the responsibility of Animal Protection Officers (APOs). These include provincially appointed APOs, and those appointed municipally in Regina through the Regina Humane Society (Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan, n.d.-b). RCMP and municipal police are also designated APOs (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018); however, most police officers do not receive adequate training to prepare them for the duties required under the Animal Protection Act. In Saskatchewan, veterinarians do not have the authority to enforce the Animal Protection Act, and are mandated to report to an Animal Protection Officer suspected cases of animal cruelty, defined by intentional or unintentional imposition of suffering and distress on animals secondary to the actions or inactions of humans (Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan, n.d.-a). In many areas of the province with no veterinarians, welfare concerns may go unaddressed as local RCMP may not prioritize animal welfare concerns, and provincial APOs may not be able to attend to concerns in a timely or locally appropriate manner. These gaps illustrate a need for further resources to support animal welfare, with locally based and locally delivered services best suited to meet the needs of underserved regions³ in Saskatchewan and across Canada.

2.3 Dog Management in Underserved Communities

In communities and regions with no regular access to veterinary care, community-level approaches to the dog population control, health and welfare are varied. To appropriately

³ Here, the term ‘underserved’ is referring to not having adequate access to services supporting animal welfare specifically; these include animal protection officers and animal shelters as well as other related services.

position the current study, we must examine the literature illustrating potential community-based approaches to dog population control, health and welfare.

2.3.1 Access to Care

Veterinarians and allied professionals understand that globally, access to veterinary care is not equitable for all communities, regions or populations. Barriers to accessible veterinary care include cost, geographic location, communication between veterinary team and clients, culture and language, and lack of client education (Boissonneault & Epp, 2018; LaVallee et al., 2017). These barriers can further be categorized into those that are geographic, socioeconomic and knowledge-based in nature (Lem, 2019). It is important to note that these barriers are operational at societal (environmental), human and animal levels, as illustrated in the nested One Health model developed by Michelle Lem (2019). The One Health model reinforces the importance of making animal health a priority in the greater effort to optimize and equitize human and environmental health. From a human perspective, barriers to accessible care are appreciated not only by animal caregivers but also by veterinarians and other animal healthcare providers (Boissonneault & Epp, 2018; Lem, 2019). Filling gaps in veterinary care is a clear priority for many in the veterinary community, as well as humane societies and animal welfare enforcement agencies (Boissonneault & Epp, 2018). To target efforts of these groups in an effective manner, there is need for common language and tools to use in assessment and prioritization efforts towards closing the gaps in dog care and control. Efforts are underway in this regard, with a focus on a standardized definition of ‘underserved’ regarding animal healthcare, and the prospective development of an assessment tool for use by individuals, communities, animal health and welfare professionals and policy makers (Roberts et al., 2023). With shared language in place, discussions about how to address gaps in services can easily be translated between and

within stakeholder groups, resulting in more productive action, based on mutually understood needs.

2.3.2 Dog Management in ‘The Gap’

Underserved communities often initiate dog care and control strategies as an intervention or preventive measure in response to concerns regarding human health risks associated with dogs. These risks include zoonotic diseases such as rabies and parasites; dog bites with associated mental, emotional and physical traumas; and reduced individual and community wellbeing secondary to perceived or real threats to personal safety posed by loose and roaming dogs (Baker et al., 2018b; Dhillon et al., 2016; Salb et al., 2008; Schurer et al., 2012; Schurer et al., 2015a; Schurer et al., 2014; Schurer et al., 2013). Stabilizing dog populations through vet-assisted sterilization programs, out-of-community rehoming, or culling are options implemented to improve perceived community safety, an important contributor to individual and collective wellbeing (Dhillon, 2016). A discussion of international and Canadian dog care and control programs follows to summarize the current state of knowledge in the literature.

In 2010, Dalla Villa et al found that problems associated with free roaming dogs amongst OIE-member countries were reported disproportionately by low-income countries⁴ (2010) - a finding which mirrors the dichotomy between remote and Indigenous communities and the rest of Canada. These marginalized and exploited countries appeared to have reduced access to resources to support dog care and control practices that would lead to sustainable populations, and tended to engage in crisis-control solutions such as lethal measures more frequently,

⁴ Low-income countries are generally those that are globally marginalized and exploited, typically through various forms of systemic violence, most notably colonialism.

sometimes at the expense of animal welfare (Dalla Villa et al., 2010). Yoak and colleagues demonstrated through spatial modeling that lethal methods of free roaming dog population control would be less successful at reducing aggressive dog-human encounters than sterilization methods targeting intact bitches (2016). A similar mathematical modeling approach was used by Høgåsen and colleagues to demonstrate that alterations to dog ownership habits (husbandry practices, reproductive capacity and number of dogs owned) would have the most substantial impact on problematic free roaming dog populations (2013). To effect change in human behaviours, which influence the care and control of dogs at individual and community levels, public education is essential. As suggested by the International Companion Animal Management Coalition, any approach to dog care and control requires a comprehensive program focused on identifying and addressing root causes of roaming dog populations, as opposed to merely focusing on the roaming populations themselves (2007).

Australia's experience with dogs in remote and Indigenous communities reflects the Canadian situation. As a country with a similar history of colonization, underlying colonial influences on the dog-human relationship in Australian Indigenous communities are present and inherent in structures and systems determining sustainable dog population control, and health and welfare provision in areas underserved by veterinarians (Wilks & Williamson, 1998). Because of the parasite-friendly climate of Australia and the close living relationships between humans and dogs in Indigenous communities, much attention has been paid to the creation and implementation of interventions aimed at improving dog health as a means of improving human health (Constable et al., 2012; Constable et al., 2013; Maher et al., 2019; Senior et al., 2006; Wilks & Williamson, 1998). Australian authors have described the importance of the dog-human relationship from a traditional cultural perspective, where dogs are important members of kinship

systems although ‘not quite human’ because of their disregard for social rules such as exogamous mating practices (Constable et al., 2010; Senior et al., 2006). Dogs have value as means of spiritual and physical protection, hunting companions, and as family pets (Constable et al., 2010; Senior et al., 2006). The bond between humans and dogs in Indigenous communities is strong and maintains a traditional grounding despite colonial policies that have tried to erode dog-human bonds (Constable et al., 2010; Howe, 1993; Wilks & Williamson, 1998). This culturally grounded relationship is an important consideration in the design and implementation of animal population, health and welfare programs, and cultural relevance is an important predictor of efficacy and uptake of health promotion programming in remote and Indigenous communities in Australia (Constable et al., 2010; Constable et al., 2012).

In Canada, decision makers seek out and implement health programming for dogs in underserved communities for similar reasons, with the health of humans and communities front of mind. Dog health is also a concern, particularly for veterinary personnel whose professional mandate is to foster and support good health and welfare for animals. Many public health approaches to dog care and control emphasize the dog-human interface as a place of risk, downplaying the benefits of the bond between dogs and humans and the strengths brought to both within the interspecies relationship. Canadian veterinary literature concerning human health risks related to dogs in underserved communities focuses on programs implemented to reduce incidence of zoonotic parasites, rabies, and dog bites (Dhillon et al., 2016; Salb et al., 2008; Schurer et al., 2012; Schurer et al., 2014; Schurer et al., 2013; Schurer et al., 2015b). Multiple authors, in their work with underserved communities towards addressing dog health, have made note of the changing roles of dogs in communities (Baker et al., 2018a; Schurer et al., 2015a), the importance of the dog-human relationship (Schurer et al., 2015b), and the interplay between dog

health, human health and the social determinants of health (Baker et al., 2018a; Brook et al., 2010). There is also ample discussion of the need for dog care and control initiatives that are locally developed, managed and delivered in order to ensure community uptake, cultural appropriateness, and program sustainability.

Canadian veterinary researchers have largely published studies regarding dog care and control in underserved communities based on their own observations and impressions regarding community-dog dynamics. Some authors have sought to gather community member perspectives on dogs using survey data with pre-determined responses based on author perceptions, resulting in data that may not reflect the true perspectives of people living alongside dogs in underserved regions (Brook et al., 2010). Still others have explored participatory approaches to research regarding dogs in underserved communities, using a variety of methods to engage community members in the research process (Dhillon et al., 2016; Schurer et al., 2015a; Schurer et al., 2015b). A recent article illustrated the perspectives of veterinarians, animal protection officers and humane society workers on availability of veterinary services to underserved areas of Manitoba (Boissonneault & Epp, 2018). Though community residents were invited to participate in this qualitative survey, there were no responses from this group and authors concluded that understanding the perspectives of community members on access to veterinary care and animal care and control resources would be critical in effective and sustainable dog population control, health and welfare programs in underserved communities into the future. Without relationships in place, and without using research approaches that empower community members to have a hand in determining the research agenda, the perspectives and priorities of people living alongside dogs in underserved communities will remain invisible.

The present project seeks to fill this gap with a different approach. With community-oriented, relationship-based, and qualitative research approaches the team aimed to provide a rich illustration of local dog care and control, existing community capacity and the priority areas for capacity development and partnership moving forward. Here there is a focus on community strength and empowerment, which is in line with current directions in health discourse regarding remote and Indigenous communities, which works towards a strengths-based rather than a deficit-based model (Isaac et al., 2018; Sasakamoose et al., 2016). With an overarching decolonizing aim, we seek to expose and challenge the systems and structures that currently prevent self-determination in dog care and control in underserved communities, producing data that will motivate policy change to improve community health through sustainable dog care programs.

2.4 Research Context: Veterinary perspective

Veterinarians, who are often positioned as helpers and health care professionals, have an interest in contributing to the ‘greater good’ (Waltner-Toews et al., 2015). As leaders in our communities, veterinarians have the power and responsibility to affect social change through our business, educational and research approaches. In human healthcare, social accountability is considered a core competency for graduating professionals who are expected to be the voices of change in practice and policy in an endeavor to provide equitable, culturally safe and accessible healthcare to all Canadians (Fitterer & Meili, 2016; Hunt & Harden, 2016). Expectations for graduating veterinarians are changing, and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) now requires accredited colleges to provide learners with an appreciation for the influences of diversity, inclusion and personal bias on their professional activities (American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education, 2017). Despite this progress, social

accountability remains absent in the list of core competencies for veterinary graduates (Molgaard et al., 2018).

Still, many veterinarians and veterinary learners regularly seek opportunities to volunteer with one of the organizations worldwide providing veterinary support to areas currently underserved by the profession. Within Canada, numerous veterinary-associated organizations seek to address the known gaps in companion animal health in remote and Indigenous communities nation-wide. Approaches to health programming for veterinary care in underserved communities are varied, and project ‘success’ is difficult to define or measure given the wide range of stakeholder perspectives (Baker et al., 2018b). Most temporary mobile veterinary service initiatives experience chronic challenges in accessing and retaining adequate volunteer support, while general shortages of veterinary professionals have been amplified in the past few years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Stiles, 2021; Volk et al., 2022). To add to this pressure on the current pool of animal health professionals, there is an ongoing and growing need for services to address ‘dog problems’ in unserved or underserved communities across Canada.

Because of the nature of the veterinary fee-for-service business model, delivering veterinary care to individuals and communities experiencing financial, cultural or geographic barriers can be challenging. Veterinarians working in private practice are frequently paid using a ‘ProSal’ (commission + salary) model, where individual income depends on the amount of profit they bring the business (VETgirl, n.d.). Veterinarians often want to ‘give back’ by participating in community-based outreach work; however, the financial, logistic and cultural barriers that may be in place can deter vets and allied professionals from taking on the challenge. In a profession already plagued by empathy fatigue and burnout (Brannick et al., 2015; Volk et al.,

2022), many veterinarians are unwilling to engage in work that may increase stress and financial adversity for themselves and their business. In the Canadian context, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action indicate that as healthcare professionals, we have a responsibility to improve access to healthcare services for Indigenous communities, and to provide appropriate healthcare in a culturally safe manner (Greenwood et al., 2018; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Though the TRC Calls to Action do not refer explicitly to veterinary care, providing healthcare to animals can be considered a One Health approach to supporting the health of people; where the health and welfare of animals are challenged, so too are the human equivalents and vice versa (Jordan & Lem, 2014). Increasingly, society will call upon veterinarians to determine how our profession fits into the picture of animal health and welfare provision for underserved communities and individuals, whether Indigenous or not. In so doing, we must consider how to best support community self-determination in development and execution of dog care and control strategies by affecting change at a systems level to remove systemic barriers to the achievement of optimal health and welfare for dogs in all communities in Canada.

2.5 Research Context: Community perspective

This research is situated in the region of La Ronge, located in Northern Saskatchewan on Treaty Six territory. The population centre for this region is comprised of three distinct community entities: The Village of Air Ronge, the Town of La Ronge, and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, collectively referred to as the 'Tri-communities'. Members of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band (LLRIB) comprise most area residents, with about 4000 people living on or off reserve in the Tri-community area (total area population about 7000) (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017b). The Lac La Ronge Indian Band is the largest First

Nation by membership in Saskatchewan, and one of the ten largest First Nations in Canada (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, 2018). LLRIB members have Woodland Cree heritage, and there are ongoing efforts in the community to revitalize and reclaim Woodland Cree language and traditions (Lac La Ronge Indian Band Cree Resource Unit, n.d.) that have been diluted or lost through the imposition of colonial policies by the Canadian Government over the last 150 years.

Other residents in La Ronge and Air Ronge are a mixture of newcomers and settler-Canadians, some of whom have lived in the area for many decades. These are business owners, healthcare workers, people affiliated with the air travel industry, tourism professionals, and others. The two municipalities, La Ronge and Air Ronge, and the LLRIB each have separate leadership and councils, with their own bylaws and enforcement approaches regarding dogs. Coherent approaches to dog care and control between the three communities have been challenging over the years. Population control and oversight of dog health and welfare have been by default the responsibility of individual owners, with no local support in the form of veterinarians or aligned professionals. With the nearest veterinary clinic 250km away, many families are unable to access veterinary care for their pets, placing the burden of addressing issues related to dog population, health and welfare back on families or communities. This lack of access to basic dog healthcare needs ultimately leaves gaps in dog health and welfare that pose risks to community health, safety, and wellbeing.

In 2009, a group of local animal enthusiasts chose to address this gap by creating Northern Animal Rescue (NAR), a not-for-profit humane society based in La Ronge. NAR has grown over the years, with nine board members now actively running the group with a network of foster homes across the province supporting their work. NAR is founded and run on a commitment to 'develop and improve animal welfare' in the Tri-community region through

community education, rescue and rehoming, and partnerships that support the health and wellbeing of animals in the community (Northern Animal Rescue, 2019). Although NAR has a contract with the Town of La Ronge to oversee animal control enforcement, (Northern Animal Rescue, 2019) there is no such agreement with the other two communities in the region. Air Ronge and the LLRIB rely on council-appointed and employed individuals to enforce animal control legislation; a job that can be awkward at the best of times, particularly in small tightly knit communities.

In 2014, the Tri-communities along with NAR and the Western College of Veterinary Medicine began running twice yearly spay-neuter and wellness clinics for cats and dogs in the area. Through these clinics we have successfully spayed and neutered around 1000 dogs and cats as of September 2022, and we also provide ongoing preventive care and minor medical care during each clinic. Though a primary goal of this program has been population control, the number of surgeries completed each visit likely does not compete with the fecundity of the dogs left unsterilized and roaming in the community (number unknown). There is also no official tracking system for immigration and emigration of dogs, so the impact on population numbers of movement of dogs in and out of the community is not known, other than the numbers of dogs that have been removed through ‘dog pulls’⁵ in recent years. So far, dogs continue to roam, populations continue to rise and fall in between clinics, and the Tri-communities continue to engage in crisis control periodically when there is a sudden ‘bloom’ in roaming dogs in the area.

Prior to NAR’s formation and the start of the bi-annual vet clinics, the Tri-communities achieved control of roaming dogs through dog culls – a process whereby members of the

⁵ Dog pulls refer to the planned removal of dogs from the community by outside organizations, such as rescue groups, for rehoming in other communities and sometimes out of province.

community volunteer to round up and destroy roaming dogs by shooting them (Dalla Villa et al., 2010; Dhillon et al., 2016). Although shooting dogs can be a legitimate method of humane euthanasia (Longair et al., 1991; Underwood & Anthony, 2020), there are often concerns about the inhumane nature of this process. Impressions from community members and from outsiders range from full support to passionate criticism of dog culling. Often, the strongest critics do not understand the crisis control situation most communities are in when they elect to implement a cull. Without other options available, leadership must take action to protect the people in the community from potentially traumatic events such as maulings, which can leave people permanently disfigured and, in some cases, may even be fatal (Dhillon et al., 2016; Raghavan, 2008). In the absence of culling practices, the LLRIB has collaborated with organizations outside of the community to remove dogs from the area through ‘dog pulls’, an approach that has drawn support and criticism from within and outside the Tri-community area. So, what are communities to do when the safety of their residents is threatened, and the dog population is unmanageable with existing community resources? Veterinary services can provide varied types of support, and the best foundation on which to proceed is the development and fostering of meaningful, collaborative and mutually respectful relationships.

2.6 Conclusion

The health of dogs and the health of humans and communities are intimately related, and the determinants of dog health and human health overlap considerably. Care and control strategies for dogs in underserved communities may not always be ideal from the perspective of community members, and sometimes these strategies must be utilized due to crises at the dog-human interface. While there may be existing capacity in communities to address dog issues, the best and most sustainable approaches must be developed with cultural and regional specificity.

The remainder of this thesis will focus on our team's approach to identifying current strategies in dog care and control in the Tri-communities and opportunities for development of new approaches, taking into consideration the current roles of dogs and elements of the dog-human relationship in this region of northern Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The purpose of this study was to illustrate in detail the strategies towards care and control of dog population, health, and welfare in an area underserved by animal health and welfare professionals. The study was approached using a qualitative instrumental case study design, within an Indigenous paradigm. This choice is intentional, to decolonize the research process and honour the worldviews of Indigenous team members and participants.

3.1 Research Paradigms and Approaches

In this section, Western and Indigenous research paradigms are discussed, highlighting the methodological approaches drawn from in this research and how they relate to each other. In line with the decolonizing and critical orientation to this research, Indigenous paradigms and methodologies will be addressed first. Though the research team has varied expertise in Indigenous ways of knowing and discovering, it was a political and intentional choice here to prioritize Indigenous paradigms, which some in the Western academy may still regard as inferior and foreign.

3.1.1 Indigenous Research Paradigm – Decolonizing Applications

A research paradigm encompasses the ontology (what is reality), epistemology (how can we come to know reality), axiology (what has value) and methodology (the procedures we use to acquire knowledge) with which investigators and research teams approach a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An Indigenous research paradigm flows from an Indigenous worldview, in which everything is related and interdependent, and highly contextual (Held, 2019; Michell, 2011). Shawn Wilson defines the essence of an Indigenous paradigm as Relationship, Relationality and Relational Accountability (2008). The importance and meaning of events, people, things, and

ideas are determined by the *relationships* we individually and collectively have with them. We never consider events, people, things or ideas in isolation; they can only be understood by how they are *related* to other things; reality and understanding are relational in nature, and dependent on contextual representations (Datta, 2015; Held, 2019). Relationality emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things, further equitizing the position of humans and animals in the community, highlighting the importance of attending to the health and welfare of humans and animals in an effort towards elevating community wellbeing.

As we proceed through our work, we must, in an Indigenous paradigm, remain accountable to all parties affected. This means we demonstrate the *relevance* of our work to the community; we conduct our work *respectfully*; we are *responsible* with our conduct and with the knowledge we are given; and we demonstrate *reciprocity*, by giving at least as much as we take through the project (Atkinson et al., 2021; Weber-Pillwax, 1999; Wilson, 2008). These are the 4R's of research (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) with and for Indigenous peoples, and they blend seamlessly with the essential elements of an Indigenous paradigm as elucidated by Shawn Wilson. With these central concepts in mind, we drew on literature from Western and Indigenous scholars to design and implement a research approach to suit our unique and complex 'case', illustrated in Figure 3.1. During the process, we continuously returned to the relational nature of knowledge and reality to illustrate our case and its context appropriately and adequately.

The use of Indigenous research methodologies when conducting studies with and for Indigenous Peoples is a best practice approach when engaging in culturally appropriate and decolonizing investigation. However situating a project in an Indigenous paradigm is not enough; the approach taken must be participatory (researching 'with' instead of 'on' (Smith, 2012)), must aim for liberation from oppression, and must transform systems and structures that

maintain the status quo (Held, 2019). Though our research team and the region in which we conducted our study are diverse and partly non-Indigenous, we strove to honor and apply an Indigenous paradigm, discovering where there was overlap and synergy between Western and Indigenous ways of conducting research. As Mi'kmaw Elders Murdena and Albert Marshall describe in Bartlett et al. (2012), an approach that uses the strengths of both Western and Indigenous knowledge systems to achieve a common goal can be referred to as 'Two-Eyed Seeing'. This integrated approach to creating and seeking knowledge together requires power sharing and equitable processes between team members to adequately achieve these common goals. Accordingly, we applied a decolonizing lens to the project, allowing the deconstruction of power dynamics and structures that might otherwise present barriers to the meaningful and authentic conduct and actionable outcomes of the study. The overarching aim here was to use our 'Two eyes' (Bartlett et al., 2012) to 'locate power within the Indigenous community' (Held, 2019, p. 7).

A decolonizing lens brings to the forefront an awareness of the very real and ongoing influence of colonialism on relationships between humans, between humans and animals, and between humans and the larger structures and systems determining health and wellbeing for humans, animals, and communities. Through this lens and with an 'eye' towards synergy and cooperation between Indigenous and Western ways, we are seeking to foster what Cree thinker Willie Ermine refers to as 'ethical space' (Ermine, 2007). This is the space between two paradigms in which Indigenous ways of knowing and conducting research can be valued and privileged in equal or at times greater measure than those of the 'mainstream' Western academy. An overarching philosophical aim of this project, then, is finding, with Two-Eyed seeing, the

ethical space within the tri-communities regarding dog management and regional collaboration to achieve mutually desired outcomes.

3.1.2 Overarching Approach – Community-Based Participatory Research as Community-Oriented Research

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is an action-focused and increasingly community-driven approach to research, employed in projects working towards improving health equity (Wallerstein et al., 2018). Nina Wallerstein and colleagues, foundational authors on the topic of CBPR, define the approach as follows: ‘CBPR embraces collaborative efforts among community, academic, and other stakeholders who gather and use research and data to build on the strengths and priorities of the community for multilevel strategies to improve health and social equity’ (2018, p. 3). With its focus on equitable participation between community members and researchers, CBPR ensures collaborative learning and creation of knowledge, discovery and development of local capacity, community self-determination, and a balance between research and action (Wallerstein et al., 2018). In addressing disparities in health, it is crucial to work within the context of larger structures and systems promoting these disparities, according to Lavery et al. (2005). Wallerstein and colleagues build on this by highlighting the need for researchers involved in CBPR to acknowledge and address intersectional power and privilege, especially how these affect individual participation in research and influence research conduct and outcomes (2018). In the setting of remote and Indigenous communities in Canada, this suggests the need for researchers to develop cultural humility and apply a decolonizing lens within the framework of social determinants of health and health inequity. It is also essential to maintain accountability to the community and adhere to principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.) of data as an avenue

towards community self-determination and capacity building in the research process (Datta, 2017; Schnarch, 2004).

The aims of CBPR are congruent with an Indigenous research paradigm of relationships and relational accountability. One does not have to reach far to see how CBPR and Patient-Oriented Research (POR) with a community as the ‘patient’ can be considered as similar and related approaches. Patient-oriented research is an area of priority for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), with a funding strategy dedicated to this approach, aiming to ‘transform the role of patient from a passive receptor of services to a proactive partner who helps shape health research and, as a result, health care’ (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, n.d.). With patients or community members as partners in every aspect of the research project, it is possible to conduct studies resulting in action based on priorities of the intended end-users, facilitating a short turn-around between project end and application or use of products and findings. Focusing on patient/community priorities requires a shift for some researchers, whose individual research priorities may not match what is important to communities (Patrick et al., 2018). For communities with challenges in accessing appropriate care and resources for the management of dogs, veterinarians may miss the mark if we begin conducting research or providing service that does not meet the priorities of the communities we hope to serve.

Patient-oriented research provides tools and frameworks to ensure research meets the needs and priorities of communities. According to CIHR’s Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research, the desired outcomes of community member (patient) engagement are: ‘inclusive mechanisms and processes; respectful collaboration amongst patients, researchers and healthcare providers; increased recognition of the value of patients’ experiential knowledge; research informed and co-directed by patients; and timely implementation of quality research’ (Canadian

Institutes of Health Research, n.d.). It is with these aims in mind that we have harnessed this approach to co-develop this project from start to finish. Our team's approach to designing and implementing our research collaboration is described below, providing context and theoretical grounding to the present project.

3.1.3 Key Methodology: Instrumental Case Study

Case study is a qualitative methodology used to learn deeply about a complex, real-life phenomenon within a bounded system (Crowe et al., 2011; Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 1998). Often used as an approach to research and evaluation in fields of social science and education, case study has evolved in recent decades to be applied in multiple disciplines for multiple purposes (Harrison et al., 2017). Case study is flexible, utilizes multiple data sources and draws from multiple participant perspectives, often in a participatory fashion, in order to paint a detailed image of the phenomenon in question, within its natural setting (Simons, 2009). As Creswell and Poth explain, selected cases are typically those 'in progress' so that data collected is not 'lost by time' (2018, p. 97). The rich data produced through case study can provide robust support for multi-level or system-wide changes to policy and practice which can be transformative for those affected by and affecting complex and challenging phenomena (Merriam, 1998; Simons, 2009). Indeed, case study is often political – a characteristic that allows this approach to marry well with the overarching aims of community-oriented, action based and decolonizing inquiry within an Indigenous research paradigm.

Case study is suited to questions that are investigative or explanatory in nature; when we are looking to find out the 'what', 'how' or 'why' of a particular issue or phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2012, 2014b). *Instrumental* case studies, as opposed to *intrinsic* case studies,

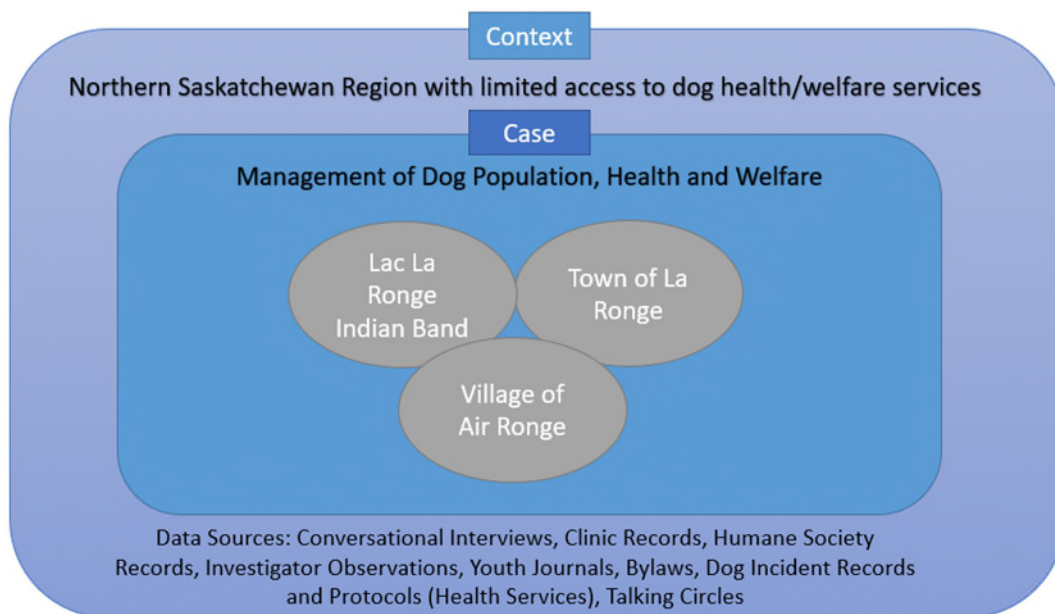
allow researchers to gain insight into a particular issue or phenomenon of interest through in-depth examination of a case that facilitates understanding of a broader issue, relevant within and outside of the context of the case in question (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2008). Stake asserts that case study is less a methodology and more a choice of *what* to study (Stake, 2008). We should choose a case based on our ability to maximize what we learn from it, which is often dictated by access, which in turn is dictated by relationships and perhaps previous experience (Stake, 1995). To conduct case study research then, we must be able to select a case and context that are accessible and hospitable to us as researchers; to define and bind our case to ensure we study what we want to study; and stick within the boundaries so the focus is not muddied by extraneous data. The ultimate aim is to thoroughly understand the case in question, and this understanding is ultimately achieved through the use of multiple data sources collected through multiple approaches (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2012).

3.1.3.1 Rationale for selection and bounding of the ‘case’

The ‘bounded case’ examined in this study was the care and control of dog population, health and welfare in the Tri-community region of La Ronge, Saskatchewan. Figure 3.1 presents a schematic representation of the bounded case in context. The phenomenon in this case (dog management) cannot be considered outside of its context (the Tri-communities, an underserved region in Saskatchewan). As Yin (2014a) asserts, this strong tie between phenomenon and context justifies the use of case study to examine a system. Existing relationships facilitated the community-oriented nature of this study, which honoured and prioritized collaboration and community empowerment (Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research, 2018). This study is considered an ‘instrumental case study’ (Stake, 1995) because of its expected ability to provide insight into the larger issue of dog care and control in areas underserved or unserved by

animal healthcare professionals. Due to the differing approaches between the two municipalities and the Band, we consider ours a single case with embedded units (the three communities) (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2014b). This added complexity increased the challenges involved in the study, and also provided more opportunity for data gathering and understanding of the various elements of the case, improving the richness of the study overall.

Figure 3.1 Bounded Case in Context



3.2 Community Oriented Decolonizing Case Study: Building Relationships and Partnerships

The relationships integrated in this research have been in development over many years, most importantly since I began my work at the WCVM. By nature of the program run by the WCVM in the Tri-communities, multiple partnerships and personal relationships have been forged and fostered in the development and delivery of the bi-annual vet clinics. I am in frequent contact with many people in the community throughout the year, not only in the times

surrounding each clinic. This frequent contact fosters long-term relationships, trust and personal connections, which transcend the work and improve my potential to engage in authentic collaborations. The most important partnerships for the clinic delivery are also those most relevant to the research. These include LLRIB leadership; Elder John Halkett; principal and teachers at Senator Myles Venne School; members of La Ronge Town and Air Ronge Village councils; and board members of Northern Animal Rescue Humane Society. By virtue of providing service twice a year in the area and being present in the community for personal recreation at other times of the year, I now recognize and am recognized by many residents of the Tri-communities. I believe that while becoming a familiar face, my relationship-focused approach has allowed me to gain the trust of many people in the area, which is a crucial factor in my access to the community as an investigator.

In July of 2018, I arranged a visit with Elder John Halkett at his home to talk about dogs in the Tri-communities. Observing protocol, I offered Elder John tobacco, as I was seeking his guidance regarding what he felt was needed to address some of the problems between dogs and people in the area. John accepted my request, and we settled in for a nice visit together. During our discussion, John identified that the greatest need in the community was for education. He indicated that people in the community have lost the connections with dogs that were so natural when the Woodland Cree were living traditionally, but that dogs were still very important fibers in the community fabric. John observed that dogs didn't have defined roles anymore, and this, combined with people's lack of understanding about how to interact safely and productively with dogs, led to dogs getting in trouble, becoming at risk of decreased health and welfare, and sometimes threatening the safety and wellbeing of the humans in the area. John shared that what he would most like to see would be a program in the schools that taught children how to interact

safely with dogs, and how to give dogs a purpose that would best match their individual physical and personality traits. This program would be culturally and locally relevant, would be developed by Elders and youth, and would easily be integrated into the existing curriculum at the schools in the area. With John's idea as the focal point, a project developed and directed by community members was starting to unfold.

Following my visit with John, I reached out to several community members to explore their willingness to serve on a Research Advisory Circle. It was important to include multiple stakeholders in the Circle, so the initial plan was to have representatives from Band, Town and Village councils; Northern Animal Rescue; local health services; engaged Elders; teachers; and other interested community members. The rationale for forming such an Advisory Circle was to have a diverse group of people, representative of the Tri-community area, to drive the research process and make decisions along the way. In the fall of 2018, we knew there was a funding opportunity coming up that we could take advantage of, targeting Patient Oriented Research (POR) projects. As a veterinarian, my patients are animals so it was difficult to imagine how patients could drive a research project in a veterinary context. However, many more possibilities exist with the *community* as the patient. The Advisory Circle members would act as the Patient Family Advisors (renamed for our purposes as Community Advisors), whose lived experiences give them the expertise to weigh in on the phenomenon in question, and make decisions about what should be investigated, and how.

3.2.1 Building a project together - Identifying and operationalizing community priorities

In early September 2018, I invited prospective Advisory Circle members to a meeting at the Band office in La Ronge. At this time, I explained that I was available to facilitate a research

project that would be useful to the Tri-communities, by acquiring funding and managing the academic side of the project. I would also provide materials, supplies and administrative support to members of a prospective Community-based Research Team to enable a community-directed project from start to finish. With permission from Elder John (who was present at the meeting), I explained his idea for developing an educational program embedded with traditional teachings as an outcome of the project. During the meeting, I sought commitments from all individuals present to serve on the Advisory Circle for the duration of the project. Everyone agreed to participate, and expressed enthusiasm about working together across municipal and Band boundaries. I asked what the Advisory Circle members felt needed to be investigated in their community to address the ongoing issues with dogs and their interactions with each other and with humans. At this time, members felt that it was important to discover community member views on their relationships with dogs, because this would relate to how people manage dogs in the Tri-communities. Members also indicated that talking not only to adults, but also to youth would be important, as youth have a different level of contact with dogs in the community than adults; youth tend to be in contact more often and tend to be the caregivers of dogs quite frequently, especially in the reserve neighbourhoods. With these priorities in mind, it was possible to write and submit a successful grant application to fund the project with and for the Tri-communities.

While we were constructing the portion of the project described above, I was working on developing a plan for a community-oriented and led evaluation of the bi-annual veterinary clinics held in La Ronge. I had multiple ideas that took multiple forms, and always found that it was a difficult sell for me, let alone for the Advisory Circle, to prioritize evaluation of the clinics. Over time, I realized that the clinics are only a small portion of the overall community approach to dog

care and control, and therefore examining this piece alone did not feel as important or urgent. After multiple conversations with Advisory Circle members and other community residents unrelated to the research, I realized that there are multiple layers and factors involved in the overall approach to caring for and controlling dogs in the area. Further discussions confirmed that the complexity of the interplay between factors would be something important to examine in making change. At a meeting in October 2019, the Advisory Circle discussed this, and agreed that a Case Study design would suit an overall examination of the approach to dog care and control in the Tri-communities. This collaborative development of ideas continued to drive the iteration of the project throughout, adding complexity and richness to the process as it unfolded.

3.2.2 Building and sustaining our Pet Health Research Team

One of the hallmarks of Patient-Oriented (or Community-Oriented) Research is the participation of patients (or patient-family advisors/community advisors), researchers, health care providers and decision-makers on the research team (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, n.d.; Mallidou et al., 2018). Most of our team members did not have previous research experience, and capacity building in this area is one of the goals of Patient-Oriented research (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, n.d.; Mallidou et al., 2018). Several of the team were nervous about being active participants in the research process, as the idea of ‘research’ can be intimidating for non-academics. Further, ‘research’ can have negative connotations for Indigenous team members who may know of the history of extractive research approaches ‘on’ Indigenous people worldwide (Datta, 2017; Held, 2019; Smith, 2012). As an investigator, I strove to support team members in providing opportunities for skill development and debriefing, so they could confidently and competently participate in any aspect of the process they wished, barrier-free. The Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research (SCPOR) has many

supports for POR teams as part of their funding and traineeship programs. Our team took advantage of these, so that all team members could develop skills and gain experience as part of this process.

Our team communicated mostly electronically, using both Facebook Messenger (Meta Platforms) and e-mail. Messenger was an invaluable tool for our team due to its instant nature and the ability to communicate as a group rather than individually. This method of communication supported ongoing connection between team members at a geographical distance, and allowed troubleshooting while apart. With the awarding of substantial funds to support this project through the 2018 SPROUT grant⁶, we were able to remunerate team members for their involvement, provide training on POR in the community, and offer honoraria and gifts to participants and Elders involved in the project. These funds have contributed to the operationalization of the 4Rs of research in this project, allowing us to meaningfully commit to disrupting power dynamics and tangibly recognizing the expertise and lived experience of Elders and local individuals. All community-based team members but one remained engaged for the duration of the project since we began in February of 2019. We were fortunate to welcome three summer students to the team over the course of the project, and have added additional team members as the project has evolved over time. A description of our team profile and individual roles, within the framework of Patient-Oriented Research, follows.

3.2.2.1 Team Profile and Roles

⁶ The SPROUT grant was a funding collaboration between the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research and the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation.

In patient and community-oriented research, patients or community members are equal partners in decision making and project focus and design, and together with knowledge users create and implement the study approach, working with a team in which relevant disciplines and stakeholders are represented (Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research, 2018). The composition of our team demonstrates alignment with the POR structure, including patients or patient-family advisors, researchers, health care providers and decision-makers. With the community as our ‘patient’, community members have taken the role of ‘community advisors’ in place of patients or patient-family advisors on our project.

Community Advisors are individuals who have lived experience of the phenomenon of interest, bringing knowledge and expertise to the project that members from outside the community do not possess.

- Genevieve Candelora-Kustiak (GC) is a white woman of European descent. She is the co-chair of Northern Animal Rescue Humane Society and has been a volunteer with the organization since inception in January of 2009. Her educational background and work experiences are in child development and in-home family support. She was involved in every step of this project, including data collection, analysis and interpretation. Genevieve also developed many of the project’s new and unique directions, including recruitment of local artists to render artistic interpretations of our findings as a knowledge translation tool.
- Leonard Herb Isbister (LHI) is a member of the LLRIB. To the team he brought the perspective of an animal lover, pet owner and community member, and someone who has knowledge on animal care to share with others in his community. He was involved in early project design and data collection.

- Kara Schneider-Ross (KSR) is a member of Montreal Lake First Nation and is a teacher at the Band-run middle school in the study community. Kara is a dog lover and a highly engaged educator who brings her passion for connecting with and empowering youth to this project. Kara has facilitated data collection with her students for the youth-engaged portion of our project, and took part in data analysis and interpretation, as well as iterative project design in the later phases of the study.
- Elder John Halkett (JH) has provided support to this project from inception. He is a Woodland Cree Elder and Medicine Keeper, and a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band. Elder John is passionate about passing on teachings about living in harmony with all our relatives, and his influence has been integral to the building and evolution of this project.
- Brandon White (BW) was added to the research team in late 2021 as a photographer and videographer. Brandon has Métis and European ancestry, and has lived in La Ronge his whole life. Brandon's background is in biology, freelance photography, and research knowledge translation. He has supported the development and sharing of our research outcomes, and has been involved in data analysis in the later stages of the project.

Researchers are individuals who have background experience or training in research and whose roles are focused on providing structure to the project so that patient/community-defined priorities can be investigated with validity and rigor, producing transferrable findings.

- Kelsey Carlson (KC) is a field biologist and a member of the LLRIB. She served as a summer research assistant in the summers of 2019 and 2020. Kelsey is very interested in animal health as an element of community health, and hopes to support improved access to animal health services for her community. Kelsey was heavily involved in data

collection and analysis for this project, and served a dual role as both a researcher and a community advisor. Kelsey's role as a summer assistant was invaluable, as she had connections and relationships in the community that any other research assistant would have had to build over time – a notable challenge during a summer work placement.

- Charlie Wyatt-Swain (CW-S) is a veterinary student, a Métis-Inuit woman and a member of the NunatuKavut community in Labrador, Canada. Charlie served as a summer research assistant during the summer of 2021. Charlie is very interested in working with Indigenous communities to improve access to veterinary care, and hopes to incorporate this type of community-based work in her future veterinary career. Charlie was heavily involved with data analysis and interpretation for this project.
- Kasey Keohane (KK) is a white woman of European descent. She is a nursing student and served as a summer research assistant in the summer of 2021. Kasey has a great deal of experience working in veterinary clinics and is especially interested in the intersection of animal and human health as a future human healthcare worker. Kasey was heavily involved with data analysis and interpretation for this project.
- Jordan Woodsworth (writer – JW) is a PhD candidate and veterinarian, and served as the functional research lead on this project, which comprises the body of work for her doctorate. Jordan serves dual roles on this project, as both researcher and healthcare provider.
- Tasha Epp (TE) is a white woman of European descent. She is a veterinary epidemiologist and the principal investigator for this project, also serving as my academic supervisor. Tasha has a particular interest in the epidemiology of zoonotic disease and the issues related to dogs faced by communities that lack regular access to veterinary care.

Tasha has provided oversight to every aspect of this project as PI, and participated in coding of participant interviews.

Health Care Providers are individuals involved in the delivery of healthcare services for animals or humans. These individuals have knowledge of health systems and bring practical expertise concerning health phenomena to the team.

- Lisa Mayotte (LM) is a member of the LLRIB and is the Manager of Community Health Nursing (CHN) for Band health services. As CHN manager, Lisa oversees the public health aspect of follow-up after dog bite incidents involving Band members. Lisa is a dog lover, and hopes to improve the health and well-being of both dogs and humans through her involvement. Lisa has been involved in data analysis and interpretation for this project.

Decision Makers are individuals involved in making or influencing decisions related to the health phenomenon of interest. They can help implement changes as an outcome of POR by virtue of their role.

- Ann Ratt (AR) is a member of the LLRIB and works as a Band Councilor. Ann is regarded as the ‘dog lady’ for the Band, and was instrumental in developing and implementing dog control bylaws for her First Nation during previous terms as councilor. Ann sees the issues with dogs in her community daily, and hopes that the outcomes of this research lead to healthier relationships between dogs and humans. Ann has been involved in project design, data collection and interpretation for this project, as well as supporting relationship building with Elders. Ann serves a dual role as a decision maker and a community advisor on this project.

3.3 Final Research Queries and Data Sources

In this section, I will first describe how our research queries changed over the course of the project, in response to experiences during initial data collection and feedback from team members and participants. I will then describe the data sources and methods used in addressing each research query in turn. Stake (1995) tells us that in case studies, it is imperative to state the *issues*, which may be in the form of research queries, at the start of the study. These issues may shift and change throughout the course of the study, which is accommodated by the methodological flexibility inherent in case study, but stating the issues outright is important to provide conceptual structure to the study (Stake, 1995). Adhering to the principles of POR, the research questions below were developed by the Research Advisory Circle based on the priorities stated by Circle members.

Query 1 (original): *What are the local understandings of what ‘pet’ dogs are, and how do local people understand and achieve health for dogs?*

Following early data collection events, our team realized that ‘pets’ are not the only roles dogs play in the lives of humans, so our question needed to get broader to accommodate that.

Additionally, what our participants really wanted to talk about was their relationships with dogs and how these were related to the roles dogs play and how dogs are managed. As a result of these findings, we changed our first query to reflect community priorities.

Query 1 (modified): *What are the roles of dogs in the Tri-communities, and how are these reflected in the dog-human relationship as described by local individuals?*

Query 2 (original): *2. What are the factors that inform and influence current approaches to dog care and control in the region, and how do these support or challenge population control, health and welfare for dogs?*

The wording of query 2 was simplified over time to better reflect what our data were telling us.

Query 2 (modified): *How is care and control of dog health, welfare and population undertaken in the Tri-communities, and what are the strengths and challenges of current approaches?*

Query 3: *How do current approaches to dog care and control support or challenge the health and safety of dog-human interactions in the Tri-communities?*

No modifications were necessary for this query.

3.3.1 Data sources and methods overview

To address query 1, two data sources were used. Conversational interviews were initiated with adult participants from all 3 communities. Additionally, youth from the grade 9 class at the middle school on reserve were invited to contribute reflective journals as a second data source. The method of inquiry used with adult participants was the conversational method, introduced by Margaret Kovach (Kovach, 2010a), a foundational scholar on Indigenous research methodologies in a Canadian context. This approach is highly relevant within an Indigenous paradigm which flows from and is defined by relationships and a relational approach to knowledge creation (Kovach, 2010a; Wilson, 2008). According to Kovach, the conversational method is not unique to Indigenous methodologies, but the approach taken in this method is distinctive within an Indigenous paradigm (Kovach, 2010a). The following characteristics define an Indigenous conversational method (Kovach, 2010a, p. 128):

'it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology ... and situated within an Indigenous paradigm; it is relational; it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim); it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and/or place; it involves an informality and flexibility; it is collaborative and dialogic; it is reflexive.'

When research team members engage in organic conversation with participants, providing guidance and ample space for storytelling, knowledge is co-created (Atkinson et al., 2021). This collaboration roots the method in relationship through building trust and rapport, and adds reflexivity by allowing the team member to access their own lived experience and knowledge in creating deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Kovach, 2010b).

Our conversational approach originated with an interview guide to support community-based team members (Genevieve, Ann, Leonard and Kelsey) in conducting conversations (Figure 3.2). This guide was developed by our Research Advisory Circle prior to the onset of data collection. While some team members found the guide helpful, others noted that it seemed repetitive and added rigidity to the conversations, limiting the ability of participants to fully engage and deeply share their stories. It was also noted that asking participants about what a 'pet' is to them might result in missing the other roles of dogs beyond 'pet' that may be important in their lives and communities (Aenishaenslin et al., 2019; Constable et al., 2010; Ma et al., 2020). These challenges resonate with the perspectives on relational interviewing shared by Wilson (2008), Kovach (2010b) and Edwards and Holland (2020). The discord between having local team members conduct data collection and the varied training and comfort levels each team member brings to the process was felt by our team and demonstrated in the variable lengths, detail and depth of the data collected. Though this could be construed as a challenge to

robustness in our study, we view this as a natural result of team-based data collection, and a part of the process when community capacity building is woven into the fabric of research.

Figure 3.2 Initial Guide for Conversational Interviews

1. Do you have a pet dog? How would you describe what a ‘pet’ is to you?
2. How would you describe a healthy dog?
 - a. What do pet owners need to ensure their dogs are healthy and to keep them healthy?
3. When your dog is sick, where do you go for help?
 - a. What choices do you have when your dog is sick?
4. Do you know who/where to call to get advice on pet health care?
 - a. What kind of help would you like that you can’t currently access in your community regarding dog health?
5. How would you describe the roles dogs have for you/your community?
6. What would you describe as appropriate care for dogs in your community?
 - a. How does this change based on weather, lifestage, other factors?
7. When there are excess loose or roaming dogs, where do they come from?
8. What is achieved by letting dogs roam?
 - a. What do people gain or lose?
 - b. What do dogs gain or lose?
 - c. What are some alternatives?
9. Who do you consider to be involved in dog management in your community?
 - a. Who should be involved?
 - b. What comments do you have about the current organizations and strategies for dog management in your community?
10. What comments do you have about population control methods such as dog pulls and out-of-community pet fostering and adoptions?
 - a. How do you/would you feel if your own dog got loose or got pulled through one of these programs?
 - b. What motivates people to keep dogs in or let them loose when dog pulls are going to happen?
11. What do you know about animal control bylaws in your community?
 - a. What responsibilities do dog owners have to understand and follow the bylaws?
 - b. How effective are the bylaws? Are they working?
12. What else is it important for us to know about dogs and their relationships to people in the community?

After an initial complement of fifteen conversational interviews, five more participants were added to further illustrate divergent perspectives discovered in one of the initial conversations. For these, the original interview guide was modified and used less rigidly to allow

for more organic flow between participants and interviewers. Team members were reminded to engage with curiosity, and proceed as if they were having a chat with a friend or family member (Atkinson et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2014). If they had a question that was not in the guide, they were encouraged to ask it, and trust their intuition when they wanted to know more about something a participant said. In this way, the quality of the conversations was enhanced as team members felt less restricted and goal-oriented in their inquiry, and approached the conversations open to the process and what might be discovered together with participants.

The method of inquiry employed for the youth journal exercises was reflective journaling. Journaling has been used in the fields of education, counselling, nursing and others as an effective and accessible means to learning, healing and general stress reduction (Hiemstra, 2001; Kelley et al., 2015; Utley & Garza, 2011). Journaling as a reflective exercise can capture the thoughts and feelings of students who may not wish to engage vulnerably with classmates and teachers face-to-face, but have valuable reflections to share (Kelley et al., 2015; Utley & Garza, 2011). In communities where there is a higher incidence of aggressive dog-human encounters, youth may have experienced trauma related to dogs, such as being bitten or witnessing dogs being shot as a mechanism of dealing with increased population, roaming and packing (Aenishaenslin et al., 2019; Baker et al., 2020). Journaling has been shown to support the processing of trauma (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005; Mariah Snyder & Ruth Lindquist, 2009; Utley & Garza, 2011), which in these cases can lead to healing of the relationships between youth and dogs. Youth also tend to have different relationships with dogs than adults do (Schurer et al., 2015a), so, their ideas and observations about dogs in their homes and neighbourhoods can add valuable richness to a study about the dog-human bond. Reflective journaling was already integrated into the learning plan for KSR's class, as a regular element of the students' weekly

assignments. For the purposes of our project, KSR assigned four questions on which her class was to reflect (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Reflective Questions for Youth Journaling

1. How are dogs important to you and your family? How are they important in your community?
2. What are you worried about regarding dogs in your home and community? Explain.
3. What do healthy and safe dog-human relationships look like to you? What can be done to keep dogs and humans healthy and safe together in your community?
4. What does a healthy dog look like? How do you properly care for a dog? How can our community help keep dogs and people healthy?

Queries 2 and 3 were initially addressed through key informant interviews using a conversational approach with open-ended questions (Kovach, 2010a). As guided conversations, these interviews took the form of dialogues, where interviewer and participants co-created knowledge through the interaction (Kovach, 2010a). These interviews were conducted by me, and my approach was informed by my own previous knowledge as well as the preliminary findings from the interviews and reflective journals described above. Interviews took place between December 2020 and December 2021. All conversations were conducted over Zoom (Zoom Video Communications, San Jose, California), as the COVID-19 pandemic required altered approaches to manage risk of disease transmission.

Other data sources used to address queries 2 and 3 include provincial animal welfare legislation; provincial veterinary legislation; local animal control bylaws; local humane society records; and records of public health reporting and follow up surrounding aggressive dog-human encounters resulting in human injuries. These sources served to triangulate and validate the data collected through our interviews and illustrate discord between what is reported to be happening and what is documented in regulations or guidelines. In our effort to provoke change to policy

and practice around dog care and control and the dog-human interface, finding out about what is happening in relationship to what is expected according to related documents is necessary. Mismatch between policy and practice can help identify ways in which current policy is not working, and opportunities for practice to be altered to best match local and provincial ideals for dog health, welfare and population control.

It is important to note that the conversational interviews and reflective journals from query 1 also gleaned information pertaining to queries 2 and 3. This data was useful not only in formulating and refining an approach to the key informant interviews based on what was left to find out, but it also helped form the blueprint of our team's understanding of the case as we progressed through the project. This experience aligns with the expected iterative nature of qualitative and community-oriented inquiry, where change over time in response to incremental findings improves the richness of the study and further refines the illustration of the 'case' (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009).

To assist with triangulation and validation of data, we also held talking circles and an Elder's tea to discuss preliminary findings with community members, including previous participants.

3.3.2 Participant recruitment

For the initial fifteen conversational interviews, Advisory Circle members unanimously felt that social media was the best way to recruit participants, as almost everyone in the area, even elders, use Facebook. We shared our recruitment poster (Appendix A) widely on Facebook, and set up a new email account for prospective participants to respond to the call. We essentially used a purposeful sampling technique (Creswell & Poth, 2018; DePoy & Gitlin, 2016), aiming to

recruit participants who had lived in the community for five years or longer, were 18 years or older, and thus had lived experience with dogs in the Tri-communities. We were interested in the input of both pet owners and non-pet owners, and we started out looking for an equal number of participants from each of the municipalities and the Band (five each). Interested participants could phone or email to get involved, and the team also informally monitored the Facebook post for questions and interested individuals, redirecting them to the contact methods specified on the poster (Appendix A). As interested participants responded, we asked further questions to ensure eligibility, and created a list of participants including their community affiliation, pet ownership status, and preferred contact method. Then as a group, we assigned participants to individual team members, and they contacted participants directly to set up a mutually agreeable time and date for the interview. After the first fifteen interviews, five more participants were recruited to further explore divergent perspectives discovered in one of the initial interviews. These participants were recruited purposively by team members for their knowledge of traditional dog roles in the area and were both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. A list of participant attributes is below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Conversational Interview Participant Attributes

Participant ID	Community Affiliation	Dog Owner (Y/N)	Interviewer	Interview Date
LLRIB_1	LLRIB	Y	KC	18/06/2019
LLRIB_2	LLRIB	Y	LHI	26/06/2019
LLRIB_3	LLRIB	N	AR	20/06/2019
LLRIB_4	LLRIB	N	GC	20/06/2019
LLRIB_5	LLRIB	N	AR	23/06/2019
LLRIB_6	LLRIB	Y	GC	30/04/2021

LLRIB_6.1 ⁷	LLRIB	Y	AR	10/04/2021
LLRIB_7	LLRIB	Y	GC	17/04/2021
LaRonge_1	La Ronge	Y	LHI	25/06/2019
LaRonge_2	La Ronge	Y	GC	17/06/2019
LaRonge_3	La Ronge	Y	KC	17/06/2019
LaRonge_4	La Ronge	Y	AR	26/06/2019
LaRonge_5	La Ronge	Y	KC	10/06/2019
LaRonge_6	LaRonge	Y	KC	23/06/2019
LaRonge_7	LaRonge	Y	AR	03/04/2021
AR_1	Air Ronge	Y	AR	21/06/2019
AR_2	Air Ronge	Y	LHI	24/06/2019
AR_3	Air Ronge	Y	GC	26/06/2019
AR_4	Air Ronge	Y	GC	19/06/2019
AR_5	Potato Lake ⁸	Y	GC	26/04/2021

All grade 9 students in KSR’s class were assigned the reflective journal questions in Figure 3.3. Upon completion of their journaling assignment, students were sent home with guardian consent forms (Appendix G) and were invited to sign assent forms (Appendix H) if they wished to have their assignments submitted to be used as data. Nine students submitted their journal assignments, and these were de-identified by Kara prior to submission. It was made clear

⁷ This participant was interviewed twice, as their status as a community Elder provided a deeper understanding of some of the traditional teachings around the dog-human relationship and dog roles for Woodland Cree

⁸ This participant lives just South of Air Ronge and is an active member of the community, particularly in dog-related activities.

to both students and their guardians that the grades received on their journal assignments would not be affected by their decision to submit their completed reflections for use in the research project. A class-wide catered lunch was provided at the end of the school year as thanks for their participation, and all students were invited to share this regardless of whether they submitted their assignments for use in the project.

Key informants were recruited purposively, based on research team member knowledge of who could provide the information needed for our case study. In many cases, there were existing relationships which could be leveraged to support the collection of this data. Efforts were made to include informants who could fill gaps made evident by early data analysis and preliminary findings. Description of key informant roles related to community dog care and control and the order in which they were interviewed are illustrated in Table 3.2, below.

Table 3.2 Key Informant Roles and Interview Dates

Key Informant ID	Key Informant Role	Interview Date
KI1	Animal Protection Officer for Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan	December 10, 2020
KI2	Board Member 1 – Northern Animal Rescue	January 14, 2021
KI3.1 KI3.2	Mayor and Councillor for Village of Air Ronge (2 individuals)	January 15, 2021
KI4	Board Member 2 – Northern Animal Rescue	January 21, 2021
KI5	Staff Sergeant – La Ronge RCMP detachment	January 29, 2021
KI6	Dog Musher	February 11, 2021
KI7	LLRIB Dog Catcher	March 4, 2021
KI8	LLRIB Health Services Community Health Nurse 1	December 9, 2021
KI9	LLRIB Health Services Community Health Nurse 2	December 9, 2021

Talking circle participants were recruited using word of mouth and social media (see recruitment poster, Appendix B). Elders were engaged based on community-based team member knowledge of who would have interest, as well as recommendations from Elder John (see invitation poster, Appendix C).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

As we conducted this project, we were constantly mindful of ethical considerations. The project's questions were about dogs and dog management, but the focus was deeply human in nature. That the research involved youth, Elders and Indigenous individuals necessitated close adherence to chapter 9 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). This chapter of the policy statement emphasizes the importance of conducting research *with* Indigenous people and communities rather than *on* or *about* them. Indigenous peoples should be collaborators in research concerning them, and consent from community leaders and individual participants is essential prior to proceeding with any research. Community customs should be observed, and reciprocity is an important element of respectful conduct, acknowledging that participant time and knowledge are valuable and deserve to be recognized as such. Accordingly, interview participants and youth involved in the project all received a gift in return for their time and contribution, in the form of a gift card or e-transfer (interviews) or celebratory event (youth). These gifts were non-conditional on the complete participation of individuals in the project, and everyone was given the chance to withdraw from the project if they so desired. Elders were appropriately remunerated for their time and involvement in the project, through the provision of gifts, tobacco and cloth, and honoraria at a rate of \$300 per half day or \$600 per full day.

It was crucial to consider and examine power dynamics and the potential for oppressive action through our research activities. Our study received initial ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan's Research Ethics Board (BehID #987), as well as receiving approval from SMVS school administration and Chief and Council of the LLRIB (Appendices D, E, and F). Adult participants provided written informed consent (Appendix A), and youth participants provided informed assent and guardian informed consent (Appendices G and H). For key informant interviews, talking circles and examination of dog bite records, a second behavioural ethics certificate was awarded (BehID #1976 – Appendix I). Participants provided informed consent (Appendix J), and access to dog bite records was granted provided there was complete anonymization prior to release. Community approval of the research process and findings was sought throughout the project through Advisory Circle discussions, as well as a community talking circle and Elder tea. We did not share research findings outside of the community without Advisory Circle approval, and were conscious of community dynamics throughout the project, ensuring that we captured the voices and perspectives of as many facets of the community as possible, including those whose voices might otherwise be silenced due to various forms of marginalization. Finally, we adhered to the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession of data, as discussed in the next section on data management.

3.5 Data Management

Data with identifiers intact were stored on a server at the University of Saskatchewan, accessible through password-protected access by TE, JW and the summer research assistants. De-identified data were stored at the U of S in the same manner. These data were accessible at times to research team members for the purposes of collaborative analysis. At the outset of the project, the plan was to store data pertaining to Indigenous participants on a password-protected

computer at the Lac La Ronge Indian Band Office. However, there is no existing setup for storing data of this nature, so instead a 4TB external hard-drive (WD Discovery: My Passport) was purchased to be password-protected and encrypted to securely store LLRIB data and be stored at the Band Office. This duplicate storage is an essential feature of research with Indigenous communities, as it ensures the community has ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) of the data at all times (Datta, 2017; Schnarch, 2004). Adherence to OCAP principles is crucial within the decolonizing framework of this project, and ensures that Indigenous members of the community maintain control over their own information to reduce the chances that it will be misused or misrepresented in ways that might perpetuate historical harms caused by extractive and culturally insensitive research practices (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). While University-housed data are only kept for seven years and then destroyed, the LLRIB will maintain ownership, control, access and possession of their data from this project as long as they desire.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Our team's approach to data analysis was not clear-cut, considering the unique blending of paradigms, methodologies and methods in our study. As a result, we developed our own framework for analysis based on work from Indigenous and Western researchers. This framework helped guide our collaborative analysis process, and supported authentic engagement of non-academic team members in analysis and interpretation.

3.6.1 Developing a Relational, Community-Oriented Framework for Qualitative Case Studies

Margaret Kovach describes data analysis within an Indigenous worldview as 'observing patterns and behaviours, and making sense of these observations' (2010b, p. 131). These patterns

and observations are highly contextualized, and there is no assumption or requirement to make them generalizable or transferrable to other contexts (Kovach, 2010b). This maintenance of context in data analysis is reflected in the work of other scholars when describing the process of making meaning out of participants' stories in a way that accurately reflects their experience. As Sutton & Austin (2015) assert, the most important part of data analysis and management is to proceed so as to remain true to the participants themselves. This sentiment is echoed by Shawn Wilson, who reminds us that as we attend to relationships and relationality through analysis, our presentation of knowledge must be true to all voices, and reflect an understanding of the topic that is shared by researcher and participants alike (2008). The interpretative and subjective are valued in tribal knowledge systems, as each individual is encouraged to take what they need from a story or experience, understanding that how they relate to that knowledge is their reality, their lived truth (Kovach, 2010b). If we are not establishing and enriching relationships through our research, we are missing the point; indeed, research itself can be seen as a process of building relationships with ideas and between individuals, and through this process we ultimately reach a higher awareness of the topic we study (Wilson, 2008).

To clarify the process of case study data organization and analysis, Catherine Houghton and co-authors (2015) provide an elegant blending of guidance from Janice Morse (1994) and Miles & Huberman (1994). This is presented in a 2015 article, correlating Morse's *Stages of Analysis* with Miles & Huberman's *Analysis Strategies*, and linking each with a *Purpose* described by Houghton et al (2015). The strategy proposed echoes the general approach to analysis illustrated by other authors, moving from categorizing data, to conceptualizing patterns, to theorizing and recontextualizing, always focusing on the overarching goal of describing and illuminating the contextualized 'case' itself (Ayres et al., 2003; Merriam, 1998; Sutton & Austin,

2015). Table 3.3 illustrates the data analysis steps that were planned prior to onset of analysis activities. This process connects the stages of data analysis, as represented by Houghton et al (2015), with important considerations for a case study conducted within an Indigenous paradigm. Columns 1-3 are taken directly from Houghton et al (2015), and column 4 is a new addition with ideas drawn from Wilson (2008) and Kovach (2010b). With recognition that the analysis and interpretation process would proceed iteratively and non-linearly in our study, this process provided a general approach to suit our community-oriented case study.

Table 3.3 Data Analysis Steps (adapted from Houghton et al, 2015)

Stage of analysis	Strategy	Purpose	Indigenous paradigm	Operationalization
Comprehending	Broad coding	Identifies domains in which codes can be developed	Keep parcels of data contextualized by linking them back to their origin. Tag each excerpt of data back to the original participant with information that allows them to be examined as part of a whole, not as a fractured bit of information without context.	Each parcel of data (interview, document, etc) is considered as a 'case' within NVIVO, and thus coded as a singular unit. As codes are created that are used in multiple data parcels, these are tagged back to the identifying data code to prevent fractioning of data
Synthesizing	Pattern coding/memoing	Explanation and inference, moving towards meaningful analysis; making sense of the data	Reflection and discussion on how our team, based on their lived experience as community members, relates to the data. Make explicit the implicit contextual knowledge individual members bring to the case. Start to build a 'story' from the coded data by developing thematic groupings of data. Continue to examine these as elements of	Within NVIVO, start to group tagged codes together to begin building a story. Gather as a group (virtually or in person) to reflect on and discuss the emerging patterns, and reflect on and record how team members perceive their own relationship with these patterns. Create a visual or textual model that illustrates relationships uncovered in the data

			<p>holistic narratives, with reflection back on context of original data elements.</p> <p>Develop statements about relationships illustrated in the data and use these in the next step.</p>	
Theorizing	Distilling and ordering, testing executive summary statements	Memos/relational statements tie together different pieces of data into a recognizable group of concepts	<p>Reflect on the purpose of the study. Team to identify how data relate to each other, and how these relationships reflect or are reflected by relationships in the community, as experienced by team members and indicated by the data</p>	As relationships within data are illustrated and visualized, come together as a group to relate these back to relationships within the community – between communities, between individuals, between organizations, between species
Recontextualizing	Developing propositions	Formalize and systemize into a coherent set of explanations	<p>Reflect on relationships, relationality, relational accountability through the work. Come back to 4Rs – respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility.</p>	Finalize model, both visual and textual (both to be used as KT products). Individual and group reflections on relationships, relationality, relational accountability and 4Rs included in model

The first stage of analysis, termed by Morse as ‘Comprehending’, involves applying descriptive labels (codes) to excerpts of raw data within a data management system, such as NVIVO (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse, 1994). Houghton et al. (2015) suggest the aim here is to open up and decontextualize the data so that the thoughts, ideas, and meanings within can be uncovered. The codes, which can be developed both *a priori* and during initial analysis, should always link back to the primary aims of the research (Stake, 1995), and can be distinguished by participant perspective (Houghton et al., 2015). This is an approach congruent with a case study with embedded units, where the team wishes to be able to analyze within and across units in illuminating the overall case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Decontextualizing data through coding, particularly when raw data are in the form of observations and narratives, does not align well with research in an Indigenous paradigm, where relational context and holistic understanding are central to knowledge creation. To customize the ‘comprehension’ stage, our team coded each data parcel while keeping each account together to preserve context. Then patterns could be identified through comparison both between accounts and across all accounts. This is in line with the ‘hermeneutical spiral’ described by Ayres et al (2003) as a way to rigorously track thematic variation across accounts with context intact.

The second stage of analysis is ‘Synthesizing’, where perceptions of the case from various data sources are merged to describe the patterns that are emerging across the case (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse, 1994). This stage culminates in the formulation of ‘executive summary statements’, which provide explanation and interpretation of each theme and perspective to draw meaning from the patterns (Houghton et al., 2015). Codes are compared, ensuring no codes are missed in the identification of themes. In an Indigenous paradigm, it is imperative to use intuition and non-linear reasoning during analysis (Wilson, 2008). The lived

experiences of participants and researchers play a strong role in analysis, and cannot be separated from the process (Datta et al., 2015; Wilson, 2008). In community-oriented and participatory research, this lived experience influences the development of findings, while enriching and supporting authenticity in the research. For our study, favouring the perspectives and analytical input of our community-based research team members was an important element of ensuring contextual knowledge creation. How our team relates to the data, and the implicit contextual knowledge individual members bring to the case, leads to important analytical elements that need to be made explicit through intentional reflection and discussion to fully support illumination of the case. In this way, the team can build a coherent ‘story’ together by making sense of contextualized, patterned data groupings.

The third stage of analysis, ‘Theorizing’, is when data are brought back together, as puzzle pieces might be, to build a coherent ‘whole’ by examining relationships between data categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse, 1994). This stage may not result in the development of theory, but always focuses on relationships among the data to move towards deeper understanding of what is really going on (Houghton et al., 2015). This process is continuous, and involves constant reflection on the data, challenging assertions made during analysis to connect the data into a recognizable group of concepts. ‘Executive summary statements’, the story elements developed in step 2, are used as preliminary findings to make assertions about what the data are saying, and during ‘theorizing’, these findings are confirmed by ensuring they accurately reflect what is found in the data (Houghton et al., 2015). With the focus on relationships between data, this is a suitable stage to reflect again on the purpose of the study, and as a team identify how data relate to each other, and how these relationships reflect or

are reflected by relationships in the community, as experienced by team members and indicated by the data.

The final stage of analysis is ‘Recontextualizing’ (Morse, 1994). This stage involves developing propositions, or formal ‘conclusions’ about the case, with the goal of making the findings transferrable to other settings and populations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Here, findings are related back to the literature to provide evidence of contribution to furthering knowledge on the topic of interest (Houghton et al., 2015). In our case, we also needed to formally link findings to the specific context of the phenomenon, connecting previously known contextual factors to the new information revealed during the study. This final stage of analysis was an important opportunity to reflect on how the process affected our team – how we relate to one another, how we relate to what we’ve learned from the data, and how our perspectives have changed about how we each relate to others within (and outside) the community. Because our focus is on dog-human relationships, but also on human relationships within the study community, this stage is an excellent opportunity to interpret what the data are telling us about how our participants relate to each other and to dogs, and how these relational experiences might also influence how dogs in turn relate to humans. This ultimately ties us back to the focus on dog care and control as a function of community and systemic factors rooted in relationships, relationality and relational accountability within and between species.

3.6.2 Community-Oriented Data Analysis and Interpretation

The operationalization of our framework bears description due to its uniqueness. Transparency around the process assists with our adherence to ethical standards and research validity and rigor.

3.6.2.1 Conversational Interviews and Youth Journals

Recordings of conversational interviews were sent for transcription to the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) at the University of Saskatchewan. Transcripts were cleaned and de-identified in accordance with project ethics. Following transcription, JW, TE, KC, GC, LM, CWS and KK engaged in coding as the initial step of data analysis. Most team members had never been involved in qualitative data analysis prior to participation in the present project. To support the coding process, it was explained that coding involves assigning meaning to passages of text and defining those meanings so they can be applied to other passages as well. In the case of community-based team members, codes were informed by lived experience within the study community and with the phenomenon of interest. For JW and summer research assistants CWS and KK, code development was partially informed by experience in veterinary environments and in the study community, and partially informed by existing literature.

Team members without access to qualitative analysis software performed hand-coding on paper copies of the transcripts, printed with wide margins. Codes created by these team members were later entered into NVIVO 12 (QSR international), and codes from all members were amalgamated in a master code book (Appendix K). JW, TE, KC, CWS and KK all used NVIVO 12 for coding purposes. KC, JW, TE, GC and LM performed initial coding on interviews from the first round of conversations in the summers of 2019 and 2020, followed by further coding by KK and CWS in the summer of 2021. Upon completion of initial coding, there was substantial overlap in codes created by individual team members, despite working independently and without the use of an *a priori* codebook. Following development of the master code book, team members met in the study community in the summer of 2021 to begin developing themes from the codes.

Coding of youth journal entries was performed by JW, KK and CWS in the spring of 2021, and this was used as a ‘practice run’ of coding and theme derivation for KK and CWS. Once codes were created and defined in NVIVO 12, individual codebooks were printed out and codes were cut out to facilitate physical grouping into themes. Evolution of theme derivation was facilitated during analysis and interpretation exercises undertaken with community-based team members later in the summer of 2021.

Over two consecutive days in August of 2021, JW, KK, GC, LM and KSR met at a cultural centre in the study community. The code book was printed, and individual codes cut out so they could be physically grouped together based on related meanings. Results of this coding and interpretation process are discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.6.2.2 Key Informant Interviews

As key informant conversations were conducted, a preliminary transcript was produced through Zoom. Following the conversations and rendering of the transcript, JW completed, formatted, cleaned and de-identified each. These transcripts were then shared with CW-S who continued to provide support to the project into the fall of 2021.

CW-S worked on coding key informant interviews using NVIVO. There was some overlap with codes from the master code book developed that summer, and there were also some unique codes developed based on the altered focus of these interviews. Unique codes are indicated in the master code book (Appendix K). JW also coded all key informant interviews, beginning in fall of 2021 and concluding in summer of 2022. No other team members were able to commit time to coding this batch of interviews, and all agreed that, given the initial collaboration in the development of the master code book, this would not affect the overall

quality of the analysis. In September of 2022, JW, GC and BW gathered to work on theme derivation and interpretation of unique codes from the key informant interviews. Results of this collaboration are discussed further in Chapter 6.

3.6.2.3 Documents

While the contents of the documents utilized to answer questions 2 and 3 were not analyzed for themes per se, they were examined by JW for content. This was done to triangulate and confirm or contradict the findings from the interviews and journal entries. Though the contents of the documents were not used unto themselves to contribute to model-building, their examination allowed the highlighting of any gaps between what was reported to be happening through previous data elements, and what ‘should’ be happening based on what is in the documents. These gaps provide the justification for recommended changes to policy and practice surrounding dog population control, health and welfare in the Tri-communities and other underserved communities in Saskatchewan and beyond.

3.7 Research validity and rigor

The validity and rigor of case study research can be a point of contention in Western academia, particularly when approaches used are ‘sloppy’ and there is a lack of transparency (Yin, 2012). In case study, rigor is achieved through examination of an issue from multiple angles, a process called ‘triangulation’ (Stake, 1995). Stake asserts that triangulation helps to clarify meaning by examining a case from various perspectives, taking into account the differing realities experienced by individuals (2008). Triangulation is possible through examining the phenomenon using multiple data sources and types of data to ensure a multi-dimensional understanding. Triangulation is also achieved through ‘investigator triangulation’, or the

examination of the same phenomenon by more than one researcher to establish convergence or divergence of interpretation based on differing perspectives or views (Stake, 1995). This method of triangulation is similar to ‘peer debriefing’ (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016), which was utilized in our study through the involvement of more than one team member in all aspects of the project, including data analysis.

Validity, or the degree of ‘trustworthiness’ (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016) of our findings, was further attended to through member checking and reflexivity. Member checking involves checking assumptions with study participants or key informants (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016). This approach to ensuring validity is well supported by the community-oriented (and therefore participatory) nature of the present study, and further supports efforts towards sharing findings only once they are validated by community membership. We achieved this approach through Advisory Circle activities, frequent communications between research team members, our talking circle event and Elder engagement, and presentation of preliminary findings to the youth involved in the reflective journaling. During these activities, emerging themes were presented to community members and feedback sought about the accuracy of findings and areas needing further examination. Reflexivity as an approach to self-examination, enabling transparency regarding investigator bias, was practiced throughout the project through oral and written journaling (JW) and open-ended conversations (JW with other research team members) to establish positioning and identify new realizations. The beauty of reflexivity in this project has been the transformative nature of the process for our team members.

Validity within an Indigenous paradigm again brings us back to relationships and relational accountability. As described earlier, ‘truth’ within an Indigenous paradigm is only created and experienced within the context of relationships. The ultimate measure of validity or

‘truth and trustworthiness’ of research within this paradigm is the usefulness of the project’s outcomes to the community (Kovach, 2010b). To give what is learned back to the community from which the knowledge originated is part of an integrated knowledge translation plan, and it is also part of the ethics we as researchers are bound by when conducting research with Indigenous peoples (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). This focus on serving and supporting community growth and self-determination has been the ultimate purpose for this work from the start. As long as our research serves the needs of the community and produces outcomes that are useful, understood by, and applicable to the community, our project will be valid, relevant and meaningful (Kovach, 2010b).

CHAPTER 4: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES OF DOGS AND THE DOG-HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IN A NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN COMMUNITY

Prior to the collection of data, our team understood that dogs were important members of the community but did not know what the roles of dogs were or how the dog-human relationship was characterized within the Tri-communities. In this chapter, community perspectives on the roles of dogs and other contributors to the dog-human relationship will be described. To aid in this description, a model of relational health between dogs and people will be presented, which informs the analysis and interpretation of data in this and future chapters.

4.1 Dog Roles – Background

The benefits and risks at the dog-human interface have been widely covered in the literature from varied perspectives and were previously discussed in Chapter 1. However, the roles of dogs in communities experiencing a lack of access to regular animal health and welfare services have not been characterized, and literature on this topic is sparse, particularly in the Canadian context. Understanding dog roles is critical to improve the appreciation that service providers and decision makers have for the value of dogs in these communities, and the importance of fostering and maintaining dog-human relationships everywhere. This understanding can help to dismantle the belief that ‘owning a dog is a privilege and not a right’ (Quain, 2002) – a common adage amongst animal health and welfare professionals. This sentiment alludes to the idea that if people cannot provide for a dog’s needs, they should not have access to dog ownership. While there is truth in the adage – access to pet ownership is not enshrined in Human Rights codes – it does little to recognize the reality that people WILL own

dogs, regardless of their access to resources and services to support animal health and welfare. In the Canadian context, animal health professionals are obligated to seek to optimize public health while attending to general animal health and welfare in their work (Bourque, 2016; Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, 2021).

With this knowledge, and understanding the benefits dogs can bring to the health and wellbeing of their human counterparts, what responsibilities do we have as animal health professionals and as members of society to support the human-dog relationship in all contexts, regardless of individual access to resources? What can we do to improve access to these resources so that all dogs and all humans can enjoy healthy and safe relationships together? And further, what value and roles do roaming dogs or community-owned dogs have, that might indicate their presence in the community is appreciated and should be maintained, as opposed to eliminated through culls or dog pulls?

These were the questions in mind when our team set out to answer our first research query: *What are the roles of dogs in the Tri-communities, and how are these reflected in the dog-human relationship as described by local individuals?*

4.2 Dog-Human Relationship – Legal Context

Before discussing community member perspectives on the dog-human relationship in the Tri-communities, I will summarize how the relationship is characterized in existing legislation relevant to the study context. From a legal perspective, the relationship between dogs and humans is only regarded as one of ownership. Under Canadian law, animals are still considered property, regardless of the depth and importance of the relationship for many individuals, families and communities (Hunter & Brisbin, 2016). Legislation pertaining to animal ownership

is found federally in Canadian Property legislation; provincially in the Animal Protection Act and the Stray Animals Act; and locally in the animal control bylaws of Air Ronge, La Ronge, and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

According to Canadian property laws, ownership of a dog is determined by proof of payment for the animal; the name on the licensing or medical paperwork; the name on the bills for any veterinary care rendered; and whomever took primary responsibility for the animal's daily care (Tailor Law Professional Corporation, n.d.). Ownership is loosely defined in the Stray Animals Act and the Animal Protection Act as 'the person who owns an animal or who has care or control of an animal' (Government of Saskatchewan, 2010b, p. 3) and 'a person who owns an animal; has custody or control of an animal; or has custody or charge of a minor who is the owner of an animal' (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018, p. 5).

The LLRIB Animal Control By-law defines an owner as 'any natural or legal person that owns, harbours, possesses, or has control, care or custody over an animal' (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, 2014, p. 2). The La Ronge Dog Control Bylaw defines an owner as 'any person, partnership, association, or corporation owning, possessing, harboring, keeping, or having custody, care or control over a dog' (The Town of La Ronge, 2011, p. 2). The Air Ronge Animal Control Bylaw does not provide a direct definition of an owner, but does refer to 'the owner, possessor, or harbourer of the dog' (Northern Village of Air Ronge, 2011, p. 1). Because these definitions themselves contain the word 'own', it is necessary to further define ownership. According to Merriam-Webster online, an owner is 'one who has the legal or rightful title to something; one to whom property belongs; one with an interest in and often dominion over property' (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

The shortcomings of the legal definitions of the dog-human relationship are clear when we look at the complexity of the dog-human relationship, and begin to regard dogs as sentient beings capable of initiating and terminating interspecies relationships of their own volition (Quain, 2002). In many Australian Indigenous communities, dogs are seen as relatives and in many ways equals to their human counterparts (Constable et al., 2010). Following description of the team's data analysis and interpretation processes, this chapter will explore dog-human relationships and their diverse contributors, including the roles of dogs within the Tri-communities.

4.3 Conversational Interviews – An Iterative Experience

Twenty conversational interviews with community participants were conducted by community-based team members GC, KC, AR and LHI. The community affiliations, interviewer, pet ownership status and interview date for these conversations are summarized in Table 3.1. During conversational interviews, adult participants were asked about the roles that dogs have in the community, in addition to being asked about dogs as pets. This question was formulated with the assumption that 'pet' was a given role of dogs for all participants. Team members found that presuming all dogs are regarded as pets was short-sighted and may have led to gaps in our understanding of dog roles as some participants may have hesitated to discuss other of roles dogs in their lives, due to our preconceived ideas. As one of our participants stated, 'I really don't consider them pets. I consider them part of a pack, I'm part of their pack' (LLRIB_7).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, after an initial fifteen interviews, we conducted 5 more conversations to elaborate on a divergent perspective discovered in one of the initial data

collection events. The divergent interview addressed experiences of anti-Indigenous racism through dog management, as well as traditional Woodland Cree upbringing with dogs as companions, transportation and protection on the trap-line. The additional participants were purposively recruited by community-based team members for their knowledge and experience around traditional roles of dogs, from both First Nations and non-First Nations perspectives.

4.4 Collaborative Data Analysis: Operationalization

4.4.1 Comprehending

As discussed in Chapter 3, data were collected and analyzed collaboratively with community-based team members. Initial coding was completed by JW, TE, KC, LM and GC. Coding began in the summer of 2019 and continued into the summer of 2021, when KK and CW-S took part. The delay in completing coding was largely due to challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited our ability to meet, even virtually, due to lockdowns and team members' other responsibilities in the Tri-communities. Not all team members coded all transcripts; collectively, however, all transcripts were coded at least once by members of the team. Upon completion of initial coding, there was substantial overlap in codes created by individual team members, despite working independently and without the use of an *a priori* codebook. Following development of the master code book, team members met in the study community in the summer of 2021 to begin developing themes from the codes.

The next step was coding the youth journal entries submitted by the grade 9 students in KSR's class. JW, KK and CW-S all coded the journals, as an introductory exercise for KK and CW-S to coding and the use of NVIVO 12. Once coding of the journals was complete, theme

derivation was initiated to practice this step of analysis prior to our meeting with the youth participants in June of 2021.

4.4.2 Synthesizing – Youth Journals

The initial theme derivation exercise was completed by JW, KK and CW-S using the codes from the youth journals. While this served as an introduction to theme development for KK and CW-S as summer research assistants, given that there was no community member involvement, the results were preliminary and required further development with other team members. From an outsider perspective, the initial themes tended towards dichotomies of ‘good and bad’, ‘human and animal’, and other such Western-based binary thinking models (Sheets-Johnstone, 1996) (Figure 4.1). This interpretation was interesting when compared to and superimposed on the themes that were developed with team members later in the summer of 2021. The codes developed from the youth journals are all found, in some version, within the master code book derived from the conversational interviews with adults by university and community-based team members (Appendix K). This overlap demonstrates agreement between the youth and adult participants, and highlights the differing areas of awareness and focus on the dog-human relationship between youth and adults.

Figure 4.1 Initial themes derived from Youth Journals

Dog Factors		Human Factors	
DOG NEEDS	Veterinary Care	ACCESS TO RESOURCES	Veterinary Clinic
	Nutrition		Medicine
	Body Condition		Finances
	Grooming		Training Resources

	Training	EMOTIONAL RESPONSE	Pet Loss
	Socialization		Positive Perspective
DOG ROLES	Family		Negative Perspective
	Emotional Support		Hope
	Job Roles	Fear	
	Protection	Community response	
DOG CHALLENGES	Danger	HUMAN ACTIONS	Abuse/Neglect
	Population Growth		
	Dog Mortality		
	Roaming Dogs		

4.4.3 Synthesizing and Theorizing – Adult Conversations

Over two consecutive days in August of 2021, JW, KK, GC, LM and KSR met at a cultural centre in the study community. The master code book was printed, and individual codes cut out so they could be physically grouped together based on related meanings. As with theme development from journal entries, the initial patterning tended towards a binary perception of ‘good and bad’ or ‘positive and negative’ codes, in line with a Western lens. Ultimately, the process was supported by the presence of a medicine wheel carpet on the floor of the cultural centre (Figure 4.2).

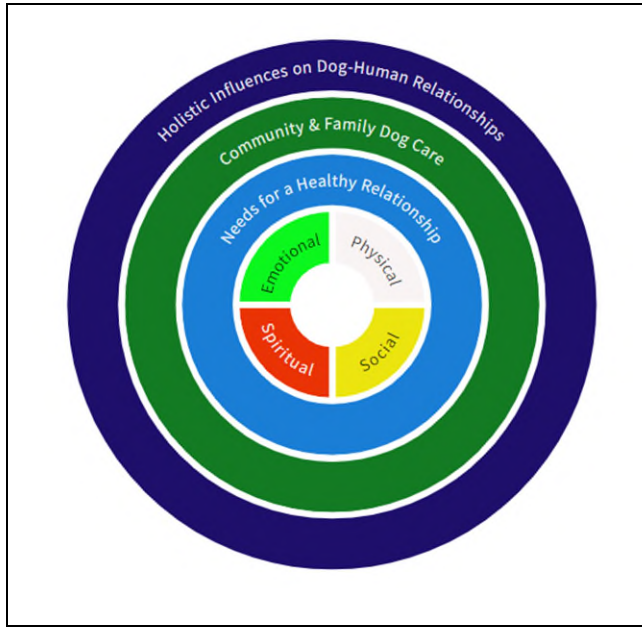
Figure 4.2 Medicine Wheel carpet



As the team worked to make meaning from the codes, GC noted the carpet on the floor and said, ‘*I wonder if we could arrange these codes within the medicine wheel? It might help us with our themes*’. As the group tried this approach, it was found that not only did the codes fit, but the medicine wheel framework allowed concurrent development of a model of relational health in alignment with a Woodland Cree worldview. Recognizing the importance of the medicine wheel as a model of holistic health for Woodland Cree (Roberts, 2005), it was noticed that the majority of codes discovered in the research easily fit into the quadrants of the medicine wheel. While the medicine wheel typically used to describe the elements of individual health contains physical, mental, emotional and spiritual domains, we adapted our model slightly to better accommodate elements of *relational* health between humans and dogs. Instead of including an intellectual or mental domain, we chose to represent this quadrant as the *social* health of the dog-human relationship – how the health of the relationship is reflected within the social fabric and cohesion of the family and community (Tognetti, 2014). To encompass all codes, the model was extended to include factors outside of the physical-social-emotional-spiritual aspects of health to consider what other forces might influence the outcomes of the dog-human relationship. In this way, a locally and culturally appropriate model was adapted to suit

the case and the data, illustrating findings in an easily translatable and transferrable manner (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Model of Dog-Human Relational Health



With the medicine wheel model in place, interpretation of the relationships between themes was possible. The model allowed conceptualization of relationships amongst all stakeholders, both canid and human, in the study community as integrated and non-directional in nature. No element of the model is superior to the others; all elements require balance for the health of the relationship between humans and dogs to be optimized and balanced. Team members appreciated being able to think of the health of the dog-human relationship as a phenomenon floating in space and interacting constantly with relationship needs, dog care and control approaches and holistic or systemic influences. In this way, the contextual elements of this phenomenon are kept intact, while also allowing the model to be transferrable to other contexts where the needs, dog care and holistic influences on the dog-human relationship may differ, but the interplay between all elements is maintained. The elements of a healthy and

balanced dog-human relationship are found in the centre of the model, and reflect the elements of holistic health. In the remainder of this chapter, we will address this portion of the model in detail, highlighting the roles of dogs and other contributors to each domain of the medicine wheel.

It is important here to note that the use of the medicine wheel as an interpretive framework was discussed with and permitted by a group of community Elders in the Tri-communities. This is a cultural framework, with important contextual meanings relating to place and topic. The use of the medicine wheel as an interpretive tool here does not imply that others can similarly use and apply it out of context. The principles of relationship, relationality and relational accountability were followed throughout this project, and we obtained permission to use this knowledge by following protocol, which included offering our Elders tobacco, cloth and rat root in exchange for their input on our preliminary findings. The format and colour scheme of our final model reflect the consensus reached by our Elders regarding use of the framework in this project. Honouring the importance of story in an Indigenous paradigm (Kovach, 2010b; Wilson, 2008), illustration of findings will build understanding of the case in a narrative manner. The remaining areas of the model will be discussed in future chapters.

4.5 Findings: Dog Roles as Elements of Relational Health

According to our model of relational health, dog roles are factors in the determination of health and balance of the dog-human relationship. What follows is a description of the varied roles described by youth and adult participants, with quotes from the data to illustrate these concepts. It is important to note that not all factors highlighted by participants were what we might consider 'positive'. It is necessary to consider the roles of dogs that both support and

challenge the balance of relational health, if we as animal health and welfare professionals and community collaborators are to understand ways in which we might optimize outcomes at the individual, family, community and systems levels. Table 4.1 summarizes which dog roles appear in which quadrants of the medicine wheel model.

Table 4.1 Dog Roles as Contributors to Relational Health

Medicine Wheel Domains	Roles
Physical	Dogs as Recreation Dogs as Protection
Social	Dogs as Transportation Dogs as Entertainment Dogs as Commodity/Status Symbol Dogs as Emotional Support
Emotional	Dogs as Family Dogs as Emotional Support Dogs as Teachers Dogs as Loyal Companions Dogs as Rescues Dogs as Protection Dogs as Gifts Dogs Only as Good as Their Humans
Spiritual	Dogs as Gifts Dogs as Symbol of Freedom Dogs as Element of Humanity Dogs Only as Good as Their Humans Dogs as Teachers Dogs as Rescues

*Bolded items are those featured in each area within this chapter

4.5.1 Dog Roles – Elements of Physical Health

The physical domain of relational health considers factors that contribute to the health of the physical relationship between dogs and humans. Adult participants recognized that dogs have important roles in the community, with those contributing to relational health in the physical domain including ‘Dogs as recreation’ and ‘Dogs as protection’. As one participant stated, ‘[t]hey’re very important...[f]or the community, I mean they’re security, they’re...recreation, entertainment’ (AR_2). The idea of dogs as recreation was echoed by

another participant, who related engaging in recreational activities with dogs to the fostering of meaningful bonds:

And so with it being a working dog, it becomes a responsibility to give them that exercise. They're not gonna be happy dogs just laying around the couch. So they need that exercise, and that's how we build relationship with the dogs, deeper relationship with them if we are active with them, if we take them out places. (AR_5)

Dogs being regarded as a means of protection was heard from several participants:

Many people want their dog to do a job for them which makes sense and having a guard dog can make people feel secure but often a guard dog is chained up. The dog will start to protect its territory by barking and growling when strangers pass and people will think the dog is aggressive or just a nuisance. (KI2)

This participant brings up a concern around dogs acting aggressively when they are protecting their territory. This is relevant when one considers the risk of dog bites in the Tri-communities and other areas with loose and roaming dogs, particularly in seasons when females are in heat (Dhillon et al., 2016; Messam et al., 2012; Oxley et al., 2018; Raghavan, 2008). However, several participants described a need to have dogs for protection, whether from other animals such as bears or wolves, or from individuals who might cause harm to people or their property:

But they're an early warning system – that's the other thing they are, right. The other thing that they do for you is, they protect you from, well, humans, and they protect you from animals. So I've always, pretty well always had a

dog who I would take on canoe trips. And her job, or his job, was to watch out for bears, you know. (LLRIB_7)

Youth participants recognized the primary role of dogs contributing to the physical domain of relational health as ‘protection’. These protective roles overlapped with those mentioned by adults, with references made to the role of dogs in protecting the family from other animals or from people:

They are important because they protect us from drunks and people. They are important because they are a part of our family. They also keep our neighbourhood safe. They keep kids safe from dogs and people.

(Youth_K.B.)

This quote alludes to a concept that will be discussed later, regarding the connection between mental health and addictions and challenges with dog care in communities. The youth tended to regard dogs as regularly playing important roles in their personal safety in the community, acting as caretakers and ‘life savers’. As one youth participant noted, ‘[m]y other dog I had, he saved me from getting taken by a group of people’ (Youth_K.C.). This participant recalled a time when a dog quite literally saved a life:

He even saved my little sister this summer. She was swimming in the water uptown and started to choke on water. My dog seen her and he just started swimming really fast to her. No matter what, your dogs will save you, no matter if they’re big or small (Youth_K.C.).

In a community with frequent reports of aggressive dog-human encounters (Dhillon et al., 2016), having a bonded dog that will provide this sort of protection can be crucial in providing children the safe environment they need to learn and play:

[M]y sister was sliding in our backyard, and there was this one dog that came up to her, [and] our dog Pumpkin saved her from being bitten (Youth_S.N.).

When dogs are culprits in causing harm to children or other community members through bites and other aggressive encounters, it can be intuitive to conclude that removing dogs is the answer. These youth make it quite clear that not having dogs, particularly those that are bonded to their humans, would be catastrophic and potentially lead to further harm caused by dogs, other animals, or humans.

4.5.2 Dog Roles – Elements of Social Health

The social domain of relational health considers the ways in which dogs are included in the social fabric of a family, community or society, and the factors that support or challenge the social health of the dog-human relationship. Adult participants recognized dogs as having multiple roles in the social domain, some of which overlap with other areas of the model. In this section, I will discuss dog's roles as transportation; entertainment; and commodities or status symbols. Other roles of dogs important to social relational health are dogs as protection; emotional support; and teachers.

Acknowledging dogs' roles as transportation was an important aspect of highlighting the historical and traditional roles of dogs in the Tri-community area. As one participant describes, '[w]e, in the trapline, we always grew up with dogs. They're our transportation, and they're our pets, and they're our warning signs too, if any danger comes around or people visiting, coming.

There's old legends too, you know, about dogs' (LLRIB_6). So dogs played crucial roles in the traditional ways of life of the Woodland Cree. When asked about how using dogs for pulling sleds was relevant or useful today, there was a strong message that using dogs for transportation connects people to the land and to culture:

But in my background, of course, I come from a long line of bush people, right. People being out on the land. So when I go out, or when I went out and ran the dogs, it was a spiritual thing. It was a spiritual bonding with the dogs and with everything. It was like – well, it was like being high...and then to think back as I was a kid, I did this as a child, you know – because it was good memories. And also being connected to the land, being connected to the sky, being connected to the stars. Being connected, like really, really connected. And that connection's happening because I'm with dogs. And the dogs are, like they're happy too. I mean, they love doing this, right. (LLRIB_7)

Running sled dogs can give us a taste of what life might have been like in the past, too:

It's just the stories from the past, and [being] utterly and totally dependent on dogs for transportation is something that I was always really interested in, because I always imagined that it'd be such a rewarding life, in a way...So I always think, what would it be like, what it would've been like 50, 60 years ago, before the skidoos came, before there was road skidoos, noise pollution, pollution everywhere. And dogs are kind of a gateway in that way. So you know, by taking the dogs I can move myself back in that time. (AR_5)

If dogs can connect us to the land, connect us to culture, and connect us to our spiritual selves simply by doing what they love to do, perhaps they are a gateway to improved health in many domains. With this possibility in mind, we can start to build rationale for considering healthy dog-human relationships as a determinant of human and community health. When dogs are healthy, perhaps so too are their people and communities. Dogs as sources of entertainment can provide a sense of connection and social wellbeing in their human counterparts, as shared by one participant:

And of course, they're also, you know, they're my company. They're my friends, they're my entertainment. I mean, you know, I'll sit – not for hours – but I'll sit for a long time at times and just watch them, because they're so interesting. They're so funny, they do the weirdest things, you know.

(LLRIB_7)

Recognizing dogs as entertainment can connect people to the land and to Cree culture, whether for use as commodities of tourism, or as show dogs in traditional regalia:

So when we did have more [dogs] we did have a tourism business, and we did go racing across Canada and United States... [b]ut we used to have two teams, my husband and I, each a team. And then even more teams to take tourists out. (AR_5)

Because a long time ago, like when, like say, in the 40s here, when people were coming into town, they had all their dogs dressed up. Because they come for Christmas, right. And they had all these bells so you could hear the dogs coming. And it was such an exciting event for them to come home to visit

their relatives during Christmas. And how the dogs had their nice little jackets, you know, like a blanket. Beaded and designs, and a belt, you know – all dollied up. They had pride in their dogs, you know what I mean? The pride in the healthy dogs coming. (LLRIB_6)

Having pride in dogs could also be considered a challenge to healthy relations when that pride leads to seeing dogs as a commodity or a status symbol. In these situations, dogs are valued less for what they bring to the relationship, and more for how they improve the social status of their owners:

[D]ogs became something to own. They became a status symbol. They weren't part of your life. They were just like a fancy car or something. (LLRIB_4)

And we have to try to get people to understand that they're not just things...Because right now too many just believe them as 'oh they're disposable. We can always get another puppy. We can always get another.' It's no different than having a phone or having a whatever. (AR_4)

In some cases, regarding dogs as commodities can lead to dangerous and illegal situations that threaten the welfare of dogs:

The status symbol dogs which are basically the pit bulls and the fighting dogs... I think it should be totally...banned, the dog fighting. But those are the status dogs that I don't like. It's not that I don't like the dog. It's I don't like the people that are doing that to the dogs. (LLRIB_4)

Since dog-fighting is a form of animal cruelty (Merck, 2012), the presence of this activity in the Tri-communities is concerning, particularly given the paucity of local support for animal protection. One can imagine that having dog-fighting and other forms of animal cruelty present and inadequately addressed could be a challenge for the emotional wellbeing of community members, another important domain of the dog-human relationship.

4.5.3 Dog Roles – Elements of Emotional Health

The emotional relationship between dogs and humans was addressed often by adults and youth, and many of the emotional roles of dogs were partnered with other aspects of the dog-human relationship through participants' stories. Here we will touch on dogs as family and loyal companions; emotional support; teachers; and as rescues.

Dogs as family was one of the most frequently assigned codes in all data collected, suggesting that this is a commonly experienced element of the dog-human relationship. As one participant said, '[t]hey're just part of our family. Yeah, they're a family member' (LaRonge_6). In some cases, dogs are regarded as loyal companions and almost as equals in their relationship to humans. One participant shared that her relationship with her dog has changed over time, '[s]o that role change becomes more of a – I guess more of a companion? And more of a...not even co-exist. Co-live? We like each other. We love each other. But also he doesn't act like 'aww I need your attention all the time'' (LaRonge_5). This element of dogs as family and loyal companions was elaborated upon by participants who described having dogs as similar to having children:

[Dogs are a] furry part of the family. Yeah, for me it's like a child. But obviously a child that never really grows up [laughs]. (AR_2)

So with a puppy it's like your baby, right? Instead of having a real human baby. So there was a lot of joy and a lot of the happiness of a mother...
(LaRonge_5)

Other participants regarded dogs as caregivers for children:

So we had two kinds of dogs – we had sled dogs that worked, they're working dogs. And then we had what you'd call pets, and those are the old sled dogs that couldn't work anymore. So they're old sled dogs that couldn't do their work anymore because of age, then became like, family members. They just hung out with family. And they did other jobs. One of the things they did a lot of was look after kids, they watched kids, right. They spent time with kids. They're always gentle – we never...have mean dogs. They're always like, gentle dogs. (LLRIB_7)

This participant's thoughts connect back to dogs as protection and dogs having a major role in keeping children safe. One youth participant described treating dogs as family as an important aspect of dogs being well-behaved and safe to be around:

I'm not worried about any dog, if they're well trained, you don't have much to worry about. If everyone just trained their dogs properly and treated them like family instead of a wild animal, there wouldn't be a problem.
(Youth_Z.M.)

While the familiarity of a 'family dog' can mean that the humans living alongside the dog are not afraid of being bit, the reality is that any dog can bite, and dog bites very often occur in the family's home environment (Rock et al., 2017). Managing the human behavioural contributors to

dog bites as well as dog behaviour through training are important considerations in supporting healthy dog-human relationships in the home and elsewhere. One youth participant summed the role of dogs as family members up perfectly:

Dogs are important in life because they make you happy. You can have fun with them when you're younger. When you are older they are a good pet and protect you. You can teach them tricks or play with them outside. They are good to have around just in case you are bored. You have to take good care of them, just like a newborn child (Youth_Z.B.)

Another commonly addressed aspect of relational health with dogs is dogs as emotional or mental health support. This extends beyond dogs that are specifically trained as therapy animals; as one youth participant noted, '[d]ogs make you feel ten times better, they don't make your depression worse, they make it better. Dogs can't talk, but dogs sure know what's going on when it comes to those kinds of things' (Youth_K.C.). Adult participants, too, noted the emotional support that dogs can provide:

I know this one person, she'd be lost. And her mother would get impatient with her if she didn't have her support dog. So her support dog takes a lotta pressure off her mother because her mother can't do everything for her. So this dog provides a lot of support and companionship for her. So that works really well. (LLRIB_4)

For me since I have a service dog, she...changed my life and really helped me. And she's just...a big support that I have. She's a goof. (LLRIB_1)

And yeah, these two really opened up my eyes. I noticed they've changed –

what part of me can I say that they've changed? Like they made me feel better. I don't know how. I don't know how to describe it [laughs] but yeah they've rescued me, not me rescuing them. (LLRIB_2)

This participant introduces the idea that dogs can be teachers for humans. In many cases, adult participants connected having dogs to children learning empathy and unconditional love, and to be responsible by contributing to their families and communities:

But then on the other hand, the benefit of a child having a dog in their life is phenomenal. The amount it teaches them in empathy and understanding and just unconditional love that they sometimes don't get elsewhere, we can't take that away from them. (AR_2)

I think that they are a way for people to learn to...care for animals and love animals and show little kids that you can't abuse them and you have to treat them like family kind of. (LLRIB_1)

Another role of dogs that is interesting through a decolonizing lens is that of dogs as 'rescues'. This is a commonly used label for dogs that come from the north, particularly from First Nations reserve communities. It presumes that dogs are being 'rescued from' something and can be part of how individuals derive their own sense of self as 'good people' because of their willingness to take on a rescue dog. This perspective is not always shared by people living on reserve and observing 'rescue' in action. As one key informant said, 'I wonder why they can come onto the reserves, it's like we're having a hard time, 'poor people', and they try to rescue everything' (KI7). When participants referred to dogs as rescues, the act of rescuing a dog was often equal to an act of preserving the dog's safety:

If I take in this animal I've got a responsibility to it. But in the back of your mind now you have that 'if I take this dog because it's a situation of rescue or it's a situation of safety, I know I have someone I can contact and ask for help.' (LaRonge_6)

This participant refers to having Northern Animal Rescue as a local resource to provide support when dogs were 'rescued'. This individual also discussed rescuing of dogs later, and expressed concern around where the dogs are ending up:

I do worry sometimes about the whole rescue aspect and where these dogs are actually going. I know that some of the area – for me, where the issue comes down to the rehoming. And this is why I had a lotta problems with the fostering – is not being able to follow that dog to find out where it ended up.

Like did it end up getting a good home? (LaRonge_6)

This question of 'what is a good home and who gets to decide' is addressed later in this thesis.

Important to note is that the notion of dogs as rescues was not limited to non-Indigenous participants. Band members also referred to dogs in this way, expressing concern for the wellbeing of dogs in the community with a potential solution being rescued and rehoming:

We picked up the rescue dogs because we love animals and there was two dogs who were in a need of a home so we opened up our home to the two dogs. I dunno, I guess for those of us who love animals, you know, try to save the ones who are less fortunate. (LLRIB_2)

So the emotional aspect of relational health with dogs places dogs dichotomously in the position of vulnerable dependent and relied-upon caregiver and teacher. Such complexities

continue to arise as we move into highlighting the spiritual roles of dogs.

4.5.4 Dog Roles – Elements of Spiritual Health

The spiritual quadrant of relational health considers roles of dogs that support or hinder connection, love, and humility between beings, bringing an appreciation of both dogs and humans ‘as a sacred part of creation’ (Absolon, 2016). During team analysis sessions, dog roles considered as part of the spiritual domain were determined to be dogs as gifts; dogs as a symbol of freedom; and dogs as an element of humanity – only as good as their humans. Other roles of dogs important to spiritual relational health that overlap with other domains of the medicine wheel are dogs as teachers and dogs as rescues.

Dogs as gifts was a concept the team was aware of prior to collecting data. Several team members had talked about dogs being given as gifts, particularly to children. This was discussed as being a problem because they were seen as ‘the kids’ dog’ and sometimes it was observed that the adults in the home weren’t taking responsibility for the animal’s wellbeing. On the surface, this could be seen as an irresponsible practice:

Usually the kids are, usually it’s the kid’s dogs, that’s what I mostly noticed...cause I go to a house and they say, oh, that’s my daughter’s dog or my niece’s dog. That’s what they say right away. So they don’t give a crap.

(KI7)

There’s a pretty big divide, some see them as a gift and nothing more than that. Yeah. (KI3.1)

Other participants shared that gifting dogs is linked to traditional cultural practices, and could be another important way in which living alongside dogs can provide cultural connection and grounding for Indigenous people in the La Ronge area:

My mom said when she was tiny, they had lots of pups that were being born, and every kid was given one pup as a responsibility to care and love your dog, and to feed them, and to raise them (LLRIB_6)

Challenges with this practice in present times were noted, when there's a disconnect between adults gifting a dog as a teaching tool and providing that mentorship or training for the child:

[Y]ou know, so many people will get a pet for their child. And really, now you're training two things. You're training the child how to look after its pet, and then you're also training the puppy. So you're actually training two things. And then, of course, a lot of parents will not take the time to train their child how to look after their dog, or puppy, and they end up looking after it. And so in actual fact, it's actually not the child's puppy anymore, it's your puppy. And so, yeah. So, that's something parents need to realize too, is when they do get a puppy for their child, that they need to take the time to train the child and the puppy, you know. (LLRIB_7)

This idea of dogs as gifts being a contributor to spiritual health through supporting the spirit and love connection between beings suggests that this is a practice that might be worth preserving. To do this in a way that supports healthy dog-human relationships and good dog welfare means that human caregivers need to re-establish their roles as mentors for the children and dogs in their care to demonstrate what healthy and balanced relationships look like. To do this,

knowledge and skills in the area of dog training are required, and these are not universally held by all dog owners. This gap will be discussed further when ‘needs for a healthy relationship’ are described in the next chapter.

Some participants connected dogs and living alongside them to a sense of or experiences of freedom. One individual related living alongside dogs in a traditional manner to the good times her family experienced before being exposed to colonial violence:

But I still know my dad’s dogs. I still know the names. I still can see them in my mind. I can still see my dad working with his dogs because there was a time, there was a form of freedom. And [...] things were so much better. We weren’t influenced by alcohol or crime because we lived up there with nobody. And when things started going wrong was when my siblings had to go to student residence. And then my father stopped having dogs. He started having snow machines. (LLRIB_4).

This connection between disruption of healthy dog-human relationships and violent policies such as residential schools is compelling when looking for contributors to current outcomes at the dog-human interface. Such a connection also stimulates questions regarding how healthy relationships can be fostered and restored, given the strong links between cultural connectedness and dogs illustrated here. One idea that was shared is the concept of humans only being as good as their dogs, or dogs being an element of humanity for the people they live alongside. In this way, having harmonious relationships with dogs improves the ‘humanness’ and spiritual health of people. As one participant said, ‘my father was a good hunter and the only reason why he was a good hunter was because his dogs were also good dogs. And he hunted with his dog and hauled his meat back with his dogs...if your dogs weren’t good then you couldn’t

get food. And because of your dogs, because of your co-relationship with the dogs, you couldn't survive if you didn't take good care of [them]' (LLRIB_4). Relationships with dogs can and should be a symbiosis:

So what dogs did in our culture historically, is they were our hunting partners.

They hunted with us. And so of course...we were able to get more food. And of course when we have more food, we're gonna have more kids. And you know, the chance of us...surviving as humans just goes way up. So dogs, of course, have changed our lifestyle. Dogs changed us as humans. (LLRIB_7).

Understanding the roles of dogs that influence outcomes in all 4 quadrants of the relational health model helps us envision how balance might be achieved and healthy relationships fostered. But what are the other factors that influence these outcomes, that could be modulated to improve the health and safety of the dog-human relationship? These factors are addressed in the following section.

4.6 Other Contributors to Relational Health

As with dog roles, the other contributors to relational health overlap between the quadrants considerably. Mirroring the approach taken above, each contributor will only be discussed once, with the understanding that several of these factors appear in more than one area of the medicine wheel. Details of which contributors and dog roles appear in which quadrants are found in Table 4.2, below.

Table 4.2 Dog Roles and Other Contributors to Relational Health

Medicine Wheel Domains	Roles	Contributors
Physical	Dogs as Recreation Dogs as Protection	Dog packs (females in heat) Population growth Dog illness/injury Healthy dogs Abuse/neglect Roaming dogs (hungry, dangerous) Dog behaviour Dog loss Fear and danger Dog death (natural)
Social	Dogs as Transportation Dogs as Entertainment Dogs as Commodity/Status Symbol Dogs as Emotional Support	Dog behaviour Perception of dogs Roaming dogs (nuisance) Bad dog owners = bad people Healthy dogs Dog death (natural)
Emotional	Dogs as Family Dogs as Emotional Support Dogs as Teachers Dogs as Loyal Companions Dogs as Rescues Dogs as Protection Dogs as Gifts	Treatment of dogs (working vs companions) Co-evolution Dog emotional wellbeing Dog loss Mental health and dog management Roaming dogs (NOT equal to no bond) Fear and danger

	Dogs Only as Good as Their Humans	Dog loss Dog behaviour Healthy dogs Traditional dog-human relationship Abuse/neglect Dog death (natural)
Spiritual	Dogs as Gifts Dogs as Symbol of Freedom Dogs as Element of Humanity Dogs Only as Good as Their Humans Dogs as Teachers Dogs as Rescues	Dog death (natural) Cats vs dogs Roaming dogs (Freedom, irresponsible ownership) Traditional dog-human relationships Relational value of dogs Good dog ownership Healthy dogs Dog behaviour Dog emotional wellbeing Abuse/neglect

*Bolted items are those featured in each area within this chapter

4.6.1 Physical Health – Other Contributors

The physical health of the dog-human relationship is an important consideration, especially when some of the primary challenges highlighted around dogs in the Tri-communities relate to the physical safety of humans and dogs in the area. Here we will discuss dogs packing up related to females in heat; population growth; and roaming dogs being hungry and dangerous. Also addressed will be concepts of healthy dogs, dog illness or injury, and abuse or neglect.

When dogs pack up, the risks to the health and safety of humans, particularly children, is increased (Dhillon et al., 2016; Raghavan, 2008). Participants in this study noted that intact male dogs tend to pack up and compete for females in heat, and that this is a frightening occurrence as pack behaviour can be unpredictable. As one participant said, ‘...then there’s the possibility of children being – especially when dogs are in heat and they start getting into aggression and you get testosterone levels. And it’s just a ticking time bomb of when a kid is the target’ (AR_4). The concern for the safety of children is an important one, and must be considered with nuance, particularly considering evidence of dogs also providing improved safety for children discussed previously in this chapter.

If dogs being intact contributes to challenges in physical relational health with humans, it is logical to presume that sterilizing those dogs might improve this aspect of the relationship:

It's not just reducing the number of dogs out there, but, when dogs pack up and cause trouble, quite often it's because of females in heat, you know, and if...the dog spayed, then that problem goes away (KI6)

This emphasis on the importance of sterilizing dogs is echoed in concerns about dog population growth that can go unchecked without access to veterinary care:

Roaming free if they're not spayed or neutered, it just leads to a higher growth rate with dogs in our community, a higher population of unwanted dogs (LaRonge_2)

If your dog's not wandering the street there's a better chance she's not gonna get pregnant or he's not gonna go get another dog pregnant (LaRonge_3)

These participants allude to the idea that roaming dogs can lead to unwanted or unmanageable population growth, and that females in heat can lead to dogs packing up and increasing danger for humans. As one youth participant said, '[t]here are too many dogs here, they grow and grow bigger each year' (Youth_R.M.). Some participants had the general belief that roaming dogs are dangerous, and this likely contributes to many people's intolerance of dogs roaming at all in the Tri-communities:

I mean, letting dogs roam is not a good thing because I've watched – you probably have seen it too – [dogs] getting killed on the highways or run over or people torturing them when they're in the wrong neck of the woods or getting beat up by other dogs or whatever the case may be. Or when they start to pack up and they start causing problems like mauling kids or whatever. (LLRIB_2)

As one participant said when asked what was gained by letting dogs roam, 'There's gonna be everything to lose. Yeah, nothing to gain. There's danger to the community. There's danger to children' (AR_2). This sentiment was echoed by other individuals who considered roaming dogs as dangerous for pet dogs out for a walk, 'It's a danger to the community members. I don't know how many times I've taken my dogs out and had my dogs attacked while being out' (AR_4). The

dangers of roaming dogs are amplified when they are also hungry and competing for resources. As one youth participant said, 'even in Bigstone and 101 reserves, there's just dogs running around hungry and stuff. I went to the store and bought them a can of food each. I love dogs, but not the ones that are mean and chasing people for no reason' (Youth_K.C.). An adult participant connected roaming, population expansion and hunger to the dangers posed to humans and other dogs:

[W]hen they're overbreeding people can't afford to feed them all and then they get hungry and then they get aggressive (LaRonge_3)

With aggression comes increased danger to children, and one youth participant described a particularly frightening experience:

My brother was attacked when he was younger, he had to get over 30 stitches. A bunch of dogs attacked my brother when he was younger. The dogs were like really [intimidating] and scary, but my brother didn't care he thought they were nice. I was scared, because you know those thoughts you have when you're young, you think that they're going to die. I was afraid because he wasn't listening to me, I told him not [to] go to the dogs. He was covered in blood, you couldn't make out his face (Youth_R.M.)

Clearly, solutions to address the contributing factors and negative outcomes of dogs roaming are needed for the Tri-communities, and participants highlighted many of the important areas to consider.

Another element of physical relational health uncovered in the data was the idea of healthy dogs and dog illness or injury. Participants were asked what they consider to be the features of

healthy dogs. Frequently, the elements discussed overlapped considerably with accepted definitions of animal welfare, such as that from the American Veterinary Medical Association, ‘...animal welfare is a human responsibility that includes consideration for all aspects of animal well-being, including proper housing, management, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, responsible care, humane handling, and, when necessary, humane euthanasia’ (American Veterinary Medical Association, n.d.). One participant from La Ronge summarized these contributors to dog health in the following way:

It’s the Maslow’s triangle there. The bottom is your basic needs, so the food, the shelter. Simple. Feed your dog dog food [laughs] and things like that. And if you can, if you have a little bit more money perhaps a little bit more quality dog [food] – it depends on your budget there. And water, fresh water. Shelter, which is I think that’s what most animals including human beings need...[A]nd to keep them healthy, you gotta provide all these things non-stop, continually until the day they pass away or until the day you decide you can no longer keep your pet. I think that’s very basic. (LaRonge_5)

Providing basic needs for dogs on a continuous basis can be challenging, particularly when gaps in access to resources such as dog food, clean water, and supplies to build shelters exist. The beliefs about individual responsibility illustrated above reinforce the narrative of dog ownership being a privilege, available to those with means, and not a right that should be accessible by all. When thinking about access to basic needs for dogs, access to emergency medical care was frequently touched upon by participants. There was much concern raised about the lack of access to services to attend to illnesses or injuries in dogs, and the distress caused by these obvious instances of poor animal welfare:

If it's serious, say they get a broken leg or they get shot – because I've had dogs shot, well, with a .22 I've had dogs shot... 'cause we have people around here who shoot dogs (LLRIB_7)

We still see animals that get injured and are hopping around on three legs and dragging a paw behind (KI3)

These concerns around dogs being shot or being otherwise injured and not having access to care contribute to a larger conversation about abuse and neglect of dogs in the Tri-communities. Some participants recognized that poor welfare is not always equivalent to lack of love or caring, but could be more related to lack of resources and education:

There is a lot of pets that are not well cared for. And it's not because the pet owners don't love their dogs. It's they don't have either the resources to properly care for them or the knowledge. A lot of people just don't know. (LaRonge_3)

Other participants equated poor dog welfare with poor ownership, and one participant's answer to the question 'where do excessive loose or roaming dogs come from' included an overt expression of racism:

[They come from] negligent homes for the most part. I mean there are obviously instances where even good dog owners can have them come out. But if you're looking for a particular region – I hate to say it, but probably from one of the reserves most likely. (AR_2)

Racism as a factor in outcomes at the dog-human interface will be discussed more in depth in future chapters. Ingrained racist beliefs around the negligence of Indigenous peoples contribute to harmful actions under the guise of 'rescuing' or 'saving' dogs, and this is a particularly complex aspect of systemic approaches to dog care and control at multiple levels. While there are many dog welfare challenges in communities without regular access to veterinary care, it is important to identify those that are preventable or manageable, even in the face of barriers to access. Both youth and adult participants described instances of cruelty and the ways that these affect the behaviour of dogs and their ability to have healthy relationships with people:

Some of the dogs are not getting fed and they could starve to death. But other dogs are getting neglected and abused. Then they turn into vicious dogs. What if a kid goes up to a mean or scared dog and gets attacked? That would not be good. Then someone would have to go kill the dog for protecting himself and that's not okay. That's sad, so I hope more dogs don't get abused and are taken care of properly (Youth_S.C.)

I think we have to teach people you can't be mean to your dog. It needs to be loved and not be tortured. There are people kicking them and hitting them, dogs don't deserve that you know? They don't deserve to be abused in the homes you know they are getting hit because they pee. There are ways to deal with them. Some dogs don't know how to act, they are scared or they get run over and they fear people. They are fearful little dogs, they don't trust humans. A lot of people are just cruel to their pets (LLRIB_6.1)

This participant also made connections between adults modeling abusive relationships with dogs and children or youth repeating these same behaviours:

The kids are seeing how rough the parents are to the dog, that's what they are going to do too (LLRIB_6.1)

Connecting animal abuse to children growing up to treat dogs poorly is a crucial element in developing and implementing preventive strategies. Education of children and adults is one necessary intervention and is addressed through an outcome of the present project. Making connections between family violence and animal abuse is also vital to the design and implementation of interdisciplinary interventions that can improve community health overall, and this will be further discussed below.

4.6.2 Social Health – Other Contributors

The social relationship between humans and dogs is reflected in community acceptance and integration of dogs as important members of society, and the ways in which dogs engage in the community as individuals. Contributors to this aspect of the relational health model to be discussed here include dog behaviour and human perceptions of dogs; roaming dogs as a nuisance; and the belief that bad dog owners are bad people. Here, the interactions between the human-dog relationship and relationships between humans in the Tri-communities are further revealed.

The perception of dogs in the Tri-communities was illustrated by some participants as reflective of racist ideas and perhaps misunderstandings about the sources of roaming or dangerous dogs:

I lived here many years ago, well when I was a young person, a young adult. And a child was mauled to death in La Ronge. The father was the town dentist and his child was out in the front yard in the winter playing in a snowsuit and a pack of dogs came along and mauled that child to death. And of course everybody then said, "Oh it's those reserve dogs." And it was found later that these were dogs with collars and owners that killed a child in our community. You hear about it happening elsewhere. (AR_3)

This sentiment is nuanced; on one hand, the speaker seems to be saying 'it's not only reserve dogs that can cause problems', and on the other they seem to believe that dogs on reserves are generally unowned and unidentified. The same participant went on to further delineate between dog care and control and community of origin, connecting roaming and packing of dogs to irresponsible ownership:

So people have this perception because we live surrounded by reserves that these dogs are reserve dogs. And I say anyone who lets their dog out the front door like that can be participating in that packing of dogs and, I mean, they run down the street and I see them and they've got collars on. I don't know if they're La Ronge dogs. I just call them dogs with irresponsible owners. (AR_3)

So where this element of social health appears on the surface to be perceptions of dogs, it is fundamentally related to perceptions of the people connected to those dogs, thus influencing not only the social health of the dog-human relationship, but also the social health of relationships between humans in the Tri-communities and beyond. The need for education of people to

modulate and improve the behaviour and perception of dogs is evident as well. As one participant noted, ‘they’re cute when they’re puppies but when they become adults and haven’t been trained properly they become nuisances and they’re thrown out’ (AR_4). This concept succinctly summarizes a connection between dogs being acquired to add to a family, or being given as gifts, lack of training (presumably related to gaps in knowledge about how to train a dog or lack of time or energy to do so), and resulting poor dog behaviour, leading to disruption of the dog-human relationship and dogs being released into the community to roam.

While the safety consequences of having dogs roam have been discussed previously, we have yet to touch on dogs being regarded as a nuisance, either because they are roaming or just because their behaviour is in some way unacceptable. As one participant noted, ‘there are the situations where people hate [dogs]. They see them just as scavengers and getting into the garbage’ (LaRonge_6). A key informant described a situation with which Northern Animal Rescue was involved where a community member’s health was negatively affected by a neighbour’s dog's poor behaviour. Situations that could be considered a nuisance to some people can lead to significant disruption of community cohesion due to negative impacts on some individuals:

Several months ago, a fellow who is wheelchair bound contacted us about his neighbor’s dog that was chained up in the bush, several feet away from the home. And it was a husky type dog that howled all night and sounded like it was in distress. The fellow said he hadn't slept for well over a month and when he contacted us, he was at the end of his rope and told us to walk through his property and take his neighbors’ dog. And I said, we can’t actually do that. So, we went to have a chat with the neighbors and tried to

see what was the point of having this dog way out in the middle of the bush. After a few visits, they eventually decided to surrender him, because they weren't willing to move him closer to the house and we explained to them that their neighbor was suffering. His mental health was suffering and with not being able to sleep, his physical health was deteriorating. (KI2)

This story clearly describes a breakdown of the dog-human bond (both for the person in the wheelchair and the dog owner), as well as strain put on relationships between humans (in this case, between the neighbours and possibly between the dog owner and NAR) due to undesirable family and community care of dogs.

The final element of social relational health to be discussed here is the belief that poor dog ownership reflects a person's value or 'goodness' as a human being. The wording of this code was 'bad dog owners = bad people', and it relates on a deeper level to the spiritual element of health and the concept of 'dogs as an element of humanity'. This concept is also related to varied definitions of 'good dog ownership' and the belief that owning a dog is a privilege and not a right. When asked what the consequences should be for choices or actions associated with 'bad dog ownership', one key informant said, 'if people that were bad pet owners just weren't allowed to go and get another pet after their present one dies or gets taken away, or whatever happens to it, if they were banned from owning a pet...but how that would be enforced I'm not sure' (KI4). When thinking about what 'good ownership' looked like, participants often made links to having the resources and knowledge to care for a dog:

[A] good way maybe would be to don't allow dog breeding unless you get a permit or something, where you can prove that you have a contingency plan,

where you're prepared for the female to give birth, and also prepare to have the money to pay for the shots and the well care and the doing, the find home for them; in a responsible way. And, yeah. Yeah, I really just wish that people would take on their own responsibility and ownership. You know? (AR_5)

Some participants couldn't understand why people might choose not to take advantage of veterinary services when they are made available in the Tri-communities, and equated not accessing services with bad ownership:

Get your dog fixed. We have the vet clinic twice a year. We're very very lucky to have that after how many years here we don't have vets. Utilize that and there's subsidy available. And NAR is going to pitch in for that. Use that, please. If you can't do that then I don't know what else I can do. If all the options are there and you made the choice, you don't wanna do it, you don't want to do population control, there's nothing I can do. You're just a shitty owner at that point [laughs] in my opinion. Or don't have a dog. You can't have everything. And that's my opinion. (LaRonge_5)

The same participant quoted above went so far as to say, 'When I see a loose dog by himself or herself roaming around, the first thing I think is like, "Your owner's a fucking moron." [Laughs] "Why would you fucking do that? Why would you do that?" It's the same as just letting your kids run loose and you know your kid shouldn't be staying home alone under the age of 12. What makes you think your dog is smarter than a 12-year-old kid? Like it's simple. Like one plus one equals two. If you let your dog roam around he may not find his way back. How hard is that?' (LaRonge_5). If the dog-human relationship is to be optimized and repaired

in communities without regular access to care, education of community members, dog owners, policy makers and animal health and welfare service providers must be prioritized so that relational health is effectively and sustainably supported.

4.6.3 Emotional Health – Other Contributors

Contributors to relational health in the emotional domain support or challenge the relational environment (within a home, community, society) and feelings of confidence, positive identity and love within the dog-human relationship. Concepts to be discussed here include historical dog-human relationships and the treatment of dogs in varied roles; roaming dogs NOT being indicative of a lack of bond with humans; dog loss and dog emotional well-being; fear and danger related to dogs, and the mental health aspects of dog management in the Tri-communities.

Humans and dogs have co-existed and evolved together for thousands of years, and it is widely understood that when people lived traditional subsistence lifestyles, dogs were used for transportation, hunting support, protection and other forms of work (Clarke & YellowBird, 2021; McGhee, 2002). Participants touched on the nuances of the dog-human relationship and how dogs were treated as working animals compared to how they are treated as companions. Previously it was mentioned that a preconceived idea our team had about the role of dogs was that they were invariably regarded as ‘pets’. This was refuted by some of our Indigenous participants, who described being discouraged from developing emotional connections with working dogs:

So when we were raised with the dogs, we weren’t allowed to touch the dogs unless we were caring for them. They were not pets. Their lives were harder

than ours. But also we couldn't get attached to the dogs because as soon as they got hurt or old, they were shot. (LLRIB_4)

This element of a traditional upbringing seemed to still inform the closer companionship relationships that participants have now with dogs, despite the roles of dogs changing:

I don't really consider them pets – I consider them a pack, that I'm a part of their pack. With a clear understanding that I'm the alpha male, and the alpha male's job is to protect and look after the other pack members. (LLRIB_7)

This is not to say that not considering dogs as pets means they are not valued, loved and well cared for. For individuals who do consider dogs as pets, which seems to be the societally accepted norm currently, the expectations for how dogs are cared for changes:

My dog gets to lay on the couch. Maybe that's overboard. But a dog outside in the winter and that's where they live on a chain outside in the winter while everybody else is in the house. I don't think that's right. And we could maybe look into that. I know folks would say, "Yeah but this is the north." The north always gets bandied about as if somehow the rules should be different here because it's the north. I don't buy it. I never have. (AR_3)

The suitability of dogs being kept outside during Saskatchewan winters depends largely on their breed characteristics, which are determined by where in the world the breed originated (Renna, 2012). As one participant noted, 'it's very disrespectful to have animals – dogs – that aren't natural to this environment. I really think that's not a very good thing. I think, probably, it's an ego thing with the person themselves. You know, I don't know why people do this. But I mean, when I see dogs that are not natural to this environment, that are shivering around and

shaking and all that stuff, you know – I really feel sorry for those dogs, because this is not their environment. And like, I know I've been given a hard time, I've been given a hard time because, you know, my dogs don't have a doghouse, or whatever, whatever, or enough straw. Well, I have dogs that won't, they won't sleep in the doghouse! They won't sleep on straw! They sleep outside. They're huskies, I mean, what the heck? You know?' (LLRIB_7). With the wide variability in dog breeds and the correspondingly wide variation in cold weather hardiness, it stands to reason that welfare assessments and care recommendations should be individualized with these factors considered. As a participant said, 'There can be all that sorta stuff in education. How to improve the quality of the dog's life. But not to push, you know? [N]ot to push someone's idea that this is the right way, that there's lots of right ways' (LLRIB_4).

Participants' views were varied on what 'good' or reasonable dog ownership looked like. Some individuals believed that allowing dogs to roam equates to poor ownership and poor morals or irresponsibility, while others believed that under some circumstances, allowing dogs to roam could be appropriate. Additionally, some participants were very clear that roaming dogs were not necessarily un-bonded and were often important to their humans. When asked about why people might keep their dogs in or let them out when dog pulls were planned, one participant said, 'I've heard that, that people put them in and then the next day they're all out roaming again. I guess they love their pets. They do love their pets and that's why they keep them in. They don't want them to be pulled' (AR_1). With this understanding that a roaming dog is not necessarily an unloved dog, it seems logical that this appreciation for the dog-human bond would extend to all areas of the Tri-communities. This was not always the case; some participants still distinguished between 'good owners' and 'nice neighbourhoods' where dogs

might roam, versus apparent ‘strays’, or unidentified dogs that might roam in the neighbourhood but were not recognized by residents there:

In fact on our street thank goodness all the neighbours know each other’s dogs. And I’ve had to catch a few and the neighbours have alarmed us of once when ours got out and stuff. So we kind of look out for each other thank goodness ‘cause we know who has which dogs and things like that. I’ve helped quite a few owners help track down their dogs. But as for strays, mostly in the summer when kids are coming through to go to the beach. But there’s lots of I believe owned dogs that have escaped that we see. (AR_4)

It seemed that there was a certain level of tolerance to roaming, and even the dog catcher for the LLRIB expressed a certain level of tolerance for roaming dogs when he stated, ‘pretty much every dog in the community knows me...some are scared and some of them come right up to me. And even want to drive around with me in the truck...those ones, I just let them run around, they’re harmless’ (KI7).

The emotional wellbeing of dogs was considered an important element of emotional relational health with humans, and some participants believed that an emotionally healthy dog was indicative of a healthy relationship with humans:

To me, a healthy dog should...also be happy with their owner. (Youth_S.N.)

Healthy dog and human relationships look like happiness. (Youth_R.M.)

When dogs are not emotionally healthy, it is a detriment to their overall wellbeing and their bond with humans. Individuals and communities recognizing and meeting dogs’ emotional capabilities

and needs could be regarded as an indicator of success in attending to challenges identified with dogs. As one participant said, '[dogs] are extremely emotional, loving beings. So if we can't get people to understand that, we're not going to be able to change. (AR_4)'

Regardless of individual community members' opinions about roaming dogs and individual approaches to dog care, all participants recognized the important bonds between dogs and humans, and the impact of dog loss on the people who care about them. In some instances, dog loss was recognized as a traumatic experience for the people who cared about them. Even thinking about the future loss of a beloved dog was hard for some individuals:

I couldn't imagine [sighs] I mean I know my dog's gonna go and when she crosses that rainbow bridge it's gonna be a devastating time. (AR_2)

It was clear that 'loss' was not always the same as 'death'. Some participants talked about dogs being taken away or being given away because of lack of resources or ability to care for them or, in one case, having to get rid of dogs because of forced relocation secondary to colonialism:

But because we were forced to move to town and we were forced, my dad had to get rid of all his dogs. And he was heartbroken. We were all heartbroken because we weren't considered people. We were considered [...] uneducated backwards people. (LLRIB_4)

This situation connects to previously discussed concepts of dogs as an element of humanity – without dogs, part of an individual's or family's humanity is stripped away – thus increasing marginalization and experiences of systemic oppression. Indeed, losing dogs can lead to trauma, depending on the circumstances surrounding the loss:

Because it's traumatizing when you do lose a dog, or you have to put it down, or they're run over, you know. That's lots of trauma for young people to keep, so. (LLRIB_6.1)

We know that trauma is a contributor to poor human health outcomes, and that mental health in particular is affected by trauma, which can cause and be caused by fear, mistrust, and lack of safety in the home, community or larger society (Absolon & Absolon-Winchester, 2016). We heard from participants that issues with dogs contributed to feelings of fear and danger, and that individual and community emotional health was affected by challenges regarding dogs in the Tri-communities. Some of the feelings of fear were related to concerns about safety for individual beloved dogs. As one youth participant said, 'I'm afraid of my dog getting hit by a car because he's so tiny and my mom loves him too much... I'm scared a bigger dog will attack him, because so many dogs wander around our place' (Youth_J.R.). In this case, the youth's fear was *not of dogs per se*, but was more related to the fear of harm coming to his mother's dog secondary to broader community challenges with how dogs are managed. Adult participants highlighted these concerns too, whether for the safety of dogs that are allowed to roam or those that could be in danger *from* free-roaming dogs:

[P]eople need to *not* just let them run loose. It's not fair to the people in the community...[b]ut it's also not fair to the pet because the pet, you know, it's dangerous. They could get hit. (AR_3)

I saw these two dogs coming. They looked like they were coming in friendly. And my boxer came in one way, my husky came in the other way and my Chihuahua was behind me. And the one dog came in on my left and the boxer

cut it off. And the other dog came on my right...the one that came on my right got behind me and grabbed [the Chihuahua] by the scruff and luckily she has lots of hair and just got fur and just started shaking and just shook her and shook her. And I'm just screaming on the top of my lungs and kicking the dog trying to get it off. And luckily he released – holding a bunch of hair so I don't know if released or if hair fell out would be the more the operative word. And I was just shaken up. The owner didn't say a thing, just called her dogs and off they went...[s]o it was quite scary. So now I take my dogs for walks but I'm always on guard. And so I automatically pick up my Chihuahua because I never know what's going to happen. (AR_4)

One can imagine that feeling fearful for the safety of your dogs or other dogs in the community would result in diminished emotional health for individuals and for the community at large. Participants also shared stories of frightening and dangerous encounters with dogs in the community, and discussed the impacts on community members including children and youth:

I've witnessed dogs pack up. Even my dog has packed up when there's been strays running around up into a pack of four or five. And they get quite aggressive and they almost get into a frenzy where they don't know – like they've got their dog instincts back and they get crazy. They can't control themselves. So I've witnessed that happen too...(LaRonge_2)

There is another time where I almost got attacked from a dog. I was walking to a store minding my own business and a dog came out of nowhere barking and chasing me. I kept running because it was scary until I made it to the

store. After that, I told my mom to drive to the store and pick me up from the store so I wouldn't get attacked. (Youth_R.M.)

I know on Fairchild [reserve] there's a bunch of little dogs running around. And big dogs! All the time and it's really bad over there 'cause those kids are scared to walk back and forth to school 'cause of these dogs. (AR_1)

The fear and dangers related to dogs in the Tri-communities appear to negatively impact safety in the community for humans and dogs alike. There may be deeper impacts on emotional and mental health by preventing adults and youth from getting outdoors, exercising, socializing and being independent in the ways they might like. This heavy impact on the emotional health of the community is crucial to illustrate, as the link between human and animal health can be narrowly focused on things like zoonotic disease. When the conversation can be more accurately expanded to include mental and emotional health impacts of poor access to animal health and welfare services, more opportunities for effective resource allocation could open up. As one key informant stated, 'animals are being acknowledged for the huge role they play in mental health. And mental health is a forefront conversation, especially in the North' (KI3.2).

4.6.4 Spiritual Health – Other Contributors

The final element of the medicine wheel model to be addressed in this chapter covers the other contributors to relational health in the spiritual domain. Spiritual health supports experiences of connection, trust and openness within the dog-human relationship. Contributors to be discussed here include 'good' dog ownership and the association between roaming dogs and irresponsible ownership; roaming dogs associated with freedom; traditional dog-human relationships and the relational value of dogs; and dog death as a natural occurrence.

The connection between beliefs around what ‘good’ ownership looks like and formation and enforcement of animal welfare legislation can disregard the many roles of dogs already described in this thesis. As one participant, an active dog musher, stated, ‘I mean, there [are] people that leave their dogs in the kennel for eight or ten hours a day, and think that’s totally fine, while having sled dogs is not fine. So it’s - then it’s the question, where do you see the dog? What is important in the dog’s life?’ (AR_5).

Centering the dog as a sentient being with desires and needs is not as common as centering the human experience of being in relationship with dogs. The data in this study highlight the immense impact of dogs on people, and even the emphasis on dog ‘roles’ centers the perspective of the human counterpart in the dog-human relationship. Youth tended to communicate from a more dog-centric perspective, and recognized that if dogs are not getting what they need, they behave in socially unacceptable ways but that this is due to gaps in human caregiving:

It’s sad when I see a hungry dog because their owner doesn’t look after them.

When I meet a mean dog, I think that it’s just because their owner made them like that. (Youth_D.G.)

While there are broadly accepted requirements for animal well-being, including access to food, water, shelter, medical attention, clean environments and ability to express normal behaviours (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018), legislation tends to exclude the nuances of dog needs and the dog-human relationship. One participant elegantly summarized that certain ways of keeping dogs are acceptable if the dogs’ needs are still being met overall, and that the lifestyle of the dog in its relationship with humans is a determinant of its needs:

That's really understanding owner responsibility. And I'm not sure what happens with roaming dogs having puppies, who is the ownership then of those puppies. So there might be some dogs that don't really belong to a certain person. But as I say, it's just guesses, I don't really know. So it's really education about pet ownership, because those dogs don't have a function as a working dog, they're not necessary to a lifestyle or survival or whatever, they're purely for pets. And understand the dog is probably not really happy in a backyard, tied up, but that's only because there's no exercise. So if that dog gets to go for walks three times a day or at least one time a day, a longer walk, or is in the backyard together with another dog, or whatever, so there's not boredom issue. I think boredom makes a dangerous dog as well. And lettin' them just roam around is not a replacement for...exercising and discipline, and giving them affection. (AR_5)

So roaming dogs are associated with a lack of responsibility, despite there being a certain level of community tolerance for roaming dogs in some situations. As one participant said, 'roaming dogs or loose dogs are dogs that aren't being taken care of' (LLRIB_4). Another participant shared that roaming dogs can lead to drastic measures to control the dog population, when more attention should be paid to the ways in which humans lead to these problems:

[P]eople go into crisis management and all this type of stuff, and then they round up dogs and shoot a bunch of dogs. Well, they should actually, they should actually be rounding up the people who have those dogs, who they let their dogs wander around, and give them a parenting lessons on how to look after dogs. (LLRIB_7)

The dichotomous views about roaming dogs being positive or negative were illustrated again within the concept of roaming dogs being associated with freedom. When asked if dogs being free to roam was good for the dogs in any way, a key informant replied, 'It's good for the dogs but not for the community. Because [the dogs] can do what they want' (KI_7). This sentiment was echoed by another participant who pondered, 'maybe they're able to have their freedom, do whatever they want. I think most dogs love that! Like, "Yay! Yeah, squirrel! I'll chase after him and run and yay!"' (LaRonge_5). Another participant connected the possibility of dogs not getting their social needs met with their owners to roaming in the community:

They get freedom. They get to reproduce. And that's important to them. They get to have socialization. Some dogs like to be with other dogs and some dogs are owner dogs. They get companionship and they're obviously not getting it somewhere else. So if people aren't home – like they're social animals. That's the way they are. (LaRonge_6)

Explorations of how this need for freedom and socializing should be best met for dogs in the Tri-communities are crucial, while also managing the safety aspects of roaming without human intervention. When designing community-led solutions for dog challenges in northern, remote and Indigenous communities, it is important to consider traditional Indigenous relationships with dogs, and how these might inform re-establishment of healthy, balanced dog-human connections. Participants related traditional beliefs about dogs and living with them to the relational value of dogs, which is different from the relational value of humans, and as important:

I think dogs should be dogs. I don't dress them up. I don't go to bed with them. But I let them be dogs. But people have to realize that dogs are living

things, that they are not something to...I let them play in the mud [laughs].

(LLRIB_4)

Honouring the inherent needs of dogs as separate from those of humans is vital to caring for them adequately, and one of our participants described his view of dogs as a Cree person:

All I know is that the worldview that I come from is, as I said, they're sacred beings. They're sacred, they're my relations. They're my relations. And that's how I view them, I view them as my relation, number one. Number two, I view myself as the alpha male of this pack. They're a pack animal, and so I have to fit into their way of thinking and being. So that means I can't make them fit into me, the way humans are, because that's not how they are. What I need to do is fit into the way they are, which means I become a pack member and I become the alpha male. So my job is, of course, to protect them, to feed them, you know, to look after them, to train them. And so that becomes my job. (LLRIB_7)

When dogs are honoured as sacred and caring for them is understood as an important responsibility, managing end of life care for dogs is taken seriously:

Sometimes end of life, I have to stay with them and help them say goodbye and to let them know it's okay to leave. I have had very few dogs put down. People say if a dog is in pain to shoot it or have it put to sleep. And I always think do they do that to people? I think it's okay to give a dog pain killers and to let it just go. I stay with my dogs when they're saying goodbye. (LLRIB_4)

There is recognition in the Tri-communities that the value of dogs as sacred relations has been lost, and participants had concerns about how this is reflected in the ways people seem disconnected from the dogs in their care:

Like one thing that I've noticed about up north is that there's not a lot of empathy for animals up here. People need to learn or realize that animals have feelings. (LaRonge_3)

[C]hating with kids in the school because I teach, I noticed the kids some of them just don't care. So when we talk about animal care in one of the units 'cause in grade 2 you teach about animal care and meeting the needs of animals, some of the kids don't have any...thought as to what an animal needs. Like they'll say, "Oh well we had baby puppies." And then I'll say, "Oh yeah? Like did you find them homes?" And then they're like, "Oh no, they all froze to death in the snow." And it's nothing to them. Or they say, "Oh we're on our sixth dog because they keep getting run over." So I think that generational – the family members don't see dogs as a pet. They just see it as a thing, you know? And so they don't offer the care for these pets. And so the children just see dogs as an expendable life. (LaRonge_2)

This perspective that people do not care about their dogs is a difficult one to dissect, because it is clear from the data shared here that youth and adults in all three communities care very much for their dogs. Whether the observable challenges in dog care are due to not caring, not knowing, not having access to resources, or other barriers is not always clear on an individual

dog or human basis. However, there are several unmet needs at community, dog and individual family levels, and these will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

4.7 Discussion

In our endeavour to support healthy dog-human relationships, we need to understand what factors can strengthen or challenge relational health, and how these might be modulated to achieve balance. Our participants illustrated the dog roles and other factors in physical, social, emotional and spiritual domains which are perceived to contribute to relational health between dogs and humans. But what do these findings mean, how can we contextualize them within current knowledge, and how can they be harnessed to support changes to policy and practice that will optimize outcomes at the dog-human interface?

In Australia, documented roles of dogs or dingoes in Indigenous communities included those as status symbols and reflections of their owners, as kin or family, and as contributors to human emotional health (Constable et al., 2010; Howe, 1993). Howe (1993) also describes that in the early period following European contact, Indigenous peoples in Australia maintained ownership of dogs as a method of self-determination and resistance to colonial control. Later, as traditional belief systems and relationships with dogs were diluted through colonial influence, dogs were perceived as dangerous or a nuisance, and were believed to require control, despite continued tolerance to roaming in the community (Howe, 1993). Dogs were and continue to be extremely important as guardians of human safety, providing protection from physical and spiritual threats (Constable et al., 2010; Howe, 1993)

These findings from the Australian Indigenous community context are reflected in those shared by Legge and Robinson (2017) and Clarke and Yellow Bird (2021) in their explorations

of the roles of non-human animals in Indigenous lives and spiritualities on Turtle Island⁹. In determining how the roles of animals might inform anti-colonial and anti-oppressive social work practices, these authors describe the roles of animals for Indigenous peoples as those of kinship; companionship; wisdom and protection; spiritual guardianship and ceremony; and historical importance (Clarke & YellowBird, 2021; Legge & Robinson, 2017). While these roles are not specific to dogs, they overlap with our findings and illustrate the importance of relationship to animals in the spiritual domain of health.

Our participants did not discuss physical health benefits to humans when in relationship with dogs, and instead there was emphasis in our data on the potential threats to human physical health from dogs, particularly those that roam and pack, in the Tri-communities. This emphasis exposes a gap in the Tri-communities and illuminates an area of required attention to elevate and preserve the physical health of the local dog-human relationship. In the Tri-communities, residents do not seem able to fully enjoy the physical benefits of their relationships with dogs due to the challenges experienced secondary to roaming, packing, and unmanageable dog population growth.

Substantial literature has illustrated the importance of dogs as sources of human social capital (Alfonso et al., 2017; Hodgson et al., 2015; Kerman et al., 2019; Knight & Edwards, 2008; Simpson Bueker, 2017; Wood et al., 2017), and this idea echoes our findings of dogs being valued as commodities or status symbols. We found that the social health of the dog-human relationship can be challenged by undesirable dog behaviour, individual perception of dogs, and human exploitation of dogs as a source of status, through activities such as dog fighting. We also

⁹ Turtle Island is the collective name for North America, derived from multiple Indigenous creation stories.

illustrated that the pride and identity derived from being in relationship with and taking good care of dogs can support not only interspecies social health, but also the social health of the community in general. If having pride in dogs supports the social aspect of relational health, perhaps this could be fostered and supported in the Tri-communities.

While dogs are still used as transportation in entertainment and sporting contexts today (Bertella, 2016; Davis, 2021; Fesenko & García-Rosell, 2019), their use as a means of travel was historically invaluable to the lives and social health of Woodland Cree and other Saskatchewan residents for generations (Butler, 1873; Pike, 1892; Riche, 2015; Tremblay, 2019). One can imagine that having good sled dogs would be a source of pride, and we heard from participants that this pride was exemplified in practices of informally showing dogs in fancy dress and regalia during Christmas and other socially important times. Other authors have also described that pride in dogs and exchange of dogs amongst mushers in Alaska contribute to social cohesion in the dog racing community, and supports healthy dog-human relationships (Cruz, 2022). Since connection to nature and culture can be forces of health and healing (Sasakamoose et al., 2016), perhaps dogs, and having pride in dogs, can be a gateway.

Dogs as kin or family, sources of emotional support, loyal companions and teachers are roles that have been illustrated repeatedly in the literature (Alfonso et al., 2017; Arahori et al., 2017; Ceatha, 2020; Hodgson et al., 2015; Kerman et al., 2019; Knight & Edwards, 2008). The emphasis on dogs as ‘rescues’ in our data represented an important deviation from what are mostly considered beneficial roles of dogs in relationships with humans. In recent years, slogans like ‘adopt don’t shop’ (Stoltz et al., 2020) have become popular, even amongst celebrities, who promote the idea of offering homes to dogs ‘in need’ as opposed to supporting breeders whose priorities might not lead to optimal animal welfare. However, when the presumption is that

roaming dogs or dogs on reserves are suffering, outsiders can feel as though it is their duty to remove those dogs from their situation.

While on the surface the act of ‘rescuing’ dogs may seem benevolent, there has been much violence inflicted on Indigenous communities through acts of supposed (white)¹⁰ benevolence (Gebhard et al., 2022; McIntosh, 1988). Indeed, the culture of saving or rescuing dogs reflects colonial policies that have caused generations of suffering amongst Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island, and disregards culturally relevant dog care practices that pre-date European contact and colonization (Aenishaenslin et al., 2019). The fracturing of the emotional aspect of the dog-human relationship through removal of dogs from their home communities could lead to emotional guardedness and people may hesitate to develop emotionally connected bonds with dogs as a result. Fear and danger associated with dogs (Aenishaenslin et al., 2019; Baker et al., 2020; Schurer et al., 2015a), and the emotional impact of dog loss (Constable et al., 2010; Putney, 2013; Schurer et al., 2015a) are also widely mentioned in the literature, and these are two important contributors to relational health that should be considered in designing and implementing interventions at the dog-human interface.

The spiritual aspects of dog-human relational health identified in our data demonstrate some overlap with concepts found in the literature, with dogs being regarded as an aspect of ‘humanness’ (Howe, 1993; Knight & Edwards, 2008), and as reflections of their owners (Howe, 1993). The role of dogs as gifts was contentious, as the practice was felt by some team members and participants to contribute to poor care and relinquishment of dogs in the Tri-communities,

¹⁰ Here, ‘white’ is referring to the social construct of whiteness, which normalizes and assigns power and privilege to those with white skin. In Canada, whiteness leads to many acts of violence and assimilation based on expectations of behaviour and conduct developed secondary to colonization and Eurocentrism

adding to the burden of loose and roaming dogs. There were also questions about dogs as gifts being an element of *spiritual* relational health. Other work has described giving dogs as gifts as a contributor to social relational health (Cruz, 2022), and authors have asserted that dogs being gifted does not increase the likelihood of relinquishment or fracturing of the dog-human bond (Weiss et al., 2013). Given that we heard repeatedly from participants and our Elders that the dog-human relationship was a sacred and spiritual one (Clarke & YellowBird, 2021), and that gifting dogs was a traditional practice based on the value of this spiritual connection, our team felt that this role did indeed belong in both social and spiritual domains of our model.

The concept of ‘good’ dog ownership is often dictated by the normative relationships between dogs and humans in Canadian society, which is based on human dominion over dogs and a sense of inter-species ownership (Clarke & YellowBird, 2021; Cruz, 2022; Faver, 2013). This type of ‘power-over’ relationship pre-judges the position of dogs in the relationship as one of service to the human counterparts, minimizes the inherent value of dogs themselves, and disregards dogs’ ability to determine whether and how they wish to be in relationship with humans. As Clarke and Yellow Bird (2021) argue, in order to decolonize human-animal relationships, we must deconstruct and challenge the human-centric view of our world, in all areas of life. Related to rejection of the anthropocentric view of the dog-human relationship is the concept found in the present study of dogs as symbols of freedom, particularly when related to traditional Indigenous lifestyles with dogs before and after experiencing colonial violence. This connection could be further explored as a basis for facilitating cultural revitalization and colonial resistance with dogs in Indigenous communities.

4.8 Conclusions

The contributors to relational health between dogs and humans identified by adults and youth in the Tri-communities can support the development of action plans to optimize outcomes at the dog-human interface. Through attending to physical, social, emotional and spiritual elements of relational health and modulating the roles of dogs and other contributors that can bolster or challenge each domain, balance can be achieved. Importantly, while the focus of the project is the dog-human relationship, the data revealed many of the ways in which relationships between humans in the Tri-communities can be helped or harmed secondary to issues at the dog-human interface. This discovery suggests that improving interspecies relational health has the potential to improve relational health overall, and this provides compelling justification for improving access to resources to support dog health and welfare. As one of our participants said, ‘one of the things we’re taught, one of the things dogs teach us or one of the things dogs give us is unconditional love...And so one of the things with dogs is they have this, well, love medicine...which is the most powerful medicine in the universe’ (LLRIB_7). If we can determine how best to harness this powerful medicine, the benefits will be enjoyed by all our relations.

CHAPTER 5: EXPLORING NEEDS FOR HEALTHY DOG-HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE TRI-COMMUNITIES

The relational health model presented in Chapter 4 frames the next part of our exploration of the dog-human interface in the Tri-communities. At the outset of the project, the team was aware of several gaps in access to resources for dog care and healthy relationships with dogs, and these were further defined through interviews with community participants and key informants, and youth journals. Also identified in the data were current approaches that are working in the community, and needs that can be met locally, with resources and supports that are already in place. This chapter will focus on the first concentric ring of the model: ‘Needs for a healthy relationship’ which is divided into ‘dog needs’ and ‘community needs’. The data presented here help us develop a deeper understanding of what is needed to achieve healthy and safe dog-human relationships, and current gaps that exist in the Tri-communities.

5.1 Dog Needs: ‘No animal should be in distress’

Adult and youth participants were asked in various ways about how dogs could be made healthy and kept healthy within the Tri-communities, and how humans and dogs could be healthy and safe together. Dog needs identified by participants were food and water; shelter; exercise; socialization and training; and veterinary care. Also included were identification and grooming, and love and affection. Some participants also recognized that the needs of dogs vary, and that the ability to express normal behaviour, referred to as ‘instinct-based living’, is a fundamental need that is not the same for every dog.

Our model of relational health illustrates that to have healthy dog-human relationships, dogs must have their needs met on a consistent basis. Understanding what dogs need is crucial so

that gaps can be identified and solutions implemented to support optimal health and welfare. Here, basic needs are recognized as those that were consistently referred to by participants, and are enshrined within existing animal welfare legislation. Within the Animal Protection Act (2018), animal caregivers are prohibited from causing an animal to be in distress, but access to the means to provide for dogs is not universal, and this can prevent communities or individuals from being able to meet dogs' needs consistently.

5.1.1 Dog needs: 'If you wanna keep a pet, [they need] shelter, food, water.'

Food, water and shelter were often the first needs listed by participants when asked how dog health is achieved and maintained. Youth consistently recognized access to food, water and shelter as necessary for dog health:

To me, whenever I think of proper care for dogs is having clean water and healthy food. (Youth_S.N.)

If nobody feeds the dog every day, gives it water, or trains it, the dog doesn't have a chance. (Youth_Z.B.)

How do you properly care for a dog? You give them a bath, feed them with dog food, you play with them, take them in and give them a home. (Youth_J.R.)

Participants who were raised traditionally and still hold traditional values about dogs considered the provision of food and water for dogs as an important way to ensure human wellbeing:

[B]ecause of your co-relationship with the dogs, you couldn't survive if you didn't take good care of your dogs. So you always fed your dogs first. (LLRIB_4)

[T]hat's what the dogs ate. They ate lake trout and whitefish, really good stuff. And not only that – when we got a moose, they were fed moose meat. They were fed good. They had good food, you know. (LLRIB_7)

When asked how to provide for a dogs' needs, one individual talked about feeding her dogs traditional foods as opposed to commercial dog food, in part because of not knowing what is in the dog food from the store:

And what you feed them, right...A lot of fish and different things. Fish are good for them, anyway. And a lot of the guts are good for them too, so. It's ah, it's interesting how – this crazy dog food we have, I don't even know what's in there...So. [Laughter] I'll cut up a steak into little pieces, feed my dogs, and then – oh, they love pemmican. (LLRIB_6)

One key informant is a dog musher who keeps sled dogs outdoors, each with their own shelter. When asked about what dogs need to be healthy, he stated, '[b]ut mostly, you know, from a dog's point of view, he's going to need a warm place to stay, he's got to have a proper diet and he's got to get exercise and vet care' (KI6).

A community health nurse for the LLRIB echoed these needs:

Yeah like that's always a thing is that dogs don't get taken care of very well so they're always left fending for themselves, even though they do have an

owner. So, making sure all the dogs are fed and like have a safe shelter home and like hay to sit on outside if they're an outside dog and stuff like that. That'd be a perfect world. (KI8)

Shelter was emphasized as critically important, particularly since the Tri-communities experience harsh winter conditions:

If your dog's gonna be cold, let him inside [laughs]. I mean it's pretty simple. If you're cold, you wanna go inside. Or I don't know, build a shelter or buy a shelter. Or if you don't like that, buy your dog some clothes. If I'm cold I'm gonna wear clothes. Anyway, keep your dog warm in winter if your dog's cold. If the dog is hot in the summer, keep your dog cool [laughs]. It's very simple. Have a shelter, have fresh water. If you don't have that, bring the dog in the house. I don't know, it's pretty simple [laughs]. (LaRonge_5)

I don't think people understand that when they tie a dog outside sometimes – I shouldn't say they don't understand. But whether they care. But when it's really super cold, I mean I've seen dogs tied outside on a chain, no shelter, no nothing and it's minus 50, you know? (LaRonge_6)

The primary gaps in being able to provide food, water and shelter for dogs in the Tri-communities were related to access to resources. In some cases, this was due to not being able to access appropriate food for the needs of an individual dog due to limited selection at local stores:

[S]o a good-quality feed is important. Unfortunately it's difficult to get up here. But yeah, good feed. (LaRonge_3)

Older dogs...I also want to say buy senior dog food but that's not an option for everyone here. Co-op don't even sell them sometimes [laughs].
(LaRonge_5)

In other cases, there was recognition that knowledge and finances were significant barriers for dog caregivers, and contributors to lack of appropriate shelter or restraint to prevent roaming, including fences for yards:

I think people should make sure that they've got a proper dog house for their dogs. And I'm not sure that's always the case and I think there's still dogs sleeping under steps and stuff like that. And, it's so easy...I guess what I'm saying is a simple dog house is so easy and I'm just not sure everybody's getting that. So that's one thing. (KI6)

I think generally, just about anybody [from NAR] who goes there and returns [dogs] to their family always lets them know that [NAR is] willing to help, you know, if you're short on cash for now we can give you some dog food, and to really encourage proper shelters for your dog, because being kept on a small deck is not usually a good place for a big husky dog like, just things like that, but we can't really enforce any of that. We just generally just try to support them by telling them that we can help if need be. (KI4)

Here we have seen that without adequate access to food, water and shelter, dog welfare is threatened. While the provision of these needs is the responsibility of individual caregivers, there is a clear requirement for broader support within the Tri-communities to facilitate the dog-human relationship.

5.1.2 Dogs need exercise, socialization and training: 'Boredom makes a dangerous dog'

Exercise, socialization and training for dogs were understood by participants as requirements for healthy relationships. There was a critical link between dogs' need to socialize with humans and other dogs, their need to exercise, and their behaviour, as these come together to determine how dogs and people interact in the community. Exercise was frequently mentioned as something that dogs need and do not always consistently get. Some participants noted that there was observable effort by community members to get out with their dogs and that certain areas were preferable for walking dogs:

I see a lot of people walk their dogs so that is good. We are very lucky we have a very big area and big bush and trees. I think most dogs love that and they enjoy the walks and there's definitely no concern about not having enough space for the dog to exercise 'cause it's everywhere. (LLRIB_5)

And, I mean, there's issues like, I'm involved in the ski community here, and we've always got issues with people wanting to walk their dogs on our ski trail. So people are trying to get their dogs out for exercise. So that's good. I just don't want them doing it on the ski trails. (KI6)

Community members who take their dogs on the lake or into the bush to run off leash could be avoiding walks in other areas in town due to worries about negative interactions with other dogs running at large. In some cases, caregivers felt that it was necessary to protect their dogs from roaming dogs, and if this was felt to be too challenging, there could be an impact on exercise and socialization for some dogs:

And there's an issue of safety. Like some people are concerned that can happen. We do get animals that pack. And I mean I've seen them. Well I used to have to live it because I'd walk to the village and I'd take my dog with me. And she would actually scare all the strays out of the school yard. And so like pack animals don't bother me [laughs]. Whereas a lot of people see a dog and they run. (LaRonge_6)

So, in communities where there are large numbers of animals roaming, it becomes an impossibility for pet owners to walk their dog when every time they're out and about, they're approached by a pack of five or more dogs. Right? Often large groups of dogs get into a fight, or they get riled up which leads to people getting bit, other animals being attacked and these incidents cause fear and reduce the number of pet owners who will risk walking their dogs. Right? So, then they have a tendency to retreat or withdraw, and never take their pets for a walk and this becomes another barrier to creating that relationship. (KI2)

Socializing dogs was recognized as an important element of training them to be part of the community, and socialization implies building appropriate and socially acceptable relationships with humans and with other dogs. Participants also indicated that dogs are social creatures, so require interaction rather than isolation:

[Dogs need] proper companionship because you can have the food, water and shelter and [then be] left in the backyard. It's like us being locked in a box all day with no human companions. They need to have interaction. (AR_4)

Exercise alone is not enough; a reliable and consistent relationship with bonded humans is also seen as a key determinant of healthy dog-human connections. A key informant who is a dog musher talked about the importance of socialization in training dogs, referring to both the relationships with humans and those with other dogs:

And then add on top of that, socialization; you have to have a relationship with your dogs. Although from a musher's point of view, I would say dog's relationship with other dogs is even more important than his relationship with the owner. I think pet owners lose sight of that. Well, they don't have anything to compare it to. So. But I think that that sort of the pack sort of mentality in dogs is super important when it comes to how they interact with other dogs.

(KI6)

While 'pack mentality' can be used to describe the dangerous group dynamics that can happen between animals (including humans) when the drive to conform outweighs rational decision making, here the speaker indicates that pack mentality is an important contributor to healthy dynamics between dogs. When considering how these healthy dog group dynamics interface with humans, it is clear from this participant's comments that while relationships between dogs are most important in a dog team, each individual's relationship with the humans in charge is also critical in determining the health of the dog-human dynamics overall. These concepts were reflected by participants who have traditional Indigenous knowledge about raising and training dogs:

But your dogs were trained as a – they had a pack. They were in a pack. And you could ask your dogs to lay down and stay and they would lay down and

stay for up to two hours. They learned to get along within their pack and they learned to listen to you. (LLRIB_4)

I was told point-blank “If they don’t learn not to fight each other, they’re gonna kill each other. And we need these dogs to live. This is what we – we need them to live. And so we can’t have them hurting each other and killing each other. So I’m training them, I’m training them not to be that way”...And I realized, you know – it didn’t take me long to realize - “okay, I understand this. You have to train them.” And a person who loves their dogs and cares for their dogs will train them. (LLRIB_7)

To ensure that dog-human relationships are safe and healthy, behaviour on both sides of the relationship must be managed, and this requires training for humans and for dogs. Unruly dog behaviour, which can be exacerbated by hormones, hunger and other factors, combined with lack of caregiver knowledge or resources to support behaviour modification or training often results in dogs being ‘let loose’. Roaming dogs can impact the health and safety of other dogs in the community, as well as human community members, which can damage relational health overall. Clearly, resources to support behavioural health through exercise, socialization and training are essential for optimal relational health in the Tri-communities, and love and trust between dogs and their humans lays a solid foundation to effectively meet these needs.

5.1.3 ‘Dogs...just wanna be loved’

It has been demonstrated that many residents of the Tri-communities consider dogs to be family members. Connected to this relational perspective is the idea that dogs need love and affection to be healthy and enjoy good relationships in the Tri-communities. An exemplar of love

and affection referred to by participants was providing dogs with identification and grooming care. Showing dogs affection, attention and love was seen as a core need by participants, and was often grouped together with things like food and water as essential for health:

‘[Dogs need] food, shelter, water, and love, like to show that the dog is needed or wanted in that home. So that they feel like they belong, yeah.’

(LaRonge_2)

Appropriate care? Lots of love, attention, good food, exercise. (LaRonge_3)

I think you should spend more time loving and caring for that animal, otherwise there’s – again – no point of having it. (LaRonge_5)

And they need to be exercised lots because that’s good for their health. And just taken care of, like loved and not just left alone and stuff. (LLRIB_1)

You can properly take care of a dog by giving it lots of affection and making it feel happy and really loved. (Youth_S.C.)

Loving dogs and sharing love in relationship with dogs was described by one participant as a spiritual connection that determines outcomes within the relationship. Without knowing and loving oneself, humans cannot adequately love and care for dogs:

A big part of being with a dog is about love. It’s about mutual love. It’s about that relation of yours loves you, and you love it back, you know. Well, it’s a spiritual thing. It’s about love. And so again, we go back to the whole idea – if a dog owner does not love themselves, you know, are they going to love their dog? Are they going to respect their dog, love their dog? And if that dog

owner doesn't know themselves really well, and hasn't taken the time in their life to really get to know themselves – how much time are they gonna take to get to know their dog? (LLRIB_7)

Dogs having identification was seen as a way to preserve relationships with their humans, because if they were caught roaming they could be traced back to their families:

I think licensing is good...if a dog has a tag on and it gets away, then it's easier to find who it belongs to. (LaRonge_6)

Some participants discussed dog identification as if it was a source of pride in ownership:

...All my dogs are tagged up. My dog, my husband says, "I bought new tags."

You know what I mean? Just like it's a brand-new car. (LLRIB_6)

There was recognition, however, that tags are not always effective in reuniting dogs with their owners, as they can be removed. One suggestion was to move towards microchipping as a better identification method when reuniting dogs with their families is a priority:

What would be good is for them to put chips in the dogs' ears – or wherever they put the chips, right...So every, like people who want chips in their dogs, so if they do lose their dogs or whatever, whatever, they can track them down easy. I think that would be money well spent in terms of animal rescue and care, and all that type of stuff. (LLRIB_7)

Several participants emphasized the need for dogs to be groomed. In some cases, depending on the breed and coat type of a dog, grooming was seen as essential for good health:

For mine, grooming is a big thing. They have to have their hair cut otherwise they matt and they get really sick. Same with nail trimming. You gotta have that trimmed up. (LaRonge_1)

And the thing is dogs are so good at hiding illnesses that it's just making sure that you're doing regular grooming alerts you to a lot of things in the skin as well as how they were. (LaRonge_6)

One participant, who is a residential school survivor, noted that grooming was not something she had grown up learning to do living traditionally with dogs. She was first introduced to grooming dogs while at residential school, and she felt the stark differences between the ways the show dogs were cared for and the ways that dogs were cared for at home on the reserve:

But you know what, when we were at the residence, every year – there's an auditorium there – every year they had dog shows. So we got to see every kind of dog. Those fancy little poodles – any kind of dog. Because they're getting groomed and they're walking, and we're allowed to watch, you know. And watch them just really pamper their dogs, everything. So it was good for us to see that, because now we come home to the reserve, and you say “what the hell?” You know? (LLRIB_6)

This connection between grooming dogs or caring for them in a certain way and beliefs about what ‘good ownership’ looks like is important, as these impressions are carried over today and influence many of the dog care and control decisions that are made at multiple levels. While it is certainly necessary for some grooming, at least nail trimming, to happen regularly for most

dogs (with the exception of some working dogs that wear their nails down during work), not all dogs have the same needs in this regard.

5.1.4 Dogs have different needs: ‘So you pick the breed for your lifestyle. And if you don’t have the lifestyle...don’t pick that breed.’

Variation in needs was recognized as an important consideration in assessing quality of dog care and dog welfare outcomes. A common perspective here was that because different dogs have different needs, people could be guided to choose a dog for themselves or their family based on what they are able to provide. Because in the north, dog sledding has been such a locally and culturally relevant activity for generations, husky-type dogs were often brought up as one of the breeds that had needs that not all families could provide:

I think that Alaskan Huskies are bred to run, so they do need exercise. And so with it being a working dog, it becomes a responsibility to give them that exercise. They’re not gonna be happy dogs just laying around the couch.
(AR_5)

[I]f you don’t have time, don’t have money and just wanna keep your dog indoors, you wanna make sure your dog is the kind of dog that can get enough exercise in the house. You don’t wanna get a husky when your house is 35 degrees in summer and no AC and you don’t have a yard or no access to a big body of water. And maybe you should consider getting a small Chihuahua, you know what I mean? (LaRonge_5)

Dogs are different. Like we’ve had everything from – as you mentioned – 110 pound husky who was more – I’m not sure what else he was – to like one

of our little guys right now is 4.5 pounds. So we had to learn about that and we had to learn that dogs were different and that they have different needs.

(LaRonge_6)

Connected to the recognition that different types of dogs have different needs is the idea that dogs need to be able to express their breed-specific behaviours – the things they are genetically programmed to do:

I really believe in having dogs that are natural to this environment. Like, I mean, I wouldn't get a Chihuahua. I wouldn't get some short haired dog. I wouldn't get a Pit-bull, or whatever, whatever. I think it's - I don't want to say it's a sin. But it's very disrespectful to have animals – dogs – that aren't natural to this environment. (LLRIB_7)

Recognizing and honouring dogs' need for living in alignment with their instincts was integrated with connecting to nature and land and a sense of freedom:

That's why I like nature walks. When we go on plant walks, everybody's free. We're not discriminating. The plants are beautiful things, and your mind is free...so even the girl dog, she made herself a hole by the water under a tree, and she hides there like it's her safe place. And then she watches the water, and she can see if any boats are coming. It's her spot. It's interesting how she found a spot where she can relax. (LLRIB_6)

In conversation about dogs expressing their instincts, one of our team members had the following reflection with a participant:

So then their importance and identity within your family, and you see those sort of as interconnected, almost, like being a pet, but also working or having that role as interconnected. Because giving them that work helps them to live out what their instincts are, what they want to do. (G.C.)

Participants communicated that dogs need to express ingrained behaviours to be healthy, and that relationships are healthiest when humans can fit dogs' instinct-based behaviours into our lives in ways that are safe and socially acceptable. The final core need for dogs to be discussed in this section is the need for veterinary care, and this sets the stage for a broader conversation about access to resources to support dog-human relationships through fostering dog health and well-being in the Tri-communities.

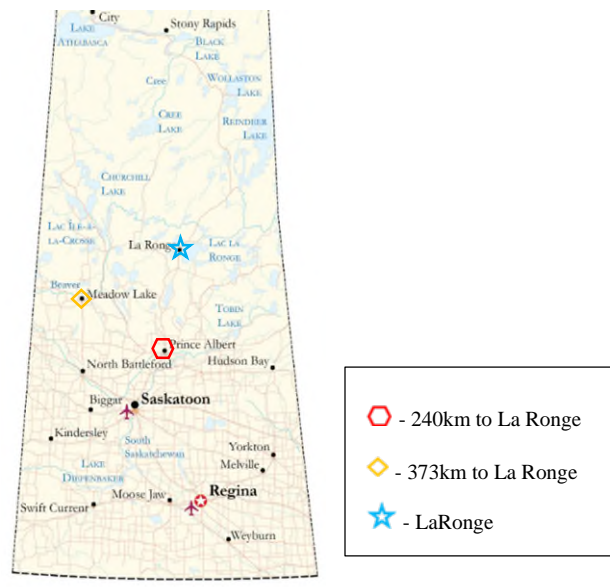
5.1.5 Dogs need veterinary care: 'If we want our community to have healthier dogs, we have to get a vet'

In Saskatchewan, the furthest north veterinary clinics are in Prince Albert and Meadow Lake (see Figure 5.1). While clinics in these communities do provide some ambulatory services, most companion animal care is done onsite, in-clinic. Since the onset of the pandemic, veterinary clinics everywhere have experienced an increased demand for services, and veterinary professionals have felt the effects of this which for many has resulted in workplace stress, further exacerbating pressures on staff (Muzzatti & Grieve, 2022). At the time of writing, there are three actively practicing veterinarians between two clinics in Meadow Lake and five veterinarians between two clinics in Prince Albert. Recently, the primary practice in Prince Albert has declined taking new patients and will not provide emergency services to clients not already in

their system. As a result, animal caregivers in the Tri-communities must travel to other communities further away to get care.

Figure 5.1 Locations of Northernmost Veterinary Clinics in Saskatchewan and Distances to La Ronge

(adapted from <https://gisgeography.com/saskatchewan-map/>)



Participants repeatedly emphasized the dire need for local animal healthcare support. Youth had concerns about the welfare of dogs in the community without access to veterinary care:

We need a vet. Why? Because there's all these dogs that are going around looking for scraps and getting sick. We need a vet, so we can take the dogs in when they need their shots. Why? So, they don't catch any sickness or viruses. In the spring or fall the dogs turn into packs and look for girl dogs and try [to] mate. (Youth_K.C.)

Another youth participant eloquently summarized the concerns for dog welfare in the absence of access to care:

We don't have a vet here and sometimes dogs get really sick and the nearest vet is a 3-hour drive. Some people don't have the money to go that far or have a vehicle to drive there. Then sometimes the dogs don't make it, or there is not enough money for gas. So, most dogs can't get the help they need and they pass away. (Youth_S.N.)

Adult participants broadly recognized the need for animal healthcare in the Tri-communities, and shared some of the challenges associated with not having local care:

Access to proper medical and healthcare...is very difficult up here. Extremely difficult. So my dogs have to go to P.A., Saskatoon, and Nipawin. And they see vets in all three locations. (AR_4)

Maybe [we need] an actual vet. Like somewhere you could take the dog without having to take it south 'cause I know a lot of people don't have a vehicle or the money to do it. So maybe they would be able to take their dog in if there was a vet here. (LLRIB_5)

Emergency dog health services were highlighted as an important gap:

It's just the immediate care for injury. If that was available, that's the biggest thing. If you know you need to go for your shots or immunizations or whatever, that you can plan ahead. But it's the immediate injury that you don't have access to. (LaRonge_2)

Preventive care was also recognized as a need, and a contributor to infectious disease prevalence within the Tri-communities:

But having regular access to vaccinations is very important as well. Puppies need to be vaccinated before they're – as soon as they turn eight weeks they need their first set of vaccines. And having a vet coming up twice a year, a lot of our animals in the community are missing those very much needed puppy and kitten vaccines. So we're never gonna get rid of the health problems if we can't get on the vaccines. (LaRonge_3)

Participants explained that the needs of dogs are widely understood, and inconsistently met within the Tri-communities. While some of these gaps could be filled by individuals and families, there is an urgent need to attend to the systemic barriers that prevent dog caregivers from accessing what they need to provide for their dogs and be in good relationship with them. Beyond basic needs like food, water, shelter, medical care, grooming, love and affection, dogs also need to be allowed to live in alignment with their instincts, and preventing them from doing this results in poor welfare and challenges within the dog-human relationship. As one of our participants summarized, 'you are who you are, they are what they are. And you've got to, well, respect it and love it. That's just the way he is, or that's the way she is, you know. There's no damn thing you can do about it, you know. You can try, but you're just simply gonna get frustrated' (LLRIB_7).

5.2 Community Needs: 'When you sit there without those resources...I think the community does a lot of problem solving'

Throughout all data collection events, it was clear that the Tri-communities need several resources that are locally unavailable. Here we will address community needs in terms of infrastructure, professional support, and education or training. It was clear that when access to

resources is inequitable, individuals and communities find ways to fill the gaps. While these creative solutions can be effective, they are often unsustainable and run the risk of putting people and dogs at risk. The hope is that, with a deeper understanding of existing gaps, opportunities for safer, more sustainable and more effective interventions can be identified and implemented within and outside the Tri-communities.

5.2.1 Infrastructure Needs: ‘If we could ever have a dog park [that] would be amazing!’

Community members generally understood the need for dogs to run and be social, as highlighted previously. While there was some empathy for why dogs might roam in the community, there was consensus that this is not an ideal way for those needs to be met as the risks outweigh the benefits. A way to meet dogs’ needs with community infrastructure that was frequently touched upon was having designated off-leash areas in which dogs could run, socialize and be safe with people, and not put children or other dogs at risk:

[W]hat I’d really like to see is a dog park. That would be so nice! A fenced area. Because our dog is big, somewhere where we could let them go and run because you can’t take them down to the beach ‘cause of the kids and things like that. (AR_1)

I would love to see a dog park but a small and a large dog park ‘cause I don’t think they should be in the same. Or you could have the option of going to the big dog park but it would be really nice to have just a small dog park. And we have all kinds of parks here that we could make that. (LaRonge_1)

There was recognition that a dog park could support social health within the community while meeting dogs’ needs:

'Cause then you have a place to walk your dog that's safe. You can let them off the leash. People can run them. And it's also a really good social thing. You get to meet your neighbours. You get to hang out with people you never would have hung out with. Anything with dogs is always a good social thing.
(LaRonge_1)

An important consideration for dog park use was owners having control over their dog first, so that interactions at the park are as safe as possible:

Well, maybe having some areas that are designated for people to go on walks or having a dog park or something where people can see that animals can interact in a positive way together. Pet owners would have to make sure that they know their pet first, before taking it out, to be aware if the animal is aggressive towards the other animals. I think that people need spaces; spaces where they can go where they're not going to be afraid of running into a pack of dogs so they feel free just to have that relationship with their pet. (KI2)

Other infrastructure needs recognized by participants were facilities for boarding and grooming dogs. While it was broadly understood that grooming was an essential need to support dog health, participants noted a gap in access to services to meet this need in the Tri-communities:

I have all the tools you need to be a professional groomer. I've taken the course. Do I do anybody else's dogs? Only in an emergency. If there's something happening or if there's a dog that's such a mess that I'm just

appalled, I'll do it. Because I have enough to do my own. I hate doing nails but I do them [laughs]. (LaRonge_6)

Yeah, we need a dog wash. We need to have a, you know, like a car wash for our dogs, you know. Because sometimes you don't have time to do it, and then you'll pay for somebody to do it for you. You know, even their nails, right...services are needed here. (LLRIB_6)

Participants also recognized the need for grooming and boarding as a business opportunity that could provide a living for someone while also supporting community well-being:

There's nowhere to board your dog up here. You could have a doggy daycare...Yeah, we could definitely use a boarding facility -- but you could do that all in one. A vet clinic, boarding facility, doggy daycare. When I go to Saskatoon I pay 32 bucks a day for my dogs to go to daycare. And like that. I don't even think about it. And I know there's a lot of people in town that would do the same thing. (LaRonge_1)

[M]aybe they could open up something where dogs can go to the dog daycare and stuff they have in the city. There'd be somewhere they could go and still be paid attention to but not wandering everywhere. (LLRIB_1)

Some individuals indicated that having a local boarding facility might prevent community members from letting their dogs roam when they need to leave town, which could reduce the number of roaming dogs overall. Additionally, a dedicated facility for boarding and other animal services could provide opportunities for several services under one roof, meeting multiple community needs in one location. Suggested approaches included boarding, grooming and

sheltering all in one facility, with the funds from boarding and grooming services supporting the operations of the animal shelter. A business model such as this could alleviate many of the pressures currently felt by those involved in managing dog health and welfare within the Tri-communities, and warrants further examination by community stakeholders and decision-makers.

5.2.2 Professional Support Needs: ‘With the amount of pets that we have in this community, we don’t have any resources for supplies or healthcare that we need for our animals’

Professional supports were recognized by all participants as critically lacking in the Tri-communities. Supports and resources needed include veterinary medical advice, local veterinary and welfare support, end-of-life or ageing dog care, and layperson animal health support. While community members acknowledged that the bi-annual veterinary clinics organized by the WCVM are helpful, the consensus was that these are not enough to meet the ongoing needs in the Tri-communities. Outside of the veterinary care provided locally each year, community members must sort out for themselves how and where to access reliable advice and care for dog health. Participants described a variety of sources they could utilize when needed, including online sources, telehealth through veterinarians in the province, and local individuals with animal health knowledge. Many participants mentioned Northern Animal Rescue as a local resource for advice when dogs are sick or injured. While none of the volunteers with NAR have animal healthcare training, several are trained human health professionals and there was recognition that these skills can be transferrable:

Well because we have NAR now we ask a lotta questions through them. But like from me taking my dog grooming training, I learned a lot of that in the training. So people mostly come to me too. (AR_1)

Yeah, we usually try to diagnose – my wife, she’s taken training for adults and surprisingly a lot of the stuff is similar to dogs. And if she talks to the vet they can give her some advice on what to try to do before we have to take them down there. So it’s pretty good. (LLRIB_2)

In the old old old days I remember we had a dog when I was a kid living still with my parents here in La Ronge. And we had our old dog ended up running out to the end of his chain and snapped a vertebrae or something like that. And we called the hospital. And the hospital here in La Ronge in those days – it may still be that way – they were very good about – they didn’t see but they suggested what we should do and whatnot. (AR_3)

This account of accessing help from human health professionals in the area has been validated by several community members in personal communications outside of the present project. Some individuals even recall times when they could take an injured dog to the hospital to have x-rays taken. However, increased restrictions on use of resources through the Saskatchewan Health Authority (Allin & Rudoler, 2019) and fears about the legal ramifications of providing these services have led to this approach to filling dog health care gaps becoming inaccessible. Online resources are often relied upon by residents of the Tri-communities for dog health advice, and there was recognition that not all online sources are reliable, so there is a need for baseline health literacy to effectively utilize online sources:

Pet health? Google it [laughs]. Google has a lot of things, yeah! And obviously it's not just trust everything on the internet. You want to maybe go to different websites to validate [that] information. (LaRonge_5)

Accessing dog health advice by phone was another commonly referenced approach, and participants highlighted the benefit of telehealth and tele-triage¹¹ when living far from veterinary services:

P: If you're not sure, you can always call the vet. And there's a few vets in P.A. If you're not sure you can call U of S. I think you guys are the biggest [clinic] in Saskatchewan. And it's also like a teaching site, so you can get information there.

I: ...So like lotsa times they'll [say] like, "You know, maybe it's this," or whatever. 'Cause they try and accommodate that distance between La Ronge and Prince Albert. (LaRonge_5)

Without formalized telehealth services, the long-term reliability of this approach may not be optimal. As noted above, challenges in this regard have been noted in recent months as some clinics have stopped providing 24-hour emergency services, including by phone, due to staffing shortages.

Participants indicated that locally available dog health and welfare services are required if the dog-human relationship is to be improved and optimized in the Tri-communities. Several

¹¹ Telehealth refers to providing healthcare by phone or web-based sources. This can include general medical advice or full assessment, diagnosis and treatment of health concerns. Tele-triage refers to remote patient screening to determine what course of action is required for presenting complaints.

areas of concern regarding lack of regularly available veterinary services have been highlighted already, including preventive healthcare, spaying and neutering to manage population expansion and dangers associated with roaming, emergency or urgent care, and management of chronic health conditions. Put simply, ‘I think we should open up a clinic for animals in La Ronge (Youth_J.R.).’

There was concern that the accessibility of veterinary care was a problem for many Tri-community residents, and an additional problem with lack of access locally was the provision of end-of-life care or proper health support for ageing dogs. Given this gap, several community members take on the responsibility of ending the lives of dogs owned by themselves and by others to protect dog welfare:

I won't put a dog down just because of old age. The only reason I would do it is injury or some medical condition that just made their life too hard. And what I found with old dogs here, what finally kind of does them in is they lose control of their bowels or their urine or both and, you know, if they keep soiling their dog house then I say, ‘well, we’ve run out of options here’, you know, when that’s happening...But, you know, if I put down a dog, I know exactly why I'm doing it, but if it was somebody else's dog I'd say, well, you know, is this necessary? (KI6)

The dog catcher for the LLRIB discussed having to shoot dogs as part of his job. When asked how he felt about it, he replied, ‘Hmm, I have no choice, but to do it. There’s no one else going to do it. I’ve had to do it quite a few times...but sometimes, I don't feel guilty doing it to those ones that bit the kids right in the face, though’ (KI7). Here, the need for euthanasia or end-of-life

services is recognized as not only important for protecting animal welfare when dogs are old, ill or injured, but also important as a way to protect human health and well-being when aggressive dog-human encounters occur.

Participants raised concerns that animal welfare is not being adequately attended to by local Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and that the availability of APOs from Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan (APSS) is also a problem, leading to significant gaps in dog welfare:

There [is] a lot of animal abuse and neglect in this community due to very deep-root[ed] reasons or various reasons. And I know a lot of time the RCMP they're so short-staffed. Animal[s] become the bottom of their priority list...And also even if you call the animal protection officer, what I've heard is there's only four or six in the whole province. So it becomes really hard for them to come up right after they get a phone call. There have been a few times when I reported they didn't come up for a few weeks because they just simply can't. And a lot of these places are so far they're not gonna come up to investigate one dog being left outside when they have to take two days out of their time to do that. So again, money. Money is always a problem for a lot of things. (LaRonge_5)

The perspective that animal welfare is not a priority for local RCMP was shared by other participants:

I don't know how many people complained about the dogs at [de-identified], phoned the RCMP, they said, "Oh, it's not our problem for now." And they

said, “Well we can’t do anything.” So many people [will decide to] shoot that dog. You don’t want that to happen. So you want somebody when you have a problem dog, like that, that is super- Those two dogs are very aggressive. Somebody needs to take responsibility within that community to actually do something. (AR_5)

According to local RCMP, they are best equipped to enforce the Animal Protection Act and order that animals be euthanized if necessary with local support from people with appropriate skills and knowledge:

So, we used to have a fellow, this is my second time stationed here. And we used to have a fellow in town here that would euthanize animals. And so he was a good partner for us. But, that was 20 some years ago, though...So, he would do that on our behalf. (KI5)

Knowing that RCMP prioritize enforcement concerning crimes with human victims, it is important to consider what steps could be taken to ensure that animal welfare is optimally supported within the Tri-communities. With ongoing needs regarding dog health and welfare that are currently not met consistently, there was recognition that some gaps could be creatively filled by individuals with knowledge and skills who may not be licensed animal health professionals. This is another area where Northern Animal Rescue¹² is relied upon to provide support in the Tri-communities:

¹² Northern Animal Rescue (NAR) is the locally operated humane society in the Tri-communities

Due to [NAR's] association with the vet clinics, many pet owners contact us when their pets aren't feeling well. We tell them that we aren't veterinarians and can only help with basic first-aid and meds that treat worms, lice and fleas. We have helped many people in this way when they have contacted us, we often get an update where they say, 'hey, thanks so much, our dog's feeling a lot better because of your help', that type of thing. (KI2)

There's a dog that's just been a stray in the community for weeks or whatever, and so NAR is notified and then they'll go and try and get that dog into a safer environment...I would think if there's a dog that they know that's being neglected at a property, they would go and intervene and take custody of that dog. And, in some situations people might not want to just relinquish ownership. And so they would certainly call on us [RCMP] to go and help them. And again, we would likely just go in a capacity to keep the peace and make sure that they're safe. And make sure they're not getting into a dangerous situation, but, so. But that's kind of what I think that their role is, I don't know. (KI5)

The need for animal health support provided by individuals other than veterinarians was discussed by many participants. Individuals noted that the current model of service provision by the WCVM will never be capable of meeting all the community needs, and these gaps have major impacts on the wellbeing of community members:

[T]o me, veterinarians have a huge role to play, but I think that if it's just going in to spay/neuter, and just going once a year or twice a year, it won't

be sustainable...There is a great sense of helplessness when a pet is injured in a community that doesn't have access to veterinary care. People don't know where to turn which traumatizes many pet owners. Having some basic care would reduce the fear associated with being in direct contact with animals and promote the health of the people and their pets. (KI2)

Since veterinarians are unlikely to meet existing dog health needs in all areas currently underserved, implementing alternative approaches like lay-vaccinator or community animal healthcare worker positions could support community self-determination in tackling complex community health concerns. In the absence of formal training and oversight for layperson-delivered care, residents will take matters into their own hands:

[My wife] does shots with our dog at home. Our dogs and stuff. And same thing. But for all that gross stuff anybody else doesn't want to do, she's right in there. She can handle the stiches, anything. If they got a cut something open and whatever. She likes cleaning all that out. She loves to look and see what it's all about and how you can fix it and all that kinda stuff. (LLRIB_2)

It's, when you sit there without those resources, and this is no fault of anybody's, like, we don't have a vet here full time. So we all know someone that can stitch a dog and a hot minute if you need it. And, you know, 'does anybody have deworming meds?' or 'can someone help me, I need some vet wrap' or this and that. So I think the community does a lot of problem solving and also support each other. You're like, 'oh, my dog's been limping for a couple days' then 'well maybe you should do this', or and I think, NAR.

Great piece, right there too. 'Someone, give this dog a ride down. We need this. We need that'. So, you make it work, and that's a very northern thing. And it's a very community thing where you figure it out, cause no one's gonna do it for you. So. Or, literally, they will deal with it and do it for you, but you gotta make it work if you don't have a vet. (KI3.2)

While this illustrates creative problem-solving and community self-determination in action, there are also potential issues with this approach, as liabilities are unmanaged, scope of practice is undefined, and animal welfare can still be compromised. A piece of the solution addressed by many participants is the need for community resources for education and training.

5.2.3 Education and Training Needs: 'Education is what's needed. But what do you do to encourage, entice, enforce?'

When participants talked about education as a needed community resource, there were several strategies suggested for educating both youth and adults. With safety in mind, teaching children how to interact safely with dogs and take care of them was one area of concern. There was also recognition that it is important to get children engaged with this content early through schools, ideally through curriculum, because they are accepting of new ideas at a young age and can influence their families with their learning. Community members felt that starting in the schools and providing education to children was an important way to ensure future generations have the knowledge to provide for dogs in their care, which will help reduce health and welfare concerns with dogs in the Tri-communities over time. There was acknowledgement that adults require education as well, and this was thought to be an important element of successful dog care

and control. Without education, enforcement of community policies around dogs are not effective in making change.

Some participants described education as the most important intervention to support positive change in the Tri-communities with dogs:

For me, it's the education part that's really the most important, and hope that pet owners that choose to have a dog are doing that responsibly...But there is a little- It's always the issue is between being careful not to be patronizing, but also between educating, but then you don't want to patronize. (AR_5)

One key informant also recognized that access to education can be disparate depending on socioeconomic status and access to technology:

I think that we're lacking in some of the important resources, such as education and the access to education is often limited if people don't have a computer or access to the Internet. And again, it is the cool thing to have puppies and it's not just in our community, all over the place it's like that. (KI2)

While web-based education resources can be helpful, particularly in the classroom, it is also important to strive for accessibility, which may mean providing in-person training resources, such as classes or workshops to support adult learning. As one key informant said, 'The people that really need the education and the understanding of it a lot of times, aren't the people that are accessing it' (KI4).

Participants also believed that education resources must be culturally and locally relevant to be effective:

I definitely think that it has to be part of the school curriculum at all levels, whether it be a traditional teaching from Elders, or lessons on proper pet care and the various jobs that dogs do for people. If we don't see the value or the qualities that companion animals have and how relationships and bonds between animals can really improve and enhance the quality of humans' lives, then attitudes towards pets won't change. (KI2)

Part of providing locally appropriate resources is understanding the most effective ways to reach people. An LLRIB public health nurse made excellent suggestions for using a multi-faceted approach to public education campaigns to reach all members of the community:

Not everybody has Facebook or Internet access, so I feel like especially with the Elders if there [were] posters available to them like somebody's going door to door I know that's a hard job because there's a lot of houses and community members. But if it was, or even radio ads like I know [Chief] Tammy does a really good job at advertising for the vaccine clinics so if Tammy could talk a little bit about dog bites, or not dog bites but like, making sure your dog's vaccinated or that this clinic is offered this day or whatever in the community that would be a really good way is through the radio through [local radio station] MBC. Door to door, providing posters on Facebook - there is a group on Facebook, called the Tri-community talks...[s]o that would be a good place to post that. (KI8)

Another participant supported the idea of strategic public education campaigns to reach adults in the community:

Like they say “slow down we don’t want our kids [to get hit]” and this helps a lot of people with their driving. Have one that says, “get your dog neutered”. Some slogan that tells them to be pet friendly by feeding your dog, looking after it, and bathing it. I don’t care if it’s a little elementary that’s what we need to do. (LLRIB_6.1)

Participant suggestions for implementing public education outside of the schools included relying on existing local capacity from Northern Animal Rescue and the LLRIB dog catcher:

That is something that we're lacking, I feel that, when we do come across [concerns about] a house or a dog’s well-being, if we feel like they're not being taken care of we kind of just leave it as it is so we're not really doing anything and that, like to follow up with that person on the dog, we’re not doing anything like that. But if there was somebody that had a job on reserve that, like, we can refer that dog owner to that person to follow up maybe do some education or we could do education, but people only listen to us to some degree...I think that when we mention or if we say if the client or the dog owner says something about the dog catcher like they have this negative connotation against the dog catcher like, ‘Oh they're going to catch my dog and they're going to kill it’ or something like that, if we could maybe raise a little more awareness of what...the dog catcher actually does, maybe

changing that role a little bit to do a little bit more education and connecting supports to the dog owner. (KI8)

We've seen NAR do so much with the education piece. They've problem solved the things that had come up with, well, people can't afford to spay and neuter. And you know what? The vet clinic that started so small and has blown up and turned into something so much bigger and better...and I think that NAR has really followed through with their commitments as far as education and bringing in the vet clinic. (KI3.2)

The role of veterinary professionals in public education was also discussed, and participants shared some of the positive changes observed in community dog care since the implementation of the bi-annual veterinary clinics:

But the condition of animals coming into [NAR] is much improved and we are even taking in animals who have been fixed so that's a positive change. I think the improvements have happened through education and because people in general understand better, the needs of their pets and they have access to more resources...I like your approach because you guys come in a little bit earlier and try to do community meetings and you try to work with us so that we can brainstorm ideas on how do you get education out there. I like that approach. I think that if people just roll into town and do the spay/neuters and roll out, it will end up being just like collecting dogs and not set the foundation for a long-term, sustainable dog management plan. I mean,

you'd have more animals that are spayed and neutered, but you won't have changed the underlying issues, the root cause of what's going on. (KI2)

But I would like to say it's changing for a positive sense from the time I came here. I really would like to say I feel that way. And I think the clinics have had a lot to do with that and so has NAR because there's a lot more education. And I just think people wanna know. (LaRonge_6)

I think education is the answer. And I like the vet group coming in. (LLRIB_4)

This broad emphasis on the importance of community education aligns well with the initial impetus for this project as a whole: Elder John's desire to improve community member education to support healthy dog-human relationships. Outcomes of this project, including a community education program designed with Elders and local educators, will be described in future chapters.

5.3 Discussion: 'There has to be education...but not to push, you know?'

The dog-specific needs for achieving health and supporting balanced relationships with humans described by our participants were generally in alignment with those in the Animal Protection Act of Saskatchewan (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018), where distress is defined as deprivation of any of the following:

- Food, water, care or shelter (including protection from extreme temperatures)
- Veterinary care, medical attention
- Sanitation
- Protection from pain, abuse, neglect, extreme anxiety or suffering
- Protection from abandonment that would deprive the dog of any of the needs listed above

These needs also correlate with the animal welfare principles of the American Veterinary Medical Association (n.d.), and the animal welfare guidelines of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (Ryan et al., 2019). Tri-community residents understand what dogs need to be healthy and enjoy healthy relationships with humans, and there is also widespread recognition that these needs are not consistently being met. When humans experience barriers (financial or otherwise) to accessing resources and do not have adequate education on how to provide for their dogs' basic needs, outcomes for both dogs and humans are compromised.

Lack of access to veterinary care locally puts significant strain on animal caregivers, and the inability to utilize previously available services located at a distance due to veterinary shortages (Booth et al., 2021; Muzzatti & Grieve, 2022; Stiles, 2021; Volk et al., 2022) amplifies that strain further. Veterinary care or medical attention are requirements for dog welfare under the Animal Protection Act (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018), and caregivers who are unable to provide this care when needed could be found guilty of animal cruelty under the Act. While it is not always necessary that medical attention be provided by a licensed veterinary professional, there are legislative boundaries around what types of care can be provided in support of animal health by individuals who are not trained and licensed (Government of Saskatchewan, 2009; Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, 2021). When systemic inequities put people in a position where they could be criminalized, and solutions are out of their control, there is urgent need for creative local and system-wide solutions, including policy change. An alternative model of animal healthcare provided by trained laypeople has been adopted internationally to manage health concerns at the animal-human interface (Duamor et al., 2021; Peeling & Holden, 2004; Waltner-Toews et al., 2015), and such a model bears consideration in areas where veterinary care is not locally available in a sustained manner.

A concerning finding in this chapter was the various expressions of trauma from participants related to not being able to access necessities for dog care in their community. For example, it is not difficult to imagine how emotional it would be to experience the traumatic loss of a beloved dog simply due to systemic barriers preventing access to the care needed to attend to illness or injury. With this kind of scenario being a common occurrence in the Tri-communities, it is reasonable to conclude that the dog-human relationship is regularly and repeatedly challenged without local animal healthcare services. Frequently, individuals without a contextual understanding of the challenges in accessing dog healthcare and end-of-life support fail to empathize with dog caregivers who experience these challenges on a regular basis (LaVallee et al., 2017; Lem, 2019). Particularly without an appreciation for historical and present harms against systemically excluded and marginalized individuals and populations, it is easy for Canadians with privilege to assume that certain choices and outcomes are evidence of lack of care or capability. Support for animal healthcare provision is critical in the Tri-communities and in other areas, both for prevention of catastrophic animal welfare deficits and for the well-being of the entire community.

One of the potential ways to fill some of the gaps in access to veterinary support is through extension and formalization of veterinary telehealth, telemedicine and teletriage services. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, veterinary clinics began utilizing technology to communicate with clients for much broader purposes than was common prior to the internationally widespread lockdowns (Bishop et al., 2021; Cushing, 2022; Kastelic & Ogilvie, 2021). The literature on this topic within veterinary spaces is expanding rapidly, and there continue to be multiple logistic and legal barriers that prevent further expansion of the scope of telehealth service provision to include animals that have not previously been examined by a

licensed veterinary professional (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2021; Cushing, 2022; Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, 2021). With the widespread availability of computer-based technologies and a growing complement of secure platforms on which to conduct confidential animal health assessments, providing support via telecommunications is far preferable to providing no support at all.

To support safe dog-human interactions and effective training of dogs, education of human counterparts is necessary. Human-directed training and behaviour modification are protective measures against aggressive dog behaviour (Hsu & Sun, 2010), and in combination with dog safety education can provide a solid foundation for healthy and sustainable dog-human relationships. We heard from participants that multi-modal education approaches would best suit the Tri-community needs. These could include youth education within the schools, public education campaigns targeting adults, and the availability of accessible dog training classes within the Tri-communities. The importance of local and cultural relevance of dog education programming is supported in what sparse literature is available on this topic internationally (Constable et al., 2012; Constable et al., 2013; International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2018; Shen et al., 2017). Education must be offered and implemented in a way that suspends judgement and recognizes that there are disparities in animal care knowledge and health literacy, in part due to the cultural disruption caused by colonization (Graham & Martin, 2016). As one Band member stated, ‘But I think there has to be education where if you choose to have a pet whether it’s a goldfish, cat, or dog, that you have to adjust to incorporate that dog or fish into your life. And you have to learn what they need and what they want...[t]here can be all that sorta stuff in education. How to improve the quality of the dog’s life. But not to push, you know?’ (LLRIB_4).

5.4 Conclusion: ‘It’s a challenge without having access up here’

Residents of the Tri-communities described what is needed to support healthy relationships between dogs and humans, including resources for dogs and for the community, which are reflective of dogs’ needs. To adequately meet these needs, current gaps must be identified and understood. It is important to note here that not all gaps are experienced equally by all community members, and this is an additional challenge that must be considered in planning and delivering interventions. Accessibility of resources for all residents, both human and canid, is a crucial requirement if relational health between dogs and humans is to be optimized.

In this chapter, we illustrated several gaps, recommendations and desires within the community concerning resources for dogs and community members to enjoy healthy and safe relationships together. To meet the ongoing needs of dogs, accessible, high quality dog food is required, and concerns about dog food access can be addressed in part through discussions with local grocery stores and other businesses that could supply commercial dog diets. Supplies and instructions for building dog houses are also needed, and these could be accessed through a combination of locally delivered workshops and community agreements with local businesses that sell building supplies. Permanent forms of identification such as microchipping would support more reliable reunions of at-large dogs with their families, which would reduce pressures on the local shelter and NAR volunteers. Opportunities for safe exercise for dogs, such as designated off-leash parks that are fenced, would provide important opportunities for socialization of dogs and their people, supporting community cohesion and healthy dog-human connections. The safety and enjoyment of prospective off-leash areas would be optimized with separate small and large dog areas, rules of conduct for dogs and owners, and widescale vaccination of participating dogs to minimize opportunities for infectious disease spread.

Boarding and grooming facilities are also needed, and these services would provide business opportunities for local individuals while also potentially reducing the number of roaming dogs and welfare concerns associated with poor grooming.

Locally provided animal healthcare delivered by trained laypeople, in collaboration and consultation with licensed veterinary professionals, would fill many of the gaps currently experienced regarding dog health, particularly if these individuals were also trained to provide end of life support and euthanasia care. Feasibly, these individuals could also provide boarding and grooming services with enough community buy-in and appropriate human resources. A facility dedicated to these dog health services could potentially also house a larger capacity, staffed animal shelter, which would provide holding areas for animals found roaming at large and apprehended by animal control officers (ACOs). Re-defining the roles of ACOs and dog catchers in the Tri-communities would allow for an emphasis on community education, which would support the efficacy of animal control bylaws and enforcement, and support positive changes in the community. Other education resources should target both youth and adults, and be delivered in a multi-modal fashion, taking advantage of the education system, local media, and social media platforms.

There is a serious and ongoing need for veterinary professional support, both in person and remotely via means such as telemedicine and telehealth. Formal telehealth services dedicated to provision of support for individuals living in the Tri-communities and other underserved areas would fill several ongoing gaps, particularly if these services could be aligned with lay-delivered animal health support within the Tri-communities. With this type of collaborative service provision in place, intermittent visits to the community by licensed animal health

professionals could be enough to address many of the concerns about dog health and welfare expressed by community members in this study.

To address animal welfare concerns and ensure the effective enforcement of the Animal Protection Act in the Tri-communities, adequate training and support of local RCMP should be prioritized. Liaising with Animal Protection Services to develop sustainable and timely response plans for animal welfare concerns in the area will also alleviate many of the fears and concerns about suspected abuse and neglect of dogs in the Tri-community area. While many of these opportunities for improved support seem simple, they will all require sustainable funding, ongoing community support, and consistent human capacity to be successful. Leadership and residents of the Tri-communities will need to decide if, when and how these recommendations are implemented in the months and years to come, and how external supports can best be called upon to facilitate practice and policy changes to augment the solutions implementable within the community itself. To better understand and inform approaches to support dog-human relationships in the Tri-communities, Chapter 6 will illustrate the current players, approaches, gaps and opportunities in dog care and control, and connect these to health and welfare concerns and outcomes at the dog-human interface.

CHAPTER 6: EXEMPLARS AND DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNITY AND FAMILY DOG CARE IN A REMOTE SASKATCHEWAN REGION

How dogs are cared for at individual or family and community levels is an important consideration in communities expressing concern about interactions and dynamics at the dog-human interface. Here, 'dog care' refers to strategies in support of dog control (control of dog population and movement), health and welfare at individual or family, community, regional, provincial and federal levels. To effectively develop and implement interventions to improve outcomes for dogs and the people they live alongside, we must understand current approaches, challenges and opportunities in dog care, in light of policy, procedures, capacity and community dynamics. Here we will describe what *should happen* in dog care, considering legislation that governs dog care approaches and compare this to what *is happening*, as reported by participants. In the Tri-communities, there are three different approaches to community-led dog care, or dog control, and these community approaches affect and are affected by the actions of Northern Animal Rescue. To provide an overview, details provided by key informants and other participants will be shared so the complexity of the current situation can be accurately represented. A determinants of health lens will be applied in this chapter as we explore dog care and its contributing factors at proximal, intermediate, and distal levels. With this approach we will seek to answer our final two research queries:

How is care of dog health, welfare and population undertaken in the Tri-communities, and what are the strengths and challenges of current approaches?

and

How do current approaches to dog care and control support or challenge the health and safety of dog-human interactions in the Tri-communities?

6.1 Dog Care and Dog Control in the Tri-Communities

Concerns around dog care practices at individual and family levels are important drivers of dog control approaches and other community-led dog care initiatives in the Tri-communities. Some of these concerns can be connected to dog and community needs discussed in Chapter 5, and the primary concerns arising from the data include the presence of backyard breeders; dogs being surrendered; dogs being chained as a method of roaming prevention; and the impact of addictions or substance misuse on individual and family dog care.

Backyard breeders are people who keep dogs for breeding purposes, sometimes to make a profit, and who may allow their dogs to reproduce indiscriminately. In the Tri-communities, there are widespread concerns about the number of dogs in the area, presenting challenges for NAR and community leadership in dealing with incoming dogs that are found at large or are surrendered by overwhelmed caregivers. Considering these concerns, a focus on minimizing the number of new litters being born seems logical, and participants voiced frustrations with indiscriminate breeding not being effectively prevented through bylaw enforcement:

I think they just have to really come down with some laws that prevent backyard breeding. Like, so much goes on there and those pups are sold, or are given away or whatever happens to them, or whatever, but it just adds to the population and if they were stricter on their bylaws, and really enforced them, I think that would really help. But, I don't know, it doesn't seem to be

top priority. Like the bylaws are in place, but they never seem to be used to enforce anything. (KI4)

The concern here is expansion of the local dog population beyond what is manageable within current community capacity. For community leadership and Northern Animal Rescue, more dogs in the community means a larger number of dogs requiring support, and this exacerbates the pressures on already overburdened local resources in place to manage dogs. Connected to uncontrolled breeding and unmanageable dog populations, as well as to inadequate access to resources and services for dog care, is the phenomenon of dogs being surrendered, often to Northern Animal Rescue. A board member from NAR summarized the trajectory from getting a puppy to surrendering an adult dog:

[W]hat we're finding now is the majority of animals that come to us aren't strays, they are being surrendered by their owners. For the most part, people choose to surrender their animal because they're overwhelmed by the responsibilities of pet ownership and there's also the attraction of having a puppy or a kitten because they're cute and the kids asked for one... We have had hundreds and hundreds of animals surrendered to us when they're just about a year old. Another part of that equation is that people don't understand the breed of dog they took in and because we don't have as many resources here to support pet ownership...[so] people become overwhelmed. Many of the local homes don't have a fenced in yard so many dogs are chained for long periods of time. Often times, the animal will break its chain or someone will let it loose and the dog will roam or start chasing vehicles or people. Pet

owners begin to see their pet as a nuisance when the neighbors complain and they contact us to take their animal. (KI2)

Dogs being chained was another concern raised regarding individual or family dog care. This concern reflects an understanding that dogs need exercise and space to run, and being chained does not allow this. However, there is also widespread recognition that dogs should not be roaming free. For homes with no fence, a frequently used alternative to keeping dogs inside is to chain them in the yard some or all the time as a method of containment, which some community members see as inappropriate:

I would really like to see dogs not tied. I really don't like that. It'd be nice if everybody had a fenced area but I found some people with fences they still tie their dogs inside just because they don't wanna have a big mess and cleaning up the mess. (AR_1)

There was also recognition that building a fence is not always accessible to all community members:

Another barrier I find is that, in order to build a fence, you need to buy and build your own fence. (KI8)

One of the issues with chaining dogs as a primary method of confinement is that other dogs roaming the neighbourhood can still approach the dog that is tied, which can lead to unintended breeding, fighting, and potential risks to human community members. Still, tying dogs up is considered a more appropriate method of care and control than letting them roam. When asked what would help the most with the dog challenges in the community, the enforcement officer for the LLRIB replied, 'Probably [to] get most of the dogs rescued. And [for

people to] tie up their dogs. Yeah, I know that's kind of cruelty too, to make your dog tied up for the whole...for his whole life. But some dogs like it anyways, when they're tied up' (KI7).

The final exemplar of concerns around dog care is the connection between addictions and poverty and dog issues in the Tri-communities:

I think that they're just struggling themselves with so many issues, they just have so many addictions, mental or whatever, and poverty. (KI4)

My sister lost her little dog with one eye, they sold it to her for \$300 for her daughter, and that dog was such a pretty little dog with long hair. It was running around downtown one day, so [the dog catcher] took her away. She was so mad and I said, "well stay sober and look after your dog." (LLRIB_6)

Substance misuse was also connected to incidents of dog bites, which are one of the main public safety concerns related to dogs in the Tri-communities:

I find a lot of the clients that got bit that alcohol is involved, they're intoxicated or. Yeah they're intoxicated when it happened and yeah, that's another thing I notice a trend in...they're more impulsive so maybe they want to be like a little bit more aggressive with the dog or they're trying to play with the dog but come off aggressive to the dog so that's kind of...what I would think...Yeah a lot of people are drinking, it's like a weekend or whatever, and then that happens. (KI8)

The connection between personal health and wellbeing and the ability to provide adequate care for dogs was summarized by an Elder who felt that people cannot live with addictions and be in good relationships with dogs as well:

I was being interviewed by Missinipe Broadcasting one time by [de-identified, who] was interviewing me in Cree. And we're talking about wellness, we're talking about health and wellness, and sobriety, and, you know. So I said to him, you know, I said "You know, people who are like this, they're not well enough to own a dog." And he started laughing, he said, "What!" And so I said to him, again, in Cree, I said, "If a person's not healthy, they shouldn't own a pet. They shouldn't own a dog. They shouldn't own anything, like another," you know, well, basically dogs. I said "They don't know how to look after themselves – how do you expect themselves to look after a dog? You know, if you can't look after yourself, you can't look after anything – period." So, that's what I see when I see all these stray dogs wandering around. (LLRIB_7)

These dog care concerns do not exist in isolation, and are symptomatic of other factors that determine dog care actions and outcomes at the individual and family levels. These can be understood by adapting the socioeconomic determinants of health framework to describe determinants of dog care in the Tri-communities. The SDoH provide a framework through which health service providers can understand the sociopolitical and socioeconomic factors which influence health outcomes. Using the SDoH framework described by Reading and Wein (2009) and applying this determinants lens to dog care, we will, in subsequent sections, feature community voices in an illustration of the proximal, intermediate and distal determinants of dog

care in the Tri-communities. Table 6.1 features the determinants of dog care in the Tri-communities identified through interview data by our research team, using definitions at each level adapted from Reading and Wein (2009).

6.2 Proximal Determinants of Community and Family Dog Care

According to Reading and Wein (2009), proximal determinants of health are those that have a direct impact on holistic health as understood through the framework of the medicine wheel. Given what we already know about the contributors to relational health between dogs and humans in the Tri-communities, we now turn our attention to illustrating determinants of effective, or healthy, care and control of dogs in the area. Proximal determinants of dog care are those that directly influence how dogs are cared for within the Tri-communities, which in turn influence whether and how dog and community needs are met, and thus the health and balance of the dog-human relationship. Based on accounts from our participants, proximal determinants include local dog control oversight and legislation; dog control operations and training; physical features of the Tri-communities; and socioeconomic status and social supports.

Table 6.1 Determinants of Community and Family Dog Care in the Tri-Communities

Proximal Determinants (direct impact on individual and family dog care)	Dog Control Oversight and Legislation	Dog Control Operations and Enforcement	Dog Control Training and Resources	Physical Features of the Tri-Communities	Socioeconomic Status and Social Supports
Intermediate Determinants (origin of proximal determinants)	Dog Health and Welfare Legislation	Dog Welfare Oversight and Enforcement	One Health and One Welfare		
Distal Determinants (most profound influence on dog care and control)	Colonialism and Oppression	Social Dynamics and Community Tensions	Environmental Events		

6.2.1 Local Dog Control Oversight and Legislation

The Village of Air Ronge and the Town of La Ronge are both members of the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District (NSAD) which is one northern municipality representing more than half of Saskatchewan's geographic area (Government of Saskatchewan, n.d.). Each community that is a member of NSAD has their own local government, comprised of an elected Mayor and Council members. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band is a First Nation, is not part of NSAD, and has a separate local government comprised of elected Chief and Council members. This diversity of community governance contributes to some of the challenges with cohesive dog care plans, particularly since the two NSAD communities and the Band have different funding models and staff complements. As one key informant said, 'I would say the management is different, depending on the community that you live in, because there are three communities, three municipalities and [three] separate governments. Everyone has their own approach and there are obviously differences in the way that domestic animals are viewed' (KI2).

Air Ronge occupies the smallest land area of the three communities, and has the smallest resident membership, last counted in 2021 at 1365 residents, while La Ronge's 2021 census counted 2521 residents (Cornet, 2022). On-reserve LLRIB population within the Tri-community area was counted in 2022 as 2911 while there are estimated to be 1263 off-reserve LLRIB members locally (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, 2022). The relative number of community members influences the funding received by each community leadership for their operations, including dog control.

Oversight of dog control is provided through the Village Administrator for Air Ronge; through Northern Animal Rescue for the Town of La Ronge; and through Public Works and Facilities for the LLRIB. Individuals providing oversight are responsible for ensuring the enforcement of community dog control bylaws through employing animal control personnel and equipping them to operate in alignment with the bylaws as written. Table 6.2 provides summaries of and enables comparison between all three bylaws to provide a detailed understanding of current policies, and support the development of recommendations for legislative change.

Implementation of bylaws in Air Ronge and La Ronge is governed by the Northern Municipalities Act, section 6 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2010a), and implementation of bylaws for the Lac La Ronge Indian Band is governed through the Indian Act, section 81 (Government of Canada, 1985). While the purposes of all three dog control bylaws are in alignment, referring to licensing and regulating dogs to provide for public safety, there are multiple and sometimes conflicting differences. Keeping in mind that the geographic divisions between the three communities are artificial as far as community member and dog movement are concerned, synergistic and collaborative approaches to oversight and enforcement would best support effective dog control in the area. Beyond the operational differences between the three entities regarding dog bylaws, there are several elements that are poorly implemented or not implemented at all due to lack of human or other resources. There are also aspects of the bylaws that present challenges considering applicable provincial or federal legislation which takes precedent over bylaw, irrespective of what is written in the bylaw. Understanding these gaps will guide the next steps of community action to improve operations and outcomes.

Table 6.2 Summary of Tri-Community Dog Bylaws

	Air Ronge	La Ronge	LLRIB
Date implemented	2012	2012	2016
Purpose	- licensing and regulating of dogs - the prohibition of dogs running at large	To provide regulation, control and licensing of dogs	- to provide for licensing of dogs and cats - control and regulate dogs and cats - provide for impounding of dogs running at large - provide a safe environment from dangerous dogs
Licensing	Mandatory; \$5.00; tag always to be worn	Mandatory; \$15 if altered, \$50 if intact; bitches must be spayed; tag always to be worn	Mandatory; \$10; ACO keeps registry
Running at large	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
Number of dogs	No more than 3 unless registered breeder through Canadian Kennel Club (CKC)	No more than 3 over 3 months unless running a licensed kennel	- no more than 3 over 3 months unless registered - no dog over 6m unless spayed or neutered OR holds a breeding permit; if not spayed/neutered, cannot be at large - exception is dog or cat litters under 3m when owner has a breeding permit
Enforcement	Bylaw officer OR RCMP	Animal Control Officer OR RCMP	- Animal Control Officer; ACO can delegate any duties with consent of council - ACO receives and approves breeding permits; valid 2y - RCMP or other appointed personnel can also seize dogs
Other personnel	Pound-keeper	Pound-keeper; Medical Health Officer for kennel approval	Pound-keeper

Procedures if caught roaming	Seized, impounded, kept 3 days unless pay fee; after 72h can be sold, destroyed, otherwise dealt with.	Seized, impounded; if has ID will be kept for 72h and then can be sold, destroyed, otherwise dealt with	Seized, impounded; held 72h
Nuisance	Property damage; noise, chasing; biting	Noise; being in school yard or park land unless attending obedience classes; defecating on property not belonging to owner	Property damage; noise; chasing, biting, attacking people or domesticated animals
Rabies, disease	If suspected, isolate for 7 days at a place determined by Council and consult a vet; owner must comply with vet recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dogs suspected of having rabies → isolate 10 days and report to MHO - If bites a person or in contact with rabid animal, contact MHO and vet from health of animals branch of Canadian dept of agriculture OR local vet OR RCMP - Dangerous dogs or dogs that might have been exposed to rabies have to be isolated for 2 weeks to ensure not rabid; MHO or vet can order mass vaccination if there's an outbreak - Can require proof of vaccination if redeeming from pound or request paying cost of rabies vaccine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If exposed or suspected, surrender dog to ACO to be isolated for minimum 14d and not released until ACO consults with a vet - If dog has bitten, notify RCMP, NITHA and MHO - Can require proof of vaccination when redeeming from pound
Destruction	By bylaw officer or RCMP if injuring or attacking a person or domestic animal OR if not claimed after 72h of impoundment	By ACO or RCMP if caught roaming; T-61 can be used to euthanize	By pound-keeper or any other person designated by ACO if not claimed and redeemed by owner after 72h of impoundment
Consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If in contravention of bylaw, pay a penalty upon being given notice of violation by Administrator or peace officer (RCMP) - If not paid within 7 days, can be prosecuted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If redeeming impounded dog, must prove compliance with bylaw and pay fee; if not redeemed after 72h can be sold etc and money kept by the Town - If in contravention, fix the problem OR pay a fine OR go to jail for 90 days OR both 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ACO can enter any land or premises on reserve to impound a dog if in contravention of the bylaw and ACO will keep records - Animals with or without ID kept for 72h and if not claimed can be sold, destroyed or otherwise disposed of - ACO must make every effort to find the owner and inform them either way

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure to comply can lead to destruction of the dog AND RCMP can enter the owner's home to destroy the dog - If alleged to have committed a contravention, if fees paid within 72h, not liable for prosecution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If owner redeems, they must prove ownership and registration, pay \$20/day impoundment plus reasonable fees for care, and any vet costs incurred - If not claimed, can be sold and excess funds go back to animal control costs - If in contravention, pay fee for each offence under the bylaw
Impoundment Fees	\$50 plus \$10/day held	\$50 plus \$10/day held	\$20 per day plus per diem for care while impounded and costs of any veterinary care provided
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Village pound' - Impounded dogs must be provided with reasonable food and water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town to establish and staff (with 'pound keepers') a pound - Not liable for capturing, impounding, selling or destroying dogs - records to be kept - food, water, shelter to be provided by pound keeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council shall establish a pound and appoint a pound keeper(s) and pay them
Dangerous dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not specifically referred to as 'dangerous dogs', but owner can be fined if dog bites or attempts to bite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biting or attempting to bite → taken to court, can order destruction of dog and/or paying \$5.00/day for every day failed to get dog under control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prohibited
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not liable for capturing, impounding, selling or destroying dogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Females in heat must be confined in owner's home unless being taken outside to defecate - Teasing, baiting or throwing objects at dogs confined on owner's property is against bylaw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Females in heat must be in owner's house unless on a leash and under control of owner - Pick up feces or waste - Owners must provide food, water, exercise, necessary vet care when in pain, injury, illness or suffering

6.2.2 Dog Control Operations and Enforcement Strategies

Between Air Ronge, La Ronge and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, divergent approaches to dog control and enforcing dog bylaws are currently in place. Enforcement models are important to understand here, as these dictate the efficacy of bylaws in practice, and modulation of unsuitable enforcement strategies could improve bylaw enforcement and adherence within the three communities. At the time of writing, the Town of La Ronge and the LLRIB both have designated Animal Control Officer positions to enforce their dog bylaws. The Village of Air Ronge, however, has taken a different approach:

I mean, we don't have a bylaw officer, so we have made our administrator in place of that. So, we have it where our maintenance staff, if a dog's running at large through business hours, which would be your 8 to 4 that they will try and seize the dog for impoundment. Not all dogs of course, are easy to catch. So, we do have traps that aren't used often that can be placed within the community if necessary. And if people are willing to sign that form to have it, within that bylaw, then if a dog is impounded, we keep it for 72 hours. Which then is posted, and shared, with the intent of hoping to find that owner. If after that 72 hours is up, NAR does have the opportunity to come and apprehend the dog. We haven't had since we kind of got firmer on the 72 hour policy, but at that point the animal can be destroyed by the municipality. We haven't had an animal destroyed within my 8 years being within the Village, so it's not something that we want to do, or seek to do. (KI3.1)

Important to note here is the role of Northern Animal Rescue in taking custody of any dog that has not been redeemed after being held for 72 hours. NAR is then responsible for deciding how to proceed – whether to foster and rehome the dog, or have it destroyed. Outside of Village office hours, the responsibility for responding to calls from Air Ronge residents regarding dogs at large tends to fall to Northern Animal Rescue, without agreed upon remuneration:

And [the Village maintenance staff] operate[s] Monday to Friday whatever their hours are, 8:30 to 4 or whatever and so if something happens on the weekend, then we wouldn't get [financial] credit for that. (KI4)

The Village also does not have a dedicated pound facility, but rather a small holding facility with capacity for two dogs; the only operational pound in the area is owned by the Town of La Ronge, and is currently operated by Northern Animal Rescue board members and volunteers. Animal Control duties for the Town are presently contracted out to Northern Animal Rescue, which employs one full-time individual to provide these services. While the LLRIB employs their own Animal Control Officer (commonly referred to as the ‘dog catcher’), impoundment is provided by NAR for dogs seized on reserve lands as well, through an informal arrangement between the Band’s dog catcher and NAR:

It would be good for the Band to have their own [pound]. We got one, but it’s just a shack, a little shack, no heat, no water, nothing. Just a place to keep them for a few days, then we give ‘em to NAR. But usually the dogs, they eat their way out of that place. (KI6)

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the Band is without a dog catcher; the individual who occupied the position during our data collection has since moved on and the Band has had difficulty hiring and retaining a replacement. According to the Band's bylaws, if owners redeem their dogs within 72 hours of being found at large, they must pay \$20 per day of impoundment to the Animal Control Officer. When the dog catcher passes responsibility for impounded dogs to NAR, however, the informal agreement is to pay NAR a \$20 flat fee per dog. A similarly informal agreement with Air Ronge had, at the time of data collection, NAR being paid \$25 per dog seized by Village maintenance staff and transferred to NAR:

When we do take a dog from the Band, although it has to be directly through their dog catcher, like if we got a call to go on reserve to go help somebody and take their dog, they wouldn't [pay us], [the Band gives] us 20 dollars a dog to take, but unless it goes through the dog catcher we don't get any credit for that. And I believe the Village of Air Ronge when they have an impounded dog and they've had it for 72 hours, then they contact us and we take it, and I believe they give us 25 dollars a dog that we take from them. But if we, there again, if we get a call from a resident of Air Ronge to come and pick up a dog, and we do that, then we don't get any credit for that either. And I'm talking about monetary credit. (KI4)

The fee paid to NAR for taking custody of dogs from Air Ronge after the 72 hour holding period has now been increased to \$100 per dog, in recognition of the resources required to provide for a dog in the pound (G. Willins, 2022).

The Town of La Ronge furnishes NAR with a grant to provide dog control services, but there is no such formal exchange of funds between NAR and either the Band or the Village of Air Ronge. The operational result of these ad-hoc policies and agreements is that Northern Animal Rescue, which is a non-profit organization, is left providing many of the dog control services for the Tri-communities using their own operating funds from donations and external grants applied for by volunteer board members:

I think kind of going back to my experience with NAR when we started, our focus was on the stray population and I feel like our biggest thing was empowering the communities. So that NAR wasn't the primary go to. That the communities participated in the animal control more than just putting them in the pound, but putting in bylaws that helped with responsible ownership. You know, I'm here 10 or 11 years after I started with NAR, and in a different role now and I see that we still have some gaps with that where there is a very big reliance on a volunteer group that has little power and authority on that end of things. And yet they're the most relied upon group for animal control situations. (KI3.2)

With community health concerns related to dogs being pressing issues for all three communities, a more formalized and well-resourced plan for bylaw implementation and enforcement should be a priority. While the human resources associated with bylaw implementation and enforcement are one aspect of the financial burden of dog control, provision and management of adequate facilities for impoundment are also important considerations. According to key informants, the responsibility for funding and building an adequate pound for the Tri-communities continues to fall, by default, to Northern Animal Rescue:

So [NAR's] goal is to have a more formal partnership [with the Village and the Band] and request more funding or a Tri-community approach to building a shelter. We're working on a proposal right now for the Town of La Ronge just to see if it would even ever be a possibility that they would help us with getting a shelter, we have to know. Do we have any local resources? And if not, then we'll have to move on and try to get some corporate funding. (KI2)

Until a proper facility is built and adequately resourced, impoundment for dogs in the area will present ethical and legal challenges for community leadership, the Animal Control Officer for the LLRIB, and the board of Northern Animal Rescue. At present, all parties continue to engage in crisis control, attempting to fill the gaps in dog control in the Tri-communities with measures that could cause harm.

With respect to costs associated with housing dogs that are impounded under community bylaws, there is a fee schedule listed in each community document (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, 2014; Northern Village of Air Ronge, 2011; The Town of La Ronge, 2011). All three bylaws state that impoundment and husbandry fees will be charged when owners redeem their dogs from the pound, and collecting these fees has been described as a challenge. When asked whether they issue fines to people whose dogs are found running at large, the LLRIB dog catcher replied, 'No, just warning letters. But so far when I've been handing those out, no one's been reinforcing them so, I don't know what's up with that' (KI7). Even in Air Ronge where fines are issued, collecting them is difficult and the costs of pursuing legal action against residents for payment of animal control fines is impractical and costly:

So our bylaw itself, I feel that, I mean, bylaws are there to provide us some jurisdiction, but in all honesty, we don't have a lot of power with those bylaws, unless we want to uphold that within the courts, which isn't always going to be in favor. So, they're tough because if our bylaw is not being upheld, when we are enforcing, and people aren't complying with the fines and the payments or just the different things within. You know, it's a tough one, because it can be a financial investment on behalf of your municipality to continuously be going to court to fight some of these things. (KI3.1)

At the time of writing, the 2022 impoundment records for Air Ronge state that sixteen dogs have been found at large and impounded by Village maintenance workers during the calendar year (G. Willins, 2022). Nine of those dogs were redeemed by their owners and impoundment fees paid; the remaining seven were relinquished to Northern Animal Rescue.

According to a board member from Northern Animal Rescue, the Town of La Ronge has a better functioning system, in large part due to their contracted services with NAR:

So, I would say, as far as the town of La Ronge is concerned, they have the most comprehensive approach in the sense that they do have bylaws that are enforced by a bylaws officer. They have an animal control officer, a pound and they also have the licensing program that they use. Northern animal rescue is contracted out to provide animal control for the town of La Ronge. If a dog is impounded and its owners reside in the town of La Ronge, the dog has to be licensed prior to it being released from the pound. (KI2)

Historically, the Band's dog catcher has been associated with dogs being taken away or shot, due to previous population control strategies involving organized culls:

Many folks have fear of calling the dog catcher because in the past, giving their pet to the dog catcher meant that their animal would be destroyed. A couple of pet owners that we help on a regular basis said that Band members won't call NAR, because we ask the dog catcher to pick the animals up, and the belief is that their pet will be put down. So there's a lot of misinformation out there. (KI2)

Importantly, culling dogs by shooting them was a past strategy practiced not only on the reserves, as shared by one participant:

'Cause the Village of Air Ronge used to [laughs] – that's how old I am – used to employ a guy whose job it was to shoot dogs. And he would then drive up to the village office with a truck load of dogs – dead dogs. And somebody'd come out and count them and pay him! (AR_3)

Presently, culls are no longer employed as a population control method in the Tri-communities. However, due to a sometimes-overwhelming number of roaming dogs and associated concerns about community safety, the Band has more recently begun employing 'dog pulls' as an alternate method of emergency population control. This strategy involves inviting rescue organizations from outside the community to remove loose or roaming dogs from the area to be rehomed elsewhere:

And there's a lady that comes to town too, from Alberta. She's the one who helps me, like, the most. And then, all these dog people over there, like the

ones that keep the dogs, they were all getting jealous because she has taken, any dog she adopts, they don't want...each time we get over, at least 15 dogs each time she comes to town. And she takes any kind of dog, even if it's real aggressive she'll take it...that's a part of my job though, and they when I went for my interview, they told me if you can find – try to get rid of all the dogs anyway you can. And I did. And now they're mad because they're all missing. (KI7)

While the dog catcher no longer shoots dogs as a primary method of population control, it appears that public perception of this role continues to be fraught with negative connotations of dogs being removed from their families, and the disruption of important dog-human relationships. This results in substantial conflict around enforcement of bylaws, which can make the job difficult, and may be part of the reason why it is a challenge to keep an individual in that position long-term.

Since the dog catcher serves all local LLRIB communities, not just those within the immediate Tri-community area, the workload is large, as reported by the individual who most recently occupied the role:

I: So what are your work hours like?

P: They're...8:00 to 4:30.

I: And do you ever have to work overtime?

P: Then I'm on call. 24-7. Every day.

I: So, how the heck can you have a life outside of your job?

P: I turn off my phone. Yeah, then when I turn off my phone, I get in trouble.

I always asked, well how come I can't get another worker and they said we'll work on it. They probably have been saying that for 15 years. (KI7)

For the LLRIB, the demand for bylaw enforcement activities is much larger than what can be accomplished by one individual, particularly if there is no back-up after hours. The role is primarily focused on seizing and impounding of dogs roaming at large or being a nuisance, which can happen at any time of day:

I patrol the reserves. Drive around and make sure there's no dogs attacking people, and the stray dogs. That's what I mostly do. Wait for a phone call...I usually get about 12 phone calls a day... Mostly stray dogs and they're mostly just little easy things like there's a dog walking in my yard or there's a dog peeing on my steps, right? (KI7)

One can imagine that twelve calls a day would take up most of a workday, particularly if these twelve calls were all in different areas. Sometimes dogs that are picked up are those that are reported because they have been acting aggressively:

Usually [dogs are reported because of people] getting chased down the road or...when they walk by [the dog's] place. They don't get attacked, they usually just [get] chase[d]. And they look aggressive, but...But, for the aggressive dogs, we usually give [their owners] warnings. Like, give them a written warning first. Then after that they get another warning housing letter. After that, they're pretty much in trouble...we usually just take their

dog...the owners, they get mad and, but they can't say nothing after their dog is mean. (KI7)

When asked what he does with a dog when he picks it up, the dog catcher replied, 'I usually give it to NAR. If NAR doesn't take them, there's another woman that takes them' (KI7). Again, this reflects on the centrality of NAR to the dog control operations of the three communities. While agreements are not universally formalized, NAR appears to be involved in some way with most of the dogs picked up through dog control activities in the Tri-communities.

It appears that many enforcement procedures prescribed in the dog control bylaws of the three communities are not being implemented, and are impractical within the local context. The costs of enforcement and impoundment are difficult to measure given informal agreements, in-kind contributions, and incomplete bylaw implementation. Punitive approaches such as issuing fines and destroying or otherwise getting rid of dogs when owners are unable to pay does not support healthy cohesive relationships in the Tri-communities, and is not achievable with current resources and dog control structures. Other elements of the bylaws are not effectively operationalized due to jurisdictional and political challenges, and some of these could inadvertently harm the health and safety of dogs and the public due gaps in training of personnel and ineffective mitigation and reporting of infectious and zoonotic disease risks.

6.2.3 Dog Control Training and Resources

Dog control requires personnel to have adequate training and equipment to do their jobs well and to maintain human and animal safety in the process. As previously discussed, dealing with potentially aggressive dogs can be dangerous, and with limited access to veterinary care in

the Tri-communities, the risk of rabies transmission from dog bites is elevated. The dog catcher described the equipment available for use when dealing with aggressive dogs:

I usually have one of those dog catching poles. And a cage and whatnot. It's much better than destroying the dog, anyways. (KI7)

According to the Village of Air Ronge leadership, the maintenance staff responsible for picking up dogs are advised not to engage with dogs that appear aggressive. While staff are provided with catch poles and kennels, they are not trained on how to use the equipment and safely handle challenging animals:

I'm not aware of our staff actually having any specific type of training with animals. We have some basic things and our staff really don't pursue an animal if it seems skittish or not safe to entertain. So, I mean, they're definitely not putting themselves or the animals at risk. If the animal is cooperative, great. And if not, I mean, lots of times those dogs do get away. (KI3.1)

If aggressive dogs are encountered at large in the Village, staff are told to call the RCMP to deal with these animals (G. Willins, 2022). For the Town, Northern Animal Rescue's Animal Control Officer has catch poles, kennels, and other personal protective equipment for seizing dogs, but similarly to the Village, aggressive animals are not handled intentionally. NAR provides training for their ACO on how to use the equipment, and when dangerous dogs are encountered, the RCMP are engaged to assist with apprehending the animal (J. Dickson, 2022). One participant from the Town felt that it is leadership's job to ensure enforcement officers are adequately equipped to do their job safely:

When I was involved [with NAR] we got the – it's just a noose kinda thing. But it was a hard pole so you could loop the dog but it couldn't come at you. So I don't know if they still have that. The net shooting thing is a great idea. But again you should have your own. That should be the Town's responsibility to provide the proper equipment for the dog catcher. (LaRonge_1)

Similarly, in circumstances where the Band's dog catcher must seize a very aggressive dog, they can call on the RCMP to help, though what they provide is minimal:

I: And did the RCMP do anything about [those highly aggressive dogs] as far as a fine or anything?

P: Not even they just helped me. They opened the cage for me, and I shoved those dogs in there, with one of those poles. Nothing other happened. (KI7)

So there are some gaps and frustration around dealing with aggressive dogs and lack of supports in place to ensure safety of individuals involved. When aggressive dogs are seized and must be contained in some way to keep the community safe, one of the options available to animal control personnel is to euthanize or 'destroy' the dog. Issues related to public health and rabies virus will be discussed later in the chapter, but operationally it is important to understand how and by whom destruction of dogs is carried out. For the Village, there is currently no one on staff who would destroy a dog but previously, the former Mayor would take on this responsibility:

We haven't had an animal destroyed within my eight years being within the Village, so it's not something that we want to do, or seek to do...in the past,

you know, the previous mayor would have been the one that would have [destroyed a dog], you know, not that it would have been something he would have taken pleasure in doing, but he was the only one at that time that we had on staff that would have if deemed necessary...it's a difficult thing, and you can't expect your staff just to automatically be comfortable doing something [like that]. And then, I mean, having because the means of destroying previously would have been by a gunshot so again, I'm not even sure which of our staff have firearms licensing and stuff, so definitely something [to consider]. I'm not sure where we sit right now. Honestly. (KI3.1)

For the Town, destruction of aggressive dogs would be at the discretion of the Animal Control Officer, who ultimately reports to Northern Animal Rescue. According to a board member of NAR, the ACO has never and would never destroy a dog, and would leave this responsibility to local RCMP or Conservation Officers, or would transport the dog to a veterinary clinic in Prince Albert for humane euthanasia (J. Dickson, 2022). There are some concerns with bylaw enforcement officers authorizing euthanasia of owned dogs without involvement of an Animal Protection Officer or RCMP, because of the designation of authority for animal destruction under the Animal Protection Act (Ferguson, 2022). With all three communities relying on the RCMP to deal with dangerous dogs, it seems logical that RCMP members in the area would be adequately equipped and trained to do so. In practice however, this is reportedly not the case:

I don't think we would have any difficulty in seizing that animal throwing them in the back of a truck. We don't really have the tools necessary, like, if you call it a ligature pole or whatever you call it I'm not entirely sure but. We

don't have anything like that at our disposal, [local Conservation Officers] might have something like that, if they're dealing with wild animals possibly. So we would have to ask them...we have an obligation to deal with it if somebody gets bitten. And so we can certainly take [the dog] into, you know, get them out so they're not roaming and bring them here...we could certainly do that until we can make arrangements to secure them elsewhere, like through NAR or whatever...(KI5)

Relying on Northern Animal Rescue to house and care for dogs that have behaved aggressively raises questions about liability if NAR has been handed responsibility for the dog by local law enforcement. This is particularly concerning if individuals caring for such dogs in the pound are bitten. When destruction of dogs is necessary, RCMP will perform euthanasia via gunshot, but will only do this if dogs are in immediate distress:

It would depend on the circumstances - if there was a dog suffering and run over and its back was broken, and it was suffering then absolutely. We would take care of the animal just to put it out of its misery and stuff like that. But if say there's somebody that identifies a dangerous dog and then, no, we wouldn't go and destroy it. We would leave that to, we probably either wait for the courts to make that decision that it has to be euthanized. And even then we won't do it. (KI5)

In some cases, an RCMP officer may not be comfortable euthanizing a dog by gunshot, and in these cases they have sometimes called on the Band's dog catcher for help:

...I've had a few phone calls to [shoot dogs] for the police in town there. (KI7)

Here, a challenge is identified: dangerous dogs are sometimes encountered by community members and individuals providing dog control services in the Tri-communities. Most service providers are not adequately equipped or trained to safely deal with aggressive animals, and when these are encountered, the RCMP are called to assist. The RCMP are similarly ill equipped to safely handle truly aggressive dogs, and do not have space available for housing them. Thus, the housing and care of potentially dangerous dogs would become the responsibility of Northern Animal Rescue as the operators of the sole local pound facility. Finally, arranging destruction of dogs falls to NAR or other local individuals, such as the Band's dog catcher, who have the skills and experience to destroy dogs safely, but this authority may not match legislation at provincial levels so there may still be gaps in this aspect of the process.

While issues with dangerous dogs are concerning, it is not common that truly dangerous dogs are encountered in the Tri-communities (J. Dickson, 2022). Many of the dogs that are involved in situations of concern for community residents are simply unruly, and are often discovered to be amenable to living safely with humans when removed from situations that stimulate aggressive behaviour:

Usually a dog will come to you. I think it's just, like, who knows what forces them to bite somebody either they're just truly mean or they're scared and they're acting out. Right? (KI5)

Recently, a lady contacted NAR about her 8-month-old pit bull type dog who's been breaking his chain, and chasing people and cars. She started off by saying that he's aggressive and to gain more information, I asked her; "Is he aggressive or is he jumping up and pushing children down? Is he bored?"

Is he chasing because he's not being exercised? After a few questions and we got into the conversation, it was more a sense of the family feeling overwhelmed by his size and strength, rather than aggression and she admitted that he hadn't been trained and he's not really aggressive in the sense of biting people. (KI2)

P: Mostly [I spend my days] roaming the streets and, the number one thing is to look for the dogs that are in heat, or the aggressive dogs.

I: Right, right. And so what do you use to tell you that a dog's in heat?

P: Yeah, there'll be 10 dogs chasing that one dog.

I: Yeah. Yeah and then that's when the fights happen, right?

P: Yeah, and that's after you get that dog, those dogs'll all separate, and go back home. (KI7)

These accounts of apparently aggressive behaviours being connected to other problems such as lack of training or competition for females in heat link to themes in previous chapters regarding roaming dogs, dogs not being spayed and neutered, and dogs not being trained. Local resource gaps and training deficits can be exacerbated by the physical features of the Tri-communities, including lack of community borders, potential for exposure to wildlife and the inconsistent provision of fences to keep dogs contained in yards, and the community's proximity to the highway.

6.2.4 Tri-Communities: Physical Features Related to Dog Control

While each of the three communities have their own residential membership and leadership structure, there are no tangible borders between the Village, the Town, and the Band-governed areas. This feature of the physical environment of the Tri-communities adds complexity to the picture of dog control, because dogs do not adhere to the community borders, and can travel between each of the communities at will if they are roaming. As a result, dogs found in one area may not have originated there, which adds to the challenges associated with dog control, reconnecting dogs with owners, and any enforcement activities that might be required. The lack of physical borders means that operationalizing a shared community approach to dog care and control is difficult, and has not yet been achieved:

[T]he leadership [doesn't want] to dive into a Tri-community approach because there's not a good understanding as to where the dogs are coming from and how the costs will be divvied up. Our belief is that dogs don't know borders and they don't know schedules as to when animal control is out and about. If domestic animals are part of the community, then it should be a collective responsibility to manage the population for the safety of all citizens. (KI2)

The need for a cohesive approach to dog care and control in the Tri-communities was mentioned numerous times in our conversations with key informants and other participants:

But I think you have to start with, always start with that shared understanding, and where everybody's on one table. And when you have that established then you can look at other issues. (AR_5)

All three communities should be together and try to work together with some sort of solution. And then maybe talk to the public and have some kind of a – what do you call that when you go to the community and hand out a form just to ask everybody else, everybody’s input onto how to control animals and stuff or what they should do. See if there’s people who might have some good ideas, I dunno. (LLRIB_2)

Our dream would be to have a tri-community approach with an animal shelter that could be used by all of the communities and to assure sustainability and an on-going Animal Welfare presence for future groups to take over...it has to be a strategy with the underlying goal or mission of “we really want our dog population controlled and we are willing to do what it takes for everyone’s safety.” In order to support the goal and make it achievable, there has to be specific actions and timelines attached to it: these are the things we are going to do, and we're going to put them in place and we're going to bring all of the people, all of the key stakeholders and resources to the table, and we're going to work on it together. (KI2)

Community cohesion in dog care and control could lead to improved care of dogs at the individual and family level, which would support better outcomes across the Tri-communities at the dog-human interface. Another feature of the physical environment that contributes to how dogs are cared for is the inconsistent presence of fences in all yards, and the proximity of the community to ‘the bush’ and local wildlife. Participants recognized that fences improve control of dogs and could reduce contact between dogs in the community, possibly alleviating some concerns for inter-dog aggression, packing and threats to community safety:

'Cause I was trying to look up the [bylaws about] dogs and I was also trying to look up fence, like the whole our fence is broken between. And mine's all a chain-link fence but the next door neighbour's has all a wooden fence and it's all rotten to the point of falling over. And so I'm worried about my dogs getting out or there being a dog fight or whatever... (AR_4)

I think a lot of people that have fences have more control of their pets and other pets coming into their yard. That's a plus, but the ones with no fences all the stray dogs go through and they are hungry looking for food. (LLRIB_6.1)

Linked to the role of dogs as protection, some participants acknowledged that the close proximity of many properties to the forest increases the likelihood of wildlife coming into the yard. In these situations, having dogs roaming free can be seen as beneficial:

So where we live and we have no fenced yard and our property faces the bush line, letting our dog roam free and I see it as with him marking his territory and urinating, he's keeping the bears away and the coyotes away and things like that. (LaRonge_2)

I don't see any gain really in allowing your dogs to roam. Except like out here. Like if you think about a rural setting. Whether it's a cabin in the woods or a farm, you want your dogs to be able to roam because they need to be able to protect their property. For us, like we don't tie our dogs because their job is to keep the bears and the wolves away from the livestock. So I guess that would be a gain, right? (LaRonge_3)

However, dogs can be put in danger due to the proximity to wildlife as well, so in this way the physical environment of the Tri-communities presents challenges to protecting the safety of dogs:

[When dogs roam] they can be in danger. They may not be able to find their way back home. And although it's a safe community but again when you go outside there can be wolves or bears or coyotes. Your dog can be eaten alive [laughs] or get to [a] trapline and get injured and just get stuck there or starve to death. (LaRonge_5)

Having neighbourhoods on either side of the highway and dogs roaming between elevates the risk of roaming to the health and wellbeing of dogs, and of people. Participants recognized that this physical feature of the Tri-communities contributed to some of the dog control challenges and strategies in place:

We are still seeing way too many animals being hit by vehicles. We have helped 7 or 8 dogs that were hit this past year and some had severe injuries that required amputation, surgery and a couple of dogs had to be humanely euthanized because their injuries were irreparable. (KI2)

Each of these physical features in isolation may not result in challenges or gaps in care and control of dog population, health and welfare, but when in combination with other proximal determinants, such as socioeconomic status, their impact is amplified.

6.2.5 Socioeconomic Status and Social Supports

In many communities where care and control of dogs are concerns, socioeconomic status and the availability of social supports play a role in what the issues are, and how they are addressed. Throughout data collection events, finances and poverty came up repeatedly as contributors to concerns at the dog-human interface in the Tri-communities. In some cases, financial concerns were cited as a reason for some of the administrative challenges in dog control at the community leadership level, particularly when it comes to providing financial support for dog healthcare:

The Mayor part of me is just, it's not financially in the capacity of the municipality. And I do feel that those types of services, you know, when we talk about responsible pet ownership and what it entails when you become an owner of animal. Those costs and those things that get associated to that, that's on you. (KI3.1)

Here, there is a belief that 'good' dog ownership requires financial means to consistently provide all needs of the animals in one's care. This sentiment was echoed by another key informant when asked about what causes situations where dogs are not getting all their needs met:

I'm not sure where this stigma about pet ownership fits in there where they still feel that they have to have all these animals, and in a lot of cases, it is all these animals and stuff, and yet they don't have money to put food on the table for themselves. So. Yeah, I think a lot of that all plays into the factor of poor pet ownership. (KI4)

The belief seems to be that when dogs are not being adequately cared for, the people responsible for them should not have the privilege of benefitting from that dog-human relationship. This participant acknowledged that families may love their dogs, but may not be providing them the ‘best’ care, and when this was a repeated finding, a reasonable solution might be to ‘[b]an them from owning pets for a couple of years’ (KI4). Another key informant repeated this understanding that love does not equal ability to provide ‘proper’ care, and compared deficits in dog care to deficits in childcare:

Yeah, you might love that animal more than anything in the world. Like, we see homeless populations not necessarily up here, and domestic violence situations where, like, I mean, animals do mean a lot to a lot of people it doesn't necessarily mean that, because they don't have the care for the animal that they don't love that animal beyond everything. It's the same with people and children. Right? You might not be doing the best for your kid, but that's not to say you don't love that kid more than anything in the world. (KI3.1)

This participant’s thoughts provide a foundation for a deeper conversation about social supports and providing resources for community members so that dogs and people can get what they need in respectful and non-patronizing ways. One participant recognized that privilege plays a role in people’s understanding of why individuals may choose to let their dogs roam or surrender them:

But I think people enter into [dog ownership] with good intentions if not unrealistic intentions. And then you just [sighs] “oh my God I just can’t look after this dog anymore”. So rather than say to someone, “Can someone come

and take this dog?” or try to find a home for it yourself, just let it out. Let it out when there’s gonna be a [dog] pull. I’m assuming that’s what happens with some people. And we might, you know, from our comfortable position say, “Oh what a terrible thing that is!” But maybe it’s a last resort for some folks. (AR_3)

Rather than leaving individuals and families to repeatedly choose last resort solutions when overwhelmed by dog care, Northern Animal Rescue has begun providing resources and support to keep dogs and people together. This approach diverges from the practice of removing dogs from their people, which fractures relationships and does little to solve dog issues, and moves towards a community care model where people are met where they are at and supported in caring for their dogs:

To reduce our intakes, we’re trying to work with people to enable them to keep their pets by finding different ways to support and help pet owners. For example, we try to find out what the specific challenges are for the pet owner and then offer supplies or advice to help with their unique situation. (KI2)

The challenge with this approach continues to centre around financial sustainability and the heavy reliance on a volunteer-run registered charity to provide the core support for dog care and control in the Tri-communities:

I would say there are definitely some financial concerns: who will bear the bulk of the costs?... From our point of view, a regional approach makes the most sense, but I think that there are barriers, even with the politics that go

along with it and people not wanting to spend money if they don't think that it's going to be used for the purposes they need it for. (KI2)

There is a need in the Tri-communities to have financially sustainable resources to support dog care and preserve dog-human relationships for all residents, regardless of socioeconomic status. A key informant made an astute comment that connects outcomes at the dog-human interface to determinants further upstream:

You can throw money at a lot of problems, and it doesn't change where the problems start right?...I remember we had a kid that had abused animals and ends up he worked with us and we're trying to bring him around and see animals as actual things and he helped us take care of bitty baby puppies for an entire day of feeding them before we were able to get them shipped out. And you go to his house and you realize that this, this is as good as it's gonna get for that dog because those kids didn't have food. (KI3.2)

With these observations, we can start to understand challenges with dog care and control as symptoms of larger systemic issues that influence not only the health of the dog-human relationship, but the health of individual humans and the community. If challenges with dogs are to be reduced or alleviated in the Tri-communities, there must be strategies in place that support sustained dog-human bonds. When dogs can stay with their people in ways that optimize dog and human health, safety and welfare, less intervention from animal control and welfare personnel will be required. Sustainable dog-human bonds are often determined by the financial aspects of dog ownership. Several participants suggested developing a community care model to help

families pay for dog care and maintain their bond, even if they couldn't pay out of pocket for health care or other expenses:

I would be curious as to if a dog is constantly out and about, what's going on there...But just having a conversation on if a dog's constantly out, why? Is it somebody needs help fixing their fence? Is it an Elder that doesn't have access to whatever, right? But I think as a community we should be able to help each other to fix that. (LaRonge_1)

Everybody in the community should take care of each other, look after one another. (LLRIB_3)

But it would be nice if we could just somehow access a vet 'cause we pay a lot to have our dogs taken care of. And if there's an accident, we have to change our lifestyle. With our children we used to have a family meeting and no pizza or movies for a month to pay an \$800 vet bill. And we had another \$700 vet bill that we had to pay. So we're able now to have the resources to do that by cutting back on certain things. A lot of people don't have that option. And there has to be some sort of emergency program that they can access. But we have to somehow ensure that it is an emergency not just a way out. (LLRIB_4)

This participant also emphasized that impoundment fees are barriers to maintaining human-dog relationships, and that these could be done away with if people were supported to keep their animals contained and provide care:

But loose running dogs, there definitely has to be a dog catcher and they have to somehow catch the dogs. And they have to I think find out who the dogs belong to. And if nobody will claim them, then they should go to homes. But right now they collect a dog and the dog's impounded with a big fee. And right away I go, "Shit. That dog's not gonna be picked up 'cause that person can't afford to pay the dog pound fees." (LLRIB_4)

Northern Animal Rescue and the LLRIB have been contributing to a community care model with the WCVN-run veterinary clinics since they began in 2014, providing subsidy for community members on an as-needed basis to improve financial accessibility of veterinary services. Recently, NAR has extended their community care efforts to supporting community members in maintaining ownership of their dogs as opposed to enforcing barriers which add pressure to the already overburdened shelter:

We are trying to reduce the number of animals that we take in because we just don't have the capacity to continue taking in the large numbers of animals we've been helping in recent years. We thought that with the spay/neuter clinics that the number of animals needing to be rescued would decrease, but we've found that we're taking in more animals from outlying communities. To reduce our intakes, we're trying to work with people to enable them to keep their pets by finding different ways to support and help pet owners. For example, we try to find out what the specific challenges are for the pet owner and then offer supplies or advice to help with their unique situation. (KI2)

Community supports and a re-imagined enforcement model could transform the sustainability of dog-human relationships in the Tri-communities, improving community self-determination and reducing some of the dependence on local and outside organizations to support dog health and welfare.

6.3 Intermediate Determinants of Dog Care

Reading and Wein (2009) define intermediate determinants of health as those that directly influence the outward ‘symptoms’ or proximal determinants of health. Here, intermediate determinants of dog care are the upstream factors that are perceived to result in the proximal determinants and thus the care of dogs within the Tri-communities. Intermediate determinants include dog health and welfare legislation, welfare oversight and enforcement, and the concepts of and personnel involved in One Health and One Welfare, which consider the intersections of human, animal, and environmental health and welfare.

6.3.1 Dog Health and Welfare Legislation

The regulation of dog health and welfare in Saskatchewan is legislated through the Veterinarian’s Act, 1987 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2009); the bylaws of the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association (Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, 2021); and the Animal Protection Act (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018). Federally, the provision of preventive health measures in remote communities is covered under the Health of Animals Regulations as part of the Health of Animals Act (Government of Canada, 2022). A summary of pertinent sections from each piece of provincial legislation is provided in Tables 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 to provide a foundation for discussion of health and welfare operations in the next section. The full text of all three documents can be found online.

Table 6.3 Veterinary Medicine Regulations from the Veterinarian’s Act, 1987

	Definition	Specified Actions
Veterinary Medicine	Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease and injuries of animals; may only be practiced by those with a DVM ¹³ in good standing with the registering association (SVMA ¹⁴)	<p>Diagnosing, advising or prescribing a drug, medical appliance or treatment for prevention or treatment of injury or disease</p> <p>Administering a drug, medicine, appliance or other treatment for prevention or treatment of disease or injury</p> <p>Performing surgery on an animal</p> <p>Certifying cause of death of an animal</p>
Exempt	Animal health actions that can be performed by someone other than a licensed and registered DVM in certain situations	<p>Anything in row above if done by someone other than a DVM under direction and direct supervision of a DVM</p> <p>Technical duties specified in SVMA bylaws completed by a RVT¹⁵ under the supervision of a DVM</p> <p>Providing first aid to an animal in an emergency</p> <p>Administration of medication to an animal by its caregiver OR with consent of its caregiver OR by agent, employee, or member of caregiver’s household</p>

¹³ DVM = Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (veterinarian)

¹⁴ SVMA = Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association

¹⁵ RVT = Registered Veterinary Technologist (vet tech)

Table 6.4 Veterinary Service Provision Regulations from the SVMA¹⁶ Bylaws, 2021

	Allowed Procedures	Prohibited Procedures
RVT ¹⁷ , under the direct supervision of a licensed and registered DVM ¹⁸	<p>Administering a drug, medicine, appliance or other application or treatment for prevention or treatment of bodily injury or disease of animals</p> <p>Performing a surgical or dental operation on an animal</p>	Making a diagnosis or determining any course of treatment for an animal
DVM code of ethics (Section 12)	<p>Responsibility to seek changes to laws and regulations which are contrary to the best interests of patients and public health</p> <p>Make knowledge available to communities and provide services for activities that protect public and environmental health</p> <p>Establish a Vet-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR) for each patient, which must be renewed every 12 months</p> <p>Vets can choose who they serve and can establish or decline a VCPR¹⁹</p> <p>Provide essential services to animals in emergencies regardless of VCPR</p> <p>Protect personal privacy and maintain confidentiality unless required by law to protect health and welfare of people or animals</p> <p>Seek to ensure protection of public health and general animal health and welfare while carrying out professional duties towards a specific patient</p>	VCPR may not be established by telephone or electronic means alone

¹⁶ SVMA = Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association

¹⁷ RVT = Registered Veterinary Technologist (vet tech)

¹⁸ DVM = Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (veterinarian)

¹⁹ VCPR = Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship

<p>Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) (Section 13)</p>	<p>Vet and client must have agreed to the relationship</p> <p>Vet needs sufficient knowledge of health, environment and need for care of the animal based on examining the animal OR making medically appropriate examinations and timely visits to premises where animal is kept OR taking history and understanding presenting complaint and reviewing previous medical records as soon as possible after first encounter</p> <p>Must be readily available or made alternative arrangements for emergency coverage or follow-up care</p> <p>VCPR required to prescribe rabies vaccines, and rabies vaccines cannot be dispensed, AND rabies vaccine must be administered by a licensed veterinarian</p> <p>Rabies vaccine can be administered by other than a DVM in alignment with section 134.2(2) of the Health of Animals Regulations – Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food must provide written permission to allow for use in a temporary emergency clinic or in a remote area where veterinary services are not readily available</p>	<p>Cannot diagnose, recommend treatment, prescribe medications or perform any medical or surgical procedure without formation of a valid VCPR</p>
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Table 6.5 Animal Welfare Regulations from the Animal Protection Act, 2018

	Duties	Personnel
Animal Protection Officer	Enforcement of all sections of the Act	A member of the RCMP ²⁰ , a member of a municipal police service, or a person appointed as an animal protection officer
Euthanasia	<p>Euthanasia to relieve distress if the animal is in such distress that a veterinarian OR the APO²¹ deems that the animal cannot otherwise be relieved of its distress</p> <p>If an animal is to be euthanized, the person performing the euthanasia must ensure the circumstances of its death cause the animal a minimum of pain and anxiety</p> <p>Must be carried out in a manner consistent with prescribed standards, codes of practice or guidelines to result in animal's immediate loss of sensibility and rapid progression to death</p>	APO must provide authority to euthanize if owner or caregiver cannot or will not provide consent
Reporting Contraventions	Reporting contraventions to the Act, sections 3-6 (distress, transport, euthanasia)	Mandatory reporting for veterinarians; also have to provide any further information relevant to the event required by APOs for assessing the situation

²⁰ RCMP = Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Canadian Federal Police agency)

²¹ APO = Animal Protection Officer

6.3.2 Dog Welfare Oversight and Enforcement

Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan (APSS) is the primary organization responsible for enforcement of Saskatchewan's animal welfare legislation. At the time of writing, APSS employs nine active Animal Protection Officers (APOs) and are in the process of filling one additional position. Two officers serve the Saskatoon area, while the other seven cover the remaining area of the province, apart from the City of Regina, where provincial welfare legislation is enforced by officers employed by the Regina Humane Society. Due to the large geographic area of Saskatchewan and an average annual caseload of 700 (Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan, 2022), the demand on this small number of enforcement officers is high. This demand and the relative remoteness of the Tri-communities influences the response capabilities of APOs to welfare concerns in the area:

Sometimes I'll drive all the way up to La Ronge to respond to a complaint but by the time I get there, the dog is already gone. This is a big challenge, because I can't do anything to legally pursue the case if the dog has been removed. (KI1)

This experience shared by an APO was validated by the Band's dog catcher. When asked whether he ever contacts APSS when there is a concern with animal welfare or a dangerous dog he replied, 'No, because they'll take too long to get here. And I have to [take care of] it right away. Before something else happens' (KI7). The sense of urgency around responding to animal welfare concerns and situations involving dangerous dogs presents many challenges for local dog control authorities. Historically, there has sometimes been the impression that Northern Animal Rescue takes on the responsibility of responding to animal welfare concerns in the Tri-

communities, and this presents some legal challenges because they are not designated APOs. At times, situations are perceived by NAR to be too dire to wait for a response from Animal Protection:

[T]hey don't come up very often. So it takes a long time for anything to happen with that, and in the meantime, like, if you find a dog that's in distress and being starved or not [given] proper shelter, a lot of times [NAR has] given them the food and the shelter. And then if Animal Protection does come up and then they say, 'well, the dog has shelter. The dog has food'. Or whatever, 'the dog is fine' or whatever...I think they find it very hard to remove any dog too, due to all the laws and regulations and stuff. So there isn't much of a voice out there for these animals.' (KI4)

With the heavy demands on the small pool of APOs employed by APSS and the potential requirement for fast local response when suspected cruelty is encountered, having local APOs available to respond to welfare concerns would be ideal. RCMP and municipal police are designated APOs under current legislation (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018), and the detachment in La Ronge could provide support for welfare cases in a timelier fashion than APSS. One of the barriers in the way of RCMP officers taking on the role of APOs in the Tri-communities is perceived challenges in enforcing the Animal Protection Act:

I think something that would make it easier for our members to, in fact, enforce Animal control laws and stuff like that, just to take away some of the, I guess what's the word I'm looking for, cumbersomeness of the process. Like, if a person could just go and do their own investigation, and if they

found that there was a contravention, lay [a] ticket...and compel the person to court to answer to the charge. And then if that meant as a part of the investigation...then we would seize the animal and have a place, I'm sure that NAR has a place that they could hold animals and stuff like that. Then we could take carriage of that animal and then take it to them for storage until a decision is made, I suppose. But I realize there's a lot of costs associated to hanging onto animals and stuff like that, but. But at least it's probably in a situation where [if] we have to intervene and take animals, the animal would probably be better off, I guess, in the long run, but. I think that ...members wouldn't sort of be as reluctant to get involved because of the ease of doing it rather than having to first, go to the court, present the case, get the judge to declare the dog as a dangerous animal and then go back. It's just so many processes. (KI5)

This individual, who is an RCMP officer, perceives that there are multiple steps involved in enforcing animal protection legislation, and that officers cannot proceed with their own investigation when cruelty is suspected. There is also an apparent misunderstanding that enforcing local Animal Control bylaws is the primary concern. Further, the focus of this individual is dangerous dogs, whereas there are more concerns from NAR and other individuals involved in dog control about suspected abuse and neglect, which are covered under the Animal Protection Act.

Operationally then, there is a gap in the Tri-communities in response to suspected cruelty. With no local provincially employed APOs, the legal responsibility for enforcement of the Act falls to the RCMP. However, the RCMP are not equipped with adequate training in this role, and

are largely unaware of their animal protection responsibilities. Further, individuals most likely to become aware of animal welfare concerns, such as bylaw enforcement officers and NAR personnel, know that the RCMP do not provide animal welfare enforcement support. Finally, previous experiences with the extended response times of APSS have left local individuals feeling as if they need to respond to suspected cruelty urgently, independently of APOs. If RCMP were to provide more robust support for animal welfare in the area, they would need resources for members to become familiar with their roles and responsibilities as APOs:

Yeah, [what we need is] primarily the education and awareness and training. Because, like I said, it's something that we deal with so rarely that it's just not a comfortable thing. And a lot of guys, probably a lot of the members probably don't even understand what their roles and obligations would be under the Act. Right? And that we have that legislative authority to act, but it's just that they're probably not comfortable with it or even realize that it's a part of their job. But so I think that would be the key piece would just be the education and awareness. And but like I said we just, so rarely do we get those types of calls but. It would be, it would be probably timely, though, to have those discussions and just say, like, because there is such a gap...And [NAR] probably [doesn't] call us right? Yeah, because they probably don't even see us as an avenue to seek assistance with. (KI5)

The need for education and training for RCMP is an important discovery, as it justifies the mobilization of provincial resources to improve RCMP awareness of and competence in providing enforcement when suspected cruelty is encountered. At the time of writing, there is provincial action being taken to engage RCMP detachments province-wide in providing more

robust animal welfare support (Ferguson, 2022). In part, this movement is the result of widespread recognition of the link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, or The Link, which will be discussed in the next section.

6.3.3 One Health and One Welfare in the Tri-communities

One health is a framework used to understand the interconnectedness of animal, human and environmental health, and recognize that interventions that consider all elements of this triad are best positioned to result in improved and sustained health in all areas (Jordan & Lem, 2014; World Health Organization, 2017). One Welfare is a similar framework that recognizes and leverages the many social connections between animal and human welfare, and environmental integrity (Animal Health Canada, n.d.; Jordan & Lem, 2014). We have previously established that dog healthcare services are not regularly available in the Tri-communities, and care offered by licensed veterinary professionals is only available two weekends per year through the temporary mobile clinics run by the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. While some local residents, including members of Northern Animal Rescue, provide health care for their own dogs and others on an as-needed basis, this care is not consistent, is not available to all residents, and cannot address all potential medical concerns.

For veterinary professionals to provide service more regularly in the Tri-communities, a different model of care would be required. We have already discussed some of the possible methods of improving access to veterinary services, through formalized telehealth and telemedicine services for example, which would require alterations to the current bylaws of the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association. Another recommendation made by participants

was to lean more heavily on Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVTs) to provide care in communities without local clinics:

If I had unlimited funds now that you've given me this idea, there's a great opportunity because we have a lot of people that they want to go away for a little bit of schooling but like you said to access the veterinary college...But could you imagine if we had, you know, NORTEP²², the partnership used to be here and if you went to school here, you taught here and that was partially funded. Now, we could form those partnerships where somebody goes and becomes a vet tech, and you have staff here, and you can have a remote clinic but of course, you need that partnership with a base veterinarian. I would imagine that it and if we have telehealth with veterinarians, that's a workable solution. We are not going to get permanent vet clinics here. And, I mean, we've come to accept that. If it ever happened, great, hoorah, but likely it's very, this is an attainable goal. Like, what a great concept. People don't always want to move away from home, like, being your home community. This is people's home. Yeah, what a great concept. (KI3.2)

A model such as this could provide opportunities for education and employment of local individuals while also closing gaps in dog healthcare with a community-led solution. Funding for such a venture would require further problem-solving, but with the various ad-hoc models of community care already in place within the Tri-communities, the potential exists for a sliding fee

²² NORTEP was the Northern Teacher Education Program, run in La Ronge with a focus on training Indigenous educators from the north who would then remain in and around their home communities to work as teachers in northern schools. NORTEP was founded in 1976 and ceased operations in 2017. Bridges, A. (2017). 'Sad for the North': Mixed emotions as 40 years of NORTEP end with last student graduation. *CBC News*

scale that would provide accessible care for all residents and all dogs. To illustrate the ways one health and one welfare act as determinants of dog care in the Tri-communities, we will discuss rabies prevention and response approaches, and the Link between animal and human violence.

6.3.3.1 Rabies Prevention and Response

The role of public health personnel in dog care and control is an important aspect of the dog-human interface to illustrate, as this is where many of the concerns about dog and human health receive attention. In the Tri-communities, when a person is bit or otherwise injured by a dog and reports the incident, the population health unit becomes involved. This is primarily in response to concerns about rabies risk. Band members who are injured by dogs are connected to community health nurses with LLRIB Health Services, and non-Band members are connected to the Saskatchewan Health Authority. We heard from community health nurses for the LLRIB that prevention of dangerous dog-human encounters had been a role assigned to one of the nurses prior to the pandemic, and this has not continued since:

[L]ots of the really bad bites to like the face, are to children, who don't have dog safety awareness, where they...crawl to the dog while they're eating and if there was like a program in schools or something, like I know there is Dog Safe, I think, but something like easy...to teach the kids and everything that would be ideal yeah...And it's kind of fallen on the wayside like no one, we had a nurse that did it, she retired and then it kind of got forgotten. And they haven't really offered any new training for that so it'd be nice to have new training regarding dog safety with children. (KI9)

Dog safety education for school children on reserve is overseen by the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA), which is a health services partnership between the four northern Saskatchewan Tribal Councils (Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, 2022). Knowing about the current lapse in delivery of bite prevention programming by public health supports the current project's aim of developing locally and culturally relevant materials for this purpose to be made publicly available for educators and healthcare professionals in the area.

Another public health concern raised by nurse key informants was the lack of widespread understanding of rabies response protocols to protect public health following dog bites:

I think there's lots of gaps in service where like if somebody gets bit by a dog and then there's not very much information and sometimes the RCMP will tell people that they have to shoot their dog and it gets...not all the organizations in the Tri-communities know the protocol behind dog bites and everything so sometimes they tell someone to shoot their dog or get rid of their dog and it's day two and then we have to go try and find this dog that's in the dumpster...(KI9)

Here, the informant refers to the need to collect the head of a dog that bit a person if the dog was euthanized prior to the end of the requisite ten-day post-bite quarantine. If a dog dies or is euthanized before symptoms of rabies can be ruled out, the head must be submitted for laboratory testing to ensure no rabies could have been transmitted at the time of the bite (Government of Saskatchewan, 2016). One of the complexities of appropriate rabies response, connected to community infrastructure and capacities, is the availability of space to house dogs

for ten days for observation after they have bitten a person. Given what is known about the lack of available shelter space in the Tri-communities, this presents some challenges:

[U]sually people are pretty good with tying up their dog and leaving them, I've never really had an issue with that. Because I come in with the perspective of... 'you don't need to put the dog down' is the first thing I tell them or 'you need to watch out make sure they're not sick, so that this person who got bit doesn't get sick' and people are usually like 'oh yeah well like that's totally fine' but if there was an issue we'd probably just call [the dog catcher]. I don't know how that would go though, I don't know what they have set up for kennels or anything like that. (KI9)

The Band's dog catcher shared the limitations that can exist with the ten-day quarantine period, particularly if the dog being quarantined is aggressive:

You have to wait for 10 days before you, to see if the dog has rabies or anything. But sometimes you can't wait for that 10 days, that dog's going crazy in their backyard, and biting other people, so you just have to [euthanize the dog]. (KI7)

Even though the dog catcher was aware of the required quarantine period, it was not always feasible and sometimes dogs are euthanized before ten days are up anyway. If the bite had not been previously reported to public health and the dog's head was not submitted for testing, there could be a very real risk to human health and safety. There are also concerns here for the welfare of any dog quarantined at the Band's pound and for the safety of whomever is caring for it, given the poor condition of the housing facility owned by the Band and the human

health risks associated with potential rabies cases. Similar risks would be presented when these situations arise in the Town or Village as well. According to the dog catcher and RCMP officer we spoke to, there is no current provision for rabies prophylaxis for individuals who might be involved in apprehending or caring for dogs that are on rabies watch:

I: And so for you, I guess the other piece I wanted to know about for your own safety is...are you vaccinated for rabies?

P: No, no, no. I only got no, I never had a needle for a long time. (KI7)

I: ...[Are any of the officers] vaccinated against rabies is my other question?

P: That's a good question. I don't know if as far as vaccinations, I don't know.

I would imagine that everybody is, I'm just trying to think of my own vaccinations. That's a really good question. I can't even remember. (KI5)

At the time of writing, individuals responsible for dog control for the Village and Town are not provided with rabies prophylaxis as part of their role either (G. Willins, 2022; J. Dickson, 2022). This gap in personal protection for those involved in dog control is a concern, despite sparse reports of rabies cases in northern Saskatchewan (Government of Saskatchewan, 2020).

A final element of animal and human health provision to note here is the lack of regular involvement of veterinarians in follow-up and client education after dog bite incidents. With further integration of animal health professionals into the dog bite follow-up protocols in Tri-communities, opportunities for sustaining the dog-human bond and preventing further aggressive encounters could be optimized, elevating dog welfare in the process.

6.3.3.2 The Link

The connection between animal cruelty and violence against humans has been widely established in the literature, and is commonly referred to by animal health and welfare professionals as 'The Link' (Arkow & Lockwood, 2012). Participants in the present study were aware of this connection, and expressed concerns about the known presence of animal cruelty in the Tri-communities given its strong connection to other forms of family and community violence (Arkow, 2013; Lockwood & Arkow, 2016):

So also, with abuse there's a correlation between animal abuse and human abuse, so you get a pretty good picture of what's going on right? (KI2)

And then over time, of course, unfortunately with a human, if this young boy or girl gets damaged, you know, and they get hurt, like they get kicked or punched or whatever, where does lateral violence go? Unfortunately, it'll go to the dog sometimes, you know. And it happens quite often, you know. When you see, yeah. When you see young boys...what I've seen in my life is young boys will like, torture, will hurt animals. And of course, that's a horrible sign. When you see a child or a young person torturing a dog or an animal, that is a fair warning that that person is not well. (LLRIB_7)

There was an acknowledgement that Northern Animal Rescue has played an important role in the Tri-communities to provide education around The Link:

I'm also glad to see that there has been a move towards maybe the whole domestic abuse aspect of things. Because I mean Ontario's had that for years and I remember introducing it here and making some suggestions and putting things on Facebook and some people sort of thinking about it. But I think a

lot of people believed that no people would just walk out and leave their animal behind. But no they won't. And also the animals are used as a threat. Like if you don't stay with me I'll do whatever to the pet. So I'm really glad to see that there's been a movement on that with NAR. I think that's important. (LaRonge_6)

With this recognition of the connection between animal cruelty and violence against humans, there is need for all parties involved in dog care and control to be able to recognize the signs and respond appropriately and in a timely fashion. Community health nurses employed by the Band often become aware of dog welfare concerns when performing follow-up duties after a dog bite has occurred:

I would say that, by the way the outside of like a house looks from the outside, I don't want to say that says a lot about the people that live inside the house, but like if it's not well kept or if the dog is tied up, but you can tell they've been tied up for a long time I think that says a lot about the dogs well-being and possibly the person, the owner's well-being as well...It could be just a lack of education for the dog's well-being, or it could be other stuff as well, like negligence and stuff but...That is something that we're lacking, I feel that, when we do come across like a house or a dogs well-being, if we feel like they're not being taken care of we kind of just leave it as it is so we're not really doing anything and that like to follow up with that person on the dog, we're not doing anything like that. (KI8)

Public education and inter-professional collaboration around The Link and who to call when concerns arise are needed to optimize health and welfare for dogs, humans and the environment in the Tri-communities.

6.4 Distal Determinants of Dog Care

Distal determinants of health are the political, economic and social forces that result in intermediate and proximal determinants, thus exerting the most pronounced influences on health outcomes. Here, we are considering the distal determinants of dog care to be those factors that lead to the intermediate and proximal dog care determinants previously discussed, and include colonialism and associated forms of oppression; social dynamics and community tensions; and environmental events. While these systemic or holistic influences are more challenging to modulate, exposing them and understanding outcomes at the dog-human interface within the context of these distal determinants can lead to more effective and sustainable interventions in support of interspecies relational health.

6.4.1 Colonialism and Oppression

Colonialism operates systemically in Canada, often in ways that are invisible to those benefitting from the denigration and oppression of Indigenous people. It is not unusual for non-Indigenous Canadians, particularly those who are white, to have little or no understanding of Canada's colonial history and the ways in which colonial policies and structures still operate and inform all aspects of Canadian life. As discussed in Chapter 2, colonialism as a determinant of animal health can be presumed to influence outcomes at the dog-human interface, and dog care and control approaches would not be exempt from this influence. One of the ways colonialism appears to influence outcomes is through the disruption of traditional dog care and control

practices, coincident with displacement of Indigenous families and stealing of children for placement in Indian Residential School institutions.

When Indigenous children were taken away to residential schools, the traditional methods of raising and caring for dogs were not passed on. One participant shared a story from her mother about the practice of giving puppies to children to teach them how to care for dogs:

There's old legends too, you know, about dogs. My mom said when she was tiny, they had lots of pups that were being born, and every kid was given one pup as a responsibility to care and love your dog, and to feed them, and to raise them...Dogs are important. But what I find today is the kids are not given the responsibility to look after their dogs properly, to feed them, give them water – it's like having a baby, right. You have to be there all the time. And you can't just like them for a little while – it's a responsibility till they pass. And that's something that needs to be taught here, because everybody wants a puppy, then they don't look after them. (LLRIB_6)

The disruption of passing on traditional dog care practices would have been amplified by other methods of colonial violence designed to separate Indigenous peoples from their families and cultural practices:

I: And you were saying too - which is something that I was really interested in – that people were using dogs for transportation, but then that was a way that the RCMP, when you were saying that the RCMP had shot a whole bunch of the dogs to prevent-

P: The movement, eh. Because they had a law that we couldn't leave the reserve. That was...what year was that? I think it was lifted – I don't know what year now. You had to have a pink slip. And the person that was the Indian agent at the community, he's the one – that's a guy that started “you tattle, I'll give you more food,” eh, to control. So that's the- they implemented that. So people couldn't go to their traplines, they couldn't live, you know – you had to have a reason. You couldn't visit your relatives in Montreal Lake. So this was, my mom – my granny lived it. And stopping movement of us coming together to fight. (LLRIB_6)²³

At a time when First Nations people living on reserve could not leave the community and travel to practice traditional lifestyles, visit relatives, or sell produce to make money, it makes sense that dogs would be regarded as less useful because they would no longer be able to fulfil their primary role as means of transportation. Another participant shared further details about how government-sanctioned dog culls could be connected to some of the challenges in community cooperation with dogs seen today:

And I do kind of understand some of it because there was a time in La Ronge many years ago where the person who was in charge of the community – of course there was a Chief on Lac La Ronge Indian Band – but the person who was sort of technically in charge of things was an Indian agent. And an Indian agent could call for a dog cull. So you have someone else telling you what

²³ The speaker refers to the Pass System, which was a policy under the Indian Act in place from 1885 to 1951, when it was repealed (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (2015). *Indian Act and the Pass System*. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indian-act-and-the-pass-system.>)

you need to do with your dogs, you know. And I know it's a part of the whole self-government and self-administration desires for Aboriginal communities to make their own rules up about that. But what I'm hoping is that everybody's mission is the same. And if it is, then we could come together and there could be a representative from each of those communities. And I dunno, I think it would go a long way. (AR_3)

Participants in the present study exposed their beliefs about the ability of some community members to provide adequate care for dogs, and very often these concerns were explained as 'cultural differences' which appeared to be a discursive strategy used to soften the blow of settler colonial racism:

There are also some differences in beliefs about the role of dogs in our lives and at times people might feel intimidated or that they're being told how to manage the dog population when they've had certain practices in place in the past. (KI2)

Here, the speaker does not explicitly state who 'they' are, but it can be assumed that the 'certain practices of the past' are traditional Indigenous approaches to using and caring for dogs. The speaker also alludes to practices of intimidation and paternalism concerning dog care, and the idea of needing to 'fix' things between Indigenous people and dogs was expressed by another non-Indigenous participant:

It's kinda become ingrained into their families, the generations of families, like, maybe not from way back, but these last few generations. So this is...pets are, I mean, they're not pets, they're just an animal that lives outside,

and it doesn't seem to be that real physical connection between them, they don't realize they just don't seem to, they can't realize that this is a you know, a live being that needs to be cared for and loved and fed and all that. Like, if somehow you could reconnect them, but yet there are some that are really connected to their animals, but I think it's all the social problems that go on within their own families and stuff. (KI4)

While the connections between challenges in caring for dogs and social issues such as poverty, addictions, and intergenerational trauma have been supported by our data, recognizing the connections alone is not helpful if the context in which the connections occur is not part of the story. As one of our participants said, 'So it's a society thing, eh. To some, and then how people discriminate, say 'the oriental people eat all the cats and dogs,' you know. It's just racist attitudes, so much comes out. So I think it's history too, historically and how it affects all people' (LLRIB_6). Some of these racist attitudes are felt by Indigenous community members through population control practices such as dog pulls:

It's the dog pulls because they're just like...they're very traumatic. And from there it becomes a lot of anger. We have enough racism in this town without adding fuel to the fire. Dog pulls add fuel to the fire. (LLRIB_4)

Northern Animal Rescue has been involved in dog pulls in the past, and has faced community backlash as a result:

Like, we're moving away from...the dog pulls. We're not doing that, so we're moving away from those things that maybe short term will work, but long term they won't. We still help people and we do still work with our rescue

partners because we can't do it all. We have limited resources and space and we just can't do it all. So, we do work with rescue partners and that's when we are asked to help right? We don't go around just thinking this animal needs help right? Taking it. We don't do that. So, we're here to support and help, but we're not being intrusive. We're willing to be open and grow and change our ways. And work together. (KI2)

In the context of the Tri-communities, conflict over dogs and how they are cared for and controlled appears to be illustrative of historical and current pressures which are experienced divergently by Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members because of colonialism and related forms of oppression such as racism. Outsiders wanting to 'help' and believing that dogs would be better off somewhere else may use strategies of coercion or legal action to convince individuals that they should relinquish their dogs to a 'better' home. In an area like the Tri-communities, these beliefs and actions pervade the approaches to dog care and control from within and outside the community, and can lead to substantial harm caused to people and dogs under the guise of protecting animals. Uninvited removal of dogs from reserve communities can exacerbate community tensions, and present barriers to regional collaboration on dog care and control within the Tri-communities. In short, it does not work to apply 'southern solutions and expectations to northern [Indigenous] conditions' (Qikiqtani Truth Commission, 2013, p. 10).

6.4.2 Social Dynamics and Community Tensions

In the Tri-communities, dynamics and tensions between individuals and between community leadership structures have marked influences on dog care and control approaches. These dynamics can accentuate challenges due to lack of understanding of how anti-Indigenous

racism and colonial systems are reproduced in dog care and control actions and ideals. An exemplar of continued lack of awareness is the desire from some to require mandatory spaying and neutering of dogs:

But I feel that we have further to go in that regard because we still have lots of strays, and but more so we have just loose pets, that are breeding, so that's always been my perspective. I really like, I mean, from a personal perspective, and from my time with NAR, that is something that I still want to see where we really enforce the spaying and neutering, because there's no reason why your dog or cat shouldn't be spayed and neutered. Unless you're a professional breeder. (KI3.2)

In the Tri-communities, where access to veterinary care is limited to two weekends per year, having every dog spayed or neutered is currently not feasible. This participant later identified the limitations in implementing such a policy:

I cannot recall any municipalities that have a mandatory spay – like, I don't know which municipalities have them. I'm sure there are some, but it's a hard sell because as we learned with COVID, you cannot tell people what to do even when you are that municipality. You know, our expectation is that you keep your dog in an enclosure and same with, with cats and this and that. And so, for me, like, how you would ever roll that out, I mean, it would have to be one heck of a sales pitch because it's just such a difficult thing to do. (KI3.2)

Societally, it seems that the expectation is that everyone ‘should’ be able to have their dogs spayed and neutered, and take ‘good’ care of them. Concurrently, there is an understanding that these are difficult things to enforce, and they are not necessarily accessible to all, despite efforts being made to improve accessibility of the twice-yearly local vet clinics. Within the context of colonialism and systemic racism, expectations of how dogs should be cared for and controlled result in exacerbated tensions and unwillingness to collaborate across community borders for the purposes of dog control. Very often there is a sense of blame, frequently towards the Band, for being the cause of all the dog issues in the community:

I think I’m pretty disappointed with how the Band handles it to be honest. I went to NAR’s AGM and there was some statistics. And again, not trying to bash anybody but just the statistics. 95% of the dogs they pick up are from the reserve and that is very very sad to see. That means perhaps we need to bring more education to the people living on the reserve. And that is a barrier because we need permission from the councilor. And this is a very very big topic. It goes back to the whole intergenerational trauma, residential school, or even before that, right? And where do we even address it because I know a lot of Band councilors they perhaps don’t like other people coming and telling them what to do. Or perhaps they don’t see it as a big issue [laughs]. Like again, our views are different. It becomes very hard. (LaRonge_5)

Another way these tensions and dynamics are demonstrated is in the use of social media as a tool in dog care and control. One of the challenges reported by the Band’s dog catcher was related to people’s reactions to dog control on Facebook:

[The most stressful part of my job is] all the phone calls and people on social media, they always complain about everything. (KI7)

Northern Animal Rescue has also had negative experiences with social media, largely due to their association with animal rescuing and perceptions of interference, particularly with dog care and control on the reserves:

I'm not sure exactly how it all happened except I do know that social media played a big part in [NAR's relationship with the Band changing]. Like, if they would see our van on the reserve, which we did go fairly often for an animal in medical distress, or if they're requesting assistance of any sort for food or medical supplies or whatever. And then if something happened in the meantime that a dog did disappear or whatever, then that would be mentioned 'Well, I saw the NAR van on the reserve on such and such a day, they probably picked up your dog' or whatever, and then it just kind of snowballed from there I think. I don't know, we were just tired of defending, trying to defend ourselves. (KI4)

A lot of what has happened in the past, it just seems like we are in the center of it, and yet the facts haven't been out there. For example, when there was a dog cull advertised in 2012, everyone assumed that we leaked the information to the media and that we stopped the cull but we don't have any power to do that. Somebody who's an animal lover leaked it to the media, we had nothing to do with it. People just felt that since there was a rescue organization in the area that things could be done differently. After seeing the initial post about

the upcoming dog cull, we contacted the Band's dog catcher for permission to share the post on our FB page and he agreed. In fact, he said he didn't want to do dog culls anymore. It was stressful. He didn't like doing it and he wanted us to publicize the cull so things would change. (KI2)

Social media has a place in dog care within the Tri-communities, but it should be employed with caution. Given pre-existing community tensions and experiences of racism through dog care and control, non-Indigenous individuals in the Tri-communities must take ownership of their approaches and take steps to minimize harm and demonstrate awareness of internalized and structural racism moving forward. Finally, all individuals engaging on social media around dogs should acknowledge the potential for miscommunication to occur, which can harm community relationships and result in further challenges in achieving effective and sustainable dog care and control.

6.4.3 Environmental Events

The final distal determinant to be discussed here is the influence of environmental events on dog care and control within the Tri-communities. In the summer of 2015, 13,000 residents from the La Ronge region were evacuated due to massive forest fires that threatened the Tri-communities and neighbouring areas (CBC News, 2015). During this time, many local families were required to board charter buses out of the community with few possessions, and head south to be sheltered while the fires were dealt with. Most could not take their pets with them, and there were a variety of ways in which the panic around this situation affected dogs. In many cases, individuals without family in Saskatoon or Regina had to stay at emergency shelters, where dogs were not welcome.

Because of the rapidity of the evacuation processes, some owners decided to let their dogs loose in hopes they would be able to survive on their own. Some community members stayed in the area specifically to provide care for dogs, and some worked with rescue organizations from elsewhere in the province to evacuate dogs and have them sheltered for safety. Many dogs ended up in Saskatoon at the WCVM where an emergency shelter was erected, and some were sent to other organizations for safekeeping. As one of our team members shared, ‘We trusted that the organizations that we were sending the dogs to understood that these are not, this is not an animal protection issue. This is an issue of an evacuation. And even if the dog is going back to a home where you think they’re being neglected, then go ahead and make a report, but send the dog back. And we- There was so many issues of us trying to advocate for dogs coming back. Some we got back, some were “lost”’ (G.C.).

One of the challenges faced in evacuating dogs was the lack of a formalized system of dog identification to enable reuniting animals with their owners. While Northern Animal Rescue and their supporters attempted to maintain records, some individuals were removing dogs from the community on their own, without community cooperation or consent. With rampant beliefs about dogs not receiving proper care in northern and Indigenous communities, many times these external organizations refused to return dogs to their original homes:

[T]here’s that viewpoint from southern rescue organizations, all those dogs that were coming from the north, so they’re better off in the south and not giving them back...I remember there was a firefighter on Bigstone and he had two really nice dogs, and were very well looked after, and he didn’t want to give them to us because he said, “I’m never gonna get them back. But I’m afraid of firefighting, I don’t know if the fire comes in here. I can’t- I don’t

know what to do.” And I said, “I can guarantee you you’ll get those dogs back. This is only to keep them safe. It’s an advocacy for the dogs, that’s for the people, they always come back.” And some of the rescue organizations or even the foster homes they had given them out to, temporarily, said, “Well, I’m not giving that dog back to the north where It’s just gonna have a miserable life” No. That’s not true. They’re not all having a miserable life here. (AR_5)

A result of these actions was further animosity towards NAR, which continues to influence challenges in working towards a cohesive regional approach to dog care and control at the time of writing, almost a decade later:

Some rescue groups and individuals came up from southern communities and started taking animals. It was deemed an emergency evacuation because people thought that many animals would be chained up, which they were, and that they would burn to death if left behind without their owners. Everyone panics. Right? So. Then again, we are the ones who are blamed for every situation, even though there was only a couple of board members in town. Having said that, many of the animals were in dire conditions and needed to be helped but the facts aren't getting out there because it is a hot button topic...There seems to be a lot of media attention, and because we are the rescue group that works in the community, we are always the ones who are associated with these actions, so these events have added more barriers in our efforts to reach out and communicate to build better relationships. (KI2)

The Tri-communities experienced further challenges in dog care and control during the COVID-19 pandemic. The WCVN clinics were unable to operate in 2020 due to travel and gathering restrictions, and there were more litters of puppies born as a result of the gap in spay and neuter services. Globally, interest in adopting dogs increased during COVID lockdowns, and this put further pressure on organizations and individuals providing support for dog care (Morgan et al., 2020). Participants noted that challenges faced during the pandemic exacerbated the barriers experienced in caring for dogs in the Tri-communities:

Getting South, we still vaccinate our dogs, we still go and see our vet down South and I'm sure [de-identified; KI3.1] went through the same thing with your dogs this year; I've been bringing my vaccinations home. We had one where we had to go [to the vet] and it was pretty stressful to get down South because of COVID. So I think that has a big impact. People are feeling like – I can't go South to get my hair done so I sure as shit shouldn't be taking my dog and so on and so forth. (KI3.2)

Participants also expressed concerns about what might happen to dogs that were adopted during the pandemic once their owners had to go back to work:

I don't know. I'm kind of a little puzzled by all these numbers going up during COVID. Is this because people have more time for [dogs] now? Which would be wonderful...Or are they replacing something that people can't get right now through other, your contacts or whatsoever. So what's gonna happen when, if, things go back to normal? So what's gonna happen with all these dogs? (AR_5)

Yeah, with this pandemic happening and all the people that are getting pets, when the pandemic is over, we're gonna have like, very interesting times – I think we're gonna have a lot more dogs showing up at pet shelters, or whatever they're called. Because, yeah. Because people are not gonna have time to spend with their dogs that they're doing now. And once you start leaving dogs on their own – especially single dogs, and that's again, the thing is I'm not a fan of single dogs. I mean, you know, somebody owning one dog. I think really, because they're a pack animal. (LLRIB_7)

According to the statistics for Northern Animal Rescue, there has been an increase in dog intakes since 2020 from all three communities. Appendix L summarizes these statistics and illustrates that while total intakes have fluctuated over time, intake averages over the past four years are proportionate to the relative population of each community. There is the impression that fluctuations since 2020 are related to a combination of a gap in spay/neuter access during 2020 and the inability for Band members to work bingos to raise funds to cover veterinary costs for the clinics in 2021 and 2022 (J. Dickson, 2022). However, the spectrum of underlying factors are unknown, and are beyond the scope of this study to elucidate.

6.5 Discussion

Concerns about 'dog issues' in northern and Indigenous communities are widespread across Canada, and much international literature is devoted to dog care and control as methods of protecting public health and animal welfare (Hiby et al., 2017; International Companion Animal Management Coalition, 2007; Taylor et al., 2017). In this chapter, challenges and gaps in local dog care and control determinants were exposed and illustrated. There are opportunities here for

decision makers and service providers in the Tri-communities to develop new models for dog control, oversight and enforcement that more adequately reflect the local cultural and socioeconomic context. International literature provides dog care and control program guidelines (FAO, 2014; Hiby et al., 2017; International Companion Animal Management Coalition, 2007), including those for development and implementation of bylaws, and these can be used as references during planning. Ultimately, local dog care and control approaches must consider local contextual factors including access to resources (health services, education, funding and personnel); cultural factors; geographical characteristics; and facilities available for supporting dog control. Regardless of the process undertaken, care and control plans will be ineffective if the realities of the local population are not considered, and appropriate enforcement measures are not ensured (International Companion Animal Management Coalition, 2007).

Serious attention must be paid to the socioeconomic status of those caring for dogs, and community priorities for care and control programs should be established early. In the Tri-communities where the dog-human relationship is highly valued and culturally significant, community care models that include education and resource support may lead to the most desirable outcomes at the dog-human interface. This suggestion is not the norm and is not currently reflected in the Canadian public's understanding of responsible dog care, where individual dog ownership is normalized and community contributions to dog care are reserved for unowned or 'stray' animals not claimed by an individual owner or family. A move to a more integrated and relationship-focused model of community care could radically alter the narrative surrounding responsible dog care and models of community cooperation in striving for healthy and sustainable dog-human bonds.

The widespread reliance on Northern Animal Rescue, a non-profit organization, for upholding dog population control and welfare in the Tri-communities is well illustrated in this chapter. The ultimate responsibility for dog population control should lie with local government, and currently there are large gaps in this respect. A cohesive approach to dog care and control between leadership structures of the Tri-communities is essential, and involvement of NAR and other non-governmental organizations should be elicited through clear contractual agreements with secure resource allocation and defined roles and responsibilities (Hiby et al., 2017; International Companion Animal Management Coalition, 2007). NAR plays several key roles in the Tri-communities, and many of the challenges faced by NAR and its members could be ameliorated through more effective support and oversight by community leadership.

The challenges associated with not having a regionally funded and resourced pound and dog shelter contribute heavily to the ongoing use of crisis control approaches such as dog pulls in the Tri-communities. Regulations for design and maintenance of facilities used for holding dogs are found in the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's Kennel Codes (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2018). In Saskatchewan, adherence to the Kennel Codes is mandated under the Animal Protection Act of Saskatchewan which states that an animal is in distress if 'kept in conditions that contravene the prescribed standards, codes of practice or guidelines' (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018). Given that facilities where animals are held for sale or adoption can be entered at any time by an animal protection officer for inspection without a warrant (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018), neglecting to fund and staff proper impoundment quarters for dogs held under animal control bylaws leaves local governments and agencies operating a pound vulnerable to legal consequences under the Act. With these details in mind,

Tri-community leadership has an opportunity to strategize a cohesive plan for funding and acquisition of appropriate facilities in support of regional care and control of dogs.

In considering barriers to achieving desired dog care and control outcomes, regulatory and legislative challenges in the provision of dog health and welfare services must be attended to. Layperson-provided care is an important opportunity, and should be further explored as a viable option for closing dog healthcare gaps as part of attending to One Health and One Welfare in the Tri-communities. Models for consideration are the ‘community animal healthcare workers’ or ‘environmental health practitioners’ employed in global low-income communities. These individuals are local to the communities they serve, and are provided training, oversight and supplies to support ongoing maintenance of animal health and welfare in their local contexts (AAMRIC, n.d.; Veterinarians Without Borders Canada, 2023). In Canada, lay-vaccinator programs and animal first aid training for community members are currently being considered in some provinces as viable options for closing the gaps in access to dog health and welfare services in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. While current legislation in most jurisdictions does not support such programs, community champions and veterinary professionals can and should work together to lobby for change.

When illustrating the details of a community’s approach to dog care and control, experiences and awareness of animal cruelty are important to identify, as these can be indicators of the efficacy of local animal welfare oversight and enforcement strategies, and provide justification for changing approaches where gaps exist (Arkow, 2013). Effective responses to animal and human welfare concerns require an inter-professional approach, which includes getting all potential partners aligned on recognition of and response to problems (Long & Klukarni, 2013). For the Tri-communities, such an approach would include provincial APOs,

RCMP, Northern Animal Rescue, veterinarians, LLRIB and Air Ronge bylaw enforcement personnel, and community health nurses. With human health and welfare in mind, effective dog bite response protocols should include attending to the behavioural contributors to these events. While human behaviour and understanding of dog body language are certainly factors in the occurrence and severity of dog bites (Dhillon, 2016; Messam et al., 2012), dog behaviour plays a role in dog bites as well (Messam et al., 2013; Oxley et al., 2019). With the recent opening of a locally-owned and operated dog training business in the Tri-communities, support for dog behaviour modification is more accessible, and cooperation with veterinary professionals could augment training plans further.

The systematic approaches of cultural genocide implemented by the Canadian government against Indigenous peoples have been intentionally hidden from the dominant Canadian society for generations. This has led to widespread social inequities experienced by Indigenous individuals, which to many non-Indigenous Canadians are assumed to be connected to particular race-based or ‘cultural’ faults inherent to Indigenous peoples, as opposed to being symptoms of targeted structural violence as an element of Canadian colonial rule (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, n.d.). RCMP-led dog shoots were reportedly utilized as a method of colonial violence inflicted upon Indigenous communities across northern Canada, and there have been inquiries into such events involving Inuit in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (Qikiqtani Truth Commission, n.d.); however, most Canadians are unaware of such events and of colonial history in general. One result of the general lack of public knowledge about Canada’s true history with Indigenous peoples is the varied narratives around the inadequacy or ineptitude of Indigenous groups and individuals. The belief seems to be that Indigenous individuals are less capable of providing ‘adequate’ care for dependents, whether human or animal. When allocation

of resources and access to services strategically disadvantage Indigenous communities, this inability to provide care becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Meanwhile, media outlets, particularly in Canada, perpetuate the notion that dogs in northern and Indigenous communities are ‘stray’, unwanted, and are benefitted by the actions of rescue groups who are frequently positioned as benevolent ‘animal lovers’ (Fraser-Celin & Rock, 2022). In the present study, we learned that many roaming dogs are owned and loved, but their owners may find themselves beyond their capacity to care for their dogs for a variety of reasons. This is an important distinction, as it challenges the narrative that dogs in these communities are suffering, and prioritizes improved access to resources and support for dog ownership to improve the sustainability of dog-human relationships (Fraser-Celin & Rock, 2022).

6.6 Conclusion

Dog care and control in the Tri-communities are influenced by several factors locally, provincially and systemically within the context of the Canadian colonial structure. While there have been attempts made to implement bylaws to support sustainable and safe dog-human connections, these appear to be largely ineffective due to a combination of inadequate resource allocation, heavy workloads and community conflicts leading to poor retention of enforcement personnel, and social dynamics that produce and exacerbate tensions between individuals and community leadership. Provincial legislation designed to protect animal welfare and regulate animal healthcare provision is fraught with barriers in the setting of remote communities, and these barriers must be addressed if dog and human health and welfare are to be optimized. Finally, the public health aspects of dog care and control are critical to protecting dog and human health and safety, and improved communication, collaboration and processes will lead to better and safer outcomes at the dog-human interface.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND ACTIONS

In bringing this thesis to a close, the final chapter will discuss our findings in the context of extant literature, introducing opportunities for action and change within and beyond the Tri-communities. Actions and outcomes already undertaken or currently in progress will be discussed next, followed by reflections of the research team on their experiences throughout the project, described in their own words. I will offer my own reflections as well, and the chapter will close with a list of recommendations and future directions, and finally a formal conclusion. Importantly, the work initiated by this project is not done; this thesis provides a solid foundation for continued efforts towards fostering healthy dog-human relationships by supporting dog and human health and welfare in communities everywhere. These efforts will be career-spanning for me, and will hopefully provide fruitful areas of interest and professional passion for others yet to come.

Care and control of dog population, health and welfare in northern, remote and Indigenous communities are linked to community health and welfare at multiple levels. This study set out to understand and illustrate the various aspects of the dog-human interface in the Tri-community region of La Ronge, Air Ronge, and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band in northern Saskatchewan, Canada. While the status of dog care and control is much clearer at the close of the study, these phenomena are incredibly complex, particularly in the setting of a politically and socially diverse region such as the Tri-communities. Considering this complexity, several strengths and limitations were encountered during the research that should be explicated before drawing final conclusions.

7.1 Study Strengths

This study is unique in the existing body of literature on dog care and control and the dog-human relationship in communities without regular access to veterinary care. Our community-oriented and team-driven approach to the research led to a project aimed at answering questions that were important to community members and resulted in actions and outcomes that were directly informed by community priorities. Research capacity was also built during the conduct of this study, and team members experienced transformative conversations during their work, which have altered the ways in which they view dog care and control and current approaches within the Tri-communities. The use of rigorous qualitative methods informed by Indigenous ways of knowing also offered strength to our study, as Indigenous people comprise the demographic most heavily affected by current systemic inequities in dog care and control in Canada.

Using a Case Study approach enabled a rich illustration of the phenomenon in question because data triangulation was made possible through multiple data collection methods (conversations, youth journals, document analysis), and validity was ensured through member checking in the form of a talking circle and Elder gatherings. The community advisors who were part of the research team also contributed heavily to the production of knowledge through their involvement in data collection, analysis and interpretation, which further strengthened study validity and rigor.

Finally, our focus on action and usable outcomes as part of the research process led to a rich and diverse knowledge translation approach, which ensured communication of our findings to a wide audience within and outside the study community. The products of this study will

extend the life and usefulness of our work beyond the five-year period of academic effort culminating in this dissertation. Importantly, the relationships built and enriched through this study will continue to provide value to the lived experiences of our team members and participants, as well as the dogs in our homes and communities.

7.2 Study Limitations

The community-located nature of this project presented challenges, particularly during 2020 and 2021 when travel between communities was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. Geography alone would have delayed elements that should have been conducted in person, and a global pandemic amplified these issues and presented new ones as well. My work as a clinical veterinarian in the community presented both strengths and limitations to the project; the power dynamic inherent in my position as ‘the vet’ meant that I was not the ideal team member to engage in conversational interviews with participants, though I may have been the most prepared from a training standpoint to do so. There were also potential power differentials between participants and research team members, as several of the team hold positions of power within the community. With these pitfalls in mind, we did our best to match participants with team members they might feel most comfortable with to minimize these dynamics as much as possible.

The generalizability of this work could be considered a limitation, as the knowledge generated is quite specific to the context of the Tri-communities. However, the richness of the data enabled a thick description of the phenomenon of dog care and control in a community currently underserved by veterinarians, which provides understanding of the same phenomenon

in other, similarly underserved regions in our province and country. Thus, transferability, rather than generalizability, was the goal for this study.

While we tried to ensure a diverse participant pool and attempted to illustrate all aspects of dog care and control within the Tri-communities, there were some aspects that were not touched upon, or were incompletely investigated. The complexity of the study context and the number of individuals involved in informal capacities in dog care and control (often under the title of ‘frontline rescuing’) meant that including every perspective was challenging within the confines of this project. With defined boundaries around our case and context, these limitations could be justified; however, there were some voices from within the Tri-communities who are involved heavily with dog care and control that are not represented here.

Finally, there were some limitations in the cohesion of our team’s approach to data collection, and this was primarily due to my own inexperience in leading a research team. While we worked together to develop the interview guide for the conversational interviews, the instrument was not piloted, and this led to us using some questions that were ineffective or easily misunderstood by our participants. Team members also had variable experience with conducting interviews, and embarked on participant conversations without clear ideas on how to integrate a conversational approach with an interview guide.

In hindsight, it would have been helpful for me to test-drive the interview guide with the team members who would conduct the conversations prior to engaging with community participants. This approach would have allowed us to identify questions or wording that should be changed, and would also have allowed me to demonstrate the conversational approach. This way, I could have identified for team members how the guide could be used flexibly and could

be augmented by further curiosities and questions from the interviewer when they arose. These pilot conversations would also have allowed the gathering of team member perspectives, which would have added further richness to our data, since they are community members too.

Ultimately, our findings are still valid and the process was rigorous; these limitations reflect the importance of reflexivity and the power of collaborative research to stimulate growth in all members of the team.

7.3 Discussion

This project set out to explore and provide a detailed illustration of the phenomenon of dog care and control in a northern Saskatchewan community without adequate access to animal health and welfare services. The underlying objective was to stimulate action to close gaps in access to health and welfare support, and justify provision of resources to support optimization of outcomes at the dog-human interface. Using a community-oriented qualitative case study approach, we implemented a customized methodology drawing on Indigenous and Western literature to suit our case and context. Using data collected through conversational interviews, youth reflective journals and document analysis we sought to answer the following queries:

- *What are the roles of dogs in the Tri-communities, and how are these reflected in the dog-human relationship as described by local individuals?*
- *How is care and control of dog health, welfare and population undertaken in the Tri-communities, and what are the strengths and challenges of current approaches?*
- *How do current approaches to dog care and control support or challenge the health and safety of dog-human interactions in the Tri-communities?*

7.3.1 Humans, Dogs and Kinship

The Indigenous epistemological principle of ‘kinship’ encompasses the values of relationality, respect, relational accountability and reciprocity between and within individuals of all species and with the earth (Campbell, 2007; Ward et al., 2021). Kinship describes the relatedness of all things; that all things have spirit and can be thus related to by humans; and the ‘responsibilities humans have to maintain good relationships’ (Wildcat, 2018, p. 14). In social settings fraught with systemic racism and colonial practices and policies, embracing the ethic of kinship can provide a focus on building and maintaining good relationships within and between species through cooperation and mutual accountability (Ward et al., 2021). In the context of the dog-human relationship and the care and control of dogs, focusing on fostering and maintaining kinship can re-direct our attention to establishing and moving towards common goals. This thesis has illustrated the centrality of kinship in the context of the dog-human interface, with clear evidence that challenges between these two species have broad-reaching impacts on kinship and relational health between humans, as well.

Author Dwayne Donald suggests that walking can teach principles of kinship and foster relational reparation between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians by highlighting the importance and centrality of respect, relationships, responsibilities and reciprocity in establishing healthy futures together (Donald, 2021). In the Tri-communities, perhaps centering kinship can provide a philosophical foundation on which all parties can begin to build better and healthier outcomes for dogs and humans, together. Borrowing from a Saskatchewan-based teacher preparation model, kinship values could be applied by adopting the pillars of love, respect and humility (Wallin & Scribe, 2022) in the planning and operationalizing of new approaches to dog care and control in the Tri-communities. In extending the concept of kinship further, this philosophy grounds community education for dog health and welfare in human

responsibilities to other-than-human relatives (Turner, 2021). Kinship brings us back to the inciting objective of this project: to understand and optimize the health and safety of the dog-human relationship within the Tri-communities.

What we learned about the contributors to and determinants of relational health between dogs and humans in the Tri-communities will allow strategic actions to bolster areas of strength and attend to challenges and gaps. Of particular importance is addressing equitable access to dog health and welfare services for the Tri-communities and other areas and populations with similar needs in Saskatchewan. Access to care is becoming an important focus area within veterinary circles, but much of the available peer-reviewed and grey literature comes from the USA, where the geographical, sociopolitical and cultural contexts differ from those in Canada. In Saskatchewan and elsewhere in Canada, there remains a prevalent view that dog ownership is a privilege that should only be available to those citizens who can independently and consistently provide for their animal's health and welfare. By recognizing the importance and validity of the dog-human relationship regardless of geographic, sociopolitical or cultural differences, and embracing the law of kinship, those who would obstruct practice and policy changes aimed at improving access to care can achieve a new understanding. With this goal in mind, the findings of this project must reach the eyes, ears and hearts of individuals from multiple perspectives.

Within this thesis, the effects of colonialism and whiteness were highlighted as important determinants of outcomes at the dog-human interface. It is important to recognize that traditional Woodland Cree dog care and control practices and relational values around dogs are not completely lost, and cross-cultural influences are not uni-directional in nature. In the Tri-communities, Cree lifestyles and values have influenced the evolution of 'northern' culture in many ways, some of which were illustrated in our data. Some non-Indigenous participants take

part in dog mushing and have adopted this culturally significant activity as an identity and way of life. Tolerance for roaming dogs and recognition of their need to be in good relationship with humans AND others of their own species is widespread, and this reflects kinship values in the worldviews of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members alike. As we move forward with the knowledge generated through this study, it is important that we do not relegate the topic of dogs in remote and Indigenous communities to one based solely in deficit. Simultaneously, we should not assume that the roles and importance of dogs in the lives of Indigenous peoples are contemporarily irrelevant, or things of the past. In the Tri-communities and elsewhere, dog-human relationships are neither an artifact nor an issue (Monture, 2018), but are complex, highly valued, culturally relevant and holistically important elements of the lives and well-being of all community members.

7.3.2 Access to Care: Opportunities and Obstacles

This project illuminated many of the gaps in access to dog health and welfare support, and participants offered creative suggestions for filling these gaps. There is opportunity here for development and exploration of alternative models of service delivery. One of these potential models could include harnessing the skills and knowledge of Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVTs) in combination with remote veterinary oversight using telecommunications technology. During the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine use expanded rapidly in veterinary practices worldwide, as in many areas this was the best method of providing routine or non-emergency veterinary care with public health restrictions in place (Bishop et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). What was learned from this forced implementation of a previously under-utilized model of care delivery was that telemedicine is widely accepted and easily adopted by clients; can improve access to care by reducing costs and eliminating geographic or

transportation barriers to accessing veterinary services; and can address client concerns around pet stress during transport, particularly for appointments that are routine or follow-up in nature and less dependent on thorough hands-on assessment of the patient (Smith et al., 2022).

In contrast, there were also concerns, particularly from veterinary professionals, about the potential for misdiagnosis or inferior standard of care when using telemedicine as the primary tool for patient assessment, diagnosis and treatment planning (Bishop et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). These concerns are consistent with current policy on use of telemedicine in Saskatchewan, which restricts telemedicine to follow-up consultations after in-person establishment of a valid Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) (Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, 2021). However, based on the current language in the Veterinarian's Act, 1987 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2009) and the SVMA Bylaws (2021), telemedicine could be used to establish a VCPR along with information provided synchronously through hands-on assessment by a licensed RVT. While the veterinary shortages plaguing the nation are mirrored amongst RVTs, the training for RVTs could be more accessible to northern residents due to its shorter duration (2 years vs 6+) and recently launched potential to complete a portion of the program by distance education in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Polytechnic, n.d.). This model of care delivery addresses the widespread phenomenon of underutilizing the broad skill set of RVTs (Hicks, 2019) with an approach that could support improved access to veterinary professional support while providing opportunities for animal health careers at home for Saskatchewan northerners.

The primary obstacles to establishing such a model in Saskatchewan are political in nature. While there is no specific language prohibiting the use of tele-supervision to support RVT-delivered care, there are barriers around ensuring local follow-up care and determining the

practice standards and licensing for such a model. There are also potential conflicts between initiating this style of service provision and the impression of infringing on the livelihoods of rural veterinarians whose income often depends largely on technical duties that theoretically could be performed by RVTs. Despite these challenges, this model of service delivery has the potential to benefit the entire profession. For rural veterinarians serving production animal clients, hiring more RVTs is far more cost effective than hiring more veterinarians, even if there were DVMs available to hire. With some in the profession recommending the fast-tracking of licensing processes for internationally trained DVMs to help fill gaps across Canada (Singh, 2021), there are already other initiatives working towards the same goal.

In the case of providing care in northern and Indigenous communities, however, there is a dire need to secure service providers who want to live in and serve these areas, and who can connect and build meaningful relationships and trust with clients. This is best achieved by hiring individuals who themselves are from these regions, and this is most achievable if the training required is available close to home. To support the expansion of diversity, equity and inclusion in veterinary fields, the training, hiring and retention of veterinary professionals who are Black, Indigenous and People of Colour is essential (Milstein et al., 2022; Odunayo et al., 2022). However, these changes will not happen without changes to the professional landscape, including how, where and by whom veterinary care is delivered. Diversity is good for our profession, and it is good for animal health and welfare; where diverse professionals are visible, youth are more likely to see themselves in those roles and be interested in a similar career path (Daniel, 2021). Opportunities to work at or near their home communities increases the likelihood that youth from backgrounds historically excluded from animal health careers will find rewarding and sustainable futures for themselves and their families. Moving towards meaningful

structural changes such as those suggested here could markedly improve the health and wellbeing of animals and communities within a short timeframe. Ignoring the need for this kind of evolution is unethical and renders animal health professionals complicit in the continued animal health and welfare deficits experienced by northern, remote and Indigenous communities across Turtle Island.

7.3.3 Opportunities at the Dog-Human Interface

In the Tri-communities, there are several opportunities for change at the dog-human interface. Some of these will be addressed in the next section on outcomes, and here we will link these opportunities to evidence from extant literature. In the Tri-communities, when reasons for dogs ending up in the care of Northern Animal Rescue are known, they are typically linked to lack of access to resources. This project has illustrated that current capacity to care for surrendered or apprehended dogs is overburdened, and strategies for care and control do not attend to the underlying causes for these challenges. Addressing the causes (referred to in this thesis as determinants of care and control) of imbalances at the dog-human interface could lead to sustainable relationships between dogs and humans community-wide, and reduce the need for crisis control interventions such as dog pulls, owner surrenders and dogs being let loose to fend for themselves.

We know that the community-defined challenges at the dog-human interface are not solely related to the number of dogs; however, surrenders to NAR are often stimulated by bitches being in heat or delivering litters that tax the capacity of individuals and families to care for their dogs. We also know that when bitches are in heat, the potential for dogs to pack and behave aggressively increases due to competition between intact males (Kustritz, 2005). While

sterilization of roaming dogs demonstrates superior efficacy to other methods for stabilizing dog populations (Yoak et al., 2016), surgical sterilization interventions are resource intensive and may not ever result in stable populations, particularly when dogs continuously immigrate and emigrate (International Companion Animal Management Coalition, 2007). An alternative to surgical sterilization is chemical castration, which is currently not a widely used or nationally licensed approach in Canada, despite these methods showing efficacy in multiple international studies (Singh et al., 2020).

In considering chemical sterilization, it is important to note that these procedures do not necessarily need to be carried out by veterinarians. If trained and licensed RVTs are available in the community through a service delivery model such as that described in the previous section, chemical sterilization could be carried out by these individuals with remote supervision. This approach would improve the ability to sterilize multiple animals in a shorter time, with fewer personnel and reduced post-procedure complications (DiGangi et al., 2017). While chemical sterilization of male dogs would not reliably eliminate testosterone-related behaviours of concern for community safety in every dog, reduced aggression, roaming and packing would be expected following this procedure (DiGangi et al., 2017; Weedon & Fisher, 2014). Exploring alternatives to surgical spay and neuter could improve the ability to sustain manageable dog populations in the Tri-communities, and could manage costs associated with this arm of a comprehensive dog control strategy.

Available literature on dog population control illustrates that sterilization alone is not enough to sustainably achieve manageable dog populations (Dhillon, 2016; International Companion Animal Management Coalition, 2007). Education is critical in the pursuit of balanced dog-human relationships, and this need for education applies not just to human

community members and service providers, but also to dogs in the form of behaviour training. Community education programs best support changes at the dog-human interface when they aim for community contribution to intervention development and operationalization and use approaches appropriate to the local context in program materials (Constable et al., 2012; Constable et al., 2013). In combination with accessible dog training programs, well-rounded community education interventions could result in effective outcomes between dogs and humans (Duncan-Sutherland et al., 2022; Wellington City Council, 2018). Education for prospective and current service providers should consider the barriers to equitable animal health service provision related to the veterinary profession itself (Roberts et al., 2023). These ‘veterinary-dependent barriers’ include impressions of veterinary work in rural, remote or otherwise underserved areas; diversity, equity and inclusion deficits in the veterinary profession; perceived lifestyle factors in rural/remote communities; veterinary education-related barriers; relational and service-delivery barriers; and individual veterinary biases and preferences. These barriers are primarily rooted in the culture of the veterinary profession and the structure of professional training, which is chiefly focused on producing veterinary professionals who will practice in traditional fee-for-service veterinary clinics. These barriers must be addressed by animal health service providers as they represent systemic challenges to achieving adequate access to care for animals everywhere (Lem, 2019).

Another critical arm of a well-rounded community dog care and control program is the effective development, implementation and enforcement of animal control bylaws (FAO, 2014; International Companion Animal Management Coalition, 2007). In the Tri-communities, where there are currently three separate bylaws and enforcement models in place, the move to a regional approach would improve cohesion and eliminate some of the existing gaps. The Food

and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations notes that individuals responsible for animal control and bylaw enforcement should have adequate training, equipment, facilities and support to ensure that their role is respected and their conduct is respectful of animal needs and the human-animal relationship (FAO, 2014). In the Tri-communities, a collaborative model including a team of trained and resourced ACO's could address many of the existing challenges in dog care and control. A regional shelter should also be considered, and such a facility must meet the standards set out by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's Kennel Codes (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2018).

A model that prioritizes appropriate staffing, training and facility provision for dog control is not novel, and has been successfully implemented on Ermineskin Cree Nation in Alberta. Their Dog Care and Control Program employs a team of officers who are trained and equipped to oversee the responsible management of dogs in the community (Ermineskin Cree Nation, 2020). The model enables local individuals to contribute to improved community and animal health and welfare while supporting the human animal bond, using an approach that is locally and culturally appropriate for their community context. In the Tri-communities, adopting a cooperatively funded, well structured and resourced dog control program would alleviate the current pressures on Northern Animal Rescue to perform the bulk of the 'front line' dog care and control duties in the area without adequate resources. Recent international work recommends that community allocation of funds towards dog care and control should be prioritized for interventions which support human behaviour change through education and enforcement (Garde et al., 2022). With this in mind, and considering the inefficacy of repeated removal of dogs from communities as a primary method of control (FAO, 2014), community leadership have an

opportunity to work together to strategize and implement the most appropriate model for the local context.

7.4 Actions, Outcomes and Reflections

Essential features of Patient/Community-Oriented Research include outcomes that are important to patients or community members, and actions to integrate research-generated knowledge into practice (Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research, 2018). Capacity building is also an important feature, and this can manifest in different ways, including patients or community members gaining competencies related to the research that they did not previously hold (Fergusson & Monfaredi, 2018; Mallidou et al., 2018). In this section I will detail how we have attended to these elements in the present study by illustrating the actions taken, the outcomes or products of the research, and the recommendations for partners and for future efforts following the close of this project. Reflections from community-based team members will be shared to provide evidence of the impacts and opportunities experienced by these individuals because of their involvement in the project.

7.4.1 Actions and Outcomes

This project was undertaken with the underlying goal of stimulating change. The gaps in access to dog health and welfare services are unsustainable and must be addressed to support community and animal health long-term. Throughout the course of the project, our team achieved several outcomes that can contribute to changemaking in Saskatchewan and beyond. These outcomes address the multiple contributors to imbalance at the dog-human interface through provision of resources to community partners and capacity development within and outside the Tri-communities.

7.4.1.1 Healthy Dogs Healthy Communities: Education Program and Website

At the outset of this project, our team knew that developing a community-targeted education program was a priority as an outcome of the research. As the project progressed, meetings with Elders and educators informed the framework we used to shape the program. Elders John Halkett, Myles Charles, Doreen McKenzie and Donna McKay generously contributed time and knowledge across multiple meetings to support this work. With pedagogical and curriculum expertise from Kara Schneider-Ross and content contributions from veterinary learners in the DVM program at the WCVM, the program began to take shape. Drawing from the medicine wheel model developed from our data and integrating Saskatchewan Ministry of Education learning outcomes for grades 6-9, we were able to generate the initial content for a comprehensive and culturally relevant education program for Saskatchewan youth living in northern and Indigenous communities province-wide. While the culturally-connected content is specific to Woodland Cree teachings, the program allows for flexibility and customization such that other communities with different cultural contexts can adapt it for their own needs. The outline of the education program is featured in Table 7.1 and the program content can be explored at <https://healthydogshealthycommunities.ca/>.

The goal of the education program is to foster healthier and safer relationships between community residents and dogs by providing resources for expanded knowledge about dogs including how to care for them, how to interact with them, and how to control their movements. While the initial focus of the education program was to teach children about dog safety, through the findings of our research we discovered that adults have knowledge gaps as well, so they also need resources. Our website features a repository of adult education resources, also connected to the medicine wheel framework, which will support public education for all age groups.

Figure 7.1 'Dogs Have Love Medicine': Learning Tool Outline

<p>Chapter 1: Dogs Are Our Relations</p> <p>Green: Our Emotional Connection to Dogs White: Our Physical Connection to Dogs Yellow: Our Social Connection to Dogs Red: Our Spiritual Connection to Dogs</p> <p>Chapter 2: Needs for a Healthy Relationship with Dogs</p> <p>Chapter 3: Community and Family Dog Care</p> <p>Chapter 4: Holistic Influences on Dog-Human Relationships</p>
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7.4.1.2 Atim Maskihkiy Art Gallery

Apart from the education program, our website also features art produced as a part of this project. As our team was thinking about how we might best reach our target audiences with our findings, Genevieve offered the idea to hire local creatives to produce art that illustrated our preliminary findings from the conversational interviews and youth journals. With our research grant, we were able to commission twenty art pieces from seventeen local artists to translate community perspectives on the dog-human relationship. We have dubbed this gallery the '[Atim Maskihkiy/Dog Medicine Art Gallery](#)'. The website features digitized versions of all twenty art pieces, and video vignettes of each artist's perspective on their piece and their personal connection to dogs. In the summer of 2022, the gallery was launched at the Mistasinihk government building in downtown La Ronge, where it stayed for two months. After this, the gallery was displayed for the month of September at the One the Avenue Artisan's Gallery in Prince Albert, which is owned and operated by the Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

During the initial launch in July of 2022, one of the contributing artists, Hilary Johnstone, mentioned that she felt the gallery would be of interest to the [Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils](#) (OSAC). Hilary put me in touch with the curator, and there is now a contract in place to have the gallery toured province-wide from January 2024 – December 2025, with a tour launch at Wanuskewin Heritage Park. This tour will not only provide our contributing artists with broad visibility across Saskatchewan, but will also engage viewers from all over the province in the findings of this research project. With the help of Brandon White, our media coordinator, we will create a contextual exhibit with the art pieces to translate the findings of the whole project more completely with the art as an auxiliary knowledge translation tool. This marriage of science and art will extend the life of this project, and will enable knowledge mobilization beyond the usual target audience for a research project. We hope to capture feedback from viewers to enable further illustration of the impact of such an approach as a contributor to the current literature on knowledge translation.

7.4.1.3 Media and Presentations

This research has been featured in multiple media stories over the duration of the project. These features served to introduce community members to the [research](#) early in the project; illustrate the impact of traineeship funding from the [Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research](#); update community members during [later stages](#) of the project; and inform [local](#) and [provincial](#) audiences about the unique combination of art and research featured in our project. References for these news stories are listed in Appendix M.

Summer research assistant Charlie and I had the opportunity to present the findings featured in Chapters 4 and 5 at the 2nd annual Multicultural Veterinary Medical Association's

online conference in November of 2021. The audience was comprised of veterinary professionals from all over Turtle Island, with the majority located in the United States. This was a wonderful opportunity to discuss the dog-human relationship in northern and Indigenous communities in Canada, and talk about some of the needs expressed by our participants to achieve balance with dogs. We received good feedback from this presentation, and it was valuable to share the Canadian context of inequitable access to veterinary care, and learn more about the differences and similarities experienced by underserved communities in the USA. That experience led to connections with colleagues in the USA working in Access to Veterinary Care with whom I may not have crossed paths otherwise. These connections have the potential to result in future collaborations in both practice and research, which is an exciting prospect and a meaningful product of this project for me.

7.4.1.4 Dog Rescue Infographics

In the summer of 2021, our team recognized that there are challenges in the dog rescue sector in rescue groups understanding how to work ethically with Indigenous communities. Resources for both communities and rescue organizations are needed; additionally, veterinary clinics working with rescue organizations need resources. With these needs in mind, summer research assistants Charlie and Kasey produced infographics to support ethical and respectful interactions between dog rescues, Indigenous communities and veterinary professionals. These infographics are found in Appendix N.

7.4.1.5 Action Towards Practice and Policy Change

During the course of this research, I have become involved in a provincial working group focused on issues pertaining to northern dogs. This group was initiated by the Saskatchewan

SPCA, and members include government representatives; the Executive Director of the Sask. SPCA; another veterinary colleague; and two Indigenous community activists – one who designs and delivers family violence programming in Meadow Lake and another who is the founder and director of a [grassroots advocacy organization](#) for rez dogs in Saskatchewan. This group has worked together to determine policy priorities in the province that we might focus on to improve conditions at the dog-human interface in northern Saskatchewan communities. A promising outcome of this group's work is planned exploration of northern youth interest in pursuing animal health careers which could stimulate northern delivery of registered veterinary technologist training programs at Northlands College in La Ronge.

An additional outcome has been a collaboration with the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan. A conversation with Dr. Jaime Lavallee, an Associate Professor at the College, led to collaborative development of an elective assignment for students in her course on Indigenous Nation Building. Two students expressed interest in taking on this assignment, and their completed assignments provide templates for ethical and culturally relevant bylaw development for Saskatchewan First Nations, and guidelines for enforcement of dog care and control in communities. While these products are not direct outcomes of this research, what has been learned during this project has informed and empowered my work at local and provincial levels towards practice and policy changes in support of healthy and safe dog-human relationships everywhere.

A final outcome of this project related to practice and policy change is the move towards Registered Veterinary Technologist delivered preventive care for communities that currently have no local access to veterinary care. Using findings from this project and relationships developed through my work and research activities, I was able to secure a grant from PetSmart

Charities in January of 2023 to hire an RVT. With this individual, we will run a pilot program to test this service delivery model in 3 or 4 Saskatchewan communities from 2023-2025. We will preferentially hire an Indigenous candidate with experience working in Northern Saskatchewan, and already have an interested individual ready to apply. Part of this process requires liaison with the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association to determine scope of practice and the regulatory details of this pilot project. Ultimately, we will be able to perform cost-benefit analyses of this service delivery model; illustrate the impact on community members and their relationships with dogs in their homes and neighbourhoods; and the impact on youth awareness of and interest in animal health careers following sustained and repeated contact with an RVT in their community. Should this pilot be successful, the benefits to human and animal health and wellbeing in the partner communities will provide a solid foundation for improved recruitment and retention of Indigenous animal health professionals in northern Saskatchewan, and support sustainable careers for these individuals post-graduation in or near their home communities.

7.4.2 Team Member Reflections

With the community-oriented nature of this research, it is important to illustrate how community-based team members experienced their involvement in the project, and what their reflections are as our work draws to a close. The following reflections come directly from our team members and are written in their voices from conversations I had with each of them in January of 2023. At the end of this section, I will also provide my own reflections on the experiences and opportunities I have had throughout the research process.

7.4.2.1 Ann Ratt (LLRIB Councillor; Lac La Ronge Band Member)

What made me get into the project was the number of complaints about the dog population on the reserve. The dogs always walked in packs, and it was a safety concern for me; the last thing I want to see is someone being mauled by a dog. Our community members should feel safe walking or playing in their own community without having to carry a stick for protection. I noticed a lot of people not looking after their dogs, and people get dogs given to their child as a gift, but once the child outgrows the dog, or the dog is not so cute and fluffy anymore, then the dog is ignored. I was hoping that getting involved would create more awareness for people.

So far, I don't know if it's helping honestly. We continue to see more and more dogs on the reserve. I helped with the bylaw, I developed the bylaw, and I had help from different organizations. It's there, it's in place, but it's not enforced. So now, and because of my involvement with this project, every single dog call is coming to me. They'll phone me at night, sometimes midnight, saying, 'there's a dog sitting outside our door'. I just tell them to call the dog catcher; our old one is back on contract. People think it's easy for the dog catcher to just go pick up a big aggressive dog, they think they can just call and it's going to happen so easily. And we still have too many dogs. Because we can neuter them. We can get them fixed and everything. But you know, somebody is going to come along with another litter of puppies, and then it just spreads again.

And there are still some frustrations with working with NAR because they direct people to me when they have dog problems instead of Facilities or the dog catcher. And the RCMP is challenging too. Maybe a few weekends ago there was a dog that was hit by a car, and somebody just left the dog. So someone called me, and we called the RCMP to report that this dog had been

hit, and they just said, 'that's not our concern. You need to call conservation officers'. So what happens to that dog now?

I think what worked best for me was the in-person conversations, I liked having the person right across from me, and it was good to connect. What I also liked is hearing their perspectives. Sometimes I had to control my emotions there, and not laugh when the question was, 'Where do the strays come from?' And someone's response was, 'from the reserve', and that just shows me how other people see it. I can imagine how many people probably think like her. So it was just opening my eyes and realizing what I see is not what they see, and everybody has their own opinions. So that's what I liked. And then some of the conversations were very good, I was impressed with the one young lady who just wants to see a clinic here, and she's even saying, people shouldn't buy pets as gifts, and pets are like family members. And so it was really nice to hear the different perspectives.

I would say that it was very educational. I learned a lot even as simple as just understanding different people's perspectives. I'm hoping to do a big push on the dog thing again in my next term as councilor. I know working with the school on this project, Kara did an excellent job, and I know her class learned a lot. So if we can keep that going for each class, even in the elementary school. I feel that when you learn at a younger age, then it stays with you, and it grows with you. And hopefully we can pull in the principals, and even pulling in the schools from Hall Lake and Sucker River would be good.

7.4.2.2 Brandon White (Media Co-ordinator; Tri-Community Resident)

When I first heard about the dog research project with Dr. Jordan Woodsworth, I was very interested, for several reasons. Most Northerners grow up with exposure to dogs, and we see

that they are both incredibly loved, and sometimes need more help than we're able to give up here, so it's an issue that, I think, is near and dear to most people that grow up here because they interact with dogs in some capacity, and all of us or most of us inevitably end up loving them. And also I have pretty deep ties to the University of Saskatchewan, having attended as a student for nearly 10 years myself. So it's a relationship that I like to keep working on. And I guess finally, I was really impressed with Jordan's character and her drive, and I wanted to help fan that flame if I could.

With the project, I was able to contribute in a few different ways. Principally, I was working with cameras to help capture and tell stories from our Northern people, and how they relate to their dogs. But I also helped contribute to the project on the data analysis side very minorly, but in some meaningful ways. And in other ways, like helping people get connected and facilitating communications with locals. So I think it just enriches the relationship that I have to Jordan and the project and helps it be holistic in that people contributors aren't pigeonholed into one identity. They're able to express themselves in their multifaceted ways, because we're all multifaceted. In the North people are used to wearing many hats, because there's often 'brain drain', they call it. Where competent people are taken out of the communities to find jobs elsewhere, or there's just not the candidate for certain things that need to be done. So many Northerners are used to wearing multiple hats and contributing to projects in multiple ways. It's just a reality of working in the North, and it's part of our solution for dog management is stepping up in ways that you might not be familiar with or not your principal role. You've got to expand and contribute in more ways.

Participating in the Healthy Dogs project has given me many surprises, and taught me many things as well, even having grown up and lived in the North for my most of my life. I went

in thinking maybe I understood the dynamics, but new things are revealed all the time when you are committed to learning, and it taught me many things that I didn't know about our people, our territory, and our relationship to dogs. So I guess one of my major takeaways is to keep an open mind, even if you think you know what the human dog relationship is in Saskatchewan, in Northern Saskatchewan, in Canada. Because these things are always changing, and we need to change perspective. So my perspectives have been changed through this project, and I learned many things, working with many different artists and Elders about the myriad of ways that we connect with our dogs. So my take away is, keep an open mind in an open heart, because things can change, and they actually need to.

The project has given me a deeper perspective into the Indigenous paradigm and history with dogs. And everything with relationships is two directional. So it really was a pleasant surprise for me to learn all the things that dogs teach us and have taught us. Instead of this prescriptive idea of like, 'we need to solve the dog problem'. Dogs are always teaching us and telling us what they need. And they have done that throughout time. So, if we examine that relationship, it goes both ways. It's not just us controlling dogs. We need to learn what they need from them by listening.

In my own genesis as a business owner and a creative, it's often hard to resource the projects and the funds that you need to make it through a calendar year. Sometimes that means that you are a bit hand to mouth which can happen, or that you're divided in a million different directions, trying to get through your year and survive. But the very skillful acquisition of funds by this project, and generous allocation to our Northern communities has made it for me personally that I really could focus quite a lot on this project over the year, and that's something that you don't get a lot as a creative is that amount of time and that amount of depth with your

clients. So it gave me the financial security to really invest a lot of myself into the project, and that's a really good thing to grow as a creative, because it gives you a lot of opportunities. Like I was able to work in film with about 17 different artists in the region, and that's really special, too, because when I'm not working with science, I also like to work with artists of different kinds. So the project has both secured me financially, but also allowed me to meet and communicate with many other types of artists in the region that I grew up in.

This project connected me to people in my home territory that I might pass on the street, but I never had a reason to liaison with or communicate with, and one of those is Annalisa Hepner, one of the artist contributors to the Dog Medicine gallery. And so through this project I met a new friend, and then we ended up both contributing works to another ad hoc Art Gallery that's a part of the downtown La Ronge revitalization movement where there's a new coffee shop called Marker 47 Cafe that has opened up in a very old building, and it's bringing a lot of new business and eyes to the downtown core, and it has the best coffee in the town. We have 47 pieces on one wall there, which is not a coincidence, and the title of the gallery is Designed By Nature so it's all about connecting with nature across multiple mediums, photography and painting and drawing. That connection wouldn't have happened without this project.

To go even further, Annalisa and I are both members of a new art collective in the Tri-communities. So after our gallery leaves Marker 47, another one will come in. So we've created kind of a precedent in this coffee shop to feature local artists and have our local art be seen, and then ours will go to the government building in La Ronge. So we are growing closer as artists, and then there's a new art collective, that you could say a part of that is from this project as well. And we just got a rental space that we're looking forward to having interactive installations, so that people can come to understand more issues about our territory, through art, or that we can

facilitate workshops and things like that. So in many ways, this research project has been a catalyst.

7.4.2.3 Genevieve Candelora (Northern Animal Rescue Co-Founder and Board Member; Tri-Community Resident)

When I found out about the opportunity to be involved in this project, it felt like there was natural alignment because of my involvement with Northern Animal Rescue and my own sense of deep care about dogs in our community. At first I didn't know how I was going to be received and seen at the table, both as an individual and as a representative of NAR. I told myself before the first meeting, 'I'm going to go and just be quiet and just listen'. What captured me at that meeting was Elder John. During a break he was talking to me about all animals, how there are the four-leggeds, the swimmers, the wingeds, the insects, and they are all deserving of respect. He talked about education, and how important it is to be with children and teach them. He has such a quiet and reverent way about him, so I really did have to practice listening. I've pondered his message throughout this whole process. What John was talking about was not human-centric and what I took away was, we all have a place in this circle. And then I felt not only better about my own ability to contribute something, but also that we have a common world here and there are a lot of things we are aligned on.

It was appealing to me that this project was going to have such a relational focus, and it was not so much about dog management, but also about relationships and this relationship that our community has with our dogs. We do these different things to manage, but so many of our choices are influenced by that relationship and that interconnection with the systems and so many other things. So that's a big reason why I wanted to be involved, and I think also my own

personal development. I practiced so much self-reflection, situating myself, locating myself, and reflecting on what I believe and why, and how that might be different from other people. That constant reflexivity throughout was very important. To recognize that I'm inserting myself into everything that I do, but in this project having that influence be valued and embraced, too. I learned about this concept of 'Two-Eyed Seeing' and this was a way I could actually understand it, because I feel like that's what we did here. We sat alongside one another, with traditional and contemporary views of dogs, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. And seeing some of those deeper themes about the shared values, recognizing there are some real differences but also a lot of similarities.

As a member of NAR, this process has given me a lot of confidence in understanding the deeper beliefs that influence how we operate as an organization. The project illuminated a lot of the complexities and interconnections that we have trouble articulating. NAR isn't always appreciated or valued, so the project acknowledged that, and didn't position us as irrelevant; we were at the table, and that empowered me a lot. We should be at tables. We shouldn't be left out of conversations, because we do enact so many of the things in the community relating to dogs, and we fill so many gaps.

I was excited to do the interviews because I feel confident talking to people, and it was something tangible I could offer to the project. Initially, I felt underwhelmed because a lot of what was said I was expecting. And then I did one interview that tipped and shifted everything for me. It was such a profound experience; there was me before that and there was me after that interview. Afterwards I realized there was so much that I didn't understand, but thought I did. Most people we talk to with NAR care about and love their dogs, and that was certainly the case

for this person. But there was such a different perspective on animal rescue. And it really changed what I thought about what people perceive and understand about what we do.

It also made me face my settler identity - my ancestors were the colonizers, and I'm sitting across the table from someone who's been colonized. Who's saying that this organization I represent is perpetuating ongoing colonialism and trauma through dog pulls and other strategies that we support, because they're better than shooting dogs. But this participant was saying that these practices are not really addressing what needs to be addressed. It's like re-colonizing and repeating that cycle, in a different way. And these things re-traumatize people. While NAR didn't run the pulls we supported them, and connected the Band to the organization that came to help. But we also didn't really understand how people would experience them.

After that conversation, I understood that this is not who I want to be or how I want to be perceived. This is not what I thought of myself, and I don't want this organization that I've poured myself into to be perceived in that way. Even if I love and care about people, and NAR is doing things that support people, if those are the types of stories being told, then we need to do some work. It doesn't matter if it's right or wrong. During multiple interviews I heard about dog pulls, and some people talked about it being good, and then others, particularly Indigenous people, saw it as preferable to shooting but felt it was not done in a way that was respectful of the community.

There's something missing that didn't leave a good taste for some people, and I remember during the presentations I do with PreK and Kindergarten kids, hearing little ones talk about how someone came and stole their dog out of their yard. Or this one child was telling a story about how there were people trying to get a dog, and trying to hide the dog. It was a big story, but it

was probably a lot of truth. And then you hear another person saying, 'my dog was almost taken because they were just out, and they were actually in my yard, but I don't have a fence in my yard, and I'm a really good dog owner'. I know this person, and they are a good dog owner, but they live on reserve. So then, because of where they live, it was decided that this was going to be okay, but we would never do that in the town of La Ronge.

After listening to presentations with Save Rez Dogs and Michael Yellow Bird, I've started to think about what truth and reconciliation looks like within animal welfare which I hadn't really thought about before. Yes, we are a community-based organization but we're a non-Indigenous organization. No matter what we want to be, we still have to accept what we also are. We are part of this community. We live here, we love it, we care about the people we care about the dogs, and some care more about the dogs because they feel that dogs don't have a voice. Actions with good intentions can still cause harm. So that's what I've been thinking a lot about.

I have had hard conversations with a couple of board members. Dog rescue is very emotional work and you can get compassion fatigue very easily when you're dealing with dogs in circumstances that they have absolutely no control over. But we can't forget to have empathy for the people, and we still have to build relationships in our work. We can't make it only about the dog. Months after that interview, one of the members of NAR said to me, 'You know, I really appreciate how you've been helping us as a board to broaden our perspective on things, and see things we never really thought about before'. That felt good because it was uncomfortable and I'm also not an expert. I make mistakes all the time, but thinking critically and being reflective help us move forward. We haven't totally turned ourselves upside down. But we are doing work that we never did before in different ways. Northern Animal Rescue is trying harder to create safety; if we're doing something wrong and someone is offended or if we've done something that

is insensitive or harmful, we've created this space to actually have the person address it with us. If we're ever going to make any difference for animals, we have to work with people and care about them. Now, instead of just someone reaching out and saying, 'can you come and pick up this dog', instead, our director is asking more questions, trying to find out the situation and whether we can help that person keep that dog in a healthy and good way.

I think the biggest impact on me is the stories that people so generously shared for this research. People were so courageous and so generous, and had beautiful stories, heartbreaking stories. I already felt that dogs were important, and I know this connectedness that you can have with a dog, because I've had dogs. An interview I did with one of the Elders made me think so differently about living well with dogs and mentorship and passing on of teaching and of care and love. This Elder said there was a tradition that a person was given a puppy, and that was part of their teaching on how to care for another spirit, and to nurture and care for that dog, physically and emotionally. I learned how there's now the disconnect with the mentorship part of it, and that was an 'aha' moment, because this tradition is alive here; children are always given dogs. But not all children who receive a dog have a parent or caregiver who is walking them through caring for that dog, and who takes over the care because the child is still learning. So there are these traditions that have such deep roots. But it looks so different now because of colonialism and what has been taken.

Children have instincts about dogs, they know them and just purely love them. And Elders who know these stories, and who know about the old way, and a lot of those who would have been given a puppy when they were a child. They love dogs, they see the value of dogs. Adults are where the gap is, and it makes sense if you think about our history with residential schools, and you can see where that was severed. So that's why it's important to nurture those

qualities back into the adults that we deal with, so that maybe they can care for their dogs in these ways that children and Elders know. So that's a job that we could do as an animal welfare organization, but also as leaders. And when we're creating bylaws, thinking about what might work best. Bylaws right now are all about money. That's what they're going to care about. But it doesn't work. You're solving nothing, and you're increasing the burden on the system. It probably costs more to keep that dog in the pound or in the foster network than to just support that family to keep that dog.

We can't assume that everyone who can't afford to bail out their dog is irresponsible or doesn't love their dog. Just because you can afford to pay to get your dog out doesn't mean you're a good dog owner either. Why have we equated good dog ownership to money? Money does drive a lot of things, but we are different here, and we should be willing and able to try a different approach. NAR does negotiate fees, and there have been times where we've had our hands slapped for negotiating with a 'repeat offender'. Instead of taking the dog away we tried to educate them about the bylaw and help them understand what the consequences are of dogs roaming around. I wouldn't say that changed anything either, but certainly us shipping the dog off doesn't do any good, because in this case there were children in the home who loved that dog. Yes, they let him out the front door so he could take himself for walks, and people didn't like that. But that dog had a good home. I think most people have the potential to be in good, safe, healthy, balanced relationship with animals.

One of the biggest gifts to me in this have been these relationships with people that are kind of professional, but really personal too. I've met and connected with so many people through this. This project was structured so we could all see ourselves in it and we could all contribute to it. We could all give ideas. It was really inspiring. I think of myself as a creative

person, but I don't always have an outlet for that. With the art gallery idea coming up, and then you supporting it so fully, it just provided such a creative outlet for me. I was able to build relationships with the artists, telling me about their pieces, telling me their stories, and showing me the progress of their art. Some of them were people I also had a chance to interview, so there were multiple layers of relationship; there was such depth there.

During the process, I met Miriam Koerner, and she introduced me to [Elder] Myles Charles. When I first met him, the first few times I'd have to fully explain who I was each time. But now we're true friends, I see him all the time. I usually try to get there at least once a week, and go and visit him and take him and do his errands. And that all started because Miriam introduced me, and we talked about this project, and then he did a painting. And the stories and all of the things really made me feel connected to him. I was able to develop this really deep relationship with him. And he gives me gifts all the time and says, 'how did I ever deserve you?'. And he says things like, 'I really love you'. It's just such a special relationship that he and I have.

This project is not just what people think; it's a what people feel, and it will be represented forever, because we've got these artifacts now. When the gallery was in Prince Albert, I went and visited and was told about an older gentleman who came in, and he was particularly focused on one piece. This woman working there had gone over to talk to him, and he started to cry. He said, 'this piece reminds me of my grandson', and he told the story about his grandson and his dog, and it made him really emotional, he connected so deeply with that piece. And I know the artist and what her story is with that piece. What she poured into that painting, someone else saw it and felt their own story.

The art and our data transcend. It's not one way. It's not one thing, and it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what your story is with your dog. You can see it and feel something. Feeling something is the most important thing. It's the world to me. All of us have developed stronger relationships within the team, and it's been a very positive thing. The network that we have been creating is strong, and there's still lots to do, but what we can be cradled in is this sense of safety with each other, and that we all have respect for each other, and that we're all working on this together.

Maybe dogs are a symbol of that reciprocity and being able to work together. Dogs don't exist just to serve us. While they rely on us to take care of them, they still have their own spirit. They can be taught by us, but they are also our teachers; just like one of our Elders said, dogs have medicine. That's what I am left with. That's the heart of everything. Not only can we have special relationships with dogs, but we can connect with each other because of dogs, and that's beautiful. This project has left me with a sense of hope and possibility. And knowing that we're moving forward in a direction that feels good. It feels like so many things are aligning. What has been illustrated is that it's not just about problems with dogs. We love our dogs here, and we're really creative in how we try to do things because there are people who are willing to try. There are long standing stories, and there's the spirit of dogs all around us. To me it's just such a beautiful thing.

7.4.2.4 Kelsey Carlson (Summer Research Assistant 2020-2021; Lac La Ronge Band Member)

When I first read that article on La Ronge Now and emailed you, my motivation was really split half and half between getting the work experience for my vet school application and the extra bonus that whatever work I was going to be doing was in my hometown. Just prior to

that, there were articles coming out about how there's not much to do in La Ronge, really negative media attention. So, the idea of being part of something where someone from outside the community wanted to come in but not to tell people what's best was really important for me. Because I find myself always defending my hometown to outsiders. La Ronge isn't just a junk place, it has importance and value, and it's special to people. So, it was nice to see that coming from an outside perspective, to see a mentality that reflected my own that wasn't someone just agreeing with me, but was sharing the same ideas I have about La Ronge. That was really refreshing.

When we started doing the interviews, I wasn't part of the initial meetings of what the discussion was going to be. So when I started it was like I'm coming in after the fact. So again you don't want to step on toes. Don't want to push, so I was like, 'hey, I'm going to take this and roll with it, and do it as best as I think they want it done'. But then, at the same time, I was 19 or 20 years old and there are these authority figures from my home community, like Ann Ratt is the councilor, and she's been a councilor since I was a child. So, I was thinking 'do this how they want it done, and don't mess it up'. So, it was a lot of growth for myself at that time because I was so young. And then finding my place and my voice in the group, and not being shy to voice an opinion, was a big thing.

But when it came to interviewing people there were a couple of people that I knew or we were in the same social circle, and there were some people that I was actually pretty close to. So then trying to go off the list of questions without having my own relationship with them influence how I asked those questions, or how I framed them. I tried really hard to not let that happen, which might have broken up the interview. I didn't go in as depth as I would like to now, looking back at it. But, you know, also not trying to include any information that would identify

anybody, but still because I had a relationship there was a comfortable feeling with them. It was definitely a balancing act. But it was fun, and the first few that I did were probably a little more rocky, but then you get a groove.

There was a question, I can't remember which one, it was always really interesting to me. And then there was another follow up question that I pretty much asked everybody, even though it wasn't on the list. I can't remember what it was, it was something that I was really curious about, something I just wanted to know, for my own personal interest in my own hometown. I don't think there was ever a point where I worried I went too far, or felt like I was pushing or prying. I wanted to frame it in a way where this is just curiosity. I'm not trying to point fingers. I'm not trying to say, 'well, you don't think like I do'. To be better prepared, maybe if I had sat down for an hour or something and gone through the questions myself to see where that discussion could go, where it was easy to flow into. When I first started doing it you said very clearly, "It's not an interview. I know the sheet says interview questions, but it's not an interview, it's a conversation."

But I honestly think the biggest thing for me was my age, and just how comfortable I was speaking in front of people. Like now, in my job, I've done presentations to high school students on my educational path, and how I got into my job, and we kind of do a whole tour of the Band schools and I'm fine with getting up and talking to these kids now. Whereas five or six years ago when we started the project, I was like, 'Huh! I have to control my breathing because I hold my breath and stop breathing when I speak'. That was a huge part of it, how comfortable I was being in that position. I feel like if I were to go back and re-do it now, the interviews would have been a lot more of a conversation. And I would have been comfortable creating that conversation.

Sometimes people ask me about being involved in the project and I tell them “It’s about the dog human relationship, and I’ve done interviews”, and people ask ‘what’s the most surprising thing for me’? And I still say it’s just the extent of racism in that town. It’s always going to be there. It’s going to be anywhere, and I know that. But just the quick responses to include race as a conclusion, or as a reason for our dog issues was just - I was expecting it, but I was surprised to get it from some of the people that I got it from. But for me, as a very white-presenting Indigenous person, I get it all the time, where people just assume I’m not Indigenous. So, there were probably people I was interviewing who knew me but didn’t know my background or maybe didn’t make the connection with my family or whatever. But the amount of racism I heard from a very diverse range of people, but what always surprised me most was when it came from Indigenous people themselves. You almost expect it from an outside person or an outside group. But I think it happens a lot with like any kind of stereotype with Indigenous people. We tend to play into these stereotypes and these racist ideas, and we play it off as a joke when we say it about ourselves. But then, as soon as somebody else says it, it’s a problem.

For the non-Indigenous participants, I heard a lot of things similar to ‘my ancestors were colonizers, but I wasn’t the person that did that to you’. They try so hard to not be racist, but it’s actually incredibly racist. And not even just related to dogs. It’s like when you bring up history and colonization and the effects today with non-Indigenous people and then they get hurt feelings, and you train yourself to not even bring it up. And then getting that mentality from other people in the interview - I’m used to dealing with it because of other experiences so I can bounce around it or talk around it. But when that was brought to the conversation it did take me back a little bit, and I had to recentre myself and remember I’m not talking to any Joe and Jane off the street that I can point fingers and be like, ‘Your thinking is wrong’. So my position within

the community brought a familiarity where I can bridge these gaps and say, 'Let's talk about this'. but I also had to pull myself back and realize there's a line that I have to draw for myself and being really conscious of that, really finding the balance between that. In the moment I would just stop my brain from going down this path, whether it was getting them to talk more until there was something else I could ask about, or figure maybe they could talk themselves out of this hole they were digging. But afterwards, that whole first year of the first summer and fall working with you, after the interviews I was reflecting on the realization that everyone wanted to bring up the race card, and that kind of sucks.

Then, after doing the activities with the veterinary students, it shifted my whole perspective on what it is to be Indigenous today. When I first started working with you, I very much thought that - people get all up in arms about residential schools and the payouts, and I was of the belief that, 'Yes, it sucks, I recognize that. But we can't keep living 150 years ago, or 60 years ago, or 50 years ago, we can't change what was done. At some point, when do we just step forward into what's next'? And then doing these interviews, and seeing that mentality in my hometown, and then doing the activities with students, I just got more and more pissed off about what happened. You learn about it in school, you learn about these atrocities. But it's one thing to read it in a book and to have someone tell you all this happened a long time ago, and then you move on to a new subject. And you're like, "Okay, that's not going on anymore." I think it all really started when we were doing those activities before the rotation in the fall with the vet students, with the Blanket Exercise and the documentary [We Were Children]. I just started getting pissed off because of what happened to someone very close to me in residential school, and she still has not talked to anybody about it. These issues became personal for me, so that's

where I'm at - working with you and doing those rotations with the students was really where my own mentality and my perspective on it really started shifting.

I also wanted to mention, you always talk about this idea of not wanting to be a white woman coming in and saving the day, and you actively work to not do that. And I see so often this white saviour mentality amongst white women, especially those who might spend a lot of time in Indigenous communities for work or whatever. For example, on Facebook people talk about finding a dog and wanting to get the dog a home, and saving dogs that were starving, and uncared for and on the streets. And saying there's dogs everywhere, and very much that white savior mentality. This mentality pisses me off so much now, because of doing this work with you. But if I was to bring this up with people, it would turn into an argument where these white women play themselves as a victim, how they are the misunderstood one for trying to help. It wouldn't be a conversation about how this mentality actually has a negative effect. I want them to see whatever results are coming out of this, because they're playing this white savior and now that I know what it is, I hate it.

7.4.2.5 Lisa Mayotte (LLRIB Community Health Nursing Manager; Lac La Ronge Band Member)

When I was asked to join the research team, I was interested for a few reasons. For one, part of my portfolio as a community health nurse involves responding to dog bite incidents and providing public education for school aged children about how to be safe with animals. I've also been involved in other research projects and have enjoyed that in the past. From a personal standpoint, I'm also a dog lover and I want to see more done for dogs in my community; I see

loose dogs and worry for their safety, so this seemed like a good way to be involved in making change.

Previous research projects I've been involved in have been quantitative, so this was my first experience with qualitative data. I really enjoyed being part of such a diverse research team and having an approach that felt really community-driven. It wasn't like other projects I've been a part of where there's a research assistant hired to collect data and they're not really invested – all of us involved were invested in the project and wanted to see change as a part of the research. As a result, the impact of this project is obvious and meaningful to the concerns of community members.

I found this project unique in that there was involvement from all facets of the community membership, from Elders to youth, so we got a really good diversity of voices to contribute. For me, the biggest takeaways are the outcomes. To have the model, the education project, the art gallery, and the potential for vet tech delivered services in the province is all so valuable. The situation with dogs in the Tri-communities is so complex, and that is probably not unique to our region. Being able to better understand what's going on here is helpful because with this information, maybe more can be done to tackle issues with dogs here and in other rural and remote places, too.

7.4.3 My Final Reflections

As this project winds down, I am struck by how much I have learned and grown during the past five years. When I began my graduate studies in 2018, I thought I knew what lay ahead, at least in general terms. I could not have imagined where this work would take me, and the ways it would stretch the limits of what I thought I could do and what I thought I knew. What was

most rewarding for me was working together with community members to learn all we could about dogs and their connections with humans in the Tri-communities. This region has become a second home to me over the past 30 years, and the relationships built and strengthened through this research have tied me even more tightly to the La Ronge area as an individual and as a service provider and academic.

Throughout the data analysis and interpretation processes, I was re-acquainted with my own passion for people's stories. I found that learning about the lived experiences of others allowed for connection and openness to change, even where personal beliefs were not in alignment. The transformational power of relational research has galvanized my commitment to prioritizing people-centered approaches to discovery in my own future as a researcher. These approaches broaden our own growth and learning as investigators by requiring us to flex our humility muscles. In so doing, we can fully embody the understanding that we do not and cannot know it all, but together with individuals with relevant 'other' experiences, we might be able to discover more. This learning has given me invaluable skills as a researcher, yes, but has also provided me with important transferrable skills that support my evolution in all aspects of my personal and professional life.

While this project is ending, the 'work' will never be done, at least not during my lifetime. Inequities and injustices continue to challenge the health and wellbeing of animals and people across the globe, and I consider it my duty as a veterinary professional to dedicate my efforts to exposing, challenging and deriving solutions to health and welfare issues. With the experiences, skills and relationships I have been gifted through this research, I will continue to lift and amplify the voices of marginalized communities, populations and individuals through research, activism and allyship. Ultimately, my work is in service to those whose voices have

been excluded from decision making conversations for far too long. If this project or any future work can contribute to the elimination of barriers to meaningful equity and inclusion in any of the environments I occupy, I will count it as a success. My steps forward will be guided by the ethic of kinship – regarding all I encounter as my relatives – an approach to life that Elder Maria Campbell reminds us ‘is free’ (2007).

7.5 Recommendations and Future Directions

If actionable outcomes are to be produced through research, findings and recommendations must reach the eyes and ears of those in decision-making positions. While many of our team and advisory circle members hold positions of influence in the Tri-communities, providing summaries of this large and complex project and connecting these to clear recommendations is essential to guide future actions. Relevant organizations at local and provincial levels will receive reports to inform next steps; examples of these are available in Appendix O. The organizations considered in these recommendations are:

- Town of La Ronge Mayor and Council
- Village of Air Ronge Mayor and Council
- Lac La Ronge Indian Band Chief and Council
- Northern Animal Rescue Humane Society – Board of Directors
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police – La Ronge Detachment
- Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association

The actions taken and decisions made by these organizations will be supported by my own continued work in the La Ronge area and my involvement at the provincial level in lobbying for

changes to practice and policy. I will avail myself of the local decision-maker groups to provide support in any areas I might be useful as they work towards healthier and safer dog-human relationships in the Tri-communities. Additionally, I will continue to work closely with the provincial organizations listed to address barriers to improved interspecies outcomes within and beyond the Tri-communities.

As changes are explored and implemented following this research, further illustration of the benefits to dogs and people will be needed. Future work should focus on the following:

- Exploring the needs for and characteristics of effective development and implementation of relationally-focused community dog care and control programs
- Conducting cost-benefit analyses of such programs
- Exploring legislative and sociopolitical barriers to development and implementation of alternative animal healthcare delivery models in underserved areas
- Illustrating the value of culturally and locally relevant dog education programming to Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan
- Development and testing of a scoring system for identification of underserved regions, populations and individuals
- Degree of interest in animal-health related careers amongst Northern residents – findings from such a study could support the expansion of the RVT certificate program to be offered through a satellite location in the north

7.5 Conclusions

The health of the dog-human relationship is central to observed outcomes at the dog-human interface in the Tri-communities. Interspecies relational health can be understood using

an adaptation of the medicine wheel – a model of holistic health familiar to Indigenous peoples in Canada. While certain dog roles and other contributors to relational health bolster the dog-human interface and optimize it as a place of health and well-being, others can present challenges, and these may be detrimental to relational health between humans as well. The care and control of dog health, welfare and population in the Tri-communities is complex and engages multiple local and provincial stakeholders. With no local sustained access to animal health and welfare support, community residents work to fill gaps to the best of their ability to protect animal and community health and well-being. In the Tri-communities, Northern Animal Rescue has taken on a substantial role in the stewardship of dog health and welfare, and past approaches are not sustainable and have contributed to and been affected by community tensions. While each of the three communities are responsible for dog control in their own jurisdictions, the ultimate responsibility frequently falls to NAR, despite a lack of formal agreements and cost-sharing with leadership. Despite the presence of local Animal Protection Officers at the local RCMP detachment, protection of animal welfare is frequently absent or ineffective, and this exacerbates community concern, urgency and conflict around dogs. Education and training to support improved dog care and control in the Tri-communities is needed, and these can be achieved in part by drawing on products of the current project.

The oversight, regulation and enforcement of dog health and welfare in Saskatchewan is operationalized at the provincial level, and the current policies and procedures favour areas in the province with the fewest barriers to accessing services. In the Tri-communities, creative solutions for the unique combination of needs and values around dog health and welfare will require flexibility or change in current practices and policies to adequately manage dog health and welfare as crucial components of community health and welfare. Those with the power to

effect changes to animal health and welfare practice and policy in Saskatchewan must consider the influence of colonialism and other forms of oppression on dog health and welfare outcomes. At the local level, social dynamics and community tensions can place further pressure on the dog-human interface, which become even more pronounced during significant environmental events such as wildfires and pandemics. The dog-human interface is a sociopolitical litmus test of One Health and One Welfare; where dogs and people are not safe and healthy together, inequity is sure to be present.

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APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT POSTER #1 AND INFORMED CONSENT

**Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences,
Western College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Saskatchewan**



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN COMMUNITY AND POPULATION HEALTH

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of local ideas and attitudes about dogs and dog-human interactions in the La Ronge region

As a participant in this study, you would participate in an individual interview with a member of the research team.

Your participation would involve 1 session,
30-90 minutes in length.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive
a \$50 gift card to the local business of your choice.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:

Dr. Jordan Woodsworth
WCVM – Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences
at
306-966-6466
Email: lr.petresearch@gmail.com

**This study has been reviewed by, and received approval
through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan.**



You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: Pets and people in the gap: identifying perspectives on pets and pet health, working towards community-derived interventions to promote community health in communities under-served by veterinarians in Saskatchewan

Researchers:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Tasha Epp	tasha.epp@usask.ca	306-966-6542	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences
Jordan Woodsworth	jordan.woodsworth@usask.ca	306-966-6466	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences

Community Team Members:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Ann Ratt	ann.ratt@lrib.ca	306-425-7455	Band Councillor, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Herb Isbister	hhisbister@hotmail.com		Member, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Genevieve Candelora-Kustiak	genevievelynn@hotmail.com		Co-chair, Northern Animal Rescue
Kelsey Carlson	kmc101@mail.usask.ca		Undergraduate Student Research Assistant, University of Saskatchewan; Member, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Lisa Mayotte	lmayotte@lribhs.ca		Lac La Ronge Indian Band Health Services, Community Health Nursing Manager

Why are we doing this study?:

- To discover the thoughts and attitudes of residents of the tri-communities about dogs, their relationships with humans, dog health and wellness, and dogs' roles in homes and environments in the area.

How will I be involved?:

- Members of the research team will interview you. Interviews will be conducted in a location familiar to each participant and will last 30-90 minutes. Recordings of the interview will be collected on digital recording equipment. These recordings will be transcribed and analyzed at the Social Sciences Research Lab and the Veterinary College at the University of Saskatchewan. The team will communicate findings to participants and other community members before publishing or sharing any results outside the community.
- If you have questions at any time, feel free to ask any research team member, listed above.

Who is paying for this study?: The Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) and Saskatchewan Centre for Patient Oriented Research (SCPOR), SPROUT grant.

What risks are involved?:

- We do not expect any risks to you by being involved in this research. However, if at any time during the interview you feel you do not want to continue, you may ask the interviewer to stop the recording and not have the recording used in the research.
- After the interview, if you feel you need to talk to someone for support, you can contact the following resources free of charge:
 - Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region
Addictions & Mental Health
306-425-2422
 - Elder John Halkett
Via Facebook Messenger
 - Erin Wasson
Counsellor, Western College of Veterinary Medicine
vet.socialwork@usask.ca
306-966-2852/306-227-3814

Will this study help me in any way?:

- We hope that the results of this study will provide a better understanding for community leadership and service providers of issues related to dogs, their health and population management within the La Ronge region
- The results can inform new and existing programs in the community to improve the safety and health of dog-human interactions in the region.

What will I receive for participating in the study?:

- We appreciate the time and effort you will be contributing to this project. In recognition of this, we offer you a \$50 gift certificate for the local business of your choice. Please let the research team member who will be interviewing you know in advance where you would like the gift certificate to come from.
- Even if you decide part way through that you do not want to continue with the interview, you will still get to keep the gift card.

Will I be identified in the study?:

- Because La Ronge is a small community, there are community members on the research team, and you will be communicating your interest in participating via email, your identity will not be completely confidential during the recruitment and interview process
- However, once you have been contacted to set up your interview, any email messages between you and the research team will be deleted
- Your personal information will be removed when the recorded interviews are written up at the University of Saskatchewan
- When quotes are used, they will be de-identified and your name and the name of any animals mentioned will never appear in any publication or other written document, electronic or hard copy
- You will be invited to group discussions with other community members about the findings of the study, and if you choose to attend no one will identify you as a participant in the study

- We will use the data collected during this study to produce reports for the community, academic articles, and a graduate student dissertation. We will report data anonymously in all final reports
- Interview data (recordings, transcripts, consent forms) will be stored electronically on a University server with access through password-protected computers accessible only by members of the research team
- Any data that are to be stored at the Lac La Ronge Indian Band Office (only data pertaining to Band members) will be securely managed in consultation with the Band's IT team to ensure information is not lost or damaged, and can be accessed only by members of the research team.
- Any materials that could identify you and your data (including this consent form) will be stored separately from the data. Once we no longer need this identifying information, we will destroy it (delete or shred).
- Data will be stored for 5 years, then deleted or destroyed.

Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I grant permission to have my community's name used: Yes: ___ No: ___

What if I decide not to participate?:

- Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on how you will be treated or your access to services, including veterinary services provided or facilitated by members of the research team.
- If you decide part way through the interview that you do not want to participate, let the interviewer know and they will stop the recording and delete what was previously recorded.
- If you decide after the interview that you wish to withdraw, you must let the interviewer know **within 1 week**. After this time, the recording will be submitted to the University to be transcribed, and withdrawal will not be possible.

What happens after the study?:

- When the study ends, a member of the research team will contact you to invite you to a community meeting where you can find out about the results. This meeting will be open to a larger community audience, and you will not be identified as a participant.
- During the community meeting, everyone present will have the opportunity to give feedback on the conclusions drawn. If community members feel that some information should not be shared outside the community, those results will be excluded from any final reports.
- There will also be copies of the report available at this meeting, or at the Band, Village or Town offices.
- You can request an electronic or paper copy of the results by contacting one of the researchers, listed on page 1.

What if I have questions or concerns?:

- Contact the researchers using the information at the top of page 1;
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to

that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Consent

Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided:

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT

I have read and explained this Consent Form to the participant below before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it. Consent has been audio taped.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

APPENDIX B – TALKING CIRCLE RECRUITMENT POSTER AND INFORMED CONSENT

**Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences,
Western College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Saskatchewan**



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN COMMUNITY AND POPULATION HEALTH

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study about human-dog relationships and dog management in the Tri-communities.

In this study, you would participate in a talking circle with members of the research team and other individuals from the Tri-communities.

Your participation would involve 1 session,
60-120 minutes in length.

A meal will be provided, and transportation and childcare will be available.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:

Dr. Jordan Woodsworth

WCVM – Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences
at

306-966-6466

Email: lr.petresearch@gmail.com

**This study has been reviewed by, and received approval
through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan.**





Sharing Circle Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: Dog Management in ‘The Gap’: A Case Study Exploration of the Dog-Human Interface in a Remote Saskatchewan Community

Researchers:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Tasha Epp	tasha.epp@usask.ca	306-966-6542	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences
Jordan Woodsworth	jordan.woodsworth@usask.ca	306-966-6466	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences

Community Team Members:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Ann Ratt	ann.ratt@lrib.ca	306-425-7455	Band Councillor, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Kara Schneider-Ross	Kara.ross@lribedu.ca		Teacher, Senator Myles Venne School
Genevieve Candelora-Kustiak	genevievelynn@hotmail.com		Co-chair, Northern Animal Rescue
Kelsey Carlson	kmc101@mail.usask.ca		Member, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Lisa Mayotte	lmayotte@lribhs.ca		Public Health Nursing Manager – Lac La Ronge Indian Band Health Services

Why are we doing this study?:

- To discover the factors that influence how the population, health and welfare of dogs are managed in the Tri-communities, and whether these are working from the perspectives of community members.

How will I be involved?:

- You will be participating in a sharing circle with other individuals from the Tri-communities. The event will be facilitated by members of the research team, listed above. The sharing circle will have certain topics to be addressed, and will proceed like small group conversations followed by a larger discussion with the full group at the end of the session.
- Sharing circles will be held at the JRMCC. We expect the sharing circles to be 2-3 hours long, including a light meal.
- All parts of the sharing circle will be audio recorded. These recordings will later be transcribed at the University of Saskatchewan, at which point they will be de-identified (names removed).
- Transcriptions will be analyzed by members of the research team to find themes and ideas related to our research purpose.
- The team will communicate findings to participants and other community members before publishing or sharing any results outside the community.
- If you have questions at any time, feel free to ask any research team member, listed above.

Who is paying for this study?: The Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) and Saskatchewan Centre for Patient Oriented Research (SCPOR), SPROUT grant.

What risks are involved?:

- We do not expect any risks to you by being involved in this research. However, if at any time during the talking circle you feel you do not want to continue, you may discontinue your participation by letting one of the research team members know and leaving the circle. **Your previous contributions to the conversation will remain in the recording and in the ultimate transcription in order to preserve the integrity of the talking circle data.**
- After the talking circle, if you feel you need to talk to someone for support, you can contact the following resources free of charge:
 - Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region
Addictions & Mental Health
306-425-2422
 - Elder John Halkett
Via Facebook Messenger
 - Erin Wasson
Counsellor, Western College of Veterinary Medicine
vet.socialwork@usask.ca
306-966-2852/306-227-3814

Will this study help me in any way?:

- We hope that the results of this study will provide a better understanding for community leadership and service providers of issues related to dogs, their health and welfare, and population management within the La Ronge region
- The results can inform creation or modification of new and existing programs in the community to improve the safety and health of dog-human interactions in the region, which will ultimately improve the wellbeing of humans and dogs in the area

What will I receive for participating in the study?:

- We appreciate the time and effort you will be contributing to this project. In recognition of this, we will provide a meal during the talking circle, and offer transportation to the venue and childcare during the event for those who require it.
- Even if you decide part way through that you do not want to continue your participation, you will still have access to the meal, transportation and childcare.

Will I be identified in the study?:

- Because La Ronge is a small community, there are community members on the research team who will take part in data collection and will have access to data where you will be identified, and you may be communicating with the team via email, your identity will not be completely anonymous during the recruitment and talking circle processes
- Any email exchange will be accessible only by the team on a password-protected email account
- All participants and team members will maintain confidentiality. This means that the names and identities of participants will not be shared outside of the sharing circle, including within resulting publications and presentations
- During transcription, all names will be removed; if the transcripts are prepared by personnel from outside the research team, these individuals will sign a confidentiality agreement stating that they will not disclose the identities of any participants in the study
- Recordings of the Sharing Circle will be saved with a coded title that does not identify you. This code will be stored in a master list, kept separately from the recordings, that will link the new coded title back to the original title created by the recording device. Consent forms will also be kept separately from this master list. This master list could enable identification of you as a participant. Master lists will be kept on our server until publications and presentations related to this project are complete.
- When direct quotes are used, they will be de-identified and your name and the name of any animals mentioned will never appear in any publication or other written document, electronic or hard copy
- You will be invited to group discussions with other community members later about the findings of the study, and if you choose to attend no one will identify you as a previous participant in the study
- We will use the data collected during this study to produce reports for the community, academic articles, and a graduate student dissertation. We will report data anonymously in all final reports
- Sharing circle data (recordings, transcripts, consent forms) will be stored electronically on a University server with access through password-protected computers accessible only by members of the research team
- Any data that are to be stored at the Lac La Ronge Indian Band Office (data pertaining to Band members) will be de-identified and securely managed in consultation with the Band's IT team to ensure information is not lost or damaged, and can be accessed only by members of the research team.
- Any materials that could identify you and your data (including this consent form) will be stored separately from the data. Once we no longer need this identifying information, we will destroy it
- Data (including original recordings) will be stored for 5 years following publication and report production, then deleted or destroyed. Data pertaining to LLRIB members will be stored at the Band office, and may be retained for longer than 5 years (the data will be de-identified prior to storage).

Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio-taped:

Yes: ___ No: ___

*if you do not consent to be audio-taped, please see a member of the research team as you may not be eligible to participate in this portion of the study.

What if I decide not to participate?:

- Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may discontinue your participation at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on how you will be treated or your access to services, including veterinary services provided or facilitated by members of the research team.
- Once you begin participation in the sharing circle, anything you say will be included in the recording and cannot be removed. Therefore, your contributions will be included for transcription and analysis, and withdrawal will not be possible.

What happens after the study?:

- When the study ends, a member of the research team will contact you to invite you to a larger community meeting where you can find out about the results. You will not be identified as a participant during such a meeting.
- During the community meeting, everyone present will have the opportunity to give feedback on the conclusions drawn. If community members feel that some information should not be shared outside the community, those results will be excluded from any final reports.
- There will be copies of the report available at this meeting, or the Band, Village or Town offices.
- You can request an electronic or paper copy of the results by contacting one of the researchers, listed on page 1.

What if I have questions or concerns?:

- Contact the researchers using the information at the top of page 1;
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Non-Disclosure Statement

Our team commits to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussion during this sharing circle, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please place a checkmark below to indicate your agreement to respect the confidentiality of others during and after this session:

Please place a checkmark below to indicate your agreement with the following statement:

___ I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the sharing circle session, including the identity of all participants involved.

If you cannot agree to the above stipulation, please see the researcher(s) as you may be ineligible to participate in this study. Please be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality, even if they participate and sign this consent form.

Consent

Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided: I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

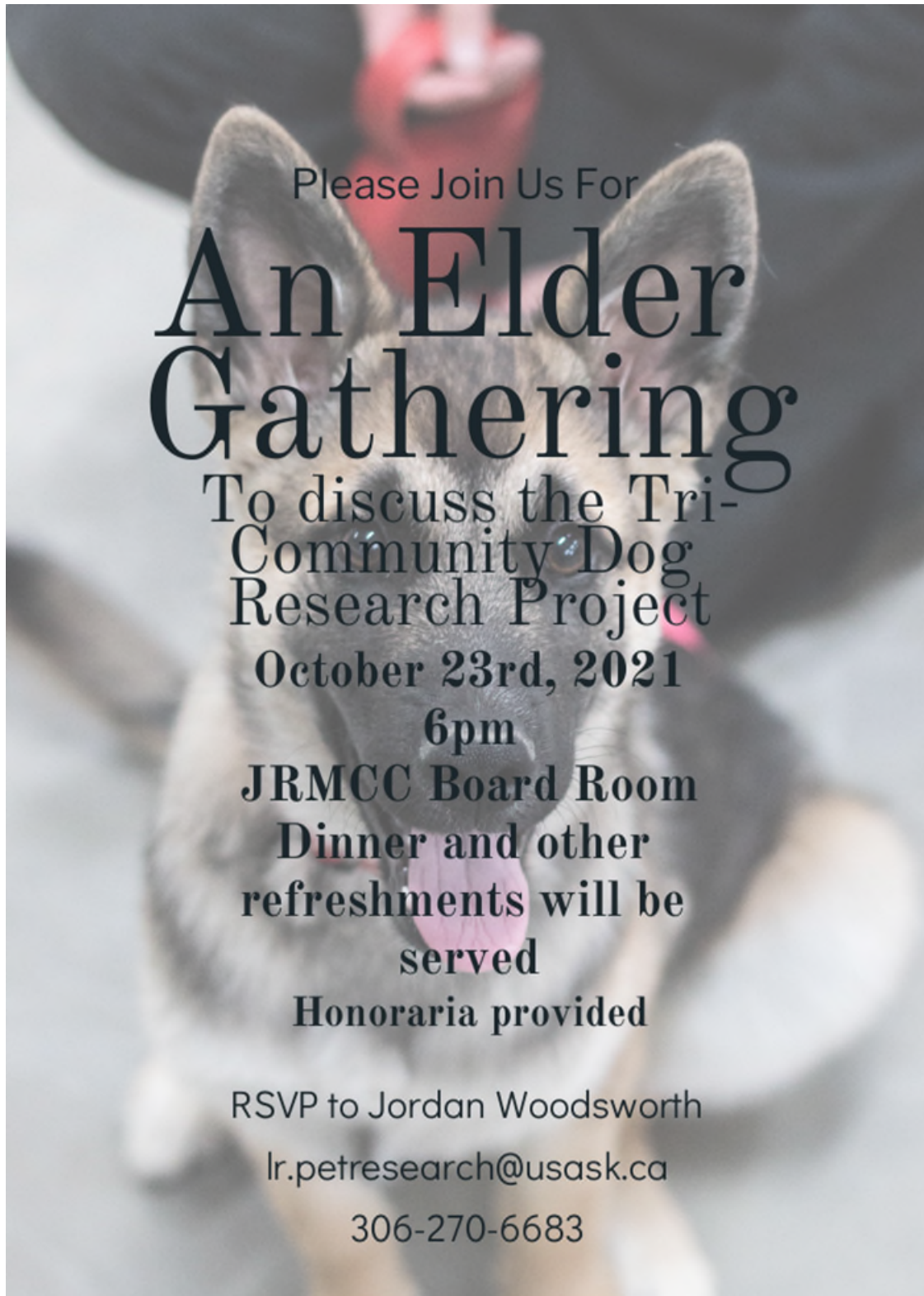
A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT

I have read and explained this Consent Form to the participant below before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it. Consent has been audio taped.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

APPENDIX C – ELDER TEA INVITATION POSTER



Please Join Us For

An Elder Gathering

To discuss the Tri-
Community Dog
Research Project

October 23rd, 2021

6pm

JRMCC Board Room

**Dinner and other
refreshments will be
served**

Honoraria provided

RSVP to Jordan Woodsworth

lr.petresearch@usask.ca

306-270-6683

APPENDIX D – BEHAVIOURAL ETHICS ID 987 APPROVAL



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 29-Apr-2019

Certificate of Approval

Application ID: 987

Principal Investigator: Tasha Epp

Department: Department of Large Animal Clinical
Sciences

Locations Where Research

Activities are Conducted: University of Saskatchewan, Canada
La Ronge, Canada

Student(s): Jordan Woodsworth

Funder(s): Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research
Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation

Sponsor: Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research

Title: Pets And People In The Gap: Identifying Perspectives On Pets And Pet Health, Working
Towards Community-Derived Interventions To Promote Community Health In Communities
Under-Served By Veterinarians In Saskatchewan

Approved On: 29/04/2019

Expiry Date: 28/04/2020

Approval Of: Behavioural Research Ethics Application

Letters of support

Consent form for interview participants

Guardian consent form for photovoice participants

Student assent form for photovoice participants

Guiding questions for participant interviews

Recruitment poster to be shared on Facebook

Acknowledgment Of:

Review Type: Delegated Review

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

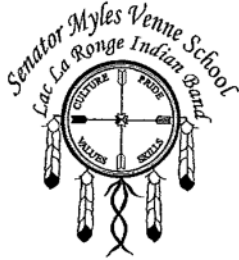
ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php>.

*Digitally Approved by Patricia Simonson, Vice Chair
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan*

1 / 1

APPENDIX E – SENATOR MYLES VENNE SCHOOL RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER



SENATOR MYLES VENNE SCHOOL

Box 268, Air Ronge, Saskatchewan S0J 3G0
Phone: (306) 425-2478 Fax: (306) 425-2815
Principal – Robert Whiteman
Vice Principal – Dale Ahenakew

To Whom It May Concern:

As Principal of SMVS, we are excited about the opportunity to partner with the University of Saskatchewan and their pet/human health promotion curriculum for elementary school grades (K-8). We have had the U of S vet college in the school on many occasions in the past and it has always been a positive experience. I hope this project will be just as positive and that the solution to the wellbeing of the dogs will be a positive one with the help of the community. We look forward to working closely with Dr. Tasha Epp, and Jordan Woodsworth on this initiative.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX F – LLRIB CHIEF AND COUNCIL RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

ADMINISTRATION
BOX 480
LA RONGE, SK
S0J 1L0
PHONE: (306) 425-2183
FAX: (306) 425-5559



Lac La Ronge Indian Band

October 30, 2018

To whom it may concern;

RE: LLRIB Support of Community Dog and Health Research Project – Tasha Epp & Jordan Woodsworth

Chief and Council of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band are in support of Tasha Epp, Principal Applicant and Jordan Woodsworth, Co-applicant and their Community Dog and Health research project. Their research will be conducted in the area of La Ronge where they can collect required information.

If there are any questions regarding the research or the Letter of Support for this project please contact me at the Lac La Ronge Indian Band Office at 1-306-425-2183.

Sincerely,



APPENDIX G – GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM



SENATOR MYLES VENNE SCHOOL

*Box 268, Air Ronge, Saskatchewan S0J 3G0
Phone: (306) 425-2478 Fax: (306) 425-2815
Principal – Robert Whiteman
Vice – Principal – Dale Ahenakew*



TO: Parents or Guardians

RE: Request to include your child’s school journal entry assignments in a research project entitled ‘Pets and people in the gap: Identifying Perspectives on Pets and Pet Health, Working Towards Community-Derived Interventions To Promote Community Health in Communities Under-Served by Veterinarians in Saskatchewan’

Researchers:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Tasha Epp	tasha.epp@usask.ca	306-966-6542	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences
Jordan Woodsworth	jordan.woodsworth@usask.ca	306-966-6466	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences

Community Team Members:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Ann Ratt	ann.ratt@llrib.ca	306-425-7455	Band Councillor, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Genevieve Candelora-Kustiak	genevievelynn@hotmail.com		Co-chair, Northern Animal Rescue
Kelsey Carlson	Kmc101@usask.ca		Member, Lac La Ronge Indian Band; Research Assistant
Lisa Mayotte	lmayotte@llribhs.ca		Public Health Nursing Manager, LLRIB Health Services

Why are we doing this study?: To discover youth perspectives on pet dogs and dog health in the La Ronge region.

How will my child's assignments be included?: Your child will get a class assignment as part of his/her Grade 9 requirements to create journal entries about dogs in homes and the community. As part of these class assignments he/she will be given journal questions about pet dogs, dog health, and dog-human relationships. The class will then have small or large group discussions where the students will discuss their responses. This assignment is separate from our research and is a normal part of your child's regular class activities.

If both you and your child give us permission to use your child's assignments for our study, we will analyze the assignments to identify general themes about this topic from the perspective of local youth. We will ask your child to participate in a group discussion (following COVID rules) about the project later so that we can find out if our ideas match what they want us to know. Everyone who did the assignments will be invited to participate in the discussion, whether or not they allowed us to use their assignments for this research study.

What risks are involved?: We do not expect any harm or risk to you or your child as a result of allowing us to use your child's assignments for this research.

Will this study help me or my child in any way?: There are no direct benefits to your child, and your child will be invited to a small celebration with all students in their grade regardless of whether their assignments are used in this study. The results of this study, however, will increase our understanding of the relationships between dogs and humans, and dog health in the La Ronge region.

Will my child be identified in the study?: Once the teacher submits your child's assignments to the research team, all identifying information will be removed. When we publish the results of this study, the data will be presented as a group and individual children will not be identified.

Do my child's assignments have to be included in the study?: Allowing us to use your child's assignments is voluntary. We will seek children's permission to include their assignments in the study before doing so. If you feel your child has in any way been coerced into allowing their assignments to be used, please inform one of the researchers. We also ask that you read this letter to your child and inform your child that participation is voluntary.

What if I decide later that I don't want my child's assignments to be included?: If you or your child decides after signing and submitting this form that you do not want their assignments included, you must let the teacher know within **one week** after the original due date for the forms. After that time, it will not be possible to withdraw your child's assignments.

What happens after the study?: When the research study ends, children will be invited to a COVID-safe group event to find out about results. The results will be available in a format

easily understandable to children and will be made available to you and your child. The results, including excerpts from your child's assignments, may be published in academic journals and a graduate student dissertation as well. We will not publish names of any people. You can request an electronic or paper copy of the results by contacting one of the researchers, listed on page 1.

What if I have questions?: Contact the researchers using the information at the top of page 1 with any concerns. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

SIGNING THE FORM BELOW WILL GIVE OUR TEAM CONSENT TO USE YOUR CHILD'S ASSIGNMENTS FOR OUR STUDY. If you do not sign and return this form, teachers and researchers will understand that you do not wish to allow your child's assignments to be used.

How will my child be protected from COVID-19 if they attend the celebration?

Our team will host the celebration outdoors close to the end of the school year. We will require everyone to wear non-medical masks (we will provide these or your child can bring their own) when not eating or drinking. When we are seated, we will ensure 2 meters space between all attendees. We will take all safety precautions to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19, and expect your child to do the same. If you or your child decide you'd prefer they not attend the celebration, that is fine; nothing bad will happen to them if they decide not to attend. We will have hand sanitizer available for everyone to use when they arrive and frequently during the celebration.

We will ask your child COVID-19 screening questions and collect your child's name and contact information when they arrive. This will be held by Band Health Services, separately from the data collected from your assignment. This is so that if someone who attends develops symptoms of COVID-19 after the gathering, contact tracing can be completed. Your child's information will be kept by Band Health Services for 1 month after the gathering, and then the sign-in sheet will be destroyed.

PLEASE RETURN ONLY PAGE 4 OF THE CONSENT FORM. PAGES 1, 2 and 3 ARE FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Parent Signature Box

I, the parent or guardian of _____, a minor _____ years of age,
permit his/her participation in a program of research named above and being conducted by Dr.
Tasha Epp and Dr. Jordan Woodsworth.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Please print your name here.

APPENDIX H – YOUTH ASSENT FORM



SENATOR MYLES VENNE SCHOOL

Box 268, Air Ronge, Saskatchewan S0J 3G0
 Phone: (306) 425-2478 Fax: (306) 425-2815
 Principal – Robert Whiteman
 Vice – Principal – Dale Ahenakew



YOUTH PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

Title of Study: Pets and people in the gap: Identifying Perspectives on Pets and Pet Health, Working Towards Community-Derived Interventions To Promote Community Health in Communities Under-Served by Veterinarians in Saskatchewan

Researchers: Dr. Tasha Epp and Dr. Jordan Woodsworth

Contact:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Tasha Epp	tasha.epp@usask.ca	306-966-6542	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences
Jordan Woodsworth	jordan.woodsworth@usask.ca	306-966-6466	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences

Why are we doing this study?

This study is working to find out about people’s thoughts, feelings and ideas about dogs, their relationships with humans, their place in the community and their health in the La Ronge area.

Why do you want to use my school project in the study?

Since youth have different types of contact with dogs than adults, you can provide us with different information from what we expect to get from adults. Your school has assigned a project for you to complete that addresses this topic through journal entries where you answer questions about dogs in your home and community. Your assignment is separate from our research and is a normal part of your regular class activities.

What if I have questions?

You can ask questions if you do not understand any part of the study. If you have questions later, you can ask your teacher (Ms. Schneider-Ross) or one of the researchers (listed above).

If you use my project in the study what will happen to me?

If both you and your parent/guardian give us permission to use your completed assignments for our study, we will ask your teacher to provide a copy of your assignments to the research team. We will analyze your journal entries to identify general themes about this topic. We will also ask you to participate in a group discussion about the project later so that we can find out from you if our ideas match what you want us to know. This discussion will take place after the assignments are completed and our team has had a chance to look at all of them. Everyone who did the assignment will be invited to participate in the later discussion, whether or not they allowed us to use their assignments for this research study.

Will this study help me in any way?

There will be no direct benefit to you if you allow us to use your assignments in this study. However, we hope that what we find out from your assignments will help change how dogs and people live together in your community, and how dog health is managed. We will celebrate this part of our study with a group event, in compliance with COVID restrictions, for all students in your grade, including those whose assignments were not used in the study.

Do I have to allow my project to be used in this study?

You can choose to have your assignments be used in this study or not. It is entirely up to you. Even if your parent or guardian signed a consent form to allow us to use your assignments in the study, you can still say no. No one will be angry or upset. Your assignments will still be graded by your teacher and your grade will not change based on your decision. If you decide later that you do not want your assignments to be used, you must let your teacher know **within 1 week** of handing in this form and your parent/guardian consent form. After that time, it will not be possible to withdraw.

What happens after the study?

When the research study ends, you will be invited to a group event to find out about results. The results will be available to you and your parent/guardian. The results, including parts of your writing from your assignments, may be published in academic journals and a graduate student dissertation as well, but we will not publish names of any people.

How will I stay safe from COVID-19 if I attend the celebration?

Our team will host the celebration outdoors close to the end of the school year. We will require everyone to wear non-medical masks (we will provide these or you can bring your own) when not eating or drinking. When we are seated, we will ensure 2 meters space between all attendees. We will take all safety precautions to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19, and expect you to do the same. If you or your guardian(s) decide you'd prefer not to attend the celebration, that is fine; nothing bad will happen to you if you decide not to attend. We will have hand sanitizer available for everyone to use when they arrive and frequently during the celebration.

We will ask you COVID-19 screening questions and collect your name and contact information when you arrive. This will be held by Band Health Services, separately from the data collected from your assignment. This is so that if someone who attends develops symptoms of COVID-19 after the gathering, contact tracing can be completed. Your information will be kept by Band Health Services for 1 month after the gathering, and then the sign-in sheet will be destroyed.

Signature section for assent:

If you decide you **want** to allow your assignments to be used in this study, please sign and/or print/write your name below to affirm your decision to participate:

I, _____(print your name) would like to be in this research study.

If the child not able to read/write, verbal assent received: Yes No N/A

_____(Date of assent)

_____(Name of person who obtained assent)

_____(Signature of person who obtained assent and date)

Cut here

Signature section for assent:

If you decide you **want** to allow your project to be used in this study, please sign and/or print/write your name below to affirm your decision to participate:

I, _____(print your name) would like to be in this research study.

If the child not able to read/write, verbal assent received: Yes No N/A

_____(Date of assent)

_____(Name of person who obtained assent)

_____(Signature of person who obtained assent and date)

APPENDIX I – BEHAVIOURAL ETHICS ID 1976 APPROVAL



Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 14/Oct/2020

Certificate of Approval

Application ID: 1976

Principal Investigator: Tasha Epp

Department: Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences

Locations Where Research

Activities are Conducted: University of Saskatchewan; La Ronge, Saskatchewan, Canada

Student(s): Jordan Woodsworth

Funder(s): Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research
Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation

Sponsor: Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation

Title: Dog Management in The Gap: A Case Study Exploration of the Dog-Human Interface in a Remote Saskatchewan Community

Approved On: 14/Oct/2020

Expiry Date: 14/Oct/2021

Approval Of: Behavioural Research Ethics Application

Consent forms (Key informant conversations, Community talking circles, Youth talking circle guardian consent, Youth talking circle participant assent, Facebook)

Recruitment posters (Community talking circles)

Recruitment email (KI interviews)

Conversation guides for Key informant conversations

Data Collection Tools for Secondary Analysis (NAR Records, NITHA Grid, SHA Grid)

Confidentiality Agreement

Transcript Release Form

Acknowledgment Of: Letters of support (Town of La Ronge council, Village of Air Ronge council, Lac La Ronge Indian Band council, Principal of Senator Myles Venne School, NITHA)

TCPS2 Core Certificates (Carlson and Woodsworth)

Review Type: Delegated Review

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TPCS 2 2018). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php>.

***Digitally Approved by Stephanie Martin
Vice-Chair, Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan***

APPENDIX J – KEY INFORMANT INFORMED CONSENT



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN
Western College of
Veterinary Medicine

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: Dog Management in ‘The Gap’: A Case Study Exploration of the Dog-Human Interface in a Remote Saskatchewan Community

Researchers:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Tasha Epp	tasha.epp@usask.ca	306-966-6542	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences
Jordan Woodsworth	jordan.woodsworth@usask.ca	306-966-6466	WCVM – Large Animal Clinical Sciences

Community Team Members:

Name:	Email:	Phone:	Organization (Department):
Ann Ratt	ann.ratt@lrib.ca	306-425-7455	Band Councillor, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Herb Isbister	hhisbister@hotmail.com		Member, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Genevieve Candelora-Kustiak	genevievelynn@hotmail.com		Co-chair, Northern Animal Rescue
Kelsey Carlson	kmc101@mail.usask.ca		Summer Research Assistant; member, Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Lisa Mayotte	lmayotte@lribhs.ca		Public Health Nursing Manager – Lac La Ronge Indian Band Health Services

Why are we doing this study?:

- To discover the factors that inform and influence current approaches to dog management in the Tri-community region, and how these support or challenge population control, health and welfare for dogs
- To discover how current approaches to dog management support or challenge the health and safety of human-dog interactions in the Tri-communities

How will I be involved?:

- Members of the research team will interview you. If in person, interviews will be audio recorded (no video) and conducted in a public location familiar to each participant and will last 30-90 minutes. Recordings of the interview will be collected on digital recording equipment. These recordings will be transcribed and analyzed at the Social Sciences Research Lab and the Veterinary College at the University of Saskatchewan.
- Due to current public health restrictions associated with the Coronavirus pandemic, these interviews may be conducted either over the phone (with audio recording) or via WebEx videoconferencing software (with audio **and** video recording), depending on your preference. (Webex privacy policy found here: https://www.cisco.com/c/en_dz/about/legal/privacy-full.html.)
- In the case of Webex, the interviews will be conducted wherever is comfortable for both interviewer and participant, with accessible internet connection. A scheduled meeting access code will be sent to you via email; our session will be private and closed to any uninvited participants.
- The session will be recorded on the Webex cloud server (located in Toronto, Ontario). Once available, the session recording will be saved to a password-protected computer managed by the University, and stored long-term, with encryption, in a private OneDrive folder accessible only to members of the research team. The original recording will then be deleted from the Webex cloud.
- Though the recorded session will be initially stored on the cloud, any other information you share with Webex when you set up your account may be stored on their analytics server in the United States. See link for more details: [https://help.webex.com/en-us/WBX28754/Where-are-the-Webex-Data-Centers-and-iPOP-Locations#:~:text=Internet%20Point%20of%20Presence%20\(iPOP\)%20Locations&text=The%20Billing%20data%20is%20stored,outside%20the%20account%20holder's%20region](https://help.webex.com/en-us/WBX28754/Where-are-the-Webex-Data-Centers-and-iPOP-Locations#:~:text=Internet%20Point%20of%20Presence%20(iPOP)%20Locations&text=The%20Billing%20data%20is%20stored,outside%20the%20account%20holder's%20region).
- The interviewer will be in a location where confidentiality can be maintained for the participant (using earbuds to eliminate the opportunity for others to overhear participant responses). The interview will be recorded (audio **and** video) and transcribed and analyzed at the University of Saskatchewan.
- If at any time you would like the recording stopped, let the interviewer know; you do not have to provide a reason.
- The team will communicate findings to participants and other community members before publishing or sharing any results outside the community.
- If you have questions at any time, feel free to ask any research team member, listed above.
- Due to the nature of internet-based platforms, we cannot guarantee complete privacy of any information you share with us through Webex.
- By signing at the bottom of this form, you agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of our interview.

Who is paying for this study?: The Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) and Saskatchewan Centre for Patient Oriented Research (SCPOR), SPROUT grant.

What risks are involved?:

- We do not expect any risks to you by being involved in this research. However, if at any time during the interview you feel you do not want to continue, you may ask the interviewer to stop the recording and not have the recording used in the research.
- After the interview, if you feel you need to talk to someone for support, you can contact the following resources free of charge:
 - Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region
Addictions & Mental Health
306-425-2422
 - Elder John Halkett
Via Facebook Messenger
 - Erin Wasson
Counsellor, Western College of Veterinary Medicine
vet.socialwork@usask.ca
306-966-2852/306-227-3814

Will this study help me in any way?:

- We hope that the results of this study will provide a better understanding for community leadership and service providers of issues related to dogs, their health and welfare, and population management within the La Ronge region
- The results can inform creation or modification of new and existing programs in the community to improve the safety and health of dog-human interactions in the region, which will ultimately improve the wellbeing of humans and dogs in the area

What will I receive for participating in the study?:

- We appreciate the time and effort you will be contributing to this project. In recognition of this, we offer you a \$50 gift certificate for the local business of your choice. Please let the research team member who will be interviewing you know in advance where you would like the gift certificate to come from.
- Even if you decide part way through that you do not want to continue with the interview, you will still get to keep the gift card.

Will I be identified in the study?:

- Because La Ronge is a small community, there are community members on the research team who will take part in data collection and have access to data where you will be identified, and you may be communicating with the team via email, your identity will not be completely confidential during the recruitment and interview process
- However, these email conversations will be accessible only by team members on a password-protected email account, and your data will be kept separate from these email exchanges

- You will decide whether you would like the interview data to be de-identified. Keep in mind that the nature of your role as it relates to dog management may result in you being identified by others based on the discussion, even if your name and role are not included in any research materials
- If your interview is conducted via WebEx, your confidentiality will be limited due to the inability to de-identify the video portion of the recording. However, for the purposes of our study, it is the text we are interested in, and once transcribed, the data will be de-identified for all further research procedures (analysis, writing, publication and presentation).
- Recordings of your interview will be saved with a coded title that does not identify you. This code will be stored in a master list, kept separately from the recordings, that will link the new coded title back to the original title created by the recording device. This master list could enable identification of you as a participant. Master lists and original recordings will be kept on our server until publications and presentations related to this project are complete
- When quotes are used and you have chosen to have your information be anonymous, quotes will be de-identified and your name and the name of any animals mentioned will never appear in any publication or other written document, electronic or hard copy
- You will be invited to group discussions with other community members about the findings of the study, and if you choose to attend no one will identify you as a previous participant in the study
- We will use the data collected during this study to produce reports for the community, academic articles, and a graduate student dissertation. We will report data anonymously as indicated by participants in all final reports; however, the Tri-communities may be identified in these materials
- Interview data (recordings, transcripts, consent forms) will be stored electronically on a University server with access through password-protected computers accessible only by members of the research team
- Any data that are to be stored at the Lac La Ronge Indian Band Office (de-identified data from Band members) will be securely managed in consultation with the Band's IT team to ensure information is not lost or damaged, and can be accessed only by members of the research team.
- Any materials that could identify you and your data (including this consent form) will be stored separately from the data. Once we no longer need this identifying information, we will destroy it (delete or shred).
- Data (including recordings saved on USask managed devices) will be stored for 5 years following publication and report production, then deleted or destroyed. Data pertaining to LLRIB members will be stored at the Band office, and may be retained for longer than 5 years (the data will be de-identified prior to storage).

Please put a check mark on the corresponding line that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio-taped **and** video-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

*if you do not wish to be recorded, the interviewer will do their best to accurately record your responses by writing or typing as you speak. This may increase the duration of the interview and reduce the accuracy of your responses as they are used in the study. You will have an opportunity to review the transcript once it is completed and can make corrections if you choose.

What if I decide not to participate?:

- Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on how you will be treated or your access to services, including veterinary services provided or facilitated by members of the research team.
- If you decide part way through the interview that you do not want to participate, let the interviewer know and they will stop the recording and delete what was previously recorded.
- If you decide after the interview that you wish to withdraw, you must let the interviewer know **within 24 hours**. After this time, the recording will be in transcription and analysis, and withdrawal will not be possible.

What happens after the interview?:

- After the interview, the recording will be transcribed into text. This transcript will be sent back to you for review. Once you receive the transcript, you will have **one week** to return any additions or other edits to the team. If we do not receive a response by this time, we will use the original transcript as is in our study.
- When the study ends, a member of the research team will contact you to invite you to a community meeting where you can find out about the results. This meeting will be open to a larger community audience, and you will not be identified as a previous participant.
- During the community meeting, everyone present will have the opportunity to give feedback on the conclusions drawn. If community members feel that some information should not be shared outside the community, those results will be excluded from any final reports.
- There will also be copies of the report available at this meeting, or at the Band, Village or Town offices.
- You can request an electronic or paper copy of the results by contacting one of the researchers, listed on page 1.

What if I have questions or concerns?:

- Contact the researchers using the information at the top of page 1;
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Consent

Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided:

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant _____
Signature _____
Date

Researcher's Signature _____
Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT

I have read and explained this Consent Form to the participant below before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it. Consent has been audio taped.

Name of Participant _____
Researcher's Signature _____
Date

APPENDIX K – CODE BOOKS

MASTER CODE BOOK FOR CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWS – August 11/12, 2021

Comprises Medicine Wheel Model

Most Outer Ring: Holistic Influences on Dog Care and Control

<u>Master Code</u>	<u>Individual Codes</u>	<u>Individual Code Definition</u>	<u>Individual Code Author</u>
<u>Roaming Dogs Come from the Reserve:</u> Speakers believe roaming dogs in the tri-communities come primarily from reserve neighborhoods	Roaming Dogs Source = reserve	Excess roaming dogs in the tri-communities come primarily from reserve neighborhoods	Lisa
	Roaming Dogs - Placing blame on reserve	The speaker indicates or blatantly states that roaming dogs are from the reserve	Kasey
<u>Human Trauma</u> – Colonization has led to traumatic events that influence animal care and perspectives.	Trauma	Mentions of the effects of residential schools or other traumatic events – with a focus on colonization and its associated activities – that affect animal care, perspective, ect.	Kelsey
	Dog Issues as a product of colonialism	Relating dog issues to historical or current colonial harms	Jordan
<u>Negative Narratives:</u> Discussion of negative narratives of dog ownership (Indigenous communities)	Negative Narratives	Discussion of negative narratives of dog ownership (Indigenous communities)	Jordan
<u>Racism:</u> How Racism affect public perception of animal welfare in the North	Racism	Racist views by participants, or description of racism experiences in the community	Jordan
	Racism – Stereotyping	Racism is alive in the north, how does this affect public perceptions of animals and the care these animals receive? How does it affect the resources given to people and animals that may be discriminated against?	Kelsey
<u>Significant Environmental Circumstance:</u>	2015 Fires	Discussion of dog issues around the fires in 2015 as an illustration of issues with management	Jordan
	COVID and dog ownership	Discussing the effects of the pandemic on surrender numbers and/or numbers of dogs being adopted	Jordan
<u>Community Tension:</u> tensions within and between communities regarding dog management	Community Tension	Tensions within and between communities regarding dog management	Jordan
<u>Culture and Dog Ownership:</u> Indigenous dog ownership practices are different than other dog ownership. These differences can cause conflict such as outsiders telling Indigenous dog owners how to manage their dogs	Cultural Divide Over Dog Ownership	Discussion of there being a difference between Indigenous understandings of good dog ownership and white settler understandings; this causes conflict	Jordan
	Cultural Influence	Mentions of how dogs were a part of Indigenous cultures, how the culture has changes over time and how these changes are reflected in people’s perceptions of dog ownership and responsibilities	Kelsey

	Being told what to do with dogs	Discussion of outsiders telling dog owners how to manage their dogs and this being in conflict with owners own understandings of what their dogs need. May also be in contrast to traditional understanding of dog needs	Jordan
	Cultural Influence	The speaker identifies how culture may be associated with how animals are raised, treated (including for illness) or how bylaws are formed.	Lisa

Second Ring: Community and Family Dog Care

<u>Master Code</u>	Individual Codes	Individual Code Definition	Individual Code Author
Dogs Not a Priority	Dogs Not a Priority	Talking about dogs not being a priority for community leadership	Jordan
Concern with Animal Management in the Community	Concern with Animal Management in the Community	The speaker identifies concerns that they have with animal management, this includes call for more support from certain members within the community	Kasey
Special Access to Resources	Special Access to Resources	Some people have access to special resources that aren't available to all community members	Lisa
<u>Communication Required:</u> Mentions how better communication is required to understand/access bylaws, as well as having a more open relationship with leadership	Bylaws – Better Communication Needed	Bylaws aren't always readily assessable and so people may not be aware of their responsibilities. Better communication or sharing of the information would be helpful	Jordan
	Communication – Public Leadership	Public's desire to have a more open relationship/communication with leadership, and easier access to information that currently may be difficult to locate	Kelsey
<u>Bylaws Negative:</u> Speaker feels that the bylaws are not working, and they do not encourage compliance. Mentions specific examples of why they feel the bylaws aren't working such as not being enforced after hours.	Dog Bylaws – Negative	Discussing negative aspects of animal control bylaws and enforcement	Jordan
	Bylaws Ineffective	Feeling that bylaws are not working	Lisa
	Bylaw Enforcement After Hours	Bylaws are not always enforced after hours and this can lead to varied owner adherence throughout the day, or between weekdays and weekends (letting dogs roam outside of business hours)	Lisa
	Bylaws Ineffective	Discussion of bylaws as being ineffective or not leading to behavior change.	Jordan
<u>Bylaws are Effective:</u> Speaker feels that the bylaws are working, and mentions conditions under which bylaws are effective	Bylaws Effective	Conditions under which bylaws are effective (when do bylaws work)	Jordan
	Bylaws Effective	Feeling that bylaws are working	Lisa
<u>Bylaws:</u> Discussion on bylaws within the Tri-Community.	Bylaws reasonable	Feeling that bylaw stipulations are reasonable and pet owners should be able to follow them	Lisa
	Local Resources – Education on Rules or Bylaws	Mention of the need to provide intentional education for residents of the tri-communities on rules/bylaws to improve adherence	Lisa
	Bylaws	Discussions on the knowledge level, effectiveness, and accessing bylaws within the Tri-Community	Jordan
	Bylaw	The speaker discusses current bylaws or recommendations for future bylaws to impact animal management and control within the communities	Kasey

	Bylaws	Discussions on the knowledge level, effectiveness, and accessing bylaws within the Tri-Community	Kelsey
<u>NAR: Mentions NAR and their involvement within the community, both positive and negative</u>	NAR – negative impressions	Describing negative perspectives of NAR and their activities in the tri-communities	Jordan
	NAR as local resource	Description of or eluding to NAR as a positive local resource for helping dogs	Jordan
	Local dogs should stay local	Impression that dogs picked up by a dog catcher or NAR locally should ideally stay in the la longe area rather than being removed from the community and taken elsewhere	Jordan
	NAR	Mentions NAR and their involvement within the community, both positive and negative	Charlie
	NAR as a community resource	Mention of NAR as an important/valuable local resource for dogs and pet owners	Lisa
<u>Social Media: How Social Media is used to relay information, encourage community interaction, and a part of dog management</u>	Social Media – Media Influences	How has social media and media influenced the attitudes and perspectives towards animals? Has this been positive or negative? Helpful or impeding on animal and public health?	Kelsey
	Social Media as local resource	Talking about social media as a useful way for the community to interact around dogs and dog management	Jordan
	Social Media	The speaker discusses how social media is used to relay information	Kasey
	Impact of Social Media	How social media has been a part of dog management within the area	Charlie
<u>Education and Awareness: How education and awareness can be helpful in learning to care for dogs, produce empathy, prevent roaming, and reduce dog numbers</u>	Education Resources	Where community members can get information or learning material from. Mentions of how difficult access information may be, or how complicated it is to find reliable information in an isolated community	Kelsey
	Need for Education	Discussion on the need for education on how to care for an animal and determine what they need	Jordan
	Education and Awareness	How education and awareness can be helpful in learning to care for dogs, produce empathy, prevent roaming, and reduce dog numbers.	Charlie
	Education through training (becomes a trusted resource)	Local people have training or experience that allows them to provide support to others in the community around dog care or medical care for dogs.	Lisa
	Need for Education	The speaker describes how they feel there is a need for education, the speaker may also describe times in which individuals are ignorant	Kasey
	Lack of Education	Discusses a lack of education within the community whether it be on when/where to access vet care/knowledge, bylaws within the community. Pros and cons on population control methods, importance of vaccinations, training methods, ect. Where have we fallen short because we simply do not know any better?	Kelsey
	Education and awareness	How education and awareness can be helpful in learning to care for dogs, produce empathy, prevent roaming, and reduce dog numbers in the community	Genevieve
<u>Taking Owned Dogs: The speaker discusses dog management where owned dogs have been taken – this is associated with Concern with Animal Management in the Community</u>	Dogs being taken away	Discussion of dogs being taken (by NAR or other outside group)	Jordan
	Taking Owned Dogs	The Speaker discusses dog management where owned dogs have been taken – this is associated with Concern with Animal Management	Kasey

<u>Dog Management:</u> Discusses how a designated person for dog management would be beneficial as current management is ineffective	Dog Catcher as Local Resource	Discussion of dog catcher or bylaw officer being a valuable community resource to deal with dogs	Jordan
	Dog management – designated person	Mention of the need for or existence of a designated person for dog management	Lisa
	Management + Control	How to manage dogs in the community with the help of a dog catcher, who is in charge of the animal control aspect in communities	Charlie
	Dog Management – lack of awareness	Mention of or evidence of a lack of awareness of current dog management approaches and bylaws	Lisa
	Dog management – lack of management	Mention of ineffective management of dogs in the tri-communities	Lisa
	Management and enforcement	Who is in charge of the animal control aspect	Lisa
	Dog management – differences between communities	Discussing differences between each of the three communities in terms of approaches to dog management (and success of these approaches)	Jordan
	Dog management and racism	Eluding to or discussing racism in the ways that dogs are managed in the Tri-communities	Jordan
	RCMP as part of dog management	Naming the RCMP as involved in animal management or maybe expectation of RCMP involvement	Jordan
<u>Dog Pulls:</u> Thoughts on dog pulls, if there are any advantages/disadvantages to these pulls, who should be involved, and effects on owners.	Dog Pulls	Thoughts on dog pulls, if there are any advantages/disadvantages to these pulls, who should be involved	Genevieve
	Dog Pulls – Fear and Stress	Dog pulls can cause fear and stress to owners	Jordan
	Dog Pulls	Thoughts on dog pulls and adopting dogs out of the community, if they think dog pulls alleviate issues.	Charlie
	Dog Pulls – Fear and Stress	Dog Pulls can/do cause fear and stress for owners and community members	Lisa
	Dog Pull – Negative	Discussion of dog pulls as a negative thing	Jordan
	Dog Pulls	Associated with “Culls” – the speaker describes instances when dogs are gathered from the community. The speakers describes how they feel and what happens during dog pulls.	Kasey
	Dog pulls don’t change owner responsibility	Dog pulls do not change how owners manage their dogs (so are ineffective in changing human behavior)	Lisa
	Dog pulls effective	Dog pulls do what they were designed to do, and help manage dog populations	Lisa
	Dog pulls lead to better ownership	Dog pulls motivate people to be better owners in the future	Lisa
<u>Community Support and Cooperation:</u> Discussing how the community supports animal management, the differences between the tri-communities dog management, and how effective these methods are.	Community Cooperation	Discussing the need for the tri-communities to work together from common ground to optimize dog management	Jordan
	Community Support with Animal Management	The speaker describes times in which they feel that the community is working well to aid in animal management or supports something that the community is doing	Kasey
	Differences between tri-community	These can include differences with bylaws, dog management/enforcement, finances. Also mentions how the tri-communities could be working together in regard to dog management	Charlie

	Management	Discussions on population management within the community, how effective current methods are, how the community feel towards such methods, and responsibility	Kelsey
	Dog Management – Community Responsibility	Dog management is the responsibility of all community members and all should come together to make dog management work	Lisa
	Dog Management as Community Responsibility	Everyone in the tri-communities is responsible for the management of dogs	Jordan
	Shifting Community Perspective	Mentions of a change in the community and how animals are perceived from previous years. What is the consensus within the community? Does it vary for each community? What is influencing the shift?	Kelsey
	Community between leadership	Mentions of the relationship between leadership within the tri-community, and discussions on how there is a desire for a more collaborative action from leaders	Kelsey
	Community Perspective	The speaker describes what they feel as community perspective on dogs within the communities	Kasey
<u>Community Self-Determination</u>	Dog Management – Community Input Important	Gathering community input for dog management strategies would help them be most effective	Lisa
	Need for community self determination	Solutions for dog issues in the community need to come from and be directed by the community members.	Jordan
<u>Roaming Dogs: Discusses general roaming dog issues such as opinions and alternatives to roaming</u>	Roaming Dogs	Mentions where they think the roaming dogs are coming from, any alternatives to roaming, advantages/disadvantages to having dogs roam in the communities	Genevieve
	Roaming Dogs = accident	Talking about roaming dogs being an accident (ie. Not due to owner negligence or choice)	Jordan
	Roaming Dogs	The speaker discusses roaming dogs, the speaker describes opinions regarding roaming dogs (both negative and positive)	Kasey
<u>Positive Change:</u>	Positive Change	Discussing positive changes in how dogs or animals are managed in the tri-communities	Jordan
<u>Youth Voices are Important:</u>	Youth Voices are Important	Youth have good ideas about how to manage dogs and their input is valuable	Jordan
<u>LLRIB as a Part of Dog Management: Description of LLRIB as having responsibility towards dog management in the tri communities</u>	LLRIB as a part of Dog Management	Description of LLRIB as having responsibility towards dog management in the tri communities	Jordan
	LLRIB leadership as a local resource	LLRIB leadership provides valuable support and resources to local pet owners	Lisa
<u>Power Differences</u>	Power Differences	The idea of working within a hierarchical system: needing to work up a ladder to make a difference or be a part of the system	Kelsey
<u>Intimidation:</u>	Intimidation	Suppressing the desire to help based on the sheer volume their skills would be required	Kelsey
<u>Town of La Ronge as Part of Dog Management:</u>	Town of La Ronge as Part of Dog Management:	Description of ToLR as having responsibility towards dog management in the Tri-communities	Jordan
<u>Dog Culls: Shooting dogs as population control, if there are any</u>	Shooting dogs as population control	Discussion of shooting dogs as population control method, either when old or ill, or when not performing well (sled dogs)	Jordan
	Culls	The speaker describes animal culling – this includes dog shoots	Kasey

disadvantages/advantages or if they alleviate the stray dog population.	Culling	Thoughts on dog culls, if there are any advantages/disadvantages to these culls. Also mentions if they think the culls alleviate the roaming dog problem.	Charlie
<u>The Link: Discussion on the link between animal cruelty and domestic violence</u>	The Link	Discussing the link between animal cruelty and domestic violence	Jordan
	Violence	Violence towards animals, done on animals, animals used for violence, connection between human violence and animal violence	Kelsey
<u>Roaming Dogs – Consequences to Owners: Discussion of the consequences that are or should be in place for having a dog running at large</u>	Roaming Dogs = Consequences for Owners	Owners who let their dogs roam should face consequences	Lisa
	Roaming Dogs = Consequences for Owners	Discussion of the consequences that are or should be in place for having a dog running at large	Jordan
<u>Traditional Approaches to Dog Care: How dog population, dog training, and dog illnesses/injuries were managed traditionally</u>	Traditional approaches to dog population management	Discusses decision to let a dog live or die, or how to manage the populations of dogs traditional	Jordan
	Traditional approaches to dog training	How dogs were trained when they were used traditionally in Woodland Cree lifestyle	Jordan
	Traditional approaches to dog illness or injury	Talking about traditional Woodland Cree approaches to managing dog illness or injury (ie. What was done before contact or when dogs were used in traditional ways)	Jordan
<u>Experience with Veterinary Professionals: Discussing both negative and positive experiences with veterinary clinics/professionals</u>	Mistrust in Veterinary Professionals	The speaker describes misdiagnosis or times in which they have not felt comfortable with care that they received from a veterinarian	Kasey
	WCVM – Negative	Discussing negative experiences with the vet collage	Jordan
	WCVM Clinics – Positive	Talking about positive aspects of the WCVM clinics (positive perspectives on the effects the clinics have had on the tri-communities and dog management)	Jordan
	Advocacy for Vet Care	When an owner is persistent for extensive testing, evaluation, and care for their animal; possibly asking for extra work/care/tests on their animal to ensure optimum health	Kelsey
<u>Responsibility of Owners: Owning a dog is a long-term commitment and they require a standard of care that owners should have knowledge of.</u>	Dog ownership as a responsibility	Discussion of dog ownership being a responsibility; may equate to the responsibility of having children	Jordan
	Essential Animal Needs	The speaker is describing what they feel is essential for dogs and should be provided by owners. This is not to be confused with what is described by law.	Kasey
	Knowledge of Care	What is the owners knowledge regarding humane care of their animals	Charlie
	Different Beliefs	Related to standard of care, owners may have “different beliefs” on what is proper care and/or management of animals. Discusses the various beliefs that may be held within the community	Kelsey
	Pet Owners Should be Involved In Management	It is the dog owners responsibility to manage their own dogs	Lisa
	Standard of Care	What is “Standard of Care”? How does it change from person to person? Is there a standard every person should try and meet? Here we see examples of how “standard of care” varies within the communities and how it is met by each owner	Kelsey
	Responsible Ownership Important	Responsible ownership is crucial for successful community dog management	Lisa

<u>Backyard Breeders = Problem:</u> Talking about issues caused by backyard breeders in the community	Backyard Breeders = Problem	Talking about issues caused by backyard breeders in the community	Jordan
<u>Dogs Being Chained:</u> Discussion of dogs being chained up and perspectives on this type of management	Dogs Being Chained	Discussion of dogs being chained up and perspectives on this type of management	Jordan
<u>Rescue, Fostering and Adoption:</u> Discusses rescue, fostering and adoption, its advantages/disadvantages, and effects on the community	Fostering and adoption of dogs – negative	Discussion of fostering and adoption of dogs (especially outside of community) as a negative thing	Jordan
	Short term management – dog pulls, adoption, fostering	Dog pulls, adopting and fostering are only short-term solutions	Lisa
	Fostering – Adopting – Rehoming	Discusses pros and cons to fostering/adopting/rehoming, when or if the process should be started, and the effects on the community and animals both in the short term and long term	Kelsey
	Fostering and adopting of dogs – positive	Positive opinions about out of town fostering and adopting of local dogs	Jordan
	Dog fostering and adopting – positive	Dog fostering and adoption programs to deal with roaming dogs or problem dogs are good and are helping with the tri-communities dog issues	Lisa
<u>Sustainability of Dog Ownership:</u> Can humans support more and more dogs, and is it right to continue collecting them for our own benefit? There are already too many dogs for adoption	Sustainability of Dog Ownership	Can humans support more and more dogs, and is it right to continue collecting them for our own benefit	Jordan
	Too many dogs for adoption	Too many dogs for adoption	Lisa
<u>Affordability:</u> The cost of owning a dog not related to accessibility issues. Includes cost of claiming dogs after impoundment, veterinary care cost, food and supply costs.	Cost as Barrier to Dog Ownership	Discussion of the cost of caring for a dog and the cost of claiming a dog after being impounded as being a barrier for some people	Jordan
	Money as a Barrier	Community needs around dogs not being met due to financial constraints or barriers	Jordan
	Finances as a Construct	The speaker discusses how finances may impede a decision and can be a barrier for people. This may be with regards to accessing services or even providing essential needs for an animal.	Kasey
	Cost of Animal Care	The speaker describes cost of animal care, this includes cost associated with veterinary care or for providing for the animal's essential needs	Kasey
	Affordability Issues (Caring for a Dog)	Ongoing care for a dog is expensive	Lisa
	Finances	Mention of financial responsibilities and difficulties and how this influences standard and quality of animal care	Kelsey
<u>Accessibility:</u> The geographic distance of the tri communities from important resources plays a role in the accessibility of veterinary care and food. Cost is also acknowledged due to long transportation times.	Access to Good Quality Dog Food	Local access to quality dog food is lacking in the tri-communities	Jordan
	Access to Vet Care	Mentions difficulties accessing veterinary care such as cost, distance to vet clinic, transportation issues, and willingness	Genevieve
	Accessing Medicine	Situations or instances where owners may have to travel or make travel arrangements to either get to a veterinarian, have medicine transported or have care done remotely (ex over the phone)	Kelsey

	Access to Vet Care	Mentions difficulties accessing veterinary care such as cost, distance to vet clinic, transportation issues and willingness	Charlie
	Access to Vet Care – Cost	Cost of vet care is a barrier to accessing it	Jordan
	Affordability issues (vet care)	Veterinary care is expensive, and this can be a barrier for some people	Lisa
	Emergency Resources	Shows the need for more accessible vet care, contact people, and access to resources. Mentions of how community members deal with emergency cases and difficult decisions in those cases	Kelsey`
	Access to Vet Care – Hours of Operation	Discussion of typical vet business hours as a barrier for some to access vet care especially in La Ronge (having to drive to PA)	Jordan
	Transporting Reptiles to Vet	Difficulties in transporting reptiles long distances for vet care	Charlie
	Challenges with Accessing Veterinary Care	The speaker describes challenges that can be associated with accessing veterinary care – this includes access, travel and cost and other identified barriers	Kasey
	Accessibility Issues – Distance to Vet	Discussions of geographic distance to access vet care on a regular basis	Lisa
	Access to Vet Care – Transportation	Discussion of transportation or distance as a barrier to accessing vet care	Jordan
<u>Rescue, Fostering and Adoption:</u> Discusses rescue, fostering and adoption, it's advantages/disadvantages, effects on community	Fostering – Adopting – Rehoming	Discusses pros and cons to fostering/adopting/rehoming, when or if the process should be started, and the effects on the community and animals, both in short and long term	Kelsey
	Fostering and Adopting of Dogs – Positive	Positive opinions about out of town fostering and adopting of local dogs	Jordan
	Dog Fostering and Adoption – Positive	Dog fostering and adoption programs to deal with roaming dogs or problem dogs are good and are helping with the tri community dog issues	Lisa
	Fostering and Adoption of Dogs – Negative	Discussion of fostering and adoption of dogs (especially outside of community) as a negative thing	Jordan
	Short Term Management – Dog Pulls, Adoption, Fostering	Dog Pulls, Adoption and Fostering are only short term solutions	Lisa

Third Ring – Needs (Dogs and Community)

<u>Master Code</u>	Individual Codes	Individual Code Definition	Individual Code Author
<u>Dogs Needs – Instinct Based Living</u>	Dog Needs- Instinct Based Living	Discussion of allowing dogs to express normal breed-based instinctual behaviors (may include a certain type of work or job)	Jordan
<u>Dog Needs – Training</u>	Dog Needs – Training	Discussion of training or behavior modification as something dogs need to be healthy and have a healthy human animal bond	Jordan

<u>Dog Needs – Sanitation</u>	Dog Needs – Sanitation	Dog’s environment needs to be kept clean in order for them to be healthy	Jordan
<u>Dogs and Socialization: Socialization is important for dogs</u>	Socialization	The importance of socialization for both the owner and the animal. How does the standard level of socialization vary from owner to owner? How does this vary as the standard of care and quality of life vary?	Kelsey
	Socialization for Animals	The speaker describes the importance of socialization for animals. At times the speaker is discussing how it can be difficult to socialize animals due to lack of areas to do this	Kasey
<u>Dogs Need Veterinary Care: Dogs need to have access to veterinary care to be healthy and well</u>	Dog needs – vet care	Dogs need to have access to veterinary care to be healthy and well	Jordan
	Dog needs – vet care	Dogs need access to vet care	Lisa
	Veterinary Preventative Care	The speaker discusses the importance of vaccines, deworming and health checks for animals. The speaker describes how they are able to access these resources OR the speaker describes why these resources are not accessed by individuals in the community	Kasey
<u>Dogs need identification</u>	Dog needs – identification	Dogs should be identified to assist with management and keeping dogs healthy and well (and under the care of their owners)	Jordan
<u>Differences of Needs (Dogs): How the needs of dogs varies based on dog breed, age, temperament, and weather</u>	Different dogs have different needs	The needs of dogs varies by breed, size, temperament and other factors	Jordan
	Appropriate Care	Appropriate care of dogs, and how that changes depending on weather, age of dog, breed	Charlie
	Breed Specific Differences	The speaker describes differences that breed may play in animal care, behavior and ailments that may be present in that animal	Kasey
	Dogs are Individuals	Dogs have different needs as individuals and blanket recommendations don’t work	Jordan
<u>Dog Needs – Grooming: dog grooming is important to health and is the responsibility of the owner</u>	Dog needs – grooming	Dogs need grooming to be healthy	Jordan
	Grooming	Mentions of grooming, its importance, how it is a responsibility of the owner and how it may lead to proper and early health diagnosis	Kelsey
	Dog needs – grooming	Dogs need grooming	Lisa
<u>Dogs need proper nutrition and water: Dogs need food and water to be healthy, and proper nutrition impacts body condition and overall health</u>	Dog needs – food and water	Discussion of dogs needing food and water for health and wellbeing	Lisa
	Dog needs – food and water	Dogs require food and water to be provided	Jordan
	Animal Nutrition	The speaker discusses animal nutrition, this includes describing how food can impact body condition and overall health of the animal	Kasey
<u>Dog Needs – Exercise: Dogs need exercise to be happy and healthy</u>	Dog needs – exercise	Description of dogs needing exercise to be healthy and happy	Jordan
	Dog needs – exercise	Dogs need regular exercise to be healthy	Lisa
<u>Dogs Need Shelter: Dogs need shelter to protect them from the elements</u>	Dog needs – shelter	Discussion of dogs needing shelter, and description of what that means	Jordan
	Dog needs – shelter	Dogs need shelter from the elements and to be restrained/prevented from roaming	Lisa
<u>Services Needed in the Community: Services the community needs for dogs such as daycare, kennels, grooming, dog parks</u>	Need for Dog Park	Discussing the need to have a local dog park where dogs can be off-leash in controlled area	Jordan
	Local resources – dog park	Mention of a specified dog park as a local resource that would be helpful	Lisa
	Need for Other Animal/Dog Services	The speaker advocates for other services that could be useful for animals in the communities – this includes grooming services, fenced dog parks and daycare	Kasey
	Dog Services	The speaker discusses accessible dog services within the community	Kasey

	Need for boarding and grooming	Discussing the need for local access to boarding kennel and dog grooming services	Jordan
	Boarding	Mentions on the needs/desire/support for some sort of boarding or housing facility or doggy daycare for pets while their owners are out of town	Kelsey
	Needs in Community	Mentions what they think the community needs to support dog owners such as vet, kennels, training, groomers	Charlie
	Local resources – daycare	Mention of a doggy daycare as a local resources that would be helpful	Lisa
	Local resources – grooming	Mention of the need for a local groomer	Lisa
	Play Areas	Need/desire/support for designated play areas	Kelsey
<u>Advice for Medical Care:</u> Where they go for advice regarding medical care of their dogs such as internet, friends and family or telehealth	Options for Medical Care	Who/where do they go for help when their dog is sick, what choices do they have? Are there other options we should be considering such a having a community member administer medications and basic veterinary care. Also, what medicines were used in the past?	Genevieve
	Resources – online	Referring to google or the internet as a pet health information resource	Jordan
	When to access veterinary care	Discussion of what might make an owner decide its time to access vet care for their dog	Jordan
	Where to go for advice	Who they go for advice (family, friends) or if they have received information from internet, phoning a vet	Charlie
	Remote Access to Veterinary Care	The speaker describes an instance in which they were able to receive veterinary care within the communities. This includes telehealth provided by a veterinary professional and remote clinics	Kasey
	Accessibility issues – who to call	Discussion of who a person can call for vet advice on a regular basis or in an emergency	Lisa
	Online vet advice	Mention of online resources as valuable for accessing veterinary or pet healthcare advice	Lisa
	Resources – phone a vet	Discussion of phoning a veterinarian in PA or Saskatoon for advice on pet health or in an emergency	Jordan
<u>Community Needs:</u> Resources the speaker has identified as needs for the community such as APOs, local vet care	Need for local veterinarian	Mention of the need for local veterinary care on an ongoing basis (not just twice a year) or mention of the value of the bi annual clinics in the tri-communities	Lisa
	Need for Spaying and Neutering	Talking about the need for spaying and neutering as a part of successful dog management	Jordan
	Support Wanted	Mentions help they would like that they can't access in the community right now, including spay/neuter clinics, more education, ect.	Charlie
	Lack of Support for a Sick Animal	In the event of a sick or injured animal, local support is hard to find/unavailable	Lisa
	Long Term Management	Long term management has to include spaying and neutering dogs	Lisa
	Need for Local Animal Protection Officers	Discussion of RCMP or APOs not being able to respond effectively to suspected cruelty in the Tri-communities	Jordan

	Need for Local Vet Care	Mentions need for local veterinary care (vaccines, spay or neuter, emergencies, other veterinary services)	Jordan
	Vet Care	Tied to “support for a vet clinic”; Mentions of the need, desire, and opportunities to have a vet clinic within the community	Kelsey
	Advocating for Veterinarian	The speaker identifies the need for a veterinarian, this includes having a full time permanent veterinarian or a veterinarian on a contract basis that regularly visits the area	Kasey
	Support for a Vet Clinic	Statements where community members show support for a vet clinic and associated services, such as boarding, and discuss how it is a needed resource in the community	Kelsey
	Support Programs		Kelsey
	Vet Care	Mentions when they’ve had to access vet care, the experience they had at the vet. Additionally mentions need for vet care in community	Charlie
	Spaying and Neutering		Lisa
	Population Control	The speaker describes population control methods, this includes culls, dog pulls and spaying and neutering. This code also includes opinions about how effective these measures are.	Kasey
<u>Lay Person Care: A person who is not a DVM but has some medical training and is able to aid when needed to provide medical care for dogs.</u>	Options for medical care	Who/where do they go for help when their dog is sick, what choices do they have?	Charlie
	Local Resources – Lay pet help (non-vets to help or give advice)	Mention of the need for or existence of local folks who can provide support for pet health either because they are trained or have experience and are willing to help	Lisa
	Lay Person Care	The speaker describes an organization or a person who has provided advice or assistance with animal illness or injury – the person is not a veterinarian	Kasey
	Lay Doctor	A person who is not a DVM but has some medical training and is able to aid when needed	Kelsey
	Local People Stepping Up	Discussing circumstances where, in the absence of local dog health or welfare services, local individuals will step up to assist or manage these things on their own	Jordan
	Doing Own Medical Care for Dogs	Providing medical care for dogs in the absence of a vet	Jordan
	Taking Initiative	How community members may “take things into their own hands” and provide a service that is not asked of them, but they choose to provide; helping because they want to and are capable to	Kelsey
	<u>Aging Dogs and Quality of Life: Describes how caring for a dog is long term and they need special care as they age. Also mentions how quality of life impacts end of life decisions.</u>	Dog Needs – Aging Care	Dogs need special care as they age and it's important to provide whatever is possible given financial limitations
Dog Needs – Continuous Care		Describing care for a dog as a long-term and continuous commitment	Jordan
Dog Needs – End of Life Decision Making		Discussing the responsibility of owners to make decisions at the end of dogs’ lives around palliative care or euthanasia and that this is difficult	Jordan

	Quality of Life	Mentions of what people consider to be required to meet a high quality of life; quality of life differs from person to person so the idea of what is required varies	Kelsey
	Quality of Life	The speaker discuss how quality of life plays a role in end-of-life decision making.	Kasey

Inside Circle: Dog Roles and Contributors to Dog-Human Relational Health

<u>Master Code</u>	<u>Inner Circle Classification</u>	<u>Individual Codes</u>	<u>Individual Code Definition</u>	<u>Individual Code Author</u>
<u>Dog Packs in Heat</u>	White – Physical	Dog Packs – Females in Heat	Dogs pack up when there are females in heat; this is one of the primary issues for roaming dogs	Jordan
<u>Dog Roles – Protection: Dogs as protectors (either through training or via natural instincts to protect familiar humans and territory)</u>	White – Physical Yellow – Social	Protection	The speaker describes how dogs contribute to protection for them. This is interlaced with dog roles within the community	Kasey
		Safety	Tied to “dog roles”; dogs often provide a sense of safety and protection to their owners. Also discusses how to provide safety for our animals	Kelsey
		Dogs as Protection	Dogs as protectors (either through training or via natural instincts to protect familiar humans and territory)	Lisa
		Dogs as Protection	Dogs have an important role as protection for people and property	Jordan
<u>Population Growth: Speakers explain instances that contribute to population growth of dogs within the communities such as accidental breeding and stray dogs</u>	White - Physical	Accidental Breeding	Dogs that breed without human intervention often end up with problems and this contributes to unmanageable population	Jordan
		Population Growth	The speaker explains instances that contribute to population growth of dogs within the community	Kasey
		Population Issues		Kelsey
		Reproducing		Kelsey
		Strays		Kelsey
<u>Animal Illness or Injury</u>	White – Physical	Animal Illness or Injury	The speaker discusses an incident they witnessed or know of when an animal was injured or ill	Kasey
<u>Roaming Dogs = Hungry</u>	White – Physical	Roaming Dogs = Hungry	Discussion of roaming dogs as being hungry or roaming in order to look for or find food	Jordan
<u>Roaming Dogs are Dangerous: Roaming dogs can be dangerous to humans and each other</u>	White – Physical	Roaming Dogs = Dangerous	Roaming dogs cause risk or danger to humans OR other dogs	Jordan
		Roaming dogs as danger –fights, disease	Roaming dogs are a danger for other dogs (through fighting and spread of disease)	Lisa
		Roaming dogs equals safety issue	Roaming dogs face threats to their own safety AND cause threats to the safety of community members (being run over or attacked; attacking humans or spreading zoonotic disease)	Lisa
<u>Dog Death – Natural: Discussion of letting dogs die</u>	White – Physical Yellow – Social	Dog Death Natural	Discussion of letting dogs die of old age, or dogs dying of old age as opposed to being shot or euthanized or dying a tragic death	Jordan

of old age, or dogs dying of old age opposed to being shot or dying a tragic death	Red – Emotional Black – Spiritual			
<u>Dog Behavior: How dog behavior is a product of external factors as well as instinctual</u>	White – Physical Yellow – Social Red – Emotional Black – Spiritual	Dog Behavior as a Result of Human Behavior	The behavior of dogs is a direct product of how they're treated by humans	Jordan
		Dogs Being Blamed for Bad Behavior	Discussion of dogs being blamed when they make a mistake, when normally it's the human's fault	Jordan
		Dog Behavior	The speaker discusses dog behavior, this includes problematic dog behavior	Kasey
		Behavior	Recognizing that behavior is both a cause and a result of other health conditions, interactions and experiences, for both humans and animals, and is something that has to be considered when getting an animal as something that, as the owner, you must handle	Kelsey
Dog Instincts	Mentions how dogs have instincts they are born with that help them through their lives, or instincts in them that humans have to work with so the dogs can become better pets	Genevieve		
<u>Healthy Dogs</u>	White – Physical Yellow – Social Red – Spiritual Black – Emotional	Healthy Dogs	Describing what a healthy dog is in terms of physical, mental, emotional needs of the dog, and what pet owners need to do to ensure their dog is healthy	Genevieve
<u>Perceptions of Dogs</u>	Yellow – Social	Perceptions of Dogs	What do we think dogs are thinking? Feeling? How do they perceive the world around them? How can we relate to what they are experiencing?	Kelsey
<u>Cat vs Dogs</u>	Red – Spiritual	Cats Easier Than Dogs	Perspective that cats are easier to care for and manage than dogs	Jordan
<u>Bad Dog Owners = Bad People</u>	Yellow – Social	Bad Dogs Owners = Bad People	Equating poor dog ownership (as exemplified by problem dogs or dogs that chronically roam) to poor morality or "bad people"	Jordan
<u>Dogs as Gifts</u>	Red – Spiritual Black – Emotional	Dogs as Gifts	Mentions of dogs being given as gifts	Lisa
<u>Care of Pets vs Working Dogs: How dogs are treated differently based on if they fulfill a pet role or a working role</u>	Black – Emotional	Avoid attachment to dogs	Talking about avoiding attachment to dogs to avoid trauma of loss OR due to traditional perspectives on raising working dogs	Jordan
		Dogs = Not Pets	Dogs treated as something other than pets	Jordan
		Perception of Owners	How owners or the public views dogs on a day-to-day basis and how their view changes throughout time, depending on situation varies	Kelsey
		Pets vs Working Dogs	The differences, and similarities, between dogs as pets and working dogs. Includes personality differences, roles, ect	Genevieve
<u>Co-evolution (Humans and Dogs): Humans have a symbiotic relationship with dogs, and dogs in the tri communities are not the same as wild dogs/wolves and have different needs.</u>	Black – Emotional	Dogs and Humans Relay on Each Other	Dogs and humans have a symbiotic relationship, and both provide for one another	Jordan
		Dogs Needs Have Changed with domestication	Dogs in the tri-communities are not the same as wild dogs or wolves, and have different needs from their ancestors have	Lisa
		Dogs through history	Mentions the roles and relationships dogs have had with humans in the past	Genevieve

<u>Dog Roles as Family:</u> Discusses how dogs are classified as family members and can be an important part of a family's identity	Black – Emotional	Dog Ownership as Identity	Talking about owning dogs as part of a person's or family's identity	Jordan
		Pets as Family Members	The speaker describes pets to be family members or describes that other individual within the community view their pets as a part of the family. Sometimes this includes comparing them to be children	Kasey
		Animal Ownership	The speaker describes personal experience with animal ownership, this includes what they feel it means to be a pet owner	Kasey
		Dogs as Family	Recognition of dogs as family members; may even mention dogs as equal to the value of human family members (in some cases even more valuable)	Jordan
		Dogs Support Human Life	Talking about dogs being a primary support for human life	Jordan
		Dog Role in Family	Mentions how dogs are a part of the family and have a role to play in family structure. Also included is what having a dog as a pet means to them.	Charlie
		Dogs as Family	Description of dogs as family members, similar value and emotional bond as human family members	Lisa
<u>Roaming Dogs – Freedom:</u> Roaming dogs have more freedom	Black – Emotional Red – Spiritual	Roaming dogs = freedom	Discussion of dogs gaining or experiencing freedom by roaming or not being confined	Jordan
		Roaming dogs equals freedom	Roaming dogs enjoy more freedom than those that don't roam	Lisa
<u>Traditional Relationship with Dogs:</u> Looking at the human-animal relationship traditionally	Black – Emotional Red – Spiritual	Traditional Dog Relationship = Good Life	Living traditionally with dogs associated with a good life	Jordan
		Traditional Relationships with Dogs	Looking at the human animal relationship traditionally	Genevieve
<u>Animal Emotional Wellbeing:</u> Discussing how animals need love and affection	Black – Emotional Red – Spiritual	Emotions (animals)	Identifying animals as creatures of emotion with feelings that need to be met	Kelsey
		Animal Emotional AND Mental Wellbeing	The speaker identifies that an animal has emotional needs that humans are involved with, this also includes times in which the speaker identifies when humans may be negatively impacting animal mental wellbeing	Kasey
		Dog Needs – Love and Affection	Dogs need love and affection to be healthy	Jordan
		Dog Needs – Love and Affection	Dogs need love/affection	Lisa
<u>Roaming Dogs – Irresponsible Ownership:</u> Dogs that are roaming are a sign of irresponsible owners	Red – Spiritual	Roaming Dogs = Irresponsible Ownership	Discussion of loose or roaming dogs being a product of irresponsible dog ownership or poor care	Jordan
		Roaming Dogs Equals Irresponsible Ownership	Roaming dogs are a sign of irresponsible ownership	Lisa
<u>Good Dog Ownership:</u> What it takes to be a good dog owner such as time, finding a	Red - Spiritual	Owners Know Their Dog Best	Owners of animals know them best and so vets or others that are involved in animal care should listen to owners when they say something is going on	Jordan
		Dog Owner Responsibility	What responsibilities are required when owning a dog	Charlie

place to put the dog when they travel.		Care When Away	Mentions who takes care of the dog when the owner is travelling	Charlie
		Time	Mentions of time dedication to animals, whether it's taking the animal to travel south to access vet care, or dedicating time to training, socialization, ect. What is the appropriate amount of time, or the required amount of time needed to maintain standard of care? How do we measure this amount?	Kelsey
		Good Dog Ownership	Description of what it is to be a good dog owner	Jordan
<u>Roaming Dogs Does Not Equal No Bond</u>	Black – Emotional	Roaming Dogs Does Not Equal No Bond	Just because a dog is roaming doesn't mean its owners doesn't want it or love it	Genevieve
<u>Relational Value: The value of dogs to people they're in relationship with</u>	Red – Spiritual	Dogs Are Not People	Discussion of dogs as animals and not humans; recognition of dogs as living things with inherent values, not value because of their proximity to humans (or because of anthropomorphising them)	Jordan
		Lack of Emotion	Mentions of a disconnect, or lack of emotion such as empathy, compassion etc. Characterize animals as an object, something of ownership that's replaceable, perspective of owners	Kelsey
<u>Dogs as Element of Humanity</u>	Red – Spiritual	Dogs as Element of Humanity	Relationship between dogs and humans as part of what it means to be human or recognized as people	Jordan
<u>Abuse and/or Neglect: Unintentional or intentional mistreatment of animals by humans. This includes not providing basic needs, cruelty to animals, and fearful behavior as a result</u>	Red – Spiritual Black – Emotional White – Physical	Abuse and or Neglect	Mention of poor welfare conditions of dogs generated by human-controlled factors (intentional or unintentional cruelty)	Jordan
		Neglect or Abuse	The speaker describes times in which they feel and owner has neglected or abused an animal. This included intentional or unintentional harm	Kasey
		Concern with Dog Care	The speaker discusses concerns that they have with the way individuals care for dogs, the speaker describes what they consider unacceptable care	Kasey
		Dogs Abused and Fearful of People	Dogs are sometimes abused and develop a fear of people	Lisa
		Neglect	Mention of dog neglect (lack of access to any of the 5 freedoms or basic needs)	Lisa
		Mistreatment Abuse – Neglect		Kelsey
<u>Roaming Dogs are a Nuisance: Having dogs roaming in the tri communities are a nuisance</u>	Red – Spiritual Yellow – Social	Dog Fighting	Mention of organized dog fighting in the tri communities	Jordan
		Roaming dogs = nuisance	Roaming dogs as a community nuisance	Jordan
		Roaming Dogs	Mentions roaming dogs, where they come from, alternatives, advantages/disadvantages to having dogs roam in communities	Charlie
		Roaming dogs = nuisance	Roaming dogs are a nuisance in the community	Lisa
<u>Dogs as Transportation</u>	Yellow – Social	Dogs as Transportation	Discussing dogs as a form of transportation (traditionally or for competition or entertainment)	Jordan
<u>Dogs as a Symbol of Freedom</u>	Red – Spiritual	Dogs as a Symbol of Freedom	Living with dogs equated to a time of freedom	Jordan
<u>Dog Roles: Other roles dogs play for example being used in transportation, hunting, competition</u>	Yellow – Social	Dog Roles	The speaker describes dog roles, this does not include protection or emotional support as those are their own categories	Kasey
		Dog Roles	Exerts that address or imply how dogs are viewed within the home and community, whether it's for protection, companion, therapy, hunting, ect	Kelsey

<u>Dog Roles – Emotional Support:</u> How dogs provide emotional and mental support for humans	Yellow – Social Black – Emotional	Therapy	Tied to “dog roles”; how animals are involved in therapeutic services within the community and the need of those services. What is the relationship structure between owner and animal that fosters and supports this type of “dog role”	Kelsey
		Therapy	How pets can support us emotionally, their role as therapy animals	Charlie
		Dogs as Health Support (Mental, Emotional)	Dogs as providers of emotional or mental health support	Lisa
		Dogs as Service Animals	Mention of dogs as service animals formally trained or used for a specific human-support purpose	Lisa
		Emotional Support	The speaker discuss’ dog roles in which dogs assist in emotional support. Sometimes the speaker does not directly describe this as a dog role but is explaining how they have felt comforted by dogs	Kasey
		Dogs as Support for Humans	Discussion of dogs as mental or emotional support for humans	Jordan
<u>Dogs as Teachers:</u> Discusses how dogs can be important teachers especially to children	Yellow – Social Black – Emotional Red – Spiritual	Dogs as Positive for Children	Talking about dogs as a positive influence on the health and wellbeing of children	Jordan
		Children Learning to Care for Dogs	Mention of learning proper care for dogs as part of traditional upbringing	Jordan
		Dogs as Teachers	The speaker discusses how dogs are useful teachers, they are generally describing how dogs assist in teaching people compassion and empathy	Kasey
		Dogs Teach Youth Responsibility	Caring for dogs as a way to teach responsibility and important life skills to youth/children	Lisa
<u>Mental Health:</u> Relating mental health to care and control of dogs	Black – Emotional	Mental Health	Discussing mental health aspects of dog management	Jordan
		Hope	The idea of “hope” can be both a positive notion but also a hurtful concept; animals may give us something to look forward to or foster “hope” for the future, but our “hope” to resolve situations such as health issues may in fact be hurtful to ourselves and our pets; where do we draw the line on “hope”’s role in animal care?	Kelsey
<u>Fear and Danger:</u> How dogs are dangerous to people and other dogs, and how this can spark fear in community members	Black – Emotional White – Physical	Dogs as Risk to Children	Discussion of the risks dogs can pose to children (not specifically related to roaming)	Jordan
		Dogs as Nuisance	Dogs are seen as a community nuisance	Jordan
		Danger	How dogs can be dangerous in communities (dog bites/mauling’s/packs)	Charlie
		Dangers	Discussing possible dangers to both animals and humans that stem from lack of care, having roaming/loose animals, traffic, packing up or dog fighter during breeding season, and exposure to wild animals	Kelsey
		Fear	Discusses situations that foster fear within the community, especially children and how this may influence future treatment and perspectives toward dogs	Kelsey
		Danger	How dogs can be dangerous to other dogs or people in communities (dog bites/maulings/packs)	Genevieve
		Fear and Danger	The speaker describes situations in which they felt fearful with dogs within the community or times in which dogs possessed a threat	Kasey
Fear of Dogs	Mention of being scared of dogs or feeling fear toward dogs	Jordan		

<u>Dog Loss: How losing a pet is traumatic and devastating</u>	White – Physical Black – Emotional	Dog Loss as Emotionally Difficult	Losing a pet dog is sad and upsetting for those who love them	Lisa
		Dog Loss as Source of Sadness	Mention of being sad, devastated, heartbroken when dogs were lost or died	Jordan
		Dog Loss as Trauma	Discussing the trauma that can come from losing a dog, especially if sudden	Jordan
		Pet Loss	The speaker describes a time in which they experienced pet loss. This also includes death of stray or roaming animals that they witnessed	Kasey
<u>Dogs as Entertainment</u>	Yellow – Social	Dogs as Entertainment	Talking about dogs as entertaining or a form of entertainment (different from recreation)	Jordan
<u>Dogs as Recreation</u>	White – Physical	Dogs as Recreation	Mention of dogs as source of recreation or sport	Jordan
<u>Dogs as Commodity or Status Symbol</u>	Yellow – Social	Dogs as Commodity or Status Symbol	Description of dogs as a commodity or an indicator of human status – living with dogs to achieve or maintain status rather than as a part of traditional relationships or kinship	Jordan
<u>Dogs as Loyal Companions</u>	Black – Emotional	Dogs as Loyal Companions	Description of dogs as loyal to their humans, and valued companions	Jordan
		Dogs as Companions	Mentions as dogs as companions for people	Genevieve
<u>Dogs Only as Good as Their Humans</u>	Red – Spiritual Black – Emotional	Dogs Only as Good as Their Humans	The value/strength/character of a dog can be determined by that of their human counterparts	Jordan
<u>Pets Have Important Roles</u>	White – Physical	Pets Have Important Roles	Mention of pets as important members of the community	Lisa
<u>Dogs as Rescues</u>	Red – Spiritual Black – Emotional	Dogs as “Rescues”	Mention of “rescue dogs” or discussion of dogs as needing to be “saved” from something or someone	Lisa
		Rescuing or Saving Dogs	Taking action (legal or illegal) to intervene when dogs are subject to real or perceived cruelty	Jordan

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS – UNIQUE CODES

CODE	DEFINITION
Access to vet care – consequences of no access	Discusses consequences (for animals or humans) of lack of access to care for animals
Addictions and dog issues	Alluding to or describing a link between human addictions and issues with dogs in the home or community
APSS Challenges	Challenges with/for APSS regarding animal welfare enforcement in the Tri-communities
Barriers to local vet care	Discussing barriers to having a locally available source for veterinary care
Children learning to be safe with dogs	Discussing the importance of or actions towards children learning to be safe with dogs in the home and community
Children’s wellbeing and dogs	Talking about how the well-being of kids intersects with the well-being of dogs (especially when it comes to kids having resources in the community)
Community management	Discusses dog management in any or all of the tri-communities
- Air Ronge management	Discussed approaches to dog management in Air Ronge specifically
- La Ronge management	Discusses La Ronge's approaches to dog management specifically
- LLRIB management	Discusses dog management approaches of the LLRIB specifically
- NAR role	NAR's role (benefits, challenges, etc) in dog management for the tri-communities
- Outlying communities	Discussing dog management in/with outlying communities (LLRIB member communities)
Dog catcher challenges and needs	Discussing what the dog catcher needs in order to make the job easier or more enjoyable, and the challenges faced in that role

Dog catcher daily role	Discussing the daily work of the dog catcher for LLRIB
Dog pack relationships and dynamics	Discussing the dynamics between members of a dog pack, and how this might be influenced by or have influence on the people in the community or the people living alongside the dogs
Dog surrenders	Discusses surrendering of animals to NAR or other agencies and the reasons for surrendering
Hesitancy regarding vet care	Discussing people's feelings of hesitation in accessing veterinary care
Layperson animal health care	Discusses the presence of, or need for, layperson-provided animal healthcare (ie/not an RVT or DVM)
Money as barrier	Community needs around dogs not being met due to financial constraints or barriers
NAR and animal welfare	Discusses NAR's role regarding animal welfare in the Tri-communities
Other rescue groups	References rescue groups other than NAR coming to remove dogs or provide support for the Tri-communities (or outlying areas)
Provincial policy	Discusses provincial policy (existing or recommended) related to dog management, health and welfare
Public Health	The role of public health OR the impact on public health of dog issues (including dog bites)
- Dog bite-follow-up	Discussing how dog bites are followed up on in the tri-communities
- Dog bites – causes	Talking about the presumed or real causes of dog bite incidents
RCMP – dangerous dogs	Discussing RCMP role in investigating dangerous dogs or dog bites
RCMP – euthanasia	Discussing RCMP euthanizing or 'destroying' dogs
RCMP and NAR	Talking about how the RCMP work with NAR regarding animal welfare

RCMP and One Welfare	Discussing the RCMPs role in One Welfare (and connections to the Link)
RCMP as APOs	Discussing RCMP role in animal protection (cruelty, distress, etc)
RVT role	Discussing the role of RVTs in supporting improved access to animal healthcare
Sled dogs – daily care	Talking about the daily care required for sled dogs
Sled dogs – genetics	Describing the gene pool and selection process for sled dogs
Sled dogs – history	Discussing historical details of sled dogs including selection traits
Sled dogs – overall management	Talking about management of sled dogs (as a group, individually, etc)
Social media	Discussing the role of social media (positive or negative) in dog management in the Tri-communities
Telemedicine	Discussing use of technology to provide remote care
Welfare challenges	Discussing challenges associated with lack of appropriate animal welfare support in the Tri-communities

YOUTH JOURNAL CODES

Code	Definition
Emotional Support	The writer mentions instances where dogs have a role in emotional support for people.
Protection	The writer mentions the role of the dog to be for protections. This is inclusive of protecting humans, themselves and other objects.
Negative Community Perspective	The writer mentions that the community or individuals within the community have negative perspective of dogs within the community.
Positive Community Perspective	The writer mentions that the community or individuals within the community have a positive perspective of dogs within the community.
Dogs as Family	The writer mentions that dogs are values as family, this includes that they view them as family or another individual that they are talking about view them as family.
Fear	The writer mentions that they are fearful of dogs within the community or were involved in a situation where the dog provoked fear.
Danger	The writer describes something they perceive of dangerous from dogs within the community or describes a situation when they witness something dangerous occur with a dog. This includes dog bite incidents.

Lack of Training	The writer mentions instances where dogs were unruly, they relate this to lack of training. This also includes statements where the writer states where lack of training relates to unkempt behavior in dogs.
Significant Training	The writer mentions roles where dogs require significant training. This includes more advanced training for more difficult jobs. In addition, this includes statements where the writer relates more training to being important in better behaved dogs.
Need for Veterinary Care	The writer mentions a need for veterinary care, these statements also include times where the writer feels that animal health is at risk due to lack of veterinary options available.
Neglect	The writer mentions that there are instances of neglect. This includes lack of access to food or water. At times these statements are also intertwined with abuse.
Abuse	The writer mentions times when an animal is abused. This includes that they have a dog that is believes to have been abused by the previous owner.
Pet Loss	The writer mentions times in which they have experiences pet loss, this includes times when the pets have had a traumatic passing (attacked by another dog) or if the passing was due to age.
Population Growth	The writer mentions an increase in growth in dog population. This also includes instances where the writer mentions dogs they know or have having puppies.
Roaming Dogs	The writer mentions roaming dogs, this is sometimes overlapping with danger and fear.

APPENDIX L – NORTHERN ANIMAL RESCUE INTAKES 2019 – 2022

Community	La Ronge				Air Ronge				LLRIB (Local)			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
Jan	4	6	4	7	6	3	1	5	35	7	7	12
Feb	7	12	3	1	3	2	1	3	4	23	31	3
Mar	7	3	14	6	2	0	2	2	17	3	1	6
Apr	4	2	8	6	9	2	4	0	1	6	17	3
May	5	1	8	4	0	2	1	4	2	1	2	4
Jun	10	4	3	12	0	2	2	1	10	7	4	1
Jul	6	4	7	6	1	1	13	2	5	1	3	18
Aug	15	15	8	7	6	4	1	2	2	19	7	16
Sep	5	5	15	7	0	2	3	5	13	1	6	22
Oct	6	4	8	2	3	0	1	1	17	16	2	19
Nov	1	8	11	4	1	0	3	0	24	10	10	14
Dec	2	4	14	9	0	2	1	1	5	2	14	1
TOTALS	72	68	103	71	31	20	33	26	135	96	104	119

2019 Totals = La Ronge 72; Air Ronge 31; LLRIB 135

2020 Totals = La Ronge 68; Air Ronge 20; LLRIB 96

2021 Totals = La Ronge 103; Air Ronge 33; LLRIB 104

2022 Totals = La Ronge 71; Air Ronge 26; LLRIB 119

Average % intakes over 4 years = La Ronge 35.8%; Air Ronge 12.5%; LLRIB 51.7%

Tri-community relative population 2022 = La Ronge 37%; Air Ronge 20%; LLRIB (local on-reserve) 43%

APPENDIX M – MEDIA FEATURE CITATIONS

Campling, S. (2021). USask dog management study focuses on La Ronge region. MBC Radio.

<https://www.mbcradio.com/2021/11/usask-dog-management-study-focuses-on-la-ronge-region>

Cornet, D. (2019). Study examines residents perception of dogs in tri-communities. La Ronge

Now. <https://larongenow.com/2019/06/04/study-examines-residents-perception-of-dogs-in-tri-communities/>

Cornet, D. (2022). Art exhibit highlights bond between people and dogs in northern

communities. La Ronge Now. <https://larongenow.com/2022/07/07/art-exhibit-highlights-bond-between-people-and-dogs-in-northern-communities/>

Greene, R. (2020). Every Dog Should Have Its Day. POR Stories. [https://www.scpur.ca/por-](https://www.scpur.ca/por-stories/2020/11/4/every-dog-should-have-its-day)

[stories/2020/11/4/every-dog-should-have-its-day](https://www.scpur.ca/por-stories/2020/11/4/every-dog-should-have-its-day)

Peterson, J. (2022). New research on dogs in northern Sask. inspires local artists. Saskatoon Star

Phoenix. <https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/new-research-on-dogs-in-northern-sask-inspires-local-artists>

APPENDIX N – DOG RESCUE INFOGRAPHICS

How Animal Rescues Can Assist in a Good Way

Indigenous communities have special relationships with dogs, and well-meaning rescue groups may have misconceptions about these relationships. With proper guidance, rescue groups can play a key role in providing assistance in a good way, using a holistic approach that honours tradition and spirit.

Using these tips below, your rescue can start building meaningful partnerships and become recognized within the community as an organization who is trustworthy and respectful with a focus on communication and collaboration.



#1. Education

Provide culturally relevant education and anti-racism training to individuals from your organization working within the community. Understanding the history and ongoing trauma faced by Indigenous peoples throughout Canada is crucial if working closely with the communities, and is a vital step toward truth and reconciliation. Understanding a community's cultural traditions and historical relationships with animals is also an important part of this preparation.



#2. Partnership

Focus on building relationships rather than the "helicopter-in, helicopter-out" method. Knowing the history of an area, getting involved with community events, and collaborating with community members and leadership are essential. This approach will also help you recognize what is already going well in a community, and provide support where needed rather than doubling efforts that are ongoing locally.



#3. Listen

Listen to community needs and tailor services accordingly. Ask what their priorities are and how you can help facilitate. For example, if a community did not ask for assistance with re-homing dogs, do not go into the area with the intention of picking up dogs. Many of these dogs are individually or community owned and loved and cared for. It is important to not make assumptions about what a community wants or needs based on your own (outsider) perspective.



#4. Policy

Have policies in place to return dogs who were accidentally picked up and removed from the community. Mistakes happen, and when they do be sure to have a plan to return any dogs who were pulled from the community. This will require a system of identification and location of pickup to facilitate reuniting dogs with their families.

Don't know where to start? Try these resources:
Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future:
http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf
Community Dog Book:
<https://researchers.usask.ca/tasha-epp/documents/community-dog-book-may.2018.pdf>

Produced by Charlie Wyatt Swain

Is this rescue ethical?

Veterinarians play an important role in working with animal rescue organizations, and have many ethical obligations when providing care for animals under the care of these rescues. These ethical responsibilities become especially pertinent when collaborating with animal rescue groups who provide support to Indigenous communities. Here are five tips to help you determine if a rescue is operating in a Good Way- using a holistic approach that honours tradition and spirit within Indigenous communities.



1

EDUCATION

Has the rescue team provided culturally relevant education and anti-racism training to rescue-affiliated individuals working within the communities? Understanding the history and ongoing trauma faced by Indigenous peoples throughout Canada is essential if working with Indigenous communities, and is a vital step toward truth and reconciliation. Understanding a community's cultural traditions and historical relationships with animals is also an important part of this preparation. An ethical rescue will ensure their team has the appropriate training.



2

PARTNERSHIP

Does this rescue focus on building relationships rather than using the "helicopter-in, helicopter-out" approach? Ask the rescue what they are doing to promote positive partnerships with communities such as knowing the history of the area, getting involved with community events, and collaborating with community members and leadership.



3

POLICY & GOVERNANCE

Reputable rescues have standard written policies by which they abide, as well as strategic plans and visions that they follow. Additionally, an ethical rescue will be registered as a non-profit society with a designated Board of Directors. Asking to see the vision, mission and strategic plans of a rescue will tell you a lot about their approach to working with communities.



4

ASK

Ask the rescue what they consider a stray dog in Indigenous communities. Many dogs roam freely in these areas and are individually, or community, owned and loved. There are instances where well-meaning rescues enter the community and take dogs away from their owners or remove dogs roaming at large without authorization, which is not only **unethical** but also **illegal**.

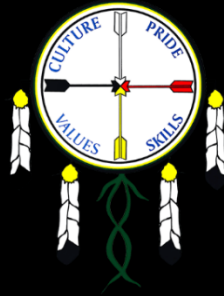


For more information, please visit:

Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future:
http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf
Community Dog Book:
<https://researchers.usask.ca/tasha-epp/documents/community-dog-book-may.2018.pdf>

Deciding which rescue to invite into your community

Tips for determining if a rescue or welfare organization is right for your community.



Dogs are important members of many northern communities and have been providing roles in **transportation**, **hunting**, **protection** and **companionship** for years. When working with your community, it is important that rescues respect YOUR community values. In order to do so there is specific information that they should be aware of.



Questions to ask rescues before working with them:

- 1 Do you know who has authority in our community for animal **welfare** and animal **control**? If you are ever unsure of a dog's **ownership**, what would you do?
- 2 How does your organization work to build **relationships** with and **empower** the communities you serve? If you remove dogs from a community, how do you **portray** the community of origin on your social media and website?
- 3 Besides removing and rehoming dogs, what other **supports** does your organization offer to partner communities? How do you determine what a **community needs** from your organization? If a community does not know their current issues and needs, how would you support them to identify these?
- 4 Do you have **education** resources to offer community members? What are your protocols for rescue, transportation and re-homing? What training do you provide your personnel to ensure they work **respectfully** with community members and leadership?



Healthy Dogs Healthy Communities - Final Research Report

Team

Research Team: Ann Ratt, Brandon White, Genevieve Candelora-Kustiak, Jordan Woodsworth, Kara Schneider-Ross, Kelsey Carlson, Lisa Mayotte, Tasha Epp
Advisory Circle: Abby Besharah, Julie Baschuk

Elders

Doreen McKenzie, Donna McKay, John Halkett, Myles Charles

Timeline

2018: Team formed, research priorities discussed
2019: Grant acquired, data collection began
2020-22: Data collection and analysis continue; COVID challenges

Research Problems

- Ongoing challenges with dog health, welfare and population control with a lack of sustained access to veterinary and welfare support
- Dog control is a challenge; dogs don't stick to community borders

Research Purpose

- To determine how best to keep dogs and people healthy and safe together
- To sustain important dog-human relationships
- To use local resources and determine what else is needed to achieve these goals

Question 1

- What are the roles of dogs in the Tri-communities?
- How do locals describe the dog-human relationship and the factors that help or hinder it?

Question 2

- How do the Tri-communities care for dog health and welfare?
- How are dog population and movement controlled?
- What needs to change about the current approaches?

Data Sources

- 20 conversational interviews
- 9 youth reflective journals
- 9 key informant interviews
- Analysis of documents (NAR records, bylaws, provincial laws for animal welfare and veterinary care)



Findings



Relational Health

- Dog-human relationships can be understood using a medicine wheel model
- Various roles of dogs and other contributors determine whether the relationship is healthy and balanced



Community Health

- Dog-human relationships also affect relationships between people in the Tri-communities
- Improving health and safety between dogs and people can improve community health overall



Dog Needs

- Food, water, shelter, exercise, training, socialization, love, veterinary care, identification, grooming, instinct-based living; not all dogs have these
- Gaps need to be filled to keep relationship healthy and safe



Community Needs

- dog park
- grooming, boarding, daycare, training
- pet supply retail
- dog health advice, pet first aid
- community animal healthcare worker
- euthanasia support



Community Needs

- Local Animal Protection Officer support
- Education and training for community members
- Sustained veterinary care

Community Dog Care Concerns

- Uncontrolled breeding ('backyard breeders')
- Dogs being chained
- Dogs roaming (some tolerance)
- Addictions and poverty



Local Determinants

- Three control and enforcement approaches = very challenging
- NAR fills many gaps; inadequate support
- Many bylaw details are unrealistic
- Enforcement training and resource deficits
- Enforcement favours those with resources



Outside Determinants

- Dog health and welfare legislation
- One Health and One Welfare - rabies, cruelty, inter-professional collaboration
- Colonialism and oppression
- Social dynamics, community tensions
- Environmental events (fires, COVID)



Conclusions & Recommendations



Conclusion 1

- Dog-human relationships are governed by kinship principles and are central to what is observed between dogs and humans



Conclusion 2

- Ultimate responsibility for dog control and dog welfare falls on NAR despite lack of formal agreements with Tri-community leadership
- RCMP are local APOs and frequently rely on NAR or dog catcher



Conclusion 3

- Current bylaws are ineffective due to unrealistic requirements, inadequate enforcement and socioeconomic status of many residents
- Community tensions increase problems between dogs and humans



Recommendation 1

- Maintain inventory of vaccines to ensure immunization of dogs in shelter upon intake
- Acquire microchip reader if relevant



Recommendation 2

- Establish check-list for intakes so that requirements as per bylaws are ensured
- Establish policies on what determines whether animals are returned to owners or not



Recommendation 3

- Implement rabies vaccine requirements/recommendations for all personnel handling animals
- Ensure titre checks to determine ongoing immunity



Recommendation 4

- Establish 'who to call' guidelines for intakes or calls from each community
- Ensure up to date information for each community is in place
- Establish written policies on when to call RCMP or APSS



Recommendation 5

- Access training for all personnel to ensure culturally safe approaches to frontline work
- Continue with bond continuity approach - supporting families to keep their animals whenever possible



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Recommendation 1

- Implement permanent ID system such as microchipping to enable connecting at large dogs with owners
- Support residents to access supplies and building instructions for dog houses and fences (lumber off-cuts, etc)



Recommendation 2

- Consider collaborative grant application for designated dog park
- Consider Tri-community application for rabies vaccine exemption OR organizing vaccine-only clinic for all community dogs



Recommendation 3

- Consider leadership support for local boarding/grooming/daycare facility
- Consider public health campaigns regarding dog health and safety delivered by leadership to residents



Recommendation 4

- Consider cooperatively funded Animal Control positions
- Re-imagine bylaws & ACO role to focus on public education and support re/dog care
- Consider cooperatively funded shelter in alignment with Kennel Codes



Recommendation 5

- Collaborate with service providers to lobby government for policy change re/animal health care delivery
- Collaborate with WCVM to explore grant/funding opportunities for community care



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Recommendation 1

- Implement training for officers on roles as APOs and clarify roles within local bylaws
- Training to include humane euthanasia and handling of dangerous dogs



Recommendation 2

- Acquire equipment necessary for handling dogs (ligature pole, kennel, gauntlets)
- Access training for officers on proper use of equipment



Recommendation 3

- Implement rabies vaccine requirements/recommendations for all officers
- Ensure titre checks to determine ongoing immunity



Recommendation 4

- Establish algorithm for how animal welfare concerns are handled
- Includes outlining scope of responsibility for commonly encountered situations



Recommendation 5

- Establish frequent open lines of communication with APSS to manage local animal welfare concerns to fill current gaps