

**Neocolonialism, First Nations Governance and Identity: Community  
Perspectives from Battleford Agency Tribal Chiefs (BATC) First  
Nations**

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by  
Megan Lee McDowell

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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents a secondary analysis of findings from a larger community-based participatory research (CBPR) project with the Battleford Agency Tribal Chiefs (BATC) First Nations reserves in Northern Saskatchewan. Initiated at the request of BATC, a three year CBPR project, entitled: “Resilience to Offending: Listening to Youth On-Reserve,” aimed to identify, analyze and disseminate local knowledge about on-reserve youth resilience. This larger project intended to capture the perspectives of First Nations youth, Elders and community stakeholders who work with youth at risk of offending, by identifying culturally specific aspects of resilience. Using arts-based and mixed methods, the focus of this larger study was on personal, relational and environmental risks faced by the youth and the impact of formal and informal services on reserve on youth resilience. Guided by a postcolonial and anti-oppressive framework, this thesis provides a secondary analysis of the in-depth qualitative interviews with the fourteen stakeholders and Elders who work with youth. Using a constructivist grounded theory, this thesis explores the stakeholder’s and Elders’ perceptions of formal and informal services in First Nations communities as well as issues related to First Nations governance. The emerging framework brought to light the continued impact of the colonization process on the federal government’s interactions with First Nations’ members, communities, Aboriginal leadership and governance structures.

The research questions for this thesis were: How is the colonization process at play in the federal government’s interactions with First Nations’ members, communities, Aboriginal leadership, and governance structures?”, “What are the impacts of the colonization process in terms of the lived experience of individual First Nation

members?”, and “What are the impacts of the colonization process in terms of community life on reserve?”. With these questions in mind, interpretation of the stakeholder interviews resulted in three general themes including: the continued impact of historical and systemic issues on the wellbeing of youth, adults and entire communities; colonized identities, which stakeholders referred to as the internalization of colonization through experiences of othering, and the resulting loss of self-esteem, lack of sense of belonging, and disconnection from traditional culture; and continued oppression through contemporary institutional means, most notably the relationship of control that exists between First Nations communities and the federal government.

This thesis concludes that colonialism and neocolonialism, or the processes of domination and control by one group over another, and the continued control of colonized groups, respectively, are still very prevalent within the lives of Aboriginal people, coming to effect their social environments, their lived realities, and the policies and discourses pertaining to them. The institutionalized racism that constituted the colonial process, and continuing neocolonialism, influences the policies, programming and relations regarding Aboriginal people. This control is solidified through the contriving of Aboriginal identity and governance: the federal government still has the ultimate control over legal Aboriginal identity through delegation of titles (such as status Indian or non-status Indian), and the rights and disadvantages associated with each title. Despite the establishment of Aboriginal self-government, community stakeholders and Elders shed light on ways First Nations people on BATC reserves are still answerable to the federal government while they continue to suffer marginality related to housing, employment, socioeconomics and racialization.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction—Context and Map of the Research

Despite the impact of colonization, many Aboriginal people maintain a vibrant culture, and strong familial and leadership structures. Many Aboriginal people and scholars (see, for e.g., Monture, 1995; Anderson, 2003; Cannon, 2007; 2008; Wong, 2012; NCPA, 2012) however, call attention to the issues that continue to face Aboriginal people across Canada. While Canada prides itself on—and, indeed, markets itself as—the archetype of contemporary multicultural relations, racial inequalities continue to impact Aboriginal people, who represent some of Canada’s most disadvantaged populations (Monture, 1995; Kendall, 2001; Frohlich, Ross, & Richmond, 2006; Cannon, 2007; 2008; Reading & Wein, 2009; Perreault, 2011; Wong, 2012; NCPA, 2012). This disadvantage is arguably felt more strongly in some areas than in others. For example, Northern Saskatchewan was proclaimed the “Mississippi of Canada” (CBC, as cited in Adams, 1999, p. 91) due to the poor living standards of its First Nation<sup>1</sup> communities. Instances of contaminated water (Dua et al., 2005), homes in need of repair, overcrowding, and transmission of infectious diseases (Reading & Wein, 2009) have all been commonly reported in First Nations communities.

Throughout Canada, the overall Aboriginal poverty rate is at 55% (Anderson, 2003; Wong, 2012), with some areas reaching up to 80% and 90% (“Canada’s Aboriginal People,” n.d.). First Nations people also comprise 40% of Canada’s homeless population (Laboucane, 2009), while only making up 4.3% of the nation’s population (Statistics

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis the terms Aboriginal and First Nations are often used interchangeably. However, *Aboriginal* is generally employed in a broader sense, designating members of First Nations, as well as the Métis and Inuit, whereas *First Nations* is generally employed to mean a band member of a First Nation, designating a registered Indian status.

Canada, 2013). High rates of homelessness, unemployment, and poverty are compounded by the fact that Aboriginal people receive 2.5 times less assistance per person than the average Canadian from federal, provincial, and municipal governments (Laboucane, 2009) and are twice as likely to live on social assistance (Burstein, 2005). There is a pressing need to better understand these social realities from the perspectives of Aboriginal people themselves.

This research presents findings from a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project with participants from Battleford Agency Tribal Chiefs (BATC) First Nations reserves in Northern Saskatchewan. The First Nations reserves that we engaged with include Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation, Moosomin First Nation, Red Pheasant Cree Nation, Saulteaux First Nation, and Sweetgrass First Nation. BATC also includes Stoney Knoll First Nation, although we did not get an opportunity to engage with community members from there. At its core, this study acknowledges both the contemporary and historical colonial realities facing Aboriginal Canadians and explores the lived experiences as well as the social and political realities of First Nations people living on reserve. Focusing on a series of qualitative interviews carried out under the course of a larger research project, this thesis aims to share the voices, perspectives, and knowledge of fourteen research participants across four BATC First Nations reserves. Participants shared stories of strength, love and success, but also shared their personal stories and their perceptions of the challenges that they and their community are currently struggling with.

## **1.1 Research Objectives and Approach**

The objective of this thesis is to identify stakeholder and Elder perspectives about identity, First Nations leadership, and the effects of colonization and neocolonialism. My specific research questions focused on:

- 1) Stakeholder and Elder perceptions of social barriers facing youth and community members on reserve;
- 2) Stakeholder and Elder perceptions of ‘Aboriginal identity’; internalized identity and larger community identities;
- 3) Stakeholder and Elder perceptions of First Nations governance structures, including self-governance;
- 4) Stakeholder and Elder perceptions of the relationship between colonial history, Aboriginal identity, First Nations governance and social barriers facing community members.

This research is community-based and informed by an anti-oppressive postcolonial theoretical lens. I used a grounded theory data analysis approach to analyze the fourteen qualitative interviews with community stakeholders and Elders from BATC First Nations reserves.

## **1.2 Learning from a Larger Project**

This thesis stems from my involvement in a larger study titled “Resilience to Offending: Listening to Youth On-Reserve” (Brooks PI, SSHRC partnership development grant, 2011–2014), a collaborative, community-based research project with community leaders and stakeholders from BATC First Nations reserves and the University of Saskatchewan.

This larger study, which has since concluded, looked at identifying factors of risk and resilience of First Nations youth through the perspectives of community members, stakeholders, governance leaders, Elders, and youth on reserve.

As previously stated, BATC is made up of Moosomin First Nation, Saulteaux First Nation, Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation, Red Pheasant Cree Nation, Sweetgrass First Nation, and Stoney Knoll First Nation, located near the Battlefords, in Northern Saskatchewan. The research partnership stemmed from existing relationships between the U of S and the Battlefords Tribal Council (BTC) and BATC Council. This particular project was initiated by stakeholders from Moosomin First Nation, who felt their community was experiencing particularly high rates of youth addictions, violence, and crime. The research team had been working with both the Battleford Tribal Council and BATC Council in a number of research projects over 8 years.

More specifically, the idea for this project came from community leaders from Moosomin, who approached the university team towards engaging in this new research project that aimed to better understand the challenges that were facing their youth. The trust built with university researchers throughout the previous number of years was key in the development of this project. While Moosomin reserve was instrumental in collaborating with the university team on the ideas for the project, through additional collaborations this research quickly expanded to include Ahtahkakoop, Saulteaux, Sweetgrass, and Red Pheasant. The principle investigator for this project is my thesis supervisor, Dr. Carolyn Brooks. Co-researchers include Dr. Jennifer Poudrier, Dr. Colleen Dell, and Dr. Leslie Samuelson. Community research partners included Lillian

Blackstar (Moosomin First Nation), Mike Kahpeaysewat (Saulteaux First Nation), Carmen Blackstar (Moosomin First Nation), and Reg Bugler (BATC Justice Director).

I was first introduced to the larger research project, *Resilience To Offending: Listening To Youth On-Reserve* as an undergraduate student. When this project received funding from the Social Science And Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Development Grant, I was invited to work closely with the research team as a graduate student. My role within the research team was to participate in data collection, transcription of interviews, data analysis, team building, training of undergraduate students and research dissemination. In my role as a graduate student researcher, I was able to develop ongoing relationships with community research partners and to work with them collaboratively as the project developed. Although this larger research project has been completed, I remain in communication with our BATC community partners and research participants. We continue to work with community partners towards the dissemination of the research findings in the context of community reports, websites, exhibits, and scholarly publications. This sharing of knowledge will be further described in the methods chapter.

Initially, my work was focussed on better understanding both the risks and resilience that the BATC youth were experiencing. Through a grounded theory approach (developed in detail in the methods chapter of this thesis), the words of participants suggested a need to also explore the role of neocolonialism and the way it is intimately tied to issues of youth resilience and risk as well as identity and leadership. Namely, there seemed to be a need to further highlight and tease out interview data relating to community members' discussions of neocolonial control, labelling, and leadership as

well as to share the lived experiences and the social and political realities of First Nations people living on reserve. I thus decided to move away from explicit themes of youth risk and resilience and refocus my research on issues of identity, control, and leadership/governance on reserve.

### **1.3 Map of the Thesis**

This thesis brings forward the voices of fourteen BATC stakeholders, highlighting their concerns relating to neocolonialism, identity, governance, and leadership. Stakeholder findings lead to the development of a model of social control, developing the impact of colonization on governance structures, relational and personal experiences, physical environment, and identities. My aim in this thesis is to shed light on these findings.

Towards this end, Chapter 2 provides a background and review of critical literature in order to better situate the historical and current colonial realities facing Aboriginal people.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the anti-oppressive and postcolonial approach utilized. Chapter 4 outlines the CBPR methodology employed in the larger research project, including an explanation of the roles and responsibilities of research partners, data collection procedures, and use of a grounded theory data analysis. I also review the research ethics for this project.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I detail both the research findings and analysis of the major themes emerging in the qualitative data – the words of the participants. In Chapter 5, I present the words of the participants by discussing three major, interconnecting themes. The first theme develops the link between the participants descriptions of how their own

wellbeing (and the wellbeing of other community members and youth) are affected by the historical and systematic factors stemming from colonialism and oppression. I introduce subthemes related to mental health and addictions, crime and gang involvement, and lateral violence. The second theme brings forward stakeholders descriptions of the effects of colonialism on their personal and cultural identities. This discussion also links to stakeholders experiencing of othering and discrimination (although they may not label it this way), how self-esteem and a sense of belonging are impacted and how residential schools have impacted parenting and culture. Third, I present how BATC community members connected their wellbeing and identity to the structural and institutional forces unique to Aboriginal people. I present discussions pertaining to the effects of institutions such as the education system and Social Services and how structural and institutional powers and processes function to disadvantage Aboriginal people. These discussions also linked to ideas around Aboriginal leadership and the impact it has on Aboriginal people and communities.

In Chapter 6, I analyze and contextualize the themes and issues brought forward in the research findings. Here I address how the labelling of Aboriginal identity can be seen as a major driving force in the othering, oppression, and continued social control of Aboriginal people, all the while existing behind a semblance of empowerment, which continues to produce and reproduce the disadvantages and oppression experienced by Aboriginal Canadians. I explain how being labeled an Aboriginal person can be connected to negative connotations and discourse within society and how these labels are not self-imposed but rather delegated by the federal government. I also present a discussion outlining how the labeling of Aboriginal people denies their unique cultures



and histories through the amalgamation of all Aboriginal people under one of four umbrella terms (status Indian, non-status Indian, Inuit, or Métis), rather than celebrating the diversity between Aboriginal groups. Although Aboriginal people have come to be seen as representing one of four groups, the separations within Aboriginal groups due to the imposition of these labels also resulted in many detrimental consequences. I then relate these discussions of identity to the implications that they have had for Aboriginal people, such as the residential school initiative, and how this has affected culture, traditions and parenting. Finally, I move into a discussion pertaining to Aboriginal self-government and how the federal government did not hold up their promises of power for Aboriginal people, and how the federal government is still ultimately in control of Aboriginal people.

In Chapter 7, I conclude this thesis by providing a synthesis of the research goals and findings, and by discussing the implications of my findings in greater detail. I describe how neocolonialism can be used as the explanation for the continuing disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people and how manipulations of Aboriginal identity, through delegation of identities rather than allowing for self-identification, the stigmas and discourses attached to these labels, and the misconception of self-governance contribute to these circumstances, ultimately maintaining federal government control over Aboriginal people. I also strive to call to attention the unaddressed, continuing, institutional racism facing Aboriginal people in Canada and how this is perpetuated within Canadian society and institutions. In Chapter 7, I also review the limitations of my research, provide a reflection on my conclusions and experience within the research for this thesis, and discuss avenues for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Background and Literature Review—Contextualizing the Challenges of Aboriginal Canadians**

In order to better understand the realities of life on BATC reserves in the broader context, this chapter provides a background and literature review of the historical and current colonial realities of Aboriginal Canadians. While many Aboriginal people and families are resilient, dynamic and demonstrate healthy, successful lifestyles, a number of social challenges also disproportionately affect Aboriginal people as well. Although First Nations people vary greatly between and within groups, acknowledgement of a shared historical and structural oppression and marginalization helps to contextualize the life experiences of many Aboriginal people and groups, and—in the case of this thesis—will help to foreground the insights and experiences shared by BATC members who participated in this research.

I begin the chapter by outlining key demographics and statistics, comparing Aboriginal age demographics and level of social support to the overall Canadian population. Here I also briefly consider how issues of poverty, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as social exclusion, have been known to impact Aboriginal Canadians. I then turn to a literature review of colonialism in Canada, both past and present. In particular, I discuss how the Indian policy, stemming from the 1876 enactment of the Indian Act, and subsequent reserve system continue to disadvantage First Nations people.

### **2.1 Aboriginal Life in Canada: Key Demographics and Statistics**

Aboriginal people are an integral part of Canada's multicultural population, contributing immensely with their vibrant culture, spirituality, traditions, achievements and

accomplishments. However, Aboriginal living standards in Canada continue to be on par with those of Third World countries. The UN Development Index has consistently ranked Canada among the best places in the world to live, while the living standards of Aboriginal people within our borders rank sixty-fourth in the world, which is equivalent to Mexico or Thailand's ranking (The Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada, 2001; Wong, 2012). Further evidence of this continued disadvantage is the well-documented depreciated life expectancy of Aboriginal people whereby, on-reserve Aboriginal men can expect to live 67.1 years, and 72.1 years if living off reserve. Canadian men overall are on average expected to live 76 years. On-reserve life expectancy of Aboriginal women is 73.1, off reserve is 77.7, while the average Canadian woman's life expectancy is that of 81.5 years (Frohlich, Ross, & Richmond, 2006).

The demographics of Canada's First Nations populations differ in a number of ways from the Canadian population overall. One such way is the age distributions of these two populations as Aboriginal populations have a larger proportion of young people than the Canadian population overall. In 2012, Canada contained 2.2 million youth between the ages of fifteen and nineteen (NCPC, 2012). While 31% of the overall Canadian population is under the age of twenty-five, 48% of Aboriginal populations are comprised of this age demographic (NCPC, 2012). Aboriginal youth are also more likely to be living in less favourable conditions than non-Aboriginal youth. For instance, Aboriginal youth are more likely to live in a single parent home; are more likely to live under the care of a grandparent rather than parent; and are more likely to live under the care of another relative other than their parents compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts (NCPA, 2012). Aboriginal children and youth are also more likely than non-

Aboriginal children and youth to have young parents: “Among children under six years old, 26% of Inuit children, 27% of First Nations children living off reserve and 22% of Métis children had mothers between the ages of 15 to 24; this is compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal children” (NCPC, 2012, p. 1).

Aboriginal youth also have a higher likelihood of living in poverty than non-Aboriginal youth. In 2006, 11.4% of the overall Canadian population was living in low-income situations, while in 2009, 9.5% of individuals under the age of eighteen were part of low-income families (NCPC, 2012). For Aboriginal families, this rate is even more pronounced. While 18% of non-Aboriginal families are considered to be low-income, 49% of off-reserve First Nation individuals under the age of eighteen and 32% of Métis individuals under the age of eighteen were considered to be low-income (NCPC, 2012).

In 2012, Saskatchewan had the highest crime severity index rate and overall crime rate in all of Canada (Ministry of Justice, 2013; Perreault, 2013). Saskatchewan cities also bear their own crime rate titles; in 2012, North Battleford, the city in closest proximity to most BATC First Nations reserves, was regarded by Statistics Canada as the city with the highest crime severity rate in Canada (Hamilton, 2012). Coupled with the fact that North Battleford has an Aboriginal population rate of 20% (Statistics Canada, 2007), the implications are severe for Aboriginal people. Rates of youth crime on reserve are also noted to be higher than the average for all of Canada: “In 2004, 9815 youths aged 12 to 17 were accused (charged or otherwise) of a criminal offence on a reserve. This rate (24, 391 per 100, 000) was more than three times higher than the average for the rest of Canada (7,023)” (NCPC, 2012).

Drugs and alcohol are also highly correlated with violent crimes and are more prevalent during instances involving Aboriginal victims than in instances with non-Aboriginal victims. In 2009, “violent crimes involving an Aboriginal victim (67%) were more likely than incidents with a non-Aboriginal victim (52%) to be related to the alcohol or illegal drug use of the perpetrator” (Perreault, 2011, p. 5). The problem is compounded when considering the large number of Aboriginal people that are victims of crime. In 2009, 37% of Aboriginal people aged fifteen years and over reported being a victim of a crime, putting Aboriginal people at a 58% higher risk for victimization than non-Aboriginal people (Perreault, 2011). Aboriginal youth specifically are also noted as being the targets of a disproportionate number of incidents. In 2009, “those aged 15 to 24 years were the victims in nearly half (47%) of incidents reported by Aboriginal people, whereas they represented 22% of the Aboriginal population aged 15 and over” (Perreault, 2011, p. 5).

Although Canada is experiencing an overall decrease in the crime rate, North Battleford’s rate of crime is on the rise (Hamilton, 2012). In addition, the city’s youth crime rate is three times higher than the national average: “nearly one in three youth in North Battleford was charged with a crime last year” (Charlton, 2013, n.p.). Since gang activities and crime are more concentrated in some areas than in others, certain groups are more likely to be recruited into gangs. The rate of Aboriginal gang membership is estimated at 22%, meaning that there are about 800 to 1000 Aboriginal gang members in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba alone (Totten, 2009). Saskatchewan has twelve known gangs, including both adult and youth gangs (CISS, 2005).

Poverty and social exclusion exist in a relationship of both cause and effect (Galabuzi, 2002; see also Burstein, 2005; “*Social Challenges: Social Exclusion*,” n.d.). Individuals facing realities of poverty are often subjected to further deprivation in terms of health and psychological well being (Galabuzi, 2002), high instances of crime (“*Social Challenges: Social Exclusion*,” n.d.), negative experiences at school, higher likelihoods of living with violence, and higher instances of dysfunctional homes; all of these factors cycle back as risk factors for further social exclusion (“*Social Challenges: Social Exclusion*,” n.d.). With placement on segregated reserves accompanied by institutionalized racism within the job market, high prevalence of unemployment and poverty are common. The relationship between poverty and joblessness is highly causal for Aboriginal people (Kendall, 2001), with reserves having unemployment rates of up to 80% and 90% (“*Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples*,” n.d.; see also Kendall, 2001). “Education, income and economy are driven by social policies, making equitable distribution of these determinants a social justice issue for Aboriginal people. Racism and its subsequent social exclusion continue to create barriers to Aboriginal participation and productivity in the national economy” (Reading & Wein, 2009, p. 22).

The discrepancy between the supports that an average Canadian receives from the government compared to an Aboriginal individual is astonishing; Aboriginal people receive less than half the amount that an average Canadian citizen receives in terms of support from the government at the municipal, provincial and federal level (Laboucane, 2009). Aboriginal people are twice as likely to be receiving social assistance (Burstein, 2005), which has no set minimum standard, and rates of welfare are not sufficient to provide a decent standard of living for most people (Laboucane, 2009). Aboriginal people

are further restricted through the processes of “colonization, colonialism, systemic racism and discrimination... (and have) been denied access to the resources and conditions necessary to maximize SES” (Reading & Wein, 2009, p. 9). The high prevalence of poverty is not only seen on reservations but is an epidemic facing Aboriginal communities all over the nation. Aboriginal populations have a poverty rate of 55%, and are as high as 66% in some areas, such as Vancouver (Anderson, 2003). Urban Aboriginal children, which comprise 77% of all Aboriginal children (Anderson, 2003), are even worse off with the rate of poverty in children under six years of age soaring at 80% (“*Social Challenges: The Well-being of Aboriginal People,*” n.d.). These high proportions of Aboriginal people experiencing social exclusion even as they are integrated in towns or cities creates socioeconomic challenges among the other experienced racism; it essentially challenges “the survival of Aboriginal identity in an environment that is usually indifferent and often hostile to Aboriginal culture” (RCAP, 1993, p. 2).

## **2.2 Colonialism in Canada: Past and Present**

Aboriginal people have not only been severely disadvantaged due to colonial efforts, with their groups separated, the implementation of residential schools and the claiming of Aboriginal land by colonial settlers, among many other things, but their contributions to the development of the nation are also severely discredited and overlooked. Recognition of Canada’s colonial past is often curtailed by heroic and proud sentiments surrounding the development of the *New World* by Caucasian-European settlers, who within literature and legend have been framed as *building* the Canadian nation. These “national

mythologies operate to make Canada a white nation” (Dua, Razack, & Warner, 2005, p. 4), solidifying notions of European superiority while discrediting anything distinctively Aboriginal. Land was not only removed from Aboriginal control but was altered into something perceived as better and white, a place where Aboriginal people no longer legitimately belonged. Although colonialism is often regarded as a matter of the past, its legacy continues to functionally position Aboriginal people as Canada’s most socially disadvantaged group.

In the following section, I provide a brief critical overview of how century-old colonial Indian policies are reproduced and maintained in Canada today, including discussion of the Indian Act and establishment of the reserve system and their continuing impact on First Nations people.

### *2.2.1 Maintaining the Indian Policy*

A great deal of administrative power over Aboriginal people can be traced back to around the time of Confederation in 1867, and is likewise engrained with discriminatory sentiments that functioned to legitimate the self-serving actions of Euro-colonial settlers. These actions were predicated and validated through the oppression of Aboriginal people: “The Eurocentric dichotomy of the savage versus the civilized simply legitimize(d) it(s) own worldview and domination over the ‘Other’” (Neegan, 2005, p. 9). To frame Canada as a postcolonial nation thus disregards the reality of the continued suppression of Aboriginal voice, social position, and opportunity for resistance (MacInnes, 1946; also see Lawrence, 2003; Williams & Yousaf, 2011). This erroneous framing occurs at the hands of discriminatory and “quasi-apartheid” (Adams, 1999, p. 29) discourse, institutions, and policy. Century-old Indian policy that is rife with colonial sentiments



continues to inform the federal government and is reproduced in contemporary movements.

Contemporary Canadian society takes pride in its reputation as the archetype of multicultural relations. However, neocolonialism is still very much a part of contemporary Canadian policy, institutions, and popular discourse (MacInnes, 1946; Adams, 1999; Lawrence, 2003; Neegan, 2005; Williams & Yousaf, 2011). Aboriginal people remain the *other* of settler society (Slowey, 2000), while they are controlled and separated, furthering their disadvantage (Retzlaff, 2005; Neegan, 2005; de Leeuw, 2009). Colonialists were eager to establish relationships with Aboriginal people in order to proceed with exploration, settlement, and conquest, under the guise that these agreements would establish all parties as partners in Confederation (Ladner, 2001). Entrance into such relationships and agreements was necessary for the acquisition of Aboriginal land due to the colonial understanding of Aboriginal people as distinct nations (Ladner, 2001). This understanding can be seen as the basis for the creation of treaties and policy regarding Aboriginal people and settlers (MacInnes, 1946).

The treaties were pieces of legislation that defined the terms of exchange between settlers and Aboriginal people; the treaties entitled the government to Indigenous land “in exchange for the guarantee of the residential reserves, education, annual cash payments and other considerations” (MacInnes, 1946). Considering these agreements, the majority of exploitation of Aboriginal people could be argued to stem from the failure of the Canadian government to uphold many of their designated responsibilities. For example, the Indian Act has designated full federal responsibility of the education, healthcare, housing, etc. of registered Indians. However,

In order to realize the benefits of an advanced system of health care, Canadian individuals must have physical, political and social access to those services; this is often not the case for Aboriginal peoples. The federal system of health care delivery for status First Nations people resembles a collage of public health programs with limited accountability, fragmented delivery and jurisdictional ambiguity (Reading & Wein, 2009, p. 18).

These failures by the federal government to adequately administer resources and support systems indicate the low priority of Aboriginal people in the view of the federal government. The inequality of power relationships at the time of establishment of the treaties almost demanded Aboriginal cooperation, or they would have “lost their interest in the land anyway” (MacInnes, 1946, p. 387). Entrance into these agreements by Aboriginal people effectually legitimized the actions of colonialists who then disregarded the stipulations that colonialists were expected to perform. Essentially, they created a “coercive state regime based on the goals of protection, civilization, and assimilation, all the while dishonoring the agreements previously established through treaties, law, and policies” (Ladner, 2001, p. 125). Many of these goals continue to be maintained today.

### *2.2.2 The Indian Act*

The Indian Act came to control the entirety of Aboriginal life (MacInnes, 1946) and was established despite Aboriginal resistance; Aboriginal people viewed the Indian Act as “synonymous with having (their) Nations dismembered” (Lawrence, 2003, p. 5) due to the racial labelling and control that was inherent within it. Among other things, the Indian Act allotted land for reserves, which solidified the relationship between Aboriginal identity and life on reserve, and the federal government’s responsibility toward both (Peters, 2001). The Indian Act was an extension of previously existing policies that were established in 1850, which functioned without legal authority to define who was an

Indian and therefore who would be subjected to reserve life (Lawrence, 2003). “The isolationist policy held that assimilation could be best achieved by isolating Indians on reserves, with Indian agents preparing them for integration with the dominant society” (Moss & Gardner-O’Toole, 1991, n.p.) and was accompanied by strategic attempts to implement Christianity, civility, and agricultural knowledge to Aboriginal people (Peters, 2001). With the enactment of the Indian Act, the federal government acquired responsibility of reserve land, which was only available to individuals who were deemed status Indians through treaty agreements. In other words, an individual could not be an active member of their community on the reserve unless they were a status Indian and a band member. Through government delegation of Indian status, this in turn removed land privileges from two-thirds of all Aboriginal people (Moss & Gardner-O’Toole, 1991; see also Lawrence, 2003), profoundly impacting their identity and separating individuals from their homes, family, and land. Removal of people from their land not only displaces them physically but also disrupts their life and livelihood through the creation of dependence.

The establishment of a colonial government was done in aims to undermine Aboriginal autonomy and to maintain colonial goals. Ultimately, colonialists ended up “institutionalizing their own ‘puppet’ regimes which were supposed to end in the goal of ‘civilizing’ the Indian, politically, economically, socially and religiously” (Ladner, 2001, p. 110). These puppet regimes allowed for the imposition of a federally delegated band council system to become the ruling structures for Aboriginal groups, an act that breached many treaty agreements (Ladner, 2001). By the 1860s, this preliminary mechanism of colonial control over Aboriginal people morphed into the official Indian

policy and was consolidated in 1876 with the establishment of the Indian Act (Ladner, 2001). The Indian Act legitimized the use of force for the subjugation, displacement, containment and domination of Aboriginal people: “Force provides the conditions of possibility for the subsequent usage of other techniques of ruling” (Neu, 2000, p. 165). This force was accompanied by the idea that colonizers possessed a Western form of religiously sanctioned knowledge (Ladner, 2001), which was eventually used to legitimize the colonial claims to desired lands in the Canadian territory and the removal and displacement of Aboriginal people from it (Neu, 2000).

### *2.2.3 The Reserve System*

Although the social standing of Aboriginal people is often attributed to factors of social and economic marginalization, the effects of removal of Aboriginal people from their land are often overlooked (Peters, 2001). Along with the federal control and maintenance of reserves arose a debilitating and oppressive regime that impacted the ways in which Aboriginal people could maintain their traditional ways of life (Frohlich, Ross, & Richmond, 2006). In 1999, most of Canada’s registered Indian population resided on the 2567 First Nations reserves within Canada (Peters, 2001), yet this land comprised only 0.2% of Canada’s total landmass, which is made up of small pieces of segregated, poor quality land containing few natural resources (Frohlich et al., 2006; see also Sandefur, 1989). This segregation is to such an extent that only 36.4% of individuals living on reserve were located 50km or less from an urban area (Peters, 2001; see also Sandefur, 1989). This random placement of reserves also led to the separation of Aboriginal people from major urban centers and the resources available within them (Sandefur, 1989). The strategy behind the establishment of reserves lies in the attempt to both create a situation

whereby Aboriginal people would have limited options and to prevent large numbers of Aboriginal people from coming together and organizing to resist the policies and the administration that were controlling them (Tobias, 1983). The establishment of the reserve system in Canada suppressed Aboriginal agency and abilities of advancement. In other words, Aboriginal people became “incapable of exercising the powers and fulfilling the responsibilities of an autonomous governmental unit” (RCAP, 1996, n.p.).

Poverty on reserves is a product of systematic underdevelopment (Peters, 2001) accompanied by the fact that First Nations people are not provided with the freedom to pursue alternative means of achieving their goals (Kendall, 2001). Life on reserve is not only economically disadvantaged, but fraught with substandard living conditions, which are indicative of continuing colonial realities. For example, overcrowding, high instances of contaminated water (Dua et al., 2005), the presence of mould in homes that are in major need of repair, have all been associated with asthma, allergies, respiratory tract infections, and transmission of infectious diseases (Reading & Wein, 2009) and are common realities on reserve. The contrast in living conditions between reserves and the average urban area feeds colonial discourses about Aboriginal people; it contributes to perceptions of the “incompatibility of Aboriginal and urban cultures” (Peters, 2001, p. 142). This has limiting effects on chances of employment and, together with certain functions of the Indian Act, perpetuate cycles of poverty and impinge on First Nations people’s capacity to better their social conditions. For example, although Aboriginal people spend 30% of their income on rent (Laboucane, 2009), Section 89 of the Indian Act explicitly states that land on reserves is exempt from the possibility of being mortgaged, which “means that reserve lands cannot be used as collateral, thus increasing

the difficulty of obtaining conventional bank financing for any kind of start-up capital” (Kendall, 200, p. 49).

### **2.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined key demographics and statistics of Aboriginal people in Canada, creating context to the findings of this thesis. I compared Aboriginal social realities to those of the Canadian population overall, in terms of poverty, crime, drug and alcohol abuse issues, as well as social exclusion. I then situated these realities within the broader historical and contemporary context of colonialism in Canada. I discussed the production and reproduction of an Indian policy that works to maintain First Nations people’s position at the bottom of Canada’s socioeconomic ladder. I also reviewed academic literature on the motivation behind and function of both the Indian Act and reserve system as means of continuing the oppression of Aboriginal people in Canada today.

This thesis aims to build on these critical perspectives, with the goal to uncover more of the social realities and challenges faced by Aboriginal people. Additionally and importantly, this work aims to allow for the expression of such challenges through Aboriginal voice, thoughts, and insights coming from participants in the BATC region. By combining primary, qualitative interview data with an academic and theoretical framing, I also hope to further illuminate how oppression of First Nations people within policy and discourse is also maintained through governance and leadership structures. In the next chapter, I outline the anti-oppressive and postcolonial approach of my research.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework—An Anti-Oppressive and Postcolonial Approach to Research with First Nations People**

Theoretical frameworks direct the focus of a research project throughout all processes, from data collection to dissemination of the findings; the aims of the theory should therefore parallel the aims of one's project. This thesis and the larger project from which it emanates—"Resilience to Offending: Listening to Youth On-Reserve"—are founded on both a community-based research partnership with BATC First Nations communities and an anti-oppressive theoretical framework. Anti-oppressive theory is often defined in a piecemeal fashion, drawing on examples of its application in social work (Strier & Binyamin, 2010; Rogers, 2012), education (Kumashiro, 2000; Brown, 2013), and Indigenous research (Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Coates, Gray, & Hetherington, 2006). The goal of this chapter is to outline the ontological and epistemological assumptions of anti-oppressive theory, defining its position as a difference-centred and critical theory. In addition, there are a number of theories defined as anti-oppressive (Moosa-Mitha, 2005), including postcolonial theory, which inform this thesis and are described in detail here. Anti-oppressive theory in general and postcolonial theory specifically are well suited to the aims of both the larger project and this thesis: they honour Aboriginal voice (Said, 1978; hooks, 1990; Spivak, 1990); they draw attention to contemporary colonial realities (Hall, 1996; Adams, 1999; Lawrence, 2003), they empower marginalized people; they expose individual resistance and agency (hooks, 1990); and they deconstruct the dichotomy of the researcher/researched (Hall, 1996).

I begin this chapter by outlining the strengths and suitability of anti-oppressive and postcolonial theory to my research project. Next, I detail how postcolonial theory is

crucial when conducting research with Aboriginal people. Here I discuss how this approach is particularly fitting when researching oppression that stems from controlled identity and oppressive governance structures, with special attention paid to eliminating the researcher/researched dichotomy, the advocacy of participant knowledge and voice, as well as the need to contribute back to communities participating in research.

### **3.1 Anti-Oppressive Theory: Difference-Centred and Critical Approaches**

An anti-oppressive approach to research challenges the status quo through its difference-centred and critical stance (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). The critical aspect of this theory encompasses insights from neo-Marxist, critical race, feminist and other theories that stand against oppression and that connect knowing and doing (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). In contrast to positive approaches, critical theories believe that subjective experiences contribute knowledge, that multiple knowledges exist, and that multiple approaches are therefore suitable to research (Ritzer, 2008). Though the critical perspective fundamental to anti-oppressive theory incorporates ideas against normative assumptions, it does not, in and of itself, contain any theorizations of multiple identities or realities. Thus the additional adoption of a difference-centred approach becomes important since it permits a focus on the existence of oppression within a number of sources. The concept of difference-centred means approaching research in a way that opposes normative assumptions while also aiming to empower people who are in the margins due to their difference from an assumed norm (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). This approach honours the reality of multiple forms of difference and, as a result, the variety of oppressions experienced (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Because difference-centred theories acknowledge the



multiple realities of difference, they strive not only to eliminate notions of difference but also to approach research in a number of ways (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). The idea that people can experience structural realities differently points to the importance of understanding the standpoint of marginalized people. For this reason, many aspects of anti-oppressive theory lend themselves to the empowerment of research participants by acknowledging their lived realities and their potential to enact social change. As explained by Yuval-Davis (1999), anti-oppressive theory draws attention to the basis of oppression that lies in the personal experiences of individuals and focuses on an approach that unites people in their collective work against social injustices. In order to understand these lived experiences and perspectives, researchers must recognize and honour the equal legitimacy of participants' voices.

### **3.2 Postcolonial Theory: Acknowledging a Colonial Past and Drawing Attention to Neocolonialism**

A postcolonial theoretical position highlights the colonial realities and European bias that continue to exist in both academic literature and lived reality. As Battiste (2004) explains it, “‘postcolonial’ is not a time after colonialism, but rather [...] it represents more an aspiration, a hope, not yet achieved” (p. 1). Postcolonialism is therefore regarded as a movement and an approach more so than an actuality: “[it] constructs a strategy that responds to experiences of colonization and imperialism” (Battiste, 2004, p. 1). This theory is more than just a reaction; it is a call for attention to the continued colonial realities suffered by marginalized people. Postcolonial theory recognizes that the representation of marginalized people within academic literature is laden with colonial

and Eurocentric bias and brings to bear to the “departure from objective reality” (Adams, 1999, p. 23) that is innate to Eurocentrism (Adams, 1999). In striving to compensate for the lack of Aboriginal voice in research, postcolonialism advocates for an alteration in the conceptualization of the margin (hooks, 1990) by replacing investigative approaches with that of sharing and relationship building between researcher and researched (Hall, 1996). Postcolonialism also aims to honour Aboriginal voice (Said, 1978; hooks, 1990; Spivak, 1990; Louis, 2006), draw attention to contemporary colonial realities (Adams, 1999; Hall 1996; Lawrence, 2003), empower marginalized peoples, highlight individual resistance and agency (hooks, 1990), and deconstruct the dichotomy of researcher/researched (Hall, 1996). Because many social barriers for marginalized peoples stem from structurally reinforced discrimination and disadvantage (Battiste, 2004), postcolonial theory also critically assesses institutions and discourses inherent in society.

Postcolonial theory finds its roots within social identity theory’s emphasis on multiple experiences of oppression and on the belief that research participants should be empowered by the processes of research with which they engage. Social identity theory recognizes multiple sites of oppression by attempting to “go beyond the confines of analyzing the nature and experiences of oppression on the basis of singular social identity locations” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 61). As Spivak (1990) warns, to assume that individuals are part of singular identity is tantamount to essentialism. She argues that essentialism within research involving marginalized peoples creates generalizations that risk situating one voice as representative of the whole group. Bhabha (1994, as cited in McLennan, 2003) ties these two concepts together by explaining how generalizations only serve the colonialist. Instead, he proposes that we “rearticulate the sum of

knowledge from the perspective of the signifying positions of the minority that resists totalization” (p. 162). In other words, researchers must accord value to individual stories and histories. While bell hooks (1990) argues that the role of the researcher should be that of a liberator, Battiste (2004) explains that “postcolonial[ism] is not only about the criticism and deconstruction of colonization and domination, but also about the reconstruction and transformation, operating as [a] form of liberation from colonial imposition” (p. 2).

Research itself is not exempt from colonizing discourses. Hall (1996) advocates for postcolonialism in both the creation of knowledge and the opposition to oppressive norms. Postcolonialism should therefore critically address both societal norms and the discourses on which these norms rely for their continued functioning. As McLennan (2003) summarizes, we must “(undermine) the norms of ‘centrist,’ European-forged thinking” (p. 72). This is consistent with concerns raised in Edward Saïd’s *Orientalism* (1978), which focuses on how researcher bias produces generalizations, assumptions, and a silencing of the voice of those being researched, all of which risk misrepresenting research participants. Although *Orientalism* focuses exclusively on the construction of *Oriental* as a concept, I extend these explanations to our constructions of Aboriginal people. As Saïd (1978) argues:

Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The Orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways (p. 202).

I contend that the discursive construction of the Orient parallels processes of labelling and discursive assumptions of the term *Indian*. In much the same way as

Orientalism should not be viewed as just an “airy European fantasy about the Orient” (Saïd, 1978, p. 6) but instead a “system of knowledge about the Orient” (Saïd, 1978, p. 6), the Canadian government did not merely affix the Indian label as a name and classification for certain Aboriginal people. Rather, the label became a way of thinking about Aboriginal people based on associated meanings. Sunseri (2007) builds on this thought and how it functions within research:

Research about the “rest” becomes part of a cultural archive, a building of knowledge of those societies constructed as both inferior and different from the West. Within this archive, only certain ways of knowing are viewed as valid epistemologies and normalized as universal truths, including the “truth” of the cultures of the “rest”; as interpreted and written by the West (p. 95).

Hall (1996) further states that colonialism should not be seen as a dichotomous term relating to either a “system of rule” (p. 254) or a “system of knowledge or representation” (p. 254), when in fact it is both. In this way we can see how the creation of Aboriginal discursive inferiority has been produced and how “colonialism (like its counterpart, racism) then, is an operation of discourse, and as an operation of discourse it interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation” (Tiffin & Lawson, 1994, p. 3). In other words, the physical acts of colonialism have been and still are fuelled by the ideologies of colonialism. As explained by Sunseri (2007), “the unequal power relationship founded upon colonial constructions demonstrates how knowledge and power are tied together within a colonial context” (p. 95). Colonizers’ understandings about colonized peoples and places—under the guise of knowledge—therefore dictate both how others perceive colonized peoples and how colonized peoples perceive of themselves. These perceptions, as determined by the colonial powers that construct them, position the colonized individual as inferior to the colonizer. In Canadian society, this

unequal positioning between groups has become part of the dominant discourse that still exists today.

The necessity of a postcolonial approach for research collaborating with Aboriginal people is further highlighted by the fact that colonialism is not a thing of the past. Since discursive and institutionalized colonialism still exist within both academic literature and lived reality, it is incumbent on researchers to both address these injustices and contribute to the empowerment of colonized peoples. Researchers who use a postcolonial approach should therefore regard the needs and wants of research participants as their highest priority.

### **3.3 Engaging in Postcolonial Research with Aboriginal Peoples**

Engaging in research has often put Aboriginal participants in a position where their contributions have not been beneficial to themselves or their communities and where the perspective of the researcher is considered superior to that of participants. Indigenous people have “been politically, socially, and economically dominated by colonial forces and marginalized through armed struggle, biased legislation, and educational initiatives and policies that promote Western knowledge systems at the expense of [their] own” (Bishop, 1997, as cited in Louis, 2006, p. 131). Battiste (2004) states that Aboriginal groups are “silenced societies in knowledge making, talking, and writing [...] they are not heard in the production of knowledge because such knowledge is managed by others” (p. 1–2). Therefore, the empowerment of Aboriginal participants through their equal participation within research and the validation of their voice and perspectives is essential to address the void of Aboriginal narratives and knowledge within the literature. As

stated above, there is only a “marginal space—if any at all” (Sunseri, 2007, p. 95) given to Aboriginal knowledge within academic literature. “The legacy of invalidating Indigenous knowledge disconnected Indigenous people from their traditional teachings, spirituality, land, family, community, spiritual leaders, medicine people, and the list goes on” (Absolon & Willet, 2004, p. 9). Thus an anti-oppressive and postcolonial approach to research must not participate—intentionally or unintentionally—in the construction or regulation of Aboriginal people as *others*. Further, such research must also work toward the sharing of Aboriginal perspectives and voices within academic literature as well as contribute back to those communities that participate in research.

### *3.3.1 Othering and the Regulation of Identity*

The concept of othering is particularly important when understanding the continued process of colonialism and its oppressive effects on Aboriginal people. Freire (1970) argues that dehumanization is a critical element of oppression, and that this may be equated to othering. Such dehumanization both legitimizes the use of force over colonized peoples and many other actions taken against them. Conceptualizations of Aboriginal people, argued Freire, were taken as inherent and integrated into public discourse and popular stereotypes. McLennan (2003) also shares this outlook:

Even the dominant colonizing consciousness, which aspires to emit self-images of mastery and to construct regimes of hierarchical certainty, does so only in the enabling rhetorical presence of the “Other”—that which is figured as colonized, weak, and silenced—but also, importantly, feared, forbidden and threatening (p. 74).

The regulation of Aboriginal identity and control of Aboriginal people’s space on reserves has been central to the colonization process in both Canada and the United States. In other words, “whites defined Indian history and [...] Indians served as the

objects of definition” (Grande, 2000, p. 348). Systems of classification and control enabled settler governments to define who is Indian and control access to Native land. As a result, these regulatory systems forcibly supplanted traditional Indigenous ways of identifying self in relation to land and community, while also functioning discursively to naturalize colonial worldviews (Lawrence, 2003). This constructed Indian identity was placed in opposition to the identity of colonialists—the *them* to the colonialist *us*. Therefore, as Green (1995) explains, the process of othering is intrinsically colonial. Othering and separation are conducted with the goal of “retain[ing] power, [as] representatives of the ruling nationality are often tempted to discriminate against other nationalities that are excluded from influence” (Adams, 1999, p. 45). It was through this separation and notion of difference that Aboriginal people became the subordinate other. In other words, they were “understood as *less than* the Western norm” (Sunseri, 2007, p. 95).

### *3.3.2 Eliminating the Researcher/Researched Dichotomy*

The concept of the other has often been carried forward into academic literature with many Aboriginal people feeling like they are being “researched to death” (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2005, p. 3), all the while perpetuating the dichotomy of the “white objects [...] [and] red subjects” (Redford, 1979, p. 42). For many Indigenous peoples, “their entire existence seems to be a problem or a question for researchers, often formulated as ‘*The ... (insert name of indigenous group) problem*’ or ‘*The ... (insert name of indigenous group) question*’” (Smith, 1999, as cited in Porsanger, 2011, p. 106, author’s emphasis). As explained by Smith (1999):

Research in itself is a powerful intervention, even if carried out at a distance, which has traditionally benefited the researcher, and the

knowledge base of the dominant group in society [...] Research is implicated in the production of Western knowledge, in the nature of academic work [...], and in practices which have continued to privilege Western ways of knowing [...] (as cited in Menzies, 2001, p. 19).

This creation of Indigenous people as the other, while researchers and Western populations are considered the *self* (Sunseri, 2007), has plagued Aboriginal people and acted as a deterrent for further participation in research. Therefore if not conducted with certain sensitivities and attention to underlying issues, research with Aboriginal people may contribute to and reinforce their contemporary colonial realities by portraying them as “the Indigenous ‘Other’ [...] an exotic figure, a representative of an inferior ‘dying’ civilization. This is directly linked to colonialism [...]” (Sunseri, 2007, p. 94). This type of approach produces a situation whereby only outsiders create the knowledge of certain groups within academia.

As described by Smith (2005, as cited in Brooks, 2009), for many Indigenous peoples, research has become synonymous with colonialism and is not regarded as a tool for empowerment. Menzies (2001) reminds us of the impact that research may have on marginalized people: “social science research is intimately tied to [...] the twined processes of imperialism and colonization” (p. 20). Historically, research existed as a colonial process and may remind people with a colonial past of a “history that still offends the deepest sense of [their] humanity” (Smith, 1999, as cited in Austin, 2001, p. 358). Writing about research with Maori people in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Bishop (1998) writes that it had resulted in a “social pathology research approach [where] in all phases of the research process, the ‘inability’ of Maori culture to cope with human problems and [...] that Maori culture was and is inferior to that of the colonizers in human terms” (p. 200) was perpetuated. The knowledge that was gained from the Maori people was



exploited and became something for “‘consumption’ by the colonizers” (Bishop, 1998, p. 200). This exemplifies how research needs to consider its effects and be aware of its capacity for continuing the colonial process, whether intentional or not.

In order to acknowledge the contemporary and historical colonial realities facing marginalized research participants, researchers should strive to eliminate the researcher/researched dichotomy (Hall, 1996) through “demonstrat(ing) the inverted power relations of postcolonial spaces” (Kowal, 2006, p. 248). As Nicholls (2009) writes, “researchers need to engage with reflexive evaluation of collective and negotiated design, data collection and data analysis to consider the interpersonal and collective dynamics during the research process, and any effects that the research may potentially have into the future” (p. 118). Decolonizing research means being aware of the role of the researcher and of the research itself, as well as the need to “[transform] the research agendas and [deconstruct] taken-for granted ways of doing research” (Brooks, 2009, p. 89). In sum, decolonizing research requires being aware of research’s traditional role within the colonial process and recognizing how it can contribute to participants (Brooks, 2009), making this its ultimate goal. In later sections I detail my own role in the research project that informed this thesis by describing my role as a researcher, the role of the university research team and the collaboration with community-based researchers and other members of BATC communities.

### *3.3.3 Sharing Aboriginal Voices*

A pressing need exists to understand how Aboriginal people frame and perceive their lives and the forces within them, and to share these stories and perspectives with aims of liberation and empowerment. Research should thus be conducted *with* Aboriginal people,

rather than *on* or *about* them to avoid the “continued construction of indigenous peoples as the problem” (Smith, 1999, as cited in Austin, 2001, p. 359). When research is conducted *on* a certain group, it removes participants from the creation of knowledge about themselves, their people, and their home. Furthermore it takes the shared knowledge away without it being utilized within the community and without anything given in return (Porsanger, 2011). As Porsanger (2011) notes, “the regulation of research is an essential part of any indigenous methodology. The regulation of research also reflects power relations” (p. 115). Power relations within research have resulted in a mass disadvantage for marginalized participants. Anti-oppressive theories—and postcolonial theory specifically—explicitly address these processes of othering through embracing intersectionality and the notion that individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression (Moosa-Mitha, 2005) or an “interweaving of oppressions” (Phoenix, 2004, as cited in Moosa-Mitha, 2005).

Despite many shared experiences within diverse Aboriginal groups and peoples, generalizations within research involving Aboriginal people disregards multiple layers of identity and lived realities. Attention must be given to the experiences of marginalized research participants since they often discursively symbolize and embody the “‘difference’ from an assumed White heterosexual, able-bodied norm [which] results in various forms of oppression that are structural, relational and cultural in nature” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 62). To most appropriately address these realities and to bring into the open the knowledge and perspectives of research participants, researchers must aggressively avoid assumptions and interpretations as well as understand and accept multiple truths. To facilitate this goal, researchers must create and engage in a research

approach that supports an equal opportunity for research participants to share their voice, perspectives, and knowledge. Attention to normalized aspects of Aboriginal life that function toward their exclusion and disadvantage—such as the construction of their Indian identity and resulting displacement—are imperative in ending the misrepresentations and discriminatory discourses against Aboriginal people.

An anti-oppressive approach also recognizes that research can quickly be removed from the person from which it originated. As bell hooks (1990) noted:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk (p. 343).

As such, research conducted from an outsider's perspective and with no genuine interest for participants can function to promote the self-interest of the researcher while also detaching the data from the contextual realities of what is being studied. Here the researcher still maintains the position of power and exploits the disadvantaged reality of research participants to further separate the self from the other. While doing this, the researcher is still the *author*—the authority—while participants do not benefit from their participation. Such research neither integrates the expertise of participants nor empowers them. Postcolonial theory argues that we need to “reject the idea of a representational frame in which these different accounts are convened at a ‘safe’ distance from the ‘phenomena’ themselves” (McLennan, 2003, p. 10).

Working with Aboriginal people to ensure that their voices are heard and shared may be achieved by integrating their participation within research processes and by

accepting that there exist multiple, equally legitimate and important perspectives. In other words, researchers must steer away from cognitive imperialism, which “denies people their language and cultural integrity and maintains legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference” (Battiste, 2004, p. 11). Research should therefore strive to empower research participants by honouring their voice, facilitating the sharing of their perspectives, and accepting the fact that they are the experts of their own social realities.

### *3.3.4 Mutual Sharing and Contributions*

Importantly, researchers working within an anti-oppressive framework must also maintain the goal of contributing back to the communities and individuals with whom they collaborate. Research should ultimately be conducted with the goal of providing support to participants. Respect throughout research must be sustained, including honouring the fact that the accumulation of knowledge without intention of its utilization is frowned upon in many Indigenous communities. Louis (2006) argues:

The most important elements are that research in Indigenous communities be conducted respectfully, from an Indigenous point of view and that the research has meaning that contributes to the community. For many Indigenous peoples, “knowledge for knowledge sake [is] a waste of time” (Meyer, 2003, 57; cf. Crazy Bull, 1997b). If research does not benefit the community by extending the quality of life for those in the community, it should not be done (p. 131).

Martin, a stakeholder from Saulteaux who participated in the research, also spoke to us about the need for our research to contribute to, and be made available to communities, rather than merely being of use within academia:

I just think that anything that happens here [BATC] needs to lead to more than just a document [...] academics shouldn't be the only ones who have this knowledge, we should make it available to our grassroots

people and make them researchers as well. And that's why power is such a good way to do it.

All processes of research should be conducted respectfully with the goal of creating something of benefit for the communities involved. In so doing, researchers ensure that they are utilizing the knowledge provided in the most useful way.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I reviewed critical and difference-centred theories and highlighted the benefits of adapting anti-oppressive and postcolonial approaches to research with First Nations people. As discussed here, anti-oppressive theories draw attention to how personal experiences contribute to knowledge and to the existence of multiple knowledges. I thus argued that research should be conducted using multiple approaches and should dismiss normative assumptions since they fit information into preconceived categories rather than allow participants to shape the information themselves. Next, I outlined how postcolonial theory highlights the histories and realities of peoples with colonized histories while drawing attention to continuing colonial realities. Since this approach acknowledges that postcolonialism is not yet realized, it aims at emancipation, deconstructing the researcher/researched bias, and providing a venue for the sharing of Aboriginal voices. Finally, I touched on how research with Aboriginal people must benefit the groups with whom it partners as well as give back to communities.

In the next chapter, I detail my research methodology and explain how CBPR is especially well suited to conducting research with marginalized people. I introduce the concept of CBPR and discuss how it was implemented in the course of our research, including the creation of a community advisory panel with strong emphasis on

relationship building. I detail our data collection process, in particular the qualitative interviews which comprise the source material for this thesis, as well as explain how I utilized a grounded theory approach to data analysis. Finally, I provide an overview of the ethics protocols for my research.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology—A CBPR Approach to Anti-Oppressive**

### **Research with First Nations**

*We can all make change if everybody understands how everybody else feels.*  
—Castleden, Garvin, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation (2008, p. 1399)

Theory and methods are unique components of the social research process; however, they are not mutually exclusive. Rather, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 162) explain, theory and methods exist in a relationship of reciprocal reliance: “research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty” . As such, this thesis and the larger project that informs it employed a CBPR methodology in order to engage with participants from the BATC First Nations reserves. As I will argue here, given its consultative, inclusive, and flexible nature, a CBPR method fulfills the ideals of the anti-oppressive and postcolonial frameworks discussed in Chapter 3. Close collaboration between our community advisory group and community-based researchers meant that we were able to not only learn about life in the communities and the social realities faced by members on reserve, but also to forge strong and long lasting friendships as well as give back to communities.

In this chapter, I introduce the concept of CBPR, its goals and advantages, and discuss how we went about consulting with our community advisory group in all aspects of research design and beyond. Here, I also explain how relationship building was integral to the overall research process. I then outline the data collection procedures, in particular the fourteen qualitative interviews upon which this thesis is based. Next, I discuss the grounded theory approach that I utilized in order to analyze the interview data. Finally, I give a brief overview of the ethical protocols followed as well as how our

research was careful to maintain the ideals of CBPR by being respectful, consultative, and flexible.

## **4.1 Research Design**

To ensure that the research project strove to co-create with its participants and the people that they represent, its goals and objectives were based in anti-oppressive and postcolonial theory frameworks, as seen in Chapter 3, as well as on a CBPR methodology, as mentioned above. In other words, our partnership with BATC placed a strong emphasis on learning from community member perspectives and allowed for the continuous assessment of both researcher and community roles and the processes of research carried out by university partners. The research for this thesis, as well as the larger research project from which it is derived, were thus both initiated and informed by the needs of the community throughout research design, delivery, and dissemination. In this section, I discuss the goals and advantages of CBPR, how researchers engaged with the community advisory group, and how building and sustaining relationships with community partners were essential to the project.

### *4.1.1 Community-Based Participatory Research*

Qualitative approaches, in general, reject the sole reliance on researcher *expertise* by gaining insights from participant perspectives and engaging in group dialogue to achieve mutual understandings of the situation at hand. CBPR, however, moves beyond the sharing of a story and toward a *mutual engagement* whereby researchers and participants achieve an understanding of perceptions and interpretations that are flexible to the situation. As such, a CBPR method relies on strong interpersonal relationships and trust



building (Christopher, 2008), requiring researchers to engage with research participants, incorporating them within all research processes including collection, interpretation, and dissemination of data (Christopher, 2008).

A central objective of anti-oppressive theories and of CBPR research alike is “to equalize power differences, build trust, and create a sense of ownership in an effort to bring about social justice and change” (Castleden, et al., 2008, p. 1394). Just as CBPR strives to “equalize power differences,” anti-oppressive theories aptly note that all social positions are “located within wider fields of power [...which are] not equally distributed among all social players” (Menzies, 2001, p. 27). As discussed in Chapter 3, anti-oppressive theories argue that research should ultimately benefit research participants (Menzies, 2001). If conducted correctly, a CBPR methodology can benefit participants and community partners through the dissemination of their knowledge in an attempt to catalyze social change.

Social change, resulting from the dissemination of participant knowledge, stems from anti-oppressive theories’ beliefs that knowledge is related to action. From this approach, participant knowledge “holds the potential for ‘liberatory’ practice because ‘knowing’ things differently results in acting differently” (Freire, 1967, as cited in Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 67). This connection between knowing and acting is also made explicit in the goals of CBPR, which argue for the recording and dissemination of local knowledge for the purposes of social change (Castleden et al., 2008). According to CBPR methodology, social change will result from maintaining an emphasis on addressing social inequalities, or by “attempt(ing) to develop culturally relevant research models that address issues of injustice, inequality, and exploitation” (Castleden et al., 2008, p. 1393).

#### *4.1.2 Building Relationships*

Although certain research methods aim to empower participants, due to differences in social power and social realities, researchers are often in a position to represent the lives and voices of participants. Wilson (2001) explains how the research process should not only focus on the voices and perspectives of research participants and community partners but also on the roles and responsibilities of researchers. As such, he states, “your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity or reliability, you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? [...] This becomes my methodology [...] being accountable to all my relations” (p. 177).

Only once we had engaged with community members and realized the depth of the life stories that were being shared with us did we fully appreciate how relationship building was an integral part of the research process. As researchers, we became invested in the wellbeing of the individuals and communities with whom we were engaging, and we agreed that there was no way this process could be rushed. Data collection became a continuous affair, and relationship building was its unexpected privilege.

Initially, we were concerned about how community participants and partners would feel and react to partnering with a university research team. Although some felt skeptical about our presence or as to whether the project would ultimately contribute to the goals of communities, for the most part, our presence within participating communities was well received. Many shared their opinions on the larger research project, particularly regarding our interactions with youth. David, a youth worker from Saulteaux, shared his opinions about our presence:

I think what you're doing with taking [the youth] to the city and letting them do art is the perfect way [...] I think that the program that you

guys are offering is perfect [...] I think like with these kids going to this program in Saskatoon, I think that it will benefit them a lot [...] they need to encounter people who [are] genuinely looking out for their well being, who are not a part of the community.

In line with a CBPR methodology, researchers have stayed in contact with participating First Nations communities and remain accountable to the initial advisory group. Community consultation has led to a number of ways in which the research has given back to communities, including (1) the development of a visual book for youth; (2) numerous community and governance presentations; (3) a website (at the request of the youth); (4) two community-led art displays featuring art from the research project; (5) a video which highlights the findings of the research; and (6) a community report.

On the whole, relationships were built that still continue today. Our involvement has even expanded beyond the original research to include engagement in the 2013 BATC Treaty Days through the administration of a new justice survey. I have also assured community members that copies of this thesis will be provided to them upon its completion, if they so desire.

#### *4.1.3 Consulting with the Community Advisory Group*

In keeping with CBPR and to ensure that our presence and research process was appropriate, welcomed by the communities, and respectful, a community-based advisory group was created. Since community leaders from BATC reserves desired this research project, their role, insights and contributions to this project were integral right from the start. An advisory group was established, including members from each of the reserve communities, with membership determined initially by the community research team in dialogue with Elders, as well as Chiefs and Councils. As such, the guiding question of the larger research project was determined in consultation with BATC communities. As

discussed in Chapter 1, this research question asked, “What are the barriers and protective processes faced by First Nations youth who encounter significant amounts of risk from the perspectives of youth who are considered resilient by their First Nations communities?” Following anti-oppressive and community-based research designs, we were also careful to collaboratively define the terms *resilience* and *risk*, allowing fluidity in their definitions depending on participant location and demographics (Castleden et al., 2008; Ungar et al., 2008). Community-based researchers, along with the advisory group, were consulted before any modification to the research process was carried out in order to contribute to the trustworthiness of the university-based researchers and the data itself. These feedback loops effectively ensured that research processes and outcomes were congruent with the goals of the community. Seeking feedback meant consulting with community-based researchers as to how to best engage with different groups on different reserves. Indeed, because each community is unique, our exact approach varied from location to location.

Community-based researchers and stakeholders from BATC First Nations reserves assisted in data collection, analysis, and recruitment of participants. As such, the advisory group suggested who we should engage with, who would be well suited to the project, and how we were to approach certain individuals and certain reserve locations. These insights were essential. They allowed us to maintain a presence that was appropriate and context-specific and ensured that our work was receptive to the needs and desires of our partner communities. Advisory group meetings took place within a community establishment and along with Elders and other community partners, we held

mutually respectful and shared dialogues about how the research process would be developed in each community.

Our engagement with community-based researchers and members of BATC communities was a learning process. Since university researchers were drawing from their academic training, we began with an approach to research that we thought would best draw out the stories of lived realities from participants, as well as remain respectful and receptive to local knowledge. Ultimately, and in line with the CPBR approach, the experience was one that required flexibility on the part of the research team in order to learn from the groups that we engaged with, with the possibility of modifying this approach with every new group that we worked with, as we often did. Our process was constantly in flux, because of this collaboration, and the outcomes exceeded our expectations. For example, we had anticipated that participants would follow the prompting questions created to guide the qualitative interviews, but we realized immediately that each person had a colourful and vibrant story to share. Often these stories did not reflect what we had anticipated to hear; however, we instantly realized that we would gain so much more than expected as a result of these stories and we modified our approach.

## **4.2 Data Collection**

The larger project from which this thesis is derived utilized a mixed methods approach for data collection, which included (1) two forms of quantitative surveys with community members and youth; (2) in-depth, qualitative interviews with youth, parents, teachers, Elders, and stakeholders; and (3) art workshops with youth. Combined, these approaches

intended to engage with youth, stakeholders, parents, Elders and other community members in sharing their stories and perspectives about youth resilience and experiences on reserve. As discussed in detail below, the data for my research, however, is primarily drawn from a series of fourteen qualitative interviews.

#### *4.2.1 Qualitative Interviews*

This thesis specifically focuses on the insights gained from in-depth interviews with fourteen research participants across four First Nations reserves: eight from Moosomin, three from Saulteaux, two from Sweetgrass, and one from Red Pheasant. This group was comprised of eight women and six men whose ages spanned three decades, with the youngest being in their 30's. Interview participants represented community stakeholders, parents, and other Elders and were chosen by community-based researchers through dialogue with Elders and our advisory group. Interview participants were selected on the basis of both their vested interest in the wellbeing of the community and their work with youth in areas of justice, health, community, as well as youth programs, services, and governance. Both members of the university research team and members of the community-based research team conducted the interviews between September 2011 and June 2013. Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to two hours in duration and were conducted in a variety of public spaces— schools on reserve, community halls on reserve, conference rooms, the Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Program (SCYAP) building in Saskatoon, and at the University of Saskatchewan. Interviews were recorded using voice recorders and were later transcribed into physical copies.

The qualitative interviews were semi-structured to facilitate dialogue and a natural flow of conversation. Interview questions were structured to help better understand lived

experiences and realities on reserve, as well as youth resilience to offending from community members' perspectives. In keeping with CBPR ideals, each participant was put in a position of control that allowed for flexibility of responses and adaptation to "a community's particular research needs and goals" (Castleden, et al., 2008, p. 1401). Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse participation or could choose to not answer any question. Participants were treated as the experts of their own reality; therefore, during the interviews, they were able to shape the conversation and tell their story in their own way, often with little prompting from the interviewer. Privacy was protected as well, through the maintenance of anonymity and the use of assigned pseudonyms. Participants also had the option to refuse the use of their interview once it was conducted and were given the opportunity to access their transcripts.

Interview questions were on hand to guide the conversation if needed and to ensure that important topics were covered. Although initial interview questions were developed, modifications were made as the research process progressed. The questions used to guide the qualitative interviews are as follows (also see Appendix A):

1. From your perspective, what are some of the precipitating/contributing factors that are related to youth risk and resilience?
  - a. What role do systemic factors, such as culture; family; socio-economics play?
  - b. What role does community play?
  - c. What role do inter-generational factors play?
  - d. What role does age play?
  - e. What role does race (and racism) play?
  - f. What role do relational factors play?
  
2. Reflections on intervention/prevention: Education, Community, Justice, and Health

- a. What is the nature of the intervention/prevention strategies on your reserve?
  - b. Do you believe more can be done to reduce/stop youth risk?
  - c. If yes, what do you believe could be done?
  - d. How do you feel that people acquire their knowledge about youth risk and resilience?
  - e. What is your perspective on the development of programs/interventions?
  - f. Are intervention/prevention strategies different for girls and boys?
  - g. What are the barriers to services?
  - h. What are the strengths?
  - i. What roles do systemic factors play, such as socio-economics; culture; race; history?
3. How do you feel we should approach our research (interviews) with youth who have been in trouble and/or are now resilient?
- a. What kinds of questions are important to ask?
  - b. What would you like to learn from the youth?
  - c. What environment should we conduct interviews?
  - d. What supports are necessary for during or after interviews?
  - g. How can we ensure that we are culturally sensitive in the research with youth participants?
  - h. Are you interested in becoming a community team member or advisor for this future project?
  - i. Do you feel there are other important people within BATC reserve communities who should become team members or advisors for this future project?

Notably, interview questions merely provided a guideline for the interviews. Ultimately, it was the participant who directed the conversation, providing in-depth and personal insights into life on BATC reserves. The qualitative interviews involved time, reflection, emotion, motivation, relationship building, risk, uncertainty, and enjoyment. The depth of thoughtfulness and creativity in participant responses were astonishing, and having their insight and experiences shared with us was an absolute privilege.



### **4.3 Data Analysis**

The aim of my analysis was to uncover themes within the interviews, both arising from prompted questions and from free conversation. Interviews were transcribed and then coded using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Some themes arose that were expected, while others were not predicted. The larger study utilized qualitative and quantitative interviews, along with arts-based methods to explore the pathways to resilience and risk for youth on reserve and the initial round of coding involved themes more relevant to the larger project such as resilience, family, education, and sports. However, closer analysis of the data exposed major trends across various conversations pertaining to issues of identity, self-esteem, governance, and leadership. I decided to further explore these themes by focusing on the historical impact of contemporary issues, Aboriginal identity and how this is manipulated, institutionalized oppression and how Aboriginal leadership and governance structures affect Aboriginal people and contribute to their disadvantage. From this point, I employed a secondary analysis of the interviews, while focusing on these themes within the data; their prevalence was overwhelming. My familiarity with the data, through work for the larger project, allowed me to get a sense of what was within the data that was beyond what was asked for. Once I got a sense of the prevalence of the themes surrounding identity and leadership, I then engaged in secondary coding with these themes as my focus. I found that all of the stakeholder transcripts painted a portrait of life on reserve that was beyond what was visible to the naked eye.

My process involved becoming familiar with the data through my work with the larger project and thinking deeply about the larger picture that the data was painting, as

according to the grounded theoretical approach to data analysis, which I explain below. Once I had recognized the three themes that were beyond the original project but were prevalent within the data, I went through the data again, categorizing the segments of interviews that exemplified these three themes. I was then able to make associations and connect the themes in a logical sense, arranging them in a hierarchy of cause and effect, and situating them in a way to make a logical flow of the data that I had.

#### *4.3.1 Grounded Theory Approach*

The interview data was analyzed using a grounded theory approach. This approach, developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, was a response to the positivism that was dominating social research at the time. They believed that the natural sciences and the social sciences studied very different subject matters, and as such, should not take the same approach to research. They felt that the purpose of social research was not to discover grand theories that provided an all encompassing explanation, but rather that observation and a consensus of what was observed would be the better path for scientific inquiry of social behaviour and phenomena (Suddaby, 2006). This data analysis approach partners well with decolonizing and anti-oppressive frameworks in that it makes no assumptions about the data. Rather, “hypotheses and theories are generated from the data collected” (Engward, 2013, p. 37), effectively removing the voice of the researcher and eliminating inaccurate researcher interpretations. In other words, grounded theory allows the data to generate knowledge instead of trying to fit the data into preconceived categories of understanding or to “test an existing theory” (Engward, 2013, p. 38) by aiming to both “explain as well as describe” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 5). This approach aids researchers and participants alike to understand the social phenomena that

surround them but which they may not explicitly be aware of or understand (Engward, 2013). Grounded theory pairs well with CBPR since its flexibility allows the research method itself to be receptive to participants, and in fact anticipates dynamic interactions and processes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), allowing for a “tailorising of methods to local research contexts and participants” (Jennings, Kensbock, Junek, Radel, & Kachel, 2010, p. 21).

The grounded theory approach allowed me to take the data from the larger project and explore issues of importance to BATC community members. Grounded theory is best used when attempting to discover how individuals interpret their own lived realities (Suddaby, 2006), therefore it is especially well suited to the ideals of CBPR and postcolonial theory since it supports the voice of participants as being the most important source of data. The major themes emanating from the data analysis, as I will discuss in subsequent chapters, were not a priori included in the interview questions. Though not prompted by the interview guides, themes around governance and leadership, along with notions of how larger governance structures influence people at the grassroots level were spoken about in nearly every interview. It was through the use of a grounded theory approach that the relevance of these issues and their widespread effect quickly became apparent. Such themes were used to discuss concepts surrounding the notion of resilience, and they were used to make connections between structures and the small-scale phenomena that community members on BATC reserves face every day.

#### **4.4 Ethical Considerations**

Research for this thesis has been approved by the ethics board at the University of Saskatchewan under the ethics for the larger project and in line with the guidelines laid out by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Involving Aboriginal People. This involved obtaining written consent from each research participant through the signing of consent forms (see Appendix B). The board of ethics also approved the interview guides (guides varied between youth and stakeholders) used in the qualitative interviews (see Appendix A). Research and procedures for this project have therefore been approved at both the community level and at the university level. However, it must be noted that many modifications have been made to the ethics for the larger project due to changing methods and changing questions, which were also incorporated into the interviews. For example, the project initially incorporated a photovoice method and art workshops with participating artists from the Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Program (SCYAP), and with university and community researchers mainly there to facilitate the interviews. However, this later changed to university and community researchers facilitating the art workshops and a draw-and-talk component of an art-based method being introduced. As a result of this change, the photovoice method was no longer being employed.

These shifts in our approach came after our measurement and re-evaluation of the research process. In other words, they were instituted once we had consulted back with community-based researchers on the best ways to move forward, what worked (what we should continue to do), what did not work (what we should stop doing), and what else we could potentially incorporate into the process. While our methods were various and prone

to change, we had designed them in a way to be flexible and to allow for modifications based on the desires and needs of participating communities. The direction provided by our community partners was of great importance within this process and remains greatly appreciated. Such a guided approach provided a wonderful learning experience and resulted in connections and relationships that I continue to learn from to this day.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I reviewed the CBPR method employed to engage with participants from BATC First Nations reserves. Here I noted, in particular, its goals and compatibility with the anti-oppressive and postcolonial frameworks discussed in the previous chapter. I then detailed the role of the community advisory group, including development of research questions, recruitment of participants, strategies for approaching communities, and the feedback loop between advisory group and researchers which ensured that our research remained welcomed, respectful, and effective. Here I also explained how relationship building was integral to the overall research process. Next, I provided an overview of data collection procedures, most notably the fourteen qualitative interviews that comprise the data for this thesis. A grounded theory approach was deployed in order to analyze the data drawn from the interviews, which yielded themes that were not explicitly prompted for in the interview guide. Finally, I briefly discussed how ethics approval was obtained for this research at the University of Saskatchewan.

In the following chapter, I detail the findings that stem from the interview data with BATC stakeholders. Here I present the three emergent and interconnected themes resulting from participant insights, words, and thoughts.

## Chapter 5: Research Findings—The Continued Effects of Colonization

*There [are] just so many serious issues from even the basic needs are not being met [...] And then they wander, because the parents are absent, the kids wander the community, trying to find scraps of attention, scraps of food. It's really very daunting sometimes, when you look at it, where do you start?*  
—Cindy, stakeholder

*I'd say [the cause of] 70% of the problems [...] goes back to that oppression, colonization and the things that happened. That's usually where it is, 70% of it.*  
—Martin, stakeholder

This chapter presents research findings from in-depth qualitative interviews with fourteen stakeholders across four First Nations reserves within BATC. The themes that arose within the data were discovered not by trying to fit the data into a pre-existing theoretical format, but by assessing the data in a way that allowed the important themes to emerge on their own. The names mentioned here are pseudonyms, which have been assigned to participants in order to respect their privacy.

As mentioned in earlier sections, this thesis aims to identify stakeholder and Elder perspectives about identity, First Nations leadership, and the effects of colonization and neocolonialism. Three major themes emerged from the qualitative interviews and are discussed in turn including: quality of life and wellbeing; identity; and institutionalized marginalization, control and disadvantage. First, I introduce the theme of contextual, physical and socioeconomic realities of both individuals and communities on reserve. Here stakeholders provided insights on the challenges that surrounded quality of life and wellbeing, including topics such as: health and addictions, crime and gang involvement and lateral violence. Second, I introduce stakeholder's discussions surrounding identity. This was related to othering, self-esteem and belonging, parenting, and traditional culture. Finally, I put forward participants' experiences of institutions and governance.

Importantly, all of the participants' linked wellbeing, identity, and governance to colonized histories and social control.

## **5.1 Quality of Life And Wellbeing**

Participants discussed contextual, physical, and socioeconomic realities of life on reserve. They spoke about the importance of family, cultural and traditional ceremonies and community events. Youth in the larger study also discussed the importance of family and culture, as well as their experience at the school and the enjoyment they found in shared activities, especially sports. Although the interviews emphasized community resilience and strength, stakeholders also wanted to draw attention to ongoing issues of concern. Following the words of the stakeholders, this sub-section puts forward these issues of concern related to wellbeing and quality of life, including: 1) mental health and addictions, 2) crime and gang involvement, and 3) lateral violence.<sup>2</sup>

### *5.1.1 Mental Health And Addictions*

As I emphasize throughout, many of the participants spoke about resiliency and strength within their youth and communities, despite the histories they share related to colonization, including those of families who have overcome the trauma of residential schools. However, discussions also revealed concerns about the challenges that members of these communities were facing.

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<sup>2</sup> While there is growing literature on the importance of focusing on resilience in research with Aboriginal youth, moving attention away from continuing social problems towards a strength based analysis (Fleming and Ledogar, 2008) stakeholders felt it was important to focus on problems to deal with social issues directly.

Victoria spoke about youth crime, suicide, pregnancy and mental health problems as epidemic on her reserve:

There's so [many] things that are epidemic on our reserves [...] there's diabetes within youth, there's teen pregnancy, there's youth crime [...] there's the young offenders. Suicide rates are high, addictions, mental health issues are high, so, yeah, our rates for a lot of these big challenges that youth face are quite high [...].

Similarly, Barbara shared her perspective on how such problematic behaviours and activities occur in her community:

Alcohol, I'd say [is] a very big problem. Dealing drugs [is a] very big problem. We have about five [or] six different drug dealers on the reserve. Theft, burglary [is a] very big problem. Bullying [is a] very big problem. Aggressive behaviour [is a] very big problem.

Although all of the stakeholders focused on alcohol, Alicia also expressed her concern about drug use. She said that in her community, drugs were more problematic than alcohol: "It's [...] almost overtaking the alcohol, it isn't just another type of drug abuse I suppose."

Drug and alcohol abuse problems were described as issues that not only affected youth and their peers but that also occur (at least somewhat) because of familial influences. Clifford, a stakeholder, expressed concern about the impacts of alcohol and drug use of parents on their children:

Some families that I know of, the parents smoked weed all their lives and now they're allowing their kids to smoke weed with them. And they see it as [a situation where] at least she's not off somewhere smoking weed [...] they have their kids safe at home but they're getting so high [...] I see it as a really big problem, the weed. And I know it's not good.

Addictions and mental health issues were addressed in each of the stakeholder interviews and often linked to larger conditions related to a lack of jobs, proper housing



and better community programming. Elizabeth for example, spoke of the physical and standard of life challenges she sees on her reserve and how these problems are linked to addictions:

For myself and my family, there are some challenges: housing, infrastructure, water, sewer [...] access to employment is very limited, access to services is limited [...] [there are] limited number of employment and training and education opportunities for our youth. Not only that, but recreational, sports, [and] social [opportunities are] very limited on reserve. There's also a lot of issues around social conditions, there's lots of alcoholism and addictions too, drugs and gambling.

Similarly, Cindy talked about how the absence of healthy food was correlated at times with the presence of what she perceived as unhealthy choices, including those involving alcohol and drugs:

There [are] just so many serious issues from even the basic needs are not being met [...] food, water, they're not living in safe homes, the physical structure itself is not safe, and then the relations, the social structures, it's not safe, so their basic needs are not getting met. Even food, a lot of kids come to school hungry [...] and for a lot of the kids, they say, "that's it." For the rest of the day there's nothing. And then they wander, because the parents are absent, the kids wander the community, trying to find scraps of attention, scraps of food. It's really very daunting sometimes, when you look at it, where do you start?

Many of the stakeholders iterated themes similar to Cindy, who talked of being overwhelmed by physical and relational problems, lack of community safety, and how these factors ultimately affect youth.

### *5.1.2 Crime and Gang Involvement*

Concern regarding drug and alcohol abuse among participants was widespread and tended to be made in connection to the prevalence of crime.

Elizabeth explicitly connected problems of addiction with the crime rates in her community:

Elizabeth: [...] I've always thought that Moosomin was high [in][...] addictions.

Interviewer: In addictions? Okay. And what would contribute that to?

Elizabeth: Crime rates.

Barbara, a parent, also made the link between substance misuse and problematic behaviours. She indicated that although people often do not have ill intentions, substances can negatively influence behaviours:

Home invasions, family fights, there has been quite a few already since I've lived there and [...] I guess they are not scared to live or die, but I see they use alcohol. If you are in your right mind you don't go do [anything wrong], but there is always alcohol.

Gang membership was seen as highly associated with violence, both through engaging in violent activities and being a victim of violence. Elizabeth brought up violence as associated with gang initiations when she spoke about what her son went through upon joining a gang:

One time [...] the one guy who's the gang leader here, I think he's in jail. He's usually in jail. He took my boy to a house and he knocked him around all over the house. There were holes in the walls from where he would throw him [...] Once he took this beating, being knocked around all over this house. He was practically his best friend. He would protect him, right? He was accepted after that. And then my son, he got his first charges, he went to jail [...] this gang leader was an older male and [my son] found acceptance there. He did go to jail a few times, he had charges [for] break and enters, and other guys his own age started to respect him because of that.

Elizabeth further elaborated on how respect functions within gang culture. She stated that seeking identity with a certain group could have a drastic effect on an individual,

especially if the moral code of the group demonstrates unhealthy rules and activities.

Elizabeth shared more about her knowledge of her son's experience with gangs:

[...] I know for my son, like because I think his dad didn't help him with that process of becoming a man [...] he looked around and on the reserve the guys, they were [...] held highly if they'd been to jail and if they'd done break and enters [...] The biggest thing was if you'd been to jail, and that's how it was for my son.

Alicia also brought up how respect can be achieved through the pursuit of illegal activities: "I think the biggest thing for them is to go to jail. If you've been to jail, you're a man."

Youth were not the only community members perceived to be seeking acceptance through involvement in gang life. Elizabeth spoke about how her husband felt the need for a sense of belonging, leading him to engage in risky situations:

He was looking for acceptance with [...] older males. So this gang leader was an older male and he found acceptance there and then he did go to jail a few times. He had charges [for] break and enters, and [once he received those charges the] other guys his own age started to respect him.

### *5.1.3 Lateral Violence*

Stakeholders shared a concern not only about addictions, youth violence and criminal activity, but also about how this may be linked to lateral violence. Lateral violence is defined as violence that is inflicted by an 'oppressor' and is learned and repeated by victims who then inflict violence toward a person within their own group. This kind of violence is layered onto the trauma already experienced by its members (NWAC, n.d.). In this sense, violence is redirected away from the oppressor and toward "peers or community members" (NWAC, n.d., p. 1).

Martin brought up the issue of lateral violence while discussing how community members felt guilt and blame about their current realities. Martin hosted workshops on lateral violence that attempted to explain how this is a result of the internalization of oppression against Aboriginal people more generally:

I did a lateral violence [workshop] at the school last week, I let them know that this is oppression, internal oppression that [they're] experiencing [and it is why they're] lashing out at people. You [...] really want to lash out at the system and white people, but you can't do that [...]

Martin expanded by suggesting that lateral violence results from the frustration of not being given the opportunity to direct aggression toward those you are angry with—in other words, the source of First Nations peoples oppression. While other factors and histories of colonization, residential schools and other sources of oppression are ultimately responsible for the anger and frustration experienced, people end up directing their aggression toward those who are in close proximity:

[...] In a lot of oppressed people's communities, [there] is lateral violence [...] Lateral violence goes sideways to other members of your group. You can't lash out at the system or the symbol of the system, white people, so you end up doing it to your own people, and you drag them down, any little bit.

Alicia also spoke of lateral violence and explained that it is created, or at least supported, among community members by structural forces that keep them in an oppressed position. These structural forces create relationships of tension rather than support, or in Alicia's words: "[structural forces] keep people and parents oppressed, using lateral violence to keep them there." Cindy spoke of how leadership can create tension at the community level by "putting pressure downwards" and creating anger and violence among its members. She explained how this is the root cause of lateral violence

and how the issues at the governance and institutional level are affecting people at the grassroots level:

[...] you have Indian Affairs at the top, Chief and Council in the middle and then the grassroots people at the bottom. And then, each level seeing themselves as victims of the whole system [...] So they put the pressure downwards, and at the bottom, there is no more bottom. That's where the lateral violence starts. That's what we see a lot of in the community. We see a lot of lateral violence. That's where the gang activities start up. The kids get engaged in that at a very young age. [...] they couldn't tell you what it is they're angry about. They come to school angry at a very young age.

Cindy further explained how the Chief and Council also feel pressure on her reserve. She described how she observes that they feel like they have to act within the confines of the stipulations set by Indian Affairs while trying to balance the needs and requests by the community. She also observed how both of these sides have the power to remove leaders' titles within the community, creating a stressful situation for community leaders:

Chief and Council [say] "we are limited by Indian Affairs, we can't make both sides happy, we're just doing the best we can for both." And each of them knowing [that] it's one little push [that] is going to topple them from their position down to the bottom. And the same thing with the government, the popular majority could topple them, so they see themselves as victims, "we're only doing what's best for everybody, we have to consider everybody's best interest."

Cindy explained how the level below governance is restricted too, with a disconnection and pressure resulting from the incompatibility between what they are expected to do by those who dictate their roles, and what is being requested by the people that they serve. The individuals within institutions, such as education, social work and police are frustrated with the incompatibility of the stipulations that they have to work within and the demands by the community.

They therefore put pressure on the individuals in the community to help create change, where there is little power to do so:

And in the middle is the institutes; education, social work, and the police force. And then they see themselves as victims, “we’re only doing what’s being told for the better,” and they’re one paycheck away from being at the bottom, which is the unemployed and the socially disadvantaged. So they put the pressure downwards, and at the bottom there is no more bottom.

This type of violence, a product of colonialism, was seen to stem from the frustration resulting from oppression and where there was no outlet to address this frustration. The frustrations of colonialism also were explained to have profound impacts on personal identities and associations with Aboriginal identity and culture, as I will explain in the upcoming section.

## **5.2 Colonized Identities: Effects on Self and Culture**

Cultural and traditional events are present on reserve and in urban areas. Student unions, special interest groups and organizations exist through the hard work and dedication of many Aboriginal people; this perpetuates a strong Aboriginal presence in important spheres of society. Many participants expressed the pride that they take in their culture, and expressed interest in their traditions and heritage. Artwork by youth reflected beautiful associations and identifications with Aboriginal culture and many participants spoke about the joy they experienced by partaking in cultural events.

Aboriginal identity has also, however, met challenges in past and present contexts. The continued effects of colonialism and neocolonialism on identity, self-esteem, and culture also emerged as a major theme in the data. Some participants revealed how a lack of belonging distorted their perceived sense of importance and

purpose. These community members spoke about how racist and colonial ideas had impacted not only how non-Aboriginal people view Aboriginal people but also how some Aboriginal people view themselves. As Cindy put it, “I think, more than anything, First Nations people are not aware of what they’ve contributed to the world.”

In this following section I discuss participants’ experiences of othering, themes of self-esteem, belonging, culture and pride.

### *5.2.1 Experiences of Othering*

Many research participants conveyed how othering (while not directly calling it this) still persists today, with racism integrated into the idea of Aboriginality. Cindy expressed how she felt others in society would prefer that Aboriginal people did not exist:

I had one person who said to me, “society, when you hear it in the media, when you hear it in general, they want us to stay on the reserves, but then they complain that we’re not involving ourselves in society.” And then we move in the cities, we open businesses, we try and get involved, and they’re like, “why don’t they go back to the reserve?”. It’s like they don’t want us to exist at all. We’re always having to make excuses, explain why we have a right. You spend half your life trying to explain that you have a right to exist. This woman told me, it can become very [...] at some point it can overwhelm you [...] day after day after day, trying to succeed in a world where your very existence seems to be an affront to the majority of the people you come across.

Martin spoke of internalized discrimination and racism and of how First Nations people are perceived as different from the larger Euro-colonial society. Martin shared how he experiences his own Aboriginal identity and his views on how others experience Aboriginality:

[...] they come in with the disadvantage right off the top. Then they leave this community and they end up going to school in North Battleford, they’re already at a disadvantage because of the forces there. That’s racism. I know, because I experience it. Even today, because of the way I choose to wear my hair, the way I look. And I won’t change it for anybody, but I go into stores and I can feel it [...] that’s one of the

things that they don't understand, that racism is so engrained in this country, they don't see it. It's ignorance is bliss [...]

Explanations of the discrimination experienced by on-reserve youth who attend high school in the city were also in the interviews. Alicia described the racism her children felt when they attended the North Battleford Comprehensive High School ('the Comp.') after attending elementary school on reserve: "My kids go to school in the Comp. and they felt like they didn't have a voice."

Participants also regarded colonization as having affected Aboriginal people's sense of place and belonging in society. Cindy explained how youth do not feel safe within the larger society, fuelling distrust and anger:

They have to have a clear understanding of their place in society and if it's not there, if there is not that sense of safety in society [...] and they don't have that at home, it creates a very dysfunctional, a very distrustful, angry, frustrated [person] [...] and then we see that coming to the schools.

### *5.2.2 Self-Esteem and Belonging*

Low self-esteem, lack of belonging, and feelings of disempowerment, particularly among youth, figured as prominent themes throughout all of the interviews.

Participants spoke about how colonized parenting fuels identities and low self-esteem. Cindy, for example, said:

I think when you look at a lot of the kids today that I'm working with you see their lack of confidence, their lack of self-esteem. That hasn't been nurtured in them, the value of their own abilities. They quit before they even try. They become overwhelmed and they don't trust [in themselves]. It happens so often [...] even I remember being in class, as much as I felt that empowerment to have my own opinion, I would go to school and you're afraid to answer a question, so you freeze. You know the answer but you won't speak up for fear of what are people going to say, and [for fear of] drawing attention to yourself.



Cindy also talked about the connection between sense of belonging and low attendance in school:

[...] that shows a lack of self-confidence, self-esteem. That could be another explanation why they're not in school. They struggle with their own sense of self-worth [...] people in the profession of therapy, working with youth, will say, "they're looking for a sense of belonging."

Another stakeholder and parent, Alicia, identified "lack of belonging," "self-esteem," and "shelter" as the three factors contributing to youth crime. Both Cindy and Alicia related self-esteem and lack of belonging to the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism (discussed more below).

Issues of low self-esteem were also troubling in terms of their impact on seeking help when needed. Victoria made a link between low self-esteem and low chance of seeking help: "If a youth has really low self-esteem level they aren't going to want to seek services."

Low self-esteem was also thought to prevent individuals from engaging in activities that may help them heal, contributing to their continued disadvantaged position. Victoria spoke of observing people who were immobilized because of low self-esteem: "It's really hard to get youth to be independent, and you know, take charge, to want to change their lives." David described how a "lack of empowerment" decreases the likelihood that individuals will escape and overcome disadvantage: "I think it is that lack of empowerment to cultivate those positive things out of them that has held back more people I guess [...]."

Cindy noted how internalized oppression led to depression and hopelessness, creating immobility for people and inhibiting their ability to better their own lives:

There's that low-grade depression. It kind of gets to a point of, "what's the point?." [We need] to help them find that strength within them, that resilience, that resilient spirit, they need the support.

Cindy shared her ideas about how many of the youth in her community do not have the same opportunities as those living more of what she called resilient lifestyles. Because youth are focused on surviving, they cannot even begin to thrive: "These kids are just in survival mode everyday, just get through today, just get through today. You look at their parents, is it any wonder?"

### *5.2.3 The Effect of Colonization on Parenting*

Interviews and artwork with youth from BATC demonstrated the depth of family love and connection felt by many participants. Artwork done by the youth for the purposes of the larger study often involved the use of their family names, and familial sentiments, such as one piece of artwork that said "My mom's hugs," with a giant heart. Stakeholders who were parents expressed deep love for their children and their desires to provide a strong, healthy, loving relationship for them. Although families demonstrated strength and devoted parenting, participants also were aware of how the effects of colonialism still permeate many aspects of Aboriginal people's personal lives, families and relationships. Participants drew attention to their concerns related to parental neglect, abuse, violence and addiction within their homes.

Interviews exposed the desire for strong relationships with parents. Barbara, for example, spoke about how her children recognized and appreciated the discrepancy between the relationship they had with her and the relationship many other youth have with their parents:

One time the young girls were talking, and my daughter told me [that they said], "oh how come your mom is always chasing you?" And the

one girl said that, “because she is the baby,” and the one girl was like, “geez I wish my mom would do that.” There is a lot of girls that would say, “I wish my mom would do that, I wish my mom would,” and my girls sometimes they’d open their eyes and would say, “I think we are really lucky, Mom.”

Parenting was described as both emotionally and physically absent. As Elizabeth explains, when a parent is absent from the home or the life of a youth, the youth will often seek out someone or something to fill the absence. This often leads to encounters with gangs:

A lot of them live without a father in their home and they’re looking for guys to look up to, and so they find that in [...] their friends, the guys that are trying to get gangs organized and stuff.

Similarly, Cindy touched on how when parents are not involved in their children’s lives, youth experience a kind of void:

There [have] been [...] feelings of a parent not being present. They’re there but they’re an absent parent in terms of emotional, psychological [presence][...] there’s feelings of inadequacy that the youth are facing.

Home life was said to affect youth in a variety of ways, both positively and negatively. For example, Clifford discussed how children’s actions at school are products of their realities at home: “The way they’re acting and doing stuff at the school [...] it’s happening because of their home life.” Brenda also mentioned the broader influence of home life on youth:

I see a lot of good people in our community wanting to help, but you can’t help somebody who doesn’t want to be helped. There [are] still [...] parents that don’t get help, they are living through their children, and their children are learning their bad habits.

Many participants spoke about how the relationships between parents and their children are not always healthy or positive. David provided an example from his youth, showing how unhealthy relationships influenced how he viewed family:

I met a great portion of my older relatives, and all they did all day was get high, and on weekends drink. I was their [relative] [...] and they wanted a relationship. That [...] was the only form of relationship they knew to have. So my concept of what it was for people to show me love was very twisted. My concept of love was people not making me pay for things.

As I discussed earlier, stakeholders linked problems within families to gang involvement.

Julia spoke of how unhealthy relationships between youth and parents are both a push and a pull factor for gang involvement:

When they start getting into the trouble, it's just because they want to belong somewhere. That's why gangs are starting to be so popular... There is no family. There is a family at home but they are not actually engaging in that family because the parents are too busy doing drugs, alcohol, or what have you, and they are not at home. I think a lot of youth are very lonely, [...] so that's why they engage in getting their little groups together. Once the group is established, they get bored because there is nothing to do. Then they go set fire to that guy's car or what have you. There is no authority figure there.

Cindy offered an explanation of these parenting realities and identified how parenting is sometimes trapped within cycles of colonialism. She noted how difficult it is to teach people within these cycles how to be good parents when they never experienced it themselves. During one interview, she pointed to a picture (see Figure 1) of the residential school in Qu'Appelle in which a series of tents had been set up just outside the school. While referring to this picture she spoke about its symbolism regarding the continued state of Aboriginal families, despite the dismantling of the school:

This [picture] is very symbolic of what we're facing today. I said, "the government built this school, this huge gap, and then this fence, and the parents so wanted to be by their kids that they went and lived as close to the fence as they could just to catch a glimpse of their kids crossing the yard or something in that distance." And after how many generations of this, they're saying, "we're taking this fence down. We want this yard, you can come in." It's the parents now, they've learned...so well from this system, so now how do we help them and empower them to give them back their kids?

She also said later in an interview: “Right now we are at a very crucial point where [we must ask ourselves], ‘How do you give parenting to parents?’”



Figure 1-1: Qu'Appelle Residential School (Library and Archives Canada, n.d.)

Clifford also expressed frustration with the cycle of colonized parenting, recognizing the need for change, yet not being sure how to enact it: “How can I know how to raise my kids really well if I wasn’t raised really well?”

In sum, all of the participants brought up ideas around the importance of parenting, including discussions of parents who are absent and may negatively influence and expose their children to elements of risk. Many stakeholders spoke of how parenting, was colonized and often lost, an intergenerational factor that is still being felt within their communities. There were also many instances of the traditional methods and parenting practices largely destroyed with the arrival of residential schools, or as Cindy says, “our ways are lost, it’s us that are lost.”

#### *5.2.4 Connections with Traditional Culture*

Many participants expressed their connections with, and enjoyment from traditional and cultural practices. However, stakeholders also expressed that there was a disconnection between Aboriginal people and their traditional identity and culture; and is a major theme on BATC reserves. Sofia spoke about how the loss of culture was intimately tied to the loss of traditional languages due to time spent in residential schools. She explained how the education system worked to suppress her knowledge of the Cree language. Speaking Cree made her feel separate from her peers:

I really think that it plays on a whole way of First Nations losing their culture. It's clearly evident because, even myself, I'm just learning Cree again [...] I think before I went to elementary, I was fluent in Cree and then as I entered the education system, even though it was a First Nations school, it just seemed like it wasn't really spoken and anyone that was they were kind of ridiculed for speaking it.

Cindy, while discussing the anger she observes in some of the youth of her community, also spoke of the negative impact that loss of language has had on her community and First Nations people. As she explains it, the problem is not as simple as loss of language and tradition. Rather, the problem is that of a deeper constructed social disability—the removal of the opportunity for proper and precise communication from an entire group of people:

The kids, they're burdened with the anger of their parents before they start their own life, before they even set their path. They are put on the path [...] wherever life is going, they start off with anger, not just from their parents but from the community in general, First Nations people. A lot of it comes from the fact that they have not been able to engage equally, at an equal footing with outside organizations, with government agencies, Indian Affairs and everything, because of the fact that they're not able to manipulate the language so that it benefits them. It's frustrating at best.

Many discussed how the breakdown of traditional roles and culture due to colonization had negatively impacted the transition period from youth to adulthood. For instance, Elizabeth reflected on the loss of culture and its connection to problematic behaviours. As she sees it, loss of culture leads to a loss of identity. With no healthy outlets for fulfilling such voids, many young people turn to risky behaviours:

They needed a way to transfer into adults, and in the First Nations culture there was a way to do that [...] however [...] when that was lost and the addictions came into play the youth didn't know how to go through that process [...] I find that for the young men, crime became the way to prove themselves as young men.

As Martin explains, young men in particular no longer have any clear roles to play in their communities. As such, they are not able to derive a sense of self-worth:

They're the ones that are most impacted by colonization because the role has changed, from a traditional [...] way the communities were before, they had valid roles in the things that they did. But now, you put them in this system, they're disempowered, they're marginalized even more than women, and then we don't give them an opportunity to do anything.

Elizabeth also elaborated on how the transition into adulthood has changed from traditional ways, and how there are more risk factors facing young people today:

A long time ago they had to prove themselves as warriors, right? That's how they got acceptance [...] And today it's not there anymore so they look for ways to prove themselves as men [...] and then there's so much negative factors that come into play. The gang life, the drug life, the alcohol, all those come into play now. And being on their own. At night, nobody cares. The parents don't care.

David explained how Aboriginal people's sense of self is often dictated and learned, rather than felt or experienced. For him, what is left of their traditions and culture is being dictated rather than passed down in the traditional ways. As a result, identities and teachings are delegated by the government and exist as a thing separate

from Aboriginal people rather than being passed down by Elders or others in the community:

Some of the things they are being taught they're just told to mindlessly follow and personally I don't agree with a lot of that [...] It has nothing to do with building character or any of that. [...] It's kind of like counting traditions, if you do the tradition, you're a good person because you're preserving who you are. This concept of who you are is defined for you. They have no idea what that means, what's being taught. I don't think it should be taught because if it's not being taught in the first place, then they must not really believe in what they're standing for. But yet they, in the name of preserving this concept of who they are, they are just being held back even more, and the whole thing is that the concept of who they are is government funded in that [the government] just keeps pouring out the dollars so that the people can do their little events, and the kids are not told a thing. It's just useless because it's just people going and all these events [...] a lot of the events are purely hypocritical.

Cindy discussed how more and more youth want to get in touch with their culture and ancestry, and the identities associated with them:

I find that kids crave traditional music and traditional activities. I think it's a cry for identity, and they start off wanting to feel that they can identify to their ancestry and [accept] of who they are.

Similarly, Elizabeth talked about how she takes pride in her identity and how there is a need for Aboriginal children to be taught to take pride in who they are:

I went back in time of the past to try and get myself back to who I am and I have to be really proud of myself because I am me, I'm a Native women of 5 [...] I have Sioux in me, I have Saulteaux in me, I have the black man in me, I also have the Cree [...] those are the things that I have to be really, really proud of [...]. I can never be anyone that I am not [...] this is something they have to really learn to be proud of, who they are.

These descriptions of how colonialism has come to affect the inner aspects of Aboriginal life portray the depth of colonialism and how it exists beyond what we can see. With descriptions of how colonialism is experienced as both an



external and internal reality presented above, this next section offers insight of how colonialism is maintained, and how it is still a reality within Canadian society, perpetuated within Canadian institutions and policy which function to maintain Aboriginal disadvantage for so many people based on their Aboriginal identity.

### **5.3 Institutional Marginalization, Control, and Generated Disadvantage**

The connection between historical and systemic disadvantages, colonized identities and their consequences, and larger institutional causes emerged within all interviews. The prevalence of neocolonialism within contemporary social and political institutions and policies paint a stark picture of the further challenges facing Aboriginal people and communities today.

Within the qualitative interviews were discussions of concern pertaining to the effects that some institutions and policies have on Aboriginal people. Discussions were extensive, but we focus our attention briefly on stakeholder discussions of education, child and family services, the reserve system and social work. I also present participant themes of the continued oppression of First Nations people from the control exerted over them by the funding and administrative schemes of the federal government, as well as the impact of controlled leadership within Aboriginal communities.

#### *5.3.1 Education, Child and Family Services and the Reserve System*

Many participants described their experience of fear and discrimination in the education system, child and family services, the reserve system, and at the hands of social

workers. For example, Cindy discussed the impacts of social institutions on Aboriginal people. She told us how they were not designed with the benefit of Aboriginal people in mind, and how some Aboriginal people are uncomfortable with the way they function:

They're just trying to come home and [they are] struggling with identity and trying to fit in. There has to be a great fear there, not only of the education system where they felt a lot of disempowerment was rooted, but also with the Child and Family Services, with Social Services, social workers. These institutes have created a lot of fear.

Martin also spoke about the disconnection between First Nations people and social institutions. He explained that social institutions are yet another aspect of society for and by the Euro-dominant Canadian society:

The systems that we're forced into, they're not made for us, and they don't fit with our culture, so we have conflicts there, too. [...] we're [going to] run into [these conflicts] because they're not built for us. They're built for non-handicapped white males. Even women are at a disadvantage.

Issues of marginalization were also discussed in terms of their realities due to the reserve system. Although many participants felt a sense of home and a connection to their community, life on reserve was also depicted as full of challenges, including social and physical exclusion. Elizabeth shared her opinion about realities on reserve. She described the substandard living conditions and the cumulative disadvantages faced by Aboriginal people on reserve:

It's a cycle [...], there is a whole [...] history behind that, if you go back [...] where it started you know? And why the reserve is the way it's set up that way, where there's not enough houses and [...] no adequate water in the sewer [nor] employment opportunities. There's a whole history there, dictated by Indian Affairs. Back in history it was illegal for a First Nations person to leave the reserve, they needed to have a permit from the government to leave. They needed a permit to work [...] [if] someone tried to get into education they lost their treaty status. So it was all dictated by Indian Affairs and then it evolved into what it is today. And the residential schools [were] a big factor in the

loss of culture and loss of parenting skills for people, which resulted in the [...] unhealthy families, addictions, which brings us to today to what's going on today.

### *5.3.2 Control Through Governance Structures, Funding, and Resources*

Many stakeholders provided examples of when very good leaders made beneficial impacts on their communities and other strong community members contributed to positive lived experiences for others. Other conversations however pertained to ideas of marginalization, isolation, and oppression, and were linked back to the imposition of control over First Nations people and communities in terms of governance structures, bureaucracy, funding, and relations with the federal government. Martin exemplified the overall sense of frustration he felt toward the federal government by explaining how a suicide prevention program, which was making positive contributions to the community, was withdrawn due to funding stipulations by the federal government:

We've got this program going, it's been here for four years, it's going to end, unfortunately. It's made big strides in that area [...] Because it's a time limited initiative by the federal government. That's the problem we have [...] they give you a five year mandate and expect you to make miracles in five years. A big example of it was this Aboriginal Healing Foundation. [...] After ten years [...] [they say] our responsibility is over, we've addressed it, you've healed in ten years. Bullshit. It took over five hundred years to get to this point. You expect [some money] and ten years to do it? It doesn't work that way. It's such a bureaucratic way of looking at social problems. I think it does a hell of a disservice.

David recognized the fine balance that exists within reserves pertaining to power, money, and resistance to the federal government. He spoke about how community members have to be careful about what they say or do in order to not appear too aggressive toward the federal government. According to him, organized resistance and combativeness are seen as threats to the government, which ultimately affect the resources that the communities receive:

There's a lot of resistance in the reserve in the name of anything that comes against what we believe in. It threatens the government dollars that are flowing into the reserve so there has to be wisdom on our part in that [...] we are being allowed to use the hall, we can't be coming against certain things, just for the fact that we don't want to come off as full force, like aggressive people.

Barbara alluded to how she felt the federal government exerted a form of control through surveillance and close monitoring of First Nations people on her reserve:

Barbara: We are being not controlled, but being watched carefully now.

Interviewer: Ok, watched by who in what way? Like government wise? Or not related to them?

Barbara: [...] I'd say, somebody higher than Chief and Council.

Cindy was well aware of the bureaucracy that still functions within the government's management of Aboriginal people:

And then the system itself [...] what is it, the futile system that was introduced which is very [...] it promotes violence within the community so that you have Indian Affairs at the top, Chief and Council in the middle and then the grassroots people at the bottom.

Julia spoke about the lack of opportunities faced by both Aboriginal leadership and First Nations members on reserve. She explained how the federal government puts a lot of pressure on communities to generate positive results, yet communities are given little resources to work with and, as a result, are virtually set up for failure. Julia also mentioned that the lack of resources on reserve given by the government tends to create a scarcity of employment, with jobs going to individuals from certain families who are not necessarily qualified to do the work, leading to further challenges:

There [are] a lot of challenges to going back home, there is not a lot of great opportunity in those communities either. So there is such a high expectation for the people themselves but then the challenge is that there isn't anything there for the government leaders, like the Chief and Council, to try and meet the need of the people that live there. [...]

Most jobs will go to, who knows who, and [that] doesn't necessarily mean they are educated or qualified for that position. So if you have an eighteen year old who had more skills and abilities to do that job they are not necessarily [going to] get that job [because] they are not from the right family [...] it's all based on what amount of funding and money for programs and who is going to get that for x amount of years that that individual is empowered [...]

Cindy addressed how the numerous disadvantages and barriers faced by Aboriginal people should be explained within a larger context of how Aboriginal people are still suffering at the hands of the federal government. According to her, the cries for help of Aboriginal people are often either unheard or unaddressed by the powers that be:

But for Aboriginal people, it's kind of like you have this child who's being abused at home and goes to the teacher and says, "this is what's happening to me at home." In a larger picture, it's like Canada is the home, and the Aboriginal people are the child that's being abused and what happens is they try and call attention to it. They might go to United Nations, and say, "this is what we're experiencing." For the abuser, a lot of times they'll lock up their victim in the closet, so they don't have to see them. It's the same thing with Aboriginal people, they want us out of sight. We're a constant reminder to society of [...] their own guilt and shame. Rather than deal with it, it's blame. It's the home at a smaller scale.

### *5.3.3 Perceptions of Aboriginal Leadership*

Although many stakeholders were aware of the potential of, and even provided examples of strong, efficient leaders and community members, many of the stakeholders from BATC reserves said they had "low confidence" when asked to rate their level of confidence in community governance—in other words, Aboriginal leaders themselves. Alicia spoke about the unaccountability of Aboriginal leadership on her reserve, stating that they are not worried about correctly doing a job but rather are concerned with just getting it done:

Most of the people that run don't have the same viewpoint as me, they're more for the money and making others happy than doing what's right; to fix things quickly with a Band-Aid.

Landon also was troubled with the way that leadership executed its mandate. He observed that measures were carried out in ways that ensured the leadership's re-election rather than focusing on what would truly benefit the community:

It's the problem with these politics, what are they doing to the Chief and Council.[...] I tried for five years to pass Moosomin for a dry reserve, the Chief said "I can't do it." I said, "why?" "Because they won't vote for me next time if I run for Chief, if I do that." So nothing's come of it [...] But every time you ask your Chief, or my Chief, or somebody else, that's what they are scared of. They are scared that they [...] won't vote for him the next election, so he won't be a Chief.

Alicia similarly noted how community leadership had the tendency to favour some community members over others:

[...] people on top are getting more money and the people at the bottom are not really getting the support because there is not much education or people who are in those positions tend to judge harshly and group people. [They have the attitude that] [...] if you are in a gang you deserve it and you don't need help. [They think you should] find your own way out, stuff like that.

Chris spoke about the importance of a leadership that has the best interests of the community at heart. On the one hand, he explained how things could change for the better when good leadership is present within the community. On the other hand, however, Chris also noted how communities could face large periods of time at the whim of inefficient leadership:

Chris: [...] the new Chief and Council come in and they started programs but it is different now, like the parents see that they have to do something too. Before it was getting outta hand [because] the parents wouldn't do [anything], [...] it all goes to the leadership, if we have good leadership then they [...]

Interviewer: So they sort of hold the families accountable and they—

Chris: Yeah, [because] the previous band council were in there for something like ten years[...] people just didn't do nothing [...] the councillors just wanted to get paid.

Julia echoed Chris by explaining that the wellbeing of the community is largely based on the measures and initiatives carried out by the leadership. She discussed how progress could be lost overnight with the implementation of poor leadership:

There are some bands that are more advanced than others [...] I've been around the business long enough to know, one band will do good for with one Chief [...] [if] they are lucky enough to have a Chief for eight years where it's really good, they will be good for eight years and one bad one will come in and all of a sudden they will just slide back down. [...] [it] depends on who is the leader, at one time our band was, I thought, up to par too. Like we were getting somewhere and [...] now it's where it's at, with third party management and all that. There is this other band who was millions on the hole and now they are right up there, it all depends on leadership and how knowledgeable those leaders are and how well the support staff are.

David, a minority voice on the topic, discussed what he believed were cycles of misdirected blame by Aboriginal people. He spoke about how blame worked in his community as a phenomenon that not only targeted outside groups but inside groups as well, such as Aboriginal leadership. In particular, he noted how the leadership in his community was being held accountable for things that continue to be out of their control:

When I see leaders, I think how would the kids be affected if they came walking in here and saw how their leaders talked to each other, or how the people talk to the leaders, which is even worse. The leaders don't retaliate, which is a good thing [...] but like just seeing the people, like say at our quarterly band meeting, the way the adults talk to the leadership it's so degrading and like it's trying to put burdens on them that they can't carry. And the way I see it is like for these people who are all about criticizing, if all your putting into your leadership, if all your investing into them is negativity and criticism, what do you expect the outcome to be?

## 5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented findings from the interview data that outlined three major, interconnecting themes. First, I discussed participant insights on the link between wellbeing and historical and systemic factors. Here participants spoke of how structural disadvantages negatively impacted quality of life on reserve, which was also seen to lead to both in-group and out-group violence, addictions, criminogenic activities, including gang involvement. Participants also described historical and structural factors as having hindered many community members' ability to parent in healthy ways. Second, I detailed how interview participants experienced colonized notions of Aboriginality through othering, and how the internalization of oppression was connected to a lack of belonging, low self-esteem, as well as disconnection from tradition and culture. Finally, I addressed participant insights on the role of institutions in the continued marginalization of Aboriginal people. Here, governance structures, the allotting of funding and resources, and Aboriginal leadership were largely seen to perpetuate the lived disadvantages of Aboriginal people rather than creating liberating or emancipatory realities.

In the next chapter, I discuss the themes reviewed in this chapter and present my analysis of the research findings. In advancing my arguments, I attempt to draw on both the interview data and, where appropriate, on concepts reviewed in Chapter 2.



## **Chapter 6: Discussion—The Construction of the Aboriginal Other:**

### **Identity and Power**

*Colonization continues in both the external realities [...] and in the inner reality of each person.*  
—Goulet et al. (2011, p. 90)

The legacy of colonialism continues to have contemporary effects in peoples' lives. Despite the multicultural image of this nation, findings here suggest that inequalities stemming from colonial policy and practice still remain in place. According to the interview data the processes of colonial policy control and marginalize Aboriginal people while suppressing opportunities and motivations for resistance.

As you will recall in the previous chapter, participants outlined both how they experienced neocolonialism and how they internalized the oppression. For instance, Martin explained how Aboriginal people are forced into positions and social situations that are not congruent with their people or traditions. He said: "The systems that we're forced into, they're not made for us, and they don't fit with our culture." One stakeholder explained how these processes are internalized and how this may lead to a decreased sense of a persons place in the world: "They have to have a clear understanding of their place in society and if it's not there [...] it creates a very dysfunctional, a very distrustful, angry, frustrated [person] [...]."

In the previous chapter I also described participants perspectives on the construction of identity as the core of the impact of colonial processes and continued neocolonialism. Many discussions about identity arose in the interviews. Cindy shared her insights about the process of othering, she said Aboriginal people "[...] spend half

[their] life trying to explain that [they] have a right to exist,” and how “[Aboriginal people’s] very existence seems to be an affront to the majority of the people you come across.” Elizabeth spoke about how youth would benefit from a strong sense of cultural identity: “this is something they have to really learn to be proud of, who they are.”

Drawing from the themes of othering and oppression, and the words of participants, this chapter reveals two key themes connected to the ongoing othering process: 1) identity, self-esteem and exclusion; and its relation to 2) autonomy, power and self-government. I conclude that the perpetuation of control over Aboriginal people, under the illusion that they themselves hold that control, has sustained many social problems and shifted the blame from the government to the bands, and even to individual members, for the socioeconomic realities as well as the crime and justice issues that they experience. Despite the establishment of Aboriginal self-government, community stakeholders and Elders shed light on ways First Nations people on BATC reserves are still answerable to the federal government while they continue to suffer marginality and disenfranchisement related to housing, employment, socioeconomics and racialization—and provide insight on an existing illusion that they are the ones in control of changing this, when they also recognize a lack of control.

### **6.1 Identity, Self-Esteem and Exclusion**

Throughout the initial colonial process, mechanisms supporting the easy management of Aboriginal people involved imposing a label on them that would be subject to colonial policy and function to discriminate and differentiate the *savage* quality of *Indianness* from the *civilized* way of Europeans (Neegan, 2005). Colonial powers in Canada thus

classified Aboriginal people as second-class citizens, creating an Indian identity in order to legitimize their racist policies and practices. These labels, although imposed on Aboriginal people, came to and continue to shape the conception of Aboriginal identity both from without and from within First Nations people themselves, fuelling the racism that still exists. As one participant exemplified: “you spend half your life trying to explain that you have a right to exist.”

### *6.1.1 Racism and Othering*

As we saw in chapter 5, ideas of Aboriginal people as other, or being different and inferior, to Euro-colonial settlers was a strong theme in the interview data. Aboriginal presence continues to be met with criticism. One participant stated: “they want us to stay on the reserves, but then they complain that we’re not involving ourselves in society. And then we move in the cities, we open businesses, we try and get involved, and they’re like, “why don’t they go back to the reserve?” It’s like they don’t want us to exist at all.”

Participants expressed concern over what it meant to be an Aboriginal person within the larger society and how the creation of an inferior label still affects Aboriginal people to a great extent. As Cindy further elaborated: “at some point it can overwhelm you [...] trying to succeed in a world where your very existence seems to be an affront to the majority of the people you come across.” These racist sentiments echoed throughout stakeholder interviews. Many expressed how they are disadvantaged because of their Aboriginality and Martin strongly reiterated: “racism is so engrained in this country.”

Control over Aboriginal people has largely stemmed from the differentiation between Aboriginal people and European settlers through the construction of an inferior Aboriginal identity. Colonial agreements and processes based on the assumed inferiority

and primitiveness of First Nations people were carried out despite recognition of the efficiency and tradition bound to their pre-established, strong systems of “language, culture, traditions, history, sense of nationalism, territory, laws and legal system, political system and spirituality” (Ladner, 2001, p. 120). With this informing the colonialist approach to Aboriginal-European relations, a consistent and still present emphasis on policies of assimilation was accompanied by the goal of *civilizing* Aboriginal people (Ladner, 2001) in an attempt to rid the nation of the *Indian problem*. As Lawrence notes, “the very existence of settler society is therefore predicated on maintaining racial apartheid, on emphasizing racial difference, white superiority, and ‘Native’ inferiority” (2003, p. 8).

Loss of identity, culture, and sense of self are arguably the results of a long and persistent process that has aimed to control First Nations people through their being labelled as inferior. One participant recognized that Aboriginal people are “struggling with identity and trying to fit in.” Many stakeholders spoke about how people who have lost their culture and identity are craving to regain them and how First Nations people should be proud of who they are. One stakeholder explained: “I find that kids crave traditional music and traditional activities. I think it’s a cry for identity,” while another stakeholder spoke about teaching children about Aboriginal culture and heritage: “this is something they have to really learn to be proud of who they are.”

### *6.1.2 Identity and Self-Esteem*

Authority over the colonial ideology becomes the main method of control over the consciousness of those who have been colonized, with this consciousness being defined as “[comprising] the sum total of experience [that] contributes to a person’s unique sense

of identity” (Adams, 1999, p. 37). Therefore “colonialism has invaded Aboriginal souls in the sense that everyday (they) are faced with questions of identity and dislocation” (Vermette, 2009, p. 227). As many stakeholders discussed, a lack of knowledge about what their cultures and traditions have contributed to the world can lead to feelings of distrust and anger. Others still expressed concern over what those traditions have come to symbolize and whether or not individuals have a true sense of what traditional practices and events mean. David, for example, stated, “some of the things they are being taught they’re just told to mindlessly follow [...] they have no idea what that means [...] and the whole thing is that the concept of who they are is government funded.” As also related in the interview data, decreased initiative, decreased confidence, and increased engagement in risky behaviours—such as involvement in gangs—can be seen as attempts to fill the needs created by loss of identity, self-worth, and culture. In short, neocolonialism causes individuals to view themselves and their communities in a colonized way.

The imposition of labels on Aboriginal people has also worked to create concepts that erase their unique realities and histories. By shifting First Nations individual identities to ones being dictated to them, rather than ones chosen for themselves, distinct and diverse Aboriginal communities have been largely reduced to a few generalized themes and issues by which they are legally recognized. Such homogenizing labelling has effectively replaced the inherited histories of distinct groups and transplanted them with an anticipated future of disadvantage, signalling what Adams would call “ideological domination” (1999, p. 37). First Nations people, as a result of this homogenization, are subjected to uniform treatment by the federal government, namely its “Band-Aid solutions,” and institutions not designed to meet their communities’ needs. As such, many

participants spoke of the high rate of failure of government measures, programs, and initiatives which were out of sync with the needs of their communities, at times intimating that such measures might be the result of *failure by design*.

Questions of identity and belonging, so prevalent in the interview data, also appear to stem from First Nations people's loss of understanding of their own cultures, traditions, and sense of place in the world in instances where that has been removed from specific people. Being socialized to conform to Euro-colonial ideals has been noticed in instances to be extended even further into Aboriginal individuals' entire sense of self.

Because colonial ideologies have replaced traditional teachings with homogenized facsimiles and taught Aboriginal people that their traditional ways are inferior, processes of empowerment have also been made all the more difficult, another major source of frustration expressed by research participants. As one stakeholder observed, "they quit before they even try. They become overwhelmed and they don't trust [in themselves]." The resulting immobility and low-grade depression, many noted, significantly decreases individuals' chances of escaping their disadvantages realities, thus furthering the cycle of oppression.

### *6.1.3 Exclusion and Access*

The practice of dividing on- and off-reserve First Nations members had, in the past, created many catch-22 situations whereby, as noted in at least one interview, members' legal status were in jeopardy should they attempt to leave the reserve in order to obtain an education. Still today, the question of whether to live on or off reserve is fraught with difficulty. On the one hand, as so many participants noted, quality of life is, in general, not very high on reserve. As one participant shared with us: "there's not

enough houses and [...] no adequate water in the sewer [nor] employment opportunities.”

While on the other hand, as another participant noted, which I reiterate here, moving to the city, one encounters the sense that society at large cannot make up its mind as to whether First Nations people should be on or off reserve:

I had one person who said to me, “society, when you hear it in the media, when you hear it in general, they want us to stay on the reserves, but then they complain that we’re not involving ourselves in society.” And then we move in the cities, we open businesses, we try and get involved, and they’re like, “why don’t they go back to the reserve?”

In other words, all of these factors have compounded the separation already experienced by Aboriginal people who were first divided from settler society and then further divided and controlled based on legal status or lack thereof, and based on whether they resided on or off reserve. This would support the idea that Aboriginal people’s sense of belonging in society has been affected, creating consequences that are wide spread. Cindy also spoke to this: “They have to have a clear place in society and if it’s not there [...] it creates a very dysfunctional, a very distrustful, angry, frustrated [individual].”

Labelling Aboriginal people as federally recognized Indians has gone beyond their homogenization and othering, culminating also in inter-group separations. Not only are Aboriginal people plotted as the *them* against the ethnically European *us* of settler society, but further classification has led to inter-group division based on *what kind* of Aboriginal person one may be. In other words, “the problem with the constitutional process, as it has been executed, is that it divides Natives [into] Métis, Non-Status Indian and Status Indian. This is the classic divide-and-rule situation” (Adams, 1999, p. 65).

Despite commonalities in language, traditions, and spirituality, an ideological separation has worked to classify some individuals as one “certain type” of Indian, and

others “another type” of Indian (Moss & Gardner- O’Toole, 1991; RCAP, 1996; Adams, 1999). Separation has also carried a physical reality since the right to reside on reserve only belonged to status Indians (Moss & Gardner- O’Toole, 1991; Lawrence, 2003).

Another theme that figured as prominent within the data is the continued role of residential school on the lives of Aboriginal people. In this section I discuss the impact of residential schools and their continuing legacy on family, culture and language for Aboriginal people.

#### *6.1.4 The Impact of Residential Schools on Family, Culture and Language*

As seen in the previous chapter, colonized parenting as a result of the residential school system was a topic discussed at length in the interviews. The residential school system removed countless children from their homes, many for years at a time. Upon their return, the abuses and hardships experienced in schools, the distance and time away from parents, the language barriers, and the teachings that told children to devalue their culture and heritage separated children from their parents. Residential school children grew up being denied loving child-parent relationships and often could not even conceptualize healthy, loving relationships when they themselves became parents. Many Aboriginal families have overcome this immense challenge and many thrive. As explained in the previous chapter, many Aboriginal families are healthy, loving and supportive, and many youth from BATC demonstrated their connections and affections for their families. However, residential schools did leave their effect on a number of families as well, with intergenerational factors still being experienced. As Clifford summarized it, “How can I know how to raise my kids really well if I wasn’t raised really well?” Participants talked of how parenting as a concept was largely destroyed with the arrival of residential



schools, revealing how neocolonialism still functions today within one of life's foundational institutions—the family. Its impacts, as related by participants, are widespread and include engagement in gang life, difficulty performing at school, and addiction problems.

Just as many participants spoke about their relationships with their children and the importance of family, many participants also shared their experiences of the intergenerational impact of residential schools and spoke of how parenting was trapped within cycles of colonialism. Participants also identified the importance of understanding this history in order to make sense of what challenges youth, their families, and indeed entire First Nations communities are currently facing.

The way that the Indian Act and its effects, such as the residential school system, have come to infiltrate Aboriginal people's entire sense of self as well as their sense of belonging in the world cannot be easily undone. As Quesnel puts it: "Freedom from the Indian Act does not provide easy freedom from the entrenched behaviour of that regime. To paraphrase an old expression, you can take the 'Indian' out of the Indian Act, but you cannot easily take the Indian Act out of the 'Indian'" (2012, p. 55). As Cindy put it, "how do you give back parenting to parents?"

The effects of the residential school system on First Nations people, however, also reach far beyond the colonizing of parenting and the family institution. The system represented a wholehearted attempt to resocialize and assimilate Aboriginal children by trying to "kill the Indian, save the man" (Darvey & Yellow Thunder Woman, 2006). In other words, residential schools targeted the very essence of how individuals identified with their culture and people. As Goulet et al. (2011) argue, "for the Canadian

government, these coercive strategies achieved their objective of the re-socialization and assimilation of Indigenous children through the suppression of Indigenous identities, accompanied by the colonization of the youth's imaginations" (p. 92). Residential schools taught Aboriginal children that anything Aboriginal was wrong, severely disrupting how Aboriginal people related to each other and to their heritage, a disconnection still felt today, and which comprised a major theme in the research findings. Although many participants expressed connections to their culture, and enjoyment in participating in cultural and traditional events and ceremonies, other stakeholders expressed concerns about the diminishing prevalence of cultural identification. Elizabeth, when describing why crime was rampant in her community explained that individuals "needed a way to transfer into adults, and in the First Nations culture there was a way to do that [...] that was lost," while she said in a later conversation she said that "a long time ago they had to prove themselves as warriors, right? That's how they got acceptance [...] it's not there anymore." Findings exposed how the loss of traditions and culture not only took away rites of passage and traditional teaching for growing up, but resulted in crime and other problematic behaviours. In particular, many stakeholders spoke of the negative impact of loss of culture for youths who were transitioning into adulthood, which was interpreted as increasing their risk factors for gang involvement and other problematic behaviours.

Research participants discussed loss of their Cree language in terms of a structural, institutional failing that continues to this day. In other words, when an education system both fails Aboriginal people in English language proficiency and does not support their use of Indigenous languages, the result is the systematic construction of social disability. That is to say that generations of people were removed the opportunity

to fully communicate, express themselves, argue their points, or stand up for themselves. Residential schools can thus be said to have also effected a deliberate distancing of Aboriginal people from the most important tool of empowerment—efficient and precise communication. While a few stakeholders were still fluent in their traditional Aboriginal languages, this also was seen to be decreasing in prevalence. As one stakeholder explained when describing the way that the oppression of language and communication has affected Aboriginal people: “they have not been able to engage equally, at an equal footing with outside organizations, with government agencies, Indian Affairs and everything, because of the fact that they’re not able to manipulate the language so that it benefits them.” This can be directly tied to the suppression of Aboriginal language within residential schools.

The impact of residential schools is also connected to the current government policy pertaining to Aboriginal people that is still in place within this country to maintain their oppressed social positions. Misconceptions of the power and autonomy associated with self-government exemplify this continued structural disadvantage.

## **6.2 Autonomy, Power and Self-Government**

Various forms of control over Aboriginal people, which were exerted behind a semblance of empowerment, were initiated in colonial times but continue today. Only fifteen bands across the country have reached the final stage of negotiations with the federal government and are legally considered to have self-government under a self-government

agreement (Kayseas, Hindle, & Anderson, 2006, p. 231). While a few bands<sup>3</sup> have achieved successes and milestones in terms of sovereignty, economic development, and the social wellbeing of their on-reserve communities, most bands remain under the authority of the 1867 Indian Act, which is fraught with stipulations and requirements that do not always benefit Aboriginal people. Challenges include

insufficient power and jurisdiction; excessive government controls; unclear lines of authority and accountability (the Chief and Council are accountable to INAC instead of their community); inadequate funding and training; lack of enforcement mechanisms; confusion about the impact of provincial laws; and confusion about leaders roles and responsibilities (Kayseas, Hindle, & Anderson, 2006, p. 231).

Beginning in the 1980s (Andrusieczko, 2012), the process of establishing self-government for Aboriginal people has been framed as a governing body by and for Aboriginal people, supposedly shifting power from the hands of the federal government to those of Aboriginal leadership. However, as I argue here, in the majority of cases, self-government has largely provided the misconception of Aboriginal empowerment without an actual shift in power, all the while also working to shift blame and responsibility for

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<sup>3</sup> The Osoyoos Band in British Columbia can be said to exemplify the balance of economic success while maintaining traditional values and customs. In creating a number of businesses that are run and employed by members of the reserve, Osoyoos currently has a 0% unemployment rate and a self-generated revenue which, in 2007, was sevenfold the amount allotted by the federal government (Kayseas, Hindle, & Anderson, 2006). The band has advocated for their economic development “on their own terms in which control over traditional lands and resources plays a key role, as do traditional culture and values” (Anderson, Dana, & Dana, 2006, p. 52). Osoyoos currently owns ten businesses within the sectors of construction, forestry, golfing, and groceries, and the band has also extended its business ventures through outside partnerships.

Closer to home, Lac La Ronge First Nation in northern Saskatchewan has established the Kitsaki Development Corporation (KDC) (Anderson, Dana, & Dana, 2006), whose strategy is to form “sound, secure partnerships with other Aboriginal groups and successful world-class business in order to generate revenue for Kitsaki and employment of Band members” (McKay, 2004, p. 4). Within three years of its establishment, KDC had earned enough revenue to be classified as the “third fastest growing company in the province of Saskatchewan” (Anderson, Dana, & Dana, 2006, p. 53), massively reducing the unemployment rate of band members.

the disadvantages Aboriginal people face away from colonial powers and onto Aboriginal people themselves.

In what follows, I outline how Aboriginal self-government was established under exaggerated promises of power for Aboriginal people by the federal government, which de facto remains at the crux of all decision-making pertaining to Aboriginal life. In an effort to understand findings in chapter 5 about governance concerns in a colonial context, I detail here how a misconception exists as to the degree of power held by Aboriginal leadership, who now must bear the burden of responsibility for the continued disadvantages of their communities but without adequate resources or power to bring about reform.

### *6.2.1 Promises of Power*

As Adams (1999) explains, the self-government of Aboriginal people was established fraudulently, under the pretence that the reigns of power held by the federal government over Aboriginal affairs would be handed over to Aboriginal people as a whole.

Aboriginal leaders, however, are not able to exercise power through traditional means and are ultimately not in control of their own fates or that of their people. In other words, the federal government continues to remain at the crux of decision-making in all aspects of Aboriginal life (Andrusieczko, 2012; Bluesky, 2003). Stakeholders from BATC were well aware of these realities. The effects of this can be seen in the ‘low confidence’ many stakeholders expressed having in their leadership. As Martin stated: “We’ve got this program going, it’s been here for four years, it’s going to end, unfortunately. It’s made big strides in that area [...] Because it’s a time limited initiative by the federal government.” In the end, the federal government maintains control.

With the federal government maintaining ultimate control, little concern is paid to the actual needs of First Nation communities. Stakeholders discussed how programs on reserve were often out of touch with community needs and were constrained by unrealistic timelines and federal funding stipulations, resulting in temporary solutions. As Martin expressed: “It’s such a bureaucratic way of looking at social problems. I think it does a hell of a disservice.” Participants also spoke of how resisting such ill conceived or poorly funded programs could result in overall loss of federal funding. As David put it: “There’s a lot of resistance in the reserve in the name of anything that comes against what we believe in. It threatens the government dollars.” Aboriginal people are aware that they have to watch their actions and words to maintain what they are given. As David put it: “there has to be wisdom on our part [...] we can’t be coming against certain things, just for the fact that we don’t want to come off as full force, like aggressive people.” Other stakeholders spoke about feelings of surveillance and how they feel like they are being watched in order to not do anything that is not allowed.

Creating the illusion that Aboriginal people would have representatives acting in their own best interests, while those representatives were often forced to continue to act in line with the desires of the federal government, provided appeasement for many Aboriginal communities while changing nothing. Self-government provided a *further* inter-group separation through the delegation of a Chief and Council—in other words, the only ones empowered to represent communities or interact with the federal government (Adams, 1999). Dickason speaks of how power was delegated to only a select few:

Despite the supposed shift towards greater self-reliance on reserves, the fact remained that the Government of Canada was puppeteering bands and their composition by insisting on communicating only with elected chiefs of sanctioned band councils and favouring compliant bands by

allocating more charitable welfare grants (Dickason, 2002, as cited in Andrusieczko, 2012, p. 10).

In the Canadian case then, “neocolonialism involves [...] giving some benefits of the dominant society to a small, privileged minority of Aboriginals in return for their help in pacifying the majority” (Adams, 1999, p. 54). This stratification within Aboriginal communities is also exemplified by the unequal distribution of resources as explained by Alicia: “the people on top are getting more money and the people at the bottom are not really getting the support.”

### *6.2.2 Hierarchies of Power and Scapegoating*

A misconception also lies within the degree of power held by Aboriginal leadership. Stipulations of the Indian Act render the Chief and Council of any reserve still answerable to the federal government. Although some positions within the band were deemed more powerful than others—i.e. the Chief—they were also being manipulated and falsely led to believe that they could exercise any sort of significant power. This has often continued the disadvantages faced by First Nation communities and has allowed little room for the band Council or members of reserve communities to make appropriate adjustments and to bring about reform. As participants explained, the federal government will apply pressure on communities to generate positive results, yet it will give them so little power or resources to work with that communities are virtually set up for failure. Julia captured this idea: “There is not a lot of great opportunity in those communities either, so there is such a high expectation for the people themselves but then the challenge is that there isn’t anything there for the government leaders, like the Chief and Council, to try and meet the need of the people that live there.”

In other words, there was no true power shift, but rather manipulation and bribing

for Aboriginal representatives to adopt and advocate for a fully assimilated way of life. Stakeholders discussed their awareness of the remaining hierarchy of power that still control Aboriginal people to this day. As Cindy said: “you have Indian Affairs at the top, Chief and Council in the middle and then the grassroots people at the bottom.” The agency of the Chiefs was undermined by their continued accountability and assimilationist relationships with the federal government. Those relationships influenced many leaders to mirror settler society’s ideals, thus producing a more infiltrated mechanism of socialization for Aboriginal communities under their influence (Adams, 1999; Vermette, 2009). The government acts in corrupt ways in order to appear supportive of Aboriginal concerns, while never really addressing the problems. Seemingly then, for Aboriginal people, “the greatest delusion of all is power” (Adams, 1999, p. 120).

Perpetuation of control over Aboriginal people, under the pretense that they themselves hold that control, has sustained many social problems and shifted the blame from the government to the bands, and even to individual members, for the socioeconomic realities that they experience. Many participants expressed feeling manipulated at the hands of the federal government. One participant stated: “we’re a constant reminder to society of [...] their own guilt and shame. Rather than deal with it, it’s blame.” Though most participants said they had low confidence in their leaders, one participant discussed the misdirection of blame onto Aboriginal leadership, noting how the leadership in his community was held accountable for things that continue to be out of their control. Self-governed First Nations bands have thus often become scapegoats for



the actions and consequences of the federal government through claims that Aboriginal people are autonomous and therefore responsible for the circumstances they are facing.

However, “as long as Natives cannot select their own governments, run their own schools, and control their own finances, it is unlikely they could possibly direct their economic development in ways that are compatible with their culture and values” (Mercredi, 1994, as cited in Kendall, 2001, p. 49). With such shifted blame and little attention paid to addressing real community needs, high poverty rates, high unemployment rates, low life expectancy, and other disadvantageous social realities still persist while Aboriginal people receive the brunt of the blame (Adams, 1999; The Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada, 2001; Kendall, 2001; Anderson, 2003; Dua et al., 2005; Burstein, 2005; Frohlich, Ross, & Richmond, 2006; Reading & Wein, 2009; Louboucane, 2009; Wong, 2012).

### **6.3 Conclusion**

Drawing from the themes of othering and oppression, and the words of participants, this chapter reveals two key themes connected to the ongoing othering process: 1) identity, self-esteem and exclusion; and its relation to 2) autonomy, power and self-government. In this chapter, I drew on my combined research findings to discuss how the labelling of Aboriginal identity by settler colonials functioned—and still continues to function—as a major driving force in the othering, oppression, and control of Aboriginal people, all the while existing behind a façade of empowerment. I addressed the imposition of the Indian label, the removal of self-identification, the suppression of unique histories and culture, and the further separation of First Nations people through inter-group divisions. I then

analyzed the effects of the institutionalization of the Aboriginal label via the implementation of residential schools, and its impact on family, culture, language, as well as on broader Canadian national identity. Finally, I argued that contemporary processes of self-government for Aboriginal people, though framed as a tool for self-empowerment, have further contributed to the oppression and disadvantages experienced by First Nations people in Canada, while also shifting the weight of the responsibility and blame for these stark realities onto Aboriginal communities themselves.

In the next and final chapter, I conclude the thesis by presenting a synthesis of the research goals and findings. Here I also endeavour to address the implications of my research. I end the chapter by reflecting on both the limitations of my research as well as avenues for future research.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

Contemporary realities of Canada's Aboriginal people continue to be shadowed by the legacy of colonialism. Perceptions of our society as postcolonial grossly discount the existence of discriminatory discourse, institutions, and government policy that persist despite the nation's reputation as the archetype of multicultural relations. Although Aboriginal people are the descendants of the first inhabitants of this nation, they are often overrepresented in statistics of poverty, illness, low life expectancy, substandard housing conditions, and low educational attainment. As reflected in the findings of this thesis, Aboriginal people are often the victims of a myriad of policies, procedures, and stipulations which maintain their disadvantage while simultaneously shifting the blame for their situation onto Aboriginal people themselves. Despite supposed advances or social progress, many of the most difficult social and political realities facing First Nations people remain in place today. Aboriginal people are still unable to legally self-identify, and they remain subject to the Indian Act, a century-old policy that continues to manipulate, control, and relegate First Nations to the bottom of Canada's socioeconomic ladder.

In this final chapter, I provide a synthesis of the research goals, findings, and implications. I conclude by reviewing the limitations of my research as well as avenues for future research.

### **7.1 Synthesis of Research Goals and Findings**

The research presented here explored how the colonization process is at play in the control of Aboriginal identity and its impact on Aboriginal people. This thesis also

examined the federal government's interactions with First Nations' members, communities, Aboriginal leadership, and governance structures from the perspective of First Nations community members. In partnership with the larger SSHRC funded research project, "Resilience to Offending: Listening to Youth On-Reserve," anti-oppressive and postcolonial approaches were used to develop a CBPR methodology that engaged participants from the BATC First Nations reserves in Northern Saskatchewan. Grounded theory data analysis led to the identification of a series of themes of importance to BATC community members, themes which then came to comprise the central focus of the research.

First, both the internal and external experience of oppression emerged as a major finding in this research. As revealed here, these two forms of oppression are interconnected and mutually constructed. Colonization efforts were found to be all encompassing. In other words, not only does colonialism extend past the conquest of land claiming to societal discourses about Aboriginal people, but colonization can also be said to infiltrate Aboriginal people's sense of self, their relations to one another, and their relation to the land. Research participants connected the internalization of oppression to a lack of belonging, low self-esteem, as well as to a disconnection from tradition and culture. As a result, parenting was colonized and often lost, an intergenerational factor that is still being felt within communities, along with other quality of life impacts such as in-group and out-group violence, addictions, and gang involvement.

Second, this research points to how the construction of Aboriginal identity as other was—and remains—a prerequisite for their oppression and control. Aboriginal people were, and still are, categorized into misnomers that are appointed for them rather

than self-defined, deeply impacting the manner in which they identify with one another. This labelling of Aboriginal people into government appointed categories has separated Aboriginal groups, disregarded tribal, clan, and communal relationships, and has functioned to physically and relationally separate groups of Aboriginal people. Aboriginality has become, for some, something that is dictated, a category within which one merely *counts traditions*. Since government policy and procedure depend on the functioning of such othering discourses in order to legitimize its own actions, discriminatory policy and discourse both fuel one another, co-creating ideas around Aboriginality to suit settler colonial society. The construction of Aboriginal identity as other has allowed government policy to continue and further its systematic discrimination against Aboriginal people through institutionalized means such as residential schools and the reserve system among others.

Finally, the research findings also suggest that self-government for First Nations is best understood as misleading in terms of autonomy. When self-government was appointed to First Nations communities, it acted as a beacon of hope with many believing they would be granted autonomy and agency over their own people. However, for most communities, the reality of self-government has come with no real change. Self-government also means that First Nations leaders must now bear the burden of responsibility for the continued disadvantages of their communities but without adequate resources or power to bring about reform. In essence, the creation of self-government for First Nations in Canada is thus more so a shift of *blame* rather than a shift of *power*.

Although the labelling of Aboriginal people was—and remains—a vehicle of domination and control, contemporary trends have exposed how many First Nations

strategically embrace the label in an attempt to have distinct needs heard and met, or “to ensure that the various interests gain a voice, and that [...] institutions reflect that” (McLennan, 2003, p. 76). In others words, to outright reject Aboriginal labelling would mean to dismiss the histories and the significance of the Aboriginal experience in Canada. Doing away with the Indian status, for instance, could mean forgetting the injustices and the broken promises toward Aboriginal people, such as the honouring of treaties.

In summary, this research exposes the pressing concerns of members of BATC First Nations reserves with a CBPR approach, coupled with an anti-oppressive and postcolonial approach to research which maintained the priority of participant voice and lived experience. The grounded theory approach to data analysis that I employed also prioritized participant voice, allowing important issues within the data to emerge, rather than fit the data into preconceived categories. Although strongly influenced by the larger project, I was able to uncover pressing issues of concern that were brought up by all fourteen stakeholder participants.

My research found that neocolonialism is still a strongly functioning reality within Canadian society, disadvantaging Aboriginal people through policy, governance and discourse. Although self-government exists as something many people deem as a privilege to Aboriginal people, it is merely an illusion; the social situations surrounding Aboriginal people have not changed, yet the blame for them has. The federal government continues to maintain control over Aboriginal people; the concept of self-government is therefore fraudulent. Neocolonialism is still present, yet harder to detect since it functions and hides behind such illusions.

## **7.2 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

During the course of this research, themes of governance, though not prompted for, emerged within the data and were mentioned by all participants. While this may be considered a strength in the sense that such themes were a clear point of concern for BATC members, it remains that further questions on the matter could have been asked and more time could have been allotted to explore such questions. Given the centrality of themes of governance to my research, a more ample set of questions directly addressing relations between the federal government and First Nations communities as well as the advent of self-government would have better fleshed out both participant views on governance and my own findings and analysis. For instance, future research questions could probe more directly about the relationships between self, identity, control, and governance.

Another clear limitation within my research is the generalizations employed to extrapolate my findings within the BATC First Nations to Canadian Aboriginal people as a whole. While I do recognize the shared histories of oppression and colonization, I do not, with this research, intend to suggest that all Aboriginal people have walked the same path, lived the same lives, or suffered the same challenges. Additionally, I do not mean to portray all Aboriginal people and communities as only experiencing hardship in their lives. As such, I feel that more balanced attention could have been given to the ways that the communities defined resilience and success.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Guides- Stakeholders/ Elders**

### **STAKEHOLDER/ELDER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

\* This interview guide will be re-drafted with the Community Research Assistants to ensure that questions are phrased respectfully and appropriately and that knowledge is shared in an appropriate way.

\* Introduce the study including the purpose: to explore their perceptions on First Nations youth risk and youth resilience

Explain that the purpose for tape recording is to make sure that we are as accurate as we can be. Stress how important their words are. Discuss the consent forms in detail.

If they are reluctant to tape, let them know that we could start taping and if it really bothers them, then we can stop.

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Have the participants introduce themselves

Ask basic demographic questions – where appropriate

To begin, I'd like to know a little bit about you:

- a. What is your relationship to the Battleford Agency Tribal Council Inc. (BATC) communities?



- b. What position do you hold working with youth in the BATC communities?
  - c. How long have you lived in this community?
  - d. What do you enjoy about living here? What do you find challenging about living here?
  - e. What is the nature of youth risk and resiliency within your community? (i.e.: What is the nature of youth in trouble, or youth doing well?)
  - f. What, in your experience, is the nature of youth risk (youth in trouble) in your community? (is this related to crime, addiction, suicide?)
  - g. What, in your experience, is the impact of youth risk (youth in trouble) on youth, families, communities?
  - h. Have you witnessed any changes in relation to youth risk or resiliency?
  - i. What is the impact of gender?
  - j. In relation to youth risk, how do you define youth resilience or youth doing well?
2. From your perspective, what are some of the precipitating/contributing factors that are related to youth risk and resilience?
- a. What role to systemic factors, such as culture; family; socio-economics play?
  - b. What role does community play?
  - c. What role to inter-generational factors play?
  - d. What role does age play?
  - e. What role does race (and racism) play?
  - f. What role do relational factors play?

3. Reflections on intervention/prevention: Education, Community, Justice, and Health

- a. What are the nature of the intervention/prevention strategies on your reserve?
- b. Do you believe more can be done to reduce/stop youth risk?
- c. If yes, what do you believe could be done?
- d. How do feel that people acquire their knowledge about youth risk and resilience?
- e. What is your perspective on the development of programs/interventions?
- f. Are intervention/prevention strategies different for girls and boys?
- g. What are the barriers to services?
- h. What are the strengths?
- i. What role do systemic factors play, such as socio-economics; culture; race; history?

4. How do you feel we should approach our research (interviews) with youth who have been in trouble and/or are now resilient?

- a. What kinds of questions are important to ask?
- b. What would you like to learn from the youth?
- c. What environment should we conduct interviews?
- d. What supports are necessary for during or after interviews?
- g. How can we ensure that we are culturally sensitive in the research with youth participants?

h. Are you interested in becoming a community team member or advisor for this future project?

i. Do you feel there are other important people within BATC reserve communities who should become team members or advisors for this future project?

5. Reflection on the study, and the interview process.

a. Are there other questions or ideas that you think are important?

b. What are your thoughts about the effectiveness of a project like this?

c. How would you like to see the information shared?

## **Appendix B: Consent Form- Stakeholder/Elder Interview**

*You are invited to participate in a study:*

### **Resilience to Offending: Listening to Youth On-reserve.**

*Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.*

**Researcher:** Dr. Carolyn Brooks, Department of Sociology 966-5814

**Co-Researchers:** Cora Bird, Battleford Agency Tribal Chiefs Inc. (BATC)

Lillian Blackstar, Moosomin First Nation

Dr. Jennifer Poudrier, Department of Sociology

Dr. Colleen Dell, Department of Sociology and Department of  
Public Health

**Purpose and Procedure:** We are doing a study to learn about the meanings of the youth risk and resilience and to identify the barriers and enablers to youth resilience from the perspective of First Nations community members. Our exploratory research questions are:

- (1) What are the relational, social and cultural factors related to youth risk and resilience?

(2) How can we develop a culturally appropriate research plan and method towards the development of an expanded research project to understand the experiential accounts of youth considered as resilient?

This initial exploratory study will last about 5 months in total. The interview will take approximately one to two hours.

**Potential Risks & Benefits:** There are no known risks associated with this study.

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. The results of this study will be disseminated at academic conferences and publications and be used towards the development of the expanded research project.

Audiotapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the BATC researchers' offices. Data will be destroyed ten years after study completion.

**Confidentiality:** Carolyn Brooks (PI), Cora Bird, Lillian Blackstar, co-Investigators and research assistants will keep confidential all information arising in interviews with you. The interview will be audiotaped with permission from the participant. The tapes will be transcribed. Only the research team members will listen to the tapes and read the transcripts. Tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. You may ask to have the recorder turned off at any point.

Your name will not appear in any report, conference presentation or publication about this study. Direct quotations from the interviews may be used in publications, but transcripts and quotations will not include the names of participants. Although the data from this study will be published and presented at conferences, you will be assigned a pseudonym. The consent forms will be stored separately from the transcripts, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses.

**Right to Withdraw:** *You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply for two years, until September, 2013. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.*

You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

**Questions:** *If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on (date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2975). Out of town participants may call collect. You will receive a report of the results of the study.*

**Consent to Participate:** *I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.*

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(Signature of Participant)

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(Date)

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(Signature of Researcher)