

The Percy Papers

by

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Abstract

The Indian Residential School era took its toll on the health and wellbeing of the entire Indigenous population in Canada. How does one rehabilitate after suffering tremendous loss of culture, language, voice, and self? My father, Percy James Bird, spent 15 years in an Indian Residential School. He then worked nineteen years with the federal government. After retirement, he took a creative writing course, producing 21 stories. A critical read of the stories, using Indigenous story telling methods, begins the process of tearing down a negative colonized version of Percy. As a silent survivor, his stories diffuse much of the violence from his past. The objective of this rehabilitation science inquiry is to use an Indigenous storywork research approach to explore patterns of healing and examine how Percy's personal healing led to his later aspirations to create systems of healing for his people.

Acknowledgments

I would like to first acknowledge my father, Percy James Bird, for his courageous retrieval and reconciliation of his life after his residential school experience. It took great focus, valor, hard work, and love to achieve his goal of wellness and health. His reconciliation caused a constructive domino effect in the lives of his children, family, and community. His healing began an era of positive change.

I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Nixon, for your humbleness, constant encouragement, and for your continuous support and belief in the importance of my work within Rehabilitation Science. Thank you for being who you are. I thank my amazingly gifted, and generous, committee members for saying ‘yes’ to supporting me through this amazing journey; Dr. Laara Fitznor, and Dr. Janet Smylie. Thanks to Dr. Raglan Maddox for stepping in when he was called on. Thank you, Dr. Lisa Richardson, and Dr. Cindy Baskin, for support as internal and external examiners. I value all of your time, suggestions, and commitment, to getting me through. We are all in this together! Thanks also to Well Living House for space and support for committee meetings.

I am ever grateful for the unconditional love and support of my partner, Gomo George. Thank you, many times over, for your love and grace. Thank you for patiently listening to the continuous edits of this thesis, and giving me your much-valued advice. I thank my children; Jonathon, Benjamin, Abayomi, and Oji, for their encouragement, and support over the many years as I followed this dream to completion. Giving thanks also to my three grandchildren; Tayla, Torin, and Bridgette, the sunshine’s of my life, and why I do this work.

I thank First Nations House for being there, and giving me continuous, unwavering support. Thank you, Jules Shepard, Shannon Simpson, (and First Nations House), for your trust that I could do it.

Thanking constant friends, and lab partners, who encouraged and cried with me on the journey. Thank you, Lisa Boivin, we two will conquer the boundaries of Indigenous health and wellness with what our fathers’ left of their dynamism; coincidences and likely stories. I thank my other lab cohorts; Janna MacLachlan, Samira Omar, and LLana James, for their support.

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I thank my Mom, Elizabeth Flora Young, and my family of amazing Beaver clan members who were always there for me in the good times, and the not so good times. I love you all.

Thank you, Aunt Roz, for your constant support on this journey. Rest well.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my sister Cynthia; we were going to walk this journey together, but you left unexpectedly. I still feel you with me every step of the way, and we will finish.

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Chapter 1

Background and Introduction

1.1 Self-Location

According to Cree/Nehiyaw scholar Shawn Wilson, to give a greater understanding of the story being shared, a self-location must occur. Wilson furthers that, ‘a more culturally appropriate way to proceed is to do so as the storyteller, instead of the researcher’. (Wilson, 2008, p. 32) In this vein I proceed with this thesis. It will follow a storytelling approach as I address the short stories of my father. According to Margaret Kovach, Nehiyaw and Saulteaux scholar, “self-location provides an opportunity for the research participant to situate and assess the researchers’ motivations for the research, thus beginning the relationship that is elemental to story-based methodology” (Kovach, 2009, p. 98). The Percy Papers enable a journey of relationship building, and a path of reconciliation with my father’s life. I also reconcile with my own life, past and present. As the teller of this story, I self-locate.

I acknowledge the land of where I write this thesis. The territory of the Haudenosaunee, Wendot, Petun Neutral, and the Mississauga of the New Credit, Treaty 13 territory; of whose lands Toronto blankets, and where I am honoured to live and to work. I also give thanks to the ancestors past and present. I borrow this last line from the Indigenous land acknowledgement statement of Australia. I appreciated the honouring of past, and present, ancestors; to whom we owe our being here, today.

I was born at Opaskwayak, Manitoba, home of my maternal family, Treaty 5 territory. Through my mother, I am Beaver Clan. Through the paternalistic Indian Act, I am member of my father’s band, the Montreal Lake Cree of Saskatchewan, Treaty 6. I grew up in Winnipeg, MB, Treaty 1. I moved to Toronto in 1981 with my twin sons, Jonathon and Benjamin, who were 2 years old at the time. I have since made my home here. I am an aunt, niece, daughter, sister, spouse, a mother of four; twins- Jonathon and Benjamin 1979, daughter-Abayomi 1987, son-Oji 1990. I am a grandmother of three.

I received my name “Deerwoman” in a traditional Cree naming ceremony in 1984, in Toronto. The Late Cree Elder, Dr. Joe Couture, traveled from Edmonton to perform this ceremony. This ceremony was the beginning of my journey as an Indigenous woman, with a Spirit name. My name allowed me to embrace my Cree culture, and to challenge my own, self-doubt. My name represents all that the deer embodied; gentle, sensitive, fast, protective, family oriented. In these early years of self-discovery, my name spoke to me; giving me significance, and direction. Receiving this name was the being of my self-confidence in being Cree. Although I did not grow up speaking Cree, I did hear the language every day.

I grew up surrounded by my large maternal family in the urban setting of Winnipeg, MB. My grandmother, Elizabeth Jane Young, (nee Bignell), had 15 children, including three sets of twins. My mother was born in 1935 in Opaskwayak, Manitoba; second oldest of her siblings. My mother attended St. Albans residential school in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where she met my father. They had five children together. My parents separated when I was eleven years old. After a battle with colon cancer, she left for the Spirit world in 1988. She was 53 years old. My mother was fluent in her Cree language. Even though residential school tried, in vain, to rid the children of anything Indigenous, many had maintained their language when they left or graduated (TRC, 2015). Sadly, many from their generation did not pass down the Cree language. My maternal grandfather, John Young, in his determination that his children maintain the language would send them to stay with their grandparents for the summer months where only Cree was spoken. My maternal Aunt, Roz, said that Grandpa thought Western education was a great equalizer; he stressed the importance of knowing your enemy, and maintaining your culture and language, simultaneously; a survival strategy. He advocated for his children to achieve this dual goal.

My grandmother would not speak any English when she visited Winnipeg from Opaskwayak; she would only speak Cree. She did not like that her grandchildren spoke English. My grandmother was a short woman, with long grey braids that she wore in a bun on the top of her head. I was always amazed at how long her hair was when she let it down to brush. It occurred to me recently that of all the years I tried to not be the stereotype ‘Indian’, a great feat to realize growing up in Winnipeg (I was not fair skinned nor could I “pass”); I always had a long braid. Funny, I remembered that my grandmother had a long braid, too. Although I do not have many loving memories of my grandmother, I do know that my grandfather loved her very much.

When I returned home to Winnipeg, for one year in 1985, I met my partner, Gomo George. Gomo is a visual artist from the Island of Dominica, in the Caribbean. He is of mixed Indigenous Kalinago ancestry. Gomo immigrated to Canada in 1975. He has a BFA from the University of Manitoba, and an MFA from Western University. Together we tried to make sense of the effects of colonialism on both our lives; we had a common ground in colonial history. We have been together for 34 years and raised our four Beaver Clan children. Today, we all live in Toronto, within close proximity to each other. I am surrounded by my children and grandchildren. True to the nature of the Beaver, we are busy, changing our landscape through hard work and good relations.

My father, Percy James Bird (1933-2010) was born in Sandy Lake, Saskatchewan, and was adopted by the Montreal Lake Cree nation of Saskatchewan. Percy was fluent in his Cree language and could read and write Cree syllabics. Growing up, I remember the many academic books in the house; including bibles of all sizes, some in Cree syllabics.

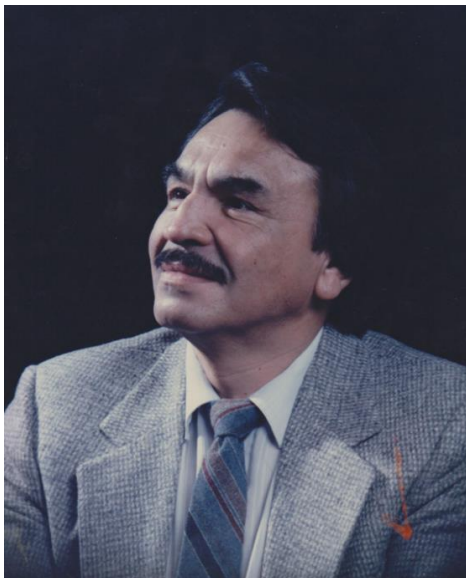


Figure 1. Percy James Bird (1933-2010)

Percy entered residential school at the age of three, and stayed for 15 years. I have learned that my father wore many hats in his life. He studied Theology at the University of Saskatchewan where he wanted to study law, but the church discouraged this interest. He was instrumental in establishing many of the first Native organizations in the late 1960's to the 80's such as: the Winnipeg Indian Council; Main Street Project; Neeginan; and, the Federal Native Alcohol and

Drug Abuse Program (NADP), including projects on all Manitoba reserves and four treatment centers. Other projects that my father was involved in were: The Manitoba Indian Brotherhood; Native Addictions Council; Thunderbird Lodge; and, the Homeless Initiative. While some of the organizations, or programs, were aimed at the urban Indigenous communities, some were located on reserves across Canada. Percy was also an accomplished visual artist, and a writer.

My parents separated when I was 11 years old. I was nineteen when I saw my father again. He was 2 years sober and wanted to share that day with me. I remember asking my mother about going to this meeting and she encouraged me. It was a struggle getting to know my father after such an extended absence. I knew that my father was an alcoholic; but I did not yet have the history, or information, in which to place his behavior.

Getting to know my father was a very slow process. Living in Toronto did not help in this recovery process, but on the other hand perhaps the space was needed. My father would come to Toronto to visit, and those visits developed into annual retreats. He followed the AA Roundup cycle and made Toronto a yearly part of his life. The Toronto Roundups would bring those in AA, plus friends and family, from around the world together for shared stories, support, and networking. I benefited from these visits, particularly in the early part of my relationship with my father. I know now that in going to the AA Roundups and different “open” AA meetings with him, I was being introduced to his world; the world of addiction, and recovery. In hearing the stories of my father’s fellow alcoholics, I heard parts of my father’s story. This experience enabled me to hear what my father could not yet talk about directly to me. These visits were instrumental in setting the scene for my insight into my father’s life. Eventually I would hear his story in his own words at a meeting where he was invited to speak. I learned much about who he was from these meetings.

I did not yet know the history of Indigenous people and Canada until I began my academic journey in 1991. When I did begin to learn more about my father’s life, and the history of Canada, simultaneously, things made more sense. My life made sense; I could put the racism and the stereotypes, things that happened to me in my life, into perspective. The learning process became easier as I was able to use my own life experiences to reflect on. Later, I began wondering about my parent’s lives, and how their lives impacted mine. The journey of meeting my father, and getting to know him, has been an ongoing adventure. Even as he is in the Spirit

world now, I am still getting to know who he is, and the importance of his life, through his short stories.

Through the stories, I learned that Percy's first ambition was to join the Mounties. That status Indians¹ were not allowed to join the Mounties at this time devastated his ego. He was unable to name the racism that he was encountering. All he could realize was what was preached from the pulpit in residential school, which he described as follows: "confirmation of what we, as First Nations People, were taught as children, to be prone to failure; that we would never amount to anything." Regardless, Percy went on to apply with the Royal Canadian Air Force; he was a licensed pilot who earned his private flying license through a scholarship with the Air Cadets. Percy did not give up trying to create a space for his skills, and education, in the world. He eventually became resentful and bitter, angry and frustrated. He writes that during this time of devastation, he "was in search of a positive identity which I could call my own. What I was, I hated, because being Indian was something wrong and evil...I could not fit within the Indian world much less the White world." Percy did work as a Liaison Officer for the Provincial Community Development Services, which was a self-help program to assist Native people in Manitoba. After seven years, his work included establishing 26 Indigenous organizations both within the province and across Canada, such as the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and Assembly of First Nations. This marked the beginning of a new era of Indigenous input in the political realm of Canada. It was also the beginning of his understanding of Canadian politics as it pertained to Indigenous Peoples. He writes:

"I began to understand why Indian people were in the situation they found themselves in. They had been victimized and brainwashed that they were other than what they were. I became angry and frustrated again and the more I learned of the truth, the more I anguished."

When the first Indigenous man, George Munroe, Saulteaux from Camperville, Manitoba, ran for City Council in Winnipeg in 1971, Dad had joined Munroe's campaign team. This was a

¹ This paper uses the term Indigenous People as a collective name for the original people living in Canada. Correspondingly, the terms First Nation, Indian, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous and Aboriginal are used depending upon the documentation of the historical and legal language used.

successful run; George Munroe won his seat that year. Dad began work with the federal government shortly after, in 1978.

When my father retired from his government job of nineteen years, he enrolled in a creative short-story writing course one summer. In 1997, I was in Winnipeg during this process of writing. He wrote one story per week for a number of weeks. His method included an invitation to his house, where we would sit in his dining room, by an enormous west facing window, looking out into his backyard. We sat at a table, and I read the story of the week back to him. He listened very intensely, stopping me every now and then to ask me to repeat a line. He managed to compile twenty-one stories from this course. He was happy when I asked him for a copy of the stories. However, as they were in the midst of moving, and the stories were on his computer, he said he would get them to me once they were settled in their new condo. Percy made his Spirit journey before I received his stories. His partner, Bev, who was present during the conversation regarding giving me the stories, had them copied and bound. Bev said she had bound them as he had left them collated.

My father's stories hold aspects of his personality, and they tell his history. I can envision my father through his stories. They tell what made him the man he was, and what motivated him to change. In one story he says of his fellow AA members, "Some were strong, some happy, others were warm, honest, loving, caring, reliable and many other characteristics which I admired so much." All these admirable attributes, my father had achieved for himself, by the time he had left this world. Reconciliation with my father was a bit awkward in the early stages until we both felt confident with each other. In retrospect, I acknowledge the growing pains that each of us went through in order to maintain our relationship, as father and daughter.

1.2 Background and Rationale

In this section, I outline the agricultural policies of the 1800's, immigration policies of the mid-1900's, and the Indian Residential School system, through which the Canadian government has constructed a "wall of contempt". I outline these policies because they are not widely known to in Canada. This wall grew progressively over the years, and prevented positive transition from residential schools into mainstream Canadian life.

While the establishment of residential schools in Canada began in the early 1800's, church denominations already had Indigenous education in mind with the building of schools in Eastern Canada, as early as the 1600's (Miller, 1989, p.100). Efforts to Christianize the 'Indians', however, existed since The Papal Bull was issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493, which stated:

“...any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be “discovered”, claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers and declared that “the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, and the health of souls be cared for and the barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself.” (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2012)

This Bull divided the world between Spain and Portugal; giving North America Spanish domain. These imaginary boundary lines guided where the major European powers would colonize, including: their expansion of trade into 'newly discovered lands', establishment of colonies, and systemic colonization of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples were ranked under 'flora and fauna', and so became commodities of colonial exploitation as other natural resources (Smith, 2012, pp. 62-63). Some Indigenous Peoples were ranked above others in terms of things such as the belief that they were 'nearly human', 'almost human', or 'sub-human' (Smith, 2012, p.63). Through this categorizing, Indigenous Peoples became objects of research, according to colonial powers; they had no voice, did not contribute to research/science, and had no life force, humanity, or spirit (Smith, 2012, p.64). Notions about the Other already existed in European imagination by this time. Therefore, acknowledging the Other in research would be “as legitimate as acknowledging the contribution of a variety of plant, a shard of pottery, or a ‘preserved head of a native’ to research (Smith, 2012, p.63). This dehumanizing effort allowed slavery to become the ultimate expression of economic growth. Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) theories on natural selection, and survival of the fittest, were transferred from the non-human to the human world. Social Darwinism was used to legitimize Caucasian belief of other Peoples as inferior, to defend the institution of slavery, and to justify coercion of Indigenous societies (Miller, 1989, pp.97-98).

In the 1800's, residential schools were established on the presumption that Indigenous Peoples were unfit parents (TRC, 2015, p.4). For well over a century, Indian-only schools operated through government and various church denominations. The objective of the schools was to

isolate children from the family, language, culture, and home land base. The residential school system was based on an assumption that European civilizations and Christian religions were superior to Indigenous cultures. Indigenous cultures were viewed as savage and brutal, by Western thought. Culture genocide is the official description offered for the residential school era, with the official motto, ‘Kill the Indian in the Child’ (TRC, 2015). “The boarding schools disassociate the Indian child from the deleterious home influences to which he would otherwise be subjected (Miller, 1989, p.196). The purpose of the schools was to teach Indigenous students “to endeavour to excel in what will be most useful to him” (Miller, 1989, p.196).

As Indigenous students were shut away from the public domain and thrust into residential schools, settler Canadians, and new immigrants, received another kind of education, regarding their Indigenous counterparts. Stereotypes of the ‘Indian’ were promoted by government officials, making the constructs convincingly credible to the general population. Indigenous people were constructed as wild, promiscuous, nomadic, without laws; the ‘Noble Savage’. “Armchair Eurocentric theorists did not have to live among Indigenous people to present an authoritative opinion about them” (Battiste, 2000, p.68). Stereotypes, created by the Canadian government, were promoted to the Canadian public, via printed pamphlets, like “The Facts Respecting Indian Administration in the North West” (Department of Indian Affairs, 1886).

Hayter Reed was the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs under the MacDonald government from 1893-1897. Reed’s wife, Kate Armour, was a popular socialite of the time. Kate’s friend, Lady Aberdeen, was wife to Lord Aberdeen, the Governor General of Canada. To demonstrate the extent of racism and disrespect faced by Indigenous peoples in the creation of what is now Canada, we need only to read about this particular happening. On February 17, 1896, at a themed ball given by the Countess of Aberdeen in Ottawa, over 800 guests were encouraged to dress in a specific representation of a time period in Canadian history, and include a dance presentation. The objective of this theme was Canadian history (Historical Fancy Dress Ball, 1896). Hayter Reed encouraged his group to dress as ‘Indians’ (Titley, 2002).



Figure 2. Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Hayter Reed, and his stepson, dressed as “Indians”



Figure 3. Iroquois Chief Donnacona’s regalia, which Hayter Reed is wearing in Figure 2

Figure 2 shows Hayter Reed with his stepson. Reed is wearing Iroquois Chief Donnacona’s actual regalia, pictured in Figure 3. Reed and his stepson both wore wigs, and their faces are darkened with makeup (The Ballroom Costumes, 1896). For their participation, Reed called all

his “Indians” to converge in the center of the room. To a room full of all white dignitaries, Reed, disrespectfully, made a speech in Cree. The irony is that Indigenous Peoples were being stripped of their cultures, languages, and land; and here was Reed, inviting people to poke fun and participate openly in displaying demeaning behaviour regarding people who were in his charge. Through this act, Reed also taught his young stepson how perpetuate the racism. The dance portion of this display was war-whoops and tomahawk waving by the other imposters in his group.



Figure 4. Photograph of “The Indian Group”, comprised of white settler leaders dressed up as ‘Indians’

In this picture called “The Indian Group” (see Figure 4), Reed is center-left, and his stepson is seated in front-center. This famous picture posted in newspapers across Canada, reinforced the fascination with the stereotype image of the ‘noble savage’ (The Historical Fancy Dress Ball, 1896). Hayter Reed had little knowledge of Indigenous Peoples prior to his appointment as Indian Agent in Battleford, SK, in 1881. Regardless of his disrespect for Indigenous peoples, he acquired his position as the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs by 1893 (Carter, 1989 p.26). Reed was in a position to demand respect and obedience from his government. He was

dismissed in 1897 after his Peasant Farming Policy came under heavy criticism by his government.

1.3 Canada's Oppression of Indigenous Peoples: The Example of Agriculture Policies in the 1800's

Prime Minister John A. Macdonald (1867–1873, 1878–1891), and his government, relegated Indigenous Peoples to wards of the state, who were deemed incapable of making informed choices for themselves. The government's Indian policies promoted protection, civilization and assimilation of Indigenous peoples. At the same time, Canadian government promoted antagonistic views of Indigenous Peoples as, "inferior, ignorant, backward, pagan, savage." 'Indians,' therefore, needed to be saved from themselves (MacEwan, 1971, p.1). The 1870's saw the opening of the Northwest to European settlers. Treaties were initiated by Indigenous Peoples where their lands were encroached upon by incoming settlers. The reckless depletion of the buffalo caused mass starvation and elevated fears among Indigenous peoples (King, 2012). Canadian and American settlers shot countless buffalo for sport, making a profit selling their hides. The military played a large part of this mass killing of buffalo through the policy designed to 'starve' Indigenous Peoples into submission. Pre contact records an estimated 60 million buffalo in North America; in 1890 there were fewer than 100. "Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone", was the direction of military (Monchalin, 2016, p.96). The House of Commons Debates of 1882 clearly states how the settler government thought of the "Indians". The Debates is clear about government greed, and their contempt. "The Government has done everything in its power to teach these savages to cultivate the soil, so that they might support themselves...it will take long years to civilize the 30,000 savages who still inhabit our northern possessions (Boyce, 1882, p. 4)."

Through a policy of starvation, rations were being withheld in an attempt by the government to subdue the Indigenous population. This starvation fear resulted in retaliation of Indians by disallowing government surveyors' access to land. Indians expected security of land boundaries, personal security from the threats of the unpredictable newcomers, and, most important, long term economic security for their future (Friesen, 1997, p.142).

The reserves were a means of transforming Indians into farmers with the eventual goal of enfranchisement. "The reserve system, introduced by the British...were created to remove

Indians from the path of white settlements and to assimilate them by transforming them into farmers (York, 1989, p.57-58). To the vast majority of Canadians, the Agricultural Policies of the 1800's failed because of the racial and cultural inferiority of a 'primitive' people. Colonial views of Indigenous Peoples stated that "there are fundamental and profound differences between native and white that are irreconcilable and unalterable" (Carter, 1990, p.3). The colonial government promoted the stereotype of the "lazy Indian" by proclaiming to the world that, "Indians failed to adapt to agriculture because they lacked initiative and diligence, and reverted to "primitive" behavior patterns ruled by superstition" (Carter, 1990, p.3). This colonial agenda of removal and assimilation was employed on a global scale. Indigenous Peoples standing in the way of Western progress were targeted with the same stereotypes of an inferior being. We see this tactic in South America, and in Africa, during the same era. The reasons for the marginalization of Afro-Brazilians from the labour market in the 1880's, was "...that because of their slave heritage blacks acquired a set of racial characteristics such as ignorance and apathy...had few skills...preferring undisciplined, irregular work" (Carter 1990, p.9). In Africa, Indigenous Africans, experienced similar situations from the same colonial governments operating in North America, who reaped resources from stolen land. After an initial period of farming success "producing a cash crop for market", African farmers faced "rural decay and underdevelopment." after the 1880's (Carter, 1990, p.10). Decaying African farms produced cheap labour for white farmers, who also benefitted from "subsidies, grants, rail facilities, and credit programs" not available to African farmers (Carter 1990, p.10).

A closer view of history tells a story of Indigenous farmers who were far more advanced in farming methods, and profit making, than their white counterparts. In Canada, Hayter Reed's government sabotaged the success of Indigenous farmers through constant policies shifts. These shifts gave way to eventual failure of thriving Indigenous farming. The stereotypes of 'Indians' was used to point fingers away from government policy shifts. At first, Indigenous farmers were praised by government officials. Carter (1983) describes Dakota farmers' agricultural efforts on the Oak River Dakota reserve in southwestern Manitoba:

Dakotas were responsible for their own financial affairs, purchasing machinery and implements with their income. By 1888 they had acquired mowers and rakes, wagons and a threshing machine. In 1890 they purchased three binders, six mowers and rakes,

six wagons, ploughs and harrows and in 1891 they bought two new mowers and rakes, six ploughs and five binders (paras. 10)).

The obvious success, and knowledge of farming, that Dakota farmers had, was shunned until government saw the extent of achievement. Dakota farmers were becoming too independent, forcing Reed's government to discourage farming machinery for Indigenous farmers. Reed states: "Peasants of other countries farmed successfully with no better implements than the hoe, the rake, cradle, sickle, and flail, and he believed Indians needed to be taught how to handle these simple tools" (Carter, 1983). Reed's relegating Indigenous farmers to that of 'peasant' is a true disrespect, and slander for Indigenous peoples' status (paras.12).

Late nineteenth century theories thought that "man developed progressively through prescribed stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization. These stages could not be skipped, nor could a race or culture be expected to progress at an accelerated rate" (Carter, 1989, p. 34). A test would conclude how successfully civilized one was. Tobias wrote, "...after demonstrating that he was free of debt, of good moral character, and able to look after a farm of at least fifty acres, he was enfranchised, meaning he lost his status as an Indian and was admitted to the same rights as the White man" (Tobias, 1987, p.149). Few white colonials could meet this standard; most were illiterate, in debt, and had little or very low morals (Tobias, 1987, p.149).

Dakota farmers had advanced beyond Reed's theory; they had become too good at farming. Carter (1983) notes, successful farmers were then charged with not conforming with Department policy of "subsistence level farming." A new policy was set in which no farming machinery was permitted for use by Indigenous people. Farm machinery use in the 1890's was universal. Furthermore, a permit policy was instilled where no grain was to leave the reserve without a permit. Carter (1983) furthers that anyone buying grain from Dakota farmers were taxed (paras. 12-16). After more than 10 years of successive harvests the Dakotas no longer had control over their finances. Indian agents now took over all handling of finances; buying and selling, and even when to plant and harvest. Attempts to pay off debts were beaten due to the unavailability of machinery to thresh before winter (paras.18).

The Dakotas' series of grievances fell on apathetic ears, Carter (1983) continues, with the judgement as a "chronic feature of Indian nature, to complain" (paras. 19). When three Dakotas went to Ottawa to insist on being heard, they were told they "broke departmental regulations by

leaving the reserve without a permit” (paras. 20). Dakota farmers broke regulations and, Carter (1983) writes, continued to market without permits (paras. 21). They formed an alliance with white buyers who favored their grain because it was superior to white farmer grain. The white buyers were outraged at being taxed for buying from Dakota farmers (paras. 20). An investigation was launched into the nature of the handling of the Dakotas. The community became divided between those that adhered to policy in fear of losing a home reserve and those who wanted to become self-sufficient (paras 25).

1.4 Canada’s Oppression of Indigenous Peoples: The Example of Immigration Policies in the mid-1900’s

After the Second World War, as a follow up to the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act, the federal government combined immigration, with Indian Affairs, under one federal ministry, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (DCI) (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.428). From 1950 until 1966, the Indian Affairs branch was located in the DCI. The general idea of this merge was to make Canadians of new arrivals from Europe, and “as many as possible of the descendants of the original inhabitants of this country” (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, pp.428-299). Immigrant programs, for newcomers, were more tolerant of cultural differences, like languages, than the Aboriginal campaigns. Indigenous Peoples, were targeted with similar types of “Canadianization” programs. Despite their seemingly progressive rhetoric, however, these programs effectively continued earlier assimilationist policies (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.430). The promotion of white middle-class society’s dominant family ideals, rigid gender codes, and pro-capitalist values informed both programs (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.430). Canadians, and Newcomers, were educated to see Indigenous peoples as immigrants, through the promotion of the Bering Strait theory. In 1952, DCI’s Citizenship Branch declared that all Canadians were immigrants as some point, even the “Indians were immigrants to this country in some earlier stage of settlement...” (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.435). Literary propaganda was created to reflect this opinion by those in respected positions of power:

In a 1954 article entitled ‘From Oldest to Newest: Our Indian Citizen,’ Andre’ Renaud, an Oblate priest with experience in Indigenous education, stressed that ‘our oldest Canadians must be given the status of New Canadians or else they may never become true Canadians like the rest of us.’ (In 1957 he co-founded the National Commission on

the Indian Canadian, a project of the Canadian Association for Adult Education that liaised with the Citizen Branch) (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.435).

In the post-second world war era, Canada opened their borders to 1.5 million Eastern European immigrants (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.430). Equally threatening, to the Canadian government, was the significant increase in the Indigenous population, which by the 1930's, increased by 18 per cent (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.434). Government officials grew worried what this increase would have on their finances. The growing numbers of Status Indians leaving the reserves for urban centers during this time, in search of employment, were considered to be immigrants, too (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.435). This movement was likened, by the Canadian government, as the same journey taken by impoverished Europeans fleeing Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Europe. This immigrant boom would further diversify Canada's already ethnically diverse (albeit white) population. Anglo-Celtic Canadians feared their way of life threatened by this incoming inferior "others", in need of Canadianizing (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.434).

Immigration policy demanded a high level of 'toeing the Canadian line', so to speak. Citizenship officials helped to ease the newcomers adaption, to Canadian society. Newcomers were provided DCI booklets with information in their own languages (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.437).

While education was promoted in this Immigration Policy to assimilate Indigenous peoples into mainstream Canada, the objective was, also, to depopulate reserve lands by 1970. Students who attained post-secondary education, or entered the military, were highly praised by the government (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.444). However;

The stakes involved were far greater for status Indians, however, because until the Indian Act was amended in 1961, any person with Indian status who achieved post-secondary education could be deemed 'enfranchised' by Indian Affairs and thus would be removed from the register and no longer be a legal member of their band (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.445).

Immigration Policy programs for Indigenous Peoples were directed as such; boys would be trained for farm work; girls would train as domestic servants. Indian Affairs encouraged the

adoption of white middle-class cultural values but structured educational opportunities to ensure that they remained firmly in the working class and best qualified for 'unskilled' labour (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, pp.446-447).

Though many immigrants joined the working class, many moved on to better jobs. Programs for immigrants were three months or longer; training for trade jobs such as, bricklaying, carpentry, welding, electrician, and earning Canadian trade certificates. By contrast, Indigenous boys had much shorter training programs and were effectively trained for lower-skilled hired help, while girls were recruited into domestic work, or institution work, a continuation of the residential school model (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p.447).

1.5 Canada's Oppression of Indigenous Peoples: The Example of Indian Residential Schools

Today we know the devastating legacy that the Indian Residential School (IRS) era left. For over a century, Canada's IRS system operated as an education system in name only (TRC, 2015). Over 150,000 children attended the Residential Schools, in operation until 1996. The schools were government sponsored, and church operated. It was mandatory for Indigenous children from the age five until sixteen years old to attend, under penalty of prison for parents (TRC, 2015).

The education system was designed to strip Indigenous students of their cultures, languages, dignity and confidence. The children were separated from their family and support networks; schools were at times as far as 500 miles away. Without family support the children faced institutionalized neglect. Lack of supervision allowed the children to be easy prey for abusers; the nuns, priests, and staff, in charge of their safety, and education (TRC, 2015). Although the TRC estimates 3,201 students died from diseases while in the IRS, TRC chair Justice Murray Sinclair, suggests the number is closer to 6000. Sinclair says the government stopped recording deaths in 1920, after chief medical officer revealed child deaths to be extremely high in the schools. Many schools were poorly built and unsanitary. Smallpox, measles, influenza and Tuberculosis were common. Many children were buried in unmarked graves, and some parents never found out what happened to their children (Puxley, 2015).

Residential school rendered the children totally ill prepared for life outside the walls of the schools. Educated to hate their own Indigenous cultures and languages, students were then released into a world educated to hate “Indians.” Unable to come to terms with their residential school experiences, many children took their own lives; many other children died trying to find their way back to their home communities. The traumatic, and at times horrific, experiences students suffered left many emotionally scarred, and silenced, for life. Much of the truthful history of residential schools was well hidden from the general public, until the survivors found the courage, found their voice, and the empathy to support each other, in the thousands of court cases that “led to the largest class-action lawsuit in Canada’s history” (TRC, 2015).

The TRC was created as a result of this class action suit. The surviving students of Indian residential schools came together to settle out of court with the federal government and four national churches. The launch of a TRC was part of the terms of settlement. The former students wanted to ensure their stories were heard. The Commission's mandate was, in short, “to gather the written and oral history of residential schools and to work toward reconciliation between former students and the rest of Canada” (The Globe and Mail, 2015). Out of the TRC process came 94 Calls to Action that speak directly to redressing the legacy of residential schools and progress the reconciliation agenda in Canada. Hearing the voices of Indigenous People, and residential school survivors in particular, is central to this process. In this thesis, I am interested in lessons we might take from the voice of my father, Percy Bird, through the short stories he wrote in the later part of his life.

The implications of what I know of Indigenous/Canadian/world histories as I read my father’s stories allows an acknowledgement of what he knew himself historically. As an academic himself, and with an up and coming academic daughter, I think my journey was spurring him to be active, and revisit his past. Why did my father write the stories? What were his aspirations for his work? Why the subjects and content? There are many unanswered, unasked questions that colonialism, and residential school experience, has left between the generations. I want to be able to answer a few of those questions, and perhaps give a final voice to my father’s life story.

1.6 Relevance to Rehabilitation Science

I conduct this thesis within the Rehabilitation Sciences Institute, at the University of Toronto. Rehabilitation Science is an integrated science dedicated to the study of human function and

participation and its relationship to health and well-being. As a research field, rehabilitation science is relevant to my research because of my father's journey of recovery, and rehabilitation, to find his own health and well-being, in spite of his traumatic experiences. Hutchison and Bleiker (2008) note:

Trauma is an encounter with an event or series of events so shocking that our understanding of how the world works is severely disrupted... Those who survive traumatic experiences may well have preserved their physical lives, but the meaning ascribed to being become altered, often in revelatory and irreconcilable ways (Bohaker, Iacovetta, 2009, pp.387-388).

I think my father was able to break through this catastrophic wall, because of his ability to process what happened to him. Traditional life regards how lifestyles were whole, relational and moral. An Aunt once told me a story of my dad, living in Opaskwayak, my mother's home, when they first married. My father was impressed with my grandfather's traditional worldviews on family, language, and education. My dad found, in my Indigenous grandfather, a role model for a father and for a man; an astounding perception after a lifetime of being transformed to that of the white man. Somehow, dad managed to hold onto his own vision of being Indigenous. He seemed to always question his morals, perhaps a habit learned in seminary. Later, confronting the 'wall', while trying to rebuild and reclaim his life as a married man with a family, is a task that breaks him, momentarily.

After losing the life and family he tried to build, against all odds, Percy set out to find the path to recovery. He honed all his tools, and proceeded to build a blueprint of recovery, that he so desperately needed. A blueprint not yet developed for Indigenous peoples on how to recover from the Indian Residential School experience. How was rehabilitation achieved after so many years in residential school? What steps were taken to achieve his goal of wellness? My father's rehabilitation journey was an arduous one. He kept his focus; trying and failing, but never giving up. Telling his story has been the medicine that saves his life. Telling his truths publicly kept him honest - speaking to an audience for the purpose of self-knowledge and sharing as a teaching tool, patiently listening to others' stories, and finding patterns across the stories.

1.7 Thesis Objective

The objective of my MSc thesis, *The Percy Papers*, is to explore the disabling effects of colonization through analysis of my father's short stories, and his life. Through this analysis, I aspire to sketch Percy Bird's journey towards healing and wellness. My father's journey to wellness impacted not only his life; but all those around him. His healing directly impacted my life, and in doing so impacted the lives of his grandchildren, his greatgrandchildren, and will continue do so for the coming generations. Cree scholar Neal McLeod states, "narrative functions as an intergenerational knowledge transfer" (Kovach, 2009, p.95). The *Percy Papers* function as intergenerational knowledge transfer, in that they offer a different way in which to learn about my father's past. If he did not write the stories, I would not know how he wrote and how he thought. The way my father's knowledge is passed on through his storytelling. The stories make connections; they are a way to continue a relationship, even though Percy has passed on to the Spirit World. How Percy James Bird paved his own path, his own life, making his own decisions, after residential school, is this story of healing, and rehabilitation, found in the stories. Who inspired him, why did they inspire him, where did he get his moral fabric? What incidents imprinted for motivation? What motivated him to stay on the path of recovery? What inspired him through the years? The stories answer these questions and many more. Percy survived despite his training that dictated his demise.

The Late Cree Elder and writer, Edward Ahenakew, writes of the Elder's responsibility in "ensuring a moral code and history of the tribe, and it was through storytelling that they fulfilled this obligation." (Kovach, 2009, p.95). Percy's stories function as a way to set things straight. What went unspoken is written. I extrapolated his moral code from the *Percy Papers*: that you finish what you have begun to the best of your ability; and, that you fulfill promises made. He finished school, a promise to his brother, Tommy. Dad started a family; the repercussions of this are that a family is human with emotions and feelings that need to be tended to. How to deal with emotions were not a part of residential school teachings. The repercussion of this lack of knowledge of how to have healthy relationships is failure. Closure is needed to move forward when trauma has occurred. When his marriage broke down, he let himself spiral further into oblivion before he managed to stop, assess his situation, and then begin the process of moving on. Dad promised my mother that he would "keep an eye on the kids." If you fail at something important, you pick up the pieces and you try again. Knowing that dad tried and tried again, is

what we need to read about. That we don't succumb to failure, we keep trying in spite of the odds. In dad's case, the odds were stacked against him, but he untangled the lies and beat the odds. A true model for success.

Chapter 2

2 Methodology

2.1 Indigenous Story Work

Joanne Archibald, Indigenous scholar, of the Stó:lō nation of the Frazer River Valley of British Columbia, coined the term “Storywork”, because she wanted a term that indicated how important our stories and storytelling are, and that they be taken seriously (Archibald, 2008, p.3). She wrote:

Patience and trust are essential for preparing to listen to stories. Listening involves more than just using the auditory sense. We must visualize the characters and their actions. We must let our emotions surface. As the Elders say, it is important to listen with “three ears: two on the sides of our head and the one that is in our heart (Archibald, 2008, p.8).

Margaret Kovach (2009) states that “[s]tories remind us of who we are and our belonging.” Stories are active agents of connections, tying us to our past, and providing continuity for the generation (Kovach, 2009, p.94). According to Métis scholar, Jeanne Carriere, there are two types of stories. One type are creation stories, or myth-like stories, that explain how and why things came to be, and how to set things right for the present generations. The other, true stories or narratives, or personal narratives of places, events, and experiences. Both types teach of consequences whether good or bad (Kovach, 2009, p.95). Gregory Cajete, Tewa scholar from Santa Clara Pueblo, says, on story, that “to remember is to re-know and re-claim a part of our life” (Cajete, 2017, p. 114). He continues that growing up, we are all gifted with stories from our adult relatives, and community members. The stories tell about how to live a good life, and to have good relations. Ultimately, our task is taking our place as storytellers, to supply the next generations (Cajete, 2017, p. 114). Unfortunately, for the many residential school survivors, like my father, they did not have the luxury of this traditional intergenerational relations, to receive stories, and to pass them on. Story work through memory, after the years of residential school, become an important tool to reconnect the ensuing generations with the history that survivors

endured. The shame and trauma of their past experiences are addressed in their stories by providing context. Through the telling of stories, resilience and aspirations are revealed. This is the case in the Percy Papers.

Reflexive story provides the opportunity to express the researcher's inward knowing. From an Indigenous perspective, sharing your own personal story is an aspect of co-constructing knowledge. Kovach notes: "Through a co-creative, interpretive tradition, Indigenous story offers knowledge relevant to one's life in a personal, particular way" (2009, p.100). In order to reflect this Indigenous aspect of storywork, I have intentionally engaged a conversational writing style throughout this thesis.

To understand and analyze my father's writings, I read the stories through a decolonizing Indigenous lens. Through my knowledge of colonial institutions and their intent, I can see my dad's survivance in the face of his demise, and how he managed to maneuver his way to success. As his daughter, I relate what is written in his stories, with what I remember and experienced, and what I know. Specifically, as a Cree/Nehiyaw woman, I am interested in Kovach's take on stories, or story work, as medicine, as "ways for passing on knowledge, teachings, medicines, and practices and that can assist members of the collective." Stories can bring about good feelings and interconnection (Kovach, 2009, p.95). The late Edward Ahenakew (1885 – 1961), a Cree Anglican minister from Sandy Lake, SK., place of birth of my father, also attended Emanuel College at the University of Saskatchewan. He was an activist in promoting the Cree language, and spoke out against residential schools. Ahenakew says that the Elders fulfilled their obligation, ensuring a moral code and history, through storytelling. (Kovach, 2009, p.95) The Percy Paper's show dad's struggles with his learned moral code from IRS days. My father's stories are personal narratives of people, places, and happenings, and his experience in the world. And so, the medicine my father was conveying through his stories, was his world, how he saw it, and how he changed it. They show his struggles to build a better moral code to live by; to lay waste to the code he was initiated into.

2.2 My Approach to Analysis

Following Margaret Kovach's use of an interpretive narrative methodology allows me a means to "hear" my father's story, and to be reflexive in regards to what is written against what I remember. While reading the stories, I ask the following analytic questions:

- Why did he tell this story?
- What was his context for this story?
- What does this story mean to me?
- What does this story have to teach about the disabling effects of colonization and/or my father's health/rehabilitation?

Put another way, I feel I have only known a thin slice of my father, in my early years. The slice presented to me in my formative years was the traumatized version. For me there was no context for this traumatized behavior. Later, I would get to know my father, when he began his healing journey. I remember how proud he was when he invited us to his home for dinner, when he was able to provide that space. The Percy Papers offer slices of the life he never spoken of. We did not have the privilege of sharing stories together as a family. Much of the past relationship I remember of him, involved him being home, and tension in the air. However, the way he wrote his stories, I perceive as him trying to add more slices, to create the full Percy pie. I learn how he grappled with situations beyond his control, and pushed on. When I read his stories, I start with the few slices of the things I knew about him, and the stories fill in the spaces of the unknown. I love that he shared part of his writing process with me. The time spent together, gives a glimpse of what our relationship could have been if colonialism did not interfere. For instance, I didn't know he went to B.C. and sang to a crowd of over a thousand people. I didn't know that he was such an academic. The stories show me the treasure full of tools he had accumulated over the years, from his many experiences. The Percy Papers allows me to read a story and recall, "Oh yeah, I remember that about him.", or, "He thought that, how gentle." A total reverse to the person I knew. Things I didn't know about my father are revealed; when he learned to play guitar, how he loved distance running. Positive images come to light, with more context. It is as though my father is writing these stories to provide context and missing pieces.

2.3 My Process

Finding a process or pattern in which to begin my work was not easy. I felt new to the process of thesis writing. As a way to begin, I read two PhD theses written by Indigenous students; one from a Humanities perspective, and the other from Public Health. Both authors are personal friends, through the University of Toronto; I have known both for a number of years. I wanted to note how other Indigenous theses read, in order to gain insight on how to begin my work. As I have great respect for the work of both of these academics, I felt confident to use their work as a springboard for finding my own pattern.

Brenda's Wastasecoot (2019), a Cree woman from Churchill, Manitoba, wrote an autoethnographic account of her history in her childhood home. Out of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), this thesis is written in a very personal, generous, respectful, storytelling tone; her account, her voice. Brenda states that revisiting her past has helped "to put some order to my childhood down the Flats because of being able to build a new understanding for myself..." (Wastasecoot, 2019). Telling your stories is freedom, in the retrieval of your past. Laying out the path and foundations from a personal storytelling position, to tell your truths. I understand my father's stories and his writing them, in this personal way. They helped put some order into my father's life. In the doing, I also found a better understanding of me, as I reordered my past. I write my thesis with Brenda's personal voice as a measure on how to bring my voice to the page. Utilizing a storytelling method, or an arts-based method, as Brenda uses, is clearly a part of my journey.

Renee Monchalin (2019), a Métis woman, wrote a comprehensive history of the Métis, specifically urban Métis women's relationship with the health professions. Although historic and factual, it does not feel cold and clinical. Not a personal thesis based specifically on her life, but I hear Renee's story. I grew up with the Red River Métis history, in Winnipeg; home of Métis and Cree relations. I did not look outside those boundaries of Métis histories. Renee's thesis gave me this larger perspective. As the 2016 Daniels Decision from the Supreme Court of Canada that states:

"There is no one exclusive Métis people in Canada, any more than there is no one exclusive Indian peoples in Canada...As early as 1650, a distinct Métis community

developed in LeHeve [sic], Nova Scotia...All Métis are Aboriginal people. All have Indian ancestry.”

It is important to lay out the path and foundation, and break down the artificial Canadian made borders of history. Renee’s thesis broadened my perspective.

I found a middle ground between the two types of writing to be a fitting plan for my thesis; storytelling mixed with Canadian history. Dad’s storytelling engages Canadian history as a backdrop to what he experienced. When I sat down to reflect on the stories one by one, I realized I needed some kind of structure. I started lining up the story titles at the start of each new story reflection I wrote, so I could look at them and remember how I talked about the stories in the preceding reflections. I wrote up a one-to-two-page reflection for each story. Each reflection would take me quite a while (e.g., a week) to write. As I proceeded, I found it easier to write my reflections. In terms of sequence, I did not analyze the stories in the order that my father wrote them. Rather, I followed my instinct of which stories were right for me to reflect on first, having previously reviewed the entire body of work as a whole.

Physically, I usually wrote each reflection by sitting in front of the computer. Many times during this process, I shed tears. When I got to points like that, I would have to stop writing, and walk around. I might go for a walk to the lake or to the park. And sometimes I would run a warm bath, and sit in it with a story. I made notes of things I thought about, and reflected on, while I read through the stories. Then I took those notes and worked them into my story reflection. Sometimes I tried the method where you sit at the computer for 20 minutes, turn the phone off, and write whatever comes to my brain, for block time. I don’t have the training of discipline to actually sit down and write, so I am learning this routine for the first time, i.e., this is what I do, this is the work that I’m doing.

To arrive at my reflections, I try to ask of the stories: why would you write about this, what would be the reason for writing specific stories? What’s the theme for today’s story? For instance, in the short story, “My Encounter with AA”, that was a big point in his life. I would ask questions like: why would he write this story, what was the point? And then the who, what, why, how and when. When I could answer those basic questions, it would lead to more personal questions about what I remember about my dad. Importantly, I also reflected on what do these

stories mean to me? Writing out what they mean to me helps me answer those questions to myself.

I started this process in July 2019, and sent my story reflections to my supervisor, Stephanie, as I developed them through to December 2019. The way we collaborated was as follows:

- We would meet after every three or four story reflections, and Stephanie would ask me questions about my process as a way of coming to understand and make sense of my methods.
- She would also ask me about how doing this work makes me feel to ensure I am staying safe and well through this challenging process.
- In October, when I went to Melbourne with Janet Smylie and others to attend an Indigenous scholars' health conference, Stephanie asked me to reflect on how that experience was shaping how I was thinking about Percy's stories. I wrote a specific reflection about this.
- Once I returned, Stephanie and I met in her office for a brainstorm about "the stories across the stories". That is, she asked me to think about what patterns or messages I was noting when I thought across my story reflections.
- Stephanie organized my thoughts into a series of my own quotes (e.g., "My father's story is my own story.") and then she asked me to write up a reflection about each of the quotes. These ideas have contributed to the section below called "The Stories Across the Stories".
- I continued to write up my story reflections.
- We then met again in Stephanie's office for another brainstorm. This time, she asked me questions about my process and my thoughts about the Percy Papers, and she typed up my answers verbatim, as best she could. We then used the 'transcript' of that brainstorm to further contribute to the methods and results sections being presented here.

An important part of the analysis process was also bringing my emerging ideas to my thesis committee for feedback.

2.4 Ethical Issues and How I Sought to Mitigate Them

Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt (1991) write in “First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R’s-Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility”. I hope to be respectful in how the Percy Papers are interpreted and presented, keeping the integrity of voice intact. The relevance of the stories will be; how the stories address history, historic trauma and healing. The stories can be used as an educational focus, to address issues in history. Reciprocity of what the stories have said to me, and how I plan to share this work respectfully, and ethically. I will honour responsibility in how the stories are researched, and how the data gathered is used and stored. I hope to keep the four R’s in perspective while working with The Percy Papers.

Ethical research practice is based on respectful relations with those participating in the research project. A past of unethical practices, on the part of Western researchers, when dealing with Indigenous peoples, has led to the necessity to develop ethics in research. Protocols and codes of ethics are required in doing research with research participants, according to the First Nations Information Governance Centre (2020). For example, setting boundaries regarding how Percy’s work/stories will be used in the future. Key principals involved are: obtaining prior informed consent, protection of privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property.

Sharing what one has learned is an important Indigenous tradition; ‘a giving back to the community.’ Stories are meant to capture our attention, and direct us, “to think deeply and to reflect upon our actions and reactions” (Kovach, 2010, p.94). This type of sharing can take the form of a story or personal life experience and is done with a compassionate mind and love for others (Kovach, 2010, p. 94). Narrative, storytelling/oral traditions, as a primary means for passing knowledge within tribal traditions, has been severely eroded through the Indian Residential School experiences. This process, of passing knowledge, was interrupted in the relationship of my parents, and their children. I think that in the writing and telling of this history within my father’s short stories, he was breaking down this wall, to communicate his truths. I validate my father’s voice by working and presenting his stories, in a respectful way. As I do this, my own family history will become clear, and coherent; allowing a renewed process of that knowledge transfer. For my dad, his stories gave him some space and time to explore his world, past and present. For me they allowed change in how I perceived my dad and his history, allowing for a forward, positive, move into the future. For the broader world, The Percy Papers

talk about how and why, he made the important changes in his world, the blueprint of Indigenous survival after IRS.

Western knowledge, with its flagship of knowledge, has often advanced into Indigenous Peoples' communities with little regard for the notions of Indigenous worldviews and self-determination in human development. The 'Wall' that I was outlining in the 'Background' section of my proposal has everything to do with why there is a need for ethics in research. "Indigenous people argue that research, which has primarily focused on social disarray and pathos, is evidence of a perspective of 'deficiency' whereby Native people and their lives are pathologized (Ermine, et al., 2004, p.12). My father's struggles with this pathology is evident in his stories. He grapples with the ethics he learned in his western education, on a daily basis, with the ethics he was advancing on, once he leaves residential school.

Keeping the Four R's in perspective while working with The Percy Papers, and being respectful in how the stories are interpreted and presented, is where the writing to siblings comes in. I drafted a letter to my siblings regarding the Percy Papers. I wanted them to know I have been working with our father's stories for my thesis. The stories, being personal, are a remaining piece of my/our father's world. This coming together as a collective of siblings through the Percy Paper's has the ability to create a form of healing for us, as 'second generation residential school survivors.' My brother had the opportunity to attend one of my presentations on the Percy Papers and stated that he was quite moved by my analysis of our father's work. With this positive support, I hope to continue with the same support, and input, of my remaining siblings. The letter I wrote to my siblings was just a formality, to let them know I am working with dad's stories; it's ok if they don't agree.

Another ethical concern arose while I was presenting one of the stories at a conference, a story that named an actual person, and I found myself wondering about the ethics of this naming. It occurred to me, during this reading, that if there happened to be someone related, or knew this person, in the audience, that took offence to the nature of the presentations, it could have resulted in an ethical discussion. It was suggested that in order to preserve the integrity of the story, there was a need to find a way to redact the identifying details of such persons, or places. Obscuring identities can, also, be achieved through a form of lifting out the identifying features of people

whom my father has named in his stories, and replacing with a generic description in square brackets. This would not affect the meaning, or take anything away, from the story itself.

I outlined these ethical considerations in the protocol that I submitted to the University of Toronto Health Sciences Research Ethics Board. The protocol was approved in December 2019 without any modifications.

3 Results

3.1 Overview

My preliminary results are organized into two sections. First, I share the reflections I've written for each of my father's 21 stories. I consider these to be building blocks for my overall analysis. I then present a section called, "The Stories Across the Stories", which is my attempt to understand my father's writings holistically. What messages is he offered across his stories? And how might they help me address my research objective, which is to explore the disabling effects of colonization through analysis of my father's short stories, and how this may give rise to new ways of thinking about "rehabilitation". Try to narrow the analysis down to a few words to capture one main theme in his stories. I read the stories with the background knowledge of what government and church officials thought of Indigenous peoples, and the Indigenous babies in their care.

3.2 Reflections on Percy Bird's 21 short stories

3.2.1 My Brother Tom

The first story in the series is called, "My Brother Tom". Tommy is my father's older brother. He is ten years older and was already at residential school when my father started. Tommy is the source of my father's inspiration, his love for traveling, his focus, and his resilience. Dad introduces his family, giving a quick history of births and deaths. I learn that my dad had six siblings; he had a family, I have a larger family. I did not know this; over the years I never asked about my paternal family. "My Brother Tom", as the first story in this series, speak loudly about how my father looked up to his brother. The short story writing course allowed a space for my father to show that reverence.

Dad started residential school when he was three years old. His mother was ill with tuberculosis, and confined to a sanatorium. With no one to care for him, he ended up in school. Loss and abandonment are also present in this story of my Uncle Tom. I can't even imagine what life was like for my father at this stage in his life. Issues become apparent when the story states that Tommy and Johnny looked after him, the best they could, "*against any bullies or problems*

which may have come up.” Residential school not only separated the children by sex, they also separated them by age. I am not sure how much time that the brothers actually had to watch over their baby brother. It must have been stressful, for the older siblings to know their little baby brother was in the school, alone, too young yet to attend classes, or fend for himself. I wondered sadly, who would change his diapers.

Tommy is seventeen when World War two begins. He is past the mandatory age of sixteen required to stay in residential school and enlists in the army. Dad tells of places Tommy had been to during his time overseas; *“England, Sicily, Italy, Holland and was in Germany when it fell.”* Tommy received an honorable discharge for his service. I can hear how proud dad is of his brother. Tommy must be around 23 years old when he returns home. Tommy had spent six years in active combat with the Tank Corps. Dad writes that Tommy never talked to him about his war experiences. He writes, *“He didn’t want me to hear what went on over there, or what he saw or what he did. It must have been terrible.”* Tommy says he was lucky to make it back. He gets hit by a shell and spends some time in hospital recuperating. He received an honourable discharge. *“We were all very proud of my brother Tommy especially when he arrived home in his service uniform.”* My dad’s admiration for the uniform is formed in these early years; seeing Tommy, a hero, in his uniform. Possibilities must have seemed boundless.

He writes that although many of the other young men arrived home, some did not make it home. Dad writes that he *“remembers the reaction of one young mother especially when she got a telegram informing her, her husband was missing.”* He still remembered her pain.

When the Korean War began, dad is sixteen, and has visions of joining the army, he *“had another two years to go to graduate high school but was thinking about quitting early and joining the army.”* Around this time Tommy comes to visit him at Residential school. He bombards Tommy with questions about army life. Tommy becomes quiet, he didn’t say much. All the questions must have tipped Tommy off as what my dad was planning. Tommy leaves but tells my father not to do anything until he heard from him again. In two months, my dad writes, that he gets a letter from Korea. Tommy says he had re-enlisted. With his current war experience, Tommy was dispatched as an engineer, and spent three years in Korea.

My father had followed his older brother's instruction to wait for him. This says much about how he trusted Tommy. Tommy must have known that his brother would follow his orders.

According to the story, the letter that my father had received from Tommy read, "*Percy, no matter what happens, stay and finish your education and don't think of joining the army. I've done that for you.*" Dad writes:

"I will never forget that moment. I have valued whatever education I have attained since that time. I think of my brother Tom quite often whenever I find myself in a class room situation. I think of the schooling he himself had missed due to wars etc. I think of my life and all of what I have experienced just because I fulfilled my brother's wish that I continue to attend school".

Tommy's gift to his baby brother was twofold: first to spare him from the horrors of war, instead, gain an education that would prepare him for a better life.

The story continues on to some history of Indigenous men and women who enlisted in the wars even though Indigenous people were exempted, through treaties, from war activities, and what their lives were like.

"My Brother Tom", contains an amazing amount of information that I can extract from. That my father's brother Tommy had continued to look after his little brother to the end is such a humanly touching story. Tommy never wavered on his focus. Tommy visited his brother, still in the clutches of residential school. I can connect this act of love and nurturing to a memory that my father would have been able to draw on when he began his healing journey. The visits by Tommy to his little brother may also be showing residential school staff that dad had relatives who cared to come visit, and could actually make the trip where many parents did not have means. The inhumane conditions at residential school had not quite managed to wipe out the humanity of some students. When the story speaks of Tommy's unwillingness to talk of the atrocities of war, and how some soldiers were killed in action. I think immediately of the similarities to the unspeakable horrors that my father could never talk about to his children regarding his residential school experiences. I had wondered in the past why neither of my parents talked about their early years, this part connects me directly to that unspeakable pain. Some of the soldiers did not make it home alive, just as some children did not survive residential school. Residential school was my father's war zone. He fought hard to get through, almost

killed in the process. I think my father suffered from a kind of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, just like many of the soldiers who returned from active war combat. Tommy's stories of traveling to Europe during the war years could have been the seeds that gave my father the curiosity of traveling abroad himself in his later years.

This story ends with a brief mention of another Indigenous soldier named Sergeant Tommy Prince, who also fought in both wars. Dad writes he was "*from Broken Head Reserve, died about ten years ago. He died never able to integrate back into civil life. A broken man, he died an alcoholic. He was alone when he died.*" My dad struggled to integrate into civil life after a lifetime of Residential school. Although the scenario of dying an alcoholic, 'broken man from Broken Head', could very well easily have been my father's, he managed to reconnect with his life, and establish himself in his world.

It is a painful story about my Uncle Tommy. Yet, his story is full of hope and resilience. It speaks of honor and strength. It is all about relationships and how far you are willing to go to preserve it. My dad went full circle with his life. He hit rock bottom, but the tools, strength and supports, he gathered along the way enabled him to recall his own education, experience, and to utilize his skills for the betterment of the community. A healing journey, a needed start for the generations. My Uncle Tommy was my father's hero, as my father is mine. My father's stories bring the unspoken aspects of his life vividly to the forefront.

3.2.2 1998 – What It's Like Now

The final story of the collection. This story is familiar to me. I have heard this story in dad's public speaking on accounts of his life. It is a story that begins his journey into the world of government programing and proposal writing. With his academics and his experience organizing, he is invited to be a part of a think tank on how to address alcohol issues in the Indigenous communities.

An incident that occurred prior to dad's quitting alcohol. Fall 1977, two cars crash head on, on the Brokenhead Hwy, just north of Winnipeg. All were from Brokenhead Reserve. Thirty-two children were orphaned and had to be fostered out, this during the 60's scoop era. The accident was alcohol related. Dad was asked to be involved in a committee seeking ways to prevent this

type of tragedy. Through this committee, Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NADAP) was developed. Dad worked here for 3 years, writing proposals and raising funds. When he sobered up, he did volunteer work in organizations just to keep active, and involved.

This story gives a quick sweep of his professional life and how he began his work building health and wellness in the Indigenous communities. I get a sense of the intensity of the work that he was involved with. His loneliness comes across almost fresh when he writes about being, *“totally alone when I sobered up.”* Dad begins his journey reconnecting with his children. Mom had cancer, and he managed to see her. I really liked reading about this meeting. There was so much history between them, so much sadness and loss. He writes that when they met, he made a promise to *“keep an eye on the kids.”* He says he would support us should we every want to pursue post-secondary education. *“This I have done to the best of my ability.”* My father loved my mother, as much as he knew how. That he chose to try and rebuild life with his children when he began his healing journey tells of his great love, and vision, and the great man that he was. I love knowing, from this story, that my parents came together, to talk, in the last days of my mother. How sad I felt reading this story. My father did fulfill his promise to my mother, by always being there for me and my family as we struggled to get me through my university undergrad degree. I know my dad loved my mom. Maybe she loved him too, but that residential school trauma took that away; or it never provided the training on how to love each other.

This journey of recovering my father through examining his short stories has helped in closing the huge gap caused by the colonial experience that my father suffered, and endured.

This journey has forced me to learn to use my voice, in this process of speaking about my father's stories.

3.2.3 1985 Olds Cierra

This story is, seemingly, about my dad's brand-new car. He writes about his employment with Medical Services Branch, Health Canada, where he worked till retirement. He was the Regional Director of Medical Services, Western Division. I remember reading this on his business card. I was proud of him, though I never told him this. I remember going to his office and seeing the respect that his staff had for him. It always seemed surreal. I know he was proud of himself,

though he was a humble man. Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NADAP) was one of the programs that my dad had materialized with a handful of other Indigenous academics who were trying to address “*massive issues of alcohol and drug abuse*”, stemming in their communities. NADAP was a national organization started in Winnipeg with a few people in the helm; dad being one of them.

I remember my dad always said that he had to keep himself busy on his off days. He worked for many years at his job without taking vacations, because he was still unsure of what to do with time. He spent much time with his new AA affiliations. His work ethics were very strong, and methodical. He loved his work. He loved being helpful to others. He was a very generous man with his time and efforts. I accompanied him numerous times in his tireless support in helping other addicts. He would bring them cigarettes, a little food, at times even some beer, to get them through. I realize this is what today we call, harm reduction. He had vast respect for some of his friends still suffering, that stemmed from a base of common knowledge of personal histories. Such a tragic past, I would think as we visited some of his old friends, all Indigenous. Some remembered me, I remembered some them too.

“Outside of my work responsibilities, I had a lot of time on my hands. I was living alone and I was very busy with my relatively new association with the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. I learned early that if I wished to maintain sobriety, I would have to share my experience, strength and hope with other people who desired sobriety for themselves. I tried to do this as much as I could within the City of Winnipeg. I attended AA meetings two or three times during the week and most definitely during weekends.”

My dad’s fellowship with AA was an important tool for his sobriety. He kept his schedule of meetings, religiously. This was a necessary part of his routine for keeping positive and on track. He kept a steady schedule of; attending meetings, meeting his fellow members, giving support, receiving support, making plans, give speeches.

Getting to know my father was a very slow process. Living in Toronto did not help in this recovery, but on the other hand perhaps the space was needed. My father would come to Toronto to visit me, and those visits developed into annual retreats. He followed the AA roundup cycle and would make Toronto a yearly part of his life. The Toronto roundups would bring those in AA, plus friends and family, from around the world together for shared stories and

networking. I benefited from these visits, in particular in the early part of my relationship with my father. I know now that in going to the AA roundups and different ‘open’ AA meetings with him, I was being introduced to his world of AA. The open meetings were for all attending the conference to attend, regardless whether you were an AA member or not. Family members or supportive allies could attend; it was the educational part of the conference. The ‘closed’ meetings were only for AA members. In hearing the stories of my father’s fellow alcoholic’s, I could hear parts of my father’s story. There were also Indigenous groups that we would attend. I relished these visits, connecting with my community here in Toronto, and introducing my dad. These visits were instrumental in setting the scene for my interest in my father’s life. Eventually I would hear his story in his own words.

This story, although it is about the buying of his first new car, cash, it is also about why my Dad bought this car in the first place. Buried in the mid-section is the planning of the trip. He planned out the road trip of the northern towns he would drive through. He had originally planned to go alone, and was therefore content to take his 1979 Crown Victoria. When my brother asked if he and his wife could come along, dad’s plans changed. Dad was now concerned about the condition of his car to drive this precious cargo.

The rest of the story is about how dad acquired a brand-new car to drive to the round up in. How proud he would have been to drive his, very first, brand new car, with his son and daughter-in-law to the roundup. He was looking for a new car, but not a brand-new car. As he writes:

“Just about this time I had been looking at some used cars in the city and contemplating buying one for the trip north...It was a beautiful light blue car. I test drove it and I loved it.” I remember this car; he drove it proudly, “...I was too excited about owning this brand-new car and looking forward to this trip.”

He did not hear the sales person telling him he would enter his name in a draw for a free car. After a successful trip to the AA roundup with his family, he returns and hears that he had won the car.

The dad I knew, prior to my parent’s breakup, was one who was, distant, not very warm or comforting. He was a violent man, when he drank alcohol. So, to read his rendition of his

concerns for his son's safety, and comfort, is very touching. Changing the landscape of my father, in one story.

3.2.4 I'll Hobble You Then I'll Race You

Note: Doing this historical work with the stories, it seems, I am constantly punching a hole through the veil that's between the present and the past. I was stuck as to how to proceed in reading my dad's stories, and describing the process. I decided to write my reply in letter form, to get unplugged. As I got ready to write the letter, I began writing the story about how it felt, and where it took me. Exploring stories within stories, is how we grow, and untangle unasked questions.

This story is about my father's perseverance. He shows his knowledge of history, and how that history intruded in his life. You read the title, I'll Hobble you -Then I'll Race You, and the first line reflects this title; *"During the late 1800's, the Canadian government began establishing Indian residential schools, with the 'purported' objective to teaching First Nations people to be self-reliant and self-supporting."* He writes the objective was in fact, *"assimilation"*, described as the *"worst nightmare"* for Indigenous attendees. I think about how angry one would be once you are able to reconcile with your experiences in residential school. This story speaks to this.

There were many dreams that my dad had while he grew up. Like many young men, he yearned to wear a uniform.

He follows his life dream of being an RCMP officer. After going through the training process, he is crushed when told that no Status Indian could be enrolled. He is a licensed pilot but cannot apply for career as a pilot for the same reasons. It is sad that my dad was put through continuous rejection. He applied to positions he was qualified to apply for, in spite of the racism that he encountered daily. This is role modeling for me, his perseverance. It truly made me feel sad when I read through this story, even though I have read it many times before. How hard he tried to use his education to gain a better life for him and his family. He was doing what he was educated to do, but the world was not allowing for positive social growth to happen. Like the article, "Making Aboriginal People Immigrants Too" (Bohaker, Iacovetta, 2009), the end result to this government intervention is what my dad and many other educated Indigenous peoples suffered during the early 60's.

As I read the stories, other stories developed, or came to mind; I realize that I would at times be railroaded by them. So, I then included those (my) stories, as I read my dad's stories. The medicine would be hearing my dad's voice from the past. My dad was a very smart, educated man. He was proud and humble of all his accomplishments. He was a very gentle man; I am proud to say; my growing up years would tell a different story. The beauty of having the stories of my father's is knowing that he wrote them. I acknowledge that writing a personal story can be challenging, depending on the subject.

I like the use of the word 'purported'; it seems loaded with sarcasm. I reflected on chosen words of "self-reliant and self-supporting", versus, "assimilation", and "worst nightmares."

I suddenly wondered, who is dad's audience? His sarcasm in using the word "purported", whereas, "intended", would be more valued to paint a lying picture; one more acceptable to the general Canadian audience. Self-reliant and self-supporting was what my dad set out to accomplish when he left residential school, to attend university, to get a life. Using his education and his experience was not enough to gain 'a piece of the pie.' His use of, "assimilation, and "worst nightmare", in the same sentence states what happened, and what the students endured at the schools. This is from a very personal perspective.

So much in the opening paragraph. It tells me immediately my dad's knowledge of Canadian history. It is a hold 'this thought', type of introductory. This story is told with history in the background. Dad's father died in the winter of 1936 when he was three years old (must have been the following year that dad got lost, alone in the muskeg for 3 days). His mother too sick with tuberculosis, and he is sent to school in Onion Lake, SK, 500 miles away from his family. He writes:

"I did not attend classes for the first three years so as a baby of the place I was allowed to roam throughout the building almost at will. The only thing I hated during at this time were the long mandatory afternoon naps alone in the big dormitory up in the third floor."

It is painful to imagine this little 3-year-old baby wandering the halls of residential school. Another story tells of his older brothers, Tom and Johnny, watching out for him the best they could from "bullies" and other problems. It's difficult to know what happened when you only

have a small version of the happening. An interview my dad did tells of his punishments for dirtying his diaper (1:23:43-1:24:41;).

Residential school stunted the growth of Indigenous students, the whole Indigenous population. The race is unbalanced, swaying in the direction of settlers, and other arrivals. “I’ll hobble you and then I’ll race you”, that’s a pretty significant title. Basically, I’ll break you down and then we’ll run a race and call it even, when it’s not. My father is telling us about his hobbling experience.

3.2.5 A Favorite Trip

This story is from when dad was a young cadet. He goes on a train ride through the mountains from Prince Albert to Abbotsford, BC. Here in the mountainous beauty we are introduced to a time in my dad’s life where he excels in all his abilities, athletic and artistic. He is confident and excited. His biggest accomplishment of this experience, however, is in the final contest.

Reading this story felt very different from the other stories. This story felt like my father was writing it from whatever age he was when he embarked on this trip. His proudness and his excitement shine through vividly. A Favorite Trip brings us to his being chosen as one of twelve of, “*the best cadets from an Air Cadet Squadron of approximately 300 kids from Prince Albert area*”, the story reads. The story draws on his accomplishments as a young man. He never stopped trying to be his best, in spite of the pitfalls, his residential school experiences, and the great wall of racism, that he was up against. This story breaks through the negative experiences and takes my young dad beyond the boundaries of his world. The trip took my dad away from that cold world, momentarily, to a world completely different from that of the prairies, and his life at residential school. It showed the possibilities in sight, for him. He writes, “*...we were all assigned to our own sleeping cars.*” How exciting to be so catered to. In residential schools there were dorms. On this trip, he had a room of his own.

The arrival to the camp grounds and the settling in, all scenes from a cadet adventure; intense competition between organized huts, in a variety of inspections, including; “*cleanliness, garbage removal, general appearance of dormitories, hut decorations, grounds keeping and even decoration of front lawns.*” I can see where my dad got his organized training from. His home

was always organized, and clean. It generally surprised me, even when in our first meetings when he lived in a rooming house. His room was neat and tidy. This vision remains with me, as I remember my father rebuilding his life. His apartments were always in the same state of cleanliness. I could see how he struggled to piece a “home” together, when he began his healing process. His yard was taken care of. The competitive nature to always be the best, with rewards, was definitely embraced on this trip. My father did very well on this memorial trip, amongst his comrades.

He was a great lover of his adopted cats, and treated them with great respect; a thing I always found peculiar, because in my early years I was never on the receiving end of that tenderness. This is one of the messages I believe today, that he tried to convey to me; patience and tolerance. We butted heads a few times, gently. We had much to learn of each other. Having the opportunity of an insight to his life through these stories, is a deeper link to me than I thought, because he wrote them, another piece of him exists.

“The camp was beautifully situated in a valley surrounded by magnificent mountains”. I can smell the greenery, in this sentence. I am happy that he had this experience. At this summer camp, my father reveals that he was quite the athlete. *“I used to be in good shape when I was in my teens. I was especially proficient in the long-distance races.”* I myself, was a pretty good runner, and enjoyed the solitary sport for quite a number of years. I still am physically active in the gym and walking. I did wonder where I got this inspiration to run. I always felt a bit of an anomaly, in my family, in terms of my love of running. I did not know anyone else in the family that ran for the love of it. Running was an escape for me. I loved how it took my mind to other places. Reading this story explains to me how my love of running may of come through my father’s love of running. Some say blood memory; that memory is in the blood and bone, that our stories are passed not just verbally but through a kind of genetic memory (Deerchild, 2015). As a member of a matriarch family, I usually think of this phenomenon as flowing through my mother’s side, not my fathers.

Abbotsford camp was the place where my father held an audience of over a thousand people who all loved his guitar playing and singing. I remember loving it when my father played guitar and sang. On happy occasions we were allowed to hear a few songs before we went to bed; we all had our favorites. Nice to read a history of this passion. The confidence building that took place

in this experience for my father was so important. In spite of what negative years he had in residential school, he was embraced in this moment. It carried him through his life. His memory of this day is fresh. My brother plays guitar and sings with the strong voice my father had. My son too, has taught himself guitar at a young age and has kept up his artistic ability; he writes and sings with a strong Indigenous voice.

The story ends with; *“I don’t remember coming home to Prince Albert at all. I was so proud I was able to contribute so much to the pride of Saskatchewan...And by the way, I was the only Aboriginal in the hall...and I beat them all!”* He floated back home.

3.2.6 Writing from The Heart

Not sure if the title of this story was the theme for the story of the day, in dad’s writing course. This story has only nine lines.

“I remember my first smell of toast.” The first paragraph.

The first paragraph says so much. Who remembers their first smell of toast? Most have had toast long before our memories kick in. Who doesn’t love the smell of toast?

This is very short story. The shortest, and was also handwritten. This handwritten story was slipped into the stack of stories; as if an important afterthought. A lost memory that slipped in at the last moment. Dad gave it the third story space, near the beginning.

Toast. We all know this smell. A smell we take for granted. This story, about the smell of toast, cuts to the heart. The young boys making bread, early, every day, *“dozens and dozens of loaves to satisfy the needs of two hundred kids plus two dozen staff.”* The stark loneliness is felt in this short story. *“We never had toast for breakfast but the staff...had toast...they ate in a separate dining room. The girls ate in their own dining room. The boys also had their own dining room.”* I feel the coldness in these lines. The boys dining room consists of two long tables with the supervisors table, a separate table, on the end. The supervisor ate bacon, eggs, and two pieces of toast, *“staff meal.”* This supervisor sat at the head of the table, eating this elaborate breakfast, while the students ate porridge, made with water (no doubt) and white sugar, if any. And bread,

untoasted. That would have been too much of a privilege for such undeserving little children, I guess. In my head I witness the children sitting and watching, in silence, the obvious difference in meals. The smell of not only toast, but the eggs and bacon, as well. The indifference of the supervisor as he eats his meal, in front of starving children. The story makes you not only smell the toast, but also smell the bacon and eggs.

After spending hours making “*dozens and dozens*” of loaves for two hundred kids plus staff, no enjoyment was allowed.

I, too, think of my own way of making porridge. In the style brought to me from my Dominican partner. We boil the cinnamon stick to flavor the water with goodness. The oats are soaking in coconut milk as we await the boil. The oats are so delicious with the added maple syrup and frozen blueberries.

I wish that residential school fed the children what they deserved, good healthy food. This short story truly emphasizes the lack of attention, child labour, cold callousness, on the whole, shown to the children in care of government and church.

My dad was making a point in this story. He never often talked about actual violence, but this story emphasizes how violent it actually was, through the making of bread. Making bread is a labour intensive production. Children went through the process every day, without the satisfaction of ever tasting toast. Watching the supervisor enjoying, not only toast, but eggs and bacon. Through the stories of the TRC, we know that many children were starving. This is the act of violence I associate with this short story.

My dad always loved good food. When we went out for dinner, he always ordered the best. He enjoyed watching people eat, and enjoying it. When I cooked him a meal, he was so thankful. I now know why he was so passionate about experiencing life to the fullest. With his life of limited tastes at residential school to his own embracing life when he could at last let go; he tried to capture all that he could. His stories of experiences from his early life showed just how much he did and aspired to; gives me the energy to keep moving forward for my own dreams. Toast to the future of living life to the fullest.

3.2.7 My Encounter with Alcoholics Anonymous

This story brings back many memories. I had not seen my dad during this time of his AA recovery. His ‘dry date’, October 6th, 1977, a rebirth. He explains how many addicts have several dry dates, dates of starting over from square one. My dad had one dry date. Like his life, he really practiced on doing his absolute best in whatever it was that he set out to do. A promise to his brother, Tommy, to always try his honest best in situations, in return for his war service.

I was pregnant with my twins when I received a call from my dad one day, after not seeing him for so many years. He was asking if I would present him with his 2nd dry date birthday cake, at his AA meeting. Of course, I agreed, and with much apprehension. I did not know what to expect. I talk to my mom about this meeting and she was very supportive that I go. My dad was safe if he was not drinking, and so I went. It was such an emotional evening seeing my dad again. He was healthy, strong, looking well. Our first meeting was a hard one. I loved him, and had missed him, and was so happy to be there.

The world of Alcoholics Anonymous was a mystery to me at this time. I did not partake too harshly in alcohol or drugs; I tried very hard in my early life to not be the ‘stereotype’ of Indigenous people. I just tried to walk a good life. Hard at times, when role models were just starting to question their role for the younger generation. Also, my life to that point carried much other negative issues that I had not yet dealt with. So much interference in just trying to be a good human being in a world of colonial chaos.

I learned over the years how my dad’s AA friends became his world of solitude. I respect the support that he had in his AA world of comrades who were there in a second for him when needed. Being sober was just the beginning, he now had to deal with the deeper issues. He did this for himself, and for his family. To take back his life, and change the future.

3.2.8 Hot Tropical Dancing

The imagined theme for this story is ‘Somewhere you went, and an inspiration while there.’

I wondered how the theme or inspiration for the story was addressed. I imagined this theme would be perfect for this story. Dad loved Mexico. He traveled many places, but he did love Mexico.

He did talk about his journeys in the form of funny stories. He was such a storyteller. His whole demeanor would change when he told a story, you were captivated. Many stories had a punch line. Some caught us off guard, we would simultaneously say, “Dad!”, and shake our heads as we chuckled. He enjoyed beautiful things, whether it was physical, amazing feats, kitties that needed affection, dancing, etc. It is exciting to read about how he approached situations, and things that he achieved, but we never knew about. So much time was lost through the residential school years, and the years of rebuilding that followed, for my parent’s generation. The stories make up a small part of those lost years. I can see how conversation can add to the stories and flesh them out with memories. My brother saying, “Ok, that’s it, I’m starting the Percy Junior Papers!”, upon learning about The Percy Papers and where they are going. And so, he should write his stories. My brother Percy has had an amazing life himself. Further proof of the positive rippling effects of my father’s rehabilitation.

I am glad to know that dad traveled, and had fun times. He learned how to have fun. His partner Bev, indulged his love of travel. Bev was scared of flying; she had a phobia and had taken a course to learn how to relax. They traveled to Europe, and Mexico several times.

The island of Cozumel, had enough of an impact on my dad to be the chosen story for the week. It is a small island off the coast of Cancun. I wonder how they decided on this island for a vacation. I was surprised when I googled the island, it did seem rather remote. I thought about my dad’s travels as always going to obvious, and modern, places like Cancun. “...*the island was quiet and peaceful. It was not commercialized as you would expect a tourist spot to be.*”

The inspiring local dancing is the object of the story. The dancing and the dancers. Dad focuses on a dancer who he says was in his 70’s. “*I could see a slight movement in his arms and legs but hardly moved away from the spot where he was at. I saw lines on his face as he smiled a one steady smile. I believe his eyes were closed, fully taking in the moment.*”

This dancer inspired my dad, because of his age, and the way he showed his enjoyment of the dance and moment. He was dancing with this beautiful woman also not too young. She “*may*

have been in her late forties and she was beautiful...” He describes the dancing, “...*perfection, grace, dignity and the sheer enjoyment of life.*”

I took a jazz dance course one year when I first moved to Toronto. I love the dance and the moves. It was very good for my body. Today I still utilize the warm up exercises that we used back then. Such a coincidence that my dad took a dance class too.

The commitment of this ‘classroom’ setting was 1 ½ hours per week, for eight weeks.

Granddaughter, Kerry, joined them on the Friday nights for the lessons. Kerry was adopted as a baby and recently had found her birth family. My dad, in developing a relationship with her, was very gentle. He would invite her to dinners, to keep in touch and chat. Glad that he had this time to enjoy his granddaughter, in a fun and energizing way. I never saw him do the salsa. I wish I did. He ends the story with a reference to Cozumel, “*Latin dance to me, remains a thing of beauty, and has given me a wonderful memory of an evening in Cozumel.*” The group did plan to enroll for the next fall session. I wonder if they did?

One trip to Mexico, my dad had brought a sombrero and decided to wear it through customs. The border patrol thought he was Mexican trying to cross the border illegally. That was a story he enjoyed telling.

3.2.9 Mr. Kitty: February/99

I think about Mr. Kitty. I remember this old cat. He ran the Bird-Heald house. Everything revolved around Mr. Kitty. I thought it was a funny thing that dad was so focused on this kitty. Mr. Kitty was not a very sociable cat, not friendly. Kept to himself or to Bev and dad. He was old. He slept on Bev’s bed during the day. They had put a high pillow on the floor so that Mr. Kitty could jump down off the bed without hurting his old body. Totally spoilt. He had no teeth.

Mr. Kitty lived with dad and Bev for 18 years. Mr. Kitty like all the cats of this household were found cats. He was fearful of people, seems to be the running theme in the cat stories. They used sardines, to lure Mr. Kitty in from the Winnipeg cold. I thought of my dad’s love of sardines. I remember stacks of sardines in the cupboards when I was a kid. I am thinking that perhaps dad was a cat in his previous life.

Mr. Kitty finally agreed to go into the house. They hung posters in the neighbourhood to find the owner of Mr. Kitty. Bev was sure Mr. Kitty was a Siamese and so their posters reflected this. Mr. Kitty was actually a tabby, dad writes, *“It is not surprising that no one answered our ads regarding a Siamese cat.”* They did find the owners, but they did not want Mr. Kitty back.

Dad writes about his friend Jack, who cat sits when Bev and dad go on their annual holidays. Jack is as *“an old Indian trapper who now lives in the city”*. Jack is also featured in another story called, “Sylvester”. A friend of my dad’s, he was a very quiet, respectful man. I think about their shared histories, when I reflect on that quietness.

Dad loved this cat. He would say that his full name was Mr. Kitty Litter. Funny to think about my dad as a cat lover.

We also had a cat, named Ling. We had Ling for 23 years. She was an old soul. Taught me a lot about looking after another soul who was dependent on you to be fed and loved. It was a learning journey for sure. Funny the same things that are in my dad’s life, are also in mine.

3.2.10 Sylvester

I read and reread the story. I have read this story already several times. I remember Jack. Jack had the skin condition, vitiligo. I remember him as being the first person I ever saw with this condition. Jack was a very quiet, humble guy.

Jack represented someone from my dad’s past. There was a quiet mystery with Jack; a sadness. I don’t know if there is a family connection between dad and Jack. I remember another younger relative who worked for the City of Winnipeg in sanitation. He rode the huge garbage trucks around the city. He would find some pretty amazing stuff. He was much more energetic than my dad and Jack. Seemed to have a bundle of energy. My dad treated him good. I think my dad’s relatives treated him with respect, and looked up to him; I felt and saw this. It is good to remember how people treated dad. It helps in recovering my dad, to see him respected.

Jack was always dressed nice, crisp, and clean. He had a sparkle in his eyes. His hair had a bit of a curl, shoulder length, was always brushed. I can see my dad’s hair. I think it was a bit long

too. I remember my dad had a bit of a pony tail at one time. I thought that was pretty good for him to grow his hair. The first time for him, that I recall. Breaking through the constraints of residential school's strict dress code.

It's about remembering. Remembering the details. Remembering the ways that dad was with other members of his family is with gentleness. Such a different man than the one I grew up with. How does one rid themselves of anger and pain. I think that going to the gym must have helped him worked out some anger. He would pack a little bag and head off to 'Vic Tanny's' gym. It was a big mystery to me what a gym even was. I always found that running, and doing extremely physical things, were helpful for me in terms of working things out, mentally and physically. Nice to know I have this healthy activity in common with my dad.

Sylvester is the third cat in my dad's life. I can't recall meeting Sylvester. It's funny the cats in my dad's life are so needy. Sylvester showed up at their door one cold Winnipeg winter. This cat could be my dad, if my dad was a cat. *"Sylvester was afraid of people. For the longest time he would not approach his food until we were inside and out of sight."*

These few lines made me think of some of the stories my dad related how he was before he sobered up. I saw him one time on the bus, he was intoxicated, he staggered on, I was petrified. He sat down in the front area, later got off. I think that he saw me and avoided me. If so, I am thankful that he did. I don't know what I would have done had he approached me in that state.

I think about this story many times, as I think about the 'what ifs.' At that time, he spared me, and himself, the embarrassment, and the pain, of that confrontation. I loved my dad. I missed him, but not in that state. I missed the dad I am getting to know through his stories. (I shed some tears here as I think about his own pain of looking back on his life.) So, my dad as the 'afraid cat'; learning how to cope, survive, and thrive in his environment, with the tools he had acquired.

Funny, I thought about Bev as a rescuer, in respect to his cat stories. She was a VON nurse, (Victoria Order of Nurses). To my understanding, Bev worked in the north. This was how they met. Dad did a lot of traveling in the north with his job. My dad is a handsome, funny man. She had patience and gave him the space he needed to keep on his sobriety path. Funny to think about their relationship in terms of the cats.

Bev was not in AA, “Live and let live,” is one of the sayings in A.A. He was never judgmental about how we lived our lives. He was protective of his life; we were respectful of how dad was living his new life. How much my dad loved this cat, enough to tell his story, is the significance of this story for me.

3.2.11 Political Involvement - 3

A political movement you were a part of, could be the theme for this story. This story’s time line is the late 70’s in Winnipeg. A mayoral election is called and the community is rallying around George Munroe, an Indigenous man who was running for a councilor seat. My dad lists reasons why Indigenous people should be involved in politics. The story gives one page of listing of the state of Indigenous people. Dad’s knowledge of politics shines in this story. He was very involved with his community right from the beginning. *“Recidivism to Welfare, to treatment and to jail was extremely high.”* It was a vicious cycle for Indigenous people trying to survive in the city. His statistical, historical, political, knowledge is well represented in this story. His knowledge of Winnipeg’s Indigenous community and their social determinants of health, are listed. Dad is writing from his academic, and Indigenous, worldview. He writes how Winnipeg citizens complained about ‘Indians’ and the drunken behavior, squalled living conditions, transient, low life, being supported by the taxpayer. Dad writes, *“Always there were ‘put downs’ in the newspapers, radio talk shows, never it seemed, was there any solutions offered to alleviate the situation.”* He notes that there were *“no Native staff in government, City Welfare department neither in the City Police force.”* The concept of equal opportunity hiring was not yet born. Today they call this *“diversity”*. It seems that not much has changed. I can feel dad’s frustration at the racism, and the stereotypes, that he confronted. It seems like a relief to read this story, on his behalf. It speaks about life after residential school, and the wall that they were still trying to penetrate. He writes that, at that time, there was nowhere for Urban Indigenous people to go for help, or support, and other Indigenous organizations were not being responsible.

I think he found inspiration in the candidate of George Munroe. I feel some of the respect he had for Tommy present in this story. George’s unwavering dedication to better his community, and that he never gave up hope that something could be done to better Indigenous lives in the City.

This was a historically, important, moment in Winnipeg history. George Munroe was the first Indigenous person to run for a seat in the Winnipeg City Council, and he won.

After rereading the list of conditions faced by Indigenous people, I think of the article, on ‘Making Aboriginal People Immigrants Too’, and the programs and policies that educated immigrants and Indigenous peoples during this exact time. Government downplayed, and tried to squash, all the combined education and experience that this group of 1st wave post-secondary educated residential school survivors had, and used. When you read all the stories. You can see the background/backdrop, the bigger picture, of politics that my dad, and others, had to wade through during the early years of campaigning, fighting, and fixing things.

3.2.12 Allerice Quinney

This story is full of emotion. My dad has a teddy bear in his room. A large brown bear that is very visible. This story is about how he came to own this bear, and how the experience was an episode to write a short story about. It shows how my dad felt about this random act of love shown towards him, from someone he never met.

It is about a young girl who touched my dad’s heart strings, through the power of a story. Allerice is from my brother-in-law’s reserve of Frog Lake, AB. She had asked my sister about herself. My sister told Allerice that her mother had passed away a few years earlier and her father was still living in Winnipeg, doing work in the Indigenous community. After hearing this story, Allerice came back the next day with her own teddy bear carefully wrapped in Christmas paper for my sister to give to dad. She wanted dad to have her teddy bear to keep him company so he would not be too lonely. Allerice had tears in her eyes as she gave away her present.

This Teddy bear was always sitting in his room. I never asked about it. I now have the story. I feel the little boy in my dad feeling safe and loved as he writes, *“Every day when I enter my bedroom I see the teddy bear and I remember that there was a kind warm loving little child who sacrificed her teddy bear in order to alleviate the loneliness of an old man she had never met.”*

This was my dad. Humble and thoughtful. It is the little things that count. This could be the message here. Keep it simple.

3.2.13 Lost in the Woods; One of my Earliest Memories

The stories my dad writes about really do give me insight into his life, and how he was molded. It saddens me to think about this experience. He is three years old when he gets lost in the muskeg in northern Saskatchewan, for three days. This is his earliest memory; he writes that it is more of a story than a memory. It is a story told to him by his relations.

As a baby, he sees older siblings go off to residential school, and he wanted to go with them. The next day he sets out to find his siblings, unbeknownst to his parents. He gets lost in the muskeg in northern Saskatchewan with his dog, Ginger. It must have been fall, as that would have been when the children were taken to school. *“There was a big swamp just over that hill with a deep dark forest where big spruce grew and lots of water.”* This sentence speaks of the bugs, and predators, that they would have encountered in three days; how cold he would have been. He was three years old, lost for three days with his dog. When they found him, he writes that he had some, *“half-eaten partridge in my hands”*. His dog protected him, hunted for him. Ginger kept him warm and safe. When they found him, Ginger would not let anyone near him, until his parents arrived. I guess that is why he was so loving with his pets. I am thankful for Ginger; she was a good spirit. Very shortly after this traumatic experience, his father passes away. His mother contacts TB and is sent to a sanitorium. With both parents gone, he is sent to residential school even though he was just three years old.

The love of his community banding together to search for him for all those days, not relenting until they found him. Such a story of strength, love, and community togetherness. This is important to acknowledge how his community came together to look for this little baby who wandered off. A life full of trauma. But he survived to tell of his survival, of his survivance. His failures, his accomplishments, and of his loves, within these short stories. Such an insight for closure.

That is an accomplished life.

What he learned, what he could teach or pass on. How he used his morals for good judgement, in a non-judgmental way. Always striving to do the best he could. Finishing what he started. Being thankful for his own survival. To treat others, human or animal, with respect, kindness,

and understanding. Because that is what a good human being does. So many teachings my father left in his stories, so much medicine on how to be in this world, not of our making.

3.2.14 My Most Memorable History Class

All dad's stories are connected. One story is about failures to become what he dreamed of. Suffering continued failures because he would not give up his Indian status. Failure of the church to be righteous with Indigenous students in their care. Wondering what life would have looked like if...

My mom did this too. She asked the "if" questions. At one point both my parents had houses with pools. My mom said to me one day, as we sat by her pool, *"what our lives would look like today if we could have stayed together."* I think I was stuck on the, "what that would look like", I couldn't imagine. I did not live in Winnipeg at this time of all the luxuries, it did not seem real. I was happy for both of them, achieving some kind of cushion in their lives, after all they had been through. Also, nice that they could look at each other and see their monetary successes.

"I wanted to be able to make a positive contribution to society and thought the ministry was a great way to achieve this. A few years previous to this, my ego and self-esteem had been severely damaged by my failure to join the Mounties. This was due to my being Indian of treaty status. A career in the RCMP had been my childhood ambition. I have often wondered what it would've been like, had I decided, at that time, to give up my treaty status, and become a member of the force. That's almost fifty years ago this year."

Dad speaks of other disappointments in his life not achieved because of his status. He writes, *"I only saw rejection, confirmation of what we, as First Nations people, were taught as children, to be prone to failure; instilled in us from the pulpit of the residential schools."* This was their church infiltrated history lessons. This seed of lies, from the pulpit, venomously preached by the priests, negatively impacted his life. Dad eventually learned how to adapt. How did he?

He writes, *"I am only one, of a great number, perhaps thousands who tried to live comfortable, to survive, but in the end went to their graves completely distraught."* Dad was taught what all Canada was teaching about Indigenous people – *"that we would never amount to anything."*

One of the history teachers took a leave and a substitute history teacher from Romania gave a straightforward version of Canadian history, not the glossed version. He writes:

“The professor hadn’t had the time necessary to be brainwashed into teaching history as it has been taught in Canada. Instead he taught Canadian history as it was taught in Romania-straightforward and factual, without any attempt to cover up or gloss over discriminatory decisions or mistakes committed by Government or its agents.”

The story ends abruptly, *“During one particular session, the professor was going on about the Government’s attitude on Native people.”*

I love this story. It tells about the amount of knowledge my dad had. He writes that he considers himself a fortunate man, that he was able to come to terms with life, and to adapt. He used what he was taught, but he could finally use this knowledge to his own advantage. Not giving up and being able to look back, and plan the next step.

All it takes sometimes is one person. In my second year of university, I met a professor who also inspired me. His teachings also stayed with me up to today. Similarities in my dad’s life keep popping up for me in his stories.

I loved studying history. Especially Indigenous histories. The more I learn, the further I can go. On all levels of my life.

Thanks dad!

3.2.15 Kerri

This story I thought about for a while. The story begins with knowledge of Kerri and her family. Then in the second paragraph, he goes back to his time spent in his lost world of addiction. My mother had left, and dad wrote, *“It took me a number of years to finally locate them but by that time all hope of reconciliation had gone.”* He looked for us. He loved my mom. He always said that. I think he loved her to the end. And when he finally came back to us, so much had happened. He hoped for reconciliation. We were all grown, had lives of our own. We all rallied to fit my dad into our lives.

I know how momentous it was for my dad to meet Kerri. He was so astonished when he found out about her being in the RCMP. Dad loved the uniforms; especially this one.

Kerri was my dad's first grandchild. Dad did not know about Kerri, as she was adopted while we were estranged from him. I met Kerri on the first day that my sister met her again too. I was living in Toronto at this time. Dad was so happy, and amazed, to meet Kerri. She was an RCMP; his dream career in his early days. What he could not accomplish without giving up his status, his first grandchild achieved. I'm glad that dad was given this. That he could see that his dream was achieved in his life, by his granddaughter.

My sister asked if Kerri could come to my house to meet. Of course, this was great. We made a huge dinner and Kerri, her husband, also an RCMP, and their two children came over. It was a good meeting. Kerri looks very much like her mom. My dad telling this story makes me think about how much this meeting meant to him.

Kerri's adoptive family is white. I don't know how her life was, the story says she had a good life. As an RCMP, Kerri had access to information. The story states that Kerri *"thought that since the Mounties were so heavily involved with Native people every adult Native person in Canada, at some point in their lives require the assistance of the Mounties and at that point, their names would be entered into the computer."* Wow, what a statistic. In another story, dad says that in fact, RCMP evolved to protect settlers from the *"Indians"*. Would have been nice to have the privilege of growing up as a family with the opportunity to talk about politics, history, and racism, together. How strong and totally different life would have been.

The story ends with Kerri finally having contact with her mother. In a handwritten note, at the end of the story, is an afterthought my dad includes, Kerri saying, *"I'm alright, I need medical info only. I don't need money or anything like that."*

Kerri apparently had a dream of our last name. Kerri's dream apparently revealed that Bird was the name she was looking for. According to the story, my sister had told dad that she had a vision prior to meeting Kerri. This vision told her that someone in a red coat was looking for her. This would be the only story that includes Indigenous spiritual influences, of dreams and spiritual advisors.

Today I Facebook with Kerri. She is inspiring and full of energy. Kerri had bone cancer a few years back and had lost a leg. She had posted her entire journey, and recovery. She is physically active, and very physically strong. Losing a leg has not stopped her. A legacy of my dad's through blood memory?

3.2.16 Stolen Life (A Journey of a Cree Woman)

I was a bit hesitant to begin this story, mostly because the title could be my dad's life. The title is the actual title of a book that my dad had given me. The story is about how he came across the book. The book is autobiographical, about a Cree woman my dad meets when he goes to visit a niece of his who is incarcerated at a women's prison in Saskatchewan. When he is there visiting his niece, he meets two other women that are related to him. This is sad, I wondered what colonial tragedy was her story, and theirs. The place is called the "Okimaw Ohco Healing Lodge" in Cypress Hills, Saskatchewan. His niece is mentioned, but my dad's chance meeting with Yvonne Johnson, the author, is the story. Yvonne's life could have been my dad's life. She was incarcerated, convicted of killing a man who she believed to be a pedophile and a threat to her own children. Her story is tragic. Her story is that of many Indigenous women in the time of missing and murdered. My dad's meeting her must have had a profound effect on him, judging from space he provides for this story.

Dad is impressed with Yvonne's attractiveness physically, and her personality. She was outspoken, ready to tell her stories. "*She was laughing and this would affect everyone around her*". I can see how this would attract my dad. He loved laughter.

I hear my dad story echoed in these lines he writes, "*She was trying to find out who she was, what was she doing and how come these bad things were happening to her all the time. She talked about her frustrations, her moments of terror; alcoholism and her unwillingness to give up. She hoped the book would explain her side of the tragic events that overcame her. All around her she felt there had been much injustice.*" There was so much injustice. Dad's story speaks of this and how it did interfere in his life. He could have ended up in jail, like Yvonne, but he didn't; 'through the grace of God', as they say in AA. Yvonne invites my dad to come to her book launch at the Healing Lodge. He supports her by buying several copies of her book; he

gave me one. When he goes to meet her again, one last time, the meeting was not so positive. There was no humour. Yvonne had explained that since the book launch her family was embarrassed that she revealed too much. It affected her negatively. The story ends abruptly. This is who my dad was. He took the time out to visit and share. To learn and support. Yvonne's life could have been his. She was incarcerated physically; he was incarcerated mentally.

3.2.17 My First Solo Flight

Dad was 17, just completed high school. Ranked as Flight Sergeant, in charge of the 38th squadron of about 50-60 cadets. He won a flying scholarship – of 400 scholarships from across Canada, his squadron won 3; his being one. They spent a month in Regina, with the flight course at the Regina Flight Club.

The fourth paragraph in this story felt very familiar to my experience in RSI:

“The lectures were arduous but interesting. I really had to listen carefully to keep up with the class. Many of the terms and concepts introduced were foreign to me and it was hard for me to understand at times. But it was fun learning and I didn’t mind the extra work knowing it was important.”

The attention that the story conveys is quite the situation for my dad to find himself. All of the trainees had their own personal trainer. Such attention. That my dad could not even own this exceptional experience, and tell his children. I am happy to read this story of a such lucky random experience, and how he traversed through.

The story speaks of his great faith in his instructor, and so gets through this course with a win. Most training pilots ‘solo’ in 9-10 hours, he did a solo in 4 hours. Trust, carries him through this assignment. As he is careening solo down the runway, he writes:

“I had never driven anything else in my life, much less at this speed. This plane was the first mechanical thing I ever controlled on my own. I had never driven a car, motor cycle, a tractor.”

He broke the record at the Flying Club soloing in 4 hours. And says that it still may be on the record. How exciting to have this experience. How sad that I never heard him tell it. He should have had the opportunity to convey his experiences, brag about them, to his children. So glad for the opportunity to have read them, and that dad had the opportunity in the end to tell this story. Such positiveness.

3.2.18 Fire at Onion Lake School – 1944

My dad is 11 years old in this story. Another story where he says, *“I shall never forget...”*

There were over two hundred students at St. Barnabus Indian Residential School. It was wintertime, and all were getting ready for the Christmas season festivities.

This story reads like a sci-fi movie by the time you get to the end. Christmas was always such a disjointed time for me in my early years. Nothing made sense.

The story tells of a lack of space at school, for all the children, so my dad and another student had to sleep in the dispensary, on the hospital beds. The doors were locked, and the windows nailed shut to prevent runaways. When the fire broke out, dad and friend were forgotten and only retrieved at the last minute. *“We could see the fire and smoke coming out from the engine room area.”*, but were too afraid to break the window leading to the outside fire escape. *“We were afraid of punishment if we did this, so we had no option but to wait for someone to come and get us.”* They were 11 years old. Traumatized into not being able to use their intuition to get themselves to safety. The punishment itself tells of the fear instilled. What do you do? Perhaps this is how others lost their young lives in the other school fires.

At 4 am, the students filed outside, and they saw the fire burning the school. Dad writes:

“With the cold night sky at our backs and the bonfire in front of us we were quite happy to stay there for a while and enjoy ourselves... We were going to miss a lot of things but right now it was getting cold and we were getting worried, and what was to happen to us.”

The students worried because they knew the school officials did not care what happened to them. This fear was real. Even for the young boys to be thinking this. What will happen to us? Their only bit of fun, freedom, and perhaps a bit more to eat was burning in front of them, the Christmas season and, its few treats. It seemed ‘a bitter sweet moment.’

I found it hard to try sum up the rest of the story. It is painful to imagine my dad, and the other children, being treated like the way in which my dad writes this memory. The temperature was -40ish. They drove the children to the next nearest residential school in “*an open three-ton truck with just a canvas at the front to break the wind as we travelled.*” They travelled this way for 20 miles. My dad writes, “*That trip was one of the coldest trips I’ve ever experienced.*”, but the worst was yet to come.

They were housed at another school of a different denomination; however, dad adds that each denomination was taught to hate each other. So, I guess we can surmise what went on to the vulnerable young students impinging on space at the other ‘Christian’ school, during the Christmas season. After a short stay there, they were sent home for Christmas. The students were transported the same way, by truck, but this time, 500 miles. My dad writes, “*I don’t think any thought was given to have us transported by train – it would have been too expensive. As it was, we almost froze to death during that trip.*” Nearly frozen, they were dropped off at a point on the highway and had to walk another 9 miles to their homes during the evening. He ends the story abruptly, “*However, we were lucky as those other kids still on that truck, had another four to five hours to go before they reached home.*”

We hear the horrors of residential school. This story says it all. Dad did not even have to give much more detail. Just the way in which children were so expendably treated, and thought about. I wonder if any children died alone the way that night. These are details that my dad does not have to mention. We can read between the lines quite easily.

3.2.19 The Drinking Years; Years of Oblivion

This story for me is a history of my dad. I knew it would be a hard one for me to read. I chose to read it through again to place it and see what was going on in his life at this time. Marriage at eighteen, introduction to alcohol at nineteen. Trying to be the man that he envisions for his

family. Dad writes, *“Like sex, drinking was never mentioned or discussed at residential school.”* There was no education regarding family life or parenting. Dad writes, *“I sincerely believed that drinking was an essential part of life, on becoming an adult and I wanted to prove that I was an adult.”* Residential school survivors were ill prepared for life outside. As Dad writes consistently, students were taught that they would never succeed; that they would be constant failures. The idea of pursuing an idealized western family model was not in their grasp, yet everyone was encouraged to reach for this unattainable vision. He writes:

“The court house was always over loaded with names of native people being charged with one infraction or another. I began to realize that these people were drinking to relieve their anxieties and frustrations.”

Dad was working full time, married, an adult, and still could not legally purchase alcohol.

“Drinking was carried on quite openly in spite of the fact that people of treaty status, were not permitted by law to purchase, consume or be in possession of alcohol... We were all drinking in defiance of the law; a law which we did not help put together as we were at the time denied the right to vote.”

My older two older siblings, were the only ones in the family at the time of this story. Dad writes that they were a church going family. The reverend encouraged my dad to attend Theological college to become a minister. Dad was looking for a better life direction for his family. He writes, *“what better way was there to serve God and humanity?”* He also felt an obligation to repay society for caring for him as an orphan. The decision to pursue a career with the church turns out negative. Those four years seemed like hell. *“I began to ask myself, whatever happened to my desire to serve? In the beginning there had been a closeness of God and I truly wanted to serve Him to the best of my ability. I did not feel that closeness now. Once again, I began to feel that sense of failure.”*

He could not even tell his supervisor that he did feel good there. He could not make a decision.

“During my upbringing I never dared to make a mistake for if I did, I would be punished severely. I grew up never having to make a decision. It would be so much easier if the

establishment or the Church in this case, made the decision for me. Should a mistake occur, I did not want to be responsible for it.”

So powerful this story. Dad speaks about what alcohol did for him in the beginning:

“It brushed aside my inhibitions. I was not shy or afraid anymore. I was able to voice my opinions with our fear of criticism especially on injustices which had been inflicted on Native people. I protested against ‘outside values’ being imposed on Native people. I spoke against the government which contrived such a policy and the churches which implemented it. I began to understand why Indian people were in the situation they found themselves in. They had been victimized and brainwashed that they were other than what they were. I became angry and frustrated again and the more I learned of the truth, the more I anguished. Alcohol soothed that pain somewhat but there was nothing else I could do about it.”

My dad is putting things together and into perspective. He has been away from school, out in the world, trying to make a living with the tools, and lies, that he was given. He can now see things in a much clearer way. He sank in to the alcohol, and his life sank too. *“I was suspicious of any help offered me as anything that had been given to me previously only served to humiliate and hurt me.”* His drinking finally took him to waking up in an alley, freezing, hungry and thirsty. He questions, *“What is a university educated man sleeping in an alley like this?”* My heart cried out for my dad as I read this part of his story. How alone he is. He speaks of blackouts, of not knowing what happened to you. *“I believe I was in a state of black out for most of my final ten years of drinking. I was in a time warp. Everything had gone haywire. I didn’t care anymore.”*

I think about residential school years for my dad, as a black out. This story tells of the hardships of coming out of that blackout. Thank full for his actual survival through his healing process.

3.2.20 The Turn Around

Blackouts, begin this story, but it is his story of his road to recovery. He explains blackouts, *“when you pass an invisible line and from that point on, you will recall nothing of what you did, where you were, who you were with or what you said.”* Dad explains that he was always fighting

something, or someone. Many of his blackouts ended up him in jail. He was fighting the white man, cops, his failures, and the lies told to him; there was no end to this fighting. He was losing and had to make a change. He had lost his family, friends. He was ashamed of begging to feed his hunger for alcohol, his hunger to forget his pain. He had his pride, somewhere it was deep within him; he had his training, and his ethics. Perhaps Tommy is poking him to continue his education.

He finally calls a friend he knows who had joined AA the year before. He has seen the positive changes in this friend, and he wants that. At first, he liked AA; the detox program, the attention, showers, regular meals. The feeling of being healthier, and stronger. Dad enjoys the feeling of being sober and in control, and resolves to give it a try. He gives himself a time period, a 'sentencing' himself to AA, and an agenda. Six months and two meetings per day was his commitment. He was once again in a 'classroom setting', and was determined to do his best. He could relate to AA because of the preacher inside of him. He was learning again. This story is about dad's transformation. He was tired of living on the streets, and being mad at the world. He changes his life, on his own terms. He does this by grasping his own tools and acknowledging his faith.

3.2.21 My Encounter with Alcoholics Anonymous – 2

Dad's dry date, October 7th, 1977; last drink was October 6th, 1977. He writes that the importance of this date is that it signifies his success.

The story talks about how dad was so disillusioned from his residential school experience. He was against anything further that the 'white man' had to teach or offer. Nothing in his life worked out for him when he was trying to conform. It was all a trick, and he was not going to continue to be tricked in to thinking he could be successful in their world. He writes:

"I had for the first six months declined to speak so as not to be put in a position as to identify myself an alcoholic. But the neurotic in me had been bursting to get in with the discussions as I felt I could really help people."

I too love to be involved in discussion. I didn't think I ever could, but this is what academia had provided for me. I love it, most times. I like that dad calls himself 'neurotic' for wanting to be a part of such a public domain. I like the humour. Turns out he was preaching to the 'congregation'. He was just doing what was natural for him in the form of his academic training. The AA 'congregation' was patient with him, *'they only smiled and tolerated me while I grew up.'* He needed to get rid of some garbage before he could allow anything else in. Interesting that I see how he takes AA as a course, *"I thought I could cruise through the steps, graduate, and get on with my life."* It would take him 5 years to do 3 steps. He writes that working on the steps so long kept him sober. Perhaps because it was goal oriented and task driven; like school.

AA is a twelve-step program. Pretty much Christian based in its' steps. God is whoever God is to you. This story, dad choses to talk about the first three steps. This story is also one of the longer stories in this production. Step 1 – we admit we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable. Step 2 – Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Step 3 – Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him. For Step 1, dad says he could not do this step right away, he writes, *"...I was not convinced I was alcoholic. In spite of the evidence, loss of self-esteem and dignity, loss of jobs, friends, family, ill health due to drinking and leaning later, an undiagnosed diabetic."* He writes he was being told he was morally weak and could not accept that. The church officials, and politicians, running the residential schools were the morally weak ones, along with anyone who knew what was going on and said nothing. He writes, *"I found myself alone, not knowing where to turn to for help and friendship."* He was never taught how to do these basic things. What was 'help'? What was 'friendship'? What was family or relationships? How do you behave in these circles? It was a total loss for my dad. I can understand him much better. He had to grapple with simple things that were supposed to be provided for, for every human being.

Step 2. As a theology student, he thought this would be a step he could deal with. He had done this all his life, he writes, *"I had believed in God since I was a little boy in school, so much so, that I thought that no matter how bad our circumstances may be, this God, would one day set things right."* This belief made the years in the institution tolerable, as he waited for his piece of the pie, that never came. Dad questioned God's absence when he needed Him most. *"When I was banging my head against the brick wall. Where was He while I was experiencing rejection,*

failure and defeat?” Where in Winnipeg, in the 1960’s, does an Indigenous man go to get some understanding and clarity? *“Where was he when I prayed for His help to renew my waning desire to serve Him as I struggled during my stay at the theological college? In the back alley of downtown Winnipeg, in the cold, in the rain and the sleet, hungry and lost, where was He then?”* This sad paragraph really spelled out what dad’s life was like, cold and lost, with no way to find help. Thank Creator for the non-judgmental nature of AA. This gentle approach allowed a hurt spirit like my dad to get some much-needed space and attention, and a way out of his turmoil. Dad could not find a way at this time to ‘believe in any Power.’ He skipped this step and moved on.

Step 3. To turn his life to the care of a God who abandoned him. He was baffled. He had to relook at the italicized words. He had to create his own concept of God, which went against the very grain of his religious upbringing, and theological training. *“I just could not redefine God and I was fearful in my attempts.”* More banging his head against the wall. Trying to untangle and understand the complete chaotic mess that residential school put him, and all the students, in. A madness, of lies and deceit. How horrific. I see the entire destruction of Indigenous nations in the stories of my dad. The effects that many others could not deal with, and took their lives. My dad was able to question and try to find the answers to unanswerable questions. He almost lost his life along the way, but for some fortune, he plodded on. This story is where he says he learns to admire the traits in many men he met, *“Some were strong, some happy, others were warm, honest, loving, caring, reliable and many other characteristics which I admired so much.”*

I know my dad achieved all these characteristics that he loved in others. He strived to be this human being, a conglomeration of other’s he liked all in one. The story ends abruptly unfinished. The sentence gets cut off. *“While I was thinking about these things during our meetings, it occurred to me...”* I wonder what else could he be thinking about...

4 Discussion

4.1 The Stories Across the Stories

4.1.1 Overview

In this section, I reflect on what I'm coming to see and understand across Percy Bird's stories. The insights have to do with his stories and his life, and also my stories and my life. I begin with reflections during a visit to attend the IndiGEN gathering, in Melbourne, Australia. I then present an analysis I call "Chasing Butterflies", in which I reflect on the stories across and within both my father's stories and my interpretations. I close with a reflection on my experience of conducting this inquiry, and whether I am shining too positive a light on my father's journey.

4.1.2 Lost in Melbourne with Dad

This piece was written early in my process. I had written 4 or 5 of my story reflections. Stephanie asked me to write about how my experience in Melbourne helped me think about my father and his stories.

A definite highlight in accomplishing this degree was the opportunity to take 'The Percy Papers' to Australia. Leaving Toronto for Melbourne was an experience that I had no way to prepare for. I was going to Australia to present 'The Percy Paper's.' Never thought that "The Percy Papers" would see this side of the world. I know my dad did not make it this far across the globe. He probably would have loved to have come to Australia; especially the Indigenous Australia. They would have loved his stories, as they do wherever he spoke about his life's journey.

As an Indigenous woman who grew up in Winnipeg, MB, I honestly feel truthful when I say that I 'survived' Winnipeg. In this day of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), I look back and am thankful for what I believe are my 'Good Spirits', keeping me safe in my life's journey. I think about my father who spent 15 years in residential school; fifteen years changes one's whole life pattern. Being in Melbourne took me to my father's life, to his time spent in

residential school. Similarities on how the residential school's systems operated are conjured when confronted with the history of the 'Stolen Generation.' The same colonial system operating in Canada, operated in Australia. The Stolen Generation is what Indigenous People in Australia call their residential school era. How they worked to get their lives and identities back, battling a colonial past, still present, and the miswritten histories, are a constant combat in the daily lives of Indigenous people in Australia. My Dene co-student friend and I shared the first few days walking the streets of Melbourne, trying to situate ourselves. We agreed it felt very much like Toronto, in a very colonial way. The lack of an Indigenous presence was apparent to both of us. I looked for Indigenous faces in the crowd; I saw none. Questions, and knowledge of colonial histories, begin to quickly surface. I identify.

My father suffered brief loss of his identity. He managed to hang on to his Cree language, and continue to speak it when the opportunity was present. I do not know my father's personal stories of life in residential school; I do not know my mother's stories either. My mother didn't graduate; this was not expected of Indigenous students. My dad was an anomaly. He did graduate, and he studied theology at the University of Saskatchewan. He writes about his time spent in school, residential and university; I can see how he comes to decisions or outlooks from the trainings and education he reflects on. Sitting amongst the Indigenous students from this side of the world, put me in touch, once again, with the trauma that my father and his generation endured. Their stories were so heartfelt and similar. The language of colonial history in Australia, spoke the same stories as Canada. At times, silence was all there was room for, as I sat taking in all that was presented.

My visit to Melbourne, and to the University of Melbourne, was for the IndiGEN gathering. A global contingent of Indigenous Master's and PhD students in the Health Professions came to Melbourne to share our research with each other. Indigenous students from Norway, Canberra, Melbourne, Toronto, and New Zealand, came together for this trip. The gathering was invigorating. The meeting of our Indigenous selves was very emotional. Even though I have studied colonialism in my university years, extensively, this trip solidified for me how extensively, and far reaching colonialism was. It made colonialism more real. Witnessing the colonial statues, westernized names of the land, lack of Indigenous presence anywhere, lack of respect for Indigenous peoples on the whole, was much like being in Canada. We visited the art

galleries and found Indigenous art and histories there. The visits were very much like Indigenous art and stories from Turtle Island; reflections were dauntingly similar.

When I visited the tiny island of Dominica, some years back, and saw the enslavement chains down at the waterfront cafe, on a concrete slab, it froze my Spirit momentarily as my brain scrambled to realize what I was seeing. Similar feelings were surfacing, as we tried to enjoy the scenery, amidst an overwhelming colonial, history, and presence. Feelings of heaviness, and elation, seemed present as we listened, and witnessed each other's research at the conference, and learned why we all do this work. Patterns of colonialism are witnessed, and we shared how we were each moving to change this pattern of destruction; on a personal, community, political, and professional level.

The importance of our Indigenous focused work being published, and spoken about, was confirmed by the Indigenous professors who were there with their students. The research covered: the connection of language to land; revitalizing culture and language; and how colonial practices interfered with language, and culture. It was challenging to listen to at times; sad, but extremely positive that the work is being continued.

One day during a lunch break, we sat at an outside café. All four of us, Turtle Island, Indigenous students sat together; all had something visibly Indigenous from Canada on. Next to us sat a group of young women, one was Indigenous Australian. Her name was Jayne, and she was an undergraduate student at the University of Melbourne. She was so exhilarated to meet us, and when she found out we were all in the PhD program, she cried. She was so excited to meet Indigenous women from Canada, so high up in academia. We invited her to come to have lunch the next day at the conference. Jayne did come, and we found that her aunt was the keynote speaker, and the first Indigenous medical doctor in Australia. The conference invited Jayne with open arms, and she participated for the duration of the gathering. Next conferences maybe there will be invitation for all Indigenous students to come, as we are such few in numbers and need all the support, and role models, we can achieve.

When I presented my 3-minute thesis, I was feeling a bit intimidated because of the room full of Indigenous PhD students as my audience. The experience is very rare for me because my audiences are usually mostly white, and related. It was comfortable on the other hand because most were older students. There were a few younger students, those able to go from high school

and just continue on; I always feel proud of them for the ability to accomplish this. Amazingly, my dad did this; he graduated high school, and then off to university. I am learning to not judge myself for being an older student.

Later, we four from Toronto took a bus tour to Phillip Island, to see the world's smallest penguins. The trip took a few hours on a tour bus with mostly older folks, mostly from other colonial parts of the world. Behind us sat an older British couple, and there were a few couples from India with older children. The driver gave an intrusively colonial history of the land as we passed through various places 'discovered' by various 'discoverers'. It was truly a moment of suffocating familiarity. It was unbelievable that this colonial history was being spewed at us, entrapping us on the bus. Thankfully, there was no colonial speech on the way back.

Our young friends from the university, gave us a tour of Melbourne markets. It was a cultural tour. We exchanged personal gifts, stories, and inspirations; we now have new friends.

Leaving Australia was bittersweet. I loved the people and the land; but the colonial state was a struggle; at times it felt suffocating. The People, and the land, enabled their survivance to shine through, and I could relate.

4.1.3 Stories Across the Stories: Chasing Butterflies

This piece was written after a brainstorming session with my supervisor, Stephanie. She noted the following quotes that I had said during our discussion about the stories. She asked me to write about them. Below is a synthesis of the ideas that emerged from this process.

- "The story across the stories is my stories...I'm doing this work to find my Dad, but I'm finding myself even more."
- "I'm seeing my Dad and I'm loving him even more."
- "This is not just research; this is my life."
- "I'm seeing my Dad's patterns more concretely...and I'm seeing him reflected in me.":
- "Always I go back to Tommy."

In 2012, the Manitoba government developed a resource for high school social studies and history classes, on the residential school era, in which my dad was one of the speakers. Dad tells a story of when the children were being rounded up to be taken to the schools:

“We would camp by the lake there, and a truck used to come and pick the kids up to go to residential school. It used to be a competition, the Roman Catholic and the Anglicans. And it was almost like chasing butterflies with a net, and the kids running around in the bush trying to get away.”

Dad chuckles at the finish of this story, although the idea of being chased and caught by strange men with nets is not really funny. The idea of the kids giving the church officials a run around before being caught, is a funnier picture. In retrospect, perhaps it is easier to make it a funny story; makes it easier to tell. In truth, the children were chased until caught and herded off to schools in cattle trucks. I don't know if nets were actually used, or if this was a point of humour, but the use of nets is not far from believable. Children as butterflies; fluttering around, pests to be caught by nets, by the priests. The stories in the TRC tell similar situations; church officials, Indian agents, or RCMP, who came to collect the children; to be hauled off as specimens for government experimentation. My quotes related to the stories, in the beginning of this section, reminded me of the 'chasing butterflies' story. The quotes seemed to flutter forward, outward, and then back to Tommy; I wanted to keep the idea in a positive light.

To look at the stories on the whole, I first displayed all six, of the 21 stories, on my desktop. As I look at the stories all together, I can see how much work my father accomplished in his life. I can read how focus this accomplishment took for success. How the community came together to address common issues, after their residential school experience. They used the knowledge they acquired, and their social capital, to address colonial issues that affected them, to find a way out. They were trying to put that social capital together in the form of rebuilding the health of their Indigenous community, collectively. There were lawyers, architects, writers, historians, social workers; they were all working together. However, their efforts to solidify sustainable social capital was not supported by those in political power.

What this social capital could have produced, had they gotten the financial support that they were seeking, to build up infrastructures needed to heal the Indigenous community, is astounding. We would be so much further ahead today if plans, like those my father were involved in, were

supported back in the 1960' and 70's. My dad never lost pride of who he was as an Indigenous man, in spite of his residential school experiences. This is also a phenomenon to explore; how did he maintain this stance when the opposite was the objective.

I was a part of his rebuilding the social fabric within our family. My relationship with my father began to develop when I began university and shared my knowledge accumulation, and my papers, with him. We discovered a common ground. He would read my papers and comment. This began our mutual interest. Mutual interest in academics made it easier, it brought out the academic in him. And this is how we began the reading when he wrote his stories. I would read them back to him, verbally.

I think of dad's favorite poet, Robert Service. My dad had a favorite poet! He was well read. Made me wonder what other authors influenced my dad. This book of poems was given to my dad in 1977, the year he sobered up. There are two poems marked with a little metal book mark. The first poem is titled, "The Men That Don't Fit In (Service, 1953, p. 23)." Just as the title suggests, this poem is about not fitting in because you were "never meant to win (Service, 1953, p. 23)." But if "they just went straight they might go far; They are strong and brave and true;" The second poem "The Quitter" (Service, 1953, p.78), makes me think of dad's experience lost in the muskeg at three years old for three days, and how he battled with his demons in his later years. The first two lines, and the last two lines, evoke these emotions:

"When you're lost in the Wild, and you're scared as a child, And Death looks you bang in the eye...Just have one more try-it's easy to die, It's the keeping-on-living that's hard.) (Service, 1953, p.78)

'Tommy' being the first story in the series, sets up my dad's worldview, perhaps. Tommy's altruism, in the face of death, is the strength dad derives his motivation and focus. When dad thinks of giving up, he thinks of Tommy's sacrifice:

"I think of my brother Tom quite often whenever I find myself in a class room situation. I think of the schooling he himself had missed due to wars etc. I think of my life and all of what I have experienced just because I fulfilled my brother's wish that I continue to attend school."

Also, in this first story, residential school is addressed and planted, firmly in our minds. The story sets up the remainder of his life's experience. He had this experience, but he also had success. In spite of being "*crippled*", as he writes about in "I'll Hobble you - Then I'll Race You", he maintains his vision, that of success and usefulness, and crosses boundaries of western makings. He applies for the unattainable, and when he comes up against whether to give up his Treaty Status for a piece of the pie, he denies it. I wondered how dad felt after writing his short stories. As I revisit the stories, I am taken by the history he would be conjuring up. "*The school was five hundred miles away...*", "*The only time siblings could visit was by appointment only at the discretion of the principal. You were lucky if these visits were allowed more than once a year.*" Reading the stories, I hear dad's history. He begins with Tommy, and ends the series with his last meeting with my mother. All that happened between these stories is his story all in one. In an interview, dad says of his parenting skills, or lack of, "*You tended to behave the way you yourself were treated. I knew there was something wrong.*" Hearing my dad speak about when he acknowledged his lack of parenting skills is helpful to me. Dad admits he is lost in terms of how to discipline his children; his role modeling for parenting is violence.

"This is my home, my refuge, my security, here, and I have to learn to survive, to cope in this environment." (From Apology to Reconciliation DVD, 2012, 1:33:31-1:33:46).

The Late Eva McKay (1920-2005), of Sioux Valley First Nations, a respected Elder whose work focused on the building and healing of Indigenous communities in Manitoba. To cite a few of Eva McKay's accomplishment: she co-founded the Brandon Friendship Center, helped establish the Manitoba Indian Women's Association, and helped in the establishment of local control of education in Sioux Valley. Eva was also a friend of my mother; I remember her well. Eva reflects that "we came out confused and the hurt that we did not bring out but hid within us became a reality later in life" (Ing, 1991, p.72). I understand this quote and how it relates to my father's early behavior. My guess is that he set out to prove his truths; to take back something that he lost, that was denied him, the right to his own stories, in his own voice. I become stronger, with a sense that the missing pieces of my own confidence are coming together, through having access to my father's short stories, his history. The stories read like butterflies, fluttering from one theme of his life to another resting momentarily, and then off to another story.

4.1.4 Reflecting on whether I am shining my father in too positive a light in this analysis

The following reflections emerged from a 2nd brainstorm session I had with my supervisor, where she asked me questions and typed while I spoke. I then took those written notes and turned them into the reflections below.

It is up to me to be honest about what I'm reading, how I'm reading it, and how it makes me feel. I don't like to remember my dad as a violent man; although he did become volatile when he was drinking. He was distant but I still felt a connection; he didn't push me away. That's how I remember him. We did not talk about his violent past, or his frustrations. His stories are non-violent, except between the lines. They are trying to do away with that violence, and they are not apologetic. I imagine my father offering these stories as a gift of him. The stories are his voice. They speak of caring, doing things, accomplishing things, of keeping people safe. They show his vibrance for life, his humanity.

My Auntie R knew him when he was in his lost state, his pre-recovery. Auntie R could not reconcile with my dad, but respected the work that he has done. She knew what he went through in residential school, and that he came around full circle in the end. But my mom is her sister, and she remembers what she went through.

My reflections above do shine him in a positive light, because he was positive. He wrestled with his demons, and he won. Once he decided to take control of his life, he did. The day he made this decision was the only day he needed. He forged onward from there, making a positive change in his life. He gathered his tools, his family, and created a new world. This is the legacy he left for me, to always do things to the best of your ability.

Dad realized he lost his family, and his children. But we were important enough to his life, to make a change. We were not just forgotten, thrown away. Dad came back to find his family, and to make amends. For me, this realization of how important we were to dad, positively affects my self-confidence. Our reconciliation completes an era in my life.

4.2 Implications for rehabilitation science

I envision that scholars and clinicians in rehabilitation sciences will receive the message that it is important to broaden the spectrum of what Rehabilitation Science is defined as, and to consider Indigenous storytelling as a tool of rehabilitation. I am proud to be part of a movement of Indigenous scholars around the world who are seeking to expand rehabilitation science to include Indigenous perspectives, voices, and ideas about wellness and recovery, through storytelling.

Margaret Kovach relates that “story is not unique to Indigenous knowledge systems. Story is practiced within methodologies valuing contextualized knowledge such as feminism, autoethnography, phenomenology, and narrative inquiry” (Kovach, 2009, p.96). She states that from a Nehiyaw point of view, knowledge and stories are inseparable; interpretive knowledge is highly valued, and that story is purposeful (Kovach, 2009, p.98). “It is often the case in mainstream scholarship that once a story is shared and recorded, stories are deconstructed, “facts” are extracted, and the remaining “superfluous” data are set aside.” Kovach explains that ‘the bundle is plundered’ the voice silenced, bits are extracted to meet empirical academic needs, and the story dies’ (Kovach, 2009, p. 101).

Gerald Vizenor, a Chippewa literary critic, claims that, “within any Indigenous story there is both a trickster and a tragic element at work, serving to show the irony of living in an uncertain world” (Kovach, 2009, p.97). Vizenor argues that “[t]ribal storytellers must pay specific attention to how the actors involve themselves in social encounters.” Often interpretations of these stories are clouded by racial misrepresentations that emerge from a long history of “hyperrealities” about Indians’ (Kovach, 2009, p.97). I read the Percy Papers in this way. The stories in the Percy Papers contain trickster and tragic elements. How does one cope in ‘uncertainty’? I learned elements of dad’s survival in his stories. The shortest story gives me insight to his life, and how he overcame his limits. I read of dad’s ability to move forward, holding onto something, a pivotal anchor; what the anchor is and what it means, gives meaning to the stories. Reading the stories with the knowledge I have of my father, combined with the knowledge he is providing through his stories provides the medicine of understanding. I am confident that when my dad gave me his stories, he believed that I would somehow take them forward. He found agency in his sobriety, and so, in his short stories, he found a mechanism to put his voice forward.

Having studied my father's journey through his stories gave me the opportunity to understand his life, and his motivations. He was already an accomplished visual artist; drawing portraits and painting landscapes. He must have heard many stories through his professional life, and his personal life. Learning how to tell a story in a good way would be a motivation to take a creative writing course. If not for taking a writing course one summer, my father could have left this world without leaving his stories. His stories would not have been heard or shared. Dad's life was deconstructed through his residential school experience, his knowledge was extracted, but not allowed to be utilized, when he tried in vain to build a family/life. His bundle was plundered, his voice silenced, his story almost died.

Thomas King, of Cherokee/Greek descent, is a renowned academic, writer, and radio personality, who reminds us that "[t]he truth about stories is that's all we are" (King, 2003, p.2). We are stories. The trickster in dad would not allow his story to die. Dad left his life, in his short stories, to explain his side of the tragic events that threatened to overcome his life.

Percy's stories illustrate how Indian residential school created trauma for its students – and how the trauma that survivors were dealing with had no support networks in place for them when they were out in the world. When they began to confront what happened to them in residential school, the abuses they endured, there were no health experts to help them understand and speak about those horrors. This thesis is about how my dad overcame his trauma, and how he was able to see through his self-destruction – how we might think about his rehabilitation from the disabling effects of colonization.

We can look at the trauma of residential school, or colonial violence, as a virus; a disease. The best response to violence is healing. It is a personal and an internal process to be shared with others. While Indigenous peoples may not have succeeded, at first, with "macro" issues such as jurisdiction, land-use control, or dealing with outsiders and intruders, they have succeeded with "micro" issues. Taking control of one's own life is a healing issue. Strengthening the family is healing (Battiste 2000, p.47). If research is about learning, so as to enhance the well-being of the earth's inhabitants, then story is research. It provides insights from observations, experience, interactions, and intuitions that assist in developing a theory about a phenomenon (Kovach, 2009, p.102).

I used analysis of stories as a research method. I am interested in how stories can be used as a form of rehabilitation itself. A parallel can be drawn from my work here to arts-based rehabilitation approaches with people who have Alzheimer's disease. "Elder-clowns" are used to jog the memory of Alzheimer patients, similar to how storytelling in the Percy Papers helps in reconnecting that which has been severed. (Kontos, et al, (2016) The treatment and management of behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia is associated with use of psychotropic medications, which has received attention due to the significant harms and toxic consequences of inappropriate medication use. In contrast, arts-based approaches are gaining prominence for their demonstrated behavioral improvements and their promotion of quality of life. For instance, clowning technique is used as one form of an arts-based approach to dementia care. Elder-clowns use improvisation, humor, empathy, and expressive tools such as song, musical instruments, and dance to engage nursing home residents. This practice employs "laughterbosses," who are healthcare practitioners trained to assist elder-clowns in introducing humor in care practices and to continue the humor intervention between elder-clown visits. The objective is improving mood, decreasing agitation and other behavioral disturbances, and improving quality-of-life and social engagement of nursing home residents. This clowning technique is much like the traditional clowning practices in the Indigenous world, where, in some cases, 'clowning' is used to 'remove demons that caused illness or infection. This process utilized contrary behavior, inverse speech, and humour, as part of an exorcism type of therapy. The main function of a sacred clown – to force one to examine their doubts and fears (Plant, 2010, p. 7). As arts-based approaches are gaining prominence in person-centered dementia care, elder-clowning and its use of personal material/clothing, familiar songs and object, help to spark memory, and help to open the way back to balance and wellness.

5 Conclusion

This thesis started as an exploration of my father's life, through his stories. As I grew to know my father through his stories, I found my story. Here I reflect on the most profound insights I have had as a result of the journey of this thesis.

When my parents separated, my world was swept from under me. There was no talk of what was happening. One day a moving truck arrived at my house, my mother and my siblings were packed up and taken to a completely different world. A world where suddenly we were the only Indigenous family in the neighborhood. Racism was a thing that I had no words for yet, and no defense. I would not meet my father again for another 8 years. During this time, I struggled with my own issues of identity and racism that affected my world. Like my father, I was fed all the lies about who I was. In school we learned we were cannibals, savages, and alcoholics. I was not aware that these were stereotypes; I struggled to understand this.

When I began my post-secondary education, I became interested to know about Canadian history. I wanted to know about the land injustices, the Treaties and what they meant to me. There was so much history that was biased against Indigenous people, it was hard at times to untangle. This relearning of my history was very hard emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Reorganizing the past to fit the present, was a challenge that changed my life.

After receiving the 21 short stories that my father wrote, I felt compelled to take his stories to a public platform in order to elevate his voice and his life's work. 'The Percy Papers' seemed like an appropriate title; I think he would chuckle, and approve. The title sounds as intriguing as his life was. What have I learned through this experience?

First, I have learned who my father is; I have learned what shaped his life. I learned that my father loved his children, that his family was his focus to trust again. I feel his strength of love and now know of his accomplishments. He knows what he did and where he came from. He told his story; I can continue his story.

Second, I was introduced to my paternal family. I learned that my paternal family was as resilient, and accomplished, as my maternal family. I respect and love them, through dad's

stories. The Percy Papers are also an opening to become closer with my paternal family. They can share his journey through this work. Hopefully share their own context of that experience. In their personal life, gain from what he has left.

For my maternal family, the Percy Papers gives my father's stories a platform to clear the air of his history with them. For instance, his past behavior has context for my maternal family, who saw the violence. The stories trace his steps to conscientiousness. They all suffered residential school, and this is my father's story. In particular, the stories show dad's gentleness, love, and confusion; how he lost everything, but persevered in the last effort to find himself. I wonder how it was for him through the process of writing about his past, painful as it was. I think it was therapeutic to trace his life, in reflection; to speak of his brother, his family, his knowledge of history and politics, his hopes and dreams, his accomplishments, his loves. How he honored my mother in his final story.

I am filled with emotion as I read, and reread, the stories, and remember my dad. I remember bringing dad to maternal family functions, after my mother passed. I was a bit apprehensive the first few times, but this feeling gave way as I witnessed my father in the midst of a family whom he once knew up close. My maternal family were always respectful towards him. Uncles were more generous with their time with dad, Aunts would greet him, all spoke Cree. There was always laughter, stories, and much food. It was very healing for me to witness this act of understanding and camaraderie amongst my family, for what they all went through collectively. The hurts and pains lessen with the understanding, allowing for reflexive growth. I know all my aunt and uncles have their own stories of survivance, and endurance; how they strove to become successful and vibrant role models in spite of their negative experiences.

Gerald Vizenor (2008) revitalized the term "survivance" in his work, *Survivance; Narratives of Native Presence*. Vizenor states:

"Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is a continuance of stories...Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry. Survivance is the heritable right of succession... (Vizenor, 2008, p.1)

It is more than survival; it is survival plus resistance; survivance. Survivance is present in the Percy Papers, where dad is celebrating his survivance from his colonial past. He is bringing in his history where it was not present prior to his writing. This history is what will move forward in its positivity to displace the ‘absence, nihility, and victimry’ caused by residential school experience (Vizenor, 2008, p.1) of his past life. As I look back to the maternal family gatherings, in my aunts, uncles, and my father, I see active survivance.

Third, because my traumatized internal child is released, I am able to embrace my Indigenous being. I now understand the effects of the oppression and denial my father encountered, and how he learned and grew from his experiences. Because of this release, and understanding, I am more confident in each step I take. Reconnecting with my father displaced the trauma of not knowing him, and his history. I can now see how resilience, survivance, and resistance, is manifested in my father, and how that transpires to my life.

I understand that dad wanted to give life his best when he finally could. The most significant story in the series for my understanding of my father is the first one, about his brother. Tommy’s sacrifice, to go to war, gave dad the leverage needed to change the world that residential school created. Staying in school and continuing on to post-secondary saved dad’s life. When dad was at his lowest, he could ask, “What is a university educated man doing laying in the alley?” With his grasp of sanity and, perhaps, his memories of his brother, he set out to answer this question, and to set his world in order. Tommy joins the army at 17, spends 6 years in combat during WW11, he then goes to the Korean war. Tommy comes home a hero but is not treated as such because he is Indigenous. Dad outlines the injustices that Indigenous veterans faced on their return home. Clearly, dad has used his education to help set up structures for change. The rehabilitation of his Indigenous community is a major focus throughout his life, after his own healing. According to his stories, his rehabilitation entailed first acknowledging that he needed help. Then, he gave himself a timeline for recovery. Facing his shortcomings. Seeking out those he hurt to make amends. Keep moving forward. Using his resources to advance the health of the community, in any way he could. He left a path to his family, my paternal family.

I bring this research into rehabilitation science in order to contribute to the field by bringing in personal stories as a method to understand rehabilitation from trauma. I offer this example of a

method of storytelling, to give life voice, and to break patterns, in order to illustrate another path to seeking wellness.

I look forward to other Indigenous folks receiving the message that their personal stories are important to voice. It enables reflexivity. These stories contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place. For many Indigenous writers, stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generation will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story (Smith, 2012, pp. 145-146).

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