WALKING TORONTO'S RED ROAD:

THE STORY PATHWAYS OF INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORKERS

BY

NICOLE PENAK

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Leadership, Higher, and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

WALKING TORONTO'S RED ROAD: THE STORY PATHWAYS OF INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORKERS

Doctor of Philosophy 2019
Nicole Penak
Leadership Higher and Adult Education
OISE/University of Toronto

Abstract

The truth about stories is that's all we are. 'You can't understand the world without telling a story,' the Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor tells us. 'There isn't any centre to the world but a story' (King, 2003, p. 32).

Tap. Tap. 'Is this thing on?' *Clears throat*. Pushing his way to the top of the paragraph, he continues, 'I figure I would try to get to you first.' *Snicker.* 'As this is really all about *me*, anyways,' Trickster says, fluttering his eyelashes, resting one hand on his chest. 'I mean, sure, I suppose we are traveling the story pathways of Indigenous social workers in Toronto,' he muses, lifting his hand to his chin. 'But social work in North America *is* a dynamic tale of oppression and resistance,' he pauses to think. 'So, the ten (10) short stories shared here, created with the participants of this research journey, really *are* a collection of Trickster tales,' he states, regaining all confidence. 'And these stories, like Trickster tales, carry good lessons in their disorder,' Trickster says, slapping his knee. *Cackle. Snort.*

Phew. After regaining some composure, he looks up off the page and back towards the reader. *Tap. Tap.* 'Storytelling and land are interconnected with each other and to this anti-colonial endeavour' Trickster says, eyebrow raised. 'Somewhere between the significance of petroglyphs and carving your name into wet cement, these story landmarks will guide us in a journey through the relationship Indigenous social workers have with their profession,' he says, slinking his way down the page. 'Guided by an Indigenous research methodology, we take a journey through story, exploring the pathways Indigenous social workers create through their work,' Trickster says. 'Story

pathways with some unexpected impacts and destinations, for Indigenous peoples, social work, and research itself,' he smirks. 'So, come walk along Toronto's Red Road, aided by the stories of those who have gone before us, guiding and perhaps even cautioning we future travelers.'

Keywords: Indigenous, Aboriginal, Social Work, Stories, Landmarks, Story Pathways, Anti-Colonial, Research Methodology, Trickster, Toronto

An Offering of Gratitude: Acknowledgments

Breath. I may be in front of a computer, but my spirit feels like it is at the top of a mountain looking over the vastness of my gratitude, wondering how I can ever describe this powerful image. *Aye*. Well, here we go. I raise my hands in thanks for my amazing committee members. Drs. Jean-Paul Restoule, Ruth Koleszar-Green, and George Dei. First to Jean-Paul, my incredible supervisor. Doing a PhD wasn't even in the realm of dreamable options for me, until one day I was slipped your number. I was terrified, but you assured me I had a place in the academy. Your overwhelming kindness is the reason I'm here today writing this, both in those initial conversations, and in agreeing to walk with me through this massive and tenuous journey of a doctoral degree. I am eternally grateful to you. To Ruth, for being my shield-maiden through the last leg of this journey! Many Indigenous students call you scholar-mom, and now I know why. *Chuckle.* Your ability to block and guard me from an avalanche of requests or efforts that could have distracted me, and taken me off of this road. You have helped me make it to this finish line. I will always hold this kindness you have done for me in my heart. To George, for being a bastion of revolutionary critical thought at OISE. There was no better day of this degree than the day I chose to venture into your classroom. The discussions you nurtured in that class helped to feed a fire in me that the stress of this journey attempted to diminish.

Next, I need to raise my hands in the greatest thanks for the efforts of those without whom this project would never have been possible! To the incredible participants who took a risk with me in an eccentric attempt to bring our stories into the academy, *Cheers!* Nicole Wemigwans, Kenn Richard, Jay Lomax, Rochelle Allan, Tom Grinnell, Lindsay DuPré, Mike Auksi, Janet Gasparelli, Harvey Manning, and Faith Chaput. Collectively, you have put dozens, and dozens (and dozens, *phew)* of hours into this

project, giving so generously of your time, your stories, and your spirit. Between you, there are at least four generations of Indigenous social workers in Toronto. Your lives and experiences have shaped this story pathway in so many incredible ways. You have also impacted this city and community in so many ways. Thank you for your endless years of love and commitment to this urban Indigenous community.

I turn now in the direction of my family. My parents, Dave and Monique, who probably got more than they bargained for in a child. I know I have lived my life making strange decisions, taking largely unknown paths - something that could make even the most liberal of households break a sweat. *Wink.* You have been here as witnesses to this journey from the beginning. Thank you for seeing me, and bearing witness to often wild turns of events while holding a foundation, a touchstone that continues to ground me in who I am and those from whom I come. To my grandparents, Daniel, Theresa, Lorraine, and Alec. I am so, so fortunate to have spent so many formative years with you by my side. I hope that you can see the extensive impact you have made on my life, as I live it the way I think you would want me to. To my brother Sean, who may be younger in age but older in the wisdom of the heart. Your courage to live your life as exactly who you are is both undeniable and inspirational. Thank you for pushing me to be a better person. I love you more than words.

Now to my Bear, my wiijiwakan, my life partner... *Tear*. I know this has been the wildest ride for you. When we had those initial conversations about me potentially going back to school, we had no clue how much life would play out at the same time! That's the thing about academia—it's like this wormhole to a world that operates according to rules and logic that often ignores the fullness of people's lives. Thank you for always tending the fire for this family. Though I may be the one leaving this journey with a piece of paper in my hand, it's clear to me who the real PhD is. Your tireless dedication to your people and teachings, guiding you to be a truly good and kind Anishinaabe man, the best

man I and many others have ever known. You have more to teach me and the world about love, a love that permeates your traditions, and connects us to the boundless love that creation holds for us. Almost as boundless as the love I hold for you. I cannot imagine a life without you. Thank you for showing me the power of chosen family, those people we not only *find* in life but *make* our lives with.

And of course, to the little spirit we brought into this world, our little toddler, Ray, who is a bigger Trickster than the one you will come to know through these pages! *Yikes!* I guess that's what we get for naming you Raven. *Haha!* You have journeyed this path with me in such an intimate way. From a dream, to my big pregnant belly, you hustled with me from work to class and back again. In my arms, you helped to draft ethics reviews, recruit participants, and even teach classes. Your little feet are all over these pathways, and I'm just completely overwhelmed when I attempt to express to you how much you have shown me. You are the embodiment of presence, of place, of gratitude for the right here and now, while holding hope for the future. You are a fierce and seemingly fearless little spirit, and watching you grow into whoever you are or choose to be is the most incredible thing I have ever witnessed. Raven, this project is a joint dedication to you and this city. Though we may be raising you away from your reserve community, know that this city is also home. The Indigenous community of Toronto are your people, your friends, and family. This place is an Indigenous place, and you belong here, too.

Thank you to the absolutely beautiful Indigenous community here, I love you with all my heart. Thank you for not only nurturing me through my life, but for embracing our next generation. This project is both for Raven, and for all of you.

Table of Contents

A Long Story Short: Abstract ……....ii

An Offering of Gratitude: Acknowledgments ……...iv

A Story Pathway: An Introduction ……....1
A Recurring Role: Who's this Trickster Character? ……7
Story Landmarks: Finding(s) Our Way ……10
The Storyteller: Situating Self in Relation to this Land ……...12

Chapter One
Nicole Wemigwans: Trickster and the Lanyard ……...14

Chapter Two
Rethinking Research: Indigenous Methodology …….....22

Chapter Three
Kenn Richard: Trickster and the Ghosts of Past …….....28

Chapter Four
Jay Lomax: Trickster and the Search for Spirit ……38

Chapter Five
Anti-Colonial Imperatives: Theoretical Framework ……49

Chapter Six
Rochelle Allan: Trickster and the Lost Tongues ……..62

Chapter Seven
Tom Grinnell: Trickster and the Shapeshifter ……..72

Chapter Eight
Situating Stories: A Literature Review ……84
Race in Social Work Education…….85
Cultural Competency ……86
Indigenous Social Work Programs……89
Critiques of Cultural Competency ……92
Whiteness …….....94
Historical Accounts of Race and Social Work ……..95
Anti-Oppressive Practice ……...97
Social Work and Indigenous Peoples …….....100
Revisiting Indigenous Social Work Education…….....105
Indigenous Social Workers ……..108
Building on this Academic Context……..110

Chapter Nine
Lindsay DuPré: Trickster Learns to Bead ……112

Chapter Ten
Mike Auksi: Trickster Returns to the Rink ……..123

Chapter Eleven
Storytelling: The Knowledge Gathering Process ……133
Sharing Stories as Data Collection……136
Participant Selection ……...138
Meet the Storytellers ……...141
Informed Consent and Confidentiality ……..143
Storytelling Sessions ……145
Transcriptions and Member Checking ……..148

Chapter Twelve
Janet Gasparelli: Trickster Goes Back to 'School' ……...150

Chapter Thirteen
Harvey Manning: Trickster and the Wolf Pack ……160

Chapter Fourteen
Being and Creating Stories: Exploring Analysis ……..168

Chapter Fifteen
Faith Chaput: Trickster's Real Relationship Counselling ……181

Chapter Sixteen
P. S.: Post~~script~~ stories Discussion ……193

Chapter Seventeen
Reflecting on the Path Travelled: Concluding Thoughts ……201

References ……206

Appendices ……...216
Appendix A: Informed Consent Information Sheet…….....216
Appendix B: Storytelling Session Guide Part One ……..220
Appendix C: Storytelling Session Guide Part Two ……221

A Story Pathway: An Introduction

The air was warm and filled with the scent of sage. I heard a voice. It was a very old voice that crackled as it spoke. I couldn't see who it was. It said, 'You know our ways.' 'We learn from stories and from dreams.''Our stories and dreams are our way.' Hiy hiy. (Gorman as cited in Cole, 2006, p. 43)

Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle. Its about nine o'clock a.m. I'm off today, and heading out to work on this dissertation. *Hnnnnng*, I manage to squeeze into a seat between two others on a bench in the TTC shelter at the end of my street while waiting for my streetcar. The summer is ending, but it's already a hot day in the city. The temperature is headed past 30 degrees. I can feel the heat off the bodies surrounding me at the stop, and hear the pavement sizzle under the tires of cars idling at the intersection. *Phew*. I pull out a notebook, partially to fan myself, partially to review my work. *Boop. Boop. Boop. Boop*. My foot starts tapping at the concrete under me, and my reading begins to follow a new rhythm. I notice that I am bobbing along to someone's music. *Haaay*, *yaaa*, *boom*, *boom.* I look up and see him. Trickster. Unapologetically himself, sporting a new pair of sweet sneakers, skinny jeans, and an ironic t-shirt with a portrait of Sitting Bull wearing neon sunglasses on it. From his bright red headphones pours the sound of pow wow tunes mixed with electronic beats. He is squealing and dancing as he moves through the crowd of people. *Click.* We make eye contact. I try to make myself look busy but he comes right over to me. 'Ah ho, my sister! What are you reading?' he says as he grabs the book from my hands, flipping quickly though the pages like he's shuffling a deck of cards. 'Wooh, that's a lot of English words!' Trickster says, handing back the book. He looks over at the bag on my lap. 'Have any snacks in there, too?' I pull out a granola bar and hand it over. *Crunch. Crunch.* 'What's this all for, anyways?' Trickster asks, pointing with his half eaten bar. 'My research,' I tell him. 'Well what are you researching? You know, I am

very clever,' he responds. I don't doubt it. I have heard many stories of this Trickster before. In most of them he gets into trouble (and a lot of it). 'The stories of Indigenous social workers here in Toronto,' I tell him. 'Social Workers!?! Yikes!' proclaims Trickster, with a mocking laugh. 'Don't steal my granola bar!' he continues, gripping his snack dramatically. Trickster has keeled over laughing. I'm annoyed, but I get it. We are not the most popular of career choices, I stop and think to myself. Dropping my face into my hands to shield myself from Trickster's joking, it dawns on me—Trickster stories really do reinforce the principal motive of my research project, the importance of relationship. *Plink!* I feel something smack me in the nose! I crinkle my face and lift my head. I'm still sitting in the TTC shelter, but there's no Trickster, and strangers are staring at me, cockeyed. In my lap, there's a scrunched up granola wrapper. I rub my nose and look around.

Storytelling can be tricky. *Snicker.* 'Shhh, just let me get through this intro.' *Sigh.* 'Sorry, jeez!' *Shrug.* As I was saying, storytelling can be tricky, I'm never clear on where to begin. I mean, is there even really a beginning? Should we launch right into it? Maybe

d

r

o

p readers somewhere in the middle…. mid dle…. mid [*] dle… Apologies. Having to translate an oral and often performative version of storytelling into text always takes some getting used to. The written word has transformed the process of storytelling, as "…text was supposedly complete, self-contained, a thing to dissect rather than to have a relationship with" (Archibald, 2008, p. 33). However, storytelling, like Indigenous

research, is an innately relational activity. The rules of grammar are going to have to bend here, to allow for these words to have some LIFE! Well, this story arises from my research with Indigenous social workers in Toronto. About my time sharing and creating stories with other Indigenous – social – workers – in – Toronto. When I see those words all together the story is already so >crammed< … narratives about social work, accounts of Indigenous folks, anecdotes about this city—and yet, these stories cut right through all those narratives, intersections of various tales, so many different layers

layers

layers

layers of stories. I guess that's where we can start. As Vine Deloria Jr. states, "the contrast between Christianity and its interpretation of history- the temporal dimension- and the American Indian tribal religions- basically spatially located- is clearly illustrated when we understand the nature of sacred mountains, sacred hills, sacred rivers, and other geographical features sacred to Indian tribes" (1973, p.120). A renowned Indigenous scholar, philosopher, and writer, Deloria Jr.'s work on the centering of space for Indigenous peoples, versus time, confirms teachings I have been told about past, present, and future all existing in the same moment. Teachings of stories layered on top Top TOP of stories. Making room for multiple realities being experienced in the same space. 'Wow, that sounds pretty sci-fi, sister!' Trickster says with a snicker. *Sigh.* 'I promise we will come to you soon. How about you take a little walk or something?' I say to him, attempting to soften a forced smile. 'Fine. I'm bored, anyways,' he says, running off through the next paragraph. *Whew.* That will give us a minute alone. With all of Trickster's interrupting I

forgot to mention that while doing this research, Canada has been moving through an era of reconciliation. I'm not sure if that's a layer per se, or an EXPLOSION, a s-p-l-a-t-t-e-r, a BuMp, or a fooooog hooooorn. A government sponsored initiative laid out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), where "…'reconciliation' is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country" (TRC, 2015a, p. 113). Well one thing about this time of reconciliation is that I've never heard so many land acknowledgments in my entire life! It brings to mind again the significance of place in my research process. These reconciliation era acknowledgments show some kind of effort to capture the Indigeneity of this space in a pronouncement bound by the strict confines of the past tense. Though they are tediously worked over by committees of expert consultants, the story they tell still seems to place Indigenous people outside of this time, and outside of this space. When people talk about connecting to the land, they often point outside of the city, indicating that Indigenous lives, culture, and stories live somewhere separate from here. These *land* acknowledgments do little to correct this, as they fail to talk about our relationship to the land at all, just people involved in political dealings. As Indigenous peoples, our connection to land is somewhat dialectic. The trickery that removes the land—the landness—from the city's story, appears to take Indigenous peoples and our stories with it.

'Trickery indeed!' Trickster shouts, arms outstretched, bowing to some silent applause only he can hear. 'Ah yes, welcome back.' You see, the reconciliation era is absolutely brimming with trickery. 'Really, it's hard to imagine you have any time to spend with us at all, Trickster?' I say, looking over. 'Ah well,' *Blush.* Social work, too,

has found itself a part of the calls for reconciliation. In fact, of the 94 Calls to Action published by the TRC, the social work profession is the first to be called to task (TRC, 2015b, p. 1). You see, the history of social work and that of Indigenous peoples in North America are intimately connected. Thomas King, Native American novelist, broadcaster, professor, and Massey Lecturer reminds us that "the truth about stories is that's all we are. 'You can't understand the world without telling a story,' the Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor tells us. 'There isn't any centre to the world but a story'" (2003, p. 32). Social work in North America is a dynamic tale of oppression and resistance. Its story is one plagued with the reproduction of the colonial project, a divisive process that continues to isolate Indigenous people from their families, culture, community, and creation, as well as dismantle people's sense of self. As a First Nations woman and Registered Social Worker (RSW), engaging this story at times has ripped me into pieces. It was as if every day my body was carved up and portioned in two–those pieces of me that fulfilled the social worker form, and those that filled the form of the client.

'What a mess!' Trickster remarks, observing the carnage of this social work narrative. 'Indeed it is,' I say, sorrowfully kicking at the scattered ellipses in the middle of the story…… You can see why Indigenous social workers have a complicated and nuanced relationship with their profession, myself included. A First Nations woman born right here in the city, and a practicing social worker of over ten years, I live, am raising my own family, and work in the vibrant Indigenous community of Toronto. The fact that my profession lends itself to me being able to spend my days with community is a complicated gift that I am both grateful for, yet greatly cautious about. In all my years in community, I have come to know some truly remarkable people. Such as the ten (10)

Indigenous social workers who are part of this research process. Professionally, these are people I have worked for, worked alongside, or even helped to train. There are now generations of Indigenous social workers in the city who have found their way into this profession, attempting to navigate its contradictions. It makes one keenly aware that there is a legacy of experiences here, of stories that can be passed down, of important lessons to be learnt, and cautions to heed. Current and future Indigenous social workers in Toronto can look to these stories as they navigate their own complex relationships with the profession. A storied pathway through the city as an Indigenous social worker. 'Aye. Not more walking!' sighs Trickster. He's such a complainer. 'Fine with me, Trickster,' I say, feigning concern. 'You can stay here and I'll go on ahead!'

In *Indigenous Storywork* (2008), Jo-ann Archibald highlights the significance of story pathways for Indigenous peoples. She interviews cherished people who have lived their lives by the teachings found within Indigenous stories. Archibald borrows from Gregory Cajete's use of the Navajo understanding of pathways, noting that "'path' symbolizes a journey and a process; 'way' is a cultural, philosophical framework" (2008, p. 12). I put my hands up in thanks for this great work, as it has been truly inspirational for me, and helped me to conceptualize my own learning, articulating the diverse ways we come to know. Though some may see Archibald's use of pathway as figurative, a literary device much like metaphor, I am overtaken by these words, and believe they are far more material, as in "like *literally*", really, actually, physically,

story pathways. Listening and creating stories with Indigenous social workers in this city reminds me that "…stories serve as signs or marks of our presence, functioning much like landmarks on a map" (Doerfler, et al., 2013, p. 1). Similar to Deloria Jr.'s

description of a "…sacred geography..." (1973, p. 121), where "…every location within their original homeland has a multitude of stories…that cumulatively produced the tribe in its current tradition" (1973, p. 121), participants' stories help to make this landscape of Indigenous social workers in Toronto familiar. Ojibwe Scholar Heid E. Erdrich describes landmarks, the marks or signs that we leave behind that others find which help us to understand place, and connect us across time. She points out that the marks can be literary, that they can be stories (2013, p. 14). As Erdrich states, this is not an effort to toil with colonial geography, or to engage in western practices of mapping. The stories here exist somewhere between the function of petroglyphs and carving your name into wet cement. They can be found in the parks, buildings, intersections, and neighbourhoods of Toronto. Working to restore the landness of this city, and placing ourselves and our stories inside it. Our stories LIVE here. Not bound by the western restrains of time. Walking through the city, you may see them if you look openly. You may hear them if you listen carefully.

A Recurring Role: Who's this Trickster Character?

'Aho! Sister, wait up!' You've got to be kidding me. I continue to walk forward hoping it's all in my head. 'You just left me back there next to an exclamation mark! ...Umm, wait. Can I include an exclamation mark after I've said *exclamation mark*?' Nope. It's happening. Trickster runs up alongside me. 'Where are you headed, Trickster?', I inquire. 'Well, with you, of course.' *Eye roll.* Great. 'You did mention you had stories, didn't you? Well, I am a master storyteller. Perhaps I could be of some assistance?' he says, plucking a hat out of the air and *tipping* it towards me. A part of me hates to admit it, but he's right. Though I believe Indigenous storytelling has the power to

restore the relationships in our lives, it's not prescriptive in nature, with an index to follow to applicable solutions to life's challenges. In many cases, rather, "[o]ur teachers help us to see 'the upside down, the opposite, and the other balances of things around us..." (Graveline, 1998, p. 11). Among many First Nations, these stories take up the Trickster character who you have already met, in their/her/his/its many manifestations, such as Coyote, Raven, Wesakejac, Glooscap, and Nanabozho, who have been part of Indigenous storytelling since time immemorial. This may be a good spot to insert a note about pronouns. To make it explicit that the choice to present Trickster using he/him/his pronouns is in fact a choice, and by no means a given. In my experience, Trickster can be without any mention of gender whatsoever, or embody a diverse multiplicity of expressions far beyond any western conception of gender, all at the same time. Trickster is in some ways a lasting and eternal being, who demonstrates the completely distinctive ways various Indigenous societies navigate relationships with self, or others, as opposed to western societies' understandings of gender, sex, or sexuality. My expression of Trickster emerges to free my voice from western academic constraints of this project. Another part of myself, and my voice—an ontological shape shifting. Trickster, here, is my attempt to clap back at western constructs in academia and push us to consider multiple ways of being and doing.

It's also important to recognize that the English word *trickster* does not portray the diverse range of roles and ideas First Nations associate with the Trickster,

> who sometimes is like a magician, an enchanter, an absurd prankster… a shape shifter, and who often takes on human characteristics...one whose transformations often use humour, satire, self-mocking, and absurdity to carry good lessons...

> Trickster seems to learn lessons the hard way and sometimes not at all. At the same time, Trickster has the ability to do good things for others and is sometimes like a powerful spiritual being and given much respect. (Archibald, 2008, p. 5)

Archibald puts forwards the notion that Trickster can be as much a "doing" as a "being", and can be understood as a process that we interact with, as much as a person (2008, p. 6). Various expressions of Trickster have been applied in academic works by Indigenous scholars to explore diverse imbalances, from the "…'white man as Trickster'" (Graveline, 1998, p. 11) in educational pedagogy, to Weesageechak as the tension between Canadian high schools and Aboriginal students (Bazylak, 2002), to a journey with Coyote and Raven through Canadian educational institutions (Cole, 2006), and Coyote as the paradox of Indigenous higher education (Harris, 2002). This notion of Trickster is useful in reframing the idea of a "research problem" as an imbalance or disharmony that participants and/or the researcher are engaging with. The disharmony of interest to me in this project is the question of what the relationship is like between Toronto's Indigenous Social Workers and their profession. You see, our friend Trickster gets into trouble when *disconnected* from traditional teachings, family, community, Nation, culture, and land (Archibald, 2008, p. i). And so, his stories carry the principal ethic of this knowledge gathering project, the significance of relationship. Journeying with Indigenous social workers through their stories, as they encounter what has historically been an oppressive grand narrative of social work, has proven itself to be a series of Trickster tales! And as we come to the present, where there is a proliferation of Indigenous social work, and now several generations of Indigenous social workers, these stories have gotten trickier and trickier. *Cackle.*

Story Landmarks: Finding(s) Our Way

Leaving the TTC shelter at Jarvis and Carlton means we have a bit of walking to do. *Wheeze. Panting. Wheeze.* 'So. Much. Walking!' Trickster struggles towards me. *Chuckle.* 'And we're just getting started,' I say, patting his back. This is going to be a journey, a journey through the story pathways of Indigenous social workers in Toronto. 'So get ready, friend!' I say, looking out onto the city skyline. Ah, the urban landscape. Take in that fresh city air! *Sniiiiiiiiiiif! Cough. Cough. Cough.* 'Okay, Trickster, maybe not that deeply'. *Smirk.* Navigating the relationship between Indigenous social workers and their profession in the city of Toronto, I am reminded of Anishinaabe scholar Kathy Absolon's work *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know* (2011). Absolon shares, "when I was growing up in the bush I learnt to search for berries, leeks, mushrooms and good rabbit runs to snare rabbits" (Absolon, 2011, p. 82). 'Why? You snaring rabbits in Toronto?' Trickster asks sarcastically. *Chuckle.* Though sure, you see it on the news every once and a while and I'll chuckle and wonder whose cousin's out there setting traps along the Don Valley or in High Park this time, that's not quite what I am getting at. No, Absolon tells us that as a child in the bush with her parents, "[d]o not get lost was the message! I learnt from an early age to always gaze behind me to etch the landscape and its markings in my memory. I learnt to watch for distinct landmarks along the way…" (2011, 76). As discussed previously, the landmarks to guide us through this journey are stories - literary landmarks, not in the classic western sense, but stories written across the landscape of Toronto.

Sium and Ritskes share that "[s]torytelling and Indigenous land are both part of the sustaining and resurgence of Indigenous life and are not easily separable" (2013, p. VII). These stories of Indigenous social workers simultaneously push back on a kind of

urban terra nullius**,** highlighting the full and vibrant Indigenous lives and stories inside of it, while also connecting us, and in some ways, as Indigenous social workers- implicating us in establishing story pathways where our colonial social work past and our Indigenous social work present are intimately connected. Cree scholar Winona Wheeler identifies land as *mnemonic*. She states,

> [n]atural phenomena as well as petroglyphs and other artifacts carved on the landscape- trenches dug during warfare, wagon tracks, property boundary markers, even old abandoned cars- contain embedded stories and serve to nudge memory. The land is mnemonic, it has its own set of memories… (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55)

As such, while we may forget, either innocently with the passing of time, or perhaps even purposefully, Wheeler helps us to understand how "the land remembers and constructs relationships with those who live on it" (Sium and Ritskes 2013, VII). In this way, living our lives and our stories every day as Indigenous social workers, we have been imprinting onto the landscape, and the land, likewise, is remembering for us what we may forget to look at. That as Indigenous social workers in Toronto we have not just taken up the call of the *Good Red Road*, we have created one: the story pathways of Indigenous social workers in this city.

Just as Absolon, "…located the markers on the land and used those to find my way" (Absolon, 2011, p. 82), the ten (10) story landmarks you will be traveling through across the landscape of Toronto are finding(s) our way. *Cackle.* 'I see what you did there,' he points a thumb towards me. 'Ever clever,' he howls, slapping a knee. Trickster likes puns. Has that old-fashioned humour. *Giggle.* But yes, these story landmarks help us "finding our way" through our relationship with social work here in Toronto, or for our western academic cousins, these stories are "findings our way". Rather than tucked at the end of the journey, our findings here take center stage, scattered throughout, relating

back to, informing, and guiding the entirety of this knowledge gathering process. And you're an important part of that—'Who, me?' Trickster interrupts. 'Yes, you,' I respond with a grin. Not only do you help me and the readers to navigate through the story pathways of Indigenous social workers in this city, your presence in each story landmark is a clue to some potential learning highlighted by participants and myself. *Blush.* 'Oh well, I'm flattered,' Trickster says with a nudge. Well, as Trickster stories teach us about the importance of relationship, you are uniquely suited to explore these story landmarks and the nature of the relationships within and between them. These trickster stories let us really slooooooooow things down, OPEN UP our relationship to social work, and walk or *shuffle* along these relationships to highlight spaces and temporalities where (new) learning can happen. So come journey with Trickster and me, through the story landmarks along Toronto's Red Road. They help us to understand the relationships Indigenous social workers have to their profession in this space, in this City.

The Storyteller: Situating Self in Relation to this Land

As we walk together along this path, we'll also have some time to get to know each other better. My English name is Nicole Marie Penak, I am a member of the Eagle Clan, and a First Nations Woman with mixed Mi'kmaw, Maliseet, Acadian, and Ukrainian heritage. You have already been to a significant spot for me in this city—right here—this is my neighborhood! In fact, it's been a neighborhood to many members of my family as they moved into or through the city across generations. My family is from the territory stretching through what is now known as the Gaspé Region in Quebec and the province of New Brunswick, but I was born and raised in the Dish With One Spoon territory. My grandfather was the first person to bring our family story here to Toronto, after leaving one of those schools. He stole away on a cargo train alone and with nothing, at the young age of 15, in an attempt to start a new life. An amazing story in itself, he

eventually went back east to marry my grandmother. At one point when my mother was very small, my grandfather sought to locate her siblings who were taken into care, and attempted to reunite the family in an old house up the road on Bleeker street. Though the family once again returned to the East Coast, one summer, many years later, my mother was visiting family in Toronto and met my father. Unbeknownst to her, he had lived just up the road on Ontario Street—three generations of Ukrainian settlers living in what is now known as St. James Town, via Treaty Six territory in Saskatchewan. This precipitated my mother's move back to the city to have my younger brother and me. When I walk these streets every day, I remember their stories, I see flashes of their lives play out in front of me. Though my family is not originally from this place, Toronto is an important part of my family's story. It is my community, where I call home, and where *this* story is unfolding.

Just looking south of us, you will see Allan Gardens. This park has long been a part of my life as an Indigenous person and social worker in the city. Bordered by Indigenous organizations Anishnawbe Health Toronto, the Native Women's Resource Centre, and Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, the park has also been the site for many gatherings, from organized vigils honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two Spirit people, to the Idle No More food and clothing drive, to casual meet-ups with friends and community members. It's no wonder the park features prominently as one of the landmarks on the pathway of Indigenous social workers' stories. But we will come back to the park a little later; right now, we are headed westwards to Yonge and College, another major landmark for Indigenous social workers in the city.

Chapter One

Nicole Wemigwans: Trickster and The Lanyard

Honk, Hoooonk! Woops, careful there. Here we are. Yonge and College! This is a busy spot in the City. People, buses, and bike couriers, oh my! I take a moment and watch all the people scurry across the intersection, access cards on lanyards bobbling around on people's necks. To the average commuter—here for work and then gone at the end of the day—they may not realize this is a major landmark for Indigenous social workers in Toronto. *Point.* With Native Child and Family Services just there on the northwest corner, and Toronto East General Hospital's Aboriginal Day Withdrawal a few doors north. *Swivel.* The Native Child Youth Drop-In was here for years, on the northeast corner above the Pizza Pizza, and Aboriginal Legal Services' office on the southeast, as well as inside the College Park Courthouse on the southwest corner. *Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle.* You can't move through this space without at least doing a Nish nod! *Smile. Nod.* Whoa there! *Bonk!* *Flop!* 'Heeey, Nicole, I'm so sorry, I wasn't looking, let me help you up' *Umph.* 'Oh hey Nicole!' *Chuckles.* It doesn't matter how many times you meet a person with the same name as you, like Nicole Wemigwans, you can't help but poke fun at it a little. 'Oh, here. It looks like you dropped this,' I say, picking a lanyard off the ground. Nicole looks at it. She pauses. Quiet. Then she glances over at the people crossing the busy intersection. She's staring at something. I follow her gaze…

It's… It's her? It's Nicole!?! Only she looks a little different. Standing there. Waiting across the intersection. Her dark hair, dress pants, and a lanyard dangling over her chest. A little stressed. Which is unlike Nicole, who's young, confident, smart, and has the best laugh. A total Torontonian, born and raised, though her father is from Wikwemikong and her mother from Serpent River. In fact, family—relationship to be

specific–is an important part of her story as an Indigenous social worker in the city. Her mother is a long-time auntie and helper, working at the local shelter for Indigenous women and children, Anduhyuan, just west of here. Growing up, Nicole witnessed her mother's hard work, and her dedication to community, but also the painful stories she carried home with her from the shelter. For Nicole, it was enough to swear off the profession, "I heard all these different stories from her growing up, and so for me, social work was, I saw what it looked like from her experience. So, for me, that is why I didn't want to go into social work."

Her relationship with social work in Toronto had been so strained as a young person that Nicole wanted to go to school for tourism in hopes of working on a cruise ship, traveling the world, and seeing life outside of the city. "I went to school for that in North Bay, so I also decided to move away. So, that was a big wake up call for me… And so, me and my cousin who we're exactly - we're the same age - so we picked a spot and we went to school together." Moving away was a difficult decision. Family is a primary relationship for Nicole, both personally and with her Indigenous culture, so having her cousin with her meant she could explore this new world with kin: "North Bay was in the middle. So, we picked North Bay and we went to school together." Together, they made it through the program and Nicole moved back home to Toronto to begin work in that field. Back at home with her family, after working in tourism for three years, Nicole thought about going back to school. She considered George Brown, where her mother had completed the Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate program, and though she still squirmed at that idea, she thought maybe youth work was something she could do instead, advocating for and supporting young people through their most formative years. "So, I looked up on George Brown, my mom took AWCCA and I was like, I don't want to do that. So, what am I going to do? Social work or child and youth work? No, I don't want to do social work. So I went into child and youth work."

So she moved through the Children and Youth Worker program, and then into Ryerson University's program in Child and Youth Care. And though she had proven to herself that she could succeed, that she could navigate these complex systems and excel at this academic work, the lack of relationship to other Indigenous peoples or community in the program troubled her very much. Indigenous content in her program was severely lacking. In one class about youth suicide, Indigenous content amounted to a portion of one slide that was shared with all other oppressed populations. "This is what they see. This is what they're teaching, these people who are going to be going in the field, and this is what they're teaching them, that Indigenous youth suicide is worthy of one line on a slide," she says shaking her head. Then during a student placement Nicole was confronted with racism both coded and overt towards Indigenous peoples and communities from her own supervisor. "That's why I struggled so hard when I was at Ryerson because the profs don't know anything about Indigenous worldviews and they don't teach it and they don't care to have that represented," she says to me.

So Nicole went to where she may be understood, Ryerson Aboriginal Student Services (RASS) where she met social worker Ruth Koleszar-Green, the Academic Support Advisor at RASS. "I went in there and I'm like, what am I doing here? I don't know what I'm doing! And I was freaking out, so she - I was sitting with her, talking to her for a long time. And then we even brought the Elder in at the time, so it was the three of us just talking and I was - it was really helpful." It was through this relationship that Nicole began to identify what was important to her in her education and career, and even began to face her fears about social work. Namely, as she shares, "social work has such a negative reputation in the community because you want to- people call them baby snatchers or whatever, whatever you want to call them. Because we've had such bad experiences with social work in the past, I think that's why I was always- I don't want to go there, I don't want to do that." However, Nicole was intrigued by the culturally

immersive Indigenous Masters in Social Work Program at Sir Wilfrid Laurier University. Social work began to appear as a discipline that was open to Indigenous peoples and knowledges. “I was sitting there and I was like, who is in this room? We're the three Indigenous people in the room. What am I doing in child and youth care? I'm not present there. I'm not there. And so, I think that also is why I ended up going into social work because social work allows space for Indigenous world views and other professions didn't,” she shares.

Nicole’s craving for meaningful Indigenous content brought her into Laurier’s MSW program, but it was the forging of new relationships with community that made her stay. The program began with meeting all her new peers at the program’s culture camp. She didn’t know if it was fear, or sadness, but when her mother dropped her off at the camp she begged her not to leave! *Crying.* Nicole describes her mother as the sun, bringing her life and nourishing her to grow. She had been the person whom she had attended ceremony with until that point. But her mother, in her ever-present light and support for Nicole, encouraged her to participate in what was going to be a life changing experience, “She loved it there…just talked me through it,” Nicole shares. She encouraged Nicole to get to know the others, “I talked to the conductor about that and she's an Elder, she's so beautiful. She's so amazing. She's just yeah, she just definitely has that, feeling? And she's just so great and so we spent, we all spent like good - we all had our little one on one time with her during the day and then we did the sweat and we all got through it and it was so great.” As Nicole entered the sweat lodge, she was taken back to the overwhelming sense she had as a child in the lodge with her mother, but now she was moving through it, and this program without her- without any family at all! Nicole describes her experience in the program, as “intense, but it was also, I think, it was a really powerful experience. And so, we had sweat lodge ceremonies every single month.” She continues, “We did drumming and singing every day. So, at the culture camp we

made our drums," and "we made moccasins. The moccasins we wore every day in class." Supported by her new relationships with Indigenous community in the program, Nicole was able to explore areas of social work that were actually of interest to her. She focused much of her work and research on Indigenous youth-led initiatives happening out west, "For me, that's what it looked like. I was like, this is what it could look like. It was just so powerful, and I was just so blown away," she shares. The program was grounded in her culture, her teachings, her values, and she left it with a strong sense of who she was and what kind of social worker she could be—one who valued relationship, not just to her own family anymore, but to the wider Indigenous community. Community would now be the nourishing force to guide her in her social work journey.

Nicole was *that* social worker, doing incredible grassroots work with Indigenous community in Toronto, much of it with Ode, a Two-Spirit youth initiative in the city. "I just want to be in community and I want to support," she shares. "It was really challenging to get to that point of really understanding what youth-led programming means and being able to guide those discussions and just being a support person to the young people for their program. Yeah, it was such a great experience," she says with a smile. She also did a lot of amazing and deeply fulfilling work with Indigenous youth working at Canadian Roots Exchange, an organization of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth involved in facilitating relationships though exchanges, and programming promoting youth leadership development. The ground up approach resonated with Nicole, as she took direction from youth and community members, organized community meetings and gathering, and supported Indigenous community to make their own project dreams happen. "That's what I really loved about the job, was really having that experience of meeting young folks from *everywhere* across here and seeing the different work that young people are doing," she says smiling. Nicole's world was bright and full of possibility. Working in Toronto, she saw Indigenous social workers with name tags

hanging from those lanyards. She thought about what it must be like to work for an Indigenous specific agency in the city. *Wow.* To be an Indigenous social worker, within a well established agency founded on the necessity for Indigenous specific social work. *Hmmmm.* She looks at me and says, "Indigenous social work for me is like, how do we walk in social work, in our practise, with our understanding or with our traditional values and our ways of doing things, and how do we do that? How do we have both? And so for me, I thought of okay, there's simple things like having a smudge bowl available and being able to smudge in your office or if you're not able to in the building, then where's space you can? Doing different things like that, and so, I thought of different organizations in this city that have both and what do they look like and how are they doing it successfully?" Nicole applied, and of course she got hired. She was filled with excitement going to work, wearing that lanyard with such confidence and pride. Until things began to go grey.

She didn't see much health or wellness within the agency, amongst staff, or service users. She was shocked by fellow employees who didn't acknowledge the systemic barriers that service users faced, or how social workers leveraged their power and privilege not for the support of people they worked with, but to their detriment. She looks to me and says, "they were in that space but they didn't fully comprehend, didn't fully understand, didn't fully get that there's all these systemic barriers and we're constantly pushing them on people. And they don't understand their power and privilege, they don't understand, yeah, they don't understand all these different things but yet they're in this space and they're doing this harmful, harmful work." *Sigh.* She looks over at the intersection. "It's interesting because I remember when I was first starting school there was an organization—I don't want it to be named—but I was like, oh my god. I saw their name badges, I was like, I want to be there! I want one of those badges! I was so—excited. Yes! I was so excited. And then when I got it, it was the total reverse. And I was,

no, I would take it off right away if I was going to an event or if I was going to something in the community, I would hide that. That's what it got to," Nicole says staring at her former self. So Nicole, ashamed, began taking off the lanyard at Indigenous community events, but even after removing the lanyard, "I couldn't take that icky feeling off," she whispers towards me. This was exactly why she didn't want to be a social worker, the disconnect from community- the harm being done to community members. She understood that many Indigenous agencies had to work within larger systems, but she didn't realize that they would just replicate these harmful systems. Frustrated, she drags one hand down her face slowly, sharing "because there are better systems out there, because I totally understand that they're within systems, but there are other organizations in other communities, in other cities, that are doing it in such a good and different way. And it's like, how come we can't just replicate those? Those good things."

Woosh. A car flies by, blowing Nicole's hair into the wind. This was nothing like the Indigenous social work she learnt about. Reflecting on her time in academia, she realized that whether in education, or social work, she would always be fighting for recognition in these systems, for content, for space, for validation. "You can come here, but you don't really fit in because we don't understand your ways of doing things…So it's like, you have to force them to be—no, this is who I am, this is who I am as a person and it's always that constant struggle. Whereas, if you have your own places, then you don't have to do that," she says, still staring across the street. Nicole could feel that it would be a constant struggle. Or, she could stop trying to fit within the existing system. "We should be making our own," she says as she moves her head back towards me. Staring into my eyes, she then looks back at the lanyard in my hand outstretched towards her, then back up at me. 'It's not mine,' she says, with a sigh. She pushes the lanyard back towards me. *Smile*. And begins to move past me. I turn and call out after her, 'Where are you going now?' She doesn't even pause when she shouts, "I just need to be in

community. And so that's where I'm going!" I can hear a drum faintly in the distance, rising and falling over the sounds of the busy intersection. The Regent Park Pow wow. *Yoink*! That Trickster run by, swipes the lanyard from my hands, and scurries into the intersection. *Argh.* 'Trickster!' I shout. I see him place the lanyard around his neck and disappear into the crowd of people.

Chapter Two

Rethinking Research: Indigenous Methodology

In our experience as Indigenous peoples, the process of telling a story is as much the point as the story itself (Absolon, 2005, p. 98).

'Hey there, cousins!' Trickster shouts from the margin. Yes, welcome back, readers. While you journey through the stories in this project, you will find Trickster and I hanging out on the page here. We will be offering some strategic interruptions. Hoping to aid you in navigating this research project. So welcome to your first story pit stop! You see, significant spaces have been opened in the academy to speak more creatively about research. The application of feminism, post-modernism and critical approaches to research, coupled with the political activities of oppressed groups, have openly challenged Eurocentric, racist, and exploitative research (Smith, 1999, p. 9). 'Wow what a mouthful!' Trickster says in a cynical tone. Indigenous peoples, communities and scholars are now advancing an Indigenous research agenda, not only in community action projects, but in the academy "…through the spaces gained within institutions by Indigenous research centers and studies programmes" (Smith, 1999, p. 125). 'And it's a good thing, 'cause these other folks sound like nonsense to me!' he hollers again. Oh Trickster. 'My friend, we are going to try to explain our approach to the readers here, so I may need your help, or at least your patience,' I ask. *Plop.* 'I was never very good at waiting my turn,' he says, lowering himself into a chair. Okay, where were we? The term *Indigenous*, born of the struggles of the American Indian Movement, and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood of the 1970s, is not used to thoughtlessly collectivize many distinct populations of the world's original peoples with vastly different colonial histories. Similar to Cree-Métis scholar Fyre Jean Graveline's use of the concept "the Indian way", it is an acknowledgement of a distinct worldview that embodies an act of opposition and a method of communicating everyday resistance in relation to the dominant order or

"White way" (1998, p. 22). "Indigenous" is employed here in a celebratory spirit, to enable the collective voice of colonized people to be expressed strategically, and to bring communities and peoples together, to learn, share, and struggle for self-determination at global and local levels (Smith, 1999, p. 7). I glance over at Trickster. 'I guess it's also useful working with Indigenous social workers in an urban space that hail from different communities and Nations across Turtle Island,' he says. *Smirk.* And dusts off his collar.

In expanding the boundaries of what counts as legitimate research, an Indigenous approach is in conflict over what concepts can be Indigenized or resisted. Margaret Kovach, an Indigenous scholar of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry, explains how this process has meant an absorption of some western research vernacular (2005, p. 25). Though not without challenges, this proposal will also utilize vocabulary as it is taken up by scholars involved in the push for an Indigenous research agenda. 'Ah, do we have to!?' complains Trickster. '*Shhhh',* I respond. *Pout.* One such concept, *methodology,* is central to this Indigenous approach to research. As "methodology encompasses not only the mechanisms of research, but 'how research does or should proceed'" (Kovach, 2005, p. 29), for Indigenous cultures, peoples, and thus researchers, who "value the journey as much as the destination" (Kovach, 2005, p. 27), methodology as the entire *process* of doing research is of the greatest importance (Smith, 1999, p. 128).

For Cree scholar Shawn Wilson, an Indigenous research methodology is inextricably tied to ontology[1], epistemology[2], and axiology[3]. 'You've got to be kidding me,' Trickster pleads, flattening his palms over his face. Rather than thinking of these as four separate entities, Wilson conceptualizes them as a circle, with each entity inseparable from the next, of equal worth, and dependent on the whole of the circle

[1] *Ontology is the study of the nature of being. Like what even is reality? For many folks, it's probably just an unnecessarily big word for worldview. Chuckle.*
[2] *Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge. Like how do we even know what we know? What even is truth? I can't help but make a Bill and Ted voice while I type this.*
[3] *Axiology is the study of the nature of value. I know, I totally thought it was an ad for body spray too. But for real, it has to do with how we get to ethics or notions of worth.*

(2008). This *relationality* is integral to an Indigenous research methodology. 'Now we're talking,' smirks Trickster. As our ways of knowing are not separate from our ways of being (or doing), to understand relationality as a value will help to identify how relationality operates as a function in an Indigenous research methodology. As Wilson states, just as all the components of the circle are related, the components themselves—ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology—all have to do with relationships (2008, p. 71).

An Indigenous research methodology "encompasses an Indigenous way of knowing" (Kovach, 2005, p. 28). Anishinaabe scholar Kathy Absolon shares that knowledge is not solely a mental process or substance, but it can be sensory, physical, spiritual, and emotional (2011, p. 31). Chickasaw legal scholar James Henderson explains how "Mi'kmaq people have always drawn their knowledge from many sources: direct experience, intuition, oral testimony and spiritual connections" (1997, p. 9). 'Um, and Trickster Stories!' Trickster shouts. 'I promise we will get to that, friend.' Anishinaabe academic Lynn Lavallee recognizes this relational nature of Indigenous epistemology, as it acknowledges the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of humans, and extends this interconnectivity with all other living things, as well as with the earth, the star world, and the universe (2009, p. 23). In this way, an Indigenous epistemology can be understood as fluid, nonlinear, relational, and accepting of both physical and nonphysical reality (Lavallee, 2009, p. 23).

This highlights some distinctions between an Indigenous paradigm and the four dominant research paradigms[4]—positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and postmodernism—as described by Guba and Lincoln (1994). Where these dominant paradigms commonality is to view knowledge as *individual* in nature, knowledge in an

[4] *A paradigm is a distinct set of concepts or thought patterns, like a particular collection of ideas and methods. Reminds me of a joke my dad used to tell me, about a woman from the city driving down a mountain, and a farmer in his truck driving up it yells 'pig!' The woman responds 'asshole' and then hits a pig. Paradigms.*

Indigenous view is seen as relational, belonging to the cosmos, with researchers as only interpreters of this knowledge (Wilson, 2008, p. 38). As Wilson puts forward that "an Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology" (2008, p. 73), it is important to note that in an Indigenous ontology, there may be multiple realities. 'Not this again,' complains Trickster. 'Yes, again. It's an important thing to grasp, here! I mean, how else do I make sense of you, Trickster?!' I exclaim. 'Fair enough,' admits Trickster in defeat. Though this bears resemblance to a constructivist paradigm, the difference lies in the fact that rather than truth as something external to be discovered, reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth. As Wilson states, "there is no one definite reality but rather different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology. Therefore reality is not an object but a process of relationships…" (2008, p. 73). This is important later when we consider the "unit of analysis" in an Indigenous research methodology. Examples of reality as relationality can be seen in the Cree language, where the literal translation for *chair* is "the thing that you sit on", and the use of the Cree word *chapan* to describe the relationship between grand-parent and grand-child where both people in the relationship call the other *chapan* (Wilson, 2008, p. 73).

The conflict of transcribing an Indigenous paradigm into western academic research systems is apparent when attempting to describe the unit of analysis. As described previously, if reality is composed of relationships and the purpose of research is to glean understanding of reality, then an Indigenous research methodology studies relationships. *Whew.* It is helpful to draw on a vision of Wilson's that acts as a metaphor for this element of research,

> …Imagine that you are a single point of light…Now in the darkness of this void, another point of light becomes visible somewhere off in the distance…You form a relationship with that other point of light…an infinitely thin thread [of light] now running between you and the other…Now as you open you eyes, you can see all

> of the things that are around you. What you see is their physical form, but you realize that this form is really just the web of relationships…We could not *be* without *being in relationship* with everything that surrounds us and is within us. (2008, pp. 75-76)

In this vein, it is those connecting threads of light that are the focus of interest in an Indigenous research methodology. 'Wow, that's beautiful,' says Trickster. *Hoooonk.* Blowing his nose into a hanky. As Métis scholar Cora Weber-Pillwax points out, however, it is important to understand that these connections are "…not an abstract idea about the unity of living things. It is a connection to the specific localities, places…" (2004, p. 89), other living beings, the environment, and all that maintains us in life. This differs from the four dominant research paradigms that tend to think of individuals as independent agents.

Indigenous researchers are bringing forward worldviews and conceptual frameworks that shape an approach to research, and bring great strengths and contributions to the research community. Also as "[m]any times such research bridges Western practices and Indigenous knowledges; however, bringing together these two worldviews can also present challenges" (Lavallee, 2009, p. 21). A significant strength of an Indigenous research methodology surrounds its considerations for ethical research. As described by Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, non-Indigenous research can be "judged as 'not rigorous', 'not robust', 'not real', 'not theorized', 'not valid', 'not reliable'" (Smith, 1999, p. 140). Indigenous researchers have to meet these criteria, "…as well as Indigenous criteria which can judge research 'not useful', 'not indigenous', 'not friendly', 'not just'" (Smith, 1999, p. 140). 'I will never understand you academics,' Trickster says, picking at his teeth, 'That sounds like an awful lot of work!' Weber-Pillwax describes this as a challenge of resolving conflicts between institutional and

personal codes of ethics, particularly for minority groups (2004, p. 79). This conflict is described as follows in a passage by Stl'atl'imx scholar Peter Cole:

> who is in charge of the ethics police whose frames matter whose are expendable who holds the reins and whip the keys to the dungeon the drawbridge this too is the stain and cut of ethics which does not end nor begin in white picket fences stone mansions and marble places of white worship it begins in the pockets of the privileged and in the pockets of those pockets it resides too in our plank houses longhouses… (2006, p. 33)

I view the struggle for, and movement of, Indigenous ethical principles into academia as a much desired and beneficial contribution. This is beneficial not only to Indigenous researchers, but for the whole research community, as well as those individuals and communities who are participants, when we focus on relationships, respect, and reciprocity in research endeavours.

From Indigenous perspectives, ethical codes of conduct are not separate from the protocols that govern our relationships with each other and with the environment, as previously described (Smith, 1999, p.120). As such, the principal ethical consideration in an Indigenous research methodology can be described as *relational validity* (Marsden, 2004, p. 55), or as Wilson terms it, a *relational accountability* (2008 . p. 79). Wilson describes relational accountability as meaningfully fulfilling one's role and obligations with respect and reciprocity in the research relationship. If Indigenous research is establishing and maintaining relationships to gain greater understanding, "…[w]hile forming all of these relationships, you can understand the responsibility that comes with bringing a new idea into being (or articulating/ making visible an existing one). The new relationship has to respect all of the other relationships around it" (Wilson, 2008, p. 79). For Wilson, a researcher can put this principle into practice in four different ways: the first, through how we go about choosing our areas of research; the second in the methods

that we use to "collect our data" or build our relationships; the third in the way we analyze what we are learning; and finally, in maintaining relational accountability in the way we present the outcomes of our research, and the usefulness of the results to the community of participants (2008, p. 107). Valid research in an Indigenous research methodology takes on the circular view of triangulation, to *encircle.* In this sense, the research is reliable if it can be shown to relate, reflect, and build upon the relationships between the ideas and the participants (Wilson, 2008, pp. 101-102). This ethical premise also supports an anti-colonial principle discussed later in this story, where "knowledge and peoples will cease to be objectified when researchers fulfill their role in the research relationship through their methodology" (Wilson, 2008, p. 74). 'So, fulfill your role to me and let's get on with it already!' Trickster pouts.

Chapter Three

Kenn Richard: Trickster and the Ghosts of Past

'Whew'. *Panting. Panting.* I glance around, slowly scanning the scene for that Trickster. 'Where did he go?'. My words carry off into the cathedral-like sky-high ceiling, muffled by the sound of a running waterfall feature. I notice some petroglyph-style etchings in the glass, scattered foliage around a beautiful cedar staircase, and in the back there's a lodge- kind of like a longhouse. I scurried after Trickster, just fast enough to see him disappear inside Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. Yup, this is NCFST, and I'm dangling off the reception desk, trying to catch my breath. 'Nicole?' I hear a voice. Head still low, I raise my eyes to find the person calling to me. I see Kenn Richard coming out of the elevator. He's a tough looking Red River Valley Métis man that softens in an instant with a sideways smile. He's almost always in some kind of cowboy or biker boot, dark jeans, and a belt buckle. You can tell just by looking at him that he's a total Winnipeg transplant, from a time and a place far from here. Greying a little more now than he may admit, he hasn't lost a bit of his energy, drawing attention to him like an antenna does electricity just by walking into the room. 'Kenn, how's it going?' I respond, straightening myself up. 'Haha, I thought that was you Nicole. The hell you doing, hanging off my reception desk?' he says, joking. You see, Kenn is the Executive Director here, in fact he's not just the E.D., he's the founding E.D., and so when he says it's his reception desk, he ain't kidding. I often wonder if there's a cot or something hidden behind it, because this place is legitimately Kenn's homestead. There are small signs of it if you look around, like his personal drum kit, and I mean a full rock band style drum kit, tucked beside the closet in his office. Sometimes you see it set up in the lobby afterhours when the place is closed. First time I saw that as a student here, I was pretty confused, until another staff member leaving for the day passed me on the

stairs and said “Great acoustics!” I thought to myself, “Is this guy for real?” You see, for going on 30 years now, Kenn has run this organization, from a grassroots initiative in a basement, to this! ‘Actually, I was just looking for…someone,’ I say darting my eyes around. ‘Well, okay, I will look with you,’ he says, offering a hand. I get up and join Kenn. *Shuffle. Shuffle.* We walk through the building and he shares how each piece of wood, metal, or plant was hand chosen for its significance to Indigenous peoples or communities to build this place, an Indigenous child welfare agency right in the heart of Toronto. And it really is breathtaking. Some may say it’s hauntingly beautiful.

Kenn is well aware that his electricity we spoke about earlier can well be a lightning rod for controversy. *Ouch.* Seriously. So some may be surprised, myself included, to learn that behind all the bureaucracy, all the red tape, budgets, and ministry dealings, Kenn was a total hippie! Well okay, not a hippie per se, but a former rebel rousing, 1960’s, O.G. social justice warrior. At that time, he was living and working in Winnipeg, a time before “Indigenous issues” was even a phrase, pre-Oka Crisis, pre-RCAP. “Even in Winnipeg, where all the work is Indigenous, the fact that everybody's Indigenous is kind of only spoken to disparagingly. You know? Those Indians with all those problems,” he tells me. “It was not a sense that, you know, there's some social justice issues here.” As he continues, I see a figure of a young man of smaller size and stature following alongside Kenn, sharing in his every movement. As he recounts tales of activism and community service, I can see the passion in this young man. I can imagine Kenn at rallies or board room tables as a youth, shouting truth to power. At the same time, I see a lot of grief in this young man’s eyes, some really painful stories and experiences he must carry with him, both personally and professionally. You see, though Kenn has been at NCFST for three decades, he has actually been doing this work for much longer. He was on the front line of child welfare in Winnipeg until moving to Toronto in 1979. He has firsthand experience and accounts of the horrors of social work

at that time, coined *The 60's Scoop*. "Social work was just compliant with the racist ideology of the day," he shares. In my time knowing Kenn, I have heard his stories, stories that break you to pieces and leave you wondering if you can ever be whole again after knowing what you know. He shares about flying to remote communities to hunt down folks to give kids a chance to stay with family, building bunk beds in remote, one bedroom houses, and working to develop an argument that keeping siblings together was necessary for their wellness, as any ethnic or culture arguments were wilfully disregarded. On this day, too, he shares a few more. I *cringe* with every word. *Breath.* A tear forms in the corner of my right eye. And while I've heard many of his stories before, today he shares one he has never told me. His name was Wayne, Kenn's cousin and best playmate. Wayne killed himself at age 13, after being apprehended by Children's Aid and forced to live in foster care. Kenn recalls watching his mother recoil in agony, crying as she received the news, beating herself up, pleading with the past wishing she had been able to save him. Kenn tells me he has a photo of Wayne that he hung in his office all that time ago as a reminder. "You know? To work harder, to make sure that nobody fucks with the kids, the Indian kids. No more taking the kids and making them disappear, you know? So that's been a mantra of this agency, although we've struggled." We stop for a moment on an upper floor. He looks away from me for a moment, pensive, and looks down over the railing glancing at the agency's entrance. "My Métis identity was partially formed by racist events in my life," he continues, "Even though it was a racist place, I was able to transcend that and have a social justice kind of orientation".

Kenn had actually followed a girlfriend at the time to a presentation by social work professor Peter Hudson. He wrote a seminal article about colonialism and social workers. When Peter was speaking, he saw Kenn in the crowd, walked up to him and said, "we need men." Kenn laughed, thinking back. This is how he ended up in social work, "a connection between what Peter was saying, the social justice issues that were

around me, the heartfelt connection that I had to the Indigenous people of Winnipeg - that sounds like, a bit maudlin, but . . . when people were racist in Winnipeg, even as a little kid, even though my own identity was diffuse and even confused, I went, wait a minute. And it was. So I went and got my BSW." We walked past some visitation rooms in the agency, those same Indigenous etchings in the glass, children's toys and books strewn along the floor. "I was trained as a community worker and I became a child protection officer very quickly because there were no jobs as community activists, you know. It's just, there's no job description that really says that. And I needed work, so became a child welfare officer under their legislation in Manitoba, and that's where my consciousness really emerged where I saw holy fuck, look at this. Look at all these kids in care. It's ridiculous. And I was one that did not—although I was right front and centre in the Sixties Scoop, I rebelled from day one." Kenn did the first repatriation in Manitoba of a whole family of kids back to a reserve, five kids who were about to be adopted to various families through adoption agencies in the United States. "I said stop! Stoppit! I know this fucking name, there's a 1000 people with this name in this community which is where they're from!" he says as if right back on that day. He paid $180 to fly north to their community in search of a relative. Though he was able to do some incredible work, he continued to get scolding reviews from his supervisors and warnings "that said Kenn over-identifies with his clients. You know why they said that? Because I cared to keep the fucking families together. That was deemed to be over-identifying." So Kenn left the system. He assures me it wasn't the cases at all. That sure, there were some kids in real distress, but it was the system that he could see had the real problems. "It was the system that really—wasn't really doing good social work at all. It was doing terrible social work. Even back in the day before, you know, the stories started coming about an impact on people and everything. It was pretty clear to me that it wasn't working. No. All the kids

run away from foster care, so, you know, that's a good evaluation, isn't it? You know?" he says, both sarcastic and pleading.

Kenn left for Toronto with a real consciousness about social justice in the context of child welfare. And it was a new era, the 1980s, when the wider understanding around Indigenous peoples really started to shift. After a short stint selling t-shirts at the Canadian National Exhibition, he got a job with Children's Aid Toronto, and then as a community development officer in the old Metro Hall for the City of Toronto. Not long after, he was approached by a man named Gus Ashawaski. Gus was the chair of a committee that was looking at child welfare in Toronto, and he said they really needed somebody who knew something. "And you're it! Please join our committee." Kenn did, and a few years later in 1988 he became the founding E.D. of this agency. As Kenn shares his stories, that young figure emerges again, this time with someone I believe to be Gus. In the distance, I can see more figures moving forward. *Ahem.* Ghosts? Spirits? *Gulp.* I look around, a little nervous, until I hear the fondness in Kenn's voice, looking out a window onto the Toronto skyline, reflecting on those early days of Indigenous community and social services in the city. I realize they're not ghosts, just memories. "There was no Anishnabwe Health, there was no ALST, there was no Native Child, there was no Native Women's Resource Centre." He continued, "There was the Friendship Centre… Council Fire was a soup kitchen at the bottom of All Saints church". He turns to his memories, Bill Lee the first E.D. of Anishnawbe Health, Todd Ducharme, the first Director of Aboriginal Legal, turned judge, Maddie Harper of Native Women's, and Mellie Redman, the founder of Council Fire, who received an Order of Canada. As he calls the names, these figures move in, introduced one by one, and come to join the young man and Gus. "These are salt of the earth old-time residential school survivors. Toothless, chain-smoking, you know? That kind of, you know, they were tough as fucking nails, and they're going, 'Who the fuck are you to me?' Right? When I walk in

the room, right?" he says with a laugh. "So, these heroes, right? That nobody talks about or eulogizes or anything. I always - when I do speeches now - I always say, I always name a few names, right? Just because I take this oral tradition seriously. Nobody's written down these heroes. So I try to say their names occasionally because that's what oral tradition does is you speak the names and you say the story and you acknowledge them, right?" he says, turning back to me. I nod. The figures wave as we move towards Kenn's office on the fourth floor of the building. I can sense that, again, a new era is upon us.

Kenn's office is an interesting place. A collection of posters, gifts, and items from the past hang on the walls or sit along shelves. There are piles and piles of paperwork across nearly every surface, enough to make you drown in the weight of it all. And, of course, his drum kit in the corner. I ask him how he feels about social work now, after all this time. "It's not necessarily a place—other social workers—where I go to be affirmed. It's where I go, more often than not, to debate an issue. You know?" Even with all he has shared about the alienation of Indigenous peoples in society, he reflects "where do you feel most different?...is actually when I'm in the company of social workers because they carry, historically anyway, that ideology of, you know, colonialism. You know, with a velvet glove, yes, this one, because we're the helpers and everything, but it's still pretty much - and I've always sensed that, I've always sensed that - even among my own staff." He shakes his head as he moves some papers off a table so we can sit down, a small round table in front of his work desk. He continues, "I think, ugh, how did you get here? When I hear them speak about - and then, and they don't speak in racist tones or anything, it's all kind of with respect to compliance and everything, but you know." *Shuffle. Shuffle.* Huh? What was that? I hear something rustling around behind Kenn. As he speaks, I slowly scan the background. *Plink. Plink.* Two eyes appear amongst the paperwork over his shoulder, it's all I can see from his body hidden amongst the stacks. Ha. Found you,

Trickster! What's he doing? Hiding from the ghosts? I try not to draw any attention to the wiggling stack of files, assigning only one of my eyes to continue to monitor him. "There's a lot of compliance issues and standards and a lot of scrutiny from the province that we never had back in the day, right?" Kenn says. "It makes us be a lot more forceful in the forensic part of child protection, so things have changed that way." He sighs for a moment. Then that electricity starts to spark up again. Reflecting on all those people, those spirits who pushed a path towards Indigenous services in the city, towards an Indigenous child welfare system. "I place myself in that time and place of change, and that, you know, we have bought into a profession but not necessarily the professional paradigm and that it's up to us, in concert with other like-minded people to change that profession. So, I'm not ambivalent about being—I'm proud to be a social worker. I will tell you I'm an MSW, I'm a BSW, I teach. I'm as social worker as you can fucking get," he laughs a little to himself. Kenn stands and moves over to the stack of papers.

I see Trickster crouch down lower, trying not to be seen. "So, I'm happy to be part of, you know, moving a profession along that needs to be moved that for a moment there lost its way and did some terrible things. And I'm candid about that as you know." *Zoink.* Trickster grabs his exposed foot and tucks it in, out of sight. "I do walk in the room saying, you know, it's—there's a legacy here and I want you to know that I don't want to carry that legacy forward behaviourally, it's time it stopped, and this agency is an attempt to begin the process of stopping it." Kenn turns and looks back at me. I try not to look distracted, and so I shoot him a smile. *Clink. "*It hasn't really changed enough because I'm still not very happy with its reluctance, its reticence, its incapacity to move forward on the issues that matter to me and for me, the issues that matter are Indigenous issues," Kenn says with a calm but deep sense of frustration. *Boink. Boink.* Trickster's arms pop out on either side of a stack of files. He wraps them around the papers and picks up the pile as he shuffles closer to where Kenn is standing. "How do we become so easily co-

opted into an oppressive dynamic? When do we resist? And social work has been struggling with that for some time. So it hasn't really changed that much. I'm still very much carrying that flag." The stack of papers is wobbling and Trickster's whirling his hips along in unison to remain unseen. Impassioned, Kenn spreads his arms out as he speaks, "Just—where's the heart of social work? Where's the heart? I don't know. I think it's in people like us. Not to blow the horn too much, but it's the, you know, it's the progressive thinkers that are troubled by it and see not necessarily the glass half full, but sees that you know, so long as there's a component of our society that is being unjustly dealt with and being denied what others take for granted, there's the job." *Bang! Boom! Crash!* Kenn's arm hits the stack sending dozens of papers and Trickster flying! *Woosh.*

'Let me help,' I say, and scoot over to Kenn, picking up the files scattered across the floor. "But also, you know, leadership sometimes needs to be refreshed," Kenn says across from me on the floor. "To the next person. Whoever that might be," he shares as we continue to clean up the mess, "You know, it's easy–I would say it's easy to be swayed through the temptations of expedience and money and all that stuff. It's very important to keep your values up front in your filter–as your primary filter–in this job, because you can very easily go to hell. And you know, expedite bad behaviours that are just replicating what has always been, because the system doesn't like change, so keep your values right in front of you almost as a banner. And don't let go. Keep your focus" Kenn says firmly, in a serious tone. "I think I've learned. Particularly in the Indigenous world, you know? It's really important to have consensus, be achieved within our world, the Indigenous world itself, because it's really easy to tear us apart and to pit one against the other and that's—particularly when you throw money into the mix. I'm seeing a lot of that these days…even in the Toronto world of Indigenous services, we could do better in terms of cooperation and consensus building among ourselves. We tend to be insular and competitive…so advice to anybody coming up is to be the bridge-builder, if you can. I

have not necessarily been the best at that. You know? For better or for worse, I can be, draw the line too strongly." He smiles, lifting a pile of papers onto his desk. He looks around his office like a proud and exhausted parent. "We're going to see a lot of very interesting dynamic unfold. So, advice to the new leadership is to understand all those things and position an agency such that it stands for Indigeneity in the city, provides services that are actually useful, and keeps a bare collection of values that would allow the social justice agenda to prevail over the forensic, over the law enforcement, over all those other things that social work can get drawn into." Kenn sits down at his desk, quiet, and contemplative. I continue to pick at the files, drawing them into my arms. I see some shiny paper on the floor. *Hmmm.* It's a photograph. I flip it over. A young boy stares back at me. It's the same boy who had followed us earlier. I stand up, and hold the picture with both hands. 'See you later, Wayne,' I whisper softly. I place the photo on the small circular table before leaving quietly.

Chapter Four

Jay Lomax: Trickster and the Search for Spirit

My heart is both full and heavy after leaving Kenn's office. Deep in contemplation, my eyes follow the cracks along the concrete floors. I move slowly down the hall towards the elevators I know intuitively to be there. *Bump.* 'Oh, excuse me,' I say apologetically, raising my head to meet the person I've bumped into. 'I'm so sorry I…wait, what?' Confused, I stumble in my feet and my words. A person stands before me, dressed professionally, with a blank stare. Trickster is standing behind them, slowly moving their limbs, shuffling the body from one end of the room to another. 'Aho!' I call out to him, but he says nothing. I watch them disappear behind a pillar. Weird. *Bing.* I press the button for the elevator. *Clink. Clatter.* The doors begin to open. Standing in the elevator are two more people with vacant eyes, and *two* Tricksters standing behind them propping their bodies up, one holding a file under their arm. Really weird. I slowly back away from the elevator and turn instead to the stairs. *Shuffle. Shuffle.* I move steadily and swiftly, descending the staircase. I don't know what's going on here, but it's definitely got me spooked this time. *Breath*. The reception area is in sight. Glorious. But as I move closer I see that between me and the exit are a dozen or more of these… corpses? And Trickster copies moving them around their work place. *Yikes*. I move instead towards the back of the building. Oh ya, the replica lodge we saw earlier! I run to the lodge door. I'll just hide inside here until these things, people, I dunno, whatever they are, pass through. I close the door behind me. *Plunk.* Resting my head on it for a moment. *Phew.* Inside, the light is lower, and the smell of medicines stain the air. Sweetgrass, tobacco, some sage from past smudging cling to the walls. Out of the corner of my eye I can see some beautiful wooden staffs with ribbons and long eagle feathers hanging from them, surrounded by deerskin hand drums resting in the walls and propped up along the floor.

‘Hey!’ I hear someone call out from the other side of the lodge. ‘The spirits demand to know who enters their dwelling!’ the voice says eerily. Nervously, I turn around slowly, cringing. ‘Who’s there?’ I ask softly. “Spotted Blue Thunder!” I hear shout back at me. *Whew.* It’s Jay Lomax. *Chuckles.* He laughs at me. Holy mother of Creation, it’s good to see a friendly face. Jay is a joker, that’s for sure. He’s definitely known to play a prank or two, or drop a good one-liner in an otherwise tense or boring conversation. Jay’s an interesting character, a born storyteller, he’s a pow wow dancer, a proud father of three, an active community member in Toronto, someone who follows his Dakota teachings and traditions, an adoption worker here at Native Child, a former child-in-care himself, and an adoptee, originally from a small town called Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. He jokes that “It's an hour west of Winnipeg, and literally, if you blink, you'll miss the town.” *Chuckle “*You'll see a sign on my reserve, *Dakota TV*, then you're gone!” He was moved to Brampton, just west of Toronto, to live with his adopted family as a young child, so he’s no stranger to the city, but he has a strong connection to his home territory, he speaks about it with such love and respect: “It's beautiful out there, it's like—when I lived out there, it was like an ocean of corn. Especially before it rained, you could see it all moving and . . . it reminded me of the water, and a lot of—I don't think a lot of people see that unless they live out there.” I move over to the benches where he’s seated, working on something, material stretched out over the wooden table. ‘Gosh, I’m so happy to see you here, Jay. Really. There’s something freaky going on out there,’ I share. ‘Well you know, spirit will guide us to where we need to be, if we let it,’ he replies.

‘Oh ya,’ I say, and plop down to hear more. ‘Absolutely,’ he shares. “I lived in a foster home. It was a white foster home with four kids that were white. They were two brothers and two sisters. And then there were four Native, usually four Native foster kids. Yeah. And I just remember like, how beautiful it was on this farm. It was, it was very rustic, it was very cozy. I used to remember being on the back of a motorcycle, little dirt

bike, with my foster brother. He owned this dirt bike and I was always tagged along. I think by the age of two I was on the back of this dirt bike with him, I remember it so, so well," he pauses, pulling the memories from his mind. "I remember the social workers coming by to pick up kids, drop off kids. You could see, you know, them coming from miles because of the dust kicking out from the car. But yes, so it was time to be adopted at the age of three, and this white couple came and they came in the house. I remember they came in the house and I was hiding under the table, but I knew I was supposed to leave with them. It was so strange. I don't know how I knew…But once I got to know them in the car ride, I knew that they were my parents. It was so strange," he shares as he sewed.

I watch Jay as he works to mend something on the material, needle in hand. *Through, over, out, over. Again. Through, over, out, over. Again.* I can tell the story isn't finished. I wait, I listen. "I lived in Brampton most of my life. And that was a white community," he says, placing the needle down for a moment. "So, Brampton. I remember I was interested in this girl, and I saw her skating, she was so—grade six—beautiful girl. I was at the library, I was skating there and she was there with her sister and thought man, I would love to, you know, be with that girl. She's beautiful, like, she's—look at her eyes, they're just awesome. And I remember it was at the middle school dance, it was grade 6. It was just like an Adam Sandler movie…Cheesy 80s, you know... Bad hair, bad clothing, everything. Funny things going on. And I remember, I didn't even know how to dance yet. Like, I was putting my both legs behind my back, like, this," Jay pauses to motion with his arm and his leg, "and I was trying to show other kids my dance. And they were doing it too and they looked silly and I thought oh, I can't do that dance. But I remember someone came up to me and goes 'Hey, Jay, Lynn wants to dance with you. Like, a slow dance.' 'Who's Lynn?'" *Chuckles.* "'Lynn Davis.' I go, 'I don't know who that is.' So, two people grab my hand, a guy and a girl, and led me through a crowd of people, and

there was Lynn standing there. It was the girl from the skating rink!" he says, eyebrows raised. 'No way!' the words escape my mouth. "Yeah. And after, we started to talk. She was Mohawk! Yeah. I had no idea, 'cause she had light blue eyes and later on, when I met her parents, they were very dark skinned with dark eyes. But I just thought how amazing that was. Like, you wouldn't even—I think about like, how did that happen, and I think Creator plays a role when you're little. They have a lot of influence, they have a lot of protection. There's a lot of guidance when you're a child. And I think totally that was someone going like this, you know?" It's a beautiful story. I can imagine little Jay, thinking he was the only Native kid for miles, only to find that one other kid to reflect back part of who he was. Maybe spirit did have something to do with it?

Thinking of everything he's been through—I mean he and his brother are even a part of the Indigenous adoptee class action lawsuit in Manitoba- I can't help but ask him 'So why did you get into social work?' He pauses, and then laughs to himself. I can tell there's a good story here. *"*You know, I originally wanted to be in policing, and I'd always hear in my ear every now and then, *Children's Aid*. And I'd look around and there'd be nobody there. And a year would go by, *Children's Aid*. So, I would hear this voice every year. This whisper. And I'm like, what the hell is that? And I remember I bungled up my police interview over here at the headquarters. Yeah, and I took law enforcement. I had experience in security, I did armoured car, security dogs, airplanes, you name it. I was in - I was right in there. And I remember I went back to school, for some reason I took Aboriginal law, I don't know why, in Thunder Bay, and I came back for this interview and I bungled it up. And they were like, where's your resources? Where's your résumé? I didn't get a notice that said I had to bring my résumé and resources to this interview. I thought I already sent it in. So, I was out in the hallway, writing it down, and when I got in there were four people sitting with their uniforms on, like this, talking to me," he mimics the officers with their straight, stiff bodies and firm

looks. “And they were asking me questions like when was the most heroic moment you can remember, and. Yeah. I'm like, ‘Guy, I'm only 24 years old, like, haven't really seen a lot, to be honest with you.’ So, I remember going back to Thunder Bay back to school, and I went out to the Outpost, which is a popular bar in the college. And I got drunk. Yeah. So drunk. And I remember coming home and I had to go by the Thunder Bay police department to get to my residence, and I was mad that I screwed up that- that interview. And I remember at that time, I heard *Children's Aid*. No one there again. I pick up that rock and I threw it right through their Crime Stoppers sign.” My mouth falls open in disbelief. “Yeah. And Thunder Bay police had nothing to do with my anger. It was Metro police, it should've been Metro police there, but I took it out on Thunder Bay police. And I remember seeing two ambulance drivers, they stopped and were on their radios and I went and hid underneath a trailer—I was 24 years old—under a trailer across the street. They sold brand new mobile trailers. And then I thought it was an hour that went by, it was probably 5 minutes, and I got up and went into Husky and ordered the biggest breakfast that I knew, and 5 police cars showed up in front of Husky.” I was right into Jay’s story now, eyes wide, nail biting, edge of my seat. “This big, giant cop comes in. And I'm like this, like, just drinking my coffee, right? And I hear *boom*, *boom* - I can still hear his footsteps coming in, it was the big, hard salt coming in - he comes over and he goes, ‘You the guy with the rock?’ Right? I went like this,” he looks up and motions with his imitation coffee cup. Then Jay makes a funny face and says, “‘What took you so long?’” *Hahaha.* We both break out laughing. “Yeah, and then, yeah. And then I was outside greeted by four other cops, and I thought this was it, like, Rodney King beat-down right here. Cause I just messed up their sign. So, anyways, I apologized. I said ‘Look, I applied to the police department,’ and they thought it was *hilarious* that I applied and here I am throwing a rock through their sign and they were actually amused by it. Yeah, and then I got in and they didn't even handcuff me, they just put me in the back and

okay, you got to spend the night in the tank, man, you can't be walking around like this. And they were all white, and I said okay. So they put me in the coldest jail cell in Thunder Bay. It was awful. It was so cold, it was like a refrigerator. It must've been like, minus one in there. And you couldn't sleep cause there was all these other drunk guys in there yelling about who they are and who they're going to get after they get out and . . . Yeah, I was like—no blanket and it was a concrete bed. Just steel in front of you. And I remember just like, hiding under in my t-shirt. It's all I had, was just trying to keep warm. It was so cold. So after that, that's when I decided it was time for a career change and we're not gonna do policing cause this is not a match. But after that, I moved back to the reserve, did social work type things." You see what I mean about how Jay's a big joker? "If I didn't do that, then I wouldn't be in social work. I'd probably be still pursuing police or have been in police. But you see how I would have to explain to another police force why I threw that rock through their sign, and I don't think that would help me get on a force at all. I think I kind of wrecked that whole possibility," he says, then leans over. In a more serious tone he continues, "How come this is happening to me? And well, the reason is because something is showing you something, it's a lesson in life, it's a teaching." Jay enrolled in the Bachelors and then Masters of Social Work program at First Nations Technical Institute.

Jay shares that when he first came to social work at Native Child, he carried some of his police training and attitude with him. "Well, initially we worked in Regent Park a lot. So, I always think of Regent Park as like, the base of where, you know, I began as a worker. And being in that development and working in struggle, working in poverty," he shakes his head thinking back. "I remember hanging up on people and say, 'Well, I'll talk to you some other time when you're ready. Okay, bye.' And I remember how easy it was to do that, and how it never fixed anything, just made it worse." he nods. He soon realized this approach was not what spoke to him in this work. "Based on my own

personal experience, just being adopted, the goal is to fix it. The goal is to add remedy to a 150 or a 100 year problem that's in our communities and there's not too many people that want to do that." He reflected on his life, his teachings, and the lessons he had learnt along the way. "You can see that—if you think of yourself, you can see—sometimes I see myself in clients, you know. And remember how tough it was, you know, living in Winnipeg and only being able to afford a toaster. And then until the next month I could afford something else, like plates or like, clothes. You know?" he says returning to his material. "So that experience, that experience allowed me to—to see what they go through. You know? And it's painful, and a lot of workers, I don't know if they realize that, how painful that is." *Through, over, out, over. Again. Through, over, out, over. Again.* As I watch Jay, I imagine his sewing has probably changed over the years, grown, shifted, I wonder 'what about your relationship with social work now?' He glances up. "I've added a spiritual element to it, a more humanistic one," he shares. "There's a spiritual sense in it all, too. So, I think I've been able to add culture and spirituality to the work that I do. And I think that's not only a huge advantage, but it's very sobering, I guess, to the clients or the people we work with. They're spiritual too, you know? For me to accept their spirit is, it's just going the distance, I think." I look at Jay working in this beautiful lodge, surrounded by Indigenous medicines and tools, his energy matching the calm of the space. "It's reaching another level rather than just sitting there and taking notes. We can connect to our clients spiritually. Again, we have to give them the time and that's what I was missing before was I wasn't giving them the time. I wasn't being spiritual. Wasn't smudging with them. I didn't even bring it with me, and now I bring those tools everywhere, so. Show parents what to do, you know?" Jay is being humble. He has done so much in this agency to change things for kids and families involved in the adoption process. He has advocated for a selection conference instead of a sole worker being responsible for matching families to children, he has removed the income section

from the selection criteria, as he says, “Native people don't base their relationships or their parenting ability based on money”, and he has created and instituted the most beautiful adoption ceremony where biological and adoptive family come together in this very lodge to celebrate a child in their journey and acknowledge their role in their new and growing family structure.

Perhaps the most amazing thing Jay has done has been to share about his spiritual relationship with social work and to extend that relationship he has to the work of adoptions or, as he calls it, parent finding. “There are times when you don't feel it, but I think we all have helpers that, you know, like just when I was little, you know, grade six, finding the Mohawk—the only native person I ever knew in the whole area,” Jay says, smiling and raises his eyebrows. “I think they're in the room with us. And that brings me to believe that - you've done this job before so you've met parents that have said ‘Oh, I just knew that he was the one for me. I just knew it from the picture.’ Well, when I first started, I just thought oh, that's crazy. How could you just know from a picture? You're nuts, right? But when you add in the spiritual element,” he glances around the lodge as if to motion to the energy, the spirit, in the room with us. “But using that philosophy and parent-finding with children, I think that spirits show parents who they're going to parent in future or who their next child's gonna be. I think it works that way. And I'm just, I'm just a guy doing this, like, *whistles*, like I'm—like, as we say, I'm nobody. Like, some people can play god in this position, but sometimes you can just let it go spiritually, and those people will find each other. You don't have to go, ‘Well, I think you're a match, you know, and I think that you're ten out of ten, you know what I mean, on this,’” he leans in toward me. “First, I laughed at it, but sometimes it's so powerful but so overwhelming that you know that they're a fit and all the forces in nature are gonna change your mind to thinking otherwise. There's just some, some deep spiritual element that exists in adoptions and you know, I could say the same for mine, too. Like, I can't see me being

with any other parent that I've been adopted with. They went from Toronto to Winnipeg. That's 24 hour drive. And then we connected right away? Like, it just. It just doesn't . . . if you talked about that with people, it just doesn't seem real, you know? But when you're there, it's real. Like, you're in it, this is your story. So. Then there's other adoptions that just don't work out. Well, then you got to think, well, was there a spiritual element there in the beginning? Probably not. Was it just paper? Probably. Was it just paper matching? Probably. Right?" Listening to Jay's words now I'm the one looking around the lodge, reflecting on the forces present in this space, reflecting on his relationship with social work that has seen a new wave of adoption ceremony bring spirit back into the family-building that happens here. Jay has created a video and travels with it to various stakeholders and other Children's Aid Societies to advocate for spirit in this work, to demonstrate the impact that ceremony has with the children and families that come together or come back together after child welfare intervention. "The adoptions ceremonies need to be done in every CAS organization, and even a returning ceremony. I only seen that once in our—return the children, when they return to their mother, I've only seen that once where someone was acknowledged," he shares. "There should be some type of acknowledgement. It doesn't have to be ceremony—like, everything doesn't have to be smoke and elders and drumming. Yes, we do that, but I think that people can do other things. Just have a feast. Just have a feast, you know?"

It's clear that this relationship with spirit hasn't only impacted the wellness of the children and families Jay works with, but it has had a profound impact on his own life and wellness as an Indigenous person and social worker. "You have a responsibility, you know? It's not going to be easy… There were kids that were left alone for days without food, without clothing, without anyone in there. Kids left in really dire situations," he says, closing his eyes, as if to calm a painful memory. "That's the difficult part of social work, but if I was to answer like, what does it mean to me, it means responding to the

community in a good way. And that means using medicine in a good way, and that means using your heart first ‘cause it's so easy to go the other way,” he says with a serious look. “And the way I see that is because we're living by Ministry rules. We're not living by the way we - we didn't design all of our protocols, we didn't design all of our recording elements, we didn't design the laws for child welfare. So, being an Indigenous person and having to live by somebody else's rules? And them coming in here to audit our kids, our families, us?” he says, tying off the last of his stiches. “I'm always looking to be innovative, so. And talking to other people to be innovative, that's what we need because we're in the dinosaur ages with child welfare. It's not ours yet, it's somebody else's and it's a puppet show really.” *Hmm.* My head twinges to the side. I look to the door and think of the scene I left outside of here. “So many times, I've come across workers that have been hired here and it almost seems like they're just kind of skimming some of our history? But not fully understanding it or its impacts and you know. Eventually it turns into this 9-5 job for them and then they fade off and go somewhere else.” He stands up. *Breathes.* “A lot of times it feels like you're a bird in a cage. You know? And you're not getting fed, you know? And you're not getting fed the right food. So it's like you're a bird in a cage and you're getting fed cat food,” he says, and holds up the material, finally revealing what he’s been working on. “Right now, I'm helping two kids out with grass dancing outfits,” he says allowing a small smile to form in the left corner of his mouth. Families return to Jay for teachings, for cultural and spiritual support, though he says “that's something I don't want to do for a while, is take on that role where people come to me for that kind of thing. My uncle did it. It's a huge responsibility,” but what he is doing is maintaining the relationships he has with these families, relationships that found their way into being through spirit. Jay has really transformed himself as a social worker, and is looking to leave the western way of practice behind him. Jay grabs a bustle hanging on the wall and makes his way towards the door of the lodge. ‘Wait, where are you going, Jay?’ I say,

jumping out of my seat. “You're—doing this, doing child protection is like you really have to have a healthy plan. And for me, it was pow wow dancing, and drumming, and singing. That's what got me through nine years of frontline,” he says with a smirk, ready to leave. *Click.* The door to the lodge opens. *Pop.* I stick out my head, anxiously looking around. There’s still a few bodies milling about, some of which Tricksters have propped on chairs or in doorways. But Jay walks right through the chaos! *Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle.* Uncertain, I close my eyes, and hide behind his bustle. Maybe if I stay close, I’ll make it with him out the door too. *Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle.* Eventually, I feel a warmth on my face. *Plink.* I open my eyes. Regent Park! We must have walked east right past my place again and down Parliament Street. We are just a stone’s throw from Council Fire, the big purplish blue building—you really can’t miss it—it’s our local friendship centre here in Toronto at Dundas St E. and Parliament. *Whew!* Glad we got through that, tricky stuff. Jay leaves and walks over to two young people, and gifts them some beautiful regalia. *Boom. Boom. Boom.* I hear the big drum and look over to see Nicole Wemigwans standing behind the singers smiling. She made it here after all. I look back and see Jay just soaring around the inner circle, no caged bird here, just giving it his all, repping proudly for the prairies in his chicken dancer regalia. *Jingle. Jingle. Jingle.* It a good day. After dancing a few songs Jay walks out of the circle smiling. ‘No strings on you Jay!’ I shout towards him jokingly. “To be honest with you, it felt like it all closed when I went to the Council Fire powwow this summer. And the area I used to work with, it was under the ground, you know? I used to be there. So, it was almost like a celebration for me that I can close that chapter. But yeah, as I said, it was like the end of a story. It was like me celebrating that it was over. Here I was dancing in Regent Park with my outfit on. And it was good, it was a good feeling,” Jay said, before turning around and heading back to work. *Jingle. Jingle. Jingle.*

Chapter Five

Anti-Colonial Imperatives: Theoretical Framework

Eurocentrism
Colonial Practices…Genocide
Delivered through Military, Missionaries, Politicians, Educators
Tried to make our Peoples…Our Cultures… our Languages
Endangered species.
Render our stories of Resistance Invisible
In His-Story
(Graveline, 1998, p. 33).

Snap. Snap. Snap. Trickster's snapping his fingers at the end of the poem. It's a great passage, I must admit. And relevant, too. You see the histories of social work and of Indigenous peoples in North America are intimately connected. 'Here we go again,' bemoans Trickster. Though the history of relations between Indigenous and European nations is fraught with trickery, violence, and tension, it is from these original relations that social work itself has developed, and from which its working relationship with Indigenous peoples has formed. 'Tricky, eh?' he says, perking up. I shoot him a look, 'Got your attention now, I guess.' *Smirk.* Treaties are a particularly illuminating example. 'I'm listening,' Trickster says, leaning in. Social assistance of some kind is cited as a condition in many treaties. Most notably in the Robinson-Superior and Robinson-Huron Treaties (1850), the Numbered Treaties (1871-1921), and today's Modern Treaties (1975-present). However, in examining the impact of such "assistance", the contradictory role that social workers have long found themselves in their work with Indigenous peoples becomes overwhelmingly clear. On the one hand, treaty relationships have pushed Indigenous communities into desperate poverty, removing them from traditional territories and subsistence practices, and causing a scourge of social and health problems to sweep through our Nations like never before. On the other hand, the Canadian state,

through social workers, seeks to rectify the very problems their interference in Indigenous communities have caused. Absurdly, with even more interference! '*Huh?'* Even Trickster's scratching his head about that one.

Many social work scholars like Alston-O'Connor (2010), Baskin (2011, 2015, 2016), Baskin & Sinclair (2015), Blackstock (2009), Sinclair (2004), Sinha et al. (2011), and Sinha & Kozlowski (2013) discuss the role of social work in on-going colonialism and genocidal violence against Indigenous peoples in this settler state of Canada. Much has been documented about Indigenous community and family structures, and the role of social work in the exercise of removing and replacing these structures with European peoples, communities, and practices. Though much of this scholarship begins implicating social work post-confederation, focusing on social work's involvement in residential schools, and the successor to this system that is child welfare, do not let these works be misappropriated by conceiving social work as a profession with a brief historical diversion from otherwise noble original intentions. Scholars such as Craig Fortier and Edward Hon-Sing Wong (2018) have sought to trace the relationship between social work and the project of settler colonialism even further, to their mutually constitutive beginnings. Fortier and Wong argue that "[s]tarting points matter. And the most common starting point for publications on the history of social work in Canada is a time period dubbed the era of 'moral reform,' generally referring to social work and social welfare provision pre-1890, prior to the consolidation of the profession" (2018. p. 1). When any social work student or practitioner today is asked about the origins of their profession, they will likely cite this period, and the subsequent development of both the "Charitable Organization Societies and the Settlement House Movement as the two core pathways to

the professionalization of social work" (Fortier & Wong, 2018, p. 2). A depoliticized origin tied only to the history of burgeoning industrialization, social reorganization, and poverty flowing from the early failures of capitalism. They go on to share that

> the problem with this history is not that it is inaccurate, but that it is incomplete. The omission of the settler colonial context in which social work consolidates into a modern profession in Canada is conspicuous in its absence. By avoiding or eliminating the antecedents of social work that contributed directly to the settler colonial project and continue to structure the profession today, the desire to frame social work as a rather positive reaction to the injustices wrought by the capitalist system can be easily accomplished. (Fortier & Wong, 2018, p. 2)

They instead trace the rise of the social work profession in Canada as inextricably linked, and a progression of, two main colonial forces: the Christian missionary and the Indian Agent (Fortier & Wong, 2018, p. 2). From these origins, they demonstrate how social work at its core, has always, and continues to be, a technology of containment and pacification, a technology of extraction, and a technology of (re)producing the colonial state (Fortier & Wong, 2018). Likewise, I, too, believe it is necessary to re-politicize and re-contextualize the origins of social work in Canada as inseparable from the project of settler colonialism. As we know that colonialism is not an event, but a process (Wolfe, 2006), this helps us to understand how the roots of social work do not stand isolated from this activity, while also helping us to understand how social work, too, grows, shifts, and changes to perpetuate itself as an effective tool of colonialism across time and space. This is much like Cole's passage that opens this chapter, where Eurocentrism, colonialism,

and genocide are facilitated and re-enabled through a persistently evolving Rolodex of actors. 'I'm getting dizzy,' Trickster moans. *Burp.*

One such evolution in the development of social work in Canada is actually tied to analogous developments within research. Maori Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith acknowledges that the formal scholarly pursuits of knowledge and the constructions of the "Other" are intertwined with each other, and with the activity of research (1999, p. 2). She traces out the colonial origins of research, saying "the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research' is probably one of the filthiest words in the [I]ndigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith, 1999, p.1). Though some may argue that social work could challenge research's claim to ultimate infamy, I believe there is no competition here at all, as the two are in many ways one in the same. Smith chronicles how research evolved as a practice to further the colonial project, to deny our humanness, and "rationalize" the violence against Indigenous peoples for the seizure of land and resources. From "the significance of travellers' tales and adventurers' adventures" (1999, p. 8), to "images of the 'cannibal' chief, the 'red' Indian, the 'witch' doctor, or the 'tattooed and shrunken' head, and stories which told of savagery and primitivism", from "filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and compar[ing] the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought" (Smith, 1999, p. 1), to "the transplanting of research institutions, including universities, from the imperial centres of Europe [which] enabled local scientific interests to be organized and embedded in the colonial system" (Smith, 1999, p. 8). Smith demonstrates how research and colonialism are mutually constitutive, and "employed to deny the validity of [I]ndigenous peoples' claim to existence, to land and territories, to the right of self-

determination, to the survival of our languages and forms of cultural knowledge, to our natural resources and systems for living within our environments" (1999, p.1). 'So what's all this have to do with social work,' shouts Trickster. 'Well, thank you for asking,' I respond enthusiastically. As the world began changing, with overt genocidal and/or violent assimilative processes falling out of fashion, colonialism itself had to pivot to shift from the tactics of Fortier & Wong's (2018) missionaries and Indian Agents.

In an expansive review of Indigenous and Canadian relations, Hugh Shewell's book *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (2004), Shewell notes that "[i]n many respects the social scientists were the explorers and missionaries of the mid-twentieth century, the new interpreters of the 'other' to the European mind" (p. 208). After the Second World War—'Yuck, an awful time,' Trickster interrupts. As I was saying, after WWII, the Canadian state faced the devastating impacts of their oppressive relationship with Indigenous nations described above. He goes on to explain that "[t]he potential of applying various social science disciplines to the problems of Indian administration became apparent…" (Shewell, 2004, p. 208). Shewell documents the boom of social scientific research in Indigenous communities in the 1940s, his archival research reveals letters between R. A. Hoey, Superintendent of Training and Welfare Services, to Dr. Hough Keenleyside, the Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources. In this correspondence Hoey writes,

> There is a number of projects that naturally come to one's mind… when research comes up for discussion. The scientists I have interviewed appear to be… interested in psychological and sociological studies with the object of securing information relating to the temperament of the Indian, his innate inertia, his

> nomadic instincts, lack of frugality, etc. It is perhaps well that we should have thorough understanding of these before we undertake a program aimed at the legitimate exploration of the resources to which the Indian claims ownership. But even at this stage, research work in forestry, fish culture, educational effort and the dietary habits of the Indian, and his available food supply, might very profitably be undertaken. (Ellipses in original text, Shewell, 2004, p. 210)

In response, there emerged a "…different kind of state paternalism… more associated with planned programs, positivism, the promise of professionalism and applied social science. The state was determined to become a friend of the Indian but an enemy of the 'Indian Problem'" (Shewell 2004, p. 172). The Canadian government called for an organized effort to address this very issue, which became *The Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Consider and Examine the Indian Act,* 1946-1948. The committee, formed in May 1946, was set up primarily to make recommendations for revising the Indian Act, an act infamously recognized as a piece of colonial legislation, originally passed in 1876. (*Nudge.* This act consolidated all previous policies relating to Indigenous peoples into a single piece of legislation). Perhaps the most significant brief to the committee from a professional organization was the joint submission of the *Canadian Welfare Council* and the *Canadian Association of Social Workers*, largely due to the importance of state social welfare, and to the emergence of social work as one of the first professions in "applied" social science (Shewell, 2004, p. 190). They advocated for universal welfare programs, because in their view, the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples were the result of the absence of their universality with other Canadians. The brief advocated for a new federal-provincial

relations plan for developing professional social services on reserves (Shewell, 2004, p. 190). This resulted in the introduction of Section 87 (now Section 88) of the Indian Act of 1951, which opened Indigenous wellbeing to provincial initiatives, allowing provincial authority on reserves. 'Damn social workers,!' Trickster says, scowling.

This has had an everlasting impact on Indigenous self-determination, both at the level of state sovereignty–distorting the nation-to-nation relationship set up by treaties, agreements, deeds, or negotiations between Indigenous Nations and the Canadian State– and devastating impacts at the level of families and individuals. There was a mass hiring of social workers by the state to accompany and slowly replace the long-standing colonial position that Indian Agents held in Indigenous communities. From this point, "social workers were tasked to accompany Indian agents onto reserves to remove children to residential schools and later, in the 1960s and 1970s, to apprehend children deemed to be in need of protection" (Sinclair, 2009, p. 20). At the same time, the number of Indigenous children made legal wards of the state quickly ballooned from one percent of all children in care in 1959, to 30-40 percent of all legal wards being Indigenous children in 1960 (Fournier and Crey, 1997, p. 83). This period of social work intervention was coined "the Sixties Scoop" by Patrick Johnston (1983). He acknowledged that Indigenous children were apprehended from their homes and communities, often without the knowledge or consent of families and bands (Sinclair, 2007, p. 66). These harmful interventions by social workers have not slowed over time, but, rather, have increased with the proliferation of the profession. As Cindy Blackstock, Gitxsan academic, fierce advocate for Indigenous children, social worker, and Executive Director for the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada has stated, "Overall, we estimate that there may be

as many as three times more Aboriginal children in the care of child welfare authorities now than were placed in residential schools at the height of those operations in the 1940s" (Blackstock, 2005, p. 13). This continues to contribute to the reasons why "[s]ocial work has negative connotations to many Indigenous people and is often synonymous with the theft of children, the destruction of families, and the deliberate oppression of Aboriginal communities" (Sinclair, 2009, p. 20-21).

The same year the revised Indian Act came into being, 1951, the federal government established the Advisory Panel on Indian Research. Its mandate was to "…assess the merits of the study proposals and judge their fit with the overall aims of Indian policy" (Shewell, og 215.), and "…to consult with potential researchers and with government agencies it represented, to advise on the suitability of research proposals, and to distribute the findings of those it had approved" (Shelwell, p. 216). Shewell demonstrates how these efforts within research and social work are intimately connected in a meeting of this same panel in the fall of 1951 when Colonel H. M. Jones, the Superintendent of Welfare Services for the Indian Affairs Branch, "raised the issue of new policies resulting from the Indian Act. The activities of the Indian Welfare Services had been considerably expanded, he said, and social workers had been appointed in all the country's administrative regions. In addition, the effects of the new act's significant changes would require study" (Shewell, 2004, p. 216). Like a snake engulfing its own tail, social work and research consumed and re-produced each other and the project of ongoing colonialism. Trickster throws his hands up and shouts, 'Holaaaay!' *Clunk.* I plop myself down next to him, feet dangling over the page. 'I know. It's bad. It's real bad, friend,' I say, equally exasperated. The colonial framework of the relationship between

social work and Indigenous peoples is an obvious aspect of this journey. That colonial framework is also an integral component to research itself! As social work and research mirror both one another and the project of colonialism, this project too must mirror an anti-colonial imperative in *both* its content and process.

But how to go about it? *Hmmm.* 'Well, what do other Indigenous academics have to say about it,' Trickster says with a shrug. 'Good thinking,' I respond. Well, Lavallee states that "Indigenous research is decolonization research" (2009, p. 37). And Kovach puts forward that to have a discussion of this liberating goal of research, we have to also critically reflect on the role of universities in producing and defining what counts as knowledge (2005, p. 21). 'This is especially true when we talk about schools of social work and social work research,' Trickster adds confidently. *Chuckle.* For Smith, an Indigenous approach to research holds that "negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes" (Smith, 1999, p. 140). This mainstay of Indigenous knowledge gathering must be central to my efforts.

Graveline (1998) explains how the Eurocentric colonial worldview allowed for and continues to perpetuate pedagogical[5] violence institutionally directed against Indigenous peoples. Through both oppression and exclusion, educational systems have been one tool by which industrial forms of consciousness were and are expanded and disseminated. Blaut, as taken up by Graveline, understands Eurocentrism as a partner of the colonial process, which "… is not just a matter of attitudes in the sense of values and prejudices, but rather a matter of science, scholarship, informed and expert opinion. Eurocentrism guides what is accepted as 'empirical reality,' 'true,' or 'propositions

[5] *Pedagogical means relating to an approach to teaching, especially in academic contexts. Which may explain why it has its own fancy term. Chuckle.*

supported by the 'facts'" (1998, p. 23). Colonial forms of education, particularly residential schools, have contributed greatly to the efforts to eradicate and replace Traditional forms of knowledge, such as oral Tradition, language and storytelling A continued colonial assault on Indigenous consciousness (Graveline, 1998, p. 28-29).

As an Indigenous educator, Graveline reflects on how schools have become ideological processing plants, where the hegemonic power of Eurocentrism is validated rather than challenged (1998, p. 8). Likewise, Cole provides his impressions as a First Nations educator in a Canadian university:

> greater toronto where more than half of the population is nonwhite while indigenous students and other nonwhite students at universities are surrounded by what amounts to a very privileged homogeneous institution in terms of faculty in which whiteness is significantly overrepresented particularly some ethnoreligious ethnoeconomic ethnobotanical expert categories with a dearth of anything indigenous or aboriginal save a very few rhizomes mostly ap/ex/propriated by white people white indian experts (*wei's*) abound. (Cole, 2006, p. 4)

Both educators, however, "…wish to contribute to education as the 'practice of freedom', rather than as an act of repression, colonialism or imperialism" (Graveline, 1998, p. 8). Miguel Zavala (2013) reflects on the challenge of the "Euroversity", where Indigenous research projects in New Zealand and Latin America are in perpetual conflict with educational institutions invested in the colonial-capitalist state (p. 66). As well, Njoki Wane calls for a "multiversity", to challenge the singular western approach, and "… recognize that different forms of knowledge can co-exist; more particularly, different knowledges can co-exist in conflict at the same time. Indigenous peoples must be allowed to produce and control knowledges about themselves and their societies" (Wane, 2013, p.

102). Similarly to Wane, speaking of the power of Indigenous African knowledges, George J. Sefa Dei challenges the homogenous nature of knowledge in western education systems (Dei 2016, Dei 2018a, Dei 2018b). In his book *African Proverbs as Epistemologies of Decolonization*, Dei asks, "how do we equip ourselves to use multiple lenses of scholarly inquiry? No single person or group of people can claim to tell the full or complete story about any aspect of human life, so how do we establish a way of telling multiple stories about a concept in order to get the whole story?" (Dei, 2018b, p. 2). *Hmmm….*

Gerald McMaster of the Plains Cree Nation and Lee-Ann Martin of the Mohawk Nation, argue that "…rather than perpetuating an 'academic' colonialism, Aboriginal communities need to articulate their own scholarship that validates [I]ndigenous systems and philosophies" (Graveline, 1998, p. 12). Explaining that Indigenous methodologies can work to question and displace the white male settler as the reference point of all knowledge, Graveline holds that

> cultural knowledge is an essential component of cultural resistance …contemporary poets and writers take their cue from the oral tradition, to which they return continuously for theme, symbol, structure, and motivating impulse…we are resisting by 'writing back', by disrupting the European narratives and replacing them with either more playful or a more powerful new narrative style. (1998, p.41-42)

'Oh like me, like me,' shouts Trickster, arm raised straight into the air. *Hmmmm.* I think as I look over at Trickster, as he strains for attention. Perhaps he does have an answer to this query! To respond to Dei's somewhat rhetorical question, we need only point to the title of his book, and thank our African Indigenous family for their efforts in this area. As, our *stories* are epistemologies of decolonization! Aman Sium and Eric Ritskes place

Indigenous communities as the loci of decolonization theory (2013, p. II). They share that "stories in Indigenous epistemologies are disruptive, sustaining, knowledge producing, and theory-in-action. Stories are decolonization theory in its most natural form" (Sium and Ritskes, 2013, p. II). Where the colonial project has worked to destroy and disappear Indigenous existence, stories are not only spaces to actively resist this violent onslaught, but have always been spaces of Indigenous self-determination. Though Sium and Ristkes (2013) caution that this is not an attempt to return to some kind of pure pre-colonial state, but an affirmation of Indigenous control over our own lives and our collective futures, a collective autonomy that does not begin or end with our human family but extends to lands, waters, and all creation that makes it possible to sustain life.

Māori scholar Graham Hingangaroa Smith states that "while we should acknowledge that there are multiple sites where the struggle against oppression and exploitation might be taken up, Indigenous peoples must set the agenda for change themselves, not simply react to an agenda that has been laid out for us by others" (Smith, 2000, p. 210). This is significant when looking at efforts of decolonization for Indigenous peoples. Our efforts cannot, and perhaps should not, be focused solely on responding to colonial state violence. We need also to engage in sustaining and creating our nations today and imagining ourselves into the future. To put it plainly, decolonization for Indigenous peoples is not solely a defensive exercise. In many ways it is a creative exercise, like creation itself, birthing our lives and realities into every day. When considering stories, especially sharing and creating stories as a method of inquiry moving forward, Mallory Whiteduck (2013), reminds me we are

> …most importantly, writing for the continuance of our nations. When we write, Native writers are responsible to our families, our communities, and the larger Native academic community. Our stories represent a fundamental love and respect for our homeland, and writing them ensures our children can return home

> regardless of their physical location. Through stories we can achieve decolonization by responding to past and ongoing oppression, while actively moving beyond it. Continuance manifests when we thrive in a space of our own, where our ways of being are combined with tools provided by academia to further our goals. (p. 72)

And so, too, this project must take up an anti-colonial framework, not only by responding to the colonial violence of the social work profession or academia, but by creating for continuance. Creating for the worlding and futurism of Indigenous peoples is a project of both the content of this work, and its form. For me to contribute, even in some small way, to how Indigenous peoples can take up stories in our work, so the next generation can continue to do so, to continue to create into our realities and our futures. *Ahem.* I glance over and find Trickster, only now with both hands up in a sarcastic manner. 'Yes, I see you.' *Chuckle.* Indeed, Trickster is helping me to do this, not only to highlight the colonial tensions within the relationship Indigenous social workers have with their profession, but to explore these stories in a fashion that centers Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. And as Deloria (1973) stated previously, echoed by prominent Indigenous scholar Gregory Cajete (1994), that space—land— is central to Indigenous epistemologies. So, let's continue our journey across the land of Toronto to see what stories have been created here.

Chapter Six

Rochelle Allan: Trickster and the Lost Tongues

Sizzle. It's midday and it's getting hot at this pow wow. *Glug. Glug. Glug.* I slam some water and look around for some shade. This area of Regent Park has been newly renovated, *errr,* gentrified, really. A big grassy area, some concrete structures, and little saplings with hardly any foliage. *Slosh.* I wipe the sweat from my brow. Did I mention it's hot?! I look south across the park and see the Toronto Birth Centre, on the south side of Dundas Street East and Sackville. 'What day is it?' I think to myself.
'Ah, Friday! Woo-hoo!' That means Rochelle will be doing children's Ojibway language classes at the Birth Centre, or TBC, as we call it. Perfect chance to get some AC and visit with a friend. *Clink.* I press the button at the crosswalk and wander towards the TBC. *Shuffle. Shuffle.*

Roar. Giggle. Snort. Walking up the stairs, I can already hear the kids in Rochelle's program, clearly having a ball. "Boozhoo miigwech bi-izhaayeg. Gigiizhiitaami na? enh! Nishin! Ikidog miinawaa. Oh nishin maajtaadaa!" What a scene. The playmats are out, Ojibway children's books scattered across the floor, toys are labelled in Anishnaabemowin, the kids and caregivers are smiling and singing, and they are surrounded by beautiful murals made by the Indigenous community of medicinal plants, including some original artwork by Christi Belcourt. Everywhere smells like that fresh baby smell. *Chuckles.* It really is a magical place. If you're ever in the neighbourhood, I totally suggest popping in. Fridays are great, too, because it is "Soup Friday". The Birth Centre has a garden plot across the street in the park where the pow wow was, where community members grow various food staples, and on Fridays we use some of those ingredients in a soup and share a meal together. Yup, this is a space of Indigenous reclamation if I ever saw one, starting right at birth, and extending out to

community, culture, food sovereignty, and, of course, to language. ‘Aaniin ezhi-ayaayan niwiijiwaagan? Giminoayaa na?’ I call out. I’ve been taking Rochelle’s Ojibway children’s language classes for about two years now with my toddler. My husband is Anishinaabe and it’s important for us to expose our little rug-rat to their Indigenous languages as much as possible right from the start. And let me tell you, it’s an incredible thing to witness. Because for most of us, this wasn’t our experience, and language revival is something we started much later in life, Rochelle included.

Rochelle is Ojibway and for her family, Anishnaabemowin, the Ojibway language, is like…like… a beautiful song! And I don’t mean just any old song and a hand drum, but like a choir of voices, of *all* her ancestors singing together in unity with all their collective wisdom! I glance past Rochelle at the artwork behind her. The canvas starts shifting, colours swirling. From the painted florals and herbage appears a lodge. And then the ancestors. Then the singing. The paintings are recounting a story in their illustrations! From inside the lodge, you can hear voices reverberating and bouncing off the walls. There are drums, and flutes, and shakers, and clapping, and stomping, and swaying, and dancing. The acoustics are incredible! As the fullness of the voices fills every inch of the space, the lodge itself can’t even contain the extensiveness of the song and like the smoke from the fire, it *pooours* up out of the lodge and fills the entire territory, the entire universe, with its words. The song is their truth, their understanding of the world. It reveals a worldview necessary for their survival, necessary to carry forward their way of life and relationship with the universe. One night, someone, a stranger, a Trickster, resting on a hillside, heard this beautiful song and followed it *all* the way back to the Ojibway people. ‘Wow, what a song!’ the Trickster thought to himself, tapping his foot to the beat. *Blink. Blink.* He peeked through a tear in the lodge. Hips swaying, transfixed by its rhythm, he watched the singers, mouths wide open, from which their truth flowed out into the world. He observed the way it moved through space and filled

the entire universe. He thought 'Ah ha! If *I* had that song, I could fill the universe with whatever *I* wanted!' *Smirk.* Plotting and scheming, he tiptoed away and hid in the bushes until the Ojibway people went to sleep. *Snore. Whistle. Snore.* As the people rested peacefully, Trickster snuck into their lodges. *Creeeeaaaak.* One by one Trickster plucked out their tongues! *Plink. Plink. Plink.* One person here, another there, some entire families! 'The song is mine now!' he proclaimed. *Cackles.* He shoved the tongues unceremoniously into his sack and ran off with them before morning. When dawn came, the Ojibway people woke, only to find their tongues were gone, that someone had taken their song! *Woosh.* The paintings begin to shift back to their original depictions.

Generations have passed and some families were still missing their tongues. Much like Rochelle's family. Rochelle was born in Scarborough, raised much of her life just an hour outside of Toronto in a place called Cambridge, and moved back to the city about 20 years ago. "Yeah, so I came back for school. I came back, graduated from high school and went straight into university and went to the University of Toronto," she shares. Rochelle was expressly interested in child protection, and originally completed an undergraduate in Sociology and Aboriginal Studies in order to get there. But while she was studying, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers ascended as the regulatory body for social work, and many jobs in child protection followed their preference—and in some cases, requirements—for training specifically in the discipline of social work. So Rochelle did a second undergraduate degree in social work online through the University of Victoria, and later, the Indigenous Masters in Social Work (MSW) at Laurier. That's a lot of school! And a lot of dedication to break into the field of social work. I mean, a lot of people don't want to think about the work it takes to complete a single undergraduate degree, never mind two! But something drove her, motivated her to peek into social work's …sack. "I knew about social work all my life. I think that, while it's not something we talked about a lot, my dad's childhood

experience had a big impact." Rochelle shares that child protection has had a big effect on her father and his siblings. Her father actually lived in a house right around the corner from where she now lives in the east end. She recalls, "when I was like, nine, I all of a sudden got an aunt and an uncle, which was amazing. My aunt had put an ad in the newspaper to find her siblings cause they had all been put in different—so one sibling was adopted, one was put in foster care, and one was with a family member, and they didn't see each other for 40-something years. She put an ad in the Toronto Star, and so, then I got an aunt. And I don't know if you know this, but for nine-year-olds, that basically means gifts." *Giggles. "*So, that was always a part of my understanding of social work, that experience of children and the complexities of families that are created through the profession and that kind of thing. I didn't really have a way to articulate it, even when I moved here." So, social work was long a part of Rochelle's family story, and how in life she recovered family she had never even knew existed. What else did social work have to reveal to her, what other gifts, objects, understandings could she uncover with a closer relationship to the profession? *Hmmm.*

Ironically, Rochelle applied to work at child welfare organizations but responses to those applications took *forever*, and she repeatedly took job offers that came first, all of which were in education. Rochelle found her way into many exciting jobs at the University of Toronto, supporting Indigenous students and educational programming. Rochelle decided to go back to school to upgrade her credentials. While completing her MSW, Rochelle was surrounded by other Indigenous women in the program. She recalls how "my classmates were absolutely the most amazing people I've ever met." The program and classmates were aspirational for Rochelle, helping her to see new possibilities, not just professionally, but personally. "Several of them were fluent in Ojibway, and so I would always be listening and that kind of thing cause we would go away for a week to do the courses–well, I dreamt while I was there about doing an

Ojibway language group and it was me and a bunch of little children." That dream had reignited an interest that Rochelle already had for Anishnaabemowin, her family's language, as she had been slowly uncovering and practicing it in her own time. Only this time, it was different. "I think that the ability to bring some of the critical thinking, some of the supportive aspects, some of the different social work understandings to language learning is very beneficial–not that I'm saying that people who want to do language learning should become social workers. That is not what I'm saying. But there's a lot of trauma. We were told for a long time that the language is not important and that they shouldn't use it. That if they shared it with younger people it could put them in danger and that kind of thing." So Rochelle brought the trauma lens that she learnt in her social work training to language learning. "I think that being able to frame it as a trauma that needs to be attended to is really beneficial, 'cause often relationships around language sort of fall apart because learners are very eager and they lose sight of the fact that we're not just healing the language, we're also healing our communities. It might take a year or two years or something to work with someone until they feel comfortable to say sentences in the language. But that's part of that healing. You can't force it. You can't make people heal on your timeline. And so I think that that understanding was helpful for me," she shares. Rochelle's understanding about Ojibway language revitalization began to shift; it was no longer just about learning the language, but about healing. Healing for community and healing for herself, from violence, a structural violence that Rochelle could now identify.

"For some people the language is really a metaphor for their entire relationship with the culture and with colonialism, and it's not something that's going to get fixed overnight. It's also, I think a good metaphor for this negative talk we have about ourselves. People are always talking about how hard the language is, and in my mind, the piece that's always missing from that conversation is isn't every language hard? The thing

that makes it so much harder, in my mind, is that we are also dealing with this colonial violence. That is why it is so defeating when it is difficult and why it hurts so much when people criticize our efforts. So Jacob, my partner, speaks three languages. And now he like . . . well—I'll say this. Somebody said to me, oh, he's better than you now!" *Laughter.* I know Rochelle's partner Jacob, and he *is* impressive! As a non-Indigenous man, I am always amazed when I see him and their two children, and he is able to speak to them entirely in Anishnaabemowin! It's incredible. But Rochelle lets me in on the not-so-secret gift he has for Ojibway language learning, "So there is truth to that in that he isn't afraid." She explains how when he only knew five words he could rearrange them in hundreds of ways, without this fear of making mistakes or it not translating perfectly back into English. "Because he has multiple languages already, he can more easily just say like 'Oh, well that's just English.' And I think that there's a parallel there for the colonial experience, when you've lived through it it's hard to say, 'Oh, well that's just colonization showing itself again.'" This structural understanding of the systems impacting language learning has really transformed Rochelle's own language abilities, too. "Often when people, they'll say oh, it's a dialect thing. Actually, what they're talking about is a pronunciation, spelling, or an accent thing. But it's also a legacy of colonialism and the efforts to destroy Indigenous knowledge dividing communities yet again. Separate people long enough that they forget that they can communicate in their own language and when they come back together, they'll force each other to use English. I think that social work education gave me tools to understand it in a way that is less threatening to me." Reflecting on her relationship with social work, Rochelle shares, "I think that social work education and practice has helped me to be able to manage it for myself and not feel that people are judging me or upset with me or that kind of thing. 'Cause I think I did have that self-consciousness before I did the social work education, when I first did language learning. It wasn't a great experience. And it took a while for

me to come back to it, and I think that the social work lens really helped me to be able to process things in a way that was beneficial to my learning rather than detrimental."

Chatter. Buzz. Zing. The room is full of energy. What started as a children's program brought friends, guardians, parents, and now grandparents to the program. So Rochelle is not only there with her kids, but her parents too! Rochelle is going over the lesson with everyone in the room. Today, we are learning colours, and not just the names, but the various differences in the Ojibway colour system. She explains how basic colour categories are not universal and how every language in the world has different numbers of colours. Some have four, or 11, but Ojibway has five. *Giggle.* We chuckle as we stumble trying out some of the words. She reminds us not to feel discouraged if someone says a different word than us because some words like "blue" can be described in a multitude of ways. "Zhaawshkwaa covers the spectrum from green to blue. And so we didn't need a separate word for blue because it was part of this range of the spectrum. I think that's an example of how social work allowed me to go back and say we don't have to look at this through the English lens, through the colonial lens. We can understand what happened to the language through the traumas that it has been exposed to, and not judge each other. Then all the different words for blue make sense. They're different, because people compared them to different things. The colour of a blueberry, the colour of the sky, that's the words they use, which is not hard to understand, once you stop trying to force the language to fit English. And the same happens with the calendar, and probably a lot of things I don't know yet." As Rochelle shares, again I notice something in the murals behind her. Some movement. What is that? I watch the colours shift and reorganize into a small burlap sack, which immediately falls out of the frame and spills out onto the floor.

'The tongues!' I shout. The children and parents look up at me, confused. *Smile.* I grin awkwardly, trying not to draw attention to the severed tongues gathered behind

them. As Rochelle speaks, I can see the sack shrinking, appearing less and less full. I hear someone squeak, 'Uh oh!' and look around the room. Not far from where the sack fell, Trickster jumps out from the canvas! Social work may have brought Rochelle closer to recovering language for her family, but it's also what caused it to disappear in the first place. This relationship with social work is *really* complicated—former generations taken into care being the impetus for her family to stop speaking in the first place. Trickster runs over to his beloved sack and takes a peek inside. *Rustle. Rustle. Gasp!* He sees that some of his tongues have escaped. 'Yikes!' he proclaims, and scurries around the room groaning, searching for his lost goods. *Whimper. Shuffle. Whimper.* Rochelle tells me that "being directly impacted by the harm that social workers have done is, a hard thing to shake. You go to social work school and, as much as you talk about theory, it's always in the back of your mind that you also do a lot of harm. Or the profession does a lot of harm. And I think that part of that, too, is why there's not this desire to claim that social worker identity, because it does put you in almost direct conflict with the community, cause you know, we're still dealing with the impacts of that," she pauses to think.

Rochelle has always worked on the periphery of social work. One reason for that is self-imposed, "I always really feel like, oh, I'm not really a *social worker,*" but the second has to do with social work's reluctance to embrace the work she is doing. Rochelle shared about her conflict with social work as it continues to do harm removing Indigenous children from their families and languages. For Rochelle it has also hoarded resources and shut out language revitalization work. "So when we started to think about having a family, one thing I wanted to be able to provide them was the language, and so I started to approach different organizations in the city about how that might be possible, and they all were very clear that it was not something that was on their radar, not something that they were going to be involved in," she shares. She moves over to a stack of learning tools she's made—translated children's books, charts of song lyrics, kids'

toys and a label maker—"So the message was you have to do it yourself—I was doing language learning already, but I sort of amped it up and now—so I speak to the kids in Ojibway and I'm doing a couple of groups around the city. And trying to find ways to use all the resources that I've developed and that kind of thing to benefit other people without the organizations, unfortunately," and that's exactly what she's doing.

Some may see being in Toronto as a disadvantage to language revitalization, but Rochelle reached out and made new relationships, hanging out with all the seniors at the Native Canadian Centre because "we have a lot of fluent speakers but everyone forgets that because they don't talk to them about it. Like, they're somebody else's family and I think that often in the city we feel like if we were back home it would be easier. But I don't think it would be. Even on reserve, learning language is hard." She reflects that there are actually some real benefits to language revitalization in this urban landscape, as "there's some things that being in a city really helps with. For instance, you can see language transmission modelled from all the different newcomer communities. Or see friends and neighbours whose parents only speak to them in their home language, and you see that the kids respond in English and the parents just have to keep doing it." Rochelle now has multiple language programs she has developed and runs using community or free spaces throughout the city, like the Birth Centre, or the Coxwell Branch of the Toronto Public Library. She also facilitates excursions like hikes, tobogganing, and trips to tourist attractions in the city, all in Anishinaabemowin, for more land-based and interactive learning. Though she would never say this herself, she is building something important in this city. Many of us are indebted to her for all the energy it has taken for her to do this work to support the next generation of Anishinaabe kids here in Toronto. The way she sees it, "I kind of feel like just this little, like I'm just like this little tiny rock and I'm just sitting in this little river, trying to change it a little tiny bit. Redirect it a tiny bit." *Yelp. Zoom.* As Rochelle is teaching, I see Trickster

buzzing around the room, fumbling with his sack. He rushes around to scoop the tongues back into the bag, but each time he opens it to put more in, a few more also escape.

The class finishes up, and the kids are shouting ‘Gigawabamin!’ as they leave. I help Rochelle to pack her supplies in a large rolling suitcase. I pick up a stuffed bear with a tag that says “mahkwa”, it simultaneously makes me smile and shed a small tear. As I pack the bear away Rochelle comes up to me and says, “All those families who feel like they're not doing enough, I think that I just want to remind them that what they are doing is of huge value.” *Cough.* I clear my throat and wipe my eye. Rochelle picks up her suitcase full of supplies. ‘So where to now, my friend?’ I ask her. “We've created a little break-off group that we do in immersion with the kids at First Nations School,” she shares. ‘Want to join us?’ Rochelle asks me. I’m actually heading that way. But I have to meet someone on my way over to the east end. ‘Maybe see you there later today,’ I respond with a smile. I wave as Rochelle and her family head east. *Breath.* I take a deep breath of fresh air, and head south to the lakeshore to meet with another… person I know.

Chapter Seven

Tom Grinnell: Trickster and the Shape Shifter

Shuffle. Shuffle. The sun is still high in the sky and the gulls are circling overhead. The waves crash into the dock and spill up over the old concrete walls. *Flop.* I sit and dangle my feet over the edge. *Splish. Sploosh. Splatter.* Tossing a few rocks into the oncoming surf. The calm of the space is beautiful, and somewhat unique to the city. It's a great place to come and clear your head. *Dirnt, Dirnt, Dirnt, Dirnt, Dirnt.* Huh? Pulled out of my moment of peace, I hear music growing louder behind me. I turn, ready to find our usual suspect. Instead, I see a pair of worn brown leather sandals, black cargo shorts, a Pittsburgh Penguins jersey, and a ponytail. 'Tom, you made it,' I shout, as he waves back, plucking one of the speakers out of his ear. You can be sure those ain't no pow wow tracks, probably some Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers he's jamming out to. 'Hey Nicole,' he replies and packs away his tunes. 'How's it going?' he says, plopping himself down beside me. 'It's been…interesting,' I say (to say the least!). *Chuckles.* 'Well we do live in interesting times,' he responds with a smirk peeking out through his scruff. I can't help but smile, too. Tom is a funny guy, and I don't even think he tries to be. He has a dry wit and politically savvy sense of humour, and is really well read and on top of what's going on in the world today. The kind of guy who can sit at a pub, turn to anyone who happens to be sitting next to him, and have a meaningful conversation about pretty much anything. He's really, well—he's Tom, and I'm not sure I know too many folks quite like him. Tom was visiting the OFIFC—that's the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres—where he used to work, *nod,* just there on Front street. So we made a plan to meet up here at the lakeshore en route to our more eastern landmarks in this journey. It's an area Tom knows well, having grown up in the Beach, a neighbourhood in East Toronto.

Tom's a mixed Anishnaabe man, a member of Fort William First Nation, where his mom is from. His dad, well, he describes his pops as *really* white, *hahaha,* and Tom, well, Tom is unapologetically Torontonian. Born and raised, he's an east end Beaches kid with a pretty long and interesting line of family connection to this place. His father's side has seen some 200 years of family buried in the same east end graveyard. His mother is from Northern Ontario, and is part of an earlier wave of Indigenous folks who migrated to the city, at just about the same time that these Indigenous social service agencies were coming into being. In fact, Tom remembers her hanging around the now aging E.D.'s, and going with her to drop clothing donations off at the Native Women's Resource Centre when it was first getting started. Now a registered social worker, Tom didn't have any real engagement with social workers or social work agencies growing up in the city, he shares that "I knew of them … but from the perspective as a middle class person. I had no need to engage with them. I didn't need any of the services they were providing." Though, interestingly, it was around these agencies that young Tom actually got to see other Indigenous peoples. *POOF!* I look over at Tom, but now he's just a little boy. Well kind of. He's the size of a small boy, with jeans, a T-shirt, and a little cap, but he looks like… a bunny? What?! I look around and see that we aren't at the lakeshore anymore, but standing outside of some kind of community centre. There's an Indigenous woman standing, holding his hand, talking to someone in the doorway, I guess that's his ma. I see little Tom on the steps looking around. There's a few folks huddled to the right of the stairs. I can tell they have been sleeping rough for some time, outside in the elements, with tattered blankets, old bags, and some broken bottles. I see Tom, quiet, glancing at them out of the corner of his eye. But someone walking towards the entrance catches both of our attention, a tall, dark-skinned figure wearing a fringe jacket and red bandana. He has clusters of feathers hanging from his long, braided hair, and an otter skin bag dangling from his side. From the opening in the bag, you can see that it holds a beautiful

carved wooden pipe. He walks past us on the steps, but before heading inside, he turns back to us. *Wink.* 'Trickster?' I ask, confused. And, in an instant, we are back sitting along the water's edge.

Tom tells me that seeing the Indigenous peoples visiting these social service agencies, and then looking at himself, he didn't quite seem to fit in. Tom carried those early experiences, and society's stereotypes of Indigenous people throughout his young life, "I think people need to realize that there are not just two types of Native people. There aren't just the Hollywood Indians, the ones you see on TV…and then the drunks. Okay? People see quite a dichotomous view of Indigenous people right now." These experiences, coupled with growing up in the city where "in Toronto, I think as an Indigenous person it's such a big city I think you can just blend in with everybody else." Tom is proud of his identity as an Anishinaabe person, but expresses feeling that it can be difficult to find in an urban city like Toronto. He has long been on a journey to figure out what it means to always be "walking in both worlds, you know, with my Native mom and my very white father." But Tom *did* develop a very strong sense of justice, realizing early on that the political systems we live within don't seem to be supporting all folks equally. He thought about maybe becoming a police officer, or a lawyer, so he enrolled in political science at the University of Toronto. Tom admits, "I didn't quite understand university when I went into it…I was probably the first person in my immediate family to go to university, so I didn't quite get what it was all about. It was just something that you do to get a job." He jokes that his dad would repeatedly ask him, "'When do you get your ticket?' like it's a trade ticket." *Chuckles.* But Tom had a friend who was taking social work down the road at Ryerson University, and after graduating from U of T, he decided to pursue another degree in Social Work. For Tom, social work encompasses three important areas that speak to him as a person: "It encompasses the idea of being able to help people directly- that frontline aspect, which I enjoy. There's the policy piece, and

the political piece that social work is very involved in. I love that activist piece. As well as that advocacy piece, getting to know policies and law, and I think social work should encompass that. So, when I put those three things together, I thought, you know what, this is a program I really want to do."

Tom enrolled in the BSW program at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, a university entrenched in a Northern Indigenous focus in a city familiar to Tom, where his extended family live, close to his reserve community. As it was an experience that was so rich for him, Tom stayed and completed his MSW there, as well. At Lakehead University, Tom joined the Native Student Association, even serving as its president. "I ended up running two pow wows at Lakehead University. I had never run a pow wow before, I was just kind of thrust into this role, and put on posters. Immediately thrust into this role, it was a little too fast at times. But it wasn't the social work aspect of that, it was more the Native students and Native people who were propelling me forward through that, so that made me feel good." In the social work program itself he shares, "I also had the opportunity to work directly with Aboriginal communities as a social worker doing my Masters. And doing research and working with an Indigenous researcher, and a fantastic professor who was not Indigenous, but cared about Indigenous issues." Tom told me this story, where one time, while helping with this research project, "I was interviewing an Elder in a community way up north, and her and the translator were talking in Anishinaabe, and I didn't really get much, or any of it for that matter- one word I got. But I remember I heard the translator say, 'He's from Fort William First Nation,' and the old lady looks at me and says, 'Oh, they aren't making them as dark as they used to'". *Hahaha!* Tom says breaking out laughing, after doing his best old Anishinaabe granny impression. I could see that this experience was significant for Tom. "Those are the stories, those are some of the characters who would be there, that don't see you as Indigenous and then validate you with comments like that." When I ask Tom about his

relationship with social work as an Indigenous person, he says, “I think when I did my social work degree, I really became engaged in my Indigenous identity more. More assertive about it”. So Tom brought that newfound confidence back home to Toronto.

Back in the city, Tom, “started to volunteer at the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto for the Community Council Program. Moving to Toronto, I started to get involved in the board level, the community level, on the board of directors at two Indigenous agencies here in Toronto, The Native Canadian Centre, and Native Child and Family Services, while I worked in a non-Indigenous field.” Drawing on his love of politics and advocacy, Tom took a job working at his local MP office in the east end. “Ya, it was such a wide range of work from dealing with issues around poverty and income security and helping people get their pension stuff together, and their paperwork for child tax benefits together, a huge number of immigration cases,” he shares. “I did help some people with status cards and some INAC stuff came up sometimes, but not that many though. I don’t think that many First Nations people go to an MP office, or would even know to go to an MP office to get support with things,” he says with a shrug. “But from a policy perspective, working with an NDP member of parliament, you are aware of the political happenings around Indigenous issues. And I felt like I did have things to say about political issues as an Indigenous social worker within the party.” *POOF!* Once again, we are no longer at the lake’s edge. I’m standing in what appears to be a constituency office. I can see Tom and his coworkers, standing around a water cooler, talking and waving their arms about. As Tom talks, I can see him transform again, only this time into a Bear! A huge furry frame, with long teeth that glisten as he laughs with his colleagues. Only no one seems to notice? “Working in the member’s of parliament office, people who I know socially or politically would say, ‘Oh well, Tom, Tom’s the Native guy. He would probably know that.’ Or they would bring me a picture of a Native person, or something they saw in the media about Native people, and they would want to

talk about it." Tom *really* stands out amongst the people in this office, a sea of non-Indigenous bodies. Though one of the people he's talking to looks so familiar. *Hmmmm.* Where had I seen him before? *Swoosh.* The group walks past me, breaking my concentration. "It was a very activist oriented party and the MP encouraged participation in the community. So whether it was taking him to events put on by Indigenous agencies, or whether it was me participating in boards in Toronto and needing time off work to go do that," Tom shares. *Zoink.* And just like that, we're back at the water. "I think my experience working for non-Indigenous peoples was much better then working for Indigenous people. They were more supportive of the politics and everything behind it," Tom says to me tossing a stone into the water. And so I turn to him and ask, 'Then why go to the OFIFC?'

POOF! In an instant, I'm standing in a beautiful brownstone building. Looking out the window, I can see the shore where we were sitting. *Whiz. Whirl.* My head is spinning from all this…whatever it is. I can see Tom sitting in a cubicle, typing away. "My interest has really always been in urban Indigenous issues, and identity issues. And I guess that's why I went to the OFIFC. Because I thought that would be a place where I would be able to use my social work skills to talk about identity to help organize community, and do all these great things that I had these ideas about. The job description seemed to support that, at the time. And it wasn't just in Toronto, but it was all over Ontario for that job," he says to me. Hanging on the wall of his cubicle is a little paper sign that reads *Urban Aboriginal Community Activator*. "And the idea of a community activator sounded like a very activist, grassroots, community organizer position within the Indigenous community. And I thought that was exciting, because identity issues and my own identity has always been a huge subject that I have been interested in," he shares. As he continues typing, I look around the office. I wander through the maze of cubicles. This place is absolutely brimming with Indigenous folks, people from communities all

across the continent. And yet even amongst all the Indigenous employees scattered through the building, Tom still stands out. Sitting under that little paper sign, Tom begins to change, to shift. I look closely and see that Tom greatly resembles a… a coyote?! *Clack. Clatter. Clink.* He sways his lustrous tail as he clicks away at the keyboard with his claws. Wild! Tom was assigned to work on the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin Program, a "campaign to end violence against Indigenous women, to end men's violence against Indigenous women." It needed an update, and so he was asked to help redesign the program. Tom travelled to communities across Ontario to discuss violence against Indigenous women and the role Indigenous men can play in ending this violence. Working with friendship centre staff about the various approaches they could use to do this work tailored to their own communities. "So that was an interesting process" *hehehe,* Tom shares with a chuckle. 'How so?' I ask. "Ya, well, we talk about ceremony and stuff, but when we talk about ceremony, it doesn't get down to the core issues it allows for things to, like specifically in *this* work, like sexist behavior. Simple things you wouldn't think would be a problem, like catcalling, men dominating ceremonial spaces, and holding onto that very tightly." *Squeak.* Tom spins around in his work chair, revealing his long furry snout. "Things that are very rigid in Indigenous communities are difficult to challenge. In ceremony, if the person who holds the knowledge is not of the same progressive thinking, if we see ceremony as infallible, something that can't be questioned—and anyone who knows me knows that I question everything." Tom gets quiet for a moment. *Pink. Pink.* His pointy ears perk up as Tom peeks up and out from his cubicle and glances around. He doesn't seem to see anyone. He looks back at me and continues, "I did come up against a lot of barriers doing that, because I am working with people who come from more traditional perspectives than I am. And for me to be challenging what is seen to be traditional could be very difficult and stressful for people. And you could see the reactions of people when that happens. But I think social work

provided me a way to be doing that, that I think was good." *Boink!* As Tom shares, I can see someone pop up behind him. Someone else, across the room, peeking up from one of the other cubicles. They look so familiar. I squint to get a better look. *Swish.* They shoot back down behind a fuzzy grey wall. "Just having both knowledge systems with me, the western theoretical perspectives and integrating ceremony and traditional stuff, you see both," he says, moving to close the laptop on his desk. "But it was challenging, and I don't think if I didn't come from a social work background, from an advocacy background, that I would have been able to do it as well." *Click*. Just like that, we are back at the water.

Sitting along the water's edge, I can tell Tom still had a lot on his mind. I mean, he just stopped in for a visit at this former workplace. I glance over at him as he fixes a button on the side of his shorts, no more furry claws to fumble with. "I felt very isolated as a social worker in the OFIFC, I don't feel like it- there at the Indigenous agency, didn't feel like it wanted to be a part of social work necessarily but at the same time they wanted the accreditation to be a part of social work. But they didn't want to take any of the stuff that went along with it," he shares. I guess that's part of why he's working in a mainstream social work agency now. I ask him, 'So how's it going now at your new workplace?' *POOF.* Should have seen that one coming. *Burp.* I purse my lips to quench the nausea. I'm sitting on a chair in what appears to be a pretty typical staff lunch room. Tom's leaning on a counter, heating up something in the microwave. He shoots me a look, nodding towards the other employees huddled around a table in the corner. "Well, I'm a lot more watchful of other social workers. Especially if they are working at all with Indigenous clients," he whispers. *Ding!* He pops his lunch out of the microwave and comes over to where I am seated. As he walks towards me, I can see it happening again. Long black feathers begin to appear along Tom's lower arms, and smaller ones cluster up around his neck and face. "You know I am not necessarily the most, you're not going to

catch me—I mean I will do a smudge if I have to, but I'm not the guy who is going to push culture. I'm a much more humanistic person. I strongly believe that in social work the most important thing is relationship, not necessarily culture, but your ability to create a relationship. So I think I am able to do that with Indigenous clients, but I am also very protective of Indigenous clients when I see non-Indigenous people working with them... Because I think that there is a long history there of things being done in a bad way, and I want to make sure things are happening in a good way moving forward," he says, taking a seat next to me. I watch him manoeuvre his fork towards, well, towards a beak. Tom has completely transformed, only this time into a raven! Sitting there eating our lunch, we can hear the murmurings of other employees. Tom shared how this one time, "in the lunch room I overheard discussions about 'people just needed to get over residential school because they didn't go themselves, and it wasn't your experience.' And for me, I didn't go to residential school, I wasn't in the Sixties Scoop, I wasn't in foster care, I grew up in a good life, but it doesn't necessarily matter," he shared, feathers ruffled. "Regardless of what's happened to you directly, you still, you still feel it through your family members who maybe have been through that situation. So in that situation I spoke up and said 'well maybe you shouldn't be working with Indigenous clients if that's what you think'". He may be a raven, but in that moment, he looks proud as a peacock! He settles himself in his seat and continues, "and I'm not obviously Indigenous to look at sometimes, so I think the person was quite taken aback. But in that environment with a lot of non-Indigenous people I felt comfortable doing that." He wipes his dark black feathers with a napkin. Someone from the table gets up and walks past us. I stare as they move towards the trash bin. It's them again—that familiar face! 'Hey you', I shout, reaching out towards them. *Bam.* I get a grasp around their arm. They turn towards me. *Wink.*

Splash! We are back at the concrete shoreline, only I'm standing, balancing on one foot, with one arm outstretched over the lake. Tom is sitting, drenched from the unexpected wave. I just know that was Trickster! I must have yanked him back here with us. *Gurgle. Gurgle.* I look down to see the water rippling out from a centre where bubbles are popping up through the surface. Now he's somewhere down there. *Argh.* Annoyed, I glare at the water, waiting for him to emerge. *Sigh.* I see Tom a bit exasperated, wringing out his shirt. Seeing him all soggy, I wonder about this *transformative* relationship he has with social work. "Knowing that I have had a privileged Indigenous identity, in some ways. I've grown up middle class. I am not what you think of when you think of a Native person, I don't think," he shares with me. "I think I have always had the opportunity through my social work profession to grow my Indigenous identity," he continues. "That allowed me to really join the Toronto community, which I never really felt a part of. I really think Toronto's Native community is really just, it's almost just a collection of service providers. Its not like we have an area in the city where we all live. So really it comes down to where people seek services, so I think it did provide me with those connections." In a way, social work gave Tom a purpose to be at these social service agencies, these clusters of Indigenous community. *Drip. Drip.* I look up to find Trickster standing over me, his hands planted firmly on his hips. Soaking wet, he leans in dramatically, with one eyebrow raised. 'It's you!' I hear Tom shout, pointing at Trickster. *Smirk.* Trickster straightens up, crosses his arms, and winks. *Gasp.* Tom stares, and I see one long bunny ear begin to emerge from his head. 'What's with the shape shifting?' I call out to Tom. "I think I would be a bit of a shape shifter in that I can fit in pretty well places wherever I go," he says to me. I see Trickster run his hand over his head, revealing clusters of feathers hanging from long dark braids. It is him, from outside the community centre, I think to myself. 'Though,' continues Tom, "I think I always felt somewhat isolated as an Indigenous social worker in Toronto… I don't think I felt a place where

that's accepted yet as an Indigenous professional. I don't feel there's a place for us." Though social work may have given Tom a purpose to engage with Indigenous community in Toronto, belonging for Tom as an Indigenous person and a western trained social worker continues to be a challenging reality. 'Is there anywhere you feel you belong?' I ask, and as quickly as he hears my words, Tom transforms his long arms into wings. I grab onto them as we fly into the sky. 'An eagle's eye view for my eagle clan friend,' he says through a smirk. From way up here I can see all the landmarks in Tom's story, from the OFIFC, to his time volunteering with Native Child, Aboriginal Legal Services, and the Native Canadian Centre. Gosh, we are high, and just like that, Tom d

r

o

p

s

towards the water. As we come screeching downwards, Tom calls out "…well, I feel a connection to the lake, I feel a connection with the ravines that Toronto is built on, and the Scarborough bluffs, I do. I'm always seeking—here's where the cheesy stuff comes, but I am always seeking a connection with nature—You know it's because I'm Native!" *Chuckles.* He straightens out and with a focused eye he shoots across the water, slanting his wing into the lake and blasting a wave up onto the dock. *Slosh!* 'Heeeeeey!' I hear someone call out. I look back and see Trickster, soaked and unimpressed. We head east to Tom's neighbourhood in the Beaches. As we pass through, Tom points out spots like Native Child's east end location, "even just driving by you feel a sense of camaraderie with it and you always look for somebody you may know out front," he says with a smile. *Swoosh.* We circle the area. It's been a great ride, but from up here I can see my

next stop. I ask Tom if he wouldn't mind dropping me off at First Nations School, just around Jones and the Danforth.

Chapter Eight

Situating Stories: A Literature Review

Stories have always been at the heart of all our Native cultures… Our stories open our eyes and hearts to a world of animals and plants, of earth and water and sky. They take us under the skin and into the heartbeat of Creation. They remind us of the true meaning of all that lives. Our stories remember when people forget (Bruchac, 2003 p. 35).

Squish. Squish. 'Oh Trickster, there you are. Umm, you want a—?' I say, extending a towel. *Whoosh.* He snatches it from my hand. 'Humph!' he grumbles, taking a seat on a nearby apostrophe, clearly not very pleased. Awkward. As I come to this juncture, the infamous literature review, I'm feeling equally uncomfortable, wondering how a literature review can work with the focus on relationality in Indigenous research? Wilson cautions undertaking a mainstream literature review that would simply criticize previous studies and pull relations apart, but he finds that "[b]y telling what others have done in the area being studied, a literature review in the dominant tradition is their way of putting a study into its context" (2008, p. 44). I suppose building on the work of others and drawing the relationship between previous works and your own can satisfy both the Indigenous and dominant society readers one may be writing for. As such, "…a literature review can be seen as the culturally relevant way to communicate with dominant system academics" (Wilson, 2008, p. 44). For these reasons, this literature review is an attempt to draw on the relations between previous efforts and my own knowledge gathering process. It is an attempt to fulfill the mainstream research requirements in a way that begins to be harmonious with an Indigenous methodology, by viewing this literature review as a way to form the academic context or relationship with this greater knowledge gathering venture.

Additionally, this literature review is used as an expression of the social work *grand narrative*, as borrowed from Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Particularly in terms of the professional/educational discourse on race, culture, and Indigeneity, but also in

terms of what research approaches are traditionally legitimized. These books and articles are taken from various course syllabi from my social work education, and core academic social work journals, as well as Indigenous-centered courses I have helped deliver in schools of social work here in Toronto. It is this grand narrative, as depicted through the following literature review, that the participants in this research process continually encounter and negotiate with in their experience as Indigenous social workers. 'How long is this going to take?' Trickster whines. 'Well, it will give you a chance to dry off!" I respond.

Race in Social Work Education

Despite the longstanding relationship between social work and Indigenous peoples, Donna Jeffery explains that, "[t]he incorporation of issues of race and racial inequality has only been required of accredited Canadian social work schools in recent years" (Jeffery, 2007, p. 429). 'But why would Indigenous people be included in articles about race?' Trickster asks, poking out from his towel cocoon. *Chuckle.* 'Good question, my friend. Let's look at how that happened,' I say excitedly, trying to pull Trickster out of his moping. A study on social work in Canada entitled *In Critical Demand: Social Work in Canada,* found that a curriculum is required that focuses largely on cultural aspects of Aboriginal peoples and immigrant groups, to become "skill areas" that social workers can address (Jeffery, 2007, p. 431). Following recommendations of a meeting of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW) in 1987, the Task Force on Multicultural and Multiracial Issues in Social Work Education (1991) found that, "…without exception, 'Canadian Schools of Social Work are not adequately preparing today's students to work with people who differ from themselves in terms of ethnic, cultural, or racial backgrounds'" (Jeffery, 2002, p. 27). 'Multiculturalism, aye?' Trickster says, nodding, 'Should have known.' *Sigh.*

Since the publication of the report, schools of social work have scrambled to include content regarding diverse ethnic, cultural, and racial populations, with varying degrees of success. In June of 1999 at the Annual General Meetings of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW), changes were proposed to the accreditation standards "to clarify and substantiate the inclusion of materials and practices which address race and ethnicity" (Jeffery, 2002, p. 28). Consequently, schools are undergoing curriculum review, revisiting their student admissions practices, and actively responding to this perceived gap in knowledge. Jeffery's article lays the groundwork for this literature review, as the debates and decisions at the level of professional governing bodies "sets the stage for the 'speakability' of race in social work education" (Jeffery, 2007, p. 431).

As Park states in her discourse analysis on the concept of culture in social work education, "all of the reviewed articles employ the labels 'minority,' 'people of colour,' and 'ethnic' as synonyms for the 'culturally different' and the 'culturally diverse'" (2005, p. 21). Likewise, the articles reviewed here employ the abovementioned terms, along with other concepts such as "racialized," "culture," "Black," "Indigenous," "Native," "Aboriginal," "diversity," "non-dominant," "dominant," "white," and "whiteness" in a manner that attempts to discuss the significance of Indigenous peoples in social work practice, theory, education, and research.

Cultural Competency

As noted by Jeffery, the development of professional accreditation standards has led to "…race [being] conceptualized as a curricular addition to a pedagogy that remains skill- or competency-based" (Jeffery, 2007, p. 429). Following suit, early responses to the call for race-based content in social work education focused largely on breaking down a particular race or culture into comprehendible units to be ingested by social work

students. The presumption, which continues to be seen in the social work literature here, namely Robinson (1989); Gutierrez (1990); Mokuau (1995); Williams (1996); Weaver (1997); Rogers (2007); Organista (2009); Chau (2009); and Nybell (2004); is that to know the history and makeup of the culture of a population is to be able to efficiently engage in a social work relationship with an individual belonging to that particular population. These studies read like handbooks for culturally appropriate social work with Black people, women of Color, Native Hawaiian peoples, Indigenous peoples, Mexican-Americans, Latino populations, Chinese people, and finally, on how to build a culturally competent organizational structure. 'What, no Tricksters!?' our friend shouts sarcastically. These studies view cross-cultural social work interventions as a problem fraught with misunderstanding. They also view barriers to services experienced by racially diverse clients as a problem. Concerned with managing these populations, the solutions to these "problems" focus on social workers "knowing" their racialized clients, and thus being able to identify their barriers to service. These studies review the histories of colonization and oppression only so far as, "knowledge of history provides clues for culturally appropriate intervention" (Mokuau, 1995, p. 470). They focus on the "…traditions, beliefs, and behavioural norms of the community being served" (Williams, 1996, p. 147) as skills relevant for social work with each population. Some of these studies even go as far as to situate the "problem" directly *in* the race and culture of the "client".

These articles seem to use a liberal positivist theoretical approach, which conceives of race, ethnicity, or culture as knowable, objective reality, from which social work interventions can be based. 'That's a mouthful,' says Trickster, rolling his eyes. 'Okay, let's break it down a bit more, then,' I say to him. Borrowing from Jeffery, the "...'good' social worker, that is, the white liberal subject, has the presumed capacity and potential to be chameleon-like: to know, see, and adapt as is necessary to maintain

dominance in the situation" (Jeffery, 2005, p. 411). Like the modern liberal subject, the social worker is distinguished for being abstract and universal. In one's unmarked impartiality lies one's ability to use reason to mediate social differences and tensions. Seen as the ideal for social sciences like social work, this line of reasoning is embedded in the positivist paradigm, which holds that the world is objectively given and that, through utilizing scientific methods, a person can be bias-free, and one true set of events or facts can be discovered (Kirby, 2006, p. 2-3). Traditionally, this paradigm sanctioned hierarchical power relations and a separation of the researcher from the researched as necessary to undertake true object work (Kirby, 2006, p. 30). Likewise, in this context the social worker is "unconnected to a bloodline or community... [and] divorced from the contingencies of historicity" (Jeffery, 2007, p. 436). The social worker is, thus, not only separate and different from the raced or cultured clients they work with, but has embedded within them the ability of free rational thought to mediate and intervene in the lives of those who do not share the same subjectivity (Jeffery, 2007, p. 436). These articles, and contemporary schools of social work, share a striking relationship with this line of reasoning. They want to produce a masterfully knowing, self aware and competent social worker "...established as the monitor, arbiter, and tool of intervention into regulating the boundaries between that which was normal/respectable and deviant/degenerate...[and] to negotiate crisis management of racialized populations, in particular'" (Jeffery, 2007, p. 436). This is particularly problematic for Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations, as their colonial relationship with the state is completely ignored and obscured, and Indigenous peoples are situated as a mere racial group in the collection of multicultural others in North American society, completely obscuring social work as a system of settler colonialism. 'Trickery if I ever saw it!' Trickster shouts.

Indigenous Social Work Programs

The 1980s and 1990s saw a development of Indigenous specific social work programs across Canada. In 1983, the *Parliamentary Committee on Indian Self-Government* recommended sweeping changes to how the government of Canada should meet its obligations to Indigenous peoples. The committee's report, and commentary prepared by the Assembly of First Nations, called for the reorganization of human services to bring them under the authority of Indigenous communities (Castellano, Stalwick, & Wien, 1986, p.166). Four studies document the process as it occurred in Winnipeg through the University of Manitoba School of Social Work (McKenzie and Mitchinson, 1989), in Nova Scotia through The Maritime School of Social Work at Dalhousie University (O'Brien and Pace, 1990), a Canada wide review of 12 such Indigenous specific social work programs developed across seven provinces and one territory (Castellano, et a1., 1986, p. 986), and an examination of the philosophies and models of Indigenous social work education in Canada more broadly (Brown, 1992). All programs reviewed fall along a continuum of Indigenous specific social work programing, from affirmative action with additional Indigenous course content, to completely separate programs built through partnerships with local Indigenous communities. Though, as shared by Brown, "[d]evelopments of these models generally take one of two directions: distinctive or integrative" (Brown, 1992, 48).

These studies discuss the shared goal of graduating more Indigenous social workers to work in their community whether it be on reserve or with inner-city Indigenous populations. All four also discussed a variety of challenges facing these programs, from issues with content, where "schools become committed to delivering cross-cultural education before anyone is quite sure what this entails" (Castellano, et al., 1986, p. 181), to "the need to acknowledge the inadequacy of current theory and teaching

resources to appropriately educate Native social workers" (O'Brien and Pace, 1990, p. 11) in the Maritimes, and, in Winnipeg, the ways that "parallel programs that are not critically assessed with regard to standards may have an adverse effect on the quality of services provided by their graduates, and can exacerbate community perceptions of the inferiority of alternate programs" (McKenzie and Mitchinson,1989, p. 114). Then there is the challenge of shifting of the locus of control. Where McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) reviewed an affirmative action program bringing Indigenous students into a mainstream program with alternative supports and content, they noted that the program, which touted greater partnerships with Indigenous community, struggled with that mission: "at the administrative level the challenge has been in sharing control, direction and participation with others who do not normally find themselves at educational planning tables" (O'Brien and Pace, 1990, p. 11). They state that the "failure of educators to collaborate with the Native community in reorienting social work education will fuel a desire for separate development…" (Castellano, 1986, p. 182).

'That doesn't sound half bad though, aye?' Trickster says, now fully abandoning his towel to participate in the conversation. Well, though the articles were about the supposed shifting of control of Indigenous social services, they had an eerily similar tone to the cultural competency social work literature discussed previously, with generalizing statements like "many Native students have difficulty discussing family and personal problems outside their family network because the resolution of problems within the family is a strong cultural tradition" (McKenzie and Mitchinson,1989, p.119), and "in most Native cultures, it has traditionally been considered impolite to make a direct request, give direct instructions, or disagree openly" (Castellano, et al., 1986, p. 172). Similarly, Brown shares that "[n]ot all students are moving toward becoming more multiculturally aware; some [A]borignal students may be moving toward concentration on First Nations peoples and issues…The direction for growth is opposite for many non-

[A]boriginal students" (Brown, 1992, p. 49). These statements feed into stereotypical notions of Indigenous peoples being static and unchanging, as opposed to acknowledging and embracing the reality that Indigenous peoples are complex, live increasingly in urban centres, and experience great diversity within our communities. This is directly confirmed by a qualitative survey conducted during the same period, exploring the experiences of Indigenous students in social work education (Weaver, 2000). Though focusing on Native American students in US schools, this study makes the case that, "[w]hile much attention has been paid to cultural competence in assisting clients, little has been directed to evaluating the degree to which social work education respects the cultural norms and values of students …" (Weaver, 2000, p. 415). 'Hmmm, that does sound familiar,' Trickster says, scratching his chin. Yup, only now it is faculty and administrators that are asked to examine their personal biases (Weaver, 2000, p. 425). These "cross cultural" challenges of social work are now applied to educators, where "[o]vercompensation for [A]boriginal students…unintended racism…discomfort with personal awareness of [A]boriginal issues are just a few of the reactions that a non-[A]boriginal teacher may experience" (Brown, 1992, p. 53). In fact, these studies simply discussed a new way to deploy classic social work practice models onto Indigenous communities:

> It is our perception that the opportunity afforded social work educators to develop social work degree programs for Native students was accompanied by the opportunity to test in practice long held beliefs in the power and utility of social development concepts. Concepts such as community control, participation, empowerment, shared ownership, cultural appropriateness and sensitivity have prominent presence in the literature and belief systems of social work and provide

> a ready source of insights for educational innovations of this type. (O'Brien and Pace, 1990, p.114)

Echoing the same old tropes for self-reflective practice in place of the necessary overhaul of an oppressive profession, Weaver argues "… a safe climate needs to be created for faculty to go through this process of self-examination, and they should be encouraged to participate in continuing education and faculty development opportunities to enhance their cultural competence and reduce biases" (2000, p. 425).

Though the object to be competent in has shifted from the Indigenous social work client, to the Indigenous social work student, a meaningful and critical discussion on the need for dismantling or restructuring social work or social work education has not been employed. As well, the need for Indigenous content and responsibility for its creation continues to be placed only on Indigenous people, making an assumption that efforts towards any potential anti-colonial future are the work of Indigenous social work students and communities alone.

Critiques of Cultural Competency

The continuous flood of work on cultural competency has ignited an equal level of resistance from within the discipline of social work. Critiques range from post-positivist studies that applaud the efforts of cultural competency but highlight epistemological tensions of essentializing and privileging group identity over individual self-determination (Johnson, 2009), to postmodern critiques of an objective reality and the ability to know a fluid entity such as race or culture (Dean, 2001; Wong, 2003), to others that point to structural influences in naturalizing concepts like race and culture for the continual subordination and domination of particular groups in society (Nelson, 2007; Park, 2005; Dossa, 2005). These studies employed a variety of methods, such as theoretical papers (Johnson, 2009), the examination of case studies (Dean, 2001),

interviews with social work practitioners (Wong, 2003), service-user focus groups (Nelson, 2007), critical discourse analysis (Park, 2005), and narrative (Dossa, 2005).

In all, these studies challenge the ways in which race is taken up by cultural competency theorists, and advocate for an understanding of culture that is "…individually and socially constructed, evolving, emergent, and occurring in language … [and] continually changing…" (Dean, 2001, p. 623). As Nelson states, there is a re-positioning of the source of the problem, from the raced client, to the false consciousness of the "culturally competent" social worker, where "…the dominant materials and its embedded knowledge, rather than minoritized people's Otherness and difference, were centrally positioned and examined as the source of 'the problem'" (Nelson, 2007, p. 24). As such, the current discourse on cultural competency and complementary power relations are to be deconstructed (Park, 2005), and instead a repositioning of the expert position from "clinician" to "client" is to take place, under the practice principle of a "lack of competence" (Dean, 2001, p. 624) or that of "attending with curiosity and naiveté…" (Wong, 2003, p. 162). As Dossa explains, "[i]f we start 'with each individual woman's situation as it is at the time she tells her story, we may see the whole web more plainly than we do when we read 'objective' summaries of experiences that have been presented by academic researchers'…" (Dossa, 2005, p. 2534). 'Okay, well maybe now we are getting somewhere?' Trickster says with a pleading smile.

This repositioning is expressly advantageous in putting individual accounts of Indigenous social workers forward as a legitimate source for knowledge building. However, in the context of these studies, there continues to be tension with who these raced or cultured experts are constructed to be: namely, clients of social work interventions. These studies make an important challenge to essentialism and a critique of the nature of knowledge and objective reality. However, not unlike their culturally competent counterparts, race and culture are inscribed as a relational demarcator with the

social worker not-knowing of culture and the client embodying cultural knowledge. Under these arguments, Indigeneity continues to be theorized as external to the body of a social worker, a reality that is contested by the presence of Indigenous social workers. 'Okay, never mind', Trickster shrugs.

Whiteness

The following four studies are from various courses taken during my MSW education. Utilizing various methods such as a theoretical piece (Yee, 2003); interviews with social work educators (Jeffery, 2005); a phenomenological study (Ahmed 2007); and personal narratives (Alexander, 2004; Wise, 2005), these articles were brought into class under the perception that to understand whiteness was to be a better social worker. "Whiteness" can be described as "…an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space, and what they 'can do'" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 149). It is a "location of structural advantage, of race privilege… a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society…[and] a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed" (Yee, 2003, p. 103). Even though Ahmed (2007) cautions that to respond to accounts of institutional whiteness by asking "What can white people do?" is to relieve the White subject from being implicated in the critique, the content of these studies re-affirmed the premise by which these articles were introduced to my classes, "to guide students in a self-reflexive process…to work with the racial and cultural other more effectively" (Jeffery, 2005, p. 411). These articles on whiteness ask "the (white) social worker…to know herself, be more conscious of her biases and her privileges" (Jeffery, 2005, p. 417), to engage in "self- reflexivity as a personal engagement [that] 'unmasks complex political/ideological agenda hidden in our writing,' in our performing, and in our public utterances" (Alexander, 2004, p. 665), resist white dominance by "acknowledging the pervasiveness of Whiteness as a part of

Canadian consciousness and national identity" (Yee, 2003, p. 113), and to understand how "[b]eing a member of the majority, the dominant group, allows one to ignore how race shapes one's life" (Wise, 2005, p. 2). *Whirl.* 'I feel dizzy just thinking about it,' Trickster says, lowering himself back onto some punctuation.

These exercises of critical self-reflection are becoming increasingly popular in social work education, as a response to multiculturalism and to situate the "problem" of social work encounters in the bodies of social workers, as opposed to their racialized clients. However, asking social workers to examine their privilege is "mak[ing] a pedagogic assumption that to know oneself better is to work with the racial and cultural other more effectively" (Jeffery, 2005, p. 411). It also fails to challenge the notion that raced and cultured bodies are of the client population and not the social worker population. These reflections on whiteness instead act to re-inscribe the understanding of social workers as white, dominant society members. Jeffery draws attention to this issue when she states that "…a study such as this, which is premised on the idea of a white liberal subject of social work, must ask the inverse question: which subjects disrupt the dominant discourse of the university-based social work school simply by their presence? Who is presumed to be the subject at the center of the management of difference discourse?" (Jeffery, 2005, p. 419). Though she alludes to the differing experiences of social workers "of colour", she finds "…a full discussion of their experiences is beyond the scope of this paper…" (Jeffery, 2005, p. 420). This definitely provides a context for which my knowledge-gathering project can be situated amongst the gaps of previous studies.

Historical Accounts of Race and Social Work

Another common manifestation of race in social work education, is in historical accounts of how the profession has engaged with racialized "others". Following the

discussion on whiteness, these studies provide a context to understanding the white European base of the social work profession in North America. These articles employ a variety of methods from theoretical works (Jeffery, 2002; Hall, 1997), archival research (Reisch, 2008), and historical discourse analysis (Sakamoto, 2003; Castagna, 2000; Park, 2006; Ong, 1995; Stoler, 2000). These articles trace the evolution of race discourse, from "the enlightenment, which ranked societies along an evolutionary scale from 'barbarism' to 'civilization'" (Hall, 1997, p. 239), to the colonial era where "race, at the time, was a powerful and useful concept for sorting out human variation observed by European explorers, conquerors, and colonizers" (Castagna, 2000, p. 22), to the emergence of "scientific" racism when "the eugenics movement found its way into the United States in the 1900s, and believed that a number of foreigners had 'hereditary mental defects'" (Sakamoto, 20003, p. 251), to the impact this history has had on the development of the white/European social work profession and its focus on those attributed with "moral deficiencies or cultural backwardness" (Reisch, 2008, p. 790), and the reproduction of the colonial project, of "Canadianizing" new immigrants and oppressing First Nations communities (Jeffery, 2002, p. 35). 'Yuck!' says Trickster.

Interestingly, four of the historical articles expressly take up a Foucauldian theoretical perspective (Park, 2006; Stoler, 2000; Ong, 1995; Jeffery, 2002), and two others appear greatly influenced by postmodern tenets (Sakamoto, 2003; Hall, 1997). These articles focus on the emergence of biopower in the regulation of racialized populations (Jeffery, 2002; Park, 2006; Ong, 1995), as well as the inverse effect of the discursively produced good, White, civilized self or social worker, in relation to the immoral, racialized, barbaric 'Other' (Stoler, 2000; Sakamoto, 2003; Hall, 1997; Jeffery, 2002; Ong, 1995). With the exception of Reisch (2008), who includes meaningful content on the agency and social work efforts of marginalized populations, these articles take up racialized peoples as objects acted upon by social work professionals. The postmodern

framework of these articles also positions social workers as "both agents and objects of biomedical regulation" (Ong, 1995, p. 1254). Like the studies on whiteness, these studies call for reflective exercises where "social work as a field must re-examine the discourses and structure underlying the construction of the foreign" (Sakamoto, 2003, p. 268), and "mak[e]… visible the discursive practices of the past…to uncover the margins and the limits of the discourses that construct our troubled times" (Park, 2006, p. 169). These reflective exercises are a way for social workers and social work students implicated in this critique to avoid paralysis and move forward with their work. The reflective exercise held by both the articles on whiteness and the historical studies can be interpreted as a race to innocence (Fellows & Razack,1998). Reflective practice is a strategy provided for social workers to re-enable themselves to work with racialized clients with a better understanding of the history of race relations. Likewise, Castagna notes that, "an analysis of the race concept in various historical and political contexts is not to be viewed as an end in itself" (2000, p. 36). These studies provide detailed accounts of the formation of the social work profession as a white European endeavour, which is enacted upon racialized populations. This is significant for my study concerned with people who do not fulfill this historically constituted norm, namely, the Indigenous social worker.

Anti-Oppressive Practice

As race discourse in social work education can be found reformed into discussions of history and whiteness, there is also a renewed crisis of race, as its discussion disappears from social work education in exchange for the concept of Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP). In a study based on semi-structured interviews of social work educators and archival research of the CASSW, Jeffery (2007) explains how the "Educational Policy Committee was opposed to the shopping list… of 'isms'" (p. 444), and did not feel they could privilege race, so there was a shift in preference for

oppression-focused language over that of anti-racism. This same shift can be seen in much of the social work educational literature, as there is a "redefining anti-racism as something less threatening, for example, anti-discrimination or anti-oppressive practice" (Heron, 2004, p. 290); where instead, "'differences' are now spoken everywhere in the academy" (Crosby, 1992, p. 131); there are "texts on research in social work…in which 'race' is not even indexed" (Boushel, 2000, p. 75). There is a "shift from anti-racist to anti-oppressive social work education.…[that] moves from a narrow, exclusive focus on racial oppression to a broader, more inclusive understanding" (Macey, 1996, p. 309); and only a single reference to anti-racist social work in an entire book by Mullaly that is then discarded as "overly reductionist and simplistic" (2002, p. 149), and instead focuses entirely on AOP.

However, as multiple participants in Jeffery's study note, in AOP "issues of race become, in the words of one educator, 'too confused and too watered down'" (Jeffery, 2007, p. 443), the last thing considered, and obscure the importance of critical analysis on race (Jeffery, 2007). Heron also finds that the switch to AOP "may be beneficial to some, but does it benefit those who experience racism? Not only is the very nature of racism distorted, it would appear to be done in a way that is undetected by most students" (Heron, 2004, p. 290). 'Never mind the nature of colonialism!' says Trickster, frustrated. Subsequently, in Heron's content analysis of 112 social work student assignments, only four students who participated made any reference to race (Heron, 2004, p. 282). Likewise, Boushel dedicates his article to "the further development of anti-racist and culturally-sensitive research practices which avoid both the perceptual limitations and social injustices of 'colour-blindness'" (Boushel, 2000, p. 72); and McLaughlin takes up the shift from anti-racism to AOP as having "allowed the problems of society to be recast as due to the moral failings of individuals who need censure and correction from the anti-oppressive social worker" (2005, p. 300).

The question of who holds the power over knowledge is particularly interesting in the case of the disappearance of race in favour of AOP language in social work education. As illuminated by Jeffery's study, fees paid by member schools finance the CASSW, and to be an accredited school, one must be a member of the association. To restrict accreditation on the basis of the lack of content pertaining to race is to restrict association funding. As one participant stated, "what they see is how much it will cost to implement. There is that calculation that comes into effect for people" (Jeffery, 2007, p. 448). Another participant asks "Can you block an accreditation or re-accreditation on that race issue alone? ….We're dealing with a rather fragile Association so do you create a major crisis someplace that could blow the whole thing apart? " (Jeffery, 2007, p. 449). Therefore, rather than threatening to destabilize the status quo, CASSW members have sought to preserve the existing governing structures at the sacrifice of meaningful discussions and content pertaining to race in social work education. Likewise, the abovementioned articles locate agency for remedying the lack of meaningful content pertaining to race in social work education, at the level of social work administrators and researchers.

AOP has been operationalized by Indigenous social work authors such as Sohki Aski Esquao (Jeannine Carrière), and her non Indigenous co-author Susan Strega in their edited collection *Walking this Path Together: Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Child Welfare Practice.* Both authors grew up in care and worked in child welfare. In a collection by social work authors of all ethnicities from across Canada, the majority of authors look at past models of practice, including cultural competency, and work to shift that to AOP:

> In anti-oppressive theory, power is understood as widely dispersed rather than only held by one group and wielded over another group. Individual social workers

> therefore have a choice about whether to produce social justice or reproduce social injustice through how they practice. (Strega and Carrière, 2009, p.16)

While Authors in this collection also make a theoretical leap, expressing similarities between AOP theory and Indigenous worldview, stating that "we centre Indigenous perspectives because these approaches are based in the paradigm of community caring that we consider essential to transforming child welfare" (Strega and Carrière, 2009, p.15). Where some chapters do discuss Indigenous specific ways of knowing and advocating for Indigenous sovereignty, the book in its entirety presents more of a post-modern analysis of power and oppression, which fits Indigenous thought into western theory and practice concepts, making a case that there are "allied" theoretical models. I see this book as representing an important stepping-stone towards materials based on Indigenous specific theory and practice, however grounded it is in the popular AOP language of the time. 'Now we are getting somewhere', Trickster says, perking up again.

Social Work and Indigenous Peoples

At the same time that there is a disappearance of race and culture from social work literature in favour of a broader anti-oppressive practice, there is a seeming explosion of Indigenous-specific social work content being produced. Some may read this as a response to the silence or failure of mainstream social work to take up a long-standing history of the failings of social work with Indigenous peoples, the culmination of long-standing efforts by Indigenous communities to assert their own practices and knowledges, or an increase in graduation and publications of Indigenous social work scholars. One likely contributor to the proliferation of this content is the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada. Operating from 2008 to 2015, the Commission drew unprecedented media attention and Canadian social consciousness to issues facing Indigenous peoples in Canada, more so than its predecessor, The Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) 1996 report, though this report laid important groundwork for the TRC.

As the TRC's Canada-wide tour and public hearings began to come to a close in 2014, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) added a statement to their *Principles Guiding Accreditation of Social Work Programs*, saying that "social work programs acknowledge and challenge the injustices of Canada's colonial history and continuing colonization efforts as they relate to the role of social work education in Canada and the self determination of the Indigenous peoples" (Baskin 2, 2016, p. 109). In 2015, the Canadian Association of Social Workers also released a statement announcing that "The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) affirm the 94 Calls to Action advanced in Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, the Executive Summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) final report to be released later this year." (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2015). These TRC Calls to Action directly implicate social work's oppression of, and the need for reconciliation with, Indigenous peoples.

Though there are attempts made to include Indigenous content in core social work courses, it is more often the case today that Indigenous content is placed in a separate course, stream, or certificate dedicated to the history and practice of social work with Indigenous peoples. Likewise, there is a marked increase in scholarly articles on the topic of Indigenous social work, many of which can be found within Indigenous specific publication sources like *Native Social Work Journal, The Canadian Journal of Native Studies,* and *First Peoples Child and Family Review.* I must begin this section by cautioning against the extricating of Indigenous content from the core social work program, while also applauding all those course instructors, many of whom are Indigenous people who have been tasked with creating and delivering these courses in isolation. As one of these instructors myself, having worked in all three Toronto area

universities' social work departments, I have met some amazingly creative individuals who have formed partnerships with local Indigenous communities and peoples to be a part of course offerings; scoured through libraries and periodicals for Indigenous social work content; creatively incorporated other Indigenous sources not specific to social work (philosophy, history, spirituality, law, health etc.); drawn upon their own personal knowledge and experience; and taken students onto the land or led other experiential learning exercises. Looking around the table at a gathering of Indigenous instructors planning a course for this year's cohort of social work students, I am equally filled with frustration about our precarious and sequestered labour, and complete hope and excitement watching what our communities are capable of creating for future students.

The main Indigenous social work specific texts used in these courses include three books, *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping* (2002) by Michael A. Hart; *Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada* (2009) edited by Raven Sinclair, Michael A. Hart and Gord Bruyere; and *Strong Helpers' Teachings: The Value of Indigenous Knowledges in the Helping Professions* (first ed. 2011, second ed. 2016) by Cindy Baskin. 'Hey, I know these folks!' Trickster says, excited. *Chuckle.* 'I bet you do, my friend!' I say, smiling back at him. These books are truly seminal texts for Indigenous social work. Throughout my educational journey, as each of these was published and placed on shelves in our university bookstores, I was ecstatic. Finally, something that spoke aloud all the things I had struggled with not being said in my social work education. These poor books, most not even a decade old, look centuries older than that, as I drag them, marked and folded, with me everywhere through my social work practice and education. They are my constant companions. 'Hey! What about me?!" shouts Trickster. 'We can all be companions,' I say, rolling my eyes, and shooting him a joking look.

Along with these books are a plethora of journal articles pertaining to Indigenous social work, increasingly by Indigenous scholars and practitioners, many predating these texts, and building the foundation for such works to be created. First are three Indigenous authored studies, Menzies (2007), Morrissette, McKenzie, and Morrissette (1993), and Sinclair (2007), which focus on social work services provided to Indigenous peoples. All these studies explore colonization and intergenerational trauma impacting Indigenous peoples, though each approaches these issues through a specific area. Menzies' study focused on urban Indigenous men who were homeless, Morrisette et al. on youth programs happening in an Indigenous reserve community, and Sinclair on adoption and child welfare services. Menzies used interviews and focus groups informed by grounded theory, Morrissette et al. undertook a program review of a Youth Support Program, and Sinclair reviewed literature on Aboriginal transracial adoption. All three articles call to social workers to understand how these systemic oppressions play out in the present day Indigenous populations. All articles also take up Indigenous cultural traditions as an important contribution to social work with Indigenous peoples, from a culturally informed approach to trauma and homelessness, where "the model is premised on the main constructs of the traditional teachings of the Aboriginal medicine wheel" (Menzies, 2007, p. 384), to culturally informed community programming where "Aboriginal social work practice will include the use of traditional teachers and healers, a community- based approach to the planning and implementation of services, and the incorporation of traditional methods of healing" (Morrissette, et al., 1993, p. 103), to the argument that "…new directions must be taken in preparing adoptive families to meet the needs of their Aboriginal child. Indeed, in order for a child to learn about their culture, the people most significant to them must also learn about the culture" (Sinclair, 2007, p. 77).

The abovementioned books by Hart (2004), Sinclair, Hart, and Bruyere (2009), and Baskin (2011, 2016) further develop what is Indigenous social work theory and

practice. All three are riveting works that delve deep into the authors' lives as Indigenous people and social work professionals, and from that depth of lived experience present an alternative paradigm to mainstream social work practice, grounded in an Indigenous worldview. Hart states,

> This approach is an attempt at decolonization and resistance. It is an act of decolonization in that it serves to inform those previously unaware, or barely aware, that we have our own worldviews, beliefs, values and practices and that, despite efforts to bury them, they are ready to be put into practice. (2004, p. 36)

Where the works are "recommended not as 'recipes or formulae' for work with Indigenous individuals, families and communities" (Sinclair, et al. 2009, p. 16), authors put forward "that there is much to be gained by welcoming Indigenous worldviews into one's life and work" (Baskin, 2016, p. 4). These books, though expressly about Indigenous social work, provide compelling overviews of the colonial history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Connecting the past to the present, social work students, practitioners, academics and community members are invited to follow how social work is implicated in this colonial history and how it continues to replicate these oppressive systems today. These texts call on social work to be a part of the efforts towards decolonization and the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. The authors also discuss that this informs social work practice, as "…Indigenous people remain disproportionately over-represented as users of health and human services and disproportionately under-represented as providers of those services" (Sinclair, et al., 2009, p. 16), calling out how "…social work education needs to address these issues not only as a distant, theoretical concern occurring in Aboriginal communities but also as they exist in universities, classrooms and curricula" (Hart, 2004, p. 23), and advocates for Indigenous knowledges *and* bodies in social work, where "[t]his resistance is multiplies [sic] when Aboriginal helpers incorporate the approach into their practices with Aboriginal people…" (Hart.

2004, p. 36). Even if expressly for a mixed audience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, these books speak deeply to souls of Indigenous social workers already practicing from our respective cultures and traditions, so much so that these works can be emotionally difficult to move through. One such example is Baskin's *Strong Helpers Teachings* (2016), which, in the book' second edition, takes up learning from a great personal tragedy that so many of us in the Indigenous community and Indigenous social work community of Toronto have witnessed. These works, though challenging, are also celebratory and resilient. They remind us of an important shift in theory and practice: the shift from social work with Indigenous peoples to Indigenous approaches to social work. 'I suppose we can all be friends,' Trickster says, releasing his crossed arms.

Revisiting Indigenous Social Work Education

'We all deserve a second chance…or ten, right?' says Trickster with some self-deprecation. Setting the stage for a reimagining of Indigenous social work education in Canada is the collection, *Walking in the Good Way Ioterihwakwarihshion Tsi Ihse: Aboriginal Social Work Education* (2009), edited by Ingrid T. Cooper and Gail S. Moore. The book is comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, the majority of whom are associated with McGill's Indigenous social work certificate programs, as students, administrators, instructors, or academics reviewing the work of these programs. While the introductory chapters about the 1987 creation of the Certificate Program in Northern Social Work Education, a unique partnership with Inuit communities in Quebec and McGill University, are in line with the cultural competency based studies reviewed earlier, the subsequent chapters take on a more radical critique of the program and its potential future. Discussing the above program, as well as the Certificate Program in Aboriginal Social Work Practice (ASWCP) established in 1995, authors take up Indigenous peoples' inherent right to self-determination, creating space for Inuit

knowledge to displace dominant mainstream voices, as well as a directly address the oppressive forces of social work and social work education, they note that "we need to recognize that overt colonial processes have given way to more subtle forms of governance within contemporary arrangements between Inuit and dominant society institutions, including education and social services" (Cooper and Moore, 2009, p. 36).

Like Cooper and Moore, four Indigenous scholars have also put forth articles exploring Indigenous education in new ways, attempting to push beyond the cultural competency models of the past, and move towards a grounding in Indigenous worldview and practice. Barbara Harris has published two articles about transforming social work education for Indigenous communities. The first article (Harris, 2006a) reviews Indigenous content in Canadian schools of social work today, where out of seven programs at Canadian universities surveyed, six of the programs had only one required half-course that focuses on First Nations, one program had a First Nations child welfare specialization, and one program had a strong First Nations focus as a result of Aboriginal community collaboration (Harris, 2006a, p. 233). Harris also found that only one program provided a course on family violence, and one program provided a course on victims of abuse, as such "…students are ill prepared to address the challenges of working in communities where suicide, addictions, and violence are major issues" (Harris, 2006a, p. 233). Harris cautions that "[i]n spite of the prevalence of First Nations peoples requiring social services, social work curriculum does not reflect that reality." (Harris, 2006a, p. 233).

In their second article, Harris discussed the creation of a pilot project between the School of Social Work and Family at the University of British Columbia and local First Nations communities. Harris explores the philosophical foundation of this project, which include: "…community, context, care, and culture- and on traditional Aboriginal education and values…" (Harris, 2006b, p. 117). Harris puts forward that this culturally

based model is what can better meet the goals of First Nations communities, and its potential for transforming Indigenous social work education. Likewise, Joan Sanderson (2012) explores the Master of Aboriginal Social Work (MASW) program established in 2001 by the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. The MASW program has a unique component, a Culture Camp offered as a course in the summer semester, ASW 800, that is held in a local First Nation community. This course is facilitated by Elders in the community, who then teach a traditional counselling course, ASW 822, during the regular academic year. A graduate of the original Indian Social Work Program and now coordinator of the MASW, Sanderson notes that these two courses act as a foundation to the program (Sanderson, 2012, p. 91). Sanderson shares about the unique experiences and challenges of Indigenous students in the program, saying "We know of the colonial induced trauma that most of our students carry. We talk 'it'; we feel 'it'; we release 'it'." (Sanderson, 2012, p. 93), and how this learning model can be transformative for other schools of social work with "its primary focus on traditional First Nations knowledge and practices and their importance in contemporary Indigenous social work" (Sanderson, 2012, p. 95). This sentiment is encapsulated in Gord Bruyere's earlier work that explores the challenges faced by Indigenous social work students through his own story and experiences. He shares about traditional knowledge, responsibility to community, collaboration with Indigenous peoples, and fears about disrespecting traditional teachers and teachings through the act of academic writing (Bruyere, 1998, p. 171). His article entitled *Living in Another Man's House*, expressly negotiates the tensions he felt between the expectations of the school of social work and the expectations of his Indigenous community and identity. Bruyere finds that, "…at the heart of the issue is the need for schools to make room for different ways of knowing and according those ways the equal respect they deserve" (1998, p. 169).

Raven Sinclair (2004) takes the needs of Indigenous students and clients to the structural level that Bruyere touches upon. Sinclair speaks to the need for the system of social work education to decolonize, and that it is a project for everyone, not just Indigenous students. She discusses Aboriginal social work as a unique theory and practice, separate from classic social work approaches, "Aboriginal social work is a relatively new field in the human services, emerging out of the Aboriginal social movement of the 1970s and evolving in response to the need for social work that is sociologically relevant to Aboriginal people". (Sinclair, 2004, p. 49). Sinclair questions the universality of western thought, particularly as the standard for social work education, as well as new approaches which stem from this epistemology, stating that "[s]imilarly, anti-oppressive practice has an inherent danger. The danger lies in proclaiming an anti-oppressive stance, while doing little or nothing to address the reality of oppression" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 52). Instead, she puts forward Aboriginal social work education as "…a decolonizing pedagogy directed to mitigating and redressing the harm of colonization… (Sinclair, 2004, p. 49) and advocates for its use by Indigenous and non-Indigenous social work students. Though still focused on practice with Indigenous clients, this article further develops and articulates Indigenous social work as a unique discipline within social work which helps to dispel the monopoly of western thought in classrooms, namely western neo-colonialism, and imagines new possibilities for the future of social work education. 'I like the sound of that,' adds Trickster.

Indigenous Social Workers

An important impact from the Indigenous social work texts discussed above, is the drawing to light of the fact that Indigenous peoples are not only the recipients of social services, but are providers of these services. 'I mean, that's why we are here, right?' says Trickster, with arms raised. Initiatives that have developed over the last few

decades to graduate more Indigenous social workers means there are an increasing amount of Indigenous people with Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorates in Social Work. This is a unique positionality, to be both an Indigenous person of this land and be in a profession which has long oppressed your family, community, and territory. You have already heard from authors above struggling with this in their study of social work, but once graduated and practicing, these challenges do not disappear along with your final papers. Hart (2003), Bennett and Zubrzycki (2003), Reid (2005), as well as Hart and Pompana (2003), all provide insight to the unique experiences of Indigenous social workers.

A common thread is the challenge to reconcile one's identity and desires with those of the profession. Hart shares about his personal experience, where he wonders "…if social workers and missionaries share many attributes, how can I continue to work as a social worker given the atrocities Indigenous people have faced at the hands of missionaries?" (2003, p. 300). Bennett and Zubrycki, in a collaborative qualitative research project with a group of six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social workers over an 18 month period, revealed that along with boundaries, obligations, and kinship ties, "[t]heir identity is continuously negotiated alongside a professional social work identity that is dominated by Western discourse" (2003, p. 61). In Reid's qualitative study of six First Nations women who are Child and Family Service (CFS) Social Workers working in First Nations agencies, they identified three major stresses these Indigenous social workers face; from dual accountability, unrealistic expectations and multiple roles, and intensity of relationships (Reid, 2005, p. 21).

Reid's study also describes how these Indigenous social workers derive strength from the meaningful work that they do. In one of the research participant's own words, "[w]hen you watch kids interacting in a positive way with their families and you just know that this work is contributing and that everything is going to be fine" (Reid, 2005,

p. 31). Reid's study also describes the resilience and creativity of CFS social workers to maintain their health and wellness utilizing their culture and traditions, in the face of great stress and demands of child protective work. Likewise, Hart and Pompana (2003) share the strengths and resilience displayed by Indigenous social workers. In the creation of an Aboriginal Professional Helpers Society in Manitoba, they helped to develop a space that respects Indigenous worldview, values, beliefs, and customs, where Indigenous social workers can work together towards curriculum development, respectful research, advocacy, and support for Indigenous social workers in their practice. Hart and Pompana share that "[b]y joining together, Aboriginal people practicing social work could present a significant and influential voice on issues ranging from healing and growth to policy critiques and alternatives" (2003, 253). 'Geez, this does sound like tricky business,' says Trickster, stroking his chin studiously.

Building on this Academic Context

Reflecting on this literature review in its entirety, it is overwhelmingly evident that in mainstream social work practice, research, education, and courses, race, culture, or ethnicity is generally spoken of as belonging to and in better understanding of social work "clients" and "service users". Social workers, and social work students are discursively reinforced as White, non-raced professionals. As noted throughout this literature review, however, there is a definite shift from liberal positivist informed research on race, to studies informed by post-modernism. The application of feminism, critical approaches to research, and the dissemination of post-modernism into the social sciences have called attention to subjugated knowledges and the political activities of oppressed groups that have openly challenged Eurocentric, racist, and exploitative research (Smith, 1999, p. 9). Acknowledgement must be given to those who put forward

these theoretical perspectives, as they have aided in opening spaces in the academy to explore various ways of knowing.

As Indigenous people enter these spaces of social work, we have seen a renewed negotiation between the profession and our peoples and nations. Though a complicated relationship, we see more Indigenous peoples turning to social work as a potential avenue for personal, family, and community healing. The Indigenous studies discussed above begin situating Indigenous peoples, in their full complexity, as social workers, with important knowledge and experience not only for work with Indigenous clients, but for the entire profession of social work to consider. They also advance the use of Indigenous research methodologies. Both points are of particular relevance for this knowledge-gathering project, as it informs the context and the process for which to work with those whose voices are largely excluded in social work research: namely, Indigenous social workers. 'Ah, I see how it's all coming together now,' Trickster chimes in, nudging me with his elbow.

Now more than ever, Indigenous peoples are renegotiating what it means to work in a profession that has historically, and continually, defined itself according to its white European roots. As I look around Toronto, I am amazed by this process within the Indigenous social worker community. It is within this context that I put forward my research question: What is the relationship between Toronto's Indigenous social workers and their profession like? What do their stories look like as they encounter what has historically been an oppressive grand narrative of social work?

Chapter Nine

Lindsay DuPré: Trickster Learns to Bead

I wave goodbye to Tom, and begin climbing the steps of First Nations School Toronto. *Giggle! Clatter! Howl!* I can hear the buzzing of children running through the halls even before opening the door. *Smirk.* I dare you not to smile! *Haha.* The school moved to this location a few years back in order to expand from an elementary school to a secondary school, adding grade levels as the eldest cohort moves through the system. It's a multifunctional building, also housing the Urban Indigenous Education Center that works to support Indigenous students and content across all schools in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). In the basement, next to the cafeteria, is the TDSB Museum and Archives. *Eeeek.* Believe me, that floor is as creepy as it sounds! *Brrrriiiiiing!* Lunch must be over now; the kids all scatter and filter into their classrooms. The school itself is quite the metaphor for Indigenous initiatives in the city. Reoccupying spaces that were taken and designed into something that excluded Indigenous peoples, and now slowly transforming them back into something reflecting our realities. The floors currently occupied by FNST are filled with life! Beautiful banners, colourful paintings, and cultural items all around! The school is also a site for many Indigenous community initiatives. *Creak.* I peek into one of the classrooms. I see Rochelle facilitating one of her Ojibway language nests. I give a little nod and a wave and continue down the hallway. *Shuffle. Shuffle.* We're headed to one of the gyms. Yes, this school has a few of them. I'm telling you, it's a huge old building. And you know how old it is because this gym has a sign that reads *Girls Gymnasium.* Holay.

A familiar scent fills the air and leads me down the corridor towards the gym. I take off my shoes, waft the smudge over me that is burning at its entrance. I open the doors. *Woosh!* You've never seen something so striking in all your life. Red and black fabric fills the entire room, draped along the walls and covering every inch of floor space. There are sacred bundles placed throughout the room: clusters of drums, rattles, and fans. Medicines hang everywhere: massive bouquets of foliage, bowls of tobacco offerings, and a beautiful emerald path of cedar to guide you through. If you follow the path, you find yourself surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of pairs of beaded moccasin vamps, arranged on the ground in a way that mirrors the Milky Way galaxy. The beautiful beadwork shines and glistens through the fog of the smudge hanging sombrely over the room. I see Lindsay DuPré with a group of youngsters crouched down next to the collection of children's vamps. 'These vamps are for the young people in our community. Many children and babies haven't made it home to their families, and so now we honour them and pray for them to find their way to our ancestors,' she says to the youth. This is the *Walking With Our Sisters* commemorative ceremony and art instillation that is traveling across Canada to bring attention to the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit people. This bundle also offers a space for healing, where communities are able to come together to grieve and support one another. Lindsay is the volunteer & youth engagement coordinator. She works with the planning team to care for the bundle and the visitors who come through. Many of the volunteers and visitors are young people from FNST and the wider Toronto community. They have helped set up the installation, gotten to hang out with the grandmothers council and other volunteers, and participated in workshops or sharing circles led by teachers from FNST

and other community leaders. ‘Alright now folks, who wants to work on some of their own beading?’ Lindsay asks. The kids pop out of their contemplation and follow her to one of the workshop rooms.

Shuffle. Shuffle. I make my way slowly through the path and towards the beading. When I get there, I hang in the doorway for a moment. I can see from here that Lindsay is totally in her element. She is a born youth advocate and she shines when she’s supporting young people. It’s funny: though she’s a youth herself, just in her 20s, she’s a total grandma! I swear she has the spirit of some old kokum come back to support the next generation through her presence. *Clink. Clink. Clink.* People are stringing their beads. She moves slowly and purposefully around the room, her words curated like an art gallery to reflect only kindness. She talks like the old people do, and when I visit with her, I can’t help but feel the presence of my ancestors, much like how you do when walking though that moccasin vamp Milky Way. Lindsay is a Métis woman with family ties along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, with Cree, English, Scottish, Irish, and French ancestry. She was raised here in Dish With One Spoon territory, just outside Toronto in the neighbouring city of Mississauga. Her father’s family came here a few generations ago, after leaving their ancestral territory in the heart of the Métis Homeland. They headed east due to intersecting forms of colonial violence and stressors including poverty, racism and fears of child welfare. Their travels to Northwestern Ontario and then to Southern Ontario took place in hopes of keeping the family safe and their Métis identity hidden. She remarks that “I guess my first connection to social work was before I was born. I am doing a lot of work to try and pick up my family’s stories, and some I will probably never know, but I do know that like a lot of Métis families, the reasons for

moving weren't easy. Experiences of racism, poverty and fears of social workers were part of this and played a big role in us moving around so much. As white passing Métis, I imagine this was also why they chose to hide and not talk much about who they were." I see most of the kids have gone, a few are showing their creations to Lindsay before heading back to their classrooms. *Skrrreeech.* I pull a chair over to where Lindsay is sitting. *"*It's hard to think about this history, especially when it's done so much damage to my family's connection to our community. I've talked to a few different elders and community members about this, though, and they've helped me see that instead of getting stuck in anger and resentment, that I can focus on where I am today and being grateful that my family did what they needed to do to get me here. So, social work has done harm, but it also was part of bringing me to where I am today," she says to me. See what I'm saying about this kindness business? *Giggle.*

For the past six years or so, Lindsay has been living in Toronto and is "feeling okay calling it home right now. There are things that I still don't necessarily love about being in such a large urban centre, but I've also seen a lot of the beauty in this city, especially in the way our Indigenous community here is so unique from anywhere else in the country." And coming from Lindsay, that means something, because she travels a lot for work, like, A LOT. "Although I'm based in Toronto, I also feel tied to my Métis identity because our people have always moved around and needed to be adaptable in new places. That has been my life, as well," she says, looking up from her beading. Lindsay travels because her work is centered on supporting Indigenous youth leaders across the country. "I work with a lot of young people at varying places in their leadership journeys, supporting them to navigate this weird time of reconciliation that

we're in right now. On the micro level my work has looked at how do I support Indigenous young people who are facing the pressures of reconciliation and the distractions, challenges and violence that can come with that. You know, forced up on these pedestals to represent their entire nations or all of our nations while they're still trying to figure out who they are and their place in community."

As a youth herself, Lindsay understands the desire to contribute, and the pressures that young people feel to fix this world. She offers supports to youth to navigate external and internal forces pulling on them and their gifts. She also works to connect these various Indigenous youth leaders to one another, and creates spaces where they can share ideas and work together. For Lindsay, her work is a lot like… well, like this beadwork! "Beadwork can represent our path of identity exploration and wellness. I like to think of each and every one of us as having a beadwork pattern that is laid out in front of us. That pattern is designed by all of those who have come before us, especially our ancestors, and so there is, you know, a template there for us to work from. But then, in our lives, based on our experiences and our choices, we also have the power to add to that design and to change it in different ways," she says with a smile. "And so, as we are exploring who we are as young people, we are doing a lot of the toughest work on that beadwork. At the beginning when you start off, you don't know what you're doing and it's hard and you know, you fumble a little bit," she puts her needle down in excitement about the metaphor she's sharing. "We don't always know how to ask for help or to reach out to other people. But then over time, we start meeting the right people in our lives that help us and almost like mirror back who we are and what we need to learn. Each bead sort of represents one of these different people. They all offer something different to the design

and are important for different reasons at different times. But in the same way that other people offer beads to my pattern, I am a part of others', too. This says a lot about how our individual and community wellness are intertwined. It's my pattern, but I have to rely on others to create it with me and make it a strong and beautiful piece of work." Lindsay doesn't get caught up in saviour narratives of helping, or this discourse about fixing or curing the youth she works with. For her, "it's your job to just do the best that you can when you intersect with someone in life, or with my metaphor, like when someone is a bead about to be attached to your beadwork or yours to theirs, you know, you just need to offer what you can in that moment or in that time period to support them and then they're off to the next bead or to the next person."

Clink. Clink. Clink. The sound pulls us out of Lindsay's story. We look at each other and realize neither of us has a needle in our hands. Huh? We thought we were alone. We look back to the far corner of the workshop room. Sitting there with one arm stretched out holding a string, and one eye inspecting a hand full of beads- it's Trickster! *Sigh.* 'Aho sisters,' he says with a smirk. Oh goodness. 'Come to learn to bead, my friend?' I reply. 'Why yes, I have,' he says, placing one hand on his chin. 'But from what I hear, you aren't talking about beading at all, are you? Sounds to me like you are talking about social work,' he continues. Calculating. Leaning in. *Blink. Blink.* I pause like a deer in the headlights, and then turn to Lindsay. I know she has an MSW from the University of Toronto, but what is her relationship like to social work these days? *Chuckle.* Lindsay laughs and looks to Trickster. She leans in and says, "You know, I was thinking about it, and for me, talking about my role in social work is kind of like talking about Indigeneity. You can say you are Indigenous, as a lived identity with relationship and responsibility to

community, or you can show disconnect by saying that you have Indigenous ancestry. Similar to how I identify with social work, for me I say I have social work education, but I don't–well, depending on who I'm talking to–I don't usually say I am a social worker. It's not an identity that I am comfortable claiming right now." *Chuckle.* Interesting way of putting it. Lindsay explains that as a young person she always felt she had a sense of purpose. She has known that she had gifts to contribute and while social work education was one of the experiences along her path of discovery, how she lives and works is determined far more by other factors in her life. One factor being her responsibilities tied to her privilege as a white coded Métis person. She takes this piece of her identity very seriously, and shares that she is continuing to learn just what this means in her work. She acknowledges that she is positioned to navigate spaces and to push for change in ways that some people may not be able to. She also recognizes the tension with this, where she can leverage the whiteness that she carries, but also must ensure that this does not interfere with the needs and leadership of Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour. So for Lindsay, who she is and what she does is far more complex than simply her profession. She notes that "people sometimes think that work is just the 9 to 5, and it's what happens with those hours. But the real work that we're doing as people and as communities to keep healing and rebuilding is happening everywhere, in everything that we do. We have to live life with intention and fulfill our responsibilities through work that goes far beyond one job description."

I look to Trickster, who is clearly struggling. Beads spill out across the table, and his body is tangled in thread. Lindsay has picked her beading back up. *Clink. Clink. Clink.* She threads her beads and begins weaving them into the pattern. 'So has social

work shaped your beadwork pattern in a way?' I ask, tying off some string of my own. "I don't think I want to centre it in that way or to give it that much power. It is very much connected and influential in different parts of my life and my work, but I don't see my journey revolving around it. So, in my beadwork metaphor, I would say social work is more of a pair of scissors," she continues, while eyeing Trickster's mess. "Scissors as a tool I think can represent good and bad things. For example, as you're doing beadwork, you need scissors to cut your thread, you need it to cut fabric to do different things that are essential to developing your full pattern," Lindsay shares in a compassionate tone. "But scissors can also be destructive and violent, and can destroy the work as well. If someone comes along with anger or frustration, they could use scissors to cut off all the beads, or cut the fabric, destroying all of the hard work. I think this speaks to the realities of social work for our communities." *Clip. Clip.* Shears in hand, Trickster is cutting away at the air. He's trying to free himself from the thread, but keeps cutting the wrong string. *Plink. Plink. Plink.* His beadwork falling to pieces onto the floor. *Sigh.*

Clink. Clink. Clink. I string some beads, and continue on my own pattern. As she works, Lindsay shares that "there's a lot of healing that needs to be done. And sometimes social workers are the right people, with the right tools to do that. They have that potential to be good. But then, there's also, as we know, just still so much ongoing harm," Organizing some of her supplies on the table, she continues, "sometimes, with the young people that I'm connected to, I have to think really carefully about it. Like when I'm doing things to support them, which side of the scissors, or which pair of scissors, am I using? Because that's the whole thing about social work is that sometimes, the bad things don't happen because of bad people or even bad intentions. Sometimes it's just a tool

being misused or doing harm without us realizing it. And we need to think carefully about that. So, yeah, which pair of scissors are being used isn't always black and white. It's not an easy thing, so being more critical of that is important and something that I'm trying to do." She picks up some wax to smooth the end of her thread and glances back towards Trickster, "So then, yeah, I guess social work is more like a tool for me rather than a full identity."

Lindsay admits she began distinguishing herself from the profession early in her social work education. "I had so much anger and frustration when I was doing my MSW because I was in a space where people were in their bubbles, not being aware of what the profession has done, and continues to do, to Indigenous communities. I was often silenced from even talking about that in the program and because of it, every single day I had to be ready to fight," she says, staring down at her beadwork. "But I don't regret going there at all because it gave me such a clear understanding of why so much harm is still going on. It became clear to me that despite things like diversity and inclusion being buzzwords in our classes, that a lot of people are pursuing social work education and careers without even realizing or acknowledging the ways that the profession is implicated in racism and colonialism," she says. With a half-smile, Lindsay continues, "so, I'm grateful in a weird way, that the horrible experience I had in that program and being confronted with so much silencing that it gave me a taste of the bigger picture and what we are up against more broadly." *Click. Clink. Clink.* Lindsay returns to her beading. As she works, she shares how her social work training helped to further frame her relationship to the profession: "they teach us about the importance of boundaries in school. Well, I've taken that and used it to understand that my own well-being relies on

those boundaries with the profession, too." For Lindsay, that has meant decentering social work from her identity, while still recognizing its ongoing impact on her life and work. "Yeah, most of the time I don't say that I'm a social worker, but I know that I am still connected to the profession," she shares, starting a new line on her beadwork. "As much as I don't want to represent social work or take on the label of a social worker, given all of the negative associations people have, I still carry this MSW degree and it is a degree that can put me in positions with a significant amount of power. I can set boundaries with how much I relate to the profession, but I still need to take the power that comes with it seriously and need to use it wisely."

Cough. Cough. Trickster clears his throat, calling our attention to his corner of the room. He's mostly untangled but struggling to trim the fabric framing his work. Lindsay wanders over to help. As she assists, she shares that as a Métis person, she is more comfortable working at the peripheries of the social work profession, and that she is wary of social work's claiming of Indigenous people's helping work. "Indigenous nations have always had ways of taking care of people long before Europeans came here, and our communities continue to do this work in our own ways despite colonial interference." Trickster looks over and smirks as she continues, "I want my time and passion to contribute to this healing work going on in different spaces, especially work that Indigenous young people are leading to rebuild healthy communities, often with little resources." *Slash.* Trickster cuts himself. 'Ouch!' he hollers. Lindsay takes his hand and loosens his grip on the scissors. "I've had to do a lot of listening and taking direction from a range of people in my community to figure out where I fit into all of this. I've still got a lot to learn, but I think that by being patient and staying as humble as I can, I'm

starting to narrow in on where I can contribute my gifts." I nod slowly, taking in Lindsay's words. 'Would you say that is similar to beading as well?' I asked her. "Totally! Patience is everything. In the same way that it takes time to develop beading skills it takes time to get to know ourselves and to find the right moments to assert our gifts and leadership." Trickster ties off his beadwork and shows it to Lindsay. "And now that we have strong Indigenous peoples who can navigate the colonial social work system but also have the grounding of what that has meant and what has like - even just through blood memory of like, knowing what that means, that's exciting and hopeful to me." As they compare their beading, Lindsay sees a frayed thread in the corner of her work. Trickster passes her the scissors. *Smirk.* But Lindsay smiles and bites the thread off with the side of her tooth. *Giggle! Clatter! Howl!* The next group of students come piling into the room. *Ahem.* I motion to Trickster. We get up together and head to the door. *Smile.* I nod to Lindsay and take one final moment watching the excited group of youngsters before we leave.

Chapter Ten

Mike Auksi: Trickster Returns to the Rink

Hwoo! Hwoo! The train pulls up to the subway station platform. Trickster and I shuffle in between the other bodies. *Screech.* We hang off the looped handles as the train whistles quickly along the rails. It's pretty crowded, and we're smushed in shoulder to shoulder. Trickster plucks an apple out of another passenger's open knapsack. *Crunch. Crunch.* I give him a disapproving look, but he just smiles and shoots me a wink. *Sigh.* I give a little nod goodbye to the east end. Now we are headed west. *Crackle.* A voice comes over the speakers, 'Arriving at St. George Station. Transfer to University line. Doors open on the left. St. George Station.' *Ding. Dong.* Trickster moves to exit through the opened doors, but I shake my head. 'Wait, I thought we were headed to the University of Toronto?' Trickster asks, confused. 'Mike's not at work today, we're meeting him somewhere else,' I reply. *Woosh.* We pull away from the station and continue westward. Trickster wiggles his way down the train car, probably searching for more snacks. We are making our way through the Annex now, where our friend Michael Mahkwa Auksi lives and works. He grew up in this area, born in Toronto to an Estonian mother and a father from Lac Seul First Nation. *Crackle.* 'Arriving at Dufferin Station. Doors open on the right. Dufferin Station.' *Crackle.* 'Here's our stop'. I motion to Trickster to exit with me, but he's caught behind a tangle of limbs and suitcases. His face sinks, and his expression screams *uh oh.* I wave goodbye as the doors close. *Ding. Dong.* The train, and Trickster, disappear down the tunnel. *Shrug.* Knowing Trickster, he'll find his way back. Always does.

Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle. I leave the station and cross the street. I'm heading towards Dufferin Grove Park. Though Mike has spent a lot of time between Sioux Lookout—the closest town to Lac Seul, about three and a half hour, *eeerrr*, four hour drive northwest of Thunder Bay—and the Baltic states, this place is his home. *Tweet. Tweet.* The sun is shining and the birds are chirping as I walk up into the park. I can see Mike leaning on the boards of the outdoor rink. It's the off-season, so kids are playing basketball and skateboarding around the arena. You know, one of the things that led Mike to travel north and abroad was actually hockey. Now, he would NEVER say this, because Mike is, in fact, the most-humble person on the planet, but the Indigenous community here is super proud of him. *Smile.* Before I even met him, I heard about him, a young local Nish guy playing in the World Hockey Championships and Olympic Qualifications. *Wow.* Nearly every agency I have worked for, Mike has also worked for, and those spaces were always filled with stories about him. Ol' community elders gushing, and enthusiastic young folks he had worked with swapping stories. One thing was always coupled with these tales of incredible talent; reference to his kind nature. So ya, there's lots for folks to be proud of. 'Hey Mike!' I call out. He looks around and waves. I walk over and join him along the boards. 'Thanks for coming all this way to meet me,' Mike says, staring out onto the rink.

Getting to know Mike, it seems hockey has always been there for him. "I had a happy childhood, a tricky time in school, you know, just reading didn't come as easily or as quickly as some of the other kids," he shares. That's right tough growing up, grinds on a kiddo's confidence. Mike shares his gratitude for his parents. They always supported him, and looked for other ways to help him shine. Mike pulls away from the boards and

continues, “I mean, I was really fortunate, to be put in hockey and to go to summer hockey camps. That, really, really, like, everything that I ever learned I use every single day”. Though Mike was not perfect at school, or even on the ice, hockey showed him how valuable he was as a young person. “I actually learned that through ice hockey and through team sports that if I didn’t necessarily, if I wasn’t the best defenseman or the sought after offensive defenseman, I thought to myself, well, what else can I do? You know, I can work the hardest, I can complain the least. I can be cool to everyone on the team, even if some of the others aren’t being cool to me. You know? That takes a lot of tenacity and mental toughness to do that, and you know, maybe a coach is going to keep you around because he recognizes that this guy is really important for the team.” But this learning was a process, and like any journey Mike had his twists and turns. *Swish. Whistle.* A strong breeze passes. *Howl.* It picks up speed and swirls around us. *Pssst.* I hear a faint whisper carried on the wind. I look to Mike. He is still and quiet, listening, contemplating. As a teenager, sometimes those internal voices get to us. So Mike tried to find ways to quiet them. *Burr.* There’s a sudden chill in the air. I rub my arms and look around. As I look back to Mike, a single flake of snow lands on his nose. ‘What?’ I whisper. I look up to the sky and see the prettiest, thickest clusters of snowflakes come falling to the ground, all shining and glistening. I look to the rink and it begins freezing over, ice growing from corner to corner, “the ice rink at Dufferin Grove Park…where I stopped drinking about almost 15 years ago. It was literally on New Year’s at two in the morning. And it just, that epiphany of like, ‘Hey, you know, should I keep living like this? It’s unpredictable, I’m always tired,’ this and that. And then, live like this on the other side of the fence,” Mike says. *Chuckles. “*Green pastures and good friends,

improved relationships with family and everything like that, and so that's obviously a special place," he says, opening the gate and flying onto the ice.

Mike ended up playing hockey for the University of Toronto Varsity Blues. First, he registered in the Transitional Year Programme: "The beautiful thing was, it was, the curriculum was reflective of Indigenous Peoples and our stories and so that, yeah, so I mean, it was the first time that, you know, a lot of us ever saw ourselves reflected in the curriculum and it made such a big difference, you know?" he shares. When he graduated from that program, Mike moved into U of T's Indigenous Studies Program. A few years in, he left to enrol in the Social Work Program at Ryerson University, "it's kind of funny but the reason I switched to Ryerson wasn't necessarily to—because, well, I'm gonna be a social worker now and support the community—even though that was exactly what I would've done anyways, had I completed the Indigenous Studies degree—but the thing was that I wanted more ice time in hockey!" Mike says with a laugh. *Hahaha.* I chuckle as I watch him now skating circles around the rink. Hockey has done a lot for Mike. It even brought him to social work! *Snicker.* I hear someone else laughing. I look around and see Trickster giggling, running towards us. He's stumbling along the path, holding on to an old pair of skates.

Mike shouts from the ice, asking me if I believe in signs, "just anything that tells you you're on a good path or a little cardinal flying beside you and saying hello?" Well, I've seen enough in just the past few minutes to believe in signs, so ya, why not!? I nod. Mike tells me about a dream he had one night. He was walking into his mom's basement to get his hockey gear and there was a HUMUNGOUS bear there! "Probably a black bear but I really couldn't see. It was almost like, looking at this spirit bear and I'm like, whoa!"

he shouts with enthusiasm. “I wasn't scared, cause the bear was actually protecting my mom and I, aye. Yeah, is what the sense, the feeling I got. And so yeah, I mean, bears and bear clan, I understand, traditionally, were like helpers and protectors, and I believe had knowledge of the medicines as well. And I could be wrong, but that's the point is we're always learning. Right?” he chuckles. *Hmmmm.* I thought. Mike shares, “my grandfather was a great hunter, trapper, fisher, and provider for his family, and you know my dad who went through the residential school system, you know, possesses the language skills, and then in that third generation, with me born in the city, not equipped and not exposed as much to a lot of those older ways, and just coming to terms with like spending a lot of my life figuring a lot of that out in a way that fits my life.” Much like in his dream, hockey was Mike’s gateway to cultural knowledge and healing, both for himself, and with the youth he would come to support. *Wheeze. Panting.* ‘Argh!’ Trickster proclaims. I look down and see him struggling to tie up his skates. He fumbles with the laces, loops them through the wrong holes. *Smirk.* ‘Need some help, friend?’ I ask him. He shakes his head and shoos me away. *Shrug.* I turn back to watch Mike skating.

Mike graduated from Ryerson with both a BSW and MSW, and has served many Indigenous agencies in the city. “I've been fortunate to be able to combine my passion for sports and recreation and just movement in any way that can add to people's lives,” he shares with a smile. Mike has worked at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto as their recreation coordinator, “being outdoors, doing recreation programming, Camp Kawartha for some of the kids in foster care. You see the difference that it makes and that you know, having teens and having youth, you know, running around feeling like kids is priceless. Right?” He was the recreation coach at Anishnawbe Health Toronto’s Vaughn

Road location, “where they do a lot of work with mental health, addictions, and concurrent disorders…so it's like, the opportunity to provide, you know, physical literacy-style programming in a culturally relevant manner. So, like, opening and closing with a circle and smudging with the medicines.” He worked for Motivate Canada as their Gen Seven Messenger, and in smaller non-profit roles promoting culture and physical activity in northern communities. In one instance, Mike was “able to get, I think it was like, 10 bags of used hockey gear up to the community, and we had this big—I would compare it to sort of a west coast Potlatch ceremony. And it was just like, ‘Hey, you know, show up to the community centre and you can maybe pick out some gear for your kids or a pair of adult skates if you want to be coaching and playing.’ So, those kinds of experiences.” Currently, he works at the University of Toronto’s Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health. *Haha!* I hear Trickster cackle. I glance over and see him—skates on and ready to go. *Click.* He opens the gate and slides out onto the ice with Mike. ‘Woah!’ *Plop.* Trickster falls. Limbs spread out on the rink. “I just think that, you know, health outcomes can definitely be improved through the promotion of being active and that you know, when done in a safe manner—that's being physically safe, but also, verbally and emotionally and spiritually—that you know, my big thing was always like, no, you don't laugh at someone if they're, you know, struggling or make a mistake or you don't come down on them, that's just not our way,” he says, offering Trickster a hand.

“I believe, to the end of the universe that everybody, everybody, everybody can benefit from being more active and that there's really an infinite number of ways for you to do that. A lot of people really enjoy gardening, you know, sometimes community gardens, medicine gardens, traditional dancing, it's really not necessarily just about

mainstream sports or being a competitive athlete," Mike continues, lifting Trickster to his feet. Trickster manages to regain some balance, and continues slowly around the rink, wobbling, and flailing about. Mike's values and teachings really come through in his recreation work, "you have a children or youth rec program and they're playing basketball, it's important to remind them to work together!...This community needs to stick together to be strong, it can't be divided, and if you have conflicts and things like that, that's okay. But you have to manage those and you can't just hold on to grudges. So the point I'm making is that, just because someone has teachings that they've been gifted, to act in a way that's in line with those teachings is not enough, but you need to actually sort of pass those teachings along, stating where it is that you were gifted those teachings." Mike shares how "all those things, hard work, good team skills, you know, taking care of myself and whatever, it all came into my professional life, or, you know, smudging with the medicines in Estonia before a big game and just praying. I pray that I play well, I pray that I don't get hurt and I pray that no one else gets hurt and I pray that everyone has a fun time today. And that's just, that's what I loved about hockey was, you know, those times when you were scared or you were nervous, that it all translated over, you know?" *Swoosh.* He soars past me. When he comes around again, he continues, "When we took a group to Crawford Lake to do some programming and I ended up disclosing a bit about my past and that the youth just didn't know that, and they're like 'Wow, thanks for sharing, man. We just, we didn't know'… And yeah, it doesn't happen in a day and yeah, there's setbacks every once in a while. That's just life. But that, you know, it's all about building, building the resilience that we know our community already has." *Bang!* Trickster hits the boards and falls over again.

Groan. Trickster peels himself back up off the ice. I can see he's getting frustrated with his own skating performance. He's swirling around the rink, but stumbles every few feet. "You know, Indigenous kids and youth being so, so overrepresented in child services and in the jail systems and correctional systems is just unbelievable that, yeah, it's really hard to sort of make sense of all that, and that social workers in the Sixties Scoop being, you know, essentially mandated to apprehend kids, of course for the purposes of assimilation. It's very, very bizarre when you come to terms with all that and then just throw colonization on top of that and it is, it does get overwhelming," Mike says, a heaviness in his tone as he skates slowly past Trickster. "And that's the whole point, is like, every single interaction is a big, big deal. It's not like, hey, oh, it's another day or if I'm having a bad day, too bad! You know? Because it's just such a big responsibility, you know? And it does, it does kind of take its toll, too," he adds. *Pssst. Pssst.* I can hear those whispers again. I see Mike looking back at Trickster, who's sitting on the ice mumbling to himself. "One time, I remember this young person was going through a really, really tough time on a Friday and it was like, my shift ended at 9 o'clock, and I just remember going home, walking home in the rain a little bit and just like, being like, really, really upset for two hours, but basically I just allowed myself to feel that hurt," he shares, making his way to the boards. *Pssst. Pssst. "*If you're working in social work, if you're working in the Indigenous community, it's a great responsibility, it's a huge honour. That there's really no, very little room for mistakes," Mike says, looking over at me. *Pssst. Pssst.* Trickster fumbles his way over to us. *Click.* He opens the gate and extends his arm, offering for Mike to leave the rink first. Mike looks at Trickster, then towards the rink.

Breath. Mike pauses. *Breath.* “Social work is clearly, clearly super challenging,” Mike says to Trickster. “Sometimes super difficult situations where, you know, your education and everything you studied won't necessarily be what you draw upon in the moment of supporting someone who's going through a tough time,” he continues. “But it's certainly super interesting for myself, that being in a social work job, although I never intend to benefit, say spiritually,” Mike says taking a few steps forward on the ice. “You know, it really is up to myself to take care of myself,” he skates further out into the rink, “Don’t give in to anger…take a step back and smudge,” he continues, picking up speed. “Being a part of programming that's being done with, let's say, youth, it's interesting when you do get to benefit from say, you're invited to be in a sweat lodge, maybe with the youth or whatever, and sort of rationalized that of like, ‘Wow, that was actually really good for me. But that wasn't the point, it was for the youth, but there's nothing wrong with that,’” Mike says, making the corner. “I mean, I think a lot of the stuff I went through as a teenager, that's already 20 years ago now. You know, to be in a position to help a young person just to sort of maybe share with them, some of the things you can do or some of the situations you can avoid, that can help them in their lives. I mean, that's a pretty neat position to be in,” he says, soaring around the ice. Lessons he learnt through hockey seem to be helping Mike survive social work, as well. *Swish.* Mike stops quickly on his skates. Trickster rolls his eyes at Mike and steps out of the gate. *Crash.* I look down at Trickster, flat on his back, legs in the air. ‘Looks like you need to find something for your health and wellbeing,’ I say to Trickster. ‘Because I don’t think yours will be hockey,’ I continue. *Smirk.* The sun starts shining brightly again, breaking up the snow and ice. *Blink. Blink.* What was once an ice rink has returned to pavement. *Buzz. Rumble.*

Whizz. Youth fill the space again with their games and energy. Mike is smiling, leaning on the boards. *Whoosh.* A warm wind blows past us. I pause, but hear only children's laughter. Trickster hands his skates to Mike and heads out on the path ahead of me. *Chuckle.* I look to Mike and we laugh. 'Hey Mike, you used to work at Vaughn Road. What's the best way to get up there from here?' I ask. He points the way. I wave goodbye and continue en route to our next landmark.

Chapter Eleven

Storytelling: The Knowledge Gathering Process

Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home (Tafoya, as cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 6).

Inhale. Storytelling. *Exhale.* Such an integral part of my being that it seems almost strange to have to attempt to take something so extensive, so spectacular, so effervescent, and try to offer it up in some concise manner. That's one of the reasons we had to journey a bit farther to get to this chapter, so you have the opportunity to experience storytelling first, and not just think through it, but feel your way through it, bringing you closer to the power of stories. You see, stories are alive! So much so that we are cautioned as young folks not to tell certain stories when we may distract them from the work they are doing out in the universe. My childhood self was simply amazed by this premise! *Wow.* Moving through my day, I wondered if I could catch a glimpse of a particular tale. My grandfather used to tell me the little people were particularly fond of Tic-Tacs. *Chuckle.* Even to this day, when I see someone pull out a pack on the bus, I always take a second look, just in case. I have come to learn that in many ways the fabric of reality is woven with these stories.

You have already been introduced to Archibald's concept of Story Pathways. Well, the landscape is utterly filled with them! Now as an adult, walking through the streets of Toronto the words come to me. They appear up out of the ground and I skip across them like hop scotch. The etymology of the phrase "The Good Red Road" is debated and uncertain. Some link it to Black Elk (Neihardt, 1932); some say it's from largely non-Indigenous origins. Though

Potawatomi Chief ShupSheWana titled his unpublished manuscript, a collection of traditional knowledge from Anishinaabek scrolls and teachings, *The Good Red Road* (ShupSheWana, n.d.). And if you have *ever* met an AIMster (Indigenous folks from the American Indian Movement) in all your life, or been to any number of wellness programs that generation facilitates, you are bound to hear the phrase. For myself, the English words are not nearly as significant as the meaning attached, the meaning being quite similar to teachings I was brought up with about the *Strawberry Path* or the *Sweetgrass Path,* which are really collections of lessons about how to live a good life. Wandering the path of Indigenous social workers, over and over, for many years, the Good Red Road took on some additional meaning. It wasn't only the theme of the work people were doing with community to get to health and wellness, it was a physical presence, a road materializing from the travels of those who have taken on that purpose. Indigenous social workers in Toronto have not just taken up the call of the Red Road, the Strawberry Path, or Sweetgrass Path, they have created one! Like a well-travelled trail through the forest, the pavement holds the route of generations of Indigenous social workers in the city. Much like the markers along the trail that let you know where you are going and who had been there before, the landmarks along this story pathway whisper lessons about what this journey has been like for others, perhaps aiding or cautioning future travelers. They help to make this pathway visible, perhaps even knowable, through the stories of the relationship Indigenous social workers have with their profession.

I should say that in describing storytelling as a data collection process, or tool that is used by an Indigenous research methodology, it is important to recognize the process of growth of this methodology in the academy. Patsy Steinhauer (2001) describes how the articulation of an Indigenous paradigm has progressed through at least four stages,

beginning with Indigenous scholars situating themselves in western frameworks, to fully exercising an Indigenous research approach and introducing their own data collection methods. With this in mind, there have been, and still are, a plethora of data collection tools utilized in an attempt to employ an Indigenous research methodology. Narratives, self-narratives, interviews, and focus groups are common (Weber-Pillwax, 2004, p. 81; Valentine, 2003, p. 138), as well as community-based and participatory action models (Wilson, 2008, p. 115; Viola, 2006, p. 233). Methods deriving directly from an Indigenous approach include: storytelling, as described by Qwul'sih'yah'maht, also known as Robina Anne Thomas (2005, p. 252); the use of community events, as described by Weber-Pillwax (2004); as well as Sharing Circles and Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection, as described by Lavallee (2009). Wilson puts forward that "…as long as the methods fit the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the Indigenous paradigm, they can be borrowed from other suitable research paradigms" (2008, p. 39).

For this project, storytelling is used to uphold this relational nature and focus of Indigenous research. *Cough. Cough.* I look over and see Trickster, bouncing his eyebrows as he clears his throat. 'And so they have the privilege of spending time with me of course,' he says, polishing his nails against his chest. 'Well, you're going to have to wait your turn, Trickster, this isn't actually your chapter.' *Pout.* That's Trickster for you, always trying to find a faster way through the story jumping over important lessons, swinging from one chapter into the next. Sometimes he snickers at me as I move slowly along the path, stepping from word to word, but a story *is* a process, you know. As you can see, we are old friends, he and I. Even with all the trouble we have been through together, he reminds me of how important it is to trust in my relationships that come together to form this path for me to follow. Though, as you know when reading through this dissertation, following the emerging story sometimes seems like a BIG leap of faith. It always seems to take us

where we need to go. I guess that's the thing about stories; there needs to be some trust involved. Trust that stories do not always go in straight lines, that there may be twists and turns that take a story around in circles. Trust that what needs to be said will be said, and trust from the storyteller that the audience will take from the story what they need at that time, no more and no less.

Sharing Stories as Data Collection

Practices of storytelling are as various as Indigenous peoples, families, and communities across Turtle Island. Indigenous academics have sought to explore story as it operates in Indigenous communities, and consider various approaches to storytelling in an academic context. Maggie Kovach (2009), a Cree academic, shares that there are two types of stories; those with mythological elements that are intended to teach or share, and ones she refers to as personal stories. Shawn Wilson (2008) shares that there are three levels of stories: sacred stories which are guided by strict protocols in terms of who, how, where and when they are shared; legends or teachings that may be shaped by individual storytellers but the underlying message remains consistent; and stories of personal experiences. Judy Iseke's (2013) study with Metis Elders worked within the framework of three storytelling types as "mythical, personal and sacred" (p. 559), while expanding on them to including the various aspects within and between these types of stories, including: storytelling as a pedagogical tool for learning life lessons; storytelling as witnessing and remembering; and storytelling as support to spirituality (Iseke, 2013). Jo-anne Archibald (2008) describes the Stó:lō categories of oral narrative as *sxwoxwiyam*, "myth like stories set in the distant past" (p. 84), and *sequelqwe*, "'true stories or news' describing 'experiences in peoples' lives'" (p. 84). While Anishinaabe scholars Jill

Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark distinguish between *Aadizookaanag* "…generally considered 'traditional' or 'sacred' narratives that embody values, philosophies, and laws important to life" (Doerfler et al., 2013, p. xvii) and *Dibaajimowinan* "…generally translated to mean 'histories' and 'news'. They range in time from long ago to today, and often tell of family genealogies, geographies, and historical experiences" (Doerfler ert al., 2013, xviii).

Iseke reminds us that "there is a need to take seriously knowledge found in stories because stories can be spaces of resistance (Iseke, 561). She continues,

> by learning from stories and storytelling, we are a part of a process of recovering from colonization and its effects and of remaking ourselves. In storytelling, we can become who we are meant to be. In the stories we tell of who we are, where we come from, what we understand, and how we belong, we make ourselves and our connections to our world. (Iseke, p. 572-573)

The stories collected in this project, much like the scholars cited above, are stories in the realm of personal experience. Namely, stories related to participants' relationships to the profession of social work. To facilitate the sharing of these stories, I developed two separate storytelling session guides (part one, and part two) to assist participants in their sharing. The first storytelling session guide (Appendix B) was designed to solicit stories related to each participant's relationship with the social work profession. The guide included open-ended questions such as: "Tell me about your relationship to the social work profession"; "When and how did your relationship with social work begin?"; "How has being an Indigenous person impacted your relationship with the social work profession?"; "Has your relationship with the social work profession changed over

time?"; and "Do you have a memorable moment or experience that stands out for you that impacts your understanding of yourself as an Indigenous social worker?"

The second guide (Appendix C), was designed to move participants from stories of their personal experience, into story creating mode. Reflecting on the stories participants had already shared, this guide prompted each participant to begin to think of the various stories they shared as interrelated pieces of a single story. The guide was designed by reflecting on the aspects within Indigenous stories described by the authors above. From the use of metaphors, setting, characters, and humor, to lessons or teachings readers may be left with. They included questions such as: "If you could describe your relationship with social work as a metaphor, what would that metaphor be?"; "Where in Toronto would the story take place? (streets, buildings, neighbourhoods, landmarks, etc?)"; "Who might the characters be in the story? (ex. Maybe human, animal, plant, mineral?)"; and "What is the ambiance/genre of the story? Is it funny, sad, suspenseful?" The second guide served the important purpose of inviting participants to outline the components of their own creative short stories, which will be explored further when we discuss analysis in Chapter Fourteen.

Participant Selection

Trust has been an important component of the research process. You see, although there are tens of thousands of Indigenous peoples in Toronto, the community feels pretty small. *Chuckles.* Never mind six degrees of separation—an Indigenous person in Toronto could probably connect themselves to any other in one or two. Holay. And the Indigenous social worker community here is even smaller! These are the people you not only work alongside, bump into at a meeting, partner on a training initiative, but your entire life also

plays out in front of them in many ways. So I have to be honest with you that the participants in this project are by no means strangers. Just by virtue of knowing I was working on this PhD (for what feels like a century), a few people were already interested in being participants long before the recruitment message even went out! Though I did commission a beautiful recruitment poster from the talented local Indigenous artist Chief Lady Bird that was sent out with a recruitment message to various social service agencies, posted and shared via Facebook and other social media sites, and distributed through the Indigenous Education Network (IEN) and Students for Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) listservs. Without a doubt, the responses that came back were folks who were very much known to me. This may seem like a liability to rigorous research from a post-positivist lens which prays at the altar of objectivity, but, in fact, it made my efforts, and my accountability to the participants, their stories, and the learning that comes from their stories, all the more rigorous. Talk about working up a sweat over making sure the facts, spirit, and intentions of people's stories were reflected in an accurate way! *Phew.* Because these are people I can't, and would never want to, run and hide from. We have relationships to one another, some extensively long standing, and I want to honour those relationships in every step along this journey. These people are entrusting me with intimate pieces of who they are, and so I need to maintain that trust. I wonder how other research conducted with Indigenous peoples would change if researchers had to maintain relationships with the communities whom they were performing largely exploitative projects in? *Hmmm.*

I actually had more responses than I expected would come back. I mean, I wasn't sure how many people would be chomping at the bit to be a part of yet ANOTHER

research project in Indigenous country, but I received some beautiful emails from people explaining how important it would be for them to be a part of this project and share their stories, as well as how excited they were to hear other Indigenous social workers' stories about their complicated relationships with the profession. Originally, I was only seeking five people to do this work with, but with the larger response, and upon consultation with my academic supervisor, Jean-Paul Restoule, we decided to increase the participant size—the more the merrier, right? 'Ya, until you are transcribing!' shouts Trickster. *Chuckle.* I was hoping to interview everyone who came forward, but this was not the case. A few folks contacted me that did not fit the specific criteria set out for this project, and so I had to thank them for their interest but explain that I wouldn't be able to work with them this time. This is an obvious tension in the selection process with Indigenous community, where there are so many people committed to working in community through a variety of supportive roles. The selection criteria for this project was participants who identify as Indigenous (self-identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit), who have completed a BSW or MSW from a recognized program in Canada, and who are or have practiced social work in the city of Toronto, Ontario. The term "social worker" is actually a protected title in Ontario and so the selection criteria was set up to ensure all those who participated in the study were either registered as social workers or were eligible to register as a social worker in the province. This way people would be reflecting specifically on their relationship to the *social work* profession as opposed to many other helping traditions and professions that have their own unique histories and relationships with Indigenous peoples. To further negotiate the tensions in participant selection, I set eligibility for this study as requiring a BSW or MSW, rather then requiring

one to be a "registered social worker". This ensured participants would still be reflecting on their relationship to the profession of social work, but those Indigenous peoples who chose not to register with the college for practical reasons (not required in place of work, cost associated, etc.) or ideological reasons (recognizing it as a colonial institution, disagreement with guiding ethics, etc.) would still be able to participate in the project. There were initially 12 people who did meet the guiding criteria for the study. Once I reflected on the commitment to create these stories with each participant, both for myself, and for the participants, the number of participants dropped to ten. One participant was understandably too busy to participate, and I informed the last person that inquired that I had chosen to limit the study to ten participants due to my own research capacity. The resulting pool of participants are not meant to be a representative sample as quantitative studies may desire, but a qualitative exploration of these individuals' experiences through the gathering and creating of stories.

Meet the Storytellers

You have already come to know seven of the participants, or storytellers, through their incredible stories above. And there are three yet to come in the chapters to follow. This section is to provide you with a quick peek at who these ten people are, and how they met the criteria outlined above. Nicole Wemigwans is our first storyteller. She is from Wikwemikong and Serpent River First Nations. Nicole holds an MSW from Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and has practiced social work in Toronto, through a variety of agencies and initiatives including Ode and Canadian Roots Exchange. Our second storyteller, Kenn Richard, is Métis from St Francis Xavier, Manitoba. He holds a BSW and MSW from the University of Manitoba, and has worked as a social worker in a variety of child

welfare agencies, and the City of Toronto. He is the founding executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. The third storyteller, Jay Lomax, is Dakota from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. He holds a BSW and MSW from First Nations Technical Institute, and has worked in a variety of social work settings in Toronto including Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. The fourth storyteller is Rochelle Allan. Rochelle is Ojibway, and holds a BSW from the University of Victoria and an MSW from Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Rochelle has worked in a variety of roles at First Nations House and the University of Toronto, as well as through her language initiatives at the Toronto Birth Centre, Toronto Public Library, and First Nations School. Tom Grinnell is our fourth storyteller. Tom is a mixed race Anishinaabe man and a member of Fort William First Nation. He has a BSW and MSW from Lakehead University, and has worked in a variety of spaces in Toronto, from his local MPP constituency office to the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. The sixth storyteller is Lindsay DuPré, a Métis woman with family ties along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, with Cree, English, Scottish, Irish and French ancestry. Lindsay holds an MSW from the University of Toronto. She has been based in Toronto supporting Indigenous youth engage at the national level, while also working in community initiatives such as Walking With Our Sisters Toronto. Michael Mahkwa Auksi is our seventh storyteller. His father is from Lac Seul First Nation and his mother is from Estonia. Mike holds a BSW and MSW from Ryerson University, and has worked for a wide range of programs and agencies in Toronto, including Anishnawbe Health Toronto and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

There are two storytellers you have yet to meet: Janet Gasparelli and Harvey Manning. The eighth storyteller is Janet Gasparelli. Janet is a mixed Italian and Haudenosaunee woman from Six Nations of the Grand River. She holds an MSW from the University of Toronto, and is a long-time employee of the Native Men's Residence, also known as Na-Me-Res, here in Toronto. Harvey Manning is the ninth storyteller. He is an Ojibway man from Kettle Point First Nation. Harvey holds a BSW from First Nations Technical Institute and an MSW from First Nations Technical Institute in partnership with Sir Wilfrid Laurier. He has worked in Toronto for a long time, at Anishnawbe Health Toronto, and at Na-Me-Res, where he was the executive director. Our tenth and final storyteller is Faith Chaput. Faith is a Métis woman from Red River, Manitoba, on her father's side. Her mother is from Tayport, Scotland, on the North Sea. She holds an MSW from York University, and has worked as a counsellor in a variety of Toronto agencies and initiatives, including Anishnawbe Health Toronto and other local Community Health Centres.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Continuing the aforementioned theme of trust, and the accountability to those whom have offered you their trust, we can turn to beginning this research relationship in a good way. In my teachings, coming together in relationship always begins with the offering of tobacco. As Doerfler, Sinclair and Stark note:

> [i]n Anishnaabe tradition an offering is a gift. It's a gesture of relationship between people, animals, spirits, and other entities in the universe, given in the interests of creating ties, honouring them, or asking for assistance and direction. Offerings are acts of responsibility. Making one includes acknowledging value,

> promising respect, and affirming the presence of another being. They carry duties matched only by the acceptance of the offer, forming what is hoped to be a mutually beneficial partnership, not only for participants, but for the universe around them. (2013, p. xv)

In both Indigenous and western traditions, the taking or gathering of knowledge requires continuous and informed consent. Though I did not replace the consent form process, I did pair the reviewing of these forms with an exchange of tobacco. Tobbaco, as a prayer medicine, is given by a person who has filled it with their thoughts, wishes, and intentions, and the act of accepting this tobacco from another person is a sign that you understand those thoughts and wishes, and will help that person as they try to fullfil them. The act of giving and accepting tobacco is acknowledging that the research process will be done in a good and respectful way, which some researchers suggest *could* actually replace the written informed consent process (Lavallee, 2009, p. 28). While I sent out the consent forms (Appendix A) and storytelling session guides in advance, when I met with each participant for their storytelling session, I offered them tobacco and we went through the consent forms together.

This establishing of a trusting and accountable relationship with participants was particularly important in this project as participants were electing to use their real names in this publication. This was important for accountability, as too often we see research where incredible wisdom is shared, only to be cited as "some anonymous Indigenous person," and often this knowledge, defacto, is then treated as belonging to the researcher themselves—that they somehow uncovered, discovered, or own it. So I wanted to properly credit participants for the imporant lessons they have left me and readers with. The use of tobacco was an important part of this decision, because written contracts in the western world are discarded or distorted all the time. I mean, look no further than the treaty making process we spoke of earlier. But by invoking spirit, I wanted to tie my

promise to treat the participants' stories respectfully to creation. Because, in the western mind, the worst thing that can happen when a contract is broken is some kind of fight or war between the parties, but for Indigenous people, you also have the universe to answer to. 'So you better double check that spelling, my friend!' Trickster says with a cackle.

Storytelling Sessions

There were ten (10) storytelling sessions total. One per each storyteller participating in the project. I arranged one in-person "storytelling session" with each participant, meeting them at a place of their choosing. Six chose to complete their storytelling session in their place of work, two in their home, one in my home, and one in a library. Storytelling sessions were audio recorded and covered both storytelling session guides. The shortest storytelling session was 52 minutes, the longest was nearly three hours. The average time was approximately one and a half hours per storytelling session.

Though storytelling sessions consisted of myself coming together in relationship with one participant at a time, Sharing Circle protocols helped to guide these interactions. Circle does not require a minimum or maximum amount of participants, and so Circle principles offer important considerations for coming together in a good way with any number of people. Hart discusses responsibilities of those who initiate a Circle, "in initiating the circle, the conductor outlines the process to be followed in the circle. They often emphasize the importance of listening to one another, of not interrupting others when they speak, of respecting what others are sharing and of maintaining confidentiality…the first thing each of the conductors did was arrange the smudge and opening prayer" (Hart, 2002, p. 73). For these storytelling sessions, I brought medicines to smudge with, namely sage. Smudging is a physical and spiritual act to remove any negative energy from the room and participants (myself included) so that we can come

together in a good way, and to speak and hear each other in a good way. Graveline also looks at smudging as a signifier of time and space:

> [i]t serves as a demarcation of time, signifying everyone that 'Circle time' is beginning. It is a signal for the mind to be still and in present time; it provides everyone in the group with a shared embodied experience. As the sweet-smelling smoke encircles the area, it is easy to feel the calming presence of our plant sisters, entering and filling all of those present. (1998, p. 133)

Graveline reminds us that the spirituality invoked in ceremony can help to shed a person's feeling of isolation and restore them to their interconnection with other people, and the rest of creation through spirit (Graveline, 1998, p. 133). Smudging, like all other forms of participation in this project, was voluntary. For some participants, we smudged, for others, smudging is not a part of their cultural or spiritual practice. For some, its presence was enough, and for others, we didn't even unpack it from my bag.

Hart and Graveline outline some basic rules, which we will call responsibilities, necessary for use and participation in Circle. Tenets, themselves, originate from Sacred Circle form and teachings: "a Circle has no head and no tail, no beginning and no end. Everyone is equal in a Circle, the point of reference is the middle, which is both empty and full of everything. Everyone is equidistant from the middle so there is no sense of hierarchy" (Graveline, 1998, p. 130). From this comes the ethic that everyone is to be respected in the Circle. Respect is shown by participating in a good way, we participate both in speaking and listening. If someone chooses to speak, they are not given any time restrictions, and can speak for as long as they need to (Hart, 2002, p. 65). In coming together with participants, there was no limit set on the time we could spend together. I informed participants that the storytelling session guides I had prepared could be completed within an hour, but that they could take as much or as little time as they

required in moving through their stories. So some sessions took about an hour, where others took much longer.

Though these principles allow respectful conduct with others in the Circle, there are also ways of fully participating and engaging myself as a researcher in a good way in Circle. I have been told that if I have something important to say, that I should say it from my heart. I have found this is difficult for people, myself included, who have been socialized in the dominant academic system, which cuts you off at the neck and values only your mind. To really participate in Circle, we need to reconnect ourselves and learn to speak from our hearts, bodies, minds and spirits. The same is true when it comes to listening; we need to not only open our ears to what is being said, we need to open our hearts, to "try to listen from where that person is speaking from'" (Hart, 2002, p. 70). This is important in accountability to the participants, as words recorded in transcripts are devoid of so much context, of affect, emotion, and spirit. To listen with all those parts of ourselves can help us as researchers to better reflect what participants have shared. This was an important aspect of collecting stories or "data collection", as the significance of the story is not just in the words that are said, but how they are shared. I resisted taking notes during the interview process and worked to not just listen openly, but be radically present to all that was happening in a participant's storytelling session. We also need to remind ourselves when we are listening to others that each of us speaks from ourselves. We are not in the Circle to judge or debate another person's experience. Their ideas or experience belongs to them, and stems from their own life, so we speak to others and listen to others with this principle in mind (Hart, 2002, p. 71). This deep and respectful listening is an important contribution to the research process. Instead of trying to solicit particular responses, or ignoring information that may not match one's own belief system, we open ourselves to a more wholistic and diverse experience of a particular phenomenon.

Transcriptions and Member Checking

All storytelling sessions were tape recorded and transcribed. This process resulted in 297 pages of transcription. Though participants have elected to use their real names, identifying information was removed from the transcripts. This is done to ensure confidentiality through the process of doing the research, allowing participants the right to resign from the process with their confidentiality protected, or to proceed using a pseudonym if they chose to before the final paper was submitted. Individual transcriptions were provided to their corresponding storyteller to review and make any changes or additions. There was one in-person storytelling session per participant, storytelling continued via phone and/or electronic correspondence with each participant until they were satisfied with what they had shared. Original recordings were destroyed after transcription was completed.

Though data analysis, how the stories came together, will be described in a subsequent chapter, it is important to note the efforts and tensions for meaningful participant involvement through the drafting and finalization of their creative short story. Though participants worked to outline their stories in the storytelling session, particularly through responding to the second storytelling session guide, highlighting the relationships that exist in their story, I took on the work of providing a first draft of what that could look like in story form. This is an obvious space of power which will be explored more fully when we discuss analysis, but is important to highlight that in the presence of this power imbalance, efforts have been made to remain accountable to the participants and their stories. Once a draft was created of each participant's creative short story, participants were provided with a copy of their own story and invited to redraft, edit, delete and reorient the story in any way they chose. Some participants were heavily involved in the editing and redrafting process, where others provided only minor feedback to the stories you are now journeying through. All the stories that appear before

you have been checked by participants in an ongoing process, from outlining in the storytelling session, to transcripts, first draft, second draft, final draft, all the way to reviewing their finalized story as it appears in the context of the paper as a whole. *Whistle. Whistle.* I see Trickster get up and stroll away. 'Where are you off to?' I ask. 'I've got some edits of my own to attend to,' he responds. *Huh?* I think to myself, as he wonders off through another paragraph.

Chapter Twelve

Janet Gasparelli: Trickster Goes Back to 'School'

Beep! Beep! Traffic is starting to build. It's the afternoon now, a bit cooler, and the sun has begun to lower in the sky. 'Are we there yet?' Trickster says, dragging his body along the sidewalk. *Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle.* Looking at him, you would think we were wandering the desert, scorching hot and in search of water. *Chuckles.* I can't help but giggle at his theatrics. *Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.* A streetcar passes us on the right. 'Can't we just catch a ride or something?' Trickster whines. *Swish.* Another car drives quickly past us. 'We're almost there!' I shout back to him. We are headed north on Bathurst Street, to a little pocket of Indigenous community that begins where this street meets Vaughan Road. From there, it's just about a half kilometre strip of road to Vaughan and St. Clair Ave that holds three Indigenous social service agencies. We are headed to Na-Me-Res, the Native Men's Residence, an Indigenous shelter here in the city. It's just a stone's throw from Sagatay, Na-Me-Res' transitional housing services, and Anishnawbe Health, Toronto's concurrent disorders program—yup, where Mike used to work. *Plop.* Trickster plunks himself down on the curb. 'That's it, I'm not going any further!' he proclaims, arms crossed. *Shrug.*

Hwwiit. Someone whistles towards Trickster. 'Hey, you alright?' I look over and see a group of Native guys hanging out, having a smoke. Trickster eyes the men but quickly turns his head away. 'Humph,' he mumbles belligerently. 'Sorry, I just think he's tired…and probably hungry,' I say to the men. *God knows, he's always hungry*, I think to myself. 'Well maybe yous should go inside, there's beds, water, and some snacks,' one of the men respond. *Plink. Plink.* Trickster's ears perk up at the word "snacks". Another man gestures to the building over his shoulder. I look up and see a big, red brick building. It would be pretty ambiguous if not for the thoughtfully placed wooden boards stacked

around the doorway. The entrance resembles something between a lodge and a log cabin. Either way it's a warm and inviting touch to what would otherwise be a cold brick office building. 'We're here,' I say, looking over to Trickster. He's already up and ringing the doorbell, drool pooling on the left side of his mouth. We made it. I smile. *Buzzz.* The door unlocks, and we head in. People have a lot of preconceived notions of what a shelter looks like, and I've been to quite a few, so those ideas aren't always wrong. But Na-Me-Res definitely stands out from most shelters in the city. This place is pretty beautiful. You can see that the folks who live and work here take a lot of pride in the place. Not in a tidy sterile institutional way—it's still lived in and home-like. There's Indigenous artwork everywhere, and as you walk through you see traditional medicines, smudge bowls and even a big drum that the residents play. In the backyard is a sweat lodge, and you can just smell the ceremony in the air. *Sniff. Sniff.* Trickster takes a big whiff and heads down to the kitchen. *Sigh.*

'Hey Nicole! You made it.' I turn around and see Janet Gasparelli. She's a manager here at the shelter, but through the years I have known her in many different roles through this agency. 'Janet hey, how's it going?' I say with a smile and a handshake. She guides me to her office. *Brrriiing. Brrriing.* The phones are already ringing when we get there. 'Hey Janet, can you check out these numbers?' another staff member says, popping their head in. 'Looks like you're busy these days?' I tease. *Chuckles.* She laughs, 'I guess you can say that'. Janet leans her head out to consult with the staff person. Despite what looks like a demanding workspace, Janet is cooooooooool as a cucumber. It's this innate quality she seems to have. For real. The first time I met Janet, I don't even know how long ago, a young social worker, not much older than myself, I was struck by how professional she was. I immediately admired her, a First Nations woman, hair tied back, knowledgable, confident, dedicated, with a warm smile. 'Wow,' I thought. When *Bring Your Kid To Work Day* comes along, she's the kind of

person who makes me think that maybe I should send mine with her, instead of me! *Haha.*

Janet is Wolf Clan, a mixed Italian and Haudenosaunee woman from Six Nations of the Grand River territory, and a mother of two. It's funny that I mention her confidence, because Janet would tell you that wasn't always the case. "I took—it took me a long time to really—accept isn't the right word, but to own who I was. And that really happened during my MSW program, where because I'm both Italian and First Nations—and that's very clear because I have C-31 status, right?" Though Janet's community is in Southwestern Ontario, she actually grew up in Wawa, on the north shore of Lake Superior. Small town living, surrounded by the bush, two and a half hours away from the largest city, Sault Ste. Marie. Toronto, to Janet, was just this enormous scary place she never wanted to go to! After completing her undergraduate degree in Guelph, she took the plunge and moved to the city to pursue social work at the University of Toronto, where she explains "I could go directly into my Master's to get an MSW without having a BSW." She tells me, "I had the explicit intention in my head to like, complete my degree, stay for one year to get work experience in the city and then leave". *Cough.* 'Uh, and how'd that work out for you?' I ask, clearing my throat in a sarcastic manner. *Chuckles.* We both break out laughing. Because, you see, Janet never left! She's been here for over a decade now, living in the same neighbourhood she first moved into, and working in the same agency that first hired her out of school. You might say Janet has put down some roots in Toronto, but without a doubt she is a fixture of this agency and a familiar face to those who come and go through those doors.

When she moved to Toronto, Janet explains that, "there was a real process, a very conscious process that I brought myself through when I was doing my Master's and focusing a lot of my studies on, you know, mixed race Indigenous people, what that meant, you know, does it mean I'm only half-Native, does it mean I'm full Native? What

does that mean?" Identity for Janet was a major theme of her social work education. I see Janet look back into her memories. *Boop.* A small cloud appears behind her head. *Boop.* Then another. *Boop.* Then another. *Huh?* Within the third cloud images begin to form- Janet smiling in a cap and gown. "And I really—like, I have this—it almost brings up a feeling in me when I think about when I finished that program, I was comfortable, sing loud and proud, I am 100% Native, and I am 100% Italian, and I don't care who agrees or disagrees with that statement," she says with a smile, half swirling in her office chair. Interestingly, Janet's journey through her identity as an Indigenous person and social worker mirrors her work in understanding herself as a mixed-race person, an education that continued beyond the walls of her school.

Thinking back on her youth, the images behind Janet begin to shift. "I always wanted to work with people. It's always strange to me when you talk to young people or even people, like, older, and they don't know what they want to do. For me, there was, I was a kid and I knew I would work with people, I would talk to people," she shares. Still fuzzy, the image looks like Janet is sitting and sharing with someone. "I'm the family—I'm the, you know, their consultant. You can give me a call and ask me about this or ask me about that," she laughs. *Chuckles.* "I wouldn't call myself a charming person—you know some people, they're good with people, they're charismatic? It was never something like that. I like being with people one-on-one, I like talking to people. I like people's stories, I want to know more about, you know, where they came from and what that means and what that means for them now and that kind of thing." *Swoosh.* I look to Janet now. *Swoosh.* Then back at the one in the cloud. "So, for me there was never a question of what I would do, and, as far as I understood, that meant I would be a psychiatrist or a psychologist." Cloud Janet appears to get up and shake another person's hand. "So, what I started to do in the last year of my undergrad degree was meet with people who were doing the things I wanted to do—so like, counsellors or therapists or whatever. Every

single one of them was a social worker. And I just kept being like, well, I don't want to be a social worker, that's not what I'm looking for. And so, you know, the first time and the second time I was—oh, that's weird." I look back to Janet and she scratches her head. "And then at some point you go, wait a minute. I think maybe that's what I'm supposed to be doing. So, it was actually kind of funny. I had so many people in different kinds of organizations just doing things that I thought were things that I would really enjoy doing. Every single one of them was either a social service worker or a social worker!" Janet exclaims, throwing her hands in the air, piercing the cloud. She doesn't seem to notice. "So, I think about child protection, that's what I thought about when I thought about social work. Social workers are the people that come in and take kids away, no. I remember always just thinking I don't want to do that so I obviously don't want to be a social worker. I had no idea that social workers are really the jack of all trades," she says with a smile. So Janet completed her MSW, and came to work right here at Na-Me-Res.

This agency holds a special place in Janet's heart. "I mean, this organization gave me my - you know when you're right out of school and you have no experience and nobody will hire you? They gave me a shot and they gave me a job- that paid $33,000 a year with a Master's degree," she says, laughing. "This is a labour of love," she continues. *Chuckles.* "I don't think—I would ever work in a mainstream organization that didn't serve my community. So, I would leave community organizations, but not unless there was something in the job that connected me to the community in some way. So, being an Indigenous social worker, for me, is completely connected to who I'm working for," she shares. "My community is the one that paid for me to get my education, so I will never forget that. And there's just—there's no, there's no decision to be made about where I'm going, who I'm going to support. That's just always going to be my priority," she says, with a smile and a hand on her heart. She smirks and looks around the room. "This organization was like the wild west when I got here." As Janet shares, images begin to

stir in the cloud just beyond her head. This building, a shelter to some, has been the setting for Janet's education as an Indigenous social worker. "Like, it kind of got to show me everything that's great about my community in social work and everything that's horrible in my community about social work. And so it really helped me to understand where I was. I would say maybe even first and foremost this place." I can see, in the image, Janet in an outreach van with a couple of other community members. I'm completely caught off guard when one waves at me. *Yikes!* I lean in a bit, sliding to the right of my chair, trying not to look ridiculous in front of Janet. *Hmmm.* I squint to get a better look. 'Trickster?!' I mouth without making a sound. 'Hey sister!' he shouts back at me. *Sigh*. "I have a memory of picking up a clothing donation and I was working in outreach at the time. So we were in a vehicle—and we're always in pairs. This would've been in the first months I worked here. And so we pick up this big clothing donation and my co-worker says 'Why don't we pull over and go through it?'" Janet shares. I see Trickster gesture to the bags in the back of the van. "I say, sure, why not? I'm really green, whatever. So we go through, we pick out the things we each want and put them in our bags and take them home" as she talks, I look to Trickster. *Blink.* He winks at me. "Even at the time going, 'Hmm is this weird?' And, but also not having the guidance and support to know what was right or wrong. And then, so that would be an example where I was put in a position where I was just, I could've done something very different. And that was the culture of the organization, that was just, normal stuff that happened," Janet says sincerely. *Swish.* Trickster and the other images disperse.

"It's so different now. And I got to be a part of that," Janet says, looking over at her certificate of social work registration. "It's never been a—yeah. So, but for me there's no question, I'm in a management position, I don't need to be a member of the college, but for me, I have pride in what I do and—and there's, for me, there's a piece around professionalism. So, wanting that accountability," she shares. "I would just say as time

passes, I just continue to gain respect for what social workers do and gain more and more pride for being a part of that group of people," she continues. The images stir. "And so over time I have realized that and so clients always joke—so I've been gone for different periods of time from this organization, right? So, I came back from maternity leave and I'll have clients pop in and be like, 'Oh, I'm told I shouldn't get on your bad side,'" she says with a jokingly serious look. She continues, "it sounds bad, but it's also something that I've worked towards. I'm definitely a bleeding heart, I'm a little on the soft side, both working with clients and working with my team members, I just want people to be okay and feel good and whatever. So disciplinary stuff never feels good. But I have worked towards consistency and fairness." As Janet shares, in the cloud I see what looks like Trickster again, sitting in a large chair. But this time he's wearing glasses, legs crossed, and holding a pad of paper. "I'm a very professional person and understanding the black and whites and why those rules are in place and the importance of them and all that kind of stuff. As an example, you know, I have a clinical supervisor. She's non-Native, she's phenomenal, but she would always say, you shouldn't have family photos in your office, you shouldn't—everything is very depersonalized." Trickster gestures with a pen, and scribbles something on his pad. "There are professional and ethical guidelines around interactions with clients," Janet shares. As she shakes off the memories, the clouds begin to break up. I can sense some competing pressures on Janet's identity as an Indigenous social worker. "It's not the same as being—being an Indigenous social is not the same thing as just being a social worker. It's really different, and especially when you're working with your community," she tells me. I can still see Trickster in a piece of the cloud. He peers out from his glasses, as he floats closer to the floor. Reflecting on her clinical supervisor, Janet shares, "I intrinsically have never felt like that's the way to approach my work as an Indigenous social worker. And I see what she's saying and I agree with what she's saying, but it doesn't work for me as an Indigenous social worker

working with my community." Trickster grabs onto Janet's chair, trying to hold on before his piece of cloud disappears. "I'll show my clients, I'll tell them stories about my kids, I will—It's not like I'm going through pictures with them, but I wouldn't hide pictures of my kids from them. I'll share information about my personal life, within reason…I mean, it's a part of our culture, right? For us to work together, I need to know who you are and where you come from. And you need to know those things about me. Right?" she shares.

Amazing that, despite being pulled in various and sometimes opposite directions through her relationship with social work, Janet appears quietly self-assured. It seems to point to some new-found peace or understanding with herself as an Indigenous person and social worker. Janet shares, "One person who has played a big role for me has been—we started as peers in this organization. She's still here. But she's an older woman, and she has taught me so much about being an Indigenous person, or an Indigenous woman, specifically." In one of the pieces of the cloud is an image of an old Anishinaabe woman with long white hair hanging down and framing her big kind eyes. Janet continues, "And we've just managed to create this really, really wonderful relationship where—she's kind of like a mother to me. And on an emotional and spiritual level. And I am a, what would you call it? I'm trying to find the right word. So she comes to me for social work support, more like clinical support. But I go to her for emotional support." The woman smiles as she looks over at Janet. "She has just been such a strong person in my own personal development, but I mean, that would relate to my social work practice as well," Janet shares. "Some of the best of social work being, that I get to be a part of ceremony that I've never been a part of before, right? And so there's such a strong sense of, what's the word I'm looking for? There's so many cultural opportunities here in the organization that are provided to the clients and just bleed into everything that we do," she says, moving towards the doors of her office. "I'm figuring out what it means to be an Indigenous woman, period. And figuring out what it means to be an Indigenous social

worker is like a whole—is intertwined with that," Janet continues staring out into the agency. "And so kind of being able to be exposed to all of those different things and . . . having to figure out partially on my own and partially with the support of other people around me," she says. Janet looks back towards the old woman, their eyes meet, and the clouds disappear. It's clear to me this agency isn't just the brick and mortar that holds the building in place, but all the people who fill it, who have been part of Janet's learning journey.

Janet is smiling as she moves back towards her desk. She sits in her chair and looks towards me. "I went to get my spirit name and I'd had a friend who'd gone before me to get hers and so she told me what it was and she was like, I just don't get it. She's like, I don't understand what it means, and I—And so I was really worried going in. I was like, what if I'm not doing the right thing, or what if I don't understand my name?" Janet shares. "And so he told me my name is *Who Carries the Medicine*, and I almost, I just had this huge smile on my face cause it's like, oh my god! I get it! I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, this is, you know, this is what I'm meant to do," Janet says with a laugh. She looks at me, leans in and says, "And so that's why I say being a social worker is me and being Indigenous is me." Janet explains that she has an idea to place the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers' ethics on her wall right next to a copy of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. "One of the really important things as an Indigenous social worker, for me, is remembering the Seven Grandfather teachings, and those help me so much. I mean, they can help anybody in any part of their life, but as an Indigenous social worker, I just feel like they are perfect to help guide in your practice and in your life. They just—whenever I'm stuck with something, I go back to them," Janet says, looking to an open space on her wall. "I find being a social worker is just a part of who I am and, learning, you know, what being an Indigenous person means in an urban setting, working in an urban Aboriginal organization, just over time—I've had ten

years to do this," she shares. Much like her mixed heritage, Janet claims both aspects of herself fully. Learning that she is 100% a social worker and 100% an Indigenous woman. With a smile on her face and a hand on her hip, Janet leans in and says, "so for me now to think about being a social worker and being Indigenous, they're just—I've just come to a place where I can't tease them apart." *Brrring. Brrring.* Her phone is already ringing off the hook. As she picks up the phone, even in that small gesture, I can see her appreciation for this place. I realize then that I owe much of what I see in Janet not to her MSW program, but to the education that happened right here at Na-Me-Res. I thank Janet for taking time out of her busy schedule to talk with me. We say our goodbyes and I leave Janet's office. Making my way to the exit, I hear something in the distance. 'Woah!' someone shouts. *Boom! Bang! Crash!* Sounds like it's coming from the kitchen. I look to the right. *Woosh.* Then crank my head back to the left, following Trickster running quickly past me! He's covered in flour and tomato sauce. *Argh.* 'What did you do now!?' I shout, following him through the front door. *Oh.* Perhaps some of us will never learn. *Chuckle.*

Chapter Thirteen

Harvey Manning: Trickster and the Wolf Pack

Thud. I close the door behind me and follow Trickster back to the curb outside of Na-Me-Res. *Beep. Beep.* Cars are piling up along the road. It's rush hour now. Annoyed and with one hand on my hip, I ask him, 'Did you at least find that snack you were looking for?' He's still covered in residue from the kitchen. *Growl.* The rumbling of his tummy tells me otherwise. 'Hey, need a smoke?' one of the guys outside hollers towards us. *Shuffle. Shuffle.* We wander over. *Click.* Trickster lights a cigarette and takes a puff. *Cough.* We chat with the group for a little. A few guys use the services here, a few have stayed here in the past. Others tell us they prefer to "rough it" and gesture to their packs and roll mats. There's lots of laughter. The guys tease a bit. 'Were you trying to make a snack or become a snack?' one man, Pete, says, pointing out the flour clinging to Trickster's clothing. *Cackle*. I can't help but chuckle. Another man, Greg, wraps his arm around Trickster, pulling him close, inviting him to laugh along with the group. 'Take care guys, have a good one,' an employee of Na-Me-Res says before leaving for the night. 'That's our cue,' says another man named Hawk. 'Time to roll out,' replies Jim. *Poof!* And just like that, they transform into wolves. 'Wow!' I shout, unable to control my amazement. 'You're welcome to come along,' says Pete, now a large black wolf. 'We are headed south for the night,' says the grey one, Jim. They nod to Trickster and I, then look to each other. *Woosh!* Together the pack takes off quickly, kicking up dust in their wake. *Cough. Cough. Cough.* Trickster waves away the haze of debris. 'We'll never catch up to them!' he says in defeat. I pause to think. *Ding. Ding. Ding.* I hear the streetcar coming to a stop at the corner. I take Trickster by the arm and motion towards the car. 'We can try,' I say with a smirk.

The pack runs south along Bathurst. We aren't quite able to keep up on the streetcar. I peek out the window, watching the clouds pass and the hordes of people headed home at the end of the day. *Aaarooo!* A sound interrupts my daydreaming. As we approach Queen Street, I can see the wolf pack on the corner. *Clatter.* We push open the doors and jump off the car. 'Hey friends, you made it,' says a tawny wolf named Hawk, I think, before he jumps into an epic tug-of-war match. Everyone seems to be having a good time, howling, play fighting. Even Trickster jumps in on the action. I see a few wolves I don't recognize from before. The pack has grown in size from what it was at Na-Me-Res. *Snarl. Chuckle. Grunt.* Amongst all the jostling, I didn't realize the men had come back to their human form. 'Nicole?' I feel a tap on my shoulder. I turn around. 'Harvey Manning! How's it going?' I say, smiling. 'I didn't think I would find you here,' he says with a laugh, and then turns back to the crowd distributing cups of coffee. Harvey is Ojibway from Kettle Point First Nation, so he knows a thing or two about being displaced. His mother was born there but was forced to move under the War Measures Act, when the Canadian government removed everyone from the reserve and turned it into an army base during WWII. His family was uprooted and dispossessed, and government promises to return the land to the First Nation once the war was over never materialized, so Harvey's family lived scattered about for quite some time. It was not until about 20 years ago that the land was given back to Harvey's community, he tells me, "but a lot of it we can't use because it was also used for bombs and you know, practice. So". So Harvey was raised in the country, with his mom and his non-Indigenous father.

Harvey's pops knew life would be challenging for his Indigenous kids: "It's kind of a funny story. I think 'cause of colonization, and what I've been through as a young man, you know, my father told me you have to learn how to be a fighter because you're Aboriginal, so you need to know what to—so, he made all—we had 7 brothers. He made

us all learn how to fight, whether it would be karate or boxing." One of the men spars with Harvey jokingly. I ask Harvey how he came to live in Toronto. "I was sent here by the police!" he says with a laugh, one of those full body chuckles. My eyes grew wide. "I got in trouble in a small town and the police told my mom—I was, I think I was 14 at the time—they told my mom either I had to leave or they're going to charge me. So, my mother sent me to Teen Challenge here in Toronto." Harvey was a prolific scrapper. "I spent my time in and out of Teen Challenge until I turned 16 and then kind of moved back and forth from Toronto to the country and travelled all over the place. Jumped freight trains across the country and—but, eventually, you know, 17-18, I just settled in Toronto and my first place I lived was actually Native Men's Residence." I follow Harvey through the group. I begin to think out loud, 'It's pretty wild that you used to live at the shelter, Harvey, considering you came to'—"I came to run the place, yes," Harvey finishes my sentence. Yup, Harvey eventually became the Executive Director of NaMeRes, but left to take up a position at Anishnawbe Health Toronto. You can see why Harvey's such a familiar face in these parts—he's been living and working in the Indigenous street-involved community for decades! Not the same generation as Kenn, but the first generation of people to access the services from agencies started by that cohort. Services many folks in my generation may think were always a part of the landscape. Harvey witnessed the early days of these organizations. In fact, he was one of the first people to live at Na-Me-Res when it started providing shelter services in the 80s.

When the jokes and coffee cups run dry, Harvey begins to say his goodbyes. Shaking hands, and exchanging hugs. 'I've got to get back to the office,' he tells me, and asks if I want to join. 'Headed that way myself,' I tell him. Trickster waves us off. He's in the middle of a card game and isn't going anywhere. We start to leave the group. "Queen and Bathurst," Harvey says to me, looking back at everyone on the corner. "Big part of my life. One, that's where I used to go when I was younger to hang out with

friends and drink and get crazy, and then when I changed my life, I think that was where I went to help people who were on the street or in bars, in rough shape. You seen a lot of Aboriginal people there." We talk as we walk, heading east along Queen Street. Harvey nods towards an upcoming corner. "University and Queen where I knew a lot of people who would go there to sleep on the grates. And I know that one thing that sticks in my mind is the grate was left open, I don't know, by the city or something, and one young man went inside to sleep. But that's where he died because it was just too much heat and too much alcohol. And he died underneath that grate that night, which was a really sad moment, you know, in my life. But those are kind of really strong kind of places that I'll always remember." We pause for a moment. "No, I don't want sad," Harvey says, reflecting on his time on the streets. "Aboriginal people, they have all these crazy, crazy jokes and they frickin' laugh so much, and it doesn't matter if they're on the street or not. They have such a great sense of humour," he says with that full body chuckle. Reflecting on the good times. As we wander, Harvey talks fondly about his past: "You know, a lot of these guys on the street, they all stuck together. Especially Aboriginal guys. They always helped each other out, they always, you know, did certain things for each other. But they were a community. And kind of they remind me of wolves who really helped each other and protected each other and fed each other, and if someone went down, you know, someone tried to help them in some kind of way." I can tell that these guys showed Harvey what Indigenous community can be.

Shuffle. Shuffle. "Yeah, they're always—to me they've always been like that, you know, and even when they try to sober up, many of them try to do it together. You know, maybe they didn't make it but they tried to be together, 'Let's go to treatment together. Let's do this together. Let's go in there to do drumming,' and you know?" Harvey says, and then turns towards me. "There's always a lot of wonderful characters that, you know, wanted to be together one way or another. We always know that sometimes being

together is not, you know, sometimes you need time apart to grow and get into a pace that you're comfortable." He takes a moment to collect his thoughts. And so Harvey slowly started a journey independent from the pack. "I didn't really know what social work was till, you know, a few years ago. But I realized that I had been doing it for many, many years," he tells me. "I've been in and out of Toronto for so many years, but when I finally really settled here, I -and still living at Native Men's Residence. I got a - started as a volunteer for Anishnabwe Health," he shared. "It was through volunteerism that I've started. Then I started doing street patrol, and I did street patrol for years and years," he says, as we turn north onto Jarvis. We eventually make it to Gerrard, approaching the Babishkhan Unit of Anishnawbe Health Toronto, where Harvey's office is located. *Phew.* We stop on the steps of the agency and take a seat. "Yeah, the street patrol started here and so I worked on the streets. And I just loved it, I just love being out there, I love being with the people. And I just, you know, come here, cook food, make sandwiches, and go out until 1 o'clock in the morning, 2 o'clock in the morning - whatever it takes," he says, staring at the yellow brick building.

I ask Harvey why he decided to go back to school as an adult to pursue social work. He responds, "My fighting spirit, but also there was a real lack of confidence. I think being Aboriginal and the way we were treated, and that was part of the fighting part, but I had a real low self-esteem because of the names and the many, many, fights in schools, public schools. And I think that—I left high school early, and it was because of racism. But I think that, you know, I would never have become a social worker—it's because of my sister. And she is also a social worker, so she was ahead of me." He tells me that his sister completed the entire admissions package without him, just signed and submitted it herself. "We grew up in the same household, same kind of - and she just thought, you know, this is probably the best thing for you. And you know what? It was, it was the best thing for me. And that's how I became a social worker, through fraud!"

Harvey howls, slapping his knee. *Chuckle.* I can't help but laugh along. What a joker. Harvey is unique from some Indigenous social workers in that his education was completed entirely in Indigenous specific programs, providing a culturally based social work education. He shared his gratitude for the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) for helping him complete his BSW, saying, "it got me through something I would never been able to do, I think that they—looking at me as a person, as a person who was more of a manual labour kind of guy—they really, they really fought hard for me to learn how to write and learn how to do certain things, and they really built my confidence in speaking and doing presentations and being kind of, using my imagination and creativity. I think it was wonderful in that way. I think FNTI was really—it was a good thing." His experience in a program designed with the unique experiences of Indigenous learners in mind was so positive that he decided to enrol in an MSW program that was also culturally based. He shares, "I decided, you know what? If I don't do it now, I'm not going to do it. So I just kept going and I went to Wilfrid Laurier, and it was another great program where we really learnt a lot about ourselves. And you could see it was a school that was—really challenged you." Harvey continues, "and you could see some people were, were really struggling with being challenged, just about their own—who they are, their spirituality, themselves. And I think that many of us made it through, you know, but we've learnt about who we are. And some didn't make it 'cause they just weren't ready for facing the reality." He reflects on himself now, as an Indigenous person and social worker, saying "What's really helped me and really made me who I am is the ceremonial part of it and the spiritual part." He continues, "We're much more spiritual. We're so connected to land and to the force which is—many people call our first family. And that's who makes me an Indigenous social worker. I think, knowing who I am and knowing where I come from and knowing my, you know, my culture." It seems that social work

education and experience has connected Harvey to whole new dimensions of Indigenous community.

"I think being able to share that with the people that are out there still struggling, I think that's our biggest saviour, is ceremony and spirituality and history and knowing who we are, knowing why we're in these situations. I think that's what brings people off the street, I think that's what saves people, and I think there's a lot of methods that we could help to help more people, but we just need to understand ourselves better," Harvey tells me. 'Aye!' I hear Trickster call out. He's making his way towards us along the sidewalk. I look back at Harvey, and can see he learnt a lot in his solo journey. *Flop.* Trickster puts one foot on the stoop and leans against the railing. 'This where your fancy office is Harvey? I'd love to have a look,' Trickster says with a sly half smile. 'It sure is,' Harvey replies, leading us into the building. The agency appears to be empty. It's well after six p.m. now, so everyone has left for the day. Except Harvey. He opens his office door. *Woosh.* Trickster blasts past him and into Harvey's chair. *Screech.* He swivels around before planting his feet up on the desk. *Plunk.* 'So, this is who you roll with now,' Trickster says, reaching out towards the other offices. 'Lavish,' he continues, feeling the arms of the chair. Harvey looks to Trickster and shares, "You know, one person made a comment on how much money I was making. I don't know if he even knows it's not that much money," Harvey says with a chuckle. "But some people see me differently, I guess," he says, walking into the office. He continues, "I can't really say because I got a piece of paper that it's changed me a whole lot. I think it's made me open up my ideas about theories and, you know, and counselling and western and traditional ways." Harvey walks towards the desk where Trickster is sitting and shares, "I think that has helped me see things better, but I just don't think, you know, being a social worker has really changed who I've always been, and that's always someone who's worked on the streets almost all my life." Trickster leans back in the chair, resting with his hands behind his

head. “Now, I know I'm in management and other things, but my heart is social work, and it's being, you know, with the people and doing things out in the streets,” Harvey says, as Trickster leans back even further. “Yeah. And being homeless, too. Being homeless and being able to know what they go through and standing in a welfare line, and you know, going to different soup kitchens. And you know, it's a lot of work. People don't think it's a lot of work, but it's a lot of work being on the streets, for sure,” Harvey shares. *BAM!* Trickster flies backwards right off the chair! *Groan*. He pulls himself off the floor and stands rubbing his head. “You find a stronger pack, you know? And then, you know, once you become strong with that pack, you can come back and help that other pack and help some of those members of that pack, you know,” Harvey says.

A humiliated Trickster makes his way out of the office. Despite Harvey’s solo journey through social work, it appears he hasn’t forgotten about the wolf pack. Even as the sun starts to set, he continues with his community in mind. “I would want the people to—don't be afraid of the people out there, don't be afraid of Aboriginal people. They don't—they really are so giving and kind. And you know, and you know when you go and talk to somebody on the street, they're always open to talking to you,” he says to me, making his way around the desk. “Always. You know. So, just remember, Aboriginal people are just kind, giving, and community-focused, that have gone through a long legacy of pain and colonization and what it brings,” he continues, plunking down into his chair. “My memorable moment was when I realized that these guys on the streets are just, me and you. And they've just taken, you know, a turn in their lives,” he says, before booting up his computer. *Breath.* I can see Harvey’s still got a lot of work to do, its seems the devotion he learnt on the street also filters into his social work practice. It’s getting late. I say goodbye to Harvey and make my way out his office. The room is growing darker. I look back to wave at Harvey, but instead, illuminated by the glowing computer screen, all I see is a scruffy brown wolf.

Chapter Fourteen

Being and Creating Story: Exploring Analysis

Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism, where we can create models and mirrors where none existed, and where we can experience the spaces of freedom and justice. Storytelling becomes a space where we can escape the gaze and the cage of the Empire, even if it is just for a few minutes (Simpson, 2011, pp. 33-34).

So we made it to analysis! *Flop.* Here I sit amongst hours and hours of storytelling recorded onto hundreds of pages of transcriptions. *Whistling.* Wait a minute—what's that sound? *Hwee, hwee, hwee, hwoo, hwoo.* Where's that whistling coming from? I scan the pages strewn across my floor. *Aha!* There he is. I should have known. Shrunken down to type size, it's Trickster. *Gasp!* I can see the corner of the story is disappearing! I jump onto the page and run over. I find Trickster with a giant bucket of whiteout correction fluid! 'What in the world are you doing?!' I yell. 'Who, me?' says Trickster casually, paintbrush in hand. I throw my hands up in shock and confusion. 'Relax, I'm restructuring,' he tells me. 'Restructuring? What the heck do you mean?!' I say, my mouth gaping open, horrified. 'You know, finding the themes, tossing the rest,' he continues at his task. *Huh?* Panicked, I pace the page, thinking. *Splatter.* 'Hey, what are you doing now?' I say, wiping the corrective fluid from my face. 'Collateral damage,' Trickster shrugs, taking his paintbrush to my arm. 'Holaaay!' I say exacerbated, pushing him away and plopping down on the half-disappeared paragraph. I need to pull myself together here. *Cringe.* I glance over at my right hand and wiggle my fingers to make sure they are still there. *Whew.* You see, analysis can be tricky.

Wilson (2008) explains how the linear logic of dominant research paradigms look at, or "manage", a topic by breaking it down into smaller portions. This is challenging for an Indigenous research methodology, because by breaking things down into their smallest

pieces, you are destroying the relationships around them (2008, p. 119). 'Exactly,' says Trickster, lifting his brush into the air. *Plop.* A blob of correction fluid falls on to his face. 'Uh oh?' he reconsiders out loud. Rather than deconstruction, Wilson describes an Indigenous methodology as synthesis (2008, p. 121). This poses challenges with analysis, particularly in academic institutions. This struggle was echoed by author Charlotte Loppie in her study with Mi'kmaq women on midlife health, who expressly notes her disappointment in her arrival at major themes, which conflicted with the holism and relational focus of the Indigenous paradigm she worked to employ (2007, p. 278). This study highlights a primary challenge of an Indigenous methodology, of engaging in analysis and presenting findings in a way that is harmonious with Indigenous principles. Though more work is being done to further develop Indigenous approaches to analysis and presentation of findings, Lavallee proposes weaving points and themes back together in a collective story, keeping individual stories intact and writing about participants as characters (2009, p. 34). Likewise, Wilson puts forward the use of metaphor and symbolism in both analysis and presentation. This is a way that the audience of the research can better form a relationship with findings that sometimes feel abstract (Wilson, 2008, p. 124).

As described previously, if reality is composed of relationships and the purpose of research is to glean an understanding of reality, then an Indigenous research methodology studies relationships. Stories themselves are a great tool for understanding an Indigenous worldview, and by extension are an excellent tool for not just conducting, but analysing, Indigenous research. A story is not a solid thing in and of itself, a self-enclosed or discernible point or object in the universe. To return to Wilson's metaphor about research, a story, too, is like a constellation that presents itself in the sky, made up of the connections of light emanating from the relationship between stars, and between these

stars and the sky, space, the moon, the distance from the earth, and the human eye. Stories embody this relational core of an Indigenous worldview and research. A story is a collection of relationships between people; community; characters; context; place or setting; storyteller, audience, and reader; past, present, and future. Hundreds of factors like these form a web of relations that we discern as "a story".

Like Wilson and Lavallee, I too want to keep individual stories intact, and write about participants as characters in their own stories. A series of Trickster stories, as you are coming to know them. To the western academic, I would describe these almost as creative nonfiction stories, a genre of writing that uses literary techniques to present a factually accurate narrative. 'Huh?' says Trickster whipping the fluid from his face. 'You know, like those books that invent a plot or character to move you through learning about a real historical event,' I respond. 'Oh!' Trickster replies, nodding his still white speckled head. Indigenous storytelling, however, is both its own rigorous discipline, and a way of life. So it is important to say that although these stories share some qualities with creative nonfiction, Indigenous storytelling is absolutely unique from any western storytelling traditions, with its own origins, rhythms, principles, and intentions. I would never espouse that I am of any level of skill that some very learned storytellers in my community are, with their decades of apprenticeship and infinite hours of observation. It is important to me to acknowledge this rigor, while also naming that in this way, I am a novice. However, I have largely experienced our stories in this way—layers and layERS and LAYERS of truths wrapped in ever-changing plots and settings. It is my hope to honour the spirit of storytelling while moving through a largely western academic process.

Speaking of layers, analysis for this Indigenous storytelling project also moved through a series of stages. 'Speaking of stages, I'm going to take stage left here to go

clean myself up,' Trickster says, before jumping off the page.

Okay, as I was saying, a series of stages, not separate, but feeding back into one another, interdependent, with various points of entrance, flowing in multiple directions, like a helix. The first stage is refocusing our analysis. Here's where we get to a significant fracture between Indigenous and western ways of knowing, described above by Wilson as the difference between deconstruction and synthesis. To better demonstrate this, consider for a moment, the efforts of physicist over generations to uncover the smallest building blocks of matter. To clear away all else and isolate the atom, as this singular unit would hold the secrets of the universe. This is absolutely an approach yielding incredible discoveries that pursuits of western knowledge—research most specifically—is analogous to. From all we have learned so far, not only from the incredible thinkers to come before us cited throughout this paper, but from community, ceremony, teachings, family, and creation itself, it is clear to me that the focus for Indigenous ways of knowing is wholly unlike this pursuit of western research, as it is not reductionist, but expansive! Where western analysis focuses on the identification of particular points (atoms, themes etc.), an Indigenous analysis is interested in identifying the relationship(s) between them. For example: POINT_____(Relationship)_____POINT. This is expansive, as understanding this relationship between two points is not possible outside the various other relationships this one is a part of. I would posit that when we expand to reflect on the relationships beyond those most immediately connected to the relationship of interest, extending our inquiry alllllllllllllll the way out, as far as we can take it, to creation itself, even, is when we begin to know. The farther you take it, the more you realize the points themselves are but clusters of relationships. The secrets of the universe do not live within the being of a single point, but in understanding the nature of the space between, the nature of the relationships that hold all the points together. This is an approach to analysis that is embodied in story, a way to explore the nature of relationship, through an

expansive view of relationships impacting the phenomena of interest. For this project, the spaces between these relationships that hold the story together are referred to as path(way)(s): POINT_____(path(way)(s)_____POINT. Specifically, I am interested in the relationship between Indigenous social workers and their profession. And as you can see through the stories journeyed through thus far, this relationship comes into focus when we can uphold the web of relationships it is a part of, the pathways of Indigenous social workers in Toronto. So let's return to the idea of *story pathways* as being both metaphorical and physical as we move forward.

Not unlike narrative research, I would say that data analysis in Indigenous storytelling seeks out the relationships that hold the story together, through "dramatic recall, strong metaphors, images, characters, unusual phrasings, puns, subtexts, and allusions…sequence of events, a 'plot,'" (Richardson, 2004, p. 481), the elements within the web of relationship of a story. Many of the abovementioned components were inquired about within the storytelling sessions with participants, where they were asked to share about their relationship to social work, and to reflect on setting, characters, plot, and genre of the stories they shared. In this way, data analysis was built directly into the data collection process. This is a significant difference of working with Indigenous storytelling as research, where analysis is not an isolated step in a linear process, but something that is ongoing throughout the whole of the project. The second storytelling guide, in particular, invited participants to revisit their own stories in an intentional manner to highlight the *pathway* of their story. This brings us to the second stage of data analysis, *metaphorical pathways*, arriving at a guiding metaphor with participants and beginning to build a story around it. Again, the *path* being those relationships that hold the story together, that give the story its shape and direction. The second storytelling session guide begins with asking participants to reflect back the story of their relationship with social work as a metaphor. A metaphor describes something in a way that is not

literally true, but helps to explain or make a comparison. This is particularly helpful with understanding abstract phenomena, such as the nature of a relationship. This is significant for storytelling analysis! It highlights the nature of the relationship the participant has with social work, and it provides the pathway that shows how the stories they have shared should be organized to reflect the qualities of the metaphor. For example, Nicole's metaphor was about the feeling of being around a big drum at a pow wow and the journey back to community. Jay's was about feeling like, and working to free oneself from, the restraints of a puppet or caged bird. Lindsay's was about her efforts as intricate beadwork and social work as a pair of scissors. Some participants were quick to identify the metaphor for their relationship with social work, perhaps obvious to them after sharing about their experiences. Others had to move through the entire second storytelling session guide before realizing their metaphor. Like Harvey, for example, who, after reflecting on the characters, setting, humour, and genre of his story, found his metaphor of the wolf pack. A reflection of community values, where one may have to journey away for a time, but will always return to contribute to their pack.

To help participants arrive at or fine tune their metaphor, the guide attempted to reflect Indigenous storytelling tradition by making space for the spiritual dimension, asking about characters as not solely human but as animal, mineral, plant, or spirit, all of which were taken up by various participants. It also asked about sense of humour, a significant element in Indigenous storytelling, that is uniquely Indigenous, and a show of strength and resilience in the face of ongoing settler colonialism. In my experience, even when sharing the most cryptic tales, we always seem to find a chuckle. Finally, the guide inquires as to what participants hope the audience or readers of their story would be left pondering, as we know Indigenous storytelling is a great exercise in critical thinking, where listeners are left to make meaning upon their own reflections or revisiting of a story. These points were important for me in taking up ethics of trust and accountability,

so I wouldn't be imposing all my own story analysis, and participants could direct the transition of their story from fact to creative non-fiction. In this way, participants completed the first layer of analysis. By sketching out the *metaphorical* pathways of their stories, they began connecting those various elements to reveal a form or organism that we can begin to discern as a story.

The third stage of analysis was *moving from metaphorical to physical pathways*, using the written transcripts to locate the physical pathways between participants. After recording our sessions, each participant's storytelling was transcribed verbatim. These transcriptions were sent to participants who reviewed them, offered any edits, corrections, or changes that they wished to their sharing about their relationship to social work or the story elements as they conceived them. Participants were reminded that they have full ownership over their transcripts, and were encouraged to freely alter or maintain anything to ensure their comfort with what they are sharing. Once the transcripts were returned to me, I had the approved pathway to begin to wander through each person's story, a phase of analysis where rather than identifying important *points*, we began to identify the *connections* between them. This brings us to the physical dimension of these story pathways. With the collection of transcripts in hand, I could also identify the larger pathway I would travel through this research. With each participant's identified setting or landmarks for their story in mind, I laid the transcript out on the floor in a physical representation of where that story was situated in the City of Toronto. Starting from where I was situated, in my home in the downtown core, I could see the physical pathway of the stories of Indigenous social workers in Toronto. The places they transported me to in their stories would be the path I would follow in my analysis. This pathway is embedded in the unique context of this land, the land that *connects* the participants' narratives to each other, and to the topic of this research. This is represented in the order the stories appear in this project, highlighting the path as I walk or s*huffle* along it with

readers. This is an example of how Indigenous analysis works. The physical pathway I set out to travel between landmarks is emblematic of tracing relationships within each participants story.

The fourth stage of my analysis can be understood as *revisiting physical pathways*, listening back to the recordings of the storytelling session guides and heading out to the physical places these stories take place in. Though these stories would come to be recorded here in a written form, it was important for me to keep the oral tradition of Indigenous storytelling ever present in my mind. Listening to the recording of a participant's storytelling helped to bring me back into their unique voice, rhythms, and emotional expressions. While listening, I am brought right back to our time together, and I can see their body language and feel the emotion evoked through their voice. One benefit to living in the territory that these stories take place on is being able to travel with these recordings to the places their stories are situated. Though these spaces were already familiar to me, I laced up my shoes, grabbed my transit pass, and hit the pavement to revisit these sites. While the metaphorical pathway created the form of participants' stories, revisiting a participant's voice as they tell their story, along with the place that their story takes place, helped to breathe life into these forms! I could experience the sounds, sights, feeling, and expressions of the person's story, and sought to include these elements—largely intangible from reading the transcripts alone—in each person's tale. This, to me, is also an important aspect of the oral tradition of Indigenous storytelling, which is so rich in description and sensation that the audience feels they are in the story, experiencing it alongside the storyteller. This step in the analysis can be seen in the incorporation of description in each story, both the description of the particular place you are visiting, and of each participant themselves attempting to portray their unique qualities and characteristics. This vividness— this life, is also reflected in how I write the stories, both the cadence of my words, and deliberate use (or misuse) of grammar. Often

using short pointed sentences. Mimicking how a person talks, more direct and less run-on. It can also be seen in the extensive use of onomatopoeia. *BAM!* Ya, just like that. *Chuckle.* To remind you that you are experiencing a real living story, not just reading words off of a page.

The fifth stage of analysis is *bringing it all together,* using the metaphorical and physical pathways to create each story. This must be done with great care to honour the voice of the participant. Using the pathways each participant set out, I moved back through the text of their transcript and rearranged the stories they shared in the first storytelling session guide to follow the guiding metaphor and plot lines they emphasised in the second storytelling session guide. For some, that meant moving some pieces of their story to the beginning or end, reuniting thoughts that were added midway through an unrelated response to the part of the story that portion was related to, or restructuring a sequence of events that appeared unrelated while the participant was telling their story but come together to demonstrate a potential learning that the participant wanted highlighted in their story. At this point, the text was still composed completely of all the quotes from the participant. I then moved through the participant's quotes and began to transition some to narration, which removes the direct quotation marks, " ", from portions of the participant's words to transform them into other elements of the story. This was done largely in two instances: 1) where it would seem odd to have the participant speak of themselves in the third person; 2) the quote lends itself to descriptions suited for a narrator like descriptions of setting, characters, or plot devices. In this way, the words participants share do not only make up the things that they say as a character in their own story, but what they share makes up the setting, characters, subtext, and plot points used to move us through the story. This is where the bending of some western rules on grammar comes in. Come on, folks. I've bent a lot to suit these western academic requirements! You can bend a little as a gesture of good will, and potential

acknowledgment of being seeped in colonial privilege. Direct quotes from the participants are preserved using the double quotation marks as such “ ” , and when characters speak in the story as a way to move through the story without quoting the participant directly, I use single quotation marks like this ‘ ’ . As you may have noticed, this is a practice I have carried throughout this entire paper. Anywhere Trickster or myself are speaking to one another I use single quotes ‘ ’, to distinguish from quotes used to cite particular sources like other academic texts or authors. But as the narrator, I can also speak to the audience or readers without using any quotation. Like this. *Chuckle.* In this stage, I also brought the learning from traveling the participants physical story pathway, with actual descriptions of the landmarks they highlighted in their stories. The sights, sounds, and smells of the places they were situated, as well as descriptions of the journey between them. This can be seen both in the use of onamonapia, as well as descriptive prose as we move to new locations within or between participants’ stories. This, too, is to highlight the physical places, the land, that these stories live in. As we journey across the territory together through the paper, or in real life, these stories come alive in their specific locations.

These first five stages represent a significant and laborious part of storytelling analysis: working to understand how points (plot, character, setting, metaphors) are related to one another. As with the physical pathway I traveled between landmarks, our analysis is not in identifying the points themselves, but journeying the relationship between them: POINT_____(relationship/path(way)(s)_____POINT. These stages sought to highlight the relationships between these points, to identify and maintain them, drawing those infinitely thin threads of light described by Wilson, making them intelligible through the form of a story. The sixth stage involves journeying through each story as it came into existence, and shuffling along each connecting thread to explore the nature of these relationships. *Whew.* Moving along these threads, you never know what

you will find. *Panting.* 'I'm baaaaaack!' says Trickster, sliding into centre page. *Boink! Smash!* He crashes into a run-on sentence, scattering letters everywhere! Oh goodness. Okay, so you see, in telling a story, creating a story, that story takes on its own life! I have been told that not only are the beings that live inside of stories alive, but the story itself is a living being, too. It was only in the act of writing these stories, of bringing the words together as described previously, that the intentions of the story began to reveal themselves. And so writing stories, creating stories, is an analytical tool, a way to learn and discover meaning through the process of storymaking. Trickster, as we remember from earlier, is a story being that reminds us of the importance of relationship, largely through his own mishaps that identify where there is something challenging, tenuous, or even broken in those relationships. 'Hey what are you trying to say?' Trickster chimes in, appearing from a pile of Roman orthography. In this way, Trickster emerged organically from stories, rather than having stories constructed around him. 'Wait, I thought I was the star of the show here?' he retorts. Trickster is as much a *being*—instigating some level of chaos to be sure—as he is a *doing*, remember. In these stories, his presence works as a signifier of where there is something tricky being negotiated in the participant's relationship with social work as an Indigenous person in the profession. Rather than spelling out particular relationship dynamics as named or described by participants, Trickster works to draw the audience in to think about the complexity of a participant's relationship dynamic that is at times both affirming and challenging.

The seventh and final stage of analysis brings me back to my relationship with the ten incredible participants in this research project. After a draft of each story was compiled, Trickster and all, each participant was provided a copy of the story representing their relationship with the social work profession. 'This was my favourite part,' Trickster sniffles, manifesting a hanky and blowing his nose. *Hooonk!* Ya, it was a

cool experience to hear participants' reactions to the stories they shared being retold as a Trickster tale. I have to say, it feels good to know you tried your hardest to honour a participant's words, wishes, and experiences, and for that to be received with such affirming feedback. Though this wasn't the end of participant engagement. At this stage, participants took back their stories to review, edit, highlight, delete, reformat, alter or change them, to ensure the relationships identified and explored were done so in a good way. The extent of revisions varied from participant to participant, but all provided feedback to be included in their completed story. With 297 pages of transcription, and ten participants, that's an average of 30 pages of storytelling each. As you can see, the stories in our journey are about ten pages per participant. Even after removing my own words as a researcher from the transcriptions, it is obvious that not every single word of the stories participants shared made it into their Trickster tales. This calls to mind important considerations about power over participants' narratives, a power I want to be absolutely transparent about. So transparent that I chose the form of creative non-fiction for these stories, rather than verbatim retelling, to explicitly reference that power relationship. Trust and accountability have been central tenants to this project, with participants shaping their stories from our initial meeting to the structure they take on the page before you. In some instances, pieces of individuals transcripts were easy to exclude, as they were redundant or repeated stories already shared. Participants also removed some passages themselves after second thought, with concerns to what they wanted to share. Other times, I worked with participants to decide between passages. If both story fragments had the same underlying message, I asked participants which one they preferred to use, rather than including both, or I would present participants with what I

believed was the preferred option for their review and approval. Even though this is participatory, this, too, is an exercise of power over a participant's story. A power made explicit through the presence of myself as a narrator. Holding true to the metaphorical and physical pathways set out by each participant, and the goal to tell their story in an engaging and accessible form, provided the context for weighing out such important decisions. Decisions to analyse relationship through creative non-fiction, for the powerful learning that can come from storytelling. One of the reasons why the stories are told the way that they are. Rather than becoming a character in a participant's story, or telling the story through the participant's eyes, the perspective used in these stories is still relational. It is through my relationship as the narrator encountering participants, witnessing their stories, and sharing my experience of them with you, the reader. 'Should we get on with it then?' Trickster says, tossing his kerchief to the side. *Nod.* I affirm. Let's make our way through the last participant's story now.

Chapter Fifteen

Faith Chaput: Trickster's Real Relationship Counselling

Creak. Creak. I step out of Harvey's office and into the main lobby. Dark has fallen on Anishnawbe Health Toronto. Only the exit signs light my way towards the door. *Whish.* A gentle breeze blows through the empty building. It's warm and comforting. I see an emergency light shining over the staircase. *Hmmm.* I consider my options. Perhaps caught in a wave of nostalgia, I move towards the stairs instead of the door. *Creak. Creak.* Memories stir in my head as I ascend. *Smile.* I get to the third floor and laugh. *Chuckle.* We had some good times up here on the counselling floor. *Shuffle. Shuffle.* I wander past the healers' room, then the psychologist, to the traditional counselling hall. Standing in front of my former office is tremendous. *Sniffle.* So many feelings, sensations, stories still alive in this place. Out of the corner of my eye, I see an open office door. *Smirk.* I'm immediately filled with joy and affection as I run over towards it. Like a nine year old calling on their playmate early Saturday morning, I grab on to the doorframe and swing into the room. *Sigh.* It looks so different now. Her artwork is gone, no baskets of medicines on the table, or cat memes on the bulletin board. *Giggle.* This is the spot I would meet not only another social worker, but the practice of chosen family.

Faith Chaput is a queer identified Métis woman and Wolf clan person from Red River Manitoba on her father's side. Her mother is from Tayport, Scotland, on the North Sea. Her spirit name is Red Hummingbird Woman, and that's exactly how I know her, hovering with community members where they are at, consistent and loving, witnessing their healing work. Faith and I counselled side by side for many years, ran group therapy and supported each other's individual practice as mental health counsellors. I move to her former windowsill and look out onto Allan Gardens, a botanical conservatory surrounded

by a park, right in the heart of the city. It's a beautiful place, even under the night sky. Through the darkness, I see an office light glowing in the building kitty corner to where I am now, at Gerrard Street and Sherbourne. I pick up the phone and make a call. *Ring. Ring.* 'Hello,' I hear on the other line. 'Chaput! I thought that might be you burning the midnight oil,' I shout. Laughter fills the line. *Cackle.* 'Can you see me from the park?' Faith asks. 'Not quite. But hey, you off soon?' I ask. 'Ya, why don't you come over here and hang out while I pack up?' she responds. *Click.* Faith left Anishnawbe Health Toronto for a mainstream health center, a.k.a. non-Indigenous agency, just across the street. So even though she's gone from these parts, she didn't go too far.

Beep. Beep. I scurry across the road and into the neighbouring building. Faith was born and raised in Toronto. For a long time, it was just Faith and her mother. They moved around the city a bit, spanning from Jane and Bloor to Victoria Park and Danforth, but this is the neighbourhood her world has revolved around for the better part of a decade. I can see her coming down the hallway, half walking, half running, but fully her beautiful self. Faith has been through a lot in life. Even as a young person, she had already had more than her fair share of bullshit. She was well acquainted with social workers of all sorts. "I think for me, when I started to actually consider becoming a social worker is when I went to university and I started in Women's Studies which, as I mentioned before, is a gay rite of passage," she tells me, laughing. *Chuckle.* "And it was during that time that I was exposed to critical thinking about knowledge production and intersectionality and the impacts of race, gender, class, ableism, and all these things that I had never really–I'd probably been thinking about for a really long time, but hadn't had the language or orientations to understand. So no one had really put it into words," Faith

says, as we walk together back to her office. “I found that to be a very transpersonal experience because it gave me words and frameworks to understand a lot of my own experiences of living in poverty, surviving sexual trauma, growing up generally not visibly Native. So all these things that I never really had a way of putting into words. I had that language. So anyway, so having that language made me really angry because then I started to realize how fucked up the world is, and I started to see structurally how disadvantaged I am as a queer, crip, Native woman,” she shares.

Even though Faith is only in her 30s, looking back at this time in her life, she remembers there was very little work being done in the area of Métis women and sexual violence, and even less in regards to queer Indigenous people. “So I started doing this research and it was really interesting and then I really started to feel like, okay, I would like to be part of holding space for other people who are similarly Indigenous or living at the places of those intersections of identity, like class, race, gender, ability. To hold space for some of those questions in a way no one had been able to for me, which led to my curiosity about social work”. So Faith began to explore social work programs. At the time, she was volunteering at the Barbra Schlifer Memorial Clinic, an organization that supports women who have experienced abuse. “I decided that I would apply for a master’s. I had a lot of volunteer experience from a very young age because my mother worked with an organization that supported folks who were struggling with mental health and/or homeless or under-housed. She did some artistic programming with them, so I was exposed to that type of setting for a really long time, as well as spending my early childhood living in poverty with a single parent. That was obviously a lived reality for me”. She was accepted to various social work programs but selected York University. “I

had such a great time doing my master's at York. It was a really good experience for me. Obviously, there were lots of hard things, but overall, it was really positive and I didn't have a doubt in my mind once I was finished that degree that I wanted to register with a professional social work college and become a social worker, although obviously I was carrying lots of tensions and anxieties about being complicit in this type of system," she shares. So Faith registered as a social worker with OCSWSSW, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, a common requirement in Ontario to pursue a career as a counsellor. "I could channel that into feeling. That although I would be unable to wholly deconstruct all this systematic garbage or whatever, colonial violence, but at least be a support to people that are still living and surviving within that system," she reflects.

As Faith cleans up her office for the day, we chat about why she chose counselling. "You know, I really feel like I've considered, what would it look like to do different forms of social work that are just as important? So maybe policy or advocacy– things that are not as intimate and require less presence and emotional labour. But that's just not who I am. Hugely significant parts of my spiritual bundle: my name, my clan, my colours, all connect to remind me of where I'm supposed to be—and so my body feels very much at home when I'm sitting across from someone and listening to them and that is very comfortable for me. I feel very comfortable in the silence and a lot of people don't feel comfortable in silence. But yeah, I don't know. It just feels like the right thing that I'm supposed to do and it's part of my vision being here on earth," she says with a smile. She puts some files away and tidies her desk, then continues, "I think on a community level, being an Indigenous social worker is a really big honour and very humbling. It's

very cool, I think, to be in Toronto because it's such a huge city. People are coming from all sorts of different nations, places, identities, so that you get to meet so many different people and hear so many different stories and experiences of Indigenous folks. Obviously that can be very painful, too, because you see so many of the same themes coming up, so from all sorts of places, all across Canada, so many different communities, reserves and you see the same issues coming up over and over, right? So that can be hard to see and can definitely be heavy to carry, but I think there is a lot of hope in the fact that when people come here, I see how much they are soothed and comforted by the community that's here and that there are a lot of services that potentially, depending if they are coming from isolated communities and reserves, they don't always have access to. So I have noticed the positive impact that services in Toronto have on Indigenous folks coming from other places in 'Canada'."

Faith's experiences as a counsellor have led her not to an isolated practice focused only on individuals, but actually extended her understanding and practice as a social worker to structural issues and addressing systemic oppression. "I think as I've grown into being an Indigenous social worker, I've had an opportunity to learn more about myself and I've had an opportunity to learn more about where I come from and why that's important in the work that I do. I think I've also had opportunity, chance, to see firsthand how much this colonial violence is alive and how much of it is constantly affecting our community members and why it's important that I continue to be a healthy amount of angry. But I think, weirdly enough, it's offered me a lot of comfort because being privileged to support and witness people processing experiences like intergenerational trauma, unhealthy relationships to self and others, sexual trauma and

grief, has been very validating for my own experiences as someone who has survived trauma. It's really important to see your experiences mirrored back on such a substantial level because it allows you to understand that these types of violence are not our fault. These are systemic issues," she shares. "I think as a queer, crip, Indigenous woman, I see my work as integrated into much larger structural and systemic bodies," she says warmly. *Bump.* Faith puts her backpack up on the table where I am seated. As she packs up her things, a book, a shawl, a pencil case, she continues, "So, to me, it's not just clinical work I do, the individual work extends into environmental and reproductive justice. It extends into rebuilding connection with culture and traditions. It is a very embodied practice for me. Indigenous peoples' connection with the land is longstanding and we know through our language and worldview that all things in creation have a spirit and are animate and when you carry this worldview in the work that we're doing, that relationality keeps you grounded." She looks out the window and out into the park, admiring the lush greenery below. "I guess knowing that we're deeply related and connected to all levels of creation means honouring that relationality, or I feel like it is, as a social worker. Again, this is very specific as a mental health counsellor that I see that work happening, but I find it offers a lot to me and it gives my work a lot of meaning to think of it expanding. Almost like you take a deep breath and you just see a tree and it's like, okay, we're all working together to try and be able to finally breathe or just take care of ourselves." She comes back to her bag and begins tightening the straps. "I think a lot of my work and what I have as guiding principle is understanding that I'm there to help rebuild relationships and repair relationships. Usually that starts with a person, so supporting them to reconnect with themselves, and then that moves outward into community, into culture" she says.

Faith puts on her backpack and heads for the door. She looks back at me and I get up to follow. “That being said, I think it can feel really onerous as an Indigenous person to be trying to restore these connections within this colonial system right? Which is still active and based in stuff that makes it really hard to connect. For example, heteronormativity, ableism, you know, racism, society’s capitalistic values. All of these things can make it hard to do that relationship work because so much of capitalism and Eurocentric values are all about our worth and work and doing,” Faith continues, before being interrupted. *Knock. Knock.* We look back to the door. Standing there, with his arm stretched up along the frame is Trickster. ‘Leaving so soon?’ he says, licking his finger and fixing his eyebrow. ‘Ya. Move aside, Faith’s finished for today,’ I say, moving in on Trickster. But he pushes past me and drops a pile of papers onto Faith’s desk. ‘Not too sure about that,’ he says with a smirk. ‘We still need the Métis to sign off on this,’ he points to one stack, ‘and provide comments here,’ he says, handing her another mound. I look to Faith and her face confirms the regularity of these happenings. She moves back to her chair and collapses into it. *Sigh.* “On a systems level, I think it can be really challenging. I think especially since the TRC recommendations have happened. You’re seeing a lot of agencies and schools, whether they’re wanting to or not, considering how much their ignorance is affecting Indigenous people in very severe ways, right? And as a result, you’re seeing conversations about how to make spaces more accessible to Indigenous community, which at a glance appears hopeful, but a lot of the time these conversations are not genuine or they are fuelled by bureaucracy. So here’s the thing we have to do to check off the list,” she says, dropping her face into her hands. She looks up slowly dragging her hands down and away from her eyes. “So I think that this becomes

very tricky when you're working within primarily Eurocentric agencies, especially as a queer Indigenous person, because you're really put in a complicated position where there is all this energy, especially with TRC, of organizations to be instituting culturally safe care, but then it's really onerous because a lot of the responsibility is put on you right? As potentially the only token Indigenous person or persons, depending what that space looks like. So I think while there are attempts to work towards 'reconciliation' or incorporations of Indigenous knowledge into Eurocentric space—such as incorporating medicines into care, which is kind of like a basic thing that you hope all spaces can do—that process can often be complicit in the appropriation of our traditions and our cultures. So it's just something that's abruptly included into daily practice without a lot of thought about what that means and why is it happening and there's not a lot of consultation," she shares, clearly exhausted by it all.

Trickster fills the doorway, standing smugly, filing his nails. Faith flips through the papers as she shares, "It's an unsettling place to be where you're wanting those changes to happen and you want to pave the way so that other folks coming into the building know that they're safe as an Indigenous person, but it also feels hard to feel like you're potentially speaking for all Indigenous people or that you're asked as a social worker to do a lot of extra things that actually aren't part of your job but because you're Native that expectation is there, right? So I think within a city, for me in Toronto, that's just something you're seeing a lot of lately and I'm hearing other Indigenous people talking about. Which I think can streamline settler solidarity movements. This idea that we'll get a ventilation system and everything's fine, then it's culturally safe or whatever, right?" Faith is here because she witnessed how little services or understanding there is

for queer folks in Indigenous agencies, so she made a move to a queer friendly agency. "I've witnessed how inaccessible trauma-informed and culturally safe care is, especially that's queer friendly. Indigenous folks on the LGBTQ2S spectrum are forced to choose between their gender and sexuality and their culture," she shares. "There are spaces like where I'm working now which are ridiculously queer friendly—seriously the gayest place—but not culturally safe. And then it comes back to that point I was making earlier about, well, then whose responsibility is it to make spaces culturally safe? And it's usually the token Indigenous person's responsibility to answer a lot of things that maybe you could Google." Faith turns to Trickster and yells, "How do you put a smoke ventilation system in? Look it up! I don't know. Anyways, and I think generally a lot of Indigenous people that I've worked with have experienced a lot of disrespect or have not been treated with dignity by healthcare providers, so ongoing experiences of systemic racism is hugely problematic and so dehumanizing. So thanks for that, white supremacy!" It seems being an Indigenous person working in a mainstream social work organization has tried to pull Faith from her work of healing relationships within the lives of Indigenous peoples, and has made healing relationships within the lives of settler peoples and agencies the main priority. I can see how Indigenous social workers are not immune from the impacts of these oppressive structures Faith spoke about earlier. In fact, it appears that though many have been injured by these systems before their entry to social work, they continue to come up against them in their professional lives.

Despite the eminent challenges obstructing her path, Faith fights on in her workplace. "We've survived a lot, you know, jeez. We've made it this far. I think we carry a tremendous amount of badass revolutionary energy. We are a force to be

reckoned with. As Indigenous people, and as social workers, we have likely endured some sort of trauma, whether it be direct, second-hand, or intergenerational. And, as a result, have probably developed some maladaptive coping mechanisms. But we're all here. We're all trying our best and I think we're amazing for that persistence. I think you're amazing out there, you Indigenous community members doing front-line work. I carry such a strong amount of respect for the resilience and the strength that Indigenous social workers carry in the work that we do because we're not only holding space for a lot of racism, ableism, and sexism, and all of the isms for our clients but we're usually experiencing them ourselves within these same systems," Faith shares, energized. Trickster is still distracted, grooming himself in our exit. In the spirit of that badassness, we search the room for an alternative way out. In unison we look to the window, and then at each other. *Wink.* I lift the glass slowly. Trying not to make a sound. Faith grabs the shawl from her backpack and ties it to the desk. *Slurp.* We slip out the window and hold tightly to the fabric as we descend. *Plunk.* With the grass beneath our feet, we take off into the park.

Shuffle. Shuffle. We walk down a path surrounded by trees. Faith pauses and looks up at the canopy. "I think as humans, as part of creation, our gift is that we can have vision and we can dream. So I think a huge thing that can happen, especially within the systems that we're trying to survive in and support other people in is that we can lose sight of why we're there and we can get really exhausted and we can kind of lose our vision. So call me a cheeseball but I have to encourage folks to keep dreaming and hold space for those visions, whatever they are or however they have come to you, and when you can't see it clearly anymore, take a break, step back, because probably you're burnt

out and that's inevitable in this work. Happens, right? So just to honour that vision and hold the hope. Your visions is still there even if you don't always know what you're doing and it's okay to not have all of the answers," she says. As Faith shares, a seedpod falls from the tree and begins to twirl slowly towards the ground. "It's important to be self-reflexive and recognize the intersections of our identity and how they impact our intentions as a social worker within a very western, individualistic system. It is important to remember that a tremendous amount of positive things can come out of trauma, for both ourselves and our clients. There are many studies illustrating that traumatic incidents actually lead to a substantial amount of growth and self-knowledge development. That as much as traumas can completely derail our lives for however long they do, they can also heal wounds that we've carried for generations," she says, opening her hand and catching the pod. Faith continues, "I think for me that's always an important little seed to hold onto because this work can be very heavy and it can feel hard to have an anchor in the stuff that you're doing, especially when so much of it is reflecting back your own histories right? It can be hard and, I'm sure, triggering, for lots of people in our community. We've all been there, right? So I think it can be a balm to remember that despair is not permanent and that there is so much hope in change and growth that can come from trauma." We stand there in the park, surrounded by life. The flowers. Plants. Squirrels run past us. Faith takes a deep breath and whispers "The intentionality and the circularity of reciprocity and of creation from oxygen given to earth, given to trees, given to the sky, given to our lungs, etc., and our grief in the seedling not always making it, sometimes being trampled on, bruised and broken." Faith takes her hand holding the pod, reaches out and places it on the bark of an enormous old tree and says "Healing takes

time. I genuinely believe that the conduit to healing is the relationships that I build with the people that I support, that it's through that trust, and that respect, and acknowledgement of reciprocity, and working together." I'm grateful for this park for so many reasons, and tonight I'm grateful that it's helping Faith refocus on her vision. We hug and say our goodbyes for the evening. *Giggle.* We share a smile and a laugh before parting ways and beginning the journey home.

Chapter Sixteen

P. S.: Post~~script~~ stories Discussion

In fact, our stories have been integral to that survival- more than that, they've been part of our cultural, political, and familial resurgence and our continuing efforts to maintain our rights and responsibilities in these contested lands. They are good medicine. They remind us about who we are and where we're going, on our own and in relation to those with whom we share this world. They remind us about the relationships that make a good life possible. In short, they matter. (Justice, 2018, pp. 5-6).

One of the final stages in the research process brings me back to my relationship with you—'Who, me?' Trickster interrupts. 'No. Not you friend. The readers!' I respond, pointing above the page. 'How so?' asks Trickster. Well, in what feels like an age old debate about research, "unlike quantitative work, which can carry it's meaning in its tables and summaries, qualitative work depends upon people's reading it…" (Richardson, 2004, p. 474). 'So, you see Trickster, our audience here is of great importance,' I respond, bowing towards you readers. If research studies are to have an impact on people's lives, storytelling may in fact be an avenue to reach more people with the work that has been done. Lee Maracle of the Stó:lō Coast Salish Nation reinforces that "we regard words as coming from original being- a sacred spiritual being… They represent the accumulated knowledge, cultural values, the vision of an entire people or peoples…story is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people'" (Maracle, 1992, p. 87). So, you won't find any tables or pie charts here. 'Pie!?' Trickster shouts. *Chuckle.* As you know, these ten short stories *are* the findings of this research. If I were following a more linear outline to this paper, I would have just plunked them all here for you to read—*plop, plop, plop*—one, after, another. 'Boring,' Trickster says with a yawn. This has been a request I have resisted since the inception of this project. For me, that would distort the influence these stories

have had on this project, that they have informed the writing of the first chapter as much as they have informed the writing of this one. These stories are the real learning of this paper. They not only help us to understand the topic of the research, but the intentions and the process of the research itself. As such, they aid us as we journey through the entire project together, bringing us closer and closer into relationship with one another, searchers, storytellers, readers, and topic, all necessary components to this learning journey.

But don't let the placement of these stories disrupt their status as findings. As described previously, each one has been meticulously crafted with participants to arrive at important learning(s). Now this brings us back to those ethics of relationship and accountability discussed throughout this paper, and how they rub up against western academic practices. It is commonplace that once data is collected, even stories, that it belongs to the researcher to pull out whatever truths they choose to identify. Rather than this individual approach, the findings here have been negotiated with participants. They are a collaborative*,* rather than a prescriptive, finding. To me, this is an important anti-colonial challenge of this research. We have already established that social work is a profession expressly situated within the ongoing colonial process of Canada. Much like in larger efforts for decolonization, in social work, I, too, have witnessed great resistance to anti-colonial endeavours without first providing some kind of perfect and specific future destination for social work. This immobilizing practice can be seen in western research that upholds a preference for perfectly delineated problems and solutions. To force complex phenomena like decolonization into this artificial binary can stall us in meaningful movements towards social change, movements I believe to be stimulated by people working and figuring things out together. Likewise, rather than findings as an end state that I am attempting to arrive at in this work, these findings are a cooperative

process. Instead of perfect problems and perfect solutions, this collaboration guards against simplistic judgments and helps us to identify and appreciate nuance, complexity, even contradiction—the messiness of the reality of these relationships.

Stories are powerful in how they disrupt dominant paradigms that uphold the idea that there is but one true objective reality, a universal knowledge that one can discover, own, and use to offer generalizable applications. Instead, they call out the fundamental bias of any research project, identifying that knowledge is innately relational, and subject to personalized notions of truth. Research is as much a construction as the stories we have created. The difference being that the power of the storyteller(s) here is made explicit, though the impact—the understanding—that each reader may take from these stories is not. In my experience of Indigenous storytelling, the audience is left to make their own meaning and draw conclusions that are relevant for their lives. This understanding can be seen in a passage by Thomas King: "Take …[this] story, for instance. It's yours. Do with it what you will. Cry over it. Get angry. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (2003, p. 119). I have been reminded again and again to take what I need from a teaching and leave the rest. That, down the road, other meanings, or even some larger significance of the story, will make itself known the next time I come around to it in my journey. So the purpose of a story isn't narrowed to a fine point > that can be plucked and placed into the hands of the reader, but our stories seek instead to EXPAND a person's understanding, leaving w i d e r and open possibilities for various and nuanced impacts on people's lives, and creation.

It is important to note that the stories here are not simply those of struggle—of a defeated or broken people, as in the damage-centered research cautioned against by Unangax scholar Eve Tuck (2009, p. 412)—they are stories of vibrant people, living, acting and creating in the world. The participants in this research, the people you have

come to know, are engaging with colonialism through their relationship with social work, and it's a process that is dynamic and complicated. Despite not explicitly marking the ultimate destination of our journey together, it is my hope these stories help us in *finding our way* through an ongoing process of our relationship to the profession as Indigenous social workers. To encourage, and to call on us to have these uncomfortable conversations about what our relationships are really like, and where they are really leading us. That being said, I hope these stories don't just tell you what to believe, but spark conversation, debate, discussion, and searching within ourselves and with others. To assist in those discussions, I will call upon our fellow traveller. 'This time you mean me, right?' Trickster asks sheepishly. 'That's right, friend,' I respond, patting him on the back. Perhaps in reflecting on Trickster's participation in these stories, we can suggest some discussion questions that may help get that process going. *Hmmmmm.*

Remember, Trickster's presence in each story is a clue to some potential learning highlighted by the participants and myself. As an Indigenous social worker, the first story, Nicole's, about Trickster and the lanyard has me wondering what potential benefits and costs we experience through formalizing Indigenous helping traditions into the profession of social work? 'Oh I see what we are doing!' Trickster says, rubbing his hands together. 'Well, Kenn's story, about me and those… *Gulp.* Ghosts. Makes me ask, how can looking back help to navigate our way forward as Indigenous peoples in social work?' he shares. 'Oh, good one, Trickster!' Well, Jay's story has me asking what constraints Indigenous social workers feel in their relationship with the profession and how they attempt to navigate those? 'Rochelle's story has me wondering what ways social work harms and helps Indigenous social workers at the same time,' Trickster adds. Tom's story, about Trickster and the shape shifter, has me wondering what the impacts being an Indigenous person and a social worker have on one's identity? 'Oooh, next is Lindsay's, where I learnt to bead!' Trickster says with a smile. 'That's right!' I reply to

Trickster. Lindsay's story has me asking how I can challenge the terms of my relationship with the social work profession? 'Then I tried to skate in Mike's story. It has me wondering what weights Indigenous people feel in their relationship to the social worker's profession?' Trickster shares. Janet's story invites me to ask how Indigenous peoples learn to become social workers? And who are their greatest teachers? 'I never did get my snack,' says Trickster. 'But I did get to meet the wolf pack!' he adds enthusiastically. Harvey's story makes me wonder about how the rich life experience of Indigenous social workers may impact their relationship to the profession? 'And that brings the story pathway back to where it began, around Allan Gardens,' Trickster shares. 'Yup, and to our last story,' I respond. Faith's story leaves me asking myself how one's relationship to the social work profession impacts our relationship to community and to healing?

These stories can be read individually, exploring the relationship between Indigenous social workers and their profession illuminated in each person's tale. But they can also be read as a collection, to explore this relationship not just within, but between, participants stories. Questions I could ask the readers to consider include: Where is Trickster in each person's story? Are there similarities or differences in what Trickster is highlighting in each story? How is Indigenous community a part of each participants relationship to social work? How does relationship with Indigenous family, culture, community, or identity lead participants towards and away from their relationship with social work? What are participants getting from their relationship with social work? And what is social work getting from participants?

For me, the findings of this project exist within its form *and* content, which mirror each other and reinforce the learning. In terms of content, Trickster and I have been chatting about the stories as a whole, discussing the question of how these Indigenous storytellers are called into their relationship with the profession. A curious thing we

noticed is how social work emerges as a mediator of relationship. Repeated again and again throughout the stories is the idea that, rightly or wrongly, social work calls people into relationship with family, culture, community, identity, while simultaneously being something that separates Indigenous peoples and Indigenous social workers from their relationships with family, community, culture, identity etc. *Huh.* The first storyteller, Nicole Wemigwans, sets the stage for this, as it was those family relationships that nurtured Nicole and her culture for so long. Social work presented itself as something that could continue to facilitate that in her life. Only the further she pursued formalized social work, the more she realized it separated her not only from her own culture and teachings, but from community. Just shows when we slooooooooow down these relationships and *shuffle* along them we see hmmm… this is tricky! Relationships filled with beautiful creative resistance, while also filled with the proliferation of a violent profession. A great example of this is Rochelle's story, where social work helped her understand trauma and advance her language learning through a trauma informed lens. She also lives with the reality that this relationship with social work is what is removing people from language to begin with and gatekeeping funding and services in a way that excludes Indigenous language learning in the city. 'Gosh, this is tricky,' says Trickster, scratching his head. We see that social work with Indigenous peoples is perpetuating itself, ensuring its survival. To do so, it has expanded, and opened space for Indigenous peoples. This is complicated because opening space has meant we, too, have been able to seize that opportunity as Indigenous people, and a lot of incredible work in research, social justice, and community development is connected to Indigenous social work scholars and practitioners. So, there is this relationship where we are taking from social work, and social work is taking from us. Though, through the stories, you see that what Indigenous social workers really seem to seek and value is our *relationships,* with each other, with community, with culture, identity, and creation, but interestingly, social work

has inserted itself as a mediator between us and these relations, almost claiming a monopoly over them. You also see how, as Indigenous peoples, we ironically work to rescue social work, even building pathways for it, because it claims to hold some kind of key to these connections. But perhaps we need not do this any longer. Looking at these incredible participants, I can't help but think, wow, look at our creativity, our knowledges, our strengths. Perhaps our answers, our keys to connection and relationship, actually lie within our own communities. Working with Trickster, we are telling this in a way that is meaningful to community members. That honours the participants' survivance, their resilience, and their creativity in the profession, while also working with them to highlight important cautions to heed, important learnings which they helped to identify.

Thomas King reminds us that, "once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told" (King, 2003, p. 10). Though Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations are increasingly invested in our relationship with social work, I hope these stories call us to look at the story pathways we may not even realize we are creating. That these story pathways help us to have honest conversations about what it means to continue to tie our existence to one another, to tie our future to one another. One of the questions I was asked about these stories was "What do they mean for the future of social work?" My response? I hope to reframe the question as "What do these stories mean for the future of Indigenous peoples?" instead. As discussed previously, I write for Indigenous continuance, not for the continuance of social work, which is largely a rescue of settler futurity (Tuck and Yang, 2013). While Trickster helps to point to findings within the content of this project, he also points to findings in its form. Findings related to time and space that may be equal parts

challenging, and liberating. As we have explored that settler colonialism is not a moment, but a process, these Trickster stories reach back into the past to connect those stories with the here and now. These stories speak to the unique nature of space and temporality in Indigenous worldview, tying our past, present, and future together, and stacking them upon one another as they exist in these story landmarks. They remind us of how space and land remember. Land is not just an object that is acted upon, but a relation of mutual engagement. How it retains our stories, our movements, our relationship with it. Though we may forget, the land can help us recollect, reflect, and remain accountable. Rather than leaving you with a bleak sense of a fated destiny, I hope these stories highlight how we are actively creating our pathways into the future. Just as these stories have been a creative process, so too are Indigenous futurities. Exploring these pathways together, we can ask not only about where we have been and where we are going, but if this is where we *want* to be and how we *want* to move forward. Of course, these are just a few conversations Trickster and I have been having since moving through these stories, but there is much to ponder as we walk the story pathways of Indigenous social workers in Toronto. We can return to these landmarks any time, to feel them come alive, to experience their stories, and derive multiple meanings. Now you too can return to their pages, have another visit, see what you may find(ings). *Chuckle.* In fact, I'm heading there now. 'Hey Trickster, where are you? I'm going back to the park!'

Chapter Seventeen

Reflecting on the Path Travelled: Concluding Thoughts

Faith disappears into the distance, and I'm covered in the cloak of night. It's much later in the evening now and there's a refreshing coolness to the air that wasn't there a few hours ago. *Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle.* I walk, illuminated by the streetlights, through Allan Gardens park. I move slowly, breathing in the smell of cut grass and flowers blooming in the dark. I see there's a spot on the stairs leading up to the greenhouse, so I wander over and take a seat. *Plop.* Looking out into the park, its stories COME ALIVE! *Wooooow.* All those past, present, and future, moving through the space at the same time. I can see the tales Indigenous social workers shared with me, playing out right before my eyes! Infinite moments within community. *Blink*. All of a sudden, the park is filled with life! *Blink.* I look again and it's completely empty. *Huh?* Even reality has a sense of humour. Tricky, really.

It may just be me sitting on these steps, but I know I am not alone. Thinking of all those who have travelled with me on these story pathways, I wonder about the implications of this research journey. For Indigenous social workers, first and foremost, these stories belong to you. I thank the ten amazing Indigenous social workers in this project. Throughout this journey, you have requested copies of the creative stories to come out of this research for your own personal and professional consideration. Each of you will be provided with a bound copy of this completed project, as both a thanks for your tremendous efforts, and a potential resource to carry through your journeys along Toronto's Red Road. In our time as Indigenous people engaged in the social work profession, I know many of these are not conversations we have had access to in our education and training, and the spaces to talk about them with one another once we are already working in community are few and far between.

These stories are also a giveaway to you, the readers. These ten people have shared so much of themselves with the hope of leaving something behind for others in their shoes, and those coming after them. A key aspect of our storytelling sessions, and story writing—and rewriting—sessions has always been about the learning participants want to pass on through their stories. An intergenerational transmission of knowledge, so each young or new person in relationship with the profession does not have to travel this road alone, but may find their way by encountering these story pathways we leave behind. These shared stories also highlight a more dynamic picture of our relationships to the profession of social work. Particularly for those Indigenous social workers in Toronto, they beg us to consider what may be at stake. The relationships we have to this profession are not simply tales of doing good, but are complicated, challenging, and sometimes contradictory. We owe it to ourselves and to our communities to have some hard conversations to help guide us in our pathways forward, as we consider where we have already been, and where we want to go. In what is clearly a series of Trickster tales, we know what consequences come from disregarding, or taking for granted, our relationships.

Surely there are limitations, though I hope many of these are clear by now. The stories shared and created are not meant to be a representative sample of all Indigenous social workers. For this project, they, of course, are restricted to the experiences of those who are or have practiced social work in the city of Toronto. Though even in the expressly local context of this endeavour, stories have a funny way of inviting people in, and providing multiple access points for diverse individuals and communities to be a part of the learning process. Thinking of scholarly contributions, these stories represent a rich and powerful challenge, both to our relationship with social work, as well as to the hegemony of traditional research methodologies. As these stories reflect both research content *and* process, they can demonstrate the beauty and strength of an Indigenous

methodology that brings relationships to the forefront of the research process. Relationship with participants, community, land, and knowledge.

There may be others who wish to join us along this learning journey, and they are more than welcome to do so. Non-Indigenous social workers, students, educators, or researchers may find these stories speak to them too, and highlight aspects of their own relationships to social work or social work research. Perhaps aspects they have never had to consider before, Tricksters only beginning to make themselves known.

I take in the scenery one last time before getting up from the steps. *Hop.* Time to head home. *Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle*. I can see my building just beyond the park. A light shines on the streetcar stop where this whole journey began. *Hmmmm.* Right back to where we started. Stories really do go in circles. As I make my way, I wonder where this path may take us next. What future journeys lie ahead? Well, these stories are a path, not a destination. They remind me of the creative process of relationship, of our relationship to social work, imprinted on our relationship to this land. We have been a part of a process of creating these pathways, and can continue to create those we travel into the future, a future with social work that is not yet determined. Judy Isseke shares that,

> [s]torytelling as a research practice enables the researcher to engage with the stories and histories of families, communities, and cultures and to begin the transformative process of understanding oneself in relation. The research, as a result, is located in connection to the storytelling context and as such cannot be separated or generalized from the context. And yet this seeming specificity does not limit the value of the research to a single location or event because the transformative effect of the stories can continue with those who hear the stories and take up the challenges of transformation posed in the stories. (2013, p. 573)

Following from this understanding, it is important to humble myself, to recognize this work would not exist without all those who came before me who contributed to pathways for Indigenous peoples and knowledges in social work, research, the academy, and community itself. Likewise, it has been a framing hope for this research to contribute in some small way to those who come after me, as they navigate these pathways and take up the call themselves to build even further on possibilities for our present and future.

I know I want to talk more to Indigenous social workers about the questions these stories brought to mind. I would like to continue my journey with them through Toronto's Indigenous social service organizations, to hear the stories of how these agencies came to be, what their original purpose was, and where they find themselves now after the process of professionalization. I know I want to explore alternative pathways that may coexist, challenge, or go beyond the pathways highlighted here, to continue to create new possibilities, and imagine new futurities for those traveling Toronto's Red Road. These stories, the ones shared here, and those living out on the land, may not completely displace dominant stories of social work with Indigenous people, but impart an important variety. They reflect the messiness of the reality of our relationship with social work, and open space for complexity, contradiction, nuance, and collaboration to keep meaning making moving. *Shuffle. Shuffle. Shuffle.* We have not arrived in our relationship as Indigenous social workers with our profession, and there is much to be considered when we heed the call of a journey where our shared future is yet to be determined. *Whoosh. Whistle. Whisper.* I hear a familiar voice in the wind, and have a feeling there are a lot of tricky stories awaiting us. *Chuckle.* I am grateful to have an old

friend in Trickster. He helps to navigate these story pathways, helping them be more familiar than we had once expected. *Wink.*

References

Absolon, K. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know.* Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Ahmed, S. (2007). A Phenomenology of Whiteness. *Feminist Theory* , 8(2), 149-168.

Alexander, B. K. (2004). Black Skin/White Masks: The Performative Sustainability of Whiteness (With Apologies to Frantz Fanon). *Qualitative Inquiry , 10*(5), 647-672.

Alston-O'Connor, E. (2010). The sixties scoop: Implications for social workers and social work education. *Critical Social Work*, *11*(1), 53–61.

Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Baskin, C. (2011). *Strong Helpers' Teachings: The Value of Indigenous Knowledges in the Helping Professions*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Baskin, C. (2015). The role of social work in the lives of Aboriginal Peoples. In N. Ives, M. Denov, & T. Sussman (Eds.). *Introduction to social work in Canada: Histories, contexts, and practices* (pp. 207–227). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Baskin, C., & Sinclair, D. (2015). Social Work and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. *Encyclopedia of Social Work.* Ed. National Association of Social Workers and Oxford University Press. Retrieved from http://oxfordre.com/socialwork/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-953.

Baskin, C. (2016). *Strong Helpers' Teachings: The Value of Indigenous Knowledges in the Helping Professions* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Bazylak, D. (2002). Journeys to Success: Perceptions of Five Female Aboriginal High School Graduates. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 26*(2), 134-151.

Bennett, B. & Zubrzycki, J. (2003). Hearing the stories of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social workers: challenging and educating the system. *Australian Social Work, 56*(1), 61-70.

Blackstock, C. & Trocmé, N. (2005). Community-Based Child Welfare for Aboriginal Children: Supporting Resilience Through Structural Change. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand, (24), 12-33.*

Blackstock, C. (2009). The occasional evil of angels: Learning from the experiences of Aboriginal peoples and social work. *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 4(1), 28–37.

Boushel, M. (2000). What Kind of People are We?: 'Race', Anti-Racism and Social Welfare Research. *British Journal of Social Work, 30*(1), 71-89.

Brown, L. A. (1992). Social Work Education For Aboriginal Communities. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *22*(3), 46-56.

Brown, L. A. & Strega, S. (2005). *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, & Anti-Oppressive Approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Bruchac, J. (2003). *Our Stories Remember: American Indian History, Culture and Values through Storytelling.* Golden, CO, USA: Fulcrum Publishing.

Bruyere, G. (1998). Living in Another Man's House: Supporting Aboriginal Learners in Social Work Education. *Canadian Social Work Review, 15*(2), 169-176.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the Mountain: An ecology of Indigenous Education.* Rio Rancho: Kivaki Press.

Castagna, M. & Dei, G. J. S. (2000). An Historical Overview of the Application of the Race Concept in Social Practice. In *Anti-Racist Feminism: Critical Race and Gender Studies* (p. 1937). Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Canadian Association of Social Workers. (2015). *CASW Statement on Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* Retrieved from: http://www.casw-acts.ca/en/casw-statement-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-canada

Castellano, M. B., Stalwick, H., & Wien, F. (1986). Native Social Work Education in Canada: Issues and Adaptations. *Canadian Social Work Review*, *4,* 166-184.

Chau, R. C. & Yu, S. W. K. (2009). Culturally Sensitive Approaches to Health and Social Care. *International Social Work*, 52(6), 773-784.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Cole, P. (2006). *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing: Coming Home to the Village.* Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Cooper, I. T. & Moore, G. S. (Eds.) (2009). *Walking in the Good Way Ioterihwakwarihshion Tsi Ihse: Aboriginal Social Work Education.* Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Crosby, C. (1992). Dealing with Differences. In *Feminists Theorize the Political* (pp. 130-143). New York: Routledge.

Dei, G. J. S. (2016). Indigenous philosophies, counter epistemologies and anti-colonial education. In W. Lehmann (Ed.), *Education and society* (pp. 190-206). London: Oxford University Press.

Dei, G. J. S. (2018a). Reframing education through Indigenous, anti-colonial and decolonial prisms. In P. McLaren & S. Soohoo (Eds.), *The Radical Imagine-nation.* New York: Peter Lang.

Dei, G. J. S., Darko, I. N., McDonnell, J., Demi, S. M., & Akanmori, H. (2018b). *African Proverbs as Epistemologies of Decolonization*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Dean, R. G. (2001). The Myth of Cross-Cultural Competence. *Families in Society*, *82*(6), 623-630.

Deloria Jr., V. (1973). *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. New York: The Putnam Publishing Group.

Doerfler, J., Sinclair, N. J., & Stark, H. K. (Eds.) (2013). *Centering Anishnaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Doezema, J. (2001). Ouch! Western Feminist' 'Wounded Attachment' to the 'Third World Prostitute'. *Feminist Review, 67*(1), 16-38.

Dossa, P. (2005). Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds: 'They (Service Providers) Always Saw Me as a Client, Not as a Worker.' *Social Science & Medicine, 60*, 2527-2536.

Erdoes, R. & Ortiz, A. (1998). *American Indian Trickster Tales.* New York: Penguin Books Ltd..

Erdrich, H. E. (2013). Name': Literary Ancestry as Presence. In *Centering Anishnaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories* (pp. 13-34). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Fellows, M. L. & Razack, S. (1998). The Race to Innocence: Confronting Hierarchical Relations among Women, *The Journal of Gender Race & Justice*, *1*, pp. 335- 352.

Fournier, S. & Crey, E. (1997). *Stolen From Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*. Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre.

Grant, T. (2016, July 14). Cindy Blackstock, Canada's 'relentless moral voice' for First Nations equality. *The Globe and Mail.* Retrieved from http://www.thglobeandmail.com

Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Gutierrez, L. M. (1990). Working with Women of Color: An Empowerment Perspective. *Social Work, 35*(2), 149-152.

Hall, S. (1997). The Spectacle of the 'Other'. In *Representation: Cultural Representaion* (pp.

225-279). London: Sage Publications.

Harris, B. (2006a). A First Nation's Perspective on Social Justice Social Work Education: Are We There Yet? (A Post-Colonial Debate). *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 26*(2), 229-263.

Harris, B. (2006b). What Can We Learn From Traditional Aboriginal Education? Transforming Social Work Education Delivered in First Nations Communities. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 29*(1), 117-146.

Harris, H. (2002). Coyote goes to school: The paradox of Indigenous higher education *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, *26*(2), 187-196.

Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Hart, M. A. (2003). Am I a modern day missionary? Reflections of a Cree social worker. *Native Social Work Journal, 5*, 299-313.

Hart, M. A., & Pompana, Y. (2003). Establishing the Aboriginal Social Work Associations: Sharing the Manitoba Experience. *Native Social Work Journal*, *5,* 243-260.

Henderson, J. S. (1997). *The Mikmaw Concordat.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Heron, B. (2004). Gender and Exceptionality in North-South Interventions: Reflecting on Relations. *Journal of Gender Studies, 13*(2), 117-127.

Heron, G. (2004). Evidencing Anti-racism in Student Assignments: Where has all the Racism Gone? *Qualitative Social Work, 3*(3), 277-295.

Hulan, R. A. (2008). *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory, Practice, Ethics.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Iseke, J. (2013). Indigenous Storytelling as Research. *International Review of Qualitative Research,* 6(4), 559-577.

Jeffery, D. (2002). An Imperial Legacy: Social Workers as Managers of Difference. In *A Terrain of struggle: Reading Race in Social Work Education* (pp. 27-71). (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). OISE at University of Toronto.

Jeffery, D. (2007). Managing Race in Social Work Education Policy. *Journal of Education Policy, 22*(4), 429-454.

Jeffery, D. (2005). 'What Good is Anti-Racist Social Work if You Can't Master it?': Exploring a Paradox in Anti-Racist Social Work Education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8*(4), 409-425.

Johnston, B. (1996). *The Manitous: The Supernatural World of the Ojibway.* New York: HaperCollins Publishers.

Johnston, P. (1983). *Aboriginal Children and the Child Welfare System.* Toronto: Canadian Council on Social Development.

Johnson, Y. M. & Munch, S. (2009). Fundamental Contradictions in Cultural Competence. *Social Work, 54*(3), 220-229.

Justice, D. H. (2018). *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

King, T. (2003). *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative.* Toronto: Dead Dog Cafe Productions Inc.

Kirby, S. L. (2006). *Experience Research Social Change: Methods Beyond the Mainstream.* Peterborough: Broadview Press.

Kovach, M. (2005). Emerging from the Margins: Indigenous Methodologies. In L. A. Brown & S. Strega (Eds). *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, & Anti-Oppressive Approaches* (pp. 19-36). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Lavallee, L. F. (2009). Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework and Two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(1), 21-40.

Lieblich, A. R.-M. (1998). *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation.* London: Sage Publications.

Lincoln Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp.163-188). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Loppie, C. (2007). Learning from the Grandmothers: Incorporating Indigenous Principles into Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*(2), 276-284.

Macey, M. & Moxon, E. (1996). An Examination of Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Theory and Practice in Social Work Education. *Social Work, 26*(1), 297-314.

Maracle, L. (1992). Oratory: Coming to Theory. In L. Maracle (Ed). *Give Back: First Nations Perspectives on Cultural Practice.* (pp. 85-92). Vancouver: Gallerie.

Marsden, D. (2004). Expanding Knowledge Through Dreaming, Wampum and Visual Arts. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 2*(2), 53-73.

Menzies, P. (2007). Understanding Aboriginal Intergenerational Trauma from a Social Work

Perspective. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 27*(2), 367-392.

McKenzie, B. & Mitchinson, K. (1989). Social Work Education for Empowerment: The Manitoba Experience. *Canadian Social Work Review,* 6(1), 112-125.

McLaughlin, K. (2005). From Ridicule to Institutionalization: Anti-Oppression, the State and Social Work. *Critical Social Policy, 25*(3), 283-305.

Mokuau, N. & Matsuoka, J. (1995). Turbulence Among a Native People: Social Work Practice with Hawaiians. *Social Work, 40*(4), 465-471.

Morin, J. P. (2007). Treaties and the Evolution of Canada. In D. R. Newhouse, C. J. Voyageur and D. Beavon (Eds.), *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture* (pp. 19-34). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Morrissette, V., McKenzie, J., & Morrissette, L. (1993). Towards an Aboriginal Model of Social Work Practice: Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices. *Canadian Social Work Review, 10*(1), 91-108.

Mullaly, B. (2002). *Challenging Oppression: A Critical Social Work Approach.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Neihardt, J. G. (1932). *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux.* New York: William Morrow & Company.

Nelson, J. & Macias, T. (2008). Living with a White Disease: Women of Colour & Their Engagement with Breast Cancer Information. *Women's Health and Urban Life, 7*(1): 20-39.

Nybell, L. M. (2004). Race, Place, Space: Meanings of Cultural Competence in Three Child Welfare Agencies. *Social Work, 49*(1), 17-25.

O'Brien, D. & Pace, J. (1990). The Role of Empowerment in Social Work Degree Programs for Indigenous Native People: A Critique of One School's Experience. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 10*(1), 1-13.

Ong, A. (1995). Making the Biopolitical Subject: Cambodian Immigrants, Refugee Medicine and Cultural Citizenship in California. *Social Science & Medicine, 40*(9), 1243-1257.

Organista, K. C. (2009). New Practice Model for Latinos in Need of Social Work Services. *Social Work, 54*(4), 297-305.

Park, Y. (2006). Constructing Immigrants: A Historical Discourse Analysis of the Representations of Immigrants in US Social Work, 1882-1952. *Journal of Social Work, 6*(2), 169-203.

Park, Y. (2005). Culture as Deficit: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Concept of Cultural in

Contemporary Social Work Discourse. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 32*(3), 11-33.

Razack, N. (2009). Decolonizing the Pedagogy and Practice of International Social Work. *International Social Work, 52*(1), 9-21.

Razack, S. H. (2004). Those Who 'Witness the Evil': Peacekeeping as Trauma. In *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair* (pp. 169-177). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Reid, M. (2005). First Nations Women Workers' Speak, Write and Research Back: Child Welfare and Decolonizing Stories. *The First Peoples Child & Family Review, 2*(1), 21-40.

Reisch, M. (2008). From Melting Pot to Multiculturalism: The Impact of Racial and Ethnic Diversity on Social Work and Social Justice in the USA. *British Journal of Social Work , 38*(1), 788-804.

Richardson, L. (2004). Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice* (pp. 473-495). Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Robinson, J. B. (1989). Clinical Treatment of Black Families: Issues and Strategies. *Social Work , 34*(4), 323-329.

Rogers, A. T. & Gallegos, J. S. (2007). Pathways to health and Mental-Health Service Utilization Among Older Mexicans. *International Social Work, 50*(5), 654-669.

Sakamoto, I. (2003). Changing Images and Similar Dynamics: Historical Patterning of Foreignness in the Social Work Profession. In *The Concept of Foreign: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (pp. 237-257). Lanham: Lexington Books.

Sanderson, J. (2012). The Master of Aboriginal Social Work Program: Elders and Culture Camp as the Foundation. *Native Social Work Journal, 8,* 91-104.

Shewell, H. (2004). *'Enough To Keep Them Alive': Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

ShupSheWana (n.d.). *The Good Red Road: Native American Teachings from the Great Lakes Shared by ShupSheWana.* Unpublished Manuscript.

Smith, G. H. (2000). Protecting and Respecting Indigenous Knowledge. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (pp. 209 –224). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Strega, S. & Carrière, J. (2009). *Walking This Path Together: Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Child Welfare Practice.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Stoler, A. L. (2000). Cultivating Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves. In *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth Centuries* (pp. 95-136). New York: Routledge.

Simpson, L. (2011). *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back.* Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

Sinha, V., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Fast, E., Prokop, S. T., et al. (2011). *Kiskisik Awasisak: Remember the children: Understanding the overrepresentation of First Nations children in the child welfare system*. Ottawa, ON: Assembly of First Nations.

Sinha, V., & Kozlowski, A. (2013). The structure of Aboriginal child welfare in Canada. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, *4*(2), 1-22.

Sinclair, R. (2004). Aboriginal Social Work Education in Canada: Decolonizing Pedagogy for the Seventh Generation. *First Peoples Child & Family Review, 1*(1), 49-61.

Sinclair, R. (2007). Identity Lost and Found: Lessons from the Sixties Scoop. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, *3*(1), 65-82.

Sinclair, R. (2009). Bridging the Past and Future: An Introduction to Indigenous Social Work Issues. In R. Sinclair, M. A. Hart, and G. Bruyere (Eds). *Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada (*pp. 19-24). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Sinclair, R., Hart, M. A. & Bruyere, G. (Eds.) (2009). *Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Sium, A., & Ritskes, E. (2013). Speaking truth to power: Indigenous storytelling as an act of living resistance. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 2*(1), pp. I-X.

Steinhauer, P. (2001). Situating Myself in Research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 25*(2), 183-87.

Thomas, R. A. (2005). Honouring the Oral Traditions of my Ancestors through Storytelling. In L. A. Brown, *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, & Anti-Oppressive Approaches* (pp. 237-254). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*(3), 409-427.

Tuck, E & Yang, K. W. (2012) Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor. In *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society. 1*(1), 1-40.

Valentine, J. M. (2003). An Exploration of Smoking Cessation and Prevention Interventions for Aboriginal Youth. *Pimatziwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health , 1*(2), 136-154.

Viola, A. (2006). Evaluation of the Outreach School Garden Project: Building the Capacity of Two Indigenous Remote School Communities to Integrate Nutrition into the Core School Curriculum. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 17*, 233-239.

Wane, N. (2013). [Re]Claiming my Indigenous knowledge: Challenges, resistence, and opportunities. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 2(1), 93-107.*

Weber-Pillwax, C. (2004). Indigenous Researchers and Indigenous Research Methods: Cultural Influences or Cultural Determinants of Research Methods. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 2*(1), 77-90.

Weaver, H. N. (1997). Training Culturally Competent Social Workers: What Students should know about Native People. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 14*(1/2), 97-111.

Weaver, H. N. (2000). Culture and Professional Education: The Experiences of Native American Social Workers. *Journal of Social Work Education, 36*(3), 415-428.

Wheeler, W. (2010), Cree Intellectual Traditions in History. In A. Finkle, S. Carter & P. Fortna (Eds.) *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined "Region"* (pp 74-61). Edmonton: Athabasca University Press.

Whiteduck, M. (2013). "But it's *our* story. Read it.": Stories my grandfather told me and writing for continuance. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 2*(1), 72-92.

Williams, E. E. (1996). Culturally Informed Social Work Practice with American Indian Clients: Guidelines for Non-Indian Social Workers. *Social Work, 41*(2), 147-329.

Williamson, K. J. (2000). Celestial and Social Families of the Inuit. In *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies* (pp. 125-144). Saskatoon: University Extension Press.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Wise, T. (2005). Born to Belonging. In *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* (pp. 1-14). Berkeley: Soft Skull Press.

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. In *Journal of Genocide Research, 8*(4) (Dec), 387–409.

Wong, Y. L. R. (2003). Deconstructing Culture in Cultural Competence: Dissenting Voices from Asian-Canadian Practitioners. *Canadian Social Work Review, 20*(2), 149-167.

Yee, J. Y. & Dumbrill, G. C. (2003). Whiteout: Looking for Race in Canadian Social Work Practice. In *Multicultural Social Work in Canada: Working with Diverse Ethno-racial Communities* (pp. 98-118). Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Zavala, M. (2013). What do we mean by decolonizing research strategies? Lessons from decolonizing, Indigenous research projects in New Zealand and Latin America. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *2*(1), 55-71.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Information Sheet

You are invited to participate in a research project that explores the relationship between Indigenous social workers and their profession through the power of storytelling. The purpose of the study is to share and create stories of Indigenous social workers as they encounter and negotiate the grand narratives of the social work, narratives of a profession that has historically oppressed Indigenous peoples and communities. This research is being conducted for the completion of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of Toronto/Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the department of Leadership and Higher Education under the supervision of Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Participants must be, (1) Indigenous people (self-identified as First Nations, Metis or Inuit), (2) age 18 or older, (3) Eligible for registration as a Social Worker with the College of Social Worker and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW). Specifically they will have a BSW or MSW from a recognized program in Canada, (4) They are or have practiced social work in the city of Toronto, Ontario.

Your participation consists of an individual interview (storytelling session) of approximately ninety minutes. It will take place in English, at a mutually agreed upon location, at a time of your convenience.

Your interview will ask for some basic demographic information, your reflections and experiences relating to your relationship with the profession of social work, and ask about reimaging your personal story as a creative non-fiction story.

You will also be invited to review and edit storytelling transcription, as well as edit and contribute to the creative short story developed from your storytelling session. Participation in reviewing, editing, and writing stories is voluntary and participants can choose to spend very little time in this portion of the project, or much more participation, as they see fit.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

There is minimal risk involved in this study. You may choose not to answer any questions or to withdraw from the study at any time.

While there is no direct benefit to any participant, your participation can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the social work profession. This is something that yourself, as well as other Indigenous social workers or social work students may be able to learn and grow from. Other potential benefits include the validation of Indigenous knowledges in mainstream academic research, and informing schools of social work about the unique realities of Indigenous social workers. This information, thus, is not only significant to Indigenous peoples training to become social workers, but for non-Indigenous social workers and school administrators, to be a part of decolonizing the profession and working to repair relationships with Indigenous communities.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide is confidential and steps will be taken to ensure your confidentiality. Secure codes such as pseudonyms for names will be used to de-identify participants at the outset of each interview and will be maintained throughout every stage of the data collection process including in transcripts and notes. Code and pseudonym keys/legends, scanned participant information/consent letters, and de-identified transcripts, will be stored on a password-protected laptop computer within password protected files or encryption software consistent with the standards described at: http://www.research.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/2013/05/datasecurity1.pdf. Original participant consent forms will be stored in a filling cabinet in my office and kept under lock and key. All digital audio files will be copied to a password protected drive immediately after the completion of the interview. The original file will be deleted from the audio device. The audio recording of your interview will be transcribed, and the digital file will be deleted immediately after transcription.

Participants will, however, have the choice as to whether they wish for their name to be included in the published research findings. This is important for Indigenous peoples to have the choice to take ownership over their stories and knowledges. Permission to use the individuals name, or preferred identifier in research findings, will be included in the

informed consent form as well as revisited throughout the research process, providing participants the opportunity to chose to change their original decision of whether or not they would like to be named.

The research ethics program at the University of Toronto may have confidential access to data to help ensure participant protection procedures are followed.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in the project is strictly voluntary. This means you agree to participate with no pressure and are free to withdraw form the study at any time. You agree that I may use the data gathered for research, educational, and publication purposes. A summary of the research will be shared with you at the conclusion of the project.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

Participants for this study will receive compensation for their involvement with the project. I will be offering each participant tobacco as per Indigenous research protocol, and $100 in cash or gift cards.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please fell free to contact the investigator, Nicole Penak, at _(Phone Number)__ or by email at nicole.penak@mail.utoronto.ca. You can also contact the supervising professor, Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule by email at jeanpaul.restoule@utoronto.ca

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Ethics Review Office (University of Toronto) at 416-946-3273 or email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

CONSENT FORM

Please complete the following information to indicate your consent. The second copy is for your records.

I (print name) _____ agree to participate in the research study described above on this date of _____. The study has been explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and its process.

I consent to allowing this interview to be recorded with a digital audio recorder.

Signature _____ Date

I would/ would not (circle one) like my name to appear in the final publication of the research findings.

The name/pseudonym I would like to appear in the final publication of the research findings is:

_____.

Signature _____ Date

Please contact Nicole Penak at email: nicole.penak@mail.utoronto.ca if you have any comments, questions, or concerns. As well, participants can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946- 3273, if they have questions about their rights as participants.

Appendix B

Storytelling Session Guide Part One

Introductory Questions:

1) Who are you?
2) Where are you from?
3) How did you come to live in Toronto?
4) How long have you lived and worked here?
5) Where in the city have you lived and worked?

Relationship to Social Work:

6) Tell me about your relationship to the social work profession?
7) When and how did your relationship with social work begin?
8) When and how did you decide to build a closer relationship with social work by joining the social work profession?
9) Tell me about being an Indigenous social worker in the city of Toronto?
10) Are there spaces in Toronto, landmarks connected to yourself as an Indigenous social worker?
11) How has being an Indigenous person impacted your relationship with the social work profession?
12) How has being a social worker impacted your relationship with Indigenous identity, family, community, Nation?
13) Has your relationship with the social work profession changed over time?
14) Why do you choose to continue to be a social worker?
15) What does social work mean to you?
16) How do you reconcile being an Indigenous person in the social work profession? Or do you?
17) Are there challenges, strengths, learning/lessons, from your relationship with social work?
18) Do you have a memorable moment or experience that stands out for you that impacts your understanding of yourself as an Indigenous social worker?
19) What about your relationship with the social work profession would you like to share with other/new/future Indigenous social workers?
20) What about your relationship with the profession of social work would you like to share with anyone else (friends, family, peers, coworkers, educators) or anything else (ex. systems, organizations, schools, or workplaces)?

Appendix C

Storytelling Session Guide Part Two

Thinking in Stories

Based on what was shared….

21) If you could describe your relationship with social work as a metaphor, what would that metaphor be?
22) Where in Toronto would the story take place? (streets, buildings, neighbourhoods, landmarks, etc?)
23) Who might the characters be in the story? (ex. Maybe human, animal, plant, mineral, spirit?) Is there a protagonist in your story? Who or what would that be? Is there an antagonist in your story? Who or what would that be?
24) Tell me about these characters' unique characteristics such as their attitude, their approach to life, sense of humour, what they look like, what are they wearing, etc.?
25) What would happen in the story?
26) What learning could possibly come from this story, or what would you want to leave people to ponder about?
27) What is the ambiance/genre of the story? Is it funny, sad, suspenseful?