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Research on the Intergenerational Impact of Colonialism and Aboriginal Homelessness in Edmonton

Towards A Deeper Understanding of the Indigenous Experience of Urban Homelessness

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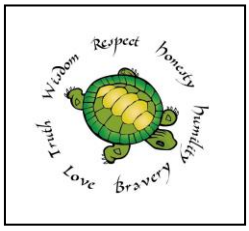
Blue Quills FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE



IRM Research and Evaluation Inc.

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Introduction – Setting the Context

In Edmonton's 2012 Homeless Count, 2,174 people identified themselves as homeless; almost half (46%) were of Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis or Inuit) descent (Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2012). This is an alarming overrepresentation considering only 5% of Edmonton's population is of Aboriginal descent (Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2012). Given the unique challenges of this population, it is imperative that there are adequate and appropriate support services available to them. In response to this situation, Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness lists the following goals:

- Work with the Aboriginal community to develop the capacity of an Aboriginal agency or agencies to deliver Aboriginal specific services in support of the Housing First Program by Aboriginal peoples to Aboriginal peoples when requested.
- Work with the Aboriginal and existing service community to ensure services provided to Aboriginal people are relevant, respectful and effective in helping Aboriginal people secure and maintain a home.

Perspectives on the Housing First Program with Indigenous Participants

In 2010, Homeward Trust Edmonton engaged Blue Quills First Nations College to conduct a research project to better understand the perspectives of Aboriginal clients in Edmonton's Housing First program, which provides housing and support services to homeless people. The research was subsequently adapted into a play, to share the participants' verbatim stories with diverse audiences.

> *"My grandmother and grandpa…their kids were removed and moved to residential schools and I mean I think up until ten years ago, my aunts and uncles literally just thought that's just what happens…it's so isolated and so just unaware that this is not okay, that this is happening and this is not a normal response to dealing with issues, using alcohol or a healthy way to deal with it rather. So I think just not being aware of what else is out there and continuing the cycle and so, therefore, they're over represented because there was this whole group that got traumatized and so, therefore, there's going to be ramifications from that."*
>
> - Formerly homeless research participant, quoted in unpublished report for Homeward Trust by Blue Quills First Nations College

The report *Perspectives on the Housing First Program with Indigenous Participants* (Homeward Trust, 2011) noted that:

> Homelessness in the Aboriginal community is complex and multi-dimensional; the social determinants that contribute to homelessness such as poverty, addiction, mental health, and social justice issues are well-documented. Existing models of housing support services that combine intervention with the provision of safe, affordable, and appropriate housing often do not adequately deal with core needs associated with the negative consequences of colonization, including the intergenerational trauma from Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and other hallmarks of systemic marginalization and oppression of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

One of the recommendations from the report was for Homeward Trust to commission research pertaining to intergenerational trauma, Indigenous identity and colonization issues in relation to Aboriginal homelessness in Edmonton.

Objective: Research to Inform and Support Efforts to End Homelessness

In response to the recommendations of the *Perspectives on the Housing First Program with Indigenous Participants* report, Homeward Trust Edmonton prioritized outsourcing an individual or team to conduct a research project to explore the following questions:

- What connections are evident between Aboriginal experiences in residential schools, child protection, or other forms of colonial oppression and experiences of homelessness? Is there a correlation between risk factors for homelessness and the intergenerational trauma of various policies of colonial oppression?
- For Aboriginal individuals who have been or are homeless, how is their sense of identity and connection with their heritage impacted by their experiences (directly or indirectly) with residential schools or child protection?
- What supports or services are suggested as promising practices for overcoming the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and other forms of colonial oppression, in relation to homelessness?
- What life factors or experiences appear to mitigate or override the impacts of intergenerational trauma from residential schools and child protection systems, and decrease the likelihood of homelessness?

The latter two questions are critical to Homeward Trust's objective of generating relevant, usable knowledge to inform ongoing efforts to end homelessness. These questions have been addressed through a combination of literature review and primary research within the context of an Indigenous research design and methodology.

Phased Approach

Early in the project, it was decided that the research would best be completed in two phases. The first phase would involve an in-depth research review exploring the multiple complex factors that contribute to the experience of urban homelessness for Indigenous peoples. This phase would be focused within the context of colonization and assimilation, and how those two concepts are operationalized and contribute to the experience of homelessness. The second phase would involve personal interviews with Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. The collected stories would then be explored for the lived relationship to the factors determined in the research review. This interplay between the research and the lived experience would allow the research team to determine which factors of colonization play a dominant role in the experience of homelessness for Indigenous people.

Indigenous Research Methodology

> "In order to open your eyes you have to close them. Does that make sense to you? Your eyes can be fooled but when you close your eyes you can't be fooled"
>
> (Research participant cited as Vince in Makokis, 2005, p. 67).

Ceremony, Circle Process, and Relational Accountability seem to form the heart of an Indigenous Research Methodological approach. Like a sweet grass braid, they are intertwined yet separate and each forms an integral part of the research process. As stated in the research ethics policy at Blue Quills First Nations College:

> "Research is about seeking knowledge, about forming relationships with the ones who know, and the ethics that guide that search can only be understood in a spiritual context.... In ceremony, the ones who are learning, who are receiving teachings and knowledge, are *oskâpewisak ekwa oskîskwewak* this is the role of the researcher — the helper, the learner. They take direction from the ones with the knowledge. Once they have learned, their teacher will send them out to be a teacher, with a responsibility to carry the knowledge for future generations, and respecting the original practice, intent, and use (p. 1)."

Ceremony, Circle Process and Relational Accountability exist in harmony with the Natural Laws and the Seven Teachings in the research process.

Circle Process

Traditional Indigenous knowledge systems are not objectively separate from life – they are embedded in life and the norms of being and knowing. As such, the Circle Process research methodology is a way of 'being' (as opposed to 'doing') research that manifests through ceremony. The circle is not a metaphor for understanding – it is an experience of shared understanding. It is only when all of the perspectives around the circle are brought together through open dialogue that we can truly see and understand that which lies in the center of the circle.

Circle Process incorporates spirituality in the forms of Ceremonial Protocols, ways of being informed by the Teachings and Natural Laws, the balance and connection of the Medicine Wheel, and the principles of Relational Accountability. Circle Process strives to make the unknown known through ceremony. As a ceremonial experience, Circle Process is fundamentally

transformative (Schnarch, 2004) wherein the transformative impact of the research process touches all involved. Commitment to Circle Process is a subconscious and/or conscious commitment to the transformative potential of the research process.

Research participants are offered tobacco and cloth and invited, literally or figuratively, to the circle. In the case of a literal circle, research participants are invited to a talking circle to share their stories around a guided topic after an opening prayer by an Elder. The Circle Process will proceed until it is felt that all has been covered. Sometimes this is one time; often this is two or three times around the circle (Makokis, 2005, p. 54). In the case of a metaphoric circle, research participants are invited to the meaning of the circle, placing the item of scrutiny at the center of the circle. In this process, all vantage points to the object of scrutiny are invaluable. Circle Process creates and transmits meaning through social construction connected intimately with action. Understanding is arrived at through communication, interaction, interpretation, ceremony, relationship, and negotiation – defined as the Circle Process.

The research team is subject to, and works within, the ceremonial Circle Process as well. Circle Process is transformative to the research team. Researchers surrender to the potential transformation of personal beliefs and values. Ongoing support through the transformative process is offered by team members to each other. Circle Process is also manifest in the interpretation of the gathered stories where meaning is identified in a Circle Process of the research team which then later includes dissemination of the research findings to the circle of research participants. The nature and scope of dissemination is determined by the stakeholders in the research process.

Ceremony

Commitment to the transformative potential of the research is typically initiated in a pipe ceremony hosted by a traditional pipe carrier. The ceremonial pipe is the embodiment of the Natural Laws, thus intentionally invoking the elements associated with the Natural Laws in research held in ceremony.

> "The bowl of the pipe is the rock and represents strength and determination, the stem comes from the tree and represents honesty, the sweet grass, representing kindness, is used to light the pipe and the land and animals, representing sharing are found within the pipe teaching itself" (Makokis, 2005, p. 46).

Tobacco and cloth are presented to the Elder and the research process is initiated in a circle with members of the research team and/or research participants in attendance. With the sacred contract for the creation and transmission of knowledge sealed in a circle of ceremony, the research process continues in Circle Process with both research participants and the research team.

Ceremony is the heart of Indigenous epistemology. Ceremony is understood "as our epistemology, our epistemological system, our way of knowing, our way of gaining knowledge; the method that we use to gain knowledge" (Makokis, 2005, p. 84). By aligning research with ceremony, core meanings of Indigeneity are brought to the surface.

Sacred traditional ceremonial practices used in research invoke guidance and support from seen and unseen forces and spirits. Indigenous research and Circle Process makes faith an explicit part of the research process, intentionally welcoming and asking for complexity and depth of meaning, of surrender of the mind to the heart. Makokis (2001) states that "the journey starts from the mind to the heart" (cited in Makokis, 2005, p. 42). This place of surrender of the mind to the heart, of humility, of not knowing, is essential in the Indigenous research methodology. There is a surrender to the greater knowing that is borne in the sacred transmission of knowledge through relationships embedded in the sacred circle.

Relational Accountability

Relationships are key in an Indigenous epistemology and ontology. Nothing exists outside of relationship. Knowledge does not and cannot exist without relationship between at least two beings. The relational aspect of Circle Process is vitally important. Without the relationships embedded in the circle, the knowledge cannot and does not exist. Attention to the sacredness of the relationships within the circle is tantamount. Ethical accountability in an Indigenous research methodology takes on a broader and deeper meaning to include accountability to the ancestors who transmitted the knowledge, to the participants in the Circle Process, to the larger community, and to future generations. Creation and transmission of knowledge is a sacred trust as that which is 'known' is carried on behalf of all those who have created the 'knowing'. Relational accountability lies at the core of this research/evaluative process. First we create, form, and commit to relationships – these relationships define who we are. And it is these relationships to which we are held accountable – we are part of our research and everything we do must incorporate the principles of respect, reciprocity and responsibility.

The concept of relational accountability is explored by Shawn Wilson (2008) in his book *"Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods".* Shawn is an Opaskwayak Cree from northern Manitoba and he suggests that "relationships don't just shape Indigenous reality, they are our reality" (p. 145). In our research we must be accountable to all of our relationships including our relationship to the Creator, the land and all living things. Relational accountability also speaks to the relationship of our ancestors and to the ones that come after us. Finally, it also pertains to the relationship between our friends, families and communities and to the relationship we have with ourselves.

Shawn suggests that one of the Cree words that form the basis of the concept of relational accountability, is "*otcinawin* (breaking of natural law)" (p.107). Simply put, "if one person deliberately mistreats other creatures, that action will invoke natural justice" (p.107). The other word is "*pastahowin,* which means breaking the sacred law" (p.107). To summarize, humans "who are capable of knowing the difference, are accountable for all of their actions to all of their relations" (p.107). When we are working with people involved in our research and evaluation, we commit ourselves to living the practice of relational accountability. We acknowledge that we will not work in isolation and that our approach is one that will be respectful of all our relations.

Medicine Wheel/Natural Law/Seven Teachings

Medicine Wheel

The research methodology is anchored in ancient ways of knowing including the Natural Laws and the Medicine Wheel. These ways of knowing are ways of "being and becoming" and flow through the research process in the context of day to day actions. "Not only do they have to go to ceremonies and pick up the knowledge but then they have to find a way to internalize the knowledge and turn it into a day-to-day lived experience" (Stewart as cited in Makokis, 2005, p. 88). Thus, the Indigenous researcher knows the Natural Laws and the Medicine Wheel as ways of *being* that manifest in daily actions.

Natural Laws/Seven Teachings

From this place of humble surrender of the mind to the heart, the research methodology is anchored in ancient ways of knowing including the Natural Laws and the Medicine Wheel.

These ways of knowing are ways of being and flow through the research process. Indigenous *ways of knowing* are *ways of becoming* which then manifest in day to day actions.

The Seven Teachings are intended to guide our conduct with one another. They are associated with various animals that represent the stories and meaning behind each of the teachings. Just like us, each animal has its own special gift.

> The Seven Teachings incorporate:
>
> - Love (Eagle) – always act in love. Love the Creator. Love the Earth. Love yourself, your family, and your fellow human beings.
> - Respect (Buffalo) – Respect all life on Mother Earth, respect Elders and people of all races. The essence of respect is to give.
> - Courage (Bear) – Listen to your heart, it takes courage to do what is right.
> - Honesty (Mistapehkew, Big Man) – Never lie or gossip, be honest with yourself and others. Speak from your heart. Be true to your word.
> - Wisdom (Beaver) – Everyone has a special gift, show wisdom by using your gift to build a peaceful world.
> - Humility (Wolf) – Think of others before yourself, humble yourself to the Great Spirit by being thankful.
> - Truth (Turtle) – Always seek truth, living the truth is living the Seven Teachings.
>
> (Teachings interpreted by Dave Courchene, Turtle Lodge)

It is important to acknowledge that these are “teachings” and the list above is only that – a list, and does not contain the actual teachings. These must be received from an Elder.

Summary

The need for research and program evaluation from an Indigenous worldview is a movement against colonization, and is necessary because only through Indigenous methodologies can we fully understand the consequences of oppression and colonization – and it is only through Indigenous methodologies that we will understand the appropriate responses to oppression and colonization. Western models of research tend to not only reinforce the concepts and process of colonization; they may also exclude other methods of knowing and learning. Yet Walker (2003) suggests that, "a growing number of Indigenous scholars maintain that valid research involving Indigenous people must be based in research paradigms that are congruent with Indigenous

realities and ways of knowing" (p.740). Aboriginal methodologies ensure that the goals and results of the study can be useful to Indigenous communities (Menzies, 2001). Baskin (2005) states that,

> "Gathering our own stories through Aboriginal research methodologies becomes our Indigenous medium. It involves how we gather our information, the stories we choose to tell, and how we communicate them. Indigenous research methodologies also concern who does the gathering and communicating, for uppermost is the responsibility to anti-colonialism and the promotion of Aboriginal world views" (Baskin, 2005).

These three principles (Ceremony, Circle Process, and Relational Accountability) form the framework of the research and evaluative process and, ultimately, should be visible in the final report and learnings. Incorporating the learnings of a Circle Process into the day-to-day operations of the agency "closes" the Circle and acknowledges the importance of each participant's relational role within the evaluative process.

Finally, the project should end as it begins – in the context of ceremony.

Stories and Storytelling

The concepts of storytelling and Circle Process are included to provide insight into the distinct and sacred nature of Indigenous Research Methodology. Telling your story in a setting that is non-judgmental, uninterrupted, and safe is the basis for letting go and getting validation and support from those around you. There is a relational process to storytelling and as suggested by Desmoulins (2006), when writing about Elder's stories, "stories do three things: orally convey cultural and personal experience through metaphorical language; set traditional practices known as traditional knowledge alongside narrative inquiry as complex understanding; and, opens up spaces of knowledge production within the academy of dialogue" (p. 122). It is this last area that is our main focus. It is within the process of dialogue and storytelling (and story-listening) that we experience knowledge production. In each of the interviews, encouraging the participant to feel supported to verbally share their story and experience of housing allowed us to create an understanding of housing services to Indigenous peoples in Edmonton.

Stories serve multiple purposes. "Grandparents also asserted that telling stories to their grandchildren was important. Stories act as mechanisms through which grandparents can teach

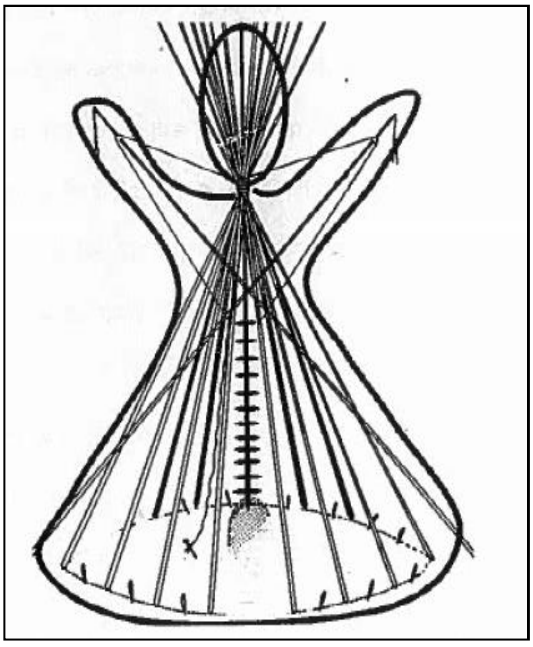
succeeding generations how to live consistently with tribal values" (Robbins et al., 2002). This is echoed by Coulter, Michael & Poyner (2007), who quote Schram (1994): "a story is a beautiful means of teaching spirituality, values, history, traditions, and customs; a creative method of introducing characters and places; an imaginative way to instill hope and resourceful thinking. Stories help us understand who we are and show us what legacies to transmit to future generations" (p. 105).

Research based within an Indigenous Research Methodology begins, occurs, and ends in ceremony. On July 29, 2013, the Homeward Trust Circle Process research project began in ceremony. A number of Homeward Trust and Blue Quills representatives attended the ceremonial initiation of the research project with a pipe ceremony. In this ceremonial process, the spirits and blessings of the four directions of the Medicine Wheel were brought into the research process. It is hoped that we can, from this ceremonial place of centeredness, present our research findings from a place of humility and with respect, honesty and determination.

Understanding the Indigenous Meaning of Home – A Creation Story

Indigenous creation stories provide an account of the origins, history, spirituality, morality, and values of a people. Stories bind a community's past with its future, and oral traditions reach across generations, from Elder to child. They bear witness to how the two-legged, four-legged and winged ones were created and describe their unique gifts and contributions to the circle. These descriptions are as varied as the Indigenous nations across Canada are themselves.

Our creation story begins with a story from Skywoman. She tells us of the woman who fell from the sky and, with the two- and four-legged and winged ones, participated in the creation of Turtle Island – our home. She tells us about the connection between women and home. Skywoman also shares her teachings of the tipi, which provide a deeper understanding of the meaning of "home" in our worldview. These teachings allow us to understand the true meaning of home, and conversely, allow us to better understand what it may mean to not have a home. The teachings also pass along traditional knowledge regarding the roles of men, women, children and grandparents. Understanding the tipi teachings allows us to understand the tipi as the basis of home, and as the foundation of Indigenous society.



Skywoman shares the teaching of the tipi:

> The tipi represents the structure of our communities and the role and values of women in *nehiyaw* (Cree) society. The tipi is the woman's lodge; the woman is the owner and the sole person responsible for her lodge. If you visualize the tipi and the way the tipi stands, it is wide at the base, forming a circle. The base of the tipi is understood as the base of the woman's skirt bottom, as it touches Mother Earth. The top of the tipi represents her dress top, and the wind flaps are the woman's arms and hands, reaching out, her arms outstretched. The shape of the tipi represents the woman giving thanks to the Creator for the sacred gift of life-giving, of creating life. The tipi is the woman's gift, the tipi is her place, her lodge. She is the owner, the keeper, and the caretaker.

The *nehiyaw* term for woman is *iskwew.* The root of this term is derived from the *nehiyaw* term for fire, *iskwetew.* Women bring life and are the keepers of the fire – the spirit. The woman uses the energy from the sun and transforms that into fire within her lodge and the fire represents the spirit within each of us. When a child is born, the child has spirit, and the woman must nurture that spirit. By nurturing the fire, she is also nurturing the spirit of her children, her partner, and her extended family that all live within her lodge. She uses that fire to cook, to give warmth, to bring light into her lodge. It is very important for a woman to understand that the energy of her thoughts and intentions when she cooks is passed along to her family through the food. Similar to the food, the fire not only brings physical warmth but it also transmits the emotional warmth – the love the woman has for her herself and all of the people who are within the family.

However, there are also unseen elements in our lodge. The known is what we can see, what we do on a daily basis. The unknown is based within the spiritual aspect of the lodge. For example, the woman is also the bundle-keeper, as the bundle has to be kept in the home – in the lodge. As a bundle-keeper, the woman's responsibility is to make sure the bundle is always taken care of. She takes care of both the physical being and the spiritual aspect of her family. Although it may be the man's bundle, the woman is the keeper of the bundle.

Tipi Teachings

The tipi dwelling of the Plains Cree has both pragmatic and spiritual significance. Tipis are portable and viable dwellings for the geography and climate in the central plains region. The tipi is the most durable dwelling design with a spherical conical shape, maintaining its solidarity with the earth in the harshest wind, rain, and snow. The spiritual dimension of the tipi embodies the cultural mores and the respect Plains Cree people have for women.

The tipi covering, made from buffalo hides, is a symbolic representation of a woman's dress, the protection of the family's well-being. Women have ownership of the family dwelling and the responsibility of dismantling and raising the tipi at each campsite. In Plains Cree society the woman is the teacher, healer, and spiritual advisor: to the children of her family and the extended family.

With the help of the men who provide the firewood, the family's home fire in the center of the tipi is nourished and nurtured by women of the lodge. The fire warms the family in the harsh winter

months, is used for cooking meals, and provides necessary light in the evenings. The tipi is the stronghold of the camp and represents womanhood, enduring continuous life, for the tribe.

Each pole of the tipi carries its own teaching and meaning. When all of these teachings are brought together within the lived experience of the home (the tipi) we are then walking the path towards *miyo pimatisiwin* (the "good life"). The poles of the tipi form the structure that defines our lives, our homes, our families and our communities and are the foundational values for Indigenous housing. Each pole has its own story; wisdom that is shared by Elders in the context of both ceremony, and protocol. In general, the poles represent the following teachings.

The first three poles are tied together and are stood up into a "tripod" format. These three poles represent the teachings of:

> *nanahitamowin* (obedience)
> Obedience means accepting guidance and wisdom from outside of ourselves, using our ears before our mouth. We learn by listening to traditional stories and teachings, by listening to our parents or guardians, our friends and our teachers. We learn by their behaviors and reminders, so that we know what is right and what is wrong.

> *kihceyihtowin* (respect)
> Respect means giving honor to our Elders and fellow students, to the strangers that come to visit our community, and to all of life. We must honor all people's basic rights.

> *tapahteyimowin* (humility)
> We are not above or below others in the circle of life. We feel humbled when we understand our relationship with Creation. We are so small compared to the majestic expanse of Creation, just a "strand in the web of life." Understanding this helps us to respect and value life.

Once the tripod is in place, the remaining poles, and their individual teachings and meanings, are added. These poles represent the teachings of:

> *miyowatamowin* (happiness)
> After the tripod is up, the fourth pole completes your doorway. Happiness means we must show enthusiasm to encourage others. Our good actions will make our ancestors happy in the next world. This is how we share happiness.

sakihitowin (love)
If we are to live in harmony we must accept one another as we are, and accept others who are not in our circle. Love means to be good and kind to one another, and to ourself.

tapowakeyihamowin (faith)
We must learn to believe and trust others. We believe in a power greater than ourselves, whom we worship, and who gives us strength to be a worthy member of the human race. To sustain our spirituality, we need to live it every day. It is a way of life.

wahkohtowin (kinship)
Our family is important to us. Our parents, brothers, and sisters give us roots that tie us to the lifeblood of the earth through their love for us. Kinship also includes extended family. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and their in-laws and children are also our brothers and sisters and give us a sense of belonging to a community.

kanateyimowin (cleanliness)
Today when we talk about cleanliness most people think hygiene. While that is very important, years ago, when old people talked about cleanliness, they meant spiritual cleanliness. Clean thoughts come from a clean mind and this comes from our spirituality. With a clean mind and a sense of peace within, we learn not to inflict ills on others. Good health habits also reflect a clean mind.

nanaskomowin (thankfulness)
We learn to give thanks: to always be thankful for the Creator's bounty, which we are privileged to share with others, and for all the kind things others do for us.

wicihitowin (sharing)
We learn to be part of a family and community by helping with the provisions of food and other basic needs. Through the sharing of responsibilities we learn the value of working together and enjoying the fruits of our labor.

sohkisowin (strength)
We are not talking about physical strength, but spiritual strength. We must learn to be patient in times of trouble, and not to complain, but to endure and show understanding. We must accept difficulties and tragedies so that we may give others strength to accept their own difficulties and tragedies.

miyo opikinawasowin (good child raising)
Children are gifts from the Creator blessed with the gift of life. We are responsible for their spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual wellbeing since they are blessed with the gift of representing the continuing circle of life, which we perceive to be the Creator's will.

kici etataytamowin (hope)
We must hope for better things to make life easier for our families, the community, and for us both materially and spiritually. We must look forward to moving towards good things. We need to understand that the seeds we are planting will bear fruit for our children, families and communities.

kicikisewin (ultimate protection)
This is the ultimate responsibility: to achieve balance and well-being of the body, mind, emotions and spirit for the individual, the family, the community and the nation.

There are 14 pins that keep the tipi together and are a symbol of keeping the family together. The hide or canvas used for the tipi cover represents warmth and protection. The rope is used to tighten the center top at the apex of gathered poles and then is tightened around a pole that is nearest to its length; this rope is a symbol of strength. The fastening pegs, usually made of wood, symbolize securing and holding our beliefs and traditions. The door flap represents the *kistohkan* or finishing of the circle that enters a clean beginning within the womb of the tipi. The two long poles that hold the control flaps are *ciscekwahikanisa*. We are all connected by relationships and we depend on each other. This controls and creates harmony in the circle of life.

(adapted from Makokis, 2009)

It would be important to note that, prior to contact, the Indigenous home, the tipi, was developed for thousands of years to be perfect for the lived context. The high degree of Indigenous science incorporated within the tipi design predates many so-called Western "discoveries". The tipi was an all-weather, year-around portable structure with multiple features that controlled effective heating, venting, weather protection, storage, transportation, and ease of erection. One of the first acts of colonization was the destruction of basic tipi building materials and the forced location of Indigenous communities to one geographic place. Housing is a process of colonization.

The Creation Story of Indigenous Homelessness

> In the published and unpublished writing of both missionaries and government agents, housing was not simply a matter of wood, mud, and mortar or even human shelter, it was an animate social force that was generative of proper gender roles, work habits, and domestic ways. ... [H]ousing became a significant site of conflict in the colonial encounter, a vehicle through which the reorganization of First Nations society was imagined, attempted, resisted, and ultimately refashioned. ... More than simply reflecting the organization and use of space, homes, like maps, actively shape the way people both imagine and live their social roles. Given the many meanings attached to houses, it is not surprising that they became contested sites in the colonial encounter. When natives and newcomers clashed over the household space, they were playing out one component of a larger clash over appropriate gender, economic, and settlement patterns, over, in other words, the politics of daily life. (Perry, 2003)

When we look at urban Indigenous homelessness we must realize that what we see today has been created over a significant period of time. Homelessness is a result of colonizing policies and practices that have been forced upon Indigenous people in Edmonton, Canada, and across Turtle Island. The colonial process haunts Indigenous and mainstream communities, as the impact of the government's actions continue to be seen in the guise of many "social problems" such as homelessness. Unfortunately, many negative social conditions have become internalized and normalized in Indigenous communities. Even more troubling is that many Indigenous people do not understand how these issues were created to begin with, and often engage in self-blaming. The creation story of Indigenous homelessness teaches us the causes and effects and invites us to explore ways in which we all play a part in helping to reduce the rates of Indigenous homeless peoples.

Literature tells us that Indigenous experiences of homelessness have common "pathways" or cultural experiences that have occurred historically and continue today. These pathways are unique from the non-indigenous experience of homelessness because they stem from the processes of colonization, assimilation, and dislocation. The pathways approach suggests that homelessness, or any other social issue, can be best understood in its complexity and as a process, rather than understood as a set of individual characteristics (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006). This approach honors the Indigenous experience and is more holistic in nature, because it acknowledges the complexity of factors that lead Indigenous people into homelessness.

Literature also tells us that Indigenous homelessness is more than just the absence of shelter, but a complex web of historical impact, which includes residential school abuse, intergenerational trauma and structural policy and practices. In addition, social issues have combined with historical impact to create a "perfect storm" for homelessness and other prevailing social conditions to occur (Dodson, 2010; Marmot & Chambers, 2010; Parsell, 2010; Christensen, 2012;). According to Menzies (2009), "…the prevailing theories on homelessness fail to provide an adequate explanation for why a growing number of Toronto's homeless service users are people of Aboriginal origin" (p.1). The United Native Nations Society (UNNS), a provincial organization of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (2001) believe that, "the homelessness of Aboriginal peoples is rooted in "structural factors such as unemployment, low wages or lack of income, loss of housing, colonization, racism, discrimination (systemic or otherwise), patriarchy, cultural and geographic displacement, and the reserve system" (UNNS cited in Baskin, 2007, p. 32). Other authors have coined Indigenous homelessness as, "being exiled from the mainstream patterns of day-to-day life" (Hulchanski, p.32).

According to the Homeward Trust website, the 2012 point-in-time snapshot of the city's homeless population counted 2,174 homeless Edmontonians. Of that number almost half, or 46% of those counted, were observed to be Indigenous. This literature review will discuss the following questions: What are the historic and present day factors (social, economic, political and policy-based) that contribute to urban Indigenous homelessness in Edmonton? How are the factors generally understood? What are the most significant contributing factors towards Indigenous homelessness?

To understand the interconnected and complex nature of Indigenous homelessness we have chosen to explore the issue within the context of the medicine wheel. Having much in common with one another, most Indigenous societies are guided by circle-based teachings of traditional knowledge. The medicine wheel is a well-known form used by many different peoples with a common teaching about the value of balance and the cyclical nature of an Indigenous worldview. Coyhis & Simonelli (2008) describe the medicine wheel as a tool that can be used to describe both the flow and interconnectedness of issues from an Indigenous worldview. This interconnectedness provides us a guideline as we travel the pathways of urban Indigenous homelessness. One of the medicine wheel principles that we will use are the teaching of the four directions—east, south, west, and north (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008) to understand the

interconnected and cyclical nature of homelessness.

> "The Medicine Wheel teaches that there are four directions of human growth—emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual, as well as four aspects - the individual, family, community, and nation. These groups of four principles are always depicted graphically in a circle to suggest that they can take place simultaneously when experienced from the vantage point of the center, which represents the unity of the Medicine Wheel. These circle or cyclically-based teachings convey a different sense of life than the linear, ever-rising concepts from the Western worldview" (p. 1933).

Indigenous people are connected through their histories and present day realities. These realities are interdependent, interrelated, and joined. If something becomes unbalanced in one area of the medicine wheel, that imbalance will be felt in other areas of the wheel. Likewise, the myriad of social conditions that were born of and are maintained by colonization continue to drive the experiences of Indigenous homelessness. Makokis (2009) further explains the complexity of Indigenous homelessness by stating:

> "The history of colonization and its current impacts explains, in large part, why some Aboriginal peoples are *homeless in their own lands* (emphasis added). We also believe that a framework, which addresses the negative impacts of colonization on Aboriginal peoples and emphasizes our strengths, needs to be developed. A Eurocentric lens fails to do this as it tends to frame Aboriginal peoples as social and economic disadvantages to the rest of Canadian society while negating our political power" (p.10).

Our trail begins in the east, exploring the physical aspects of homelessness. Here we examine the history of residential schools and the impact on the children who were physically taken from their families. We will also explore the treaties and the impact of forced re-location away from home to areas that were not the traditional homes or territories of the people. Finally we will look at the impact of child welfare, and how the removal of children from their homes continues to displace Indigenous people to this day.

Next we will then move to the south, or the mental aspect of the medicine wheel. Here we examine the crux of the social problems we see today in Indigenous communities and their relationship to homelessness. Many Indigenous people describe the uncertainties of urban living,

particularly the daily racism and discrimination for their involvement in homelessness. This can prevent people from gaining employment, securing housing, and can lead to an experience of chronic homelessness. Understanding how systemic issues critically affect the mental aspect helps us to remember that Indigenous homelessness is not an individual problem.

Then we will look to the west, or the emotional aspects of the medicine wheel. Here we talk about the relationship between identity confusion and loss of self from who we are, our community, and nation. Indigenous language innately contains the morals, values, and teachings around the roles of men and women, children and youth, and grandparents. The loss of language from colonization resulted in confusion and normalization of dysfunctional roles and behaviors such as poor parenting, loss of attachment, poor education, and homelessness. The emotional aspect holds the link between self-identity and sense of place.

Last, we will look to the north, or the spiritual aspect of the medicine wheel and understanding the connection of homelessness with intergenerational trauma, the loss of language, ceremony, and traditional ways and how we have lost our spiritual homes. Understanding homelessness in Indigenous communities requires acknowledging the legacy of attempted colonization of spirit. Unfortunately, the negative impacts of historical trauma that have been transmitted across generations are not only present in individuals, but in the prevailing structures, beliefs, and conditions which have become overwhelming to many Indigenous people’s spirit.

Stories from the East – the Physical Realm of Indigenous Homelessness

The physical aspect of the medicine wheel teaches us about our connection to traditional lands. It also teaches us about the risk of not having a safe place to call home, whether that is a physical structure or a place to go where we can be Indigenous people without discrimination. There are many physical factors such as Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care that have contributed to the homelessness of Indigenous people in Canada (Ruttan et al., 2010; Menzies, 2009; Christensen, 2012). Prior to European contact, Indigenous people were thriving in their environment. Turtle Island was built on land and resources belonging to First Nations and Inuit people. It can be argued that Canada is living entirely at Indigenous peoples' expense and that Indigenous people are actually homeless from their original land, ways of living, and families. It is also extremely important to understand that the Indigenous paradigm of "being in relationship with the land" is not an abstract concept. In addition to the intense spiritual connection, being in relationship with the land also includes access to natural medicines, food, and healing. We are "connected to place" – with a deeper meaning that, rather than the idea of "ownership", is focused on a deeply spiritual connection to place. It is one thing to experience homelessness, but to become landless in your own land is a very different experience (Robbins & Dewar, 2011).

One of the factors that contributes to the dislocation and displacement of Indigenous people today is Child and Family poverty. The distinct nature of Indigenous Child and Family poverty in Canada is rooted in cultural fragmentation, the multi-generational effects of residential schools, ward-ship through the child welfare system, and socio-economic marginalization. For reasons none other than "being Aboriginal", many Indigenous people have, for generations, grown up in poverty.

Indigenous people were never conquered, but control of land, language, culture, and mobility was taken away through assimilationist policies and procedures. The most violent processes of assimilation were the Residential Schools that operated within Canada for nearly 200 years, the earliest beginning in1820 with the last closing in 1996. In 1920, through the alteration of the Indian Act, the federal government made it mandatory for all Inuit and First Nations' children to attend Residential Schools. As well, many Métis children also attended the institutions (Walsh et al., 2011; Ruttan et al., 2008; Menzies, 2009; Peters, 2012).

The purpose of residential schools was to assimilate Indigenous children - to make them "civilized" from a European worldview. Removing Indigenous children from not only their parents and community, but from their cultural identity as well, was a tactic of assimilation meant to destroy a child's cultural and spiritual connection to place, land, family, and community and was the operating method of residential schools. Hunger and other deprivations have been noted in scores of stories and public testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Physical abuse was commonplace in most residential schools. Even more devastating was the widespread sexual abuse that came to public awareness in the late 1980s, when adult survivors began coming forward and sharing their painful stories (Milloy, 1999). One residential school survivor describes her experience in residential school as akin to being kidnapped, "I was 5 when they put me in residential school. We lost all our traditions. We were not allowed to speak the language; I understand it fully but I can't speak it" (Hunter et al., 2006). Survival became the only strategy for many students of residential school and a significant part of each child was lost – most notably cultural and moral values as they relate to an Indigenous way of life. The loss of culture resulted in parents being unable to teach their children about their cultural traditions and the way of life of their ancestors. In some cases, grandparents and parents still tried to pass on some aspects of culture during the summer months when children were home from residential schools, but this lacked in consistency (Hunter et al., 2006; Whitbeck et al., 2012).

As the Residential Schools slowly began to close, Indigenous communities began to see the devastating effects at a community level. Lack of parental role modeling and widespread physical and sexual abuse while attending residential schools created generations of survivors (Fast & Collin-Vézinab 2010). Having no positive parental role models opened the door to the notorious Sixties Scoop. The Sixties Scoop began in 1950, and continued until approximately 1980. Thousands of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were removed from their parents and placed in non-Indigenous homes in Canada, the USA and internationally. In *Wen:de — We are coming to the light of day*, Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley and Wien (2005) refer to the Sixties Scoop as a continuation of the Residential School system because removal of Indigenous children from their homes and communities continued, only under a different pretense (Fast & Collin-Vézinab, 2010).

The legacy of the Sixties Scoop, compounded with the impact of Residential Schools, has left many Indigenous people completely dislocated from land, place, community, language, spirituality and culture. Many social problems such as substance abuse, poverty, low educational

attainment, and homelessness have all been traced back to the long-term effects of removing Indigenous children from their homes and birth family, and placing them in non-Indigenous homes (Whitbeck et al., 2012; Baskin, 2007; Peters, 2012; Thurston et al., nd;).

Coined the "Child Welfare Impact", a number of research studies have begun to explore the connection between presenting factors such as growing up in poverty and child welfare involvement, and homelessness and child welfare involvement (Fast & Collin-Vézinab, 2010). In 2006, Hunter et al., spoke to twenty four Indigenous youth about their displacement and lack of home and their involvement with the Child Welfare system. Most of the youth stated that, "they grew up in the care of the Children's Aid Society (CAS), which included foster homes and group homes" (p. 13). More than half of all of the respondents mentioned having to relocate more than once. Of those that relocated, many said, "they moved to and from several different families and in some cases these homes or families were spread across the country" (p.13). In this report as well as others, the predominant theme was that Indigenous youth had unstable homes, meaning that they resided with families or in group homes where they experienced some, if not all, of the following: psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse, neglect, and acts of racism. In an attempt to avoid the traumas of involvement in the child protection system, many Indigenous people live a fluid, mobile lifestyle out of the necessity to avoid coming to the attention of the child protection system.

Social problems in Indigenous communities have led to transitory lifestyles for many Indigenous people. Whitbeck et al, talk about the mobility, or the transitory residences of many Indigenous people, to and from reserves, into the city as a "hidden" form of homelessness and a desire for greater cultural connection. This can either be a positive or negative response. Communities or traditional land can hold sacred places, extended kin, and remain the repository of cultural knowledge. Joffer and Wagner's (1996) study of return migration among Indigenous people in South Dakota noted that 41% of the respondents said they left their reservation for economic reasons, yet only 16% gave ''job'' and 4.9% ''cost of living'' as a reason for returning. More than half (56.8%) gave social environment, family, and cultural reasons for returning (Joffer & Wagner cited in Whitbeck et al., p. 158). In essence, economics drives people out of their communities and culture calls them back.

For some people, episodes of homelessness away from reservations are more stressful than those on reservations. According to the Wilder report ''the general level of distress in the American

Indian homeless population not residing on reservations is somewhat higher than for adults in the general homeless population'' (Owen et al. 2007, cited in Whitbeck et al., 2012). This would suggest that having the option of returning to a culturally safe community may reduce the stress and potential for homelessness. However, while many Indigenous nations have been able to retain a small remnant of their homeland, others were removed forcibly and placed thousands of miles from their ancestral grounds. There is a distinctly different impact when "homelessness" is exacerbated by being combined with "loss of land". Being homeless in your own land is different from being homeless in another land. For Indigenous nations who were not completely removed from their home territories, reserves often represent a remnant of ''homeland''.

The alternative reality, however, is that some reserves or homelands can be a pathway to homelessness in the city, as people live with the painful reminders of broken promises, social problems and economic disadvantage (Christensen, 2012). In many cases, this homeland often occupies the least productive, least desirable area of what was once their vast territory and offers very few economic opportunities (Whitbeck et al., 2012). In many communities, traditionally healthy social, political, and cultural infrastructures have been destroyed by colonization, leaving members to live amongst dysfunctional practices, relationships, and normalized harmful behaviors like lateral violence. In Whitbeck et al., a 21-year-old Algonquin nonprofessional who recently moved to the city described his decision to leave his community,

> "I know the suicide rate for Aboriginals is too high, the death rate is higher, and I feel it's that way because of oppression and discrimination. There are still reserves that are not near places and they get into addictions and an unhealthy lifestyle. That is why health practitioners do not understand—because they haven't lived there" (p. 423).

Stories from the South – the Mental Realm of Indigenous Homelessness

The mental aspect of the medicine wheel teaches us about being in a good frame of mind and having good health in all aspects of our lives. From an Indigenous perspective, health means more than an absence of disease. It includes having a strong connection to your family, knowing who you are, living in "a good way", having a clear mind and a clear understanding of your gifts and how they can be used to help people. In the *nehiyaw* language we talk about health as *miyo pimatisiwin*, which translates as the "good life" or "living the good life". This concept pre-dates colonization and speaks to the holistic health that exists in Indigenous communities to this day. In Blackfoot, *Nah too si* means Creator of life or medicine (Elder Interview, July 2013). These words explain that if we are to be healthy, we have to look at all aspects of who we are as individuals, families, and communities and make our way back to who we are as Indigenous people. This idea of health was further described by a Cree Elder as,

> "… the emotional, mental, social, spiritual, as well as the physical needs of the entire community, including the animals, the land and animate beings. It takes into account the psychological, spiritual, social, and physical needs of the entire Nation and like the teachings of the medicine wheel, ensures balance of all facets of the person, the body, mind, and spirit. In this notion of health, people know their gifts and they contribute to the well-being of their families and communities, and to mother earth overall, by contributing to the circle" (Spence, 2013).

Colonization and the removal of Indigenous people from physical spaces have had devastating and enduring psychological, spiritual, social, and economic effects on survivors and their families. Researchers now are beginning to emphasize the importance of understanding the social, political, and economic conditions faced by Indigenous people within the overall context of colonialism (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003; Walsh et al., 2011; Yellow Horse Braveheart et al., 2011; Fast and Colli-Vezina, 2010; Gone, 2013). These effects are translated into social "symptoms" or problems (Tait cited Denis C. Bracken, 2008), recognizing that, "…the context of those social characteristics are the result of colonialism and related policies of discrimination, attempts at forced assimilation, and economic marginalization experienced by Aboriginal people" (p. 21).

Whether leaving a home community or reserve, or having grown up in the city, many Indigenous people describe the uncertainties of urban living, particularly the daily racism, discrimination, and

urban “terms of reference” as risk factors for their involvement in homelessness. According to Cooke and Belangers' study (2006), *Migration Theories and First Nations Mobility*, urban living presents considerable difficulties for many newcomers. About a third of the participants reported that racism and discrimination in the city often prevented people from gaining employment and securing housing (p. 151). Unfortunately, to gain any type of shelter, many Indigenous people are often forced into less than desirable and dangerous neighborhoods in particular areas of the city, due partly to a lack of affordable housing and poverty, housing insecurity, and overcrowding which opens up pathways to homelessness.

As one Elder said, “I believe there is a warehouse, somewhere, with all of the reports that have been written about Aboriginal people and our problems. The only thing is nothing is done with them, but they all say the same thing” (Elder Interview, 2012). What has changed, or at least shifted, is the public’s recognition of the “issues” as symptoms of something larger. A number of recent reports have consistently identified numerous common social conditions affecting Indigenous people. Among them include the intergenerational effects of family violence, lack of housing on reserves, discrimination, and the process of making a transition to the city (Beavis, Klos, Carter & Douchant 1997; Brant Castellano, 2007; Peters 2009 cited in Peters, 2012). This has been confirmed by the scholar, Baskin, and others (Baskin, 2007; UNNS, 2001; Weinreb et al., 1998). They argue that while housing insecurity is important, there are other compounding personal factors, such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, addictions, poverty, poor health, and/or dysfunctional family relations (Baskin, 2007; UNNS, 2001; Weinreb et al., 1998).

Peters, (2012), also found a number of consistent socio-economic characteristics shared by Indigenous people that seem to create vulnerability to homelessness. Peters found that, “average incomes were very low, especially for single adult females. Adults with dependent children were eligible for higher levels of social assistance, raising their average incomes. Very few individuals were employed and those who were, worked sporadically or at low paying jobs. Participants’ generally low levels of education made it difficult for many to find employment. The majority of participants received social assistance” (p. 326).

In his work with Indigenous homeless men in Toronto, Menzies (2009) talks about the devastation of racism, discrimination and stereotypes of Indigenous people, in particular stereotypes of Indigenous people who find themselves homeless.

In his interviews, he found that several of the men in his study indicated that they found little support or affirmation for being Indigenous from their families, communities, or the public at large. This lack of support and stereotyping of the "drunken, homeless Indian", made it even more difficult to get out of the cycle, into healing treatments where positive expressions of identity could be reestablished (Menzies, 2009, p.12).

A study by Miller et al. (2004) clearly identified a lack of funds as one of the barriers to change for homeless Calgary and Lethbridge Indigenous youths. Specifically, "several youths expressed frustration at the difficulty of getting enough money for the damage deposit and first month's rent. Many participants had drug or alcohol addictions, which used up a lot of their incomes and interfered with their ability to hold down a job" (p. 743). These participants are a good example of the Indigenous experience, which includes multiple disadvantages that made them particularly vulnerable to experiencing homelessness.

Poverty is a prevailing and compounding factor that amplifies most of the social conditions that Indigenous people face, homelessness in particular. For Indigenous peoples, poverty is a direct result of colonization. As traditional economies were destroyed, they were not replaced by any long term or sustainable alternatives to keep communities out of the poverty cycle. Although education rates are increasing, breaking out of poverty is in large part dependent on acquiring formal education and employment (Baskin, 2007). Acquiring an education and meaningful employment is often difficult for Indigenous people, as decades of racism and stereotyping follow people through the school system and into their job search, In fact, "youth stated they left school because they were made to feel ashamed of being Aboriginal, they experienced racism and there was no recognition of Aboriginal perspectives in history or respect for their cultures" (p. 39).

The picture that emerges is one of cumulative and persistent disadvantage that is difficult to transcend. A revolving cycle of generational social and economic disadvantage from childhood to adulthood has created physical, social, economic, and mental health problems, and periods of homelessness. In interviews with 95 homeless Indigenous people in Yellowknife, Inuvik, and the Northwest Territories, Christensen (2012) found that interviewees spoke of strained social relationships and other social stresses that caused them to join the ranks of the homeless. John, a homeless man in Inuvik, explained, "for me, it was too crowded at home. I couldn't get away from all the problems" (p. 424). A second interviewee in Christensen's study also spoke about the compounding social factors that caused her to become homeless. "I moved to town to get away

from violence at home. My father was really abusive when he drank, and so was my brother. I had to leave, which was hard because my mom is still living there" (p. 424).

Stories from the West – the Emotional Realm of Indigenous Homelessness

The Emotional aspect of the medicine wheel teaches us about our connection to ourselves through our emotional responses to life events. It challenges us to work through our emotions, and is different from the mental aspect which can be interpreted as how we learn or understand our experiences from the mind, while emotions connect us with what happens to us in our hearts.

The most devastating effects of colonization have been the loss of Indigenous culture, identity, language, traditions, and relationships. For many, life after the residential school had no meaning. This void continued to be passed down to future generations and whatever cultural knowledge that was retained, continued to disintegrate over time (Sider, 2005; Barton et al., 2005; Morrissette, 1994).

Most devastating was the destruction of language, with Indigenous languages being outlawed at the beginning of the residential school era in the late 1820s, extending all the way up to the 1960s (Weaselhead, 2011). In her article, *Disordered dependencies: The impact of language loss and residential schooling on Indigenous peoples,* Makokis (2009) talks about the importance of language as the "moral compass of Canadian Indigenous people" (p. 9). Makokis states, "[t]he ability to speak an Indigenous language is an indispensable part of identity, as these languages convey a sense of distinctiveness, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of spiritual relationship to the universe: plants, animals, Mother Earth, rocks, and people" (p. 9).

When the language was lost, people returned to their home communities unable to speak to their parents, traditional people and Elders. Instead of a happy reunion, people carried with them conflicting notions of their identity as an Indigenous person, including confusion, shame, anger and loss of social relationships that are the glue of a healthy community (Helen-Hill cited in Makokis, 2009). Over time parents transmitted their shame of the language and culture taught in Residential schools to their children. Across generations, those children pass the shame onto their children.

Intrinsic in Indigenous language are the morals, values, and teachings around the roles of men and women, children and youth, and grandparents. When the language was lost or became shameful to speak, confusion around how to live in a good way occurred. In its place came confusion and normalization of dysfunctional roles and behaviors such as poor parenting, loss of attachment, poor education, and homelessness. In his book *Return to the Teachings; Exploring*

Aboriginal Justice, Rupert Ross (1996) writes about traditional Ojibway community as,

> "…not based on intelligence or beauty or strength or numbers. Instead, it is based on dependencies. It places Mother Earth and her lifeblood (the waters) in first place, for without her there would be no plant, animal or human life. The plant world stands second, for without it there would be no animal or human life. The animal is third. Last, and clearly least important within this unique hierarchy, come humans. Nothing whatsoever depends on their survival. Because human beings are the most dependent of all, it is we who owe the greatest duty of respect and care for the other three orders. Without them, we perish. Our role is, therefore, not to subdue individual parts to meet our own short-term goals, for that would disturb the balances among them. Instead, our role is to learn how they all interact with each other, so that we can try our best to accommodate to their existing relationships. Any other approach, in the long run, can only disrupt the healthy equilibriums that have existed on Earth for millions of years- and which created the conditions for our own evolution" (p.61).

Colonization disrupted this web of interconnection, including the socialization of children, the teaching of relationships, ceremonies, traditions, and rites of passage, replacing it with the imposition of a foreign value system resulting in material and spiritual impoverishment and a pervasive sense of hopelessness in all of Canada's Indigenous people. Cultural identities were replaced by government identities that were created to divide, conquer, and control Indigenous people. According to Kirmayer, Brass, and Tait (2000), "The very notion of Aboriginality is a social construction that, as a "dividing practice," both marginalizes and unites. The discourse of Aboriginality was used originally by colonial powers when confronting "the others" whose territory they conquered" (p. 611). With the introduction of government identities, the connection to a worldview that would allow for cohesive health for individuals, families and communities was further chipped away. Today cultural confusion, shame, and identity fragmentation can be seen clearly as an integral part of the many social conditions we see facing Indigenous people including homelessness.

Stories from the North – the Spiritual Realm of Indigenous Homelessness

The spiritual aspect of the medicine wheel teaches us about our connection to spirit. This encompasses our individual and spiritual connections to Creator as well as to Mother Earth, our Nations, our traditional ways, and our ceremonies. When we lose this connection we are not whole. To understand homelessness in Indigenous communities, we must acknowledge the legacy of attempted colonization of our spirit. This includes the multigenerational transmission of trauma, a legacy of erroneous beliefs forced upon us, ideas, myths, prejudices, biases and behaviors that are disseminated and then inherited by the next generation. All of these have come with devastating consequences. Unfortunately, the negative impacts of historical trauma that have been transmitted across generations are not only present in individuals, but in the prevailing structures, beliefs, and conditions which have become overwhelming to many Indigenous people's mind, body and spirit. As Kingfisher (2007) states eloquently,

> "On one side were those who felt that a focus on Aboriginality was the necessary response to an empirically verifiable deficiency among that population, indicating, thereby, that if any problems with homelessness were structural in nature, they had to do with the structure of an inherently dysfunctional Aboriginal culture that produced dysfunctional individuals. In contrast, and fewer in number, were those who felt that a focus on Aboriginality was the necessary response to an empirically verifiable racism seen to be rampant… indicating that problems with homelessness were both personal and private and public and structural, in specific reference to dominant white, as opposed to Native, culture and society" (p. 95).

There is no shortage of research (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1998, 2003 & 2010; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996; Solanto, 2008; Sotero, 2006; Walsh et al., 2011; Fast and Colli-Vezina, 2010; Gone, 2013) that documents the massive negative impacts of intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal people and communities. Although the term "intergenerational trauma" is also used in a great deal of the literature, it can be used interchangeably with terms such as "historical trauma", "trans generational grief", and "historic grief". Evans-Cambell (2008) defines intergenerational trauma as:

> "A collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation—ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation. It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events" (p. 320).

A pioneer in uncovering the root causes of many of the social issues facing Indigenous communities, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart defines historical trauma as "….cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma" (Yellow Horse Brave Heart in 2008, cited in Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Chase et al 2011). According to Braveheart, "The historical trauma response (HTR) has been conceptualized as a constellation of features associated with a reaction to massive group trauma. Historical unresolved grief, a component of this response, is the profound unsettled bereavement resulting from cumulative devastating losses…" (p. 283). Intergenerational trauma also helps to articulate in clinical terms the well-known and lived experiences felt daily by survivors of residential schools. It also creates a pathway to understanding and acknowledging the effect that residential school experiences continue to have on subsequent generations of Indigenous families and communities.

Manifestations of intergenerational trauma from survivors and their families include homelessness, poverty, ongoing violence, unequal access to healthcare and education, and human rights abuses, to name a few. The trauma responses may also take the form of abuse or neglect of children. Intergenerational trauma may manifest through dignity destroying beliefs resulting in lateral violence. Lateral violence refers to structures created in response to trauma that in turn create trauma for others. In a report by Miller, Donahue, Este and Hofer (2004) the authors suggest that intergenerational trauma should in fact be a key lens to understanding, "the social ills and lasting effects of disrupting families and communities; such as the transmission of models and ideologies of parenting based on experiences in punitive institutional settings; patterns of emotional responding that reflect the lack of warmth and intimacy in childhood; repetition of physical and sexual abuse; loss of knowledge, language and tradition; systematic devaluing of Aboriginal identity (p. 743).

Intergenerational trauma has inhibited Indigenous people's ability to function and thrive. The Indigenous experience of intergenerational trauma has been compared to the experiences of Vietnam veterans, where the lingering effects of trauma were formally recognized in the diagnostic category of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In her work, Brant Castellano (2007) highlights that therapists treating troubled Indigenous people quickly began to note similarities to PTSD symptoms such as: "*hyper arousal* such as being excessively alert, anticipating the next traumatic event, and easily made anxious or angry; *flashbacks* to the original traumatic event set

off by minor triggers; and *blunted feelings,* which make it difficult to maintain relationships" (p. 5). We also know that continual exposure to traumatizing events results in an inability to adequately recover from these experiences (Foy, Eriksson, & Trice, 2000) and survivors and their families need to look below the surface to understand the real loss.

In their work on trauma and addictions, Coyhis and Simonelli (2008) emphasize programs like the Wellbriety Movement, which emphasizes, "the need to go beyond sobriety in order to heal the deep wounds of intergenerational trauma carried by almost all Indian people" (p. 1928). Similarly, from a community perspective, Coyhis and Simonelli (2008), also discuss the Healing Forest Model as both an inspiration and a basis for community healing and change at a deeper level. Coyhis and Simonelli state,

> "Alcoholism and other addictions are symptoms. The many social issues associated with alcohol and substance misuse are also symptoms. It is important to address the underlying spiritual and cultural issues that give rise to the anger, guilt, shame, and fear that create unhealthy soil in the forest metaphor. These four poisons in the soil of the sick forest lead to the onset of addictive behaviors and are one cause of intergenerational trauma. For American Indians and Alaska Natives, the trauma of the historical period is continually passed down from generation to generation. It is not only a thing of the past "(LaDuke, 1997, as cited in Coyhis and Simonelli, p. 1931).

An awareness of the impact of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous communities and families also helps us understand the impact of generational losses of culture, language and traditional lifestyle on identity. Colonizing practices suppressed Indigenous cultures and ways of life through policies of assimilation. In particular, children who attended residential schools suffered from the loss of culture, identity, and language as residential school life altered the traditional ways of Indigenous peoples and broke up traditional ways of family life. For the first generation, without a consistent worldview to guide them, many of these children went back to their home communities only to be strangers to those who were left behind (Hawkeye Robertson, 2006; Walsh et al., 2011; Ruttan et al., 2008; Menzies, 2009; Peters, 2012).

For those who sought refuge in the city, the physical, sexual, mental, emotional, and spiritual abuse only amplified existing low self-esteem. In addition, most Indigenous people lacked the basic knowledge of how to live in an urban setting. Things like paying rent and utilities, banking

and bill payments, and other necessary skills for living in an urban environment were absent. Coupled with identity issues that were reinforced through childhood, emphasizing their own culture as inferior and uncivilized, many Indigenous people fell into the revolving cycle of poverty, violence, and homelessness (Barton et al., 2005; Coyhis and Simonelli, 2008). Authors tell us that as Indigenous people leave reserves or their home community to live in the city, they will likely face racism and discrimination by the mainstream community on a daily basis (Muid, 2006; Walsh et al., 2011; Ruttan et al., 2008; Menzies, 2009; Thurston et al., n.d;). These experiences create further stress on already fragile identities and make survival (I.e. finding a job or home), even more difficult. Racism and discrimination of "the other" developed out of the infrastructure and economic practices of settlers and still exists in the social structures of urban living. Although social policies of colonization, such as the residential schools, no longer exist, "the beliefs that were initially used to justify the policies have been discredited, the disparities continue" (Hookier & Potter Czajkowski, n.d).

In a report prepared for the City of Winnipeg (2012) on the status of racism and discrimination in the city, the authors found that, "although racism and discrimination exists within a broad range of groups and communities in Winnipeg, literature on immigrants and Aboriginal people is the most dominant, suggesting that the problems are bigger within these communities"(p. 3). With respect to inadequate housing and homelessness, there was a correlation between the issues of poor housing choices or homelessness and the effects of persistent discrimination both systemic and individual (City of Winnipeg, 2012).

Other Stories

While single mothers and women with low-income represent a significant portion of people experiencing homelessness, it appears that Indigenous woman are especially vulnerable to the experience of homelessness. According to Rahder (2006), "Aboriginal woman, especially single mothers, have the highest incidence of poverty in Canada – more than twice the rate of non-Aboriginal women" (p. 39) The typical housing challenges faced by women with low-income are exacerbated by the racism experienced by Indigenous women. The 2001 report issued by The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation included, as one of its specific recommendations, to "Recognize and ensure the right of all Aboriginal people to adequate housing". Unfortunately, changes to social assistance and income security programs across Canada have increased the risk of homelessness for single mothers and woman receiving low incomes (Rahder, 2006). In addition, the lack of financial resources commonly experienced by Indigenous women experiencing homelessness in an urban context results in a choice between either paying food and rent or owning a phone that would allow connection to family and friends (Berman et al., 2009).

One study (Schiff & Schiff, 2010) suggests that providing housing for Indigenous women experiencing homelessness and addiction challenges must include consideration of past experiences with oppression and assimilation. For example, having awareness that housing "rules", while helping to create safety, may be problematic for Indigenous people who have experienced the external imposition of rules as a form of assimilation. In addition, for women experiencing homelessness who have children, past experiences with Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop lead to very concrete fears of child welfare intervention and apprehension.

For the thousands of Indigenous children that are "in care" across Canada, the concurrent life-long experiences of disruptions and disconnections often manifest in a lack of connection to a concept of home. For example, Berman et al (2009) suggest that the concept of home becomes "about having a bed and a place to sleep, rather than a place where relationships are formed, emotional warmth is experienced, or important connections with others are fostered" (p. 423). The cumulative effects of a childhood history of disruption, ongoing incidents of urban racism, and discriminatory assistance and income policies for Indigenous single-mothers and low-income Indigenous women locks them, and often the children, into a trans-generational process of poverty and homelessness.

Factors that Impact Homelessness and Mobility

In order to deepen our understanding of Indigenous people experiencing urban homelessness, it would appear to be helpful to explore the factors that contribute to movement between the urban context and reserve-based communities. Research suggests that these factors can be divided into five categories:

i) Factors that motivate leaving home communities.
ii) Factors that attract movement to urban centers.
iii) Factors that contribute to leaving urban centers.
iv) Factors that motivate return to home community.
v) Systemic factors that contribute to home community/urban mobility.

Individual pathways may be so simple as to involve only one of these factors, while others may be relatively complex and involve a number of these factors. In addition, research suggests that mobility is often cyclical, with the same individuals moving between urban and community-based locations often in response to economic issues and/or connection to extended family and home community. Returning to a home community often does not resolve dominant issues and necessitates subsequent moves. The summary provided below has been gleaned from existing research.

i) Factors that motivate leaving communities

- Lack of community-based economic opportunities, small labour market.
- Domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, family death
- Lack of educational opportunities
- Lack of health services for chronic or more pervasive health issues.
- Lack of available housing
- High level of substance abuse and/or gang violence

ii) Factors that attract movement to urban centers.

- Better opportunities for employment
- Better opportunities for education
- Access to health resources

- Access to social services (child welfare, criminal justice, correctional systems, family violence, mental health, addiction services)
- The existence of Indigenous –specific organizations, institutions, and agencies.
- Media perceptions of urban life-style
- Geographic location – communities closer to urban centers experience higher rates of movement.
- Family members/friends currently living in an urban context providing support
- Access to children in foster care
- Access to family members involved in the justice system

iii) Factors that contribute to leaving urban centers

- Lack of affordable housing in urban centers for low-income wage earners
- Lack of family-based supports in the urban center
- Urban racism and discrimination preventing access to housing and/or employment
- High levels of urban crime and/or substance abuse in specific housing areas
- Difficulty in adapting to an urban lifestyle
- Lack of cultural supports (ceremony, language)
- Changes in employment opportunities due to seasonal demands
- High cost of living

iv) Factors that contribute to moving back to community

- Culture, language, values and beliefs available in reserve community
- Presence of extended family and friends in community
- Community deaths (temporary return for funerals)

v) Systemic factors that contribute to mobility

- Federal responsibility for community-based individuals
- Legislation that prevents economic development (mortgages, for example)
- Provincial responsibility for urban-based individuals
- Some research suggests that there are differing experiences for Treaty as opposed to non-status Indigenous peoples.

- Some indications that migration levels for Indigenous women is higher than for Indigenous men and usually attributed to single-mothers seeking social supports while men are seeking employment.
- Federal, Provincial and Community-based policies that encourage people to move off-reserve.
- Government polices directed at centralizing social services into an urban context.

Other research (see Habibis, 2011, for example) suggests that some level of Indigenous mobility between the rural community and urban centers reflect the role of strong community and family connections and the need to travel to maintain family connections, identity, relationships and social interaction. The lived experiences of reciprocity and *omanitew* (honoring visitors) involve strong spiritual, financial, and relationship obligations. In addition, travel for holidays and Ceremonies contribute to a high level of rural/urban mobility. For example, the high mortality rates in rural Indigenous communities, coupled with strong family connections, makes "funeral attendance one of the most common motives for travel" (Habibis, 2011. p. 404).

Various studies have explored potential factors that appear to lead to the experience of homelessness for Indigenous people. For example, Whitbeck, Crawford and Hartshorn (2012) suggest that economic disadvantage and unemployment, overcrowding (extended families or multiple families in one residence), lack of access to affordable housing (availability, financing policies, discriminatory practices), substandard housing (substandard construction, lack of heat, running water, or electricity) and loss of connections to family, culture are all correlates of homeless episodes among Indigenous adults (p. 2-3). All of these issues can be clearly linked to ongoing policies that support the continuing processes of colonization, oppression and, in some views, the genocide of Indigenous people. Whitbeck et al suggest that Indigenous woman, having experienced negative financial events and substance abuse (alcohol) were at high risk for experiencing homelessness. Living off reserve "was associated with a 95% increase in the odds of being near homeless and a 132% increase in the odds of experiencing an actual homeless episode" (p. 9).

One issue often cited in the context of mobility is the perceived large increase of Indigenous population growth in urban centers in Canada, suggesting possibly that high numbers of Indigenous people are moving from their reserve communities into urban centers – a reported "mass exodus" from reserves. A recent report by the Strategic Research Directorate of Aboriginal

Affairs and Northern Development Canada (SRD) states that the urban Aboriginal population in Canada has grown, from 1996 to 2006, by almost 5% per year (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2006). SRD states that the highest national growth rates in the world are only about 3.5% per year. Interestingly, over the same time period, the data suggests that more Indigenous peoples are moving back to rural communities than are coming into the urban centers. The SRD explains this seeming contradiction as "Ethnic Mobility" and that there has been an extremely significant increase in urban Indigenous and Metis families who now self-identify or identify their children as either First Nations or Metis. This factor, and associated data, suggests that increasing growth numbers are explained by self-identification and not rural/urban migration.

Mental Health, Trauma and Homelessness

Any story of Indigenous homelessness must include an exploration of the stories of trauma, mental health, and substance abuse. The trauma of first contact, followed closely by the negative impacts of Residential School, the Sixties Scoop, the multiple forms of colonization and forced assimilation, and concurrent levels of experienced/witnessed violence all directly contribute to the experience of homelessness. There are identified links between substance abuse, mental illness, victimization and homelessness (Brunette & Drake, 1998; Grimm & Maldonado, 1995; Stein & Gelberg, 1995). The more common mental health issues for individuals experiencing homelessness include suicidality, substance/alcohol dependence, psychotic disorder, depression, PTSD, mood disorder, panic disorder and substance/alcohol abuse (Hwang, Stergiopoulos, O'Campo, Gosdzik, 2012). As stated by Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo (2003):

> "There are high rates of social problems, demoralization, depression, substance abuse, suicide and other mental health problems in many, though not all, Aboriginal communities…..there is clear and compelling evidence that the long history of cultural oppression and marginalization has contributed to the high levels of mental health problems found in many communities" (p. 15).

The human body is equipped with complex and highly effective systems for coping with everyday stressors and allowing us to return to a normal state. There are some events, however, that can overwhelm this coping system. "Traumatic" events are those in which there is a risk of being seriously physically or emotionally injured, or events that provoke a fear of being killed or seriously injured. Some events are traumatic for almost anyone, but other events are likely to be

experienced as traumatic by one person and not by another. In these cases, the way the individual experiences the event – what it means to the person- is just as important as the event itself.

From the first moment of a traumatic event, hundreds of physiologically-based reactions are triggered in the body to assist in responding to the identified danger and to ensure survival. Once survival is ensured, the body has equally complex and effective mechanisms that allow a return to normal functioning. "Trauma" refers to events that completely overwhelm an individual's ability to cope with the physiological symptoms, emotions or to integrate the meaning resulting from that experience. The nature of some events can be so overwhelming that physical, emotional, mental and spiritual effects can continue long past the initial danger. These effects have a physiological basis, create significant distress for the sufferer, and impact their ability to cope with everyday events. The emotional and physical distress caused by these symptoms (i.e. high anxiety, sleep problems, panic attacks) can be so highly intrusive and distressing that many individuals turn to substances in an effort to manage the symptoms. The likelihood of turning to unhealthy coping strategies increases among those individuals who have few healthy strategies available to them. There is evidence of a relationship between the incidence of addiction and a trauma history.

In a First Nations worldview, the state of being in addiction indicates a loss of spirit and spirit seeking. It is said that when a person is abusing a substance or engaging in risky behaviors, that the spirit will leave him/her because the spirit cannot endure the pain. Addictions are seen as a response to a spiritual and emotional imbalance. Our brains have been programmed to react or respond in ways to protect us from experiencing additional trauma through a variety of strategies that can include unhealthy, unproductive ones such as addictions and engaging in risky behaviors.

"Intergenerational" or "trans-generational" trauma is a well-documented phenomenon seen in the descendants of systemic oppressive episodes such as the holocaust and genocides in Rwanda or Cambodia. It was noted that while these descendants may not have experienced these traumatic events themselves, they present with the physiological, psychological and behavioral symptoms, as if they have. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1995) was among the first to write about this phenomenon as a means to create a better understanding of the social and cultural issues facing Indigenous communities in North America. She and others propose that being exposed to prolonged traumatic events disrupts the ability of a society to adapt and fosters the development of maladaptive coping strategies. This occurs when the symptoms experienced by those

individuals and communities directly impacted by traumatic experiences are compounded by the loss of traditional roles, spirituality, traditional healing practices and world view. The resulting "woundedness" is recapitulated in subsequent generations through disrupted attachments, inadequate parenting, and socially learned problematic behavioral patterns. In turn, these children internalize this "woundedness" and the cycle continues.

Research Process

Using previously established connections and creating new relationships, the research team met with various agencies throughout the city of Edmonton from November 15 to December 6, 2013. A list of possible agencies was created in collaboration with Homeward Trust and there was a snowball effect once the initial interviews were started.

The agencies involved in the project were:

- Bent Arrow Healing Society
- Metis Child and Family Services (via Victim Services)
- Jasper Place Health and Wellness
- Boyle Street Co-op
- Mosaic Centre
- The Neighbour Centre

Overall the agencies showed interested in the research project and were willing to participate. Most of the agencies requested that staff select the storytellers and offer the option of participating. This worked well, the staff was able to liaison between the team and the storytellers - ensuring the best fit possible. This was also a benefit to the project because it highlighted the relationships already established between the storytellers and the front-line staff.

Story Collection

The agencies and the team collaborated and mutually agreeable times were arranged to conduct interviews. The interviewing process began January 21 and concluded February 6, 2014. With the exception of one interview which occurred within the storyteller's home, all interviews occurred at the participating agency location. Participants were selected collaboratively with the agency personnel. Criteria for selection included self-identification as Indigenous, are located in the urban community, a minimum of 18 years of age, a strong agency/participant relationship, currently or recently homelessness, the ability to express their experiences, and a willingness to

share their story. Following established qualitative Indigenous Research Methodology, this project focused on those participants who were best able to share their knowledge and wisdom in an effective manner.

There were a total of 13 participants, nine males and four females. Seven storytellers identified as being homeless at the time of the interview and six were recently housed through various Edmonton Housing First teams. One of the challenges the team experienced when interviewing this population were the impacts of the lived experiences of the storytellers. On one occasion, a story could not be included in the research process because the storyteller disclosed to the team that he/she was intoxicated. Interviews were conducted at various times of day and evening – with interview times ranging from 20 minutes to over 90 minutes. Over 230 pages of transcripts were collected.

Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. Storytellers provided verbal and written consent and each interview was audio recorded. Once the interview was over each storyteller was given the option of a $20 gift card to a department store or a coffee shop. (Interestingly, conversations with agency workers revealed that the usefulness of specific gift cards varied depending on the storyteller's current situation. Some agency workers were of the opinion gift cards to stores with housewares departments were more helpful to recently housed individuals. In contrast, other agency workers believed that those currently experiencing homelessness may prefer to use a coffee shop as a place to warm up.)

In keeping with Indigenous Research methodology, storytellers were given the option to be presented with cloth and tobacco before they began sharing, ensuring that the research process was completed in Ceremony. In accordance with Indigenous research methodology, storytellers were invited to share their experiences of their journey into homelessness. As the stories were shared, on occasion and if required, the team members requested more detail or clarification in specific areas related to the research focus. Resources were made available to the storytellers in case of re-traumatization or activation due to the interview process. The story collection process did not utilize a structured list of questions, however, the interviewers tracked each interview with the list of Homelessness Indicators (see Appendix A) in order to ensure focus and to enable further exploration of specific areas.

The storytellers often shared stories that had great emotional depth. Two team members were present for each interview, an important part of the process because it provided the team members with the opportunity to share support and debrief their experiences. The existence of complimentary skill sets in the two interviewers also played an important role in the interview process.

The interview team was selected for their ability to conduct interviews in a collaborative, non-threatening manner. In addition, participants were selected by agency personnel based on connected relationships with participants. Finally, all interviews were conducted within the context of ceremony, which provides for an honest and open sharing of stories and experiences.

Following the initial theming of the interviews, there was an opportunity to complete two data verification interviews. These interviews were conducted from March 13 to April 15, 2014. Analysis of these two subsequent interviews confirmed the dominant themes uncovered in the earlier process.

Research Question #1

What connections are evident between Aboriginal experiences in residential schools, child protection, or other forms of colonial oppression and experiences of homelessness? Is there a correlation between risk factors for homelessness and the intergenerational trauma of various policies of colonial oppression?

Research Question #2

For Aboriginal individuals who have been or are homeless, how is their sense of identity and connection with their heritage impacted by their experiences (directly or indirectly) with residential schools or child protection?

Perhaps the link between colonialism and Indigenous people experiencing homelessness is most succinctly summarized by Monk (2006) who suggests that "housing is the process of decolonization." Monk references housing as "an important site of engagement for First Nations and settler society (as important in decolonization efforts as it was in colonization) and points to the importance of relationships both within Indigenous communities and with settler society (p. iii)" to address housing and homelessness.

Pathways for Indigenous people experiencing urban homelessness are increasingly complex and intertwined. Early steps on the path are rooted deeply in a lived history of colonization, oppression, and assimilation. Since those early steps, frequent successive experiences of ill-formed policies and bureaucratic structures have contributed heavily to current experiences of homelessness. Often, individuals experiencing homelessness each have their own personal pathway to that place, which challenges the idea that over-arching solutions can be created that will resolve all homeless issues.

The process of colonization focused on assimilationist practices that included the manipulation of indigenous land and living conditions as an "instrument" of colonization. Current housing issues and the urban indigenous experience of homelessness are the consequences and long-term effects of the colonial processes of colonization. In other words, homelessness has been both a tool and a consequence of colonization and assimilation. As suggested by Monk (2006) "A history of intervention in housing has undermined Indigenous governance in an effort to achieve colonial policies of assimilation and this is the issue that needs addressing with respect to the housing crisis in Indigenous communities today (p. 13)."

As far as risk factors associated with homelessness, colonization and trauma, it is almost impossible to separate out specific factors of the colonization experience that may be associated with the experience of homelessness. A number of authors agree that a complex combination of factors, including; the Indian Act; attendance in Residential Schools; victims of the Sixties Scoop; involvement with Child Welfare; the lack of employment opportunities; the lack of educational opportunities; the lack of available on-reserve housing; the poor quality of on-reserve housing; a history of welfare dependency; being a single parent; being a single mother; practicing job-search migration; a history of hyper-mobility; experiencing racism; experiencing discrimination; a history of substance abuse; experiencing violence; and compounding physical and mental health problems are all relevant risk factors associated with Indigenous homelessness. (Beavis et al, 1997; Wente, 2000; Whitbeck et al, 2012)

Monk (2006) states:

> Housing has been a significant site where the policies of civilizing and assimilating Indigenous people have played out, but housing has not merely been a site of colonial interest and policy. It has been constitutive of it in an ongoing relationship between colonizers and colonized…… Housing is intimately connected to the economic project of colonization through its effort to fix Indigenous people on the land in ways particular to the culture of settlers. Housing policy has sought to create a particular type of relationship to the land, one that is about owning one's own home, owning land as private property, and thus creating a relationship to the land that is crucial to the economic project of its colonizers. But housing is also a part of the subjective oppression of colonialism because it is so connected to culture by recreating Indigenous society through the home. Housing allowed colonizers to promote an ethic of individual responsibility for financing and maintaining one's home, as well as promote the idea that single families should live together. Settling people on the land in this particular way also represents a contest of cultural values, indeed the project of fixing people on the land has long been a preoccupation of the state that is intimately linked to colonialism. (p. 19)

It would appear that there is a strong link between the historical and ongoing processes of colonization, assimilation, oppression and the experience of Indigenous housing and urban homelessness.

The Shared Stories

The use of storytelling and listening as a conceptual framework towards reaching a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants engages traditional knowledge-building approaches. The equality and empowerment of being listened to in such a setting as the circle, within the context of ceremony, gives voice to those who would not normally speak or otherwise express their true feelings. People are able to deal with their emotions and begin the process of letting go of past events. Respect for each person in the circle and especially the storyteller is the basis of storytelling as a knowledge building tool for Indigenous research and evaluation.

The stories that were shared contained many individual experiences; however there were a number of themes that appeared to be common across the many interviews. All of these shared experiences are deeply rooted within the process of historical and ongoing colonization and assimilation. Almost all of the storytellers shared experiences of conflict with urban-centric value and belief systems that are strongly based within a western worldview. Another common theme involved the long-term community-based impacts of poor health, sub-standard living conditions, lateral violence and trauma which appear to be manifested through the experience of high mortality rates (both urban and community-based) and the lived impact of these deaths on urban Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. Interestingly, mobility and return to community are also strongly co-influenced by high community-based mortality rates. Based on the shared stories and available literature, it would appear that community-based funerals are often the single most influencing factor contributing towards (temporary) return to community. Conversely, mobility from home communities into the urban context comes from the distinct lack of community-based development and economic opportunities. Finally, the felt experience of the perceived loss of Indigenous identity, as a consequence of these and multiple other assimilationist factors, was one of the most heartfelt, and saddening, themes.

These themes are summarized and discussed in the following sections.

1. Confrontations between values & communities: the processes of urban social control

A majority of the storytellers shared experiences of multiple confrontations with urban law enforcement and bylaw enforcement with minimal recognition of the long-term negative impacts of these confrontations. The confrontations, from the perspective of the storytellers, were often felt to be unprovoked. Confrontations almost always resulted in the destruction of living accommodations (tents/tarps/cardboard) and/or vandalizing personal property. These accommodations took a considerable amount of time to accumulate and, considering the frequency of harsh weather in this community, the loss of these materials is often to the detriment of their health and/or the ability to stay warm and safe.

Interactions with representatives of law enforcement are often the most frequent interactions that those experiencing homelessness have with government, and are therefore the most salient physical manifestation of the relationship between the colonizers and colonized. The inception of the settler state confined Indigenous peoples to reserves through the Indian Act (Razack, 2012). As instruments of colonial governance, Canada's police were enlisted to suppress the independence of Indigenous groups as sovereign peoples and bring them within the reach of colonial authority (Nettelbeck & Smandych, 2010).

One storyteller shared,

> *"When you're homeless it's like you're a target whether it's by sheriffs, the police, society."*
>
> (Storyteller #1)

The colonial city developed, and still enforces a number of practices to accomplish the ongoing eviction of Indigenous peoples from the spaces of the settler through, for example, vagrancy and nuisance laws (Ishiguro, 2011).

> *"I did two years less a day my first bit, then I did eighteen months, then I did two and half years and then I got five years. So lots of time in the pen and provincial, right. I've been to the Fort before, Lethbridge, the Edmonton Institution for Women, Medicine Hat jail, like everywhere, like I've been on an Alberta tour."*
>
> (Storyteller #2)

As early as 1777 there existed legislation that sought to control social, political, and economic relations between British settlers and Indigenous peoples in North American colonies (Manzano-

Munguía, 2011). Police have been used to further the objectives of the government by enforcing egregious provisions of the Indian Act, assimilation of Indigenous people through apprehension of children in order to have them attend Residential School, and later in support of child welfare agencies (Rudin, 2005). While the police are said to operate under the mandate of public safety and crime reduction, practices of over- and under-policing of Indigenous peoples points to assimilation and continued colonization. The colonized history between government and Indigenous peoples is reinforced, concretized and lived-out through the daily experiences of our storytellers and agents of social control.

> *"I'm just caught in the system..."*
>
> (Storyteller #6)

2. Mortality

Indigenous people have experienced generations of loss – especially loss of life. Genocide is a particularly effective form of colonization and assimilation and, in Indigenous communities, death is frequent. Given the relational context of most Indigenous communities (whether urban or community-based) frequent deaths have a huge impact on kinship systems. In the community, everyone is related, if not by blood or kinship, then by common experience, and death calls survivors together to support those who are left behind. Death is the most overt and easily identifiable break in an individual's social and support networks.

Sadly, and somewhat unexpectedly, all of the storytellers shared their experience of significant losses within their families.

Stories similar to this storyteller's were not uncommon:

> *"Well I lost everybody, my oldest son is dead, my mom and dad died, four of my brothers died, so there's really nothing out there for me so I came over here… even my cat is gone."*
>
> (Storyteller #10)

As this was not a factor that was articulated in the earlier literature review in this project, the commonality of the experience, and its connection to homelessness was unexpected. In retrospect, however, and based within the lived experience of our connections to the community, this factor and its impact should not have been unexpected. Often, in the community of Saddle

Lake, not a week goes by without a community-based death, and the relational interconnectedness calls everyone together to mourn the loss. This includes spouses, siblings, parents, aunties, and children.

> *"I'm just about the last one standing. My Dad passed away in '86, my Mother in '97, my brother in '98, sister in '99, brother in '99, and another brother just last year."*
>
> (Storyteller #11)

> *"Well I grew up with a very traditional background...until I was eight years old, that's where I seen my father get killed, got killed in front of me so...after that I was more or less taken out, I was just taken away right out of the Aboriginal community..."*
>
> (Storyteller #13)

In some interviews, the occurrence of death was explicitly pointed to as a root cause of that individual's journey into homelessness. In other interviews the frequent loss of close family members was often brought up organically with no prompting and was not connected by the storyteller to homelessness, but was just a part of their ongoing lived experience of grief and loss. Some storytellers shared how they had left their home communities as a consequence of severe losses, while others commented how they could not return to their communities because of the losses. In addition, some storytellers who were historically based within the city connected their homelessness to the losses.

During the Residential School era, the underlying colonial idea was that by removing Indigenous children from their families the government could break the child's connection with their family, culture and traditional land and ultimately they would be assimilated into settler society (Cassidy, 2006). This process is representative of many similar processes including the Sixties Scoop, the prohibition of cultural practices, and current experiences of marginalization and dispossession of lands, and causes powerlessness and anomie (Czyzewski, 2011). These feelings can lead to destructive behaviors and ultimately a loss or wounding of healthy kinship or social networks. This already fractured state of relationship due to intergenerational trauma can help us understand how experiencing death(s) can be seen as a causal factor on the path to homelessness.

> *"I know very little about my family. My Mother passed away… it's got to be in 1984. I met her a couple of times."*
>
> (Storyteller #6)

If the storytellers were living in wounded or unhealthy networks then a single loss or highly traumatic event could be pointed to as a causal factor in their experience of homelessness - or relocation from a home community or reserve to an urban context.

3. Mortality and Ceremony

Of all of the storytellers not from Edmonton who had migrated to the city, when asked if and why they would ever return to their home communities, the reasons they gave always revolved around deaths and funerals. Some storytellers even had predicted a return based on the death of certain family members.

When asked if they had ever returned to their home community, one storyteller shared:

> *"I don't think I'm ever gonna go back. Maybe when my Mom dies."*
>
> (Storyteller #3)

Because death in Indigenous communities is so frequent due to suicide rates, drug overdoses, car accidents, and early death due to complex health issues, and because there is a cultural norm of family and community attendance during funerals, there are little to no gaps between funerals at times (Tjepkema, Wilkins, Guimond & Penney, 2010). High mortality rates make funeral attendance one of the most common motives for travel (Habibis, 2011). It is difficult for homeless people to find the financial resources to attend funerals let alone contribute inter-familial support to assist with community feasts and related costs during that time. Funerals have become reunions of clan and community because otherwise many urban Indigenous peoples are quite disconnected from their families of origin.

One storyteller shared their experience of returning to their home community:

> *"I went a couple of times for funerals… it was the same as it was."*
>
> (Storyteller #9)

A history of dispersed kin dominates the narrative of Indigenous peoples lives (Babidge, 2006). Funerals revitalize kinship relations and create opportunities for families to reconnect in a safe space. A death causes a family to move and the reactivation of connections between related people and the inclusive and exclusionary practices associated with the funerary process redefine the members of family (Babidge, 2006). A desire to return to a home community for a funeral can

be understood as a desire to rebuild relationships and connect with estranged family despite historical and present day systemic forces compelling the opposite.

"...after a while you start to care about whether you live or die..."

(Storyteller #13)

4. Sharing stories

Many storytellers had difficulty answering direct questions during the interview. At the outset of the interview, storytellers were not given specific questions, they were simply asked to share their experience of homelessness. As the interviews progressed, the interviewers would ask questions that would encourage the storyteller to expand on certain details, or explore other areas. There were many times where direct questions went unanswered and the storyteller would begin talking about something seemingly unrelated. Though perhaps not equipped to answer a question directly linking colonization to homelessness, through sharing stories, storytellers were able to more meaningfully convey the depth of their experiences

When sharing their experience of Residential School, one storyteller shared,

"I remember trying to run away… I think I tried to run away every day."

(Storyteller #3)

Because of the intrusiveness of colonialism and the loss of voice, consent, and volition, many Indigenous people justifiably are suspicious of the intentions of non-Indigenous people and they hold their thoughts private. Culturally, questioning is considered intrusive. Additionally, the culture teaches about acceptance, which is not to be confused with compliance – the colonial imposition has demanded the latter and culture demands the former.

When asked about whether or not they had returned to their home community, one storyteller shared:

"I wanted to go for a Pow Wow in the summertime but (Name) wouldn't let me because it would bring back too many memories for me so I didn't bother going. But now they say the house that I grew up in, lived in, is all boarded up and it doesn't look like… it looks haunted everybody says."

(Storyteller #10)

Storytelling is a central part of an Indigenous worldview and understanding unanswered questions as indicators of a lack of relationship or protocol would be appropriate. Similarly many teachings are shared in story form and it is incumbent upon the listener to derive meaning or direction. When people hear stories they are required to listen in order to understand how what they are hearing applies to them specifically.

> *"I guess, that's where life starts… I went through foster homes and suffice it to say I was homeless then too...going from one home to another and ended up settling with one foster home mother… and then I just moved on when I was age thirteen with the streets, I did Toronto and I had places off and on but nothing you know, really suitable. I was just a gypsy basically, going one place to another place throughout the provinces"*
>
> (Storyteller #6)

5. Lack of community-based economic opportunities

The storytellers recurrently spoke of leaving home communities because of boredom or lack of opportunities - economic, educational, and otherwise. Some of them suggested that lack of opportunities and boredom lead to destructive behaviors that they believed would change if they left the community. Some of them finished high school and then left the community for new opportunities. Most of them came to the city alone, but were aware of other people they knew who had migrated as well.

Two storytellers shared about the lack of opportunities:

> *"Even now I hear stories about how things are up there and it's pretty awful…if I had opportunities when I was growing up everything would be different."*
>
> (Storyteller #9)
>
> *"There's no opportunities, absolutely nothing but drink. I was drinking over there 'cause there's nothing else to do."*
>
> (Storyteller #1)

Despite First Nations' understanding that Treaty promises would provide a basis for a successful transition to what Indigenous leaders recognized as a changing economy, the federal government failed to invest in First Nations communities (Carter, 1990; Peters & Robillard, 2009). One of the legacies of the colonial process was the creation of reservations, populated almost entirely by First Nations people, characterized by low levels of economic development and high levels of poverty (Peters & Robillard, 2009). Along with inferior levels of economic development, the poor

condition of reserve housing has been documented for decades (Clatworthy and Stevens, 1987; Spector, 1996; Jakubec & Engeland, 2004).

These issues are not unique to reserves; however the context in which the issues have evolved is. Rural communities share the same lack of economic opportunity. Our storytellers who were from both reserves and rural communities shared that, once they had reached a certain age, typically teens, they were acutely determined to leave home.

When reflecting on their move to the city, one storyteller reflected:

> *"I was eighteen, I just graduated high school and I just didn't know anything and I did know one thing was left, my last high school exam, I was on the bus and the excitement of the city has kept me here. My goal is to at least get an education and leave the city."*
>
> (Storyteller #8)

6. *nehiyawewin* (Cree identity)

Underlying a lot of the stories was the theme of identity. Many of the storytellers spoke about being raised with no connection to culture while experiencing substance abuse, disconnect with their parents, and general unhappiness growing up in their home communities. When asked about their connection to culture, most who felt they were not connected, wished they were.

One storyteller shared how being disconnected from their heritage created challenges for them:

> *"That caused a lot of emotional problems in my life, being Cree and shunning Cree's."*
>
> (Storyteller #11)

Identity conflicts among Indigenous people are the sad reality of the colonial history. To be condemned, judged and treated as sub-humans has become so imbedded in the Indigenous experience that to be Indigenous is to be undesirable. Attention to Indigenous identity has largely been from the legal system where the Indian Act governs who is Indian and who is not (Anderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2004; Goodwill & McCormick, 2012). Shifting this power away from the Indian Act and toward Indigenous people requires individual self-identification as the process of being and becoming what one is within a socio-political and cultural context (Behiels, Harvey & Rompkey, 1999). The individual, family, cultural, and community context of the storytellers is integral to their personal and cultural identities (Goodwill & McCormick, 2012).

"…internalized oppression is when you don't understand why you don't like your culture. I didn't like my culture growing up, I didn't want nothing to do with my culture. It took me a long time to get to a point where I'd say, 'yeah, I'm proud I'm Aboriginal.'"

(Storyteller #8)

The complex history and current scope of political, cultural, economic and social influences on Indigenous communities results in a spectrum of Indigenous identity at both the individual and community levels. Good Tracks (1973) suggests the spectrum of individual and collective Indigenous identity ranges from assimilated to traditional. This is further explored by Gone (2006) as he discusses the process of constructing identity as shaped "by the forces of history, power, and tradition" (p.65); these forces include the particular cultural histories, community traditions and institutional relations, among other relationships (Gone, 2006, p. 65).

In review of the different forces influencing the construction of identity, it is important to consider that too often, Indigenous identities "were cemented in the context of a brutal Euro-American colonialism" (Gone, 2006, p.57). As such, respect for the power differentials and pursuit for post-colonial alternatives is an essential part in understanding the construction of Indigenous identity. Good Tracks (1973) further highlights the need for this in his discussion of individual and collective Indigenous autonomy and decision-making. This autonomy provides the space for each individual to determine his or her self-defined sense of identity that may change over time to reflect the context in which he or she exists.

"...after a lifetime of not feeling, why do I start now . . . the first time I felt anything was when I go see my grandchildren..."

(Storyteller #13)

This context is shaped by the individual and community experience of healing. The process of healing helps recover one's sense of self and community as "wellness reinforces and is reinforced by a sense of cultural identity" (Weaver, 2002, p.7). For Indigenous people and community, this identity is connected with teachings related to blood memory and cellular memory. There is an inherent blood and cellular memory associated with all Indigenous peoples, but this memory was interrupted by the process of colonization and the corresponding intergenerational trauma that continues to exist in Indigenous communities today. The process of reconnecting to blood and cellular memory is part of reconnecting to an Indigenous identity.

Research Question #3

What supports or services are suggested as promising practices for overcoming the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and other forms of colonial oppression, in relation to homelessness?

Research Question #4

What life factors or experiences appear to mitigate or override the impacts of intergenerational trauma from residential schools and child protection systems, and decrease the likelihood of homelessness?

Understanding the trauma that stems from Canada's history of colonization helps provide insight into the many challenges Indigenous communities face today. The systematic and purposeful decimation of ceremonial life, language, connection to the land, traditional worldviews, and spirituality have all hindered Indigenous community members' ability to care for each other (Greenwood, 2006; Greenwood & deLeeuw, 2007; Hart, 2002; HeavyRunner, 2007; Kershaw & Harkey, 2011; Mussell, 2008; Ryan, 2011; Simard & Blight, 2011; Turner & Sanders, 2007; Vernies, n.d.; Wesley-Equimaux & Smolewski, 2004). These losses, such as a loss of access to traditional wisdom, the loss of connectedness with language, loss of collective support, loss of control over land and resources and so on are all identified community impacts of trauma, as is a loss of support from Elders and communal caregiving.

The loss of communal caregiving and guidance through traditional parenting practices has a trickle-down effect of traumatic impacts on families. Elders, parents and community members were replaced by residential schools, the church and Indian Affairs. This removal, combined with the loss of language, interrupted the oral exchange of wisdom from generation to generation leaving present day access severely limited (Goforth, 2007, Pettipas, 1994; Richardson & Nelson, 2007). Indigenous parents are left to raise their children without a model of effective parenting as they themselves were raised in an institutional environment without the love and attentive caregiving that supports children to thrive. These conditions are now exacerbated by "the breakdown of families that has resulted in spousal and child abuse, desertion, alcoholism, and substance abuse" (Goforth, 2007, p. 16) and death, as community and family members attempt to cope with the outcomes of historical trauma in the community.

The historical trauma experienced by Indigenous communities today needs to be acknowledged in understanding the process of healing. Healing occurs over time and is reflective of the many

elements that influence our day-to-day lived experience. An Indigenous perspective on healing refers to a lifelong journey that involves a return to balance within oneself, in one's relationships with others, and with the natural and spiritual worlds (AHF, 2006; Aitken & Haller, 1990; Brave Heart, M.Y.H., 1995; Castellano, 2010; Duran, 2006; Hart, 2002; HeavyRunner, 2007; Verniest, n.d.; Wenger-Nabigon, 2010; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). This return to balance refers to living in harmony with the Natural Laws and Seven Teachings that are at the core of Indigenous culture. Healing can take place within the context of an individual, a family, a community, an organization, an institution, and a nation and is not merely the absence of disease or challenges, but instead a holistic focus on well-being. This requires attending to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of persons, across the life span for children, youth, adults, and elders (Brave Heart, 1995; Duran, 2006; Hart, 2002; Pettipas, 1994; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996; Verniest, n.d.; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

Any discussion of healing in an Indigenous context must reflect an understanding that healing is a process that requires time. In this way, healing requires a commitment to long-term relationship building that includes the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual realms. This perspective is contrary to many service models that emphasize brief, short term or "least intrusive" intervention models. The development of long term approaches to healing also fits with Dr. Judith Herman's (1992), three phase model of trauma recovery that includes the establishment of safety and stabilization, remembrance and mourning, then reconnection and integration. To facilitate healing, it is extremely important that we find a way to move beyond the negative messages that are a product of a long history of systemic racism and on-going oppression. Instead, the focus must be on perpetuating the stories of hope, wellness, and success of individuals and communities. Healing Indigenous communities begins with recovery of individuals who then influence the rebuilding and restoring of healthy patterns of life. At the same time, healing begins with the return of healthy patterns in communities that promote wellness in individuals.

The essence of Indigenous spirituality includes an understanding that all matter has a spirit and must be respected. This respect is shown through relational accountability, which recognizes that all forms of life are connected, and it is both an individual and community responsibility to remain present to these relationships (Wilson, 2002). Relational accountability requires that the Natural Laws and Seven Teachings guide genuine interaction between all relationships including those between the human and natural world. This accountability includes an awareness of the need for the relationship to be reciprocal, and includes a responsibility to maintain this balance.

It is understood that health is the result of an interconnected balance of physical, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being (AHF, 2002; AHF, 2009); a healthy state of being is connected to one's relationship with the physical and the supernatural worlds. The understanding of this relationship is carried through a blood memory, a memory of historical ways of being and doing that have been carried at a spiritual level and held by the ancestors. Maintaining a balanced connection to one's relationship with the physical and spiritual worlds helps keep this memory present. Although, it is important to acknowledge that disconnection from blood memory is not permanent if one's spirit becomes wounded. A reconnection to ceremony helps restore this memory as ceremonies carry fundamental teachings about the values that can guide healing, not only individually, but in relationship with each other. Spirituality, health and wellness, therefore, require individuals and communities to acknowledge and tend to all of these relationships.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2002; 2009) supports cultural intervention strategies that honour the holistic process of traditional healing and involve both the physical and spiritual worlds. Honouring the spirit within each person through ceremony will naturally promote balance and health. The restoration of ceremony and traditional wisdom is seen as the core of promoting well-being across many programs serving Aboriginal clients (Greenwood, 2006; Greenwood & deLeeuw, 2007; Hart, 2002; HeavyRunner, 2007; Kershaw & Harkey, 2011; Mussell, 2008; Ryan, 2011; Simard & Blight, 2011; Turner & Sanders, 2007; Vernies, n.d.; Wesley-Equimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

Spirituality has a very deep and personal meaning where the expressions of spirituality and use of Ceremony are upheld as sacred. Discussions about the evaluation of spirituality are rooted in first defining spirituality. Attempting to define spirituality ignores the deeply personal understanding of one's spiritual connections and minimizes the dynamic ways Indigenous spirituality represent a way of being (Limb & Hodge, 2011). Bruce, Sheilds & Molzahn (2012) argue that this ambiguity in defining the components of spirituality is not necessarily a negative because of the scope of the human phenomenon. This is further supported by Fleming and Ledogar (2008) as they recognize "the exact content of the spirituality component in any preventive program is difficult to specify because Indigenous spirituality is deeply embedded in each person's own cultural traditions which may well involve knowledge and practices that are sacred to those traditions and can be tapped in ways that differ somewhat with each tradition" (p.8). These examples show the challenges of honouring, through program evaluation, the role Ceremony plays in healing. Still it

is important for program evaluation to reflect the widespread support of Ceremony and spirituality in service delivery. Ceremony and spirituality are essential to the promotion of health and well-being and so a need to acknowledge this role is vital.

Additional practices identified by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation as promising in the pursuit of individual and community healing:

Legacy Education:

Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada do not understand their own history. For the Indigenous community, internalized guilt and shame contributes to a common view that the individual and social problems experienced in that community are the result of personal and cultural failure. This lack of understanding and shame can contribute to a further rejection of Indigenous culture, spirituality, and traditions, and prevent movement towards health. Educating both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about the history of colonization, residential schools and the 60's scoop helps foster an understanding of shared experiences and create a common view from which to move forward. This understanding provides insight into the external forces that have created the trauma, allows families to better understand each other; and cultivates the hope of empowering individuals and communities to pursue healing.

Cultural Interventions:

Reconnecting to culture is a vital path for both individual and community healing. Years of eradication efforts have not changed the ceremonies that were forced underground. As a result of colonization, many families lost their connection to the stories, language, and ceremonies, carriers of traditional wisdom and knowledge. Many believe that Indigenous people carry a blood memory of their historical ways of being and doing. These memories have been carried by individuals at an unconscious and spiritual level, as well as held by the ancestors, until they can be revived. A reconnection to ceremony helps restore this memory and, as ceremonies are practiced, the traditional teachings, beliefs and values that can guide the healing of individuals and the community will return. The revitalization of these teachings, beliefs, and values also occurs through a reconnection to the stories and language, as both storytelling and language carry knowledge that contributes to healing. Reclaiming language, stories, ceremonies, and traditions as important sources of spirituality, strength, and resiliency can assist in strengthening future generations. Ultimately, a return to ceremony will facilitate and guide the restoration of harmony and balance.

The reclamation of these values and traditions may also be supported through the use of culturally-based intervention strategies. Culture-based healing interventions that are creative and multi-dimensional may be offered in a variety of ways to provide healing opportunities to individuals and communities. It is important to note that these strategies represent the holistic process of traditional healing and involve both the physical and spiritual worlds in a manner that naturally promotes balance and health. This approach is reflected within the Medicine Wheel healing model that encourages a balance between mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Examples of some traditional healing practices that may be included as part of this approach may include: herbal remedies, healing circles, and ceremonies such as smudging, the sweat lodge, and the Sun Dance.

Blended Approaches:

Western therapeutic approaches have historically viewed mental health problems through a medical model of disease that views these types of challenges as being the result of personal weakness or dysfunction. In Western models, mental health problems are addressed at the individual level by locating the problem in the "person," and through a combination of talk therapy and medication, the person is "treated" by an expert professional helper. Many types of mainstream therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Solution Focused Therapy are based on the idea that if we simply change our thinking, many of these problems will be solved. These approaches, although they can be helpful, are also limited, as they fail to acknowledge the emotional, spiritual, and physical healing that is also necessary, not to mention the role of the larger community in healing.

Despite the limitations of many Western approaches to healing, these techniques may still have something to offer the Indigenous community in moving forward. Beginning in the 1980s, there have been significant advancements in the development of trauma informed treatment approaches. There is increased understanding of the brain and the mechanisms at play, both during and after the occurrence of traumatic events. In addition, there has been a growing recognition that mind, body and spirit are intertwined and cannot be treated as distinct from each other. A variety of new, body-based approaches to the treatment of trauma (e.g. Sensori-motor Psychotherapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) have been developed, which are showing good results in assisting with all aspects of the trauma response. Even talk-based

approaches to therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), are expanding to include humanistic and familial strategies to assist with trauma symptoms.

Alternatively, there could be benefit to integrating Western trauma treatments and culture-based healing into programming. This can refer to including traditional healing practices in Western therapies, or using Western models in traditional settings. It is important to consider an integrative approach to help understand healing in both worlds, as many Indigenous people live in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. This approach is also important to consider, as many Indigenous programs have funders who enforce policies that dictate a mainstream approach to treatment and fail to recognize the benefits of traditional healing methods.

Understanding Mobility

A gap exists within the literature regarding the experience of "mobility" within homeless populations. It appears to be a common perception that individuals experiencing urban homelessness are highly mobile, however this study, and a small amount of research, contend that this is an overly popularized conception and, though there is some mobility, it is not prevalent to a large extent (Parker & Dykema, 2013). Other researchers have documented high levels of mobility in urban Indigenous homeless populations, however the geographic dimensions of their movements, including the extent to which returns to reserves play a role in these migration patterns, have not been studied (Distasio, 2003; Peters & Robillard, 2009).

The population growth of Canada's urban Indigenous groups has increased at a growth rate of 5% per year from 1996-2006 and is a primary contributor to the high levels of documented mobility rates (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2006). Canada's non-Indigenous population has grown by approximately 1% during the same decade (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2006). Natural increase, migration and data quality all minimally contribute to the growth while ethnic affiliation, or people who self identify or identify their children as Indigenous, is the primary explanation for the increase (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2006). While there is no definitive explanation for the significant increase in people who self-identify as First Nations or Metis, suggestions include increased awareness of one's identity, improved public perceptions about Indigenous peoples, and recent legal decisions (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2006). Additional evidence on net migration reveals more people move to reservations than away from them (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2006).

Indigenous homeless mobility is also influenced by factors that include the unique historical experiences of local Indigenous populations, cultural norms and values, the physical geography of the area, kinship networks, the human service environment and the demographic composition of populations, especially age and gender (Habibis, 2011; Peters & Robillard, 2009). Of these, the most significant factor contributing to mobility is kinship, which supports the role of reciprocity in our lives. Young and Doohan (1989) explain:

> "When people visit family and friends they are not merely taking part in an enjoyable social occasion. They are also reinforcing reciprocal ties and obligations, all of which are essential parts of their social fabric. In addition they are ensuring that ritual rights and responsibilities to the land will be carried out. Social visiting demonstrates the high degree of interdependence which is an essential characteristic of past and present Indigenous society."

The transition from pre-contact mobility to settlement life has impacted Indigenous peoples by forcing them to adopt a Western concept of "home" that involves staying in one place with increased external dependency on, for example, government services (Christensen, 2013). This displacement of Indigenous people from their lands has contributed to the over-representation of Indigenous people in homeless communities.

Acts of reciprocity and mobility for reasons of kinship and connection are acts of resistance to the colonizing process.

Summary

Colonization

Exploring the possible links or connections between the process of colonization and Indigenous urban homelessness is a challenge. "Colonization" has many forms, and the word is used easily without a deep understanding of the insidious nature of the colonizing process. In the context of this project, it is important to have a stronger understanding of the process of colonization.

Colonization usually begins with the intrusion of a foreign population into a new environment (Makokis, et al., 2014; Millette, 2011) for, in most cases, economic or religious reasons. As Makokis, et al. (2014) describes, there are multiple stages of colonization which use mechanisms such as segregating the non-dominant group from the whole; patriarchy; domestic violence; physical and sexual abuse of women and children; weakening of culture and tradition; violence and internalized oppression. The stages of colonization are not linear and can overlap, repeat, jump ahead, and backtrack (Makokis et al., 2014).

An early stage of colonization is the awareness of one population as being different, and usually "superior" to another. One of the first acts of colonization involved drastic changes in beliefs about land and land ownership. In Canada, prior to European settlement, land ownership was not recorded (Millette, 2011). As settlers began to divide up the land, Indigenous peoples were increasingly displaced and, eventually, government and religious groups began to force Indigenous peoples onto parcels of land called reserves (de Leeuw, Maurice, Holyk, Greenwood & Adam, 2012; Millette, 2011), the beginning of colonized homelessness. Next, the newly dominant population seeks to increase their access to resources (wealth, land…etc.) or has a desire to convert the other to the now dominant beliefs and values. Both of these desires exist only in a worldview and belief system that values power, the acquisition of property and resources, and/or holds its own belief system as superior. Next, colonization is characterized by the increased level of comfort and familiarity the colonizers have as they start to take over the land and convert the Indigenous peoples to the colonizers belief systems. As their population grows, the colonizers become less and less dependent on the Indigenous population and put more pressure on those being colonized to adopt their ways. This is often accompanied by framing the traditional ways of the Indigenous population as backward or immoral.

As colonization progresses, power shifts away from the Indigenous population as more colonizing people settle in the new land. This causes less need for local knowledge or

involvement and, as a result of this reduced need, the Indigenous population starts to look to the colonizers for direction and the colonizers come to own, direct, and profit through the oppression and exploitation of the Indigenous population. To ensure this system is maintained without guilt, the Indigenous people become considered "objects" to be used to further the interests of the colonizers and, since they are objects (often from a negative perspective), there is no need to consider how they may be impacted by these developments.

> *"I mentioned before that I grew up in a white community and that community shunned Natives because they were different…that caused a lot of emotional problems in my life – being Cree and shunning Cree's"*
>
> (Storyteller #11)

Next, the negative images of the Indigenous population are used commonly and often leading to internalized oppression - when a colonized group of people take the oppressive views of others and direct them toward themselves and others like them. Internalized oppression has two insidious nuances. Hardy (2013) has coined the term '*internalized devaluation'* which is taking value of one's self and placing it with the colonizers (p. 25). A second layer of internalized oppression is '*internalized voicelessness'* which erodes Indigenous' people's ability to defend themselves against a torrent of racism. This voicelessness impacts the ability of Indigenous people to advocate for themselves (Hardy, 2013).

One Storyteller, speaking about their experience with alcoholism, stated:

> *"I do know how deadly that disease is for me, coupled with my almost dislike of Natives but you know, I stop myself because like I am Native, you know, it's in my blood and like I said, 'If I'm hating Natives, I'm hating myself'"*
>
> (Storyteller #11)

At this point, colonizers are often perceived as being in a self-elevated hierarchal position. From this position it appears that the poor, helpless, and "inferior" Indigenous people need to be cared for and directed and, to meet this "need," services are developed and provided based in the worldview (justification) of the colonizers. Often these services are minimal and substandard, which leads to poor outcomes and, ultimately, further supports the colonization process.

In some cases, the Indigenous population may be offered the "opportunity" to practice self-determination, but only if it happens within the parameters developed by the colonizers, and not in ways that reflect local practices of knowing and doing. This opportunity presents an illusion of self-control. At this point, the colonization process is at the height of its effectiveness. The Indigenous population appears to take responsibility for their own continued oppression, while the control really still remains in the hands of the colonizers. As this is a self-defeating context, the final stage of colonization requires that those in power resume control because the Indigenous population has failed to self-colonize successfully. This reinforces the dominant view of the inferiority of this population and it is now necessary that the colonizers step in to "assist" the colonized to "get it right." This cycle will repeat as long as the colonizer is setting the rules and defining success according to their values and assumptions.

> *"I didn't like my culture growing up, I didn't want nothing to do with my culture. It took me a long time to get to the point where I'd say 'Yeah, I'm proud to be Aboriginal'*
>
> (Storyteller #8)

It would be important to note that the process of decolonization is equally complex.

It would appear that the research question seeking to discover if there are connections between Indigenous experiences in Residential Schools, child protection, or other forms of colonial oppression and experiences of homelessness is, perhaps, best answered by, "the research suggests that it is not a causal connection between colonization and homelessness: in contrast, homelessness <u>is</u> colonization." Following on this theme, it may be a challenge to conceptualize possible "risk factors" wherein colonization can be understood as something that would create an increased risk of homelessness. Colonization and homelessness appear to be two sides of the same coin, and creating homes is to challenge the process and experience of colonization.

> *"but then you stopped, you looked around, you realize that ninety-five percent of these people out here are all Aboriginal and it's like, 'Well, why is that?'*
> *They are just stuck there – they are comfortable with the resources. You know you are constantly waiting in lines, waiting to talk to somebody, and to get supplies, and it's deadlines – get in before they shut down. It was terrible, but yet people are comfortable there"*
>
> (Storyteller #8)

Another challenge to this research process has been achieving an understanding of the concept of "Indigenous homelessness" from a systemic and historical perspective. For Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, the experience is more than just not having a consistent place for one person or a family to live. To view Indigenous people experiencing urban homelessness as an "individual" issue (often attributed to negative stereotypical beliefs) is to ignore the wide range of instigating factors that are both a direct consequence, and an effective tool, of the processes of assimilation and colonization. First Contact, Residential Schools, the 60's Scoop, and Child Welfare alone have stripped Indigenous people of land, language, and identity. As suggested on the list of factors that drive Indigenous people's out of their communities, an uncountable number of federal, provincial and community policies and processes have further separated Indigenous people from their connection to meaning of place and independence. As suggested by Somerville (1992) while "homeless" is often understood by many agencies and services as "roofless", in an Indigenous context, homeless must be understood as "rootless" – the absence of a spiritual and emotional connection to place. Christensen (2013), suggests that Indigenous people experience the "profound irony of being homeless in one's homeland" (pg. 823). The concept of homelessness must be understood within the context of Skywoman's teachings of the Indigenous meaning of home shared earlier in this document.

> *"…here in Edmonton there is still an awful lot of ignorance towards homelessness. We are the richest province and the city…the best they could offer our homeless people was a tent city…it was designed as a mockery"*
>
> (Storyteller #8)

The research question exploring which supports or services could be promising practices for overcoming the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and other forms of colonial oppression does not have a simple answer. Similar to the research into the over-representation of Indigenous children in Child Welfare, the Canadian Incidence Study (2008) results show that most Indigenous children end up in care as a consequence of neglect connected to systemic issues of poverty and colonization. Likewise, the journey of many Indigenous people into homelessness begins in similar systemic issues.

Agency-based supports or services addressing the connections between colonization and the experience of homelessness can be generalized into two major areas. One area for consideration

involves the specific agency structure, while the other explores possible services that could be provided to clients by agency personnel.

It might be appropriate for Homeward Trust to work, in ceremony, with various indigenous advisory groups and Elders to explore the development of a truly "Indigenous" program focused on providing services to urban Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. Many agencies work within an all-encompassing western context and worldview that includes everything from governance to funding to service provision. Western-based beliefs of organization and service provision are often just assumed, unrecognized as inappropriate, and, more often, remain unchallenged, continuing the process of systemic colonization. In addition, Indigenous-specific services are often provided "on request" or as an "accessory" to the main program, as opposed to being the essential foundation of a program. A full exploration and understanding of a truly Indigenous-based program could provide an opportunity for systemic organizational changes that would challenge existing systems. As one storyteller shared *"It's hard when you have not been mothered to be a mom.*" A program developed from, and based within, Indigenous epistemology and ontology and ceremony would be rooted in traditional wisdom, language and ceremony. For example, the Natural Laws, the seven teachings, and the tipi teachings should be at the core of all Indigenous programs. Finally, Indigenous program development receives mandate and direction from ceremony, the environment and the community.

Services for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness require agency teams that have a number of unique skills, knowledge and understanding. Ideally, these skills and knowledge are manifested at the lived-experience level by the team. Team members could be understood, from a *nehiyaw* perspective, as *oskapewis*, an honoured role in the *nehiyaw* community. The *oskapewis* is the helper – the one who ensures that everything is ready and available for a ceremony and for the Elders. The *oskapewis* has a deep understanding of doing *omanitew*, relational accountability, and ceremony.

As one storyteller shared:

> *"I was working with Elders and doing sweats and being an Elders helper…and I really started to know myself, forgive myself."*
>
> (Storyteller #4)

Oskapewis are the essential team member and service provider.

Service providers and team members working with Indigenous clients must have:

- A deep understanding of the process and impacts of colonization,
- What it means to be de-colonized,
- A deep understanding of loss and grief,
- A deep understanding of trauma and healing from trauma,
- An awareness of language and how it creates reality,
- A lived spirituality and an understanding of the meaning and role of ceremony,
- A deep understanding of omanitew, Relational Accountability and kinship,
- An understanding of mental health and addictions,
- An understanding that colonization is homelessness.

Based on the literature, lived experience, and the stories we collected, it would appear that a strong understanding of trauma, and trauma healing, is vital. As one storyteller stated,

> *"I think what they're finding is they're housing us and it's not quite enough, it's not enough to put a roof over our heads right? That doesn't solve all of our problems."*
>
> (Storyteller #1)

> And, *"…it's like homelessness is an ailment that should be corrected - you've got professionals out there that can correct that."*
>
> (Storyteller #8)

In direct terms, trauma therapy is intense, long-term, complex and trans-generational. Healing refers to a process that occurs over time and involves a return to wholeness. An Indigenous perspective on healing refers to a return to balance within oneself, in one's relationships with others, and with the natural and spiritual worlds. It refers to living in harmony with the Natural Laws and Seven Teachings that are at the core of Indigenous culture. Healing can take place within the context of an individual, family, community, organization, institution, and nation.

Healing means focusing on well-being rather than on disease or illness and must include all levels of the community from the individual to nation, and embrace policies, economics, social relationships, and the process of cultural recovery. This requires attending to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of persons across the life cycle. Given the extent of losses experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada, it is likely that this healing journey will take

generations. Over time, however, there will be a shift from recovery to rebuilding and restoring healthy patterns of life.

Since abuse and trauma typically leave victims feeling unsafe and powerless, it is important that healing models promote emotional, physical, and spiritual safety. Addressing historical abuse and intergenerational trauma means understanding and considering individual healing within a larger picture of the healing required for the family, community, and nation. It is important to recognize that the development of trust and safety can be a long-term process, requiring consistent supportive relationships over time.

This can be a challenge within the context of current forms of service delivery.

omanitew and Cultural Competency

In many cases, non-indigenous service providers are in the position of offering services to indigenous peoples and it is generally acknowledged that the potential lack of understanding of Indigenous world views may be problematic. One institutional response has been to create "cultural awareness" training and, in some cases, this has resulted in the minimal requirement that service providers complete an eight-hour awareness workshop once a year. It is concerning that service providers believe that this minimal training will result in cultural competency, and furthers the process of assimilation and colonization. The *nehiyaw* (Cree) word *omanitew* provides a teaching in this area.

Dr. Makokis shares this story:

> *As a child, much of our food was provided through hunting and fishing. My dad was a good hunter, and provided well for us. I remember that we would often have visitors, and when the visitors arrived, we made sure that they were well fed and had a place to sleep. Even if we had just finished washing up from supper, if visitors arrived we would stop and prepare an entire meal for them. We would give the visitors the best beds, and make sure that all of their needs were met. Space was made for them, for their stories and for each member of their family. We knew that, at some later date when we travelled to their home, we would receive the same treatment. When they left, my mom and dad would make sure the visitors had enough food to last them, and that they had blankets to keep them warm. I remember that my dad would sometimes give them his gun, so that they could provide for*

> *themselves as they travelled. As a child, I sometimes said to myself, "Dad gave away his gun – what are we going to eat now?"*
>
> (L. Makokis, personal communication, February 1, 2014)

This is the practice of *omanitew* – to celebrate your visitors, to make space for them physically and spiritually. To make sure they have the best, both while they are within the program and when they leave. We should be able to practice *omanitew* with our clients - to celebrate when they enter into our programs, and to make sure that they get the best, always.

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Appendix A – Indicators Checklist
Factors that Impact Homelessness and Mobility

i) Factors that motivate leaving communities

- Lack of community-based economic opportunities, small labour market.
- Domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, family death
- Lack of educational opportunities
- Lack of health services for chronic or more pervasive health issues.
- Lack of available housing
- High level of substance abuse and/or gang violence

ii) Factors that attract movement to urban centers.

- Better opportunities for employment
- Better opportunities for education
- Access to health resources
- Access to social services (child welfare, criminal justice, correctional systems, family violence, mental health, addiction services)
- The existence of Indigenous –specific organizations, institutions, and agencies.
- Media perceptions of urban life-style
- Geographic location – communities closer to urban centers experience higher rates of movement.
- Family members/friends currently living in an urban context providing support
- Access to children in foster care
- Access to family members involved in the justice system

iii) Factors that contribute to leaving urban centers

- Lack of affordable housing in urban centers for low-income wage earners
- Lack of family-based supports in the urban center
- Urban racism and discrimination preventing access to housing and/or employment
- High levels of urban crime and/or substance abuse in specific housing areas
- Difficulty in adapting to an urban lifestyle
- Lack of cultural supports (ceremony, language)
- Changes in employment opportunities due to seasonal demands
- High cost of living

iv) Factors that contribute to moving back to community

- Culture, language, values and beliefs available in reserve community
- Presence of extended family and friends in community
- Community deaths (temporary return for funerals)

v) Systemic factors that contribute to mobility

- Federal responsibility for community-based individuals
- Legislation that prevents economic development (mortgages, for example)
- Provincial responsibility for urban-based individuals
- Some research suggests that there are differing experiences for Treaty as opposed to non-status Indigenous peoples.
- Some indications that migration levels for Indigenous women is higher than for Indigenous men and usually attributed to single-mothers seeking social supports while men are seeking employment.
- Federal, Provincial and Community-based policies that encourage people to move off-reserve.
- Government polices directed at centralizing social services into an urban context.

Appendix B – The Face of Homelessness

This piece is called “Losing My Talk” and it was inspired by my Uncle. He was a very brilliant man but he lived a lot on the streets and had a very hard life. Being that he was the oldest male in my Mother’s brothers, he learned a lot of the traditions from my Great Grandfather who held those Ceremonies underground when they were outlawed.

When he went to Residential School, of course they weren’t allowed to speak Cree, and in the mouth there’s a bit of the syllabics. On the one side I have the tree, which is the tree of life, but the tree is also important in many of our Ceremonies. On the side of the piece I have a mother and child that represent losing that connection with the closeness of our parents’ love. I left the eyes so that they are almost hollow because we lost so much of our sight when we have given in to our addictions.

What my Uncle learned so much of in Residential School….he didn’t use….it didn’t make him a better Canadian…it didn’t make him Civilized.

All of this policy of assimilation didn’t work because he died from poisoning himself with alcohol to hide that pain.

So this is my tribute to him.

Lana Whiskeyjack

Excerpt from “Gently Whispering the Circle Back” Video and Facilitators Guide. Blue Quills First Nations College
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