A STUDY OF RESILIENCE IN FIRST NATIONS POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The drop out rate of First Nations students has been a long-standing issue and concern. Although it is important to explore the factors for this dropout, this study takes a different approach. This thesis is intended to contribute to an understanding of the resilience processes that enable those who persevere and succeed in spite of great adversity. Six graduates, three female and three male, from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Indian Education Program, were interviewed. Using a narrative inquiry method, their stories were analyzed. Data analysis revealed the factors and themes associated with resiliency. A model of resilience is presented based on the predominant protective factors that have been identified. These factors are: self-efficacy, vision, faith, stability, compassion, and resourcefulness. The implications of this study for First Nations education and research are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my sons,

Craig and Ryan,

who have also had to be resilient.

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CHAPTER 1

Historical Context of Study

Introduction

I am a Cree woman, mother, grandmother, and educator. My identity is shaped by various social, political, and historical contexts. I present my story as the framework through which I have engaged in the study.

I was born in 1954 and I have three sisters and one brother. I am the youngest in the family. I am from Sweetgrass First Nations and I am happy to call it my home. In the springtime I go and plant flowers at the house that my parents left me. This is the only place that is really my home.

My parents were products of the residential school system. They both attended residential school in Delmas, which is not far from our reserve. My mother is from Poundmaker First Nations, and she stayed in the residential school until she was twenty-one years old. I was told that she once did a novena to decide if she should become a nun or marry my father. My mother completed her grade eight and then she taught kindergarten at the school. My dad went to grade five and then he had to work on the farm.

My father farmed, and my mother worked along side him in picking rocks and clearing the land. On Sundays, my mother would play the organ for mass while my dad, and several others from the reserve, would sing Cree hymns. There was a lot of work to be done, but, generally, life was good. We had horses and cows, and there was always a garden that needed weeding. My mother would be

washing clothes and cooking, endlessly. In the winter time there would be snow to haul in and melt on the stove. It made good water to wash clothes with.

Our grandparents lived a short distance from us, "on top the hill," as we used to call it. My grandfather would tease us and call us "big bellies." There were berry-picking adventures with my grandmother. My cousin, my sister, and I would hop on and off the rubber tire wagon on our way "down the hill," which is where we went berry picking. There was a man that lived with my grandparents and his name was Old Smoky, and we would always have some kind of mishap when he would take us berry picking. One time there had been a heavy rainfall and Old Smoky went right ahead and drove the team of horses into the creek. The creek was high and my grandmother was not agile enough to stand up when the water kept rising. She was not pleased when she had to dry out a few of her skirts. Our lunch and our pails went floating down the creek.

The first big change came when my mother started working in town. She had a job at the Indian Hospital. My brother and my older sisters went to residential school in Lebret, and my father took care of my sister and I. My mother would come home on her days off.

My early school experiences were good. We had a Day School on the reserve. I entered school eager to learn and after my first year, I was promoted to grade three. Our classroom was in the church, as there was no other space. My mother sent me to school in town when I was in grade four. She wanted me to get a good education. It was something new for Indian children to go to school in town, but, my mother thought I would be able to fit in, as I am fair skinned.

The nuns and the teachers were strict. In those days corporal punishment was used and I was a conforming student. When I graduated from grade eight I was one of the top three students. For my efforts I received a bible. In retrospect, I would say that my schooling experiences have been the most traumatic experiences in my life, even though I was able to succeed. There was a lot of adjustment to new situations.

In reflecting about my own coping processes, I have frequently used writing as emotional catharsis. I remember writing an essay on racism when I was in grade ten. It strikes me about how I was able to conceptualize this. I remember being told that, "You don't even look like an Indian." I used to be secretly glad about this, and now I understand that I was internalizing the racism and I was ashamed of my identity.

I need to mention some of the teachers who made a difference in my schooling. In grade three I remember my teacher showing my work to the others because it was so neat. It was to be an example to the others about how to do their work. My grade seven teacher read my writing to the class one time. For grade nine my mother had sent me to high school in Saskatoon. This was an even bigger change for me. I had trouble adjusting and it was my composition teacher who took time to encourage me about my writing. I always remember her kindness.

I returned to North Battleford for my grade ten, and it was then that I started to rebel. My mother sent me back to Saskatoon for my grade eleven, and I boarded out with six other Indian girls. I was sixteen years old when I started

drinking. When I was seventeen I started living common-law with a man thirteen years older than me. This was the first time that I got beat. I had my first son when I was nineteen and I felt obligated somehow to stay with the father of my son. I lived in this abusive relationship for seven years. In that time I did complete my grade twelve and I went to university.

What I can say is that no matter what happened to me I would go to school or go to work. Somehow that was ingrained in me. I received my teaching certificate in 1977 and I have been teaching ever since. I am a recovering alcoholic and I am sober for seven years now. I have come to understand that everything that has happened has been for a purpose. I had crossed the line into that world of darkness and despair, but, deep inside, I always believed that there would be better tomorrows. People were placed in my path to show me the way.

Today I am a proud mother and grandmother. I have two sons and two grandsons. My routine is to go to A.A meetings, to Al-Anon meetings, to church on Sundays, and to the sweatlodge, whenever I need it. I also did a sundance, for the first time, last summer. This may be thought of as an eclectic approach to healing and recovery, but in my life I have had to learn many ways of coping.

The stories of struggle and dysfunction that are told in this study are, in part, my personal story, too. This thesis has evolved from my own experiences in finding my place, and extending it to my work as a university lecturer where I am called upon to seek out ways of understanding and helping students to succeed.

The Colonial Legacy

This review of the historical practices in Indian Education is to encourage greater understanding of the roots of the problems and social ills in First Nations communities and to provide a context for the development of this study. The foundation of our collective experience lies in the colonial endeavour. Our colonial history has been aptly described as a national crime (Milloy, 1999). Battiste (1998) asserts, "In the relentless cycles of renewal and reform Aboriginal peoples live in extraordinary times. Aboriginal peoples throughout the world have survived five centuries of the horrors and harsh lessons of colonization" (p.16). The colonial encounter has been most detrimental to tribal peoples and their survival can only be attributed to "the power of the Native spirit" (Jaine, 1993, p.124).

Processes and practices of white supremacy, racism, sexism, and patriarchy constitute the power relationships and hierarchical structures within the colonial enterprise. Colonialism is manifested through the "configurations of power" (Said, 1994, p. 133) that worked and still work to control indigenous lands and populations. European supremacy is based on the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy, and it effectively justifies colonization. Power is accessed when certain cultural forms are made to prevail over others, thus producing racialized and marginalized identities (Chow, 1993). The colonizers are depicted as the advanced civilization, while the colonized are depicted as backward nations. This conception permits "ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality" (Said, p.144). Racial and cultural differences are the markers and boundaries used to subordinate.

Race, power and sex are intricately woven in colonial discourse (Stoler, 1997). Stoler (1997) maintains that sexual control was "fundamental to how racial policies were secured and how colonial projects were carried out" (p. 367). When the fur traders came, they formed alliances with local women and the children who were born from these alliances are the Metis or "mixed bloods." They came to be perceived as threats to the racial purity of the Europeans. As a result, new policies and laws were made to ensure that the colonizers retained their racial superiority. An understanding of these historical practices facilitates knowledge and awareness that "the roots of the hierarchical system are founded on classism, racism, and sexism" (Gaikesheyongai, 1993).

We live in a society that is "male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered" (Johnson, 1997). Patriarchy is a western colonial practice and it constitutes differences in gender relationships and reflects the "deep structures within us, the webs of belief, experience, which shape the patterns in our lives " (Johnson, 1997, p.15) as men and women. Within this dynamic is the practice of sexism. Sexism is "ideology, a set of ideas that promote male privilege in part by portraying women as inferior to men" (Johnson, 1997, p.19). Gender dynamics and systemic practices have resulted in women's inequality and mistreatment (Narayan, 1997). It is this underlying principle which accounts for violence and abuse against women and girls. Acknowledging these interlocking systems of structural inequality provides some insight into the complexities and the social and political realities of First Nations life.

Wa Thiong'o (1986) interprets the establishment of colonialism as one where "the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and blackboard" (p.9). Colonialism is sustained by an intimate relationship with education, imperialism, and capitalism (Said, 1994). In the Canadian experience, subjugation was carried out through armed conflict, the implementation of the Indian Act of 1876, and the establishment of the residential school system.

Indian Education In Canada: The Destruction of Aboriginal People

The ideological apparatus through which the government operated was through its educational institutions. There are distinct themes in the history of Indian Education in Canada (Burns, 1998). Prior to colonization, First Nations peoples had their own education system in place. The colonizers and the missionaries implemented the residential school system from the mid-1800's, as part of the extinction policy. Changes in governmental policy and financial needs brought about the establishment of Day schools on the reserves in the early 1960's (Milloy, 1999). The next era is known as the integration era. As part of the assimilation process, the Department of Indian Affairs entered into tuition agreements with provincial schools allowing Indian children to be educated in provincial schools. Since this period there have been other governmental policies in place to deal with the "Indian problem," including the inception of Indian Control of Indian Education in 1972. First Nations educators from Saskatchewan met in May 2001, twenty-eight years later, to revisit Indian Control of Indian Education. It

becomes apparent that the issues in Indian Education remain a part of the ongoing process of dialogue and transformation.

We have had a traumatic history resulting in many forms of social crises as evident in poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, and high rates of suicide. The predominant theme in governmental policy has been an attempt to assimilate First Nations people. In this process the language and culture of First Nations people has come under constant attack. During an S.I.F.C. Education departmental meeting, an elder was relating what she referred to as "boarding school times" and she stated simply, "We had to go through what we had to go through" (B. Lavallee, personal communication, October, 2000). With these words she had articulated the essence of resiliency and unknowingly spoke to the subject of my thesis. The question of why some people survived while others could not cope has developed into the main focus of this research.

Residential schools were one of the appendages of the Christianizing and civilizing forces that were at work to oppress and subjugate First Nations peoples. Those who have gone to residential school know first hand what First Nations people have to go through to survive. Much has been written about the abusive nature of residential schools (Haig-Brown, 1988; Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Jaine, 1993). Many have told their stories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. When young children were forcibly removed from their homes, they became vulnerable to risk and failure. Their normal development, and their family and community life, was disrupted irrevocably.

The ability to cope successfully with traumatic events like dislocation and dispossession, and ultimately, the ability to maintain vision and hope is characteristic of what it means to be resilient. It can be assumed that oppression "creates an environment where survival skills are developed and sharpened, (Cross, 1998, p.151), and where resiliency is required to survive. It can also be considered that "The richness of our histories and heritage provides an anchor that holds us to who we are, " (Cross, p.151). Despite the many challenges we face as Aboriginal people, we still endeavour to maintain our languages and cultures. First Nations people have demonstrated remarkable resiliency in this respect.

In an interpretive study on the impact of residential schools, entitled, Breaking The Silence (1994), some themes become apparent. The study identifies the negative outcomes of children who went to residential school. These include "feeling lost, feeling alone, and becoming silent"(AFN, 1994, p.21). Typically, residential school students have reported that they were made to feel inferior. They were called pagans and savages and they were forbidden to speak their language. They were placed in institutions that were regimented and which did little to foster their emotional development. They were subjected to harsh discipline and their spiritual traditions and beliefs were disparaged.

Male-female hierarchies and gender specific roles were shaped by the residential schools (Haig-Brown, 1988). For example, the priests were the ones to say mass while the nuns were the helpers. This is but one of the ways that patriarchal and sexist thinking were inculcated. Sexual abuse and repressive attitudes toward sexuality, resulting from residential school experiences, have also

created a never-ending cycle of abuse and deviance in First Nations communities (Haig-Brown, 1988).

The establishment of residential schools and their disruption of family and community life continues to impact negatively on First Nations people as we deal with the intergenerational impact. However, we need to examine what we can learn from those people who were able to survive and thrive. The results from an AFN study (1994) revealed that, despite their exposure to unfavourable conditions, the mental development of First Nations students was high. Findings from this study showed that "Despite restrictions and deprivation, the children in residential school found ways to grow. They discovered ways to express their creativity, to expand mentally through reading and, for some, to excel academically" (AFN, 1994, p.46). The study concludes that, "human beings can be exceptionally resilient" (AFN, 1994, p.46).

A recent study entitled Being Indian: Strengths Sustaining First Nations Peoples in Saskatchewan Residential Schools (Hanson & Hampton, 2000) provides valuable insights into the capacity of First Nations peoples to overcome great challenges. Survivors of residential schools were interviewed and their "inner resources and cultural strengths" (Hanson & Hampton, p. 2) were identified. The personal and social resources that helped them to adapt included: "autonomy of will and spirit, sharing, respect, acceptance, spirituality, humour and compassion, and pride in being First Nations" (Hanson & Hampton, pp.5-12).

Resistance has been presented as a way that First Nations students were able to cope (Haig-Brown, 1988). Autonomy of will and spirit can be interpreted as

resistance to the oppressive structures of the residential schools. Strong will and resolve can be viewed as an outcome of the inner consciousness in which we believe that we can exercise some power and control over what happens to us. The use of humour is also recognized as a way of dealing with pain. The stories that my parents told about their days in the residential school were usually about humorous incidents; it was not that these were happy times for them, but I believe that it was simply their way of overcoming the deprivation and wretchedness of their schooling experiences.

The integrated schools presented another significant challenge for First Nations people. Students experienced overt, covert, and institutional racism when they attended schools off reserve (Cleary & Peacock, 1998). Racism has been identified as a stressor that has psychological, social, and biological effects (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999). Memmi (1968) states that "racism is corrosive [and] it contaminates every part of our being, our mind, body, and spirit" (p.190). Institutional racism is described as "the unconscious or conscious exclusion of [Canadian] Indian history, culture, languages, literature, and other instruction relevant to these students' lives" (Cleary & Peacock, p.69). These practices have had countervailing effects for First Nations people, and coping with racism on a continuing basis has posed even greater risk. Clark and his associates (1999) assert that when people have to deal with racism continually, it leads to "resource-strain-behavioural exhaustion and psychological and physiological distress" (p.808). These are implications that have relevance to this study. An examination of how colonialism and other interlocking systems of racism, patriarchy, and

sexism, gave rise to the destruction of First Nations people is essential; otherwise, the pathologizing of Aboriginal people becomes all the more likely. A study of the resilience processes of those who have been able to adapt is relevant and timely.

Relevance of Study

Cajete (1994) a Pueblo Indian educator, suggests that education is ultimately about finding our face, our heart, and our foundation. In the post-colonial era First Nations people are committed to finding their identity and foundation through political, educational and social change. The decolonization process is painstaking as we continue to struggle with paternalism, racism, and the legacy of the residential school era.

A lingering colonial mentality is problematic and too often we accept our victimization and in this respect personal agency bears consideration. The understanding that humans are self-interpreting animals and we all have the capacity to act in our own best interests (Taylor,1985) is fundamental to an understanding of personal agency. Fanon (1963) states, "The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation" (p.230). In my search for an understanding of my place, I have come truly to believe that I am not a victim and that I am my own foundation.

The conviction that we all have personal agency has led to this research on resiliency. The previous research approach has been to study the negative manifestations of our history and existence. The literature has characteristically focussed on the loss that First Nations people have experienced. It is timely that we begin to focus on the strengths that have sustained us. This research is

intended to be part of a more affirming and constructive approach. It is intended to promote development toward health and wholeness in First Nations communities and to give voice to those who have hitherto been silenced and ignored.

For the purposes of this study, resiliency will be considered as the active process by which individuals adapt to change and adversity. Resilient individuals overcome great challenges and still have the capacity to "love and work well" (Higgens,1994). The central assumption of this study is that, "We all need to be understood through our highest level of functioning," (Higgens, 1994, p.70) which means exploring how individuals have overcome adversity.

The problems confronting First Nations students are considerable. The drop out rate of First Nations students has been a long-standing issue and student retention continues to be an immense concern. A record number of 251 students were required to discontinue in the 2000-2001 semester in the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (Registrar's Office, personal communication, August, 2002). These figures are disconcerting and although it is important to explore the factors for this dropout rate, the study takes a different approach. A study of resiliency in First Nations post-secondary students could contribute to addressing this issue by developing a better understanding of what enables those who persevere in spite of great adversity.

The Pathway

Cajete (1994) proposes seven orientations for exploring the possibilities of education and they will be adapted to the research methodology of this thesis. These orientations include asking, seeking, making, having, sharing, celebrating,

and being (Cajete, 1994, p.71). The question asked in this thesis is, "What are the factors and themes associated with resilience in First Nations post-secondary education students?"

To honour my commitment and belief in personal agency, I wish to focus my research on those who survive and thrive in spite of tremendous challenges. The participants are the graduates of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Indian Education Program who, by virtue of completing their university degree, have shown success and achievement in their lives.

The narrative research approach as described by Lieblich and her associates (1998) will be used as they have defined narrative research as any study that utilizes stories for analysis. Narrative research is particularly relevant to First Nations people, as our life experiences and our stories are the foundation of our knowledge. Ultimately, our stories can be the only truth and knowledge that we can claim as our own.

According to Cajete (1994), *seeking* entails "the search for higher levels of meaning, " (p.71). I believe that the challenges that are put before us are there for us to learn from and can be the basis of new insights and new understandings about ourselves. As a First Nations woman and an educator, I have my experiences to guide me and I begin with what I know, but also I have to listen to others and "explore the boundaries of [my] world and beyond" (Cajete, 1994, p.71) to comprehend the higher levels of meaning. To this end, I have been attentive and listened carefully to others for guidance, direction, and inspiration.

The first principle common to First Nations philosophies is that "All things are interrelated" (Four Worlds Development Project, 1982) and this thesis is an expression of the interconnectedness of all our experiences and relationships. The *making* is the writing and organizing of the thesis. It is the development of new knowledge arising from new relationships.

This thesis is organized into six chapters. This introductory chapter described the historical context of this study and discussed the impact of residential schools and early governmental policy. Chapter 2 is entitled "Review of Resilience Literature." Existing research will be discussed, outlining the various definitions of resilience, the components of resilience models, issues in measuring resilience, and critiques of resilience research. Chapter 3 is entitled "The Vision: Methodological Pathway" wherein the methodological approach of this study will be provided. In chapter 4 the stories of the resilient will be presented. Chapter 5 is entitled "Factors and Themes of Resilience." The themes and factors associated with resilience will be analyzed. The internal and external landscapes of those who are resilient will be discussed. Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter, and the implications of the study will be presented. This study is namely a celebration of our successes as First Nations people. It is intended to present our perspectives and reclaim our place of honour and respect.

Cajete (1994) refers to *having* as "a higher level of self-acceptance and maturity" (p.72). What I create is intended to empower the lives of those who participate in this research and to validate their experiences. This research is intended to contribute to a promotion of wellness in our communities and to a

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renewed vision of indigenous education. Adversity can be looked upon as a

positive and "A person who experiences pain and loss may develop a deeper

understanding and empathy for others with similar problems" (Glantz & Johnson,

1999, p.25). The main premise of this study is that those who have found their

face, or identity, and their foundation have demonstrated resilience and therefore

have the potential to contribute to a greater knowledge of resilience and to

become the healers and the leaders of our communities.

Sharing involves teaching others what I have learned. Sharing our stories is

a way of validating our strengths and resilience. This work is intended, above all,

to be a celebration of our lives. Celebrating our lives is a way of healing and

restoring ourselves. It helps us to maintain vision and hope. Being is the final

phase of the research where those who have suffered trauma and survived

adversity can become whole and integrated beings. Ultimately, this is the purpose

of education, that we become whole persons.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Resilience Literature

The focus of this chapter is to review the various definitions of resilience and discuss the various issues and considerations in researching this phenomenon. The pathway to greater knowledge begins with an exploration of what is known about resilience within the landscape of major writers and thinkers in resilience research. The characteristics of resilient individuals; the components of resilience models; measurement of resilience; and critiques of resilience research will be presented.

Definition of Resilience

Resilience is a psychological concept that has been applied to the study of hardiness and adaptation in individuals, families and communities (Health Canada, 1999). The study of resilience has evolved from the attempt to understand why some individuals are able to overcome severe physical and psychological trauma (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999). The presumption was that these individuals possessed some special trait or some higher capability than normal people, and this has been inferred about First Nations groups (Battiste, 1998; Haig-Brown, 1988). Given the great stresses that First Nations people have had to surmount, they have shown great resilience.

Norman Garmezy is considered the founder of the study of resilience (Rolf, 1999). His work with schizophrenia led him to study the adaptive characteristics of children. He uses the term "competence" for describing a variety of adaptive behaviours. Garmezy defines resilience as "the manifest competence despite

exposure to significant stressors" (Rolf, 1999, p.7). He asserts that resilience is an outcome of biological, psychological, and social elements functioning as protective factors. Analogous to this conceptualization, resilience is defined as "the positive behavioral patterns and functional competence individuals and families demonstrate under stressful or adverse circumstances" (McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, and Fromer, 1998, p.xiii). Resilient individuals are capable and can manage their behaviours effectively when confronted with adversity.

Bartelt (1994) defines resilience as "a psychological trait that is seen as a component of the self that enables success in the face of adversity, and may either be consumed or, paradoxically, reinforced by adversity" (pp. 98-99). It is deduced as a mental capacity within individuals that allows them to recover from stressful life events. Similarly, the working definition used by Health Canada (1995) is that:

> resiliency is the capacity of individuals and systems (families, groups, and communities) to cope successfully in the face of significant adversity or risk. This capability develops and changes over time, is enhanced by protective factors within the individual/system and the environment, and contributes to the maintenance or enhancement of health (p.1).

From this perspective resilience is inferred as an internal and external process that develops over time. These definitions bring up the concepts of risk and protective factors and are the main tenets in resilience.

The definition proposed by Higgens (1994) has been the most relevant to this study. The term survivor has been used most frequently in describing those

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who were able to overcome adversity and she addresses the difference between surviving and being resilient. Higgens (1994) states that:

> Resilience implies that potential subjects are able to negotiate significant challenges to development yet consistently "snap back" in order to complete the important developmental tasks that confront them as they grow. Unlike the term *survivor*, resilience emphasizes that people do more than merely get through difficult emotional experiences, hanging on to inner equilibrium by a thread...resilience best captures the active process of self-righting and growth that characterizes some people so essentially. (p.1)

From her work with abused individuals Higgens (1994) has also concluded that resilience is a constituent of the normal developmental process and that we all have this ingrained ability.

There are two main constructs in how resilience has been defined. Resilience can be perceived as outcome or the cause of outcome (Kaplan, 1999). In the first interpretation, an individual develops resilience from overcoming stressful life situations. In the second sense, resilience can be seen as a characteristic or personality trait within the individual that allows them to overcome adversity and risk. The prevalent view is that resilience is a process and that it is "fostered by stress rather than representing evidence of having overcome stress" (Kaplan, 1999, p.25). The underlying principle, however, is that stressors or challenges have to be present for resilience to be inferred.

Resiliency is studied in different contexts. For example, academic, social, and emotional resilience constitute distinct areas of coping that have been

investigated. Luthar (1993) has established that it is possible for a person to show academic resilience but may not show resilience in peer and family relationships. This type of research is instructive and conveys the complex and diverse perspectives from which resilience has been researched.

Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs has implications for the study of resilience. The hierarchy of needs starts with basic physiological needs like shelter, food, and water, and builds to include psychological needs like love and belonging. At the apex of the pyramid is our need for self-actualization and self-realization (Krau, 1989). Self-actualization can be perceived as our "highest level of functioning" and this is a key component of resilience. This understanding of human development was also embodied in traditional Aboriginal education. The parallel between the concept of self-actualization, and the First Nations cultural belief of becoming whole and coming to know ones' place (Cajete, 1994) as a maxim of growth and development, is an important aspect of this study.

The main premise of resilience theory is that individuals experience growth and change and become stronger individuals from overcoming adversity and stressful life situations. In this study, resilience is defined, basically, as the active process by which individuals adapt to stressful change and adversity. Personal resilience, the individual's ability to cope successfully in spite of adversity, is how the concept of resilience is used in this research.

Characteristics of Resilient Individuals

A review of the literature on the attributes and characteristics of resilient individuals offers valuable insights into the concept of resilience. In normal, healthy

individuals, there are certain biological and psychological traits that facilitate adaptation. Radke-Yarrow and Sherman (1990) identify three levels of coping: biological, societal and psychological. They have conceived health and physical survival as akin to coping at a biological level. Contributing to society and being happy about one's place are related to societal and psychological coping, respectively. It is also assumed that "Resilience is enhanced by self-efficacy beliefs, a positive self-concept, and self-esteem" (Rauh, 1989, p.165). It is contended that those people with high self-esteem "are less disturbed by threats to self-worth" (Kaplan, 1999, p.55).

Self-efficacy is closely linked with the understanding of human agency and resilience. Self-efficacy refers "to belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p.2). Further to this analysis, McGinty (1999) states, "the self is an active agent in the construction of one's success (or failure)" (p. 5). The successes that we negotiate for ourselves engender greater belief and confidence in our own abilities. By believing in ourselves we can become self-determining individuals.

Resilient individuals are active participants and they are able to negotiate challenges through self-factors or, what Wolin and Wolin (1993) have identified as, resiliencies. Insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humour, and morality have been named as essential strengths that help individuals overcome adversity (Wolin &Wolin, p. 20). In the framework developed by Wolin and Wolin,

these resiliencies are positioned on a mandala and they are depicted as forming "a protective ring around the self." (p. 20).

In her work, Higgens (1994) analyzes the "resilient motifs" and "adaptive capacities" of resilient people. She proposes that the resilient acquire and develop hope early in their lives. She refers to this as the "internal locus of hope." Resilient individuals also have "faith in surmounting and faith in human relationships" (Higgens, p.171) and they have a vision. The resilient develop compassion and are able to forgive those who have mistreated them. Their healing is mediated through a "committed social activism" (Higgens, p.227). Further, they are able to love well and work well and they use their experiences to help others.

Kobasa (1979) maintains that resilient individuals have three levels of characteristics: commitment, control and challenge. The essence of these three characteristics is that resilient individuals are committed to their own success and they understand that they have control over their own lives. They accept responsibility for their own actions, and they also subscribe to the belief that change is positive. Schaefer and Moos (1992) maintain, "The process of confronting these experiences can promote a cognitive differentiation, self-confidence, and a more mature approach to life" (p.150).

An understanding of cultural dynamics is important in studying coping responses to stress. From their study of native and immigrant families, McCubbin and his associates (1998) suggest that resilience is correlated to the worldview of individuals and families. Belief systems and worldview are elements that enable individuals to understand and manage their world in a meaningful way. The

enculturation hypothesis conveys additional insights into resilience and cultural identity. Zimmerman and his colleagues, (1998), maintain that those Native American youth who have a strong sense of cultural identity "have improved psychological well being" (p.203). An important component of the analysis would be to determine the significance of cultural identity to well-being and health. These assumptions of human behaviour and development serve to clarify the conceptual frameworks of resilience research and impart background information into the different models of research paradigms that have been developed. Following is an examination of the groundwork that has been done in the development of resilience models.

Models of Resilience

The pathology model, with its focus on disorders and deviance, has been the most predominant in resilience paradigms (Benard, 1999). Health professionals began with this medical model or "psychology-based disease model" (Duguid, 1993) as a conceptual base in developing models of resilience. With this approach the emphasis has been on risk and deviance.

The resiliency model proposed by Richardson and his associates (1990) includes: "biopsychospiritual homeostasis, life events, biopsychospiritual protective factors, interaction, disruption, disorganization, reintegration" as key elements (p.35) (See Appendix A). Homeostasis is explained as the normal state or the desirable condition of humans (Richardson, et al., 1990). Biological, psychological, and spiritual homeostasis are elaborate terms that refer to the manner in which individuals use their worldview, belief systems, and values, to make choices in

their lives. After experiencing disruption and disorganization, resilient individuals return to a state of homeostasis. This model is also identified as "The Resiliency Process Model" in the work of Kumpfer (1999).

Kumpfer (1999) has developed a Resiliency Framework that uses six major variables (See Appendix B). They include stressors or challenges, the external environmental context, person-environment interactional processes, internal self-characteristics, resilience processes, and positive outcomes or successful life adaptation (Kumpfer, 1999, p.183-184). Kumpfer conceptualizes these variables as predictors of resilience in individuals. These constructs are valuable in understanding the complexity and variance in resiliency research designs.

Kumpfer's (1999) model supports the prevalent view that resilience is an interactive process activated by "genetic, biological, psychological, and sociological factors in the context of environmental support" (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993, p. 518). It is assumed that the way we organize our lives arises out of our early experiences. Competence at one time does not foretell competence at a later period of life, but it does make the individual "broadly adapted to the environment and prepared for competence in the next period" (Egeland, et al., p.518). The extent of resources which can activate personal resources include biochemical factors, psychological and physiological factors (Murphy, 1987). Any number of variables can influence resilience but it is mostly obscured in biological and psychological processes.

Generally, the components of models of resilience include risk factors, protective factors, and outcomes (Kaplan, 1999). Some models utilize "feedback

loops" between the environmental system and the personal system. The environmental system includes the family and work environment, and the personal system includes the individual's "cognitive ability, health status, motivation and self-efficacy" (Schaefer & Moos, 1992, p.151). The pathways or transactions between these elements illustrate the resilience process.

The challenge model is distinctive and has been adapted to leadership paradigms. In the challenge model it is contended, "specific stressors will have a positive effect" (Kaplan, 1999, p.70). It is proposed that experiencing hardship and challenges is the foremost way of learning leadership and developing problem-solving skills (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Providing that leaders have enough resources they can improve their situations. This approach exemplifies another way that the concept of resilience has been applied.

Main effect models and interaction models are other exemplary models in resilience research. Main effect models show " the independent contribution of risks or assets or bipolar attributes to the course of the outcome criterion variable" (Masten, 2001, p.229). This is a path model that shows how the assets, risks and bipolar predictors affect the outcome. The bipolar predictors can have both a negative and a positive effect on the assets and the risks (See Appendix C). In interaction models, moderating variables can be constant or they can act independently to effect the outcome (Masten, 2001).

According to the path model, personal resilience can be perceived as a pathway where risk factors can have a negative and a positive effect or a bipolar effect. It is, however, difficult to predict human processes in such a linear manner,

there may be regressions, like prolonged drug and alcohol abuse, which are not considered in this type of model. Experiences such as attending residential school have been presented as negative life experiences but can have bipolar effects in that hardiness and adaptive processes are developed in the process. To explain interaction models, the same example of attending residential schools can be used. The residential school experience can be seen as a mediating variable which can cause constant stress at the time that it is occurring or it can cause distress in a later period of life, acting independently.

These models are reflective of the different approaches that have been utilized to construct models of resilience and they demonstrate the progression from the earliest models to the most recent. They are complex models that are illustrative of the many ways that researchers have attempted to compute and quantify resilience processes.

The relational worldview is particularly applicable to resilience research among First Nations groups. This model describes the state of balance and harmony and "the constant change and interplay among various forces that account for resilience" (Cross, 1998, p.154) (See Appendix D). This is a descriptive model that appears to be more practical as it is holistic and embodies the mind, body, spirit, and context, representative of human developmental processes. It includes spiritual practices, teachings, symbols, stories, gifts, and intuition, elements that are relevant to First Nations philosophies.

Risk Factors

Risk factors are identified as traumatic events that have the potential to cause us harm or to become out of balance in our relationships (Health Canada, 1995). Risk factors are "probable negative outcomes (Rauh,1989). They vary in nature and they are only meaningful "relative to the enormity of the stresses under which the individual operates" (Kaplan,1999, p.27).The variability in conceptual frameworks makes it difficult to identify risk factors specifically. A risk factor can be an "individual characteristic, individual attribute, situational condition, or environmental context" (Kaplan, 1999, p.37). They include unfavourable life conditions such as poverty, racism, and family dysfunction. As well, certain personality traits like aggression can be labelled as risk factors (Kaplan, 1999).

The basic understanding of risk and resilience is that there is some disruption of "the physical, cognitive, self and/or social developmental process that disables the individual" (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999, p.114). Glantz and Sloboda (1999) maintain that the extent of harm is contingent on the nature of the disruption, the developmental level of the individual, and the supporting factors of the environment and the individual. To illustrate this further, Glantz and Sloboda (1999) state that individuals, who grow up in alcoholic homes and may be genetically at risk for alcoholism, may not have problems with alcohol abuse as they have seen the negative effects of alcoholism. They may have had positive role models and social support systems that helped them to overcome this vulnerability. This discussion demonstrates the many possible outcomes of risk factors and resilience processes.

In respect to this study, it has been acknowledged that colonialism, racism, and the residential school system, have had long-term negative effects on the physical, mental, emotional, and social developmental processes of First Nations post-secondary students. Often, individuals who have failed or dropped out of university have related that they found the adjustment to university life and the adjustment to university academics too difficult. Based on the literature review, on personal experience, and on observations of students, other risk factors include financial stress, relocation, domestic violence, and personal trauma. These risk factors reflect the structural inequalities and lived realities of First Nations people and are held to be the factors that increase the probability of failure.

At the SIFC Academic Council Retreat in August, 2000, there were continuing concerns expressed about student success. It was thought that "those students who dropped out or failed did not have the study skills or the time-management skills required for success, and that they tended to be more susceptible to social problems than other groups in society," (J. Van Eijk, personal communication, August, 2000). This information is significant to this study and verifies the array of risk factors that First Nations post-secondary students can encounter.

Protective Factors

The general understanding is that protective factors build up stress resistance and risk factors increase vulnerability (Werner, 1987). Kaplan (1999) has determined that protective factors are "variables that mitigate the effects of risk factors or strengthen ameliorative effects," (p.46). They can function by

reducing risk impact or by increasing supportive mechanisms. Rutter (1990) ascertains that creating opportunities for success is an intervention strategy that can influence protective processes. If the individual experiences success, then this will develop self-confidence and self-esteem. Controlling the interactions between the person and the environment facilitates adaptation. For instance, individuals coming from abusive backgrounds can be supported through enhanced family and social support systems and this would be a way of increasing personal coping processes.

Garmezy (1993) has ascertained that protective factors can be classified into three categories: "personal qualities such as activity level and cognitive skills; family support systems, and the presence of caring adults; and the availability of social support" (pp.391-392). Social support can be manifested through a caring agency, or a concerned teacher. Kumpfer and Hopkins (1993) maintain that self-factors that enhance resilience include: "optimism, empathy, insight, intellectual competence, self-esteem, direction or mission, and determination and perseverance," (Kaplan,1999, p. 48).

Beauvais and Oetting (1999) suggest that cultural identification is a resilience factor. Cultural resources are thought to have the potential of helping individuals deal with stressful life events. In First Nations culture, the healing ceremonies can be looked upon as a protective factor. People who retain their language and practice cultural traditions are presumed to have a strong identity and a good foundation.

Protective factors can be perceived as having a direct effect or a moderating effect. Protective factors have a moderating effect, if resilience is perceived as characteristic of the individual (Kaplan, 1999, p.60). Distal and proximal variables are also correlates of risk and protective factors (Luthar & Cushing, 1999). Risk and protective factors can have an immediate or proximal effect. For example, it is a traumatic experience for any child to taken away from home at a young age. They may be able to cope with it over time but this same experience can have a distal effect and influence the individual later on in his/her development and be a cause of post-trauma. It also needs to be clarified that interrelationships exist between protective factors (Werner,1993).

Focus on resilience rather than risk has precipitated various intervention strategies. One of the programs specific to First Nations people is the Aboriginal Head Start Program. It is a program that was first implemented to assist First Nations children in inner city schools but it has also become reserve-based. This type of approach is necessary as "fostering resilience is a community-building process" (Benard, 1999, p.271) especially for First Nations communities. With its focus on language and cultural programming it aims to develop positive self-concept and self- esteem, and these characteristics are essential components of resilience (Rauh, 1989).

Outcome Variables

Outcomes are "normative judgements regarding appropriate behavioral responses" (Kaplan,1999, p.30). In the "normal positive" view, as delineated by Glantz and Sloboda (1999), positive outcomes are expected unless there are

negative influences. Negative outcomes and positive outcomes are attributed to the person or to the environment, or the developmental level of the individual (Kaplan, 1999). When a positive outcome has resulted, in spite of its being unlikely; the assumption is that the individual has shown resilience traits.

Positive outcomes are wholly subjective assumptions of what constitutes success and adaptation and these assumptions are relative to cultures and times. For example, who decides the criteria for success and adaptation is a significant issue in cross-cultural studies (Masten, 2001). The outcomes that are used in this study reflect First Nations perspectives of competence and adaptation. In First Nations worldview, balance in the four domains, the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms, is viewed as an indicator of success.

The outcomes specific to this study will take into account characterizations of successful students. Successful students are "those who graduate and have the qualifications to compete successfully in the labour market," (J. Van Eijk, personal communication, August, 2000). Further, they have been able to meet their own intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs. In reference to Cajete's (1994) interpretation, the successful individual is one who has found his/her place or their purpose in life. These conceptions contain the western and the Aboriginal worldviews of success.

Measurement of Resilience

The measurement of resilience is typically "based on statistical interactions between risk and a particular protective/vulnerability factor with competence as outcomes" (Luthar & Cushing, 1999, p. 153). The two main approaches in

resilience research described by Masten (2001) are classified as variable-focussed and person-focussed. Masten (2001)states that variable-focussed approaches "use multivariate statistics to test for linkages among measures of the degree of risk or adversity" and person-focussed approaches "compare people who have different profiles within or across time on sets of criteria to ascertain what differentiates [them from other groups]" (p.229).

Comparing low risk groups and high-risk groups, or comparing them to control groups, is a common method of assessment. Using an index of risk variables and estimating their global impact is the method referred to as a variable-focussed approach. Problems occur, however, from using subjective notions to evaluate risk and adaptation, as we are all situated in different social and political contexts.

Multiple-item questionnaires, single stressors, or life events measures are common types of instruments in resilience research (Luthar & Cushing, 1999). Checklists or interviews are utilized to measure the extent of adversity that is experienced. Life event measures would appear to be the most pragmatic and reliable methods of assessment, but the main criticism aimed at this type of measurement is that there are "uncontrollable items" (Luthar & Cushing). The example given by Luthar and Cushing is in reference to student failure. When students fail classes, it would seem that this is something that they do have control over, but there could be other reasons for their failure. Perhaps they are not adjusting well to the university setting or perhaps they are experiencing some other negative life circumstance and this would have to be considered to be a

factor in their success. These are the types of ambiguities that need to be clarified in assessing resilience.

Some life events cannot be maintained at a controlled level and they may defy quantifiable measurement, therefore, other types of assessments need to be implemented. The second concern about the use of life event measures is related to "the heterogeneity of items of potential impact" (Luthar & Cushing, 1999, p.132). Personal trauma, like the death of a parent, would merit more severity than other life events, for example. Related to these issues is the presence of "acute and chronic" stressors, which also need to be examined. A stressor that could be recognized as both acute and chronic would be being subjected to a prolonged period of sexual abuse.

There is a myriad of approaches for measuring resilience and they are mainly quantitative. There is no clear consensus about what is the best approach. Methods are contingent on the way resilience is conceptualized. Researchers have recommended the use of qualitative approaches and this type of approach is warranted in order to balance quantitative approaches.

This study entails a qualitative analysis and the risk and protective factors, and the outcome variables that are employed, have been determined as being the most relevant to the participants' academic, social, and personal resiliency. The research design follows Kumpfer's (1999) Resiliency Framework as a method of exploring moderating processes and factors of resilience. This approach aims to take into account the complexity of developmental processes and to examine the interaction of risk and protective factors (Sameroff, & Seiffer,1990). It is a design

that endeavours to take into account "distal and proximal variables" (Kaplan, 1999). Proximal variables are events that have an immediate effect and distal variables affect the individual at a later period in life. An analysis of the "mediating, moderating, and outcome variables" (Kaplan, 1999) functioning in the participants' adaptive processes is also intended. Mediating variables are protective factors that can mediate change and, moderating variables can be perceived as those protective factors that lessen or ameliorate the risk factors. In this framework as well, outcome variables are described as "resilient reintegration, adaptation or maladaptive reintegration, " (Kaplan, 1999).

Critiques of Resilience

Resilience has been characterized as a concept that is not functional and that does not have validity (Kaplan, 1999). Glantz and Sloboda (1999) question "whether resilience is a quality (or a trait) at all and whether it is a useful explanatory concept" (p.109). Kaplan (1999) claims that we need to critically examine what is being explained. Essentially, what we are looking at are the "processes of human development in different times and places" (Rigsby,1994, p.91), and, realistically, they cannot be consigned under a singular concept.

Resilience has come to be understood as an ordinary process, what Masten (2001) refers to as "ordinary magic." Masten (2001) argues that resilience manifests itself as a normal part of development. Johnson (1999) also states that resilience is essentially a "personal negotiation through life" (p.226). From Kumpfer's (1999) model we can infer that resilience is a normal progression in

human development. What appears to complicate the research process is that "multiple systems are at work" (Masten, 2001).

We have a partial understanding of desirable outcomes. As has been stated, a person may be resilient in one area of his/her life but not in another. Individuals may be resilient at an early period of their life but may not adjust well in their later years, or it can happen the other way around. This can be attributed to the conception that resilience is an evolving process and cannot be predicted with any certainty. This has implications for the "time points of measurement" (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999, p.117).

Researchers have been exhaustive in their efforts to understand and explain resilience. Many researchers like Tartar and Vanyukov (1999) are strongly questioning the concept of resilience. Tartar and Vanyukov (1999) argue that, "genetically, everyone is unique and there is phenotype variation on the majority of traits that results from both genotypic and environmental differences" (p.90). There are too many genetic differences to form a clear hypothesis of resilience, making it impossible to predict resilience. They contend that an individual is not resilient but is "positioned on a liability axis" (Tartar & Vanyukov, 1999, p.92). In their view, the use of the concept of resilience is problematic. They claim that when individuals who have overcome adversity are revered as heroes, it merely endorses the belief that through hard work and determination everyone can succeed in a democratic society.

There are different situations that cannot be explained within the resilience framework. It is difficult to explain why some people with socio-economic

advantages fall prey to drug and alcohol abuse and other destructive lifestyles, for instance. There are an "infinite number of potential developmental pathways" (Tarter & Vanyukov, 1999, p.95) that can result. The conclusion by many is that the notion of resilience is not constructive and that it is impractical. Another limitation in resilience research is that cultural differences are overlooked in the manner that resilience is defined. The criteria for determining resilience are also not adequately addressed.

It would be beneficial at this point to examine strategies for research and theoretical development on resilience. Glantz and Sloboda (1999) perceive that the term "adaptation" is more appropriate than "resilience" and that there should be more focus on the factors of resilience. They also propose the adoption of more developmentally oriented models. One example of a developmentally structured model would be to analyze the educational experiences of graduates from secondary or post-secondary institutions, prior to and after they have completed their program of study.

Glantz and Sloboda (1999) state that "Behavior, function and experience are continuously evolving states of being and models which recognize this will be considerably more valid and useful" (p.121). Current approaches that conceive resilience factors as progressing in an orderly and linear fashion or only as bipolar occurrences are restrictive. To this purpose the relational worldview model becomes relevant. The holistic worldview of indigenous peoples should be considered an ancillary component of resilience research practice, as life processes are regarded as recurring and evolving from this perspective.

Future research needs to address the underlying processes of resilience. Research paradigms need to be "process-oriented" (Masten, 2001). The use of different methodologies may stimulate new and significant knowledge. Indigenous approaches and gender differences need to be incorporated so that more "stories, voice, and subjective experiences and personal meanings are captured" (Benard, 1999, p.275).

Benard (1999) maintains that we need to view youth and families and cultures as assets rather than as problems. More research into the intervention measures that have been implemented to date is advocated as well. Longitudinal studies need to be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of these programs. Other possibilities include interdisciplinary and cross-discipline research (Benard, 1999).

Concluding Remarks

We are indoctrinated to believe that everyone in a democratic society is capable of overcoming challenges and obstacles. The view that competence and motivation will work the magic is oversimplifying the issue. The conception that through hard work and determination we can succeed is embedded in school curricula and to some degree we all subscribe to these types of values and beliefs. This philosophy, however, disregards structural inequality. We are all positioned differently and implicated differently from oppression and domination. This social and political reality needs to be more centrally positioned as the defining element of future resilience research.

CHAPTER 3

The Vision: Methodological Pathway

The methodology of this study was organized within an indigenous epistemological framework described by Cajete (1994). From this perspective research is interpreted as a visioning process. Research is perceived as the act of constructing a vision about new possibilities and seeking out the "pathways" (Cajete). The term pathway is a metaphor that conveys how:

> … in every learning process, we metaphorically travel an internal and many times external landscape. In travelling a pathway, we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, recognize and interpret signs, seek answers, and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. We create ourselves anew. *Path* denotes a structure: *Way* implies a process. (Cajete, p.55)

The internal landscape is the subjective experiences, the self-knowledge, and the inner world of the participants. The internal and external landscape constitutes the life events and the challenges that the subjects have traveled. The external landscape also includes the parameters of educational research within which we are required to work, and the social, political and historical contexts within which we are situated.

Cajete (1994) uses the metaphor of hunting to "reflect a basic way that humans process and structure their learning" (p. 68). Research can be viewed within the framework of "tracking, hunting, questing, pilgrimage, visioning, orienting and pathway" (Cajete, p.68). The research paradigm of this study has followed the

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path which "begins with appropriate orientation, acknowledging relationships, setting intentions, seeking, creating, understanding, sharing, and then celebrating one's vision with reference to a place of centering" (Cajete, 1994, p.69).

Orientation

Appropriate orientation begins with self-reflexivity, including the self in research. Weber-Pillwax (1999) states, "Each research project will be a research project layered over a research experience layered over a personal experience over a research project" (p.39). Research is a process of uncovering the layers of meaning, incorporating the personal and the political. Finding a place to speak from requires the researcher to be cognizant of the relationships between "the private, the public, the personal, and the political" (Hallam & Marshall, 1993, p.71). The process of developing a methodology that is viable for indigenous research entails having a sense of presence and a sense of place (Cajete, 2000). It involves moving through different social and psychological landscapes.

My place as a First Nations person, a woman and as a researcher is complex and emanates from "the untidiness of the social world" (Billig, 1988). My place has been relegated to the margins, and my knowledge has been devalued and disregarded; therefore, this research holds promise and possibility from a personal and political perspective. Smith (1999) states that, in indigenous research, insider and outsider positioning needs to be clear. I have insider knowledge based on my experiences as a woman, as a First Nations person, and as an educator. I know what the challenges are to succeed and I can relate to the

subjects of this study. As a researcher my position is more tenuous. I am venturing on a path less traveled.

Our knowledge of the world is "historically and culturally relative" (Burr, 1995, p.4). The implication from social constructionist theory is that there is no ultimate truth and that our knowledge is relevant to particular cultures and times. Hallam and Marshall (1993) maintain that we accumulate a number of culturally constructed identities The implication for self-reflexivity is that we have to acknowledge the many versions of truth and "the multiple, shifting identities" (Burr) within ourselves. Self-reflexivity also requires us to be adherent to the "many competing voices" (Ellis, 1997) that are present in us and in the communities we research.

The process of defining the research question, interpreting the data, and constructing the knowledge, is based on our own interpretation of life and human nature. Our identities and our history shape our research and all of our work is autobiographical to some degree. For the indigenous researcher, colonialism and imperialism have shaped this experience. Smith (1999) states that this "burden of history, makes the positioning of an indigenous researcher highly problematic" (p. 107). Part of the challenge is to claim a position because our voices have been silenced in traditional research. Hallam and Marshall (1993) state that the most salient issue in self-reflexivity is related to the ability of the individual to "find a coherent voice." Finding a coherent voice requires us to be grounded in self-knowledge and self-identity, and being true to ourselves.

Self-reflexive practice makes us accountable. Ensuring that our research makes a difference in the lives of those we research is part of the self-reflexive approach. It should empower the researcher and the people who are being researched. This approach is authentic as it opens up possibilities for others to tell about their lives and makes personal and social changes. Marcus (1994) asserts that with positioning "all work is incomplete and requires response (and thus engagement) from others positioned differently" (p. 172). The underlying principle is to be mindful of the moral and ethical responsibility in carrying out research.

Indigenous research

The process begins with determining how to connect indigenous research methodology, narrative inquiry, and qualitative research to this study. Engaging in indigenous research calls for protocols that are different from traditional research methods. Narrative research is, in many aspects, the most appropriate to indigenous epistemology. Qualitative research is also "rife with ambiguities" (Patton, 1990) but it seemed relevant to this inquiry.

One of the dilemmas of doing indigenous research is that "the notion of a distinct research methodology for and by indigenous people is still at the beginning stages of scholarly discourse" (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 33). We are still being guided by western principles and indigenous research needs to exist on its own, as a valid, recognized entity. We have a propensity to construct indigenous research as resistance, an "oppositional or reverse" discourse (Parry,1994), and this is in itself, limiting. Our knowledge has been relegated to the periphery and indigenous research is about making that paradigmatic shift to more inclusive and

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respectful research. It cannot merely emanate from "a point of resistance" as Weber-Pillwax describes it.

Knowledge has been produced from the western standpoint indicating that there are "two sets of simultaneous processes and practices" (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 39) that indigenous researchers need to be aware of. Cajete (2000) refers to this process as "split-headedness" and indigenous research is essentially about integrating two worldviews and philosophies. This process is described as finding "the ethical space" between the two "solitudes or cultures of understanding" (W. Ermine, personal communication, 2001). The implication for this study was that the methodology had to be credible and acceptable within both frameworks.

The approach used in this study is that indigenous research engages in exploring subjective knowledge gained from life experiences and from our relationships with our communities and our relations. The indigenous people's model is "an alternate knowledge system, which is decolonizing, human, intuitive, and based on experiences and the community," (W. Ermine, personal communication, 2001). To this end, the life stories and experiences of community members, in this case, graduates of the SIFC Indian Education program, are utilized.

Narrative research

Narrative research is perceived "more as art than research as it is based predominantly on talent, intuition or clinical experience. It defies clear order and systematization" (Lieblich, et al., 1998, p.1). The use of narratives is particularly relevant to First Nations philosophies and is significant to the development of

decolonizing methodologies. In First Nations worldview we access knowledge through the stories we hear and tell. Through stories we carry on the traditional and cultural knowledge. Stories reflect our philosophies, and relying on traditional forms of pedagogy seemed the most appropriate for this research.

Research is a process where the indigenous researcher is engaged in validating the experiences and knowledge of indigenous peoples and connecting the research enterprise to indigenous positions (Smith, 1999). The narrative approach is a way to validate indigenous knowledge and bring authenticity to the research. Cajete (1994) maintains that "Story...forms the basic foundation of all human learning and teaching," and "Through story we explain and come to understand ourselves" (p. 68).

There are certain protocols that need to be adhered to and to a great extent the success of this methodology is dependent on the researcher. We have to be aware that "Personal narratives are never just about me; rather they are about a me constituted by gender, class, race, ethnicity, historical moments, and particular locales" (Zawaki, 1998, p.1).

Qualitative research

Traditional research is related to notions of "objectivity and neutrality" and places the researcher as an outsider (Smith, 1999). Conversely, in qualitative research, methods are undefined, partial, and ambiguous (Marcus, 1994). It can be perceived that subjective interpretations position the researcher as an insider, in a manner that is more accommodating to First Nations perspectives.

The themes of qualitative inquiry comprise naturalistic inquiry, inductive analysis, and a holistic perspective (Patton, 1990). In naturalistic inquiry the research setting has to be amenable to openness. An inductive analysis requires the researcher to be receptive to the process that unfolds and then forming a hypothesis. In qualitative research, data also have to be examined from a holistic perspective with the understanding that there is "no fixed or final authoritative meaning" (Marcus, 1994, p.566).

In qualitative research there is an increased attention to the researcher's position. The researcher, in essence, becomes an interpreter, a participant, and a psycho-analyst (Werner, 1978). The aim is to assume a "non-judgmental position and seek meaningful, credible, valid, reliable, accurate, and confirmable findings" (Patton, 1990, p. 55). Nevertheless, the socialization, cultural background, and values of the researcher influence what is observed. Furthermore, the researcher needs to be attentive to intellectual, and psychological meanings (Patton, p.211). The researcher is working with people and this requires more skill and awareness.

Acknowledging Relationships

The concept of "wahkotowin" (Ermine, 2001) is fundamental to the understanding of First Nations culture and traditional beliefs. Wahkotowin means kinship or the state of being related. In our human experiences and human endeavors, we are all connected and related in some way. The notion of kinship and community shapes the research process. The relationships that are created with the participants emanate from a shared history and a common understanding

of what the issues and the challenges are in working towards our goals. It is this commonality that shapes and informs this research project.

Setting Intentions

The SIFC Indian Education program provides educational programming to students across Canada. This program began in 1988 in Regina, Saskatchewan. Some of the programming is done off-campus. In setting the intentions of this study, I hoped to get a good cross section of students, an equal number of male and female participants, who were from various age groups and locales.

Seeking

The research question arises out of my own quest to know and understand why some individuals are able to survive and thrive against great adversity. The participants, perhaps in their own need to validate themselves, shared their stories willingly, understanding that their experiences could help others to succeed. In this spirit the data were gathered.

Quality of life and balance in the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional domains, as reflected in the relational worldview model, were used as measures of resilience for the selection of participants (See Appendix D). They had demonstrated effective coping and success by virtue of completing the program and an additional criterion was that they had to be employed for at least two years after completing their degree.

After the Ethics Approval was given (See Appendix E), the interview guide (See Appendix F) was developed. Questions were designed to elicit narratives and the interview guide outlined the risk factors, protective factors, and outcome

variables. A Call for Participants was sent out initially (See Appendix G). Some students showed interest, but they did not meet the criteria, since they were still my students. Participants were to self-identify within the parameters of stressful life changes that were named. Stressful life changes pertinent to First Nations post-secondary students include but are not limited to: adjustment to university life, adjustment to university academics, moving to a new city, financial stress, poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, limited family support, domestic violence, and personal trauma.

Through discussion about the nature of my research with colleagues, the names of certain individuals came up. I also had a list of graduates on hand. I was aware that the interviews could possibly create some distress for the subjects and I had to be careful about whom I would choose to interview. For this reason, I approached the individuals that I had had an opportunity to work with in some capacity. I phoned them or sent them a letter, asking if they would be interested in taking part. I was surprised at the response, as the individuals that I did contact were quite willing to participate.

Description of Participants

Three female and three male graduates participated in this study. Three are of Cree ancestry and three are of Sioux descent. The average age of the participants is 42 years. They all entered university as mature students.

Following is a brief description of demographic data on the participants:

Description of Participants					
Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Level Teaching	First Nation	Year Graduated
Gloria	50	Female	University	Sioux	1987
Wilma	39	Female	University	Cree	1992
Mary .	44	Female	Secondary	Sioux	1992
Gregory	33	Male	Secondary	Cree	1998
Joseph	38	Male	Elementary	Cree	1997
David	47	Male	Elementary	Sioux	1999

Data Collection

Research is essentially about developing relationships and any research undertaking needs to incorporate the basic human values of "love, honour, trust and respect" (G. Crowe-Buffalo, personal communication, 2000) into the methodology. These values provide the basis for credible, authentic, respectful research. These spiritual teachings are what I attempted to rely on, to help me to connect with the participants.

In seeking knowledge, my intention was to follow First Nations protocol by offering cloth and tobacco to the participants and by having a smudging ceremony. This approach would preclude any exploitation of the knowledge that would be shared. The smudging and the tobacco offering did not seem necessary after the first three interviews and, in fact, three participants preferred not to partake of the smudging. I respected this and I did not pursue it. That procedure was in place to

deal with any discomforts that the interviews may have brought on. It was more important to feel comfortable with each other and I did not want to alienate or offend anyone.

Participants were asked to use a stage outline in talking about their school experiences. The stage outline represents the chapters of their lives and this is similar to the approach described by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilbar, (1998). They were to begin with the years prior to going to school, their elementary school years, their secondary education, their years as a university student, and their life as it was now. They were to relate significant events and significant people in their lives. They were to talk in general terms about personal challenges and the ways that they coped. They were also given the interview guide to help them construct their stories. The purpose was to get to know the participants better and to follow the pathway of competence as that presented by Kumpfer (1999).

I was aware that I needed to secure the confidence of the participants in me as a researcher and I had to have some credibility to begin with. I realized the need to develop a working relationship with each of the participants and this had to be done quickly in order to meet the timeline of my research. I had to gain the trust and respect of the participants so that they would share openly. I had to be an active listener and be perceptive to not only what they were saying, but to their behaviours and other styles of communication.

The interviews were taped. They varied from 1½ hours to 3 hours in duration. While the participants were telling their story, I made a point of not interrupting the flow of their story with queries. In between the tape changes I did

share some of my own thoughts and experiences, as a way of reassuring them that they could trust me. I know that reliving old memories can be difficult sometimes. The interview guide may have served to restrict the interactions to certain criteria and at another time I would spend more time simply talking with the participants and getting to know them better before proceeding with any part of the research.

The first three interviews were done at my workplace. For each interview I explained what the research was about and what the procedure was, and then I asked them if they were willing to sign the consent form (See Appendix H). I found that the setting was somewhat inhibiting but it afforded privacy and confidentiality. In retrospect, a more informal type of atmosphere would be more conducive to building trust and sharing, which is what was needed for this type of research. After each of the interviews were completed I spent some time reflecting on the process. I wrote my observations and reflections in my personal journal.

The first interview was unsettling to me as the participant revealed some very personal information. I felt totally inadequate in helping her through this situation and fortunately, at her suggestion, we ended the session with a prayer. I was thankful that she did that.

I came to the realization that some of the memories were going to be quite painful and I thought about how I would deal with this for my second interview. Before starting the interview, I did begin with the smudging, telling the participant that I thought that this would be a way of dealing with past hurts. Again, I was perturbed by the amount of abuse and violence that these women had had to deal

with in their lives. My own experiences seemed inconsequential. The third interview was much like the first two, only this participant seemed much more detached from her experiences. She had lived in an abusive relationship for twenty -one years and she had come to terms with her past life. I felt that I had been naïve about the extent of violence against women. These women had come through their experiences with strength and they walked with dignity. I felt great admiration and respect for them.

The fourth interview was done at the participant's home. This was at his request. He stated that whatever he had to say could be said in the presence of his wife and child. This participant lived in another city and it was more convenient to do the interview at his home. I had only met the participant a few times prior to the interview, but I felt that we were able to converse quite easily. I explained the interview process and the interview proceeded much more easily. The importance of maintaining confidentiality was impressed on me and I became much more careful about discussing any aspect of my research.

The fifth interview was done at the workplace of the participant. It was private and again, I had traveled there at his request, as I did not want to inconvenience anyone. While the participant was telling his story I felt that this was not easy for him. He was hesitant about being taped and I reassured him that he would have a chance to read the transcripts before I used them, and that I would use only aggregate data. It might have been better to simply take notes but I felt bound to collect the data according to the manner I had outlined in the ethics approval form. I understood clearly that all of the participants had to overcome

some very difficult challenges and maybe some had not dealt with them enough. I felt that it would be especially difficult to reveal them to a virtual stranger. I did not press him for any information that he was not comfortable in talking about and I decided that I would use the data as it had been given. I would meet with him for another session and I would be able to ask him for clarification if necessary.

The sixth and final interview was done out of my office. At this point I felt much more confident about conducting the interviews. With this participant there had been a student-teacher relationship, but I did not know too much about his personal background. The interview proceeded quickly and again I felt that the information given was reasonable given the nature of our relationship. In general I felt that the interviews with the male participants were shorter and they did not seem to want to get too emotional about their stories and I respected that.

The interviews were transcribed and after rereading them and doing some initial analysis I went back to the participants to sign the data release form. When I debriefed with the participants I shared some of my thoughts. They agreed with what I had written thus far and I thanked them for their help. I reassured them that I would present their stories in the best way I could.

Creating and Understanding

Data Analysis

Immediately after each interview was completed I had the tapes transcribed by Competence Plus, a transcription service, and confidentiality is understood to be part of the contract. The stories ranged from 12 to 46 pages in length. The framework for analysis was the holistic-content and the categorical-content

analysis method described by Lieblich and her associates (1998). For the holistic-content analysis the life story and development of the individual is taken in its entirety. In order to bring the text from a "literal to an interpretive level," as Lieblich and her associates (1998) suggest, the categorical-content analysis method was employed. This method requires the researcher to process the data by "sorting the material into categories or various themes or perspectives" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilbar, 1998. p.112).

The steps for completing a categorical-content analysis include: a) selection of the subtext; b) definition of the content categories; c) sorting the material into categories; and d) drawing conclusions from the results " (Lieblich, et al., 1998, pp.112-114). In my analysis, the risk factors, protective factors, and outcome variables, as they related to Kumpfer's Resiliency Framework (1999) and the interview guide, were selected as the categories. Kumpfer's (1999) model was selected as the most suitable in existing resilience literature. It reflected comprehensively the behavioural competencies and adaptive capacities in the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms required to surmount obstacles and challenges. It clearly represented the stressors and challenges, the internal resiliency factors, and the resiliency processes.

I kept a separate file for each participant, and initially I cut up the stories and pasted them under the headings of risk factors, protective factors, and outcome variables. Then I simply highlighted and colour-coded them, and used a word processor to cut and paste. The risk factors were red, the protective factors were blue, and the outcome variables were yellow. To categorize the data, I made

extensive notes for each of the participants and from these notes I was able to draw some inferences and conclusions about their resilience processes. This step involved making "theoretical, or commonsense assumptions" (Linde, 1993) about the text.

The stage outline for their school years had been intended as a guide but it was not intended that they should focus on schooling experiences exclusively. From their stories, there were many other factors like family relationships, cultural factors, and educational practices which I had to consider. Personal resilience included academic and social resilience and this had to be taken into account. The participants exhibited characteristics similar to resilient individuals as discussed in resilience literature. I noted the connections, first for each participant, and then by comparing them for all of the participants. It became evident, for instance, that faith was an attribute displayed by all of the participants and it developed into one of the categories or themes of the study.

The predominant themes were the primary protective factors that were the most prevalent among the participants. Overlapping characteristics were subsumed into six main themes. Other themes and resiliency characteristics like social skills, communication skills, talents, and humour were evident, but were not possessed by all participants.

The quotes that were reflective of the social and political realities of First Nations life and the examples of how the participants exercised their "autonomy of will and spirit" (Hanson & Hampton, 2000) were included. Quotes that were

especially descriptive of resilience were extracted and used in the edited version, and in the subsequent presentation of the factors and themes of resilience.

In the editing of the stories I tried to retain the essence of their narratives, structuring them developmentally according to the stage outline of their schooling experiences. I included the significant events and significant people, those that were reflective of the participants' resilience processes. I paid close attention to ordering the events chronologically so that I could present their stories accurately. I made notes about dates and events in their stories that seemed to be especially reflective of turning points or life changing events. I edited the stories as closely as possible to the manner in which the participants had related them. In the first edit the stories were 50 pages. After a second edit the stories were 30 pages.

In the editing of the stories I was reminded of the importance of including "the savoury as well as the unsavoury "(O'Dea, 1994). The disclosures about sexual abuse and departmental conflict were included. In writing up the stories, I did not want to denigrate anyone and I felt responsible to interpret the participants' lives honestly and truthfully. It was important not to "misrepresent linguistically" as O'Dea (1994) describes it. In some parts, I felt it was important to include the actual words of the participants to present the full meaning of their stories.

It has taken time to create and to understand the full meaning of the stories. The process requires empathy and an intuitive response. It requires the use of "emotional and social intelligence" (Goleman, 2000). Emotional and social intelligence are concepts familiar to leadership models. Goleman (2000) theorizes that emotional and social intelligence is related to self-awareness, social

awareness and social skill. These are skills that are prerequisites for insightful and truthful representation. My general impression was that many of their experiences sounded familiar. The names and places in their stories might be different but we are all connected by the oppression faced by First Nations. I also need to include that, for some time, I felt some limitations about the validity of the data, in terms of relating it to First Nations way of knowing, and toward developing theoretical and conceptual knowledge of resilience.

Sharing and Celebrating

The most important component of the methodology was the sharing of the stories and recognizing the adaptive processes of the resilient. The stories constitute the core of the research and from these stories we can endeavour to understand resilience processes at work. The stories bring the work to "a place of centering," (Cajete, 1994) connecting it to the soul and the heart of all who have been engaged in this process.

Similar to the research process outlined by St. Denis (1989), the steps in completing the data collection and the data analysis were as follows:

Data Collection

> Ethics Approval (See Appendix E) was given.

> Interview Guide (See Appendix F) was developed.

> Call for Participants (See Appendix G) was circulated.

> Potential participants were contacted.

> Interview times were set up.

> Participants were interviewed.

➢ Observations and reflections were written in personal journal.

Data Analysis

➢ Interviews were transcribed.

➢ Using the Resiliency Framework (Kumpfer, 1999), the risk factors, protective factors, and outcome variables, were the categories that were highlighted and colour-coded.

➢ Risk factors (red) were assessed as the stressors present in the self, family, community, and school.

➢ Protective factors (blue) were the cognitive, emotional, spiritual, physical, behavioural competencies observed and noted in the interviews and transcripts.

➢ Outcome variables (yellow) were designated as resilient reintegration, adaptation, or maladaptive reintegration based on observations and interactions with the participants.

➢ Editing of stories

➢ Analysis of resilience factors and themes.

➢ Quotes for factors and themes of resilience were selected.

CHAPTER 4

Stories of the Resilient

The stories of the participants were first taken as a whole, using a holistic-content analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilbar, 1998) and in the following chapter the edited versions of their stories are presented.

Gloria's Story

Gloria is 50 years old and she graduated from the SIFC Indian Education Program in 1987. She is presently teaching at a post-secondary level. She holds a B.Ed. and an M.Ed degree and continues to pursue higher-level education.

Gloria comes from a family of eight children, six boys and two girls. She is the second daughter. Both of her parents died when she was a young child. She believes that her father accidentally killed her mother and that her father was beaten to death during a night of drinking. She was never clear about the circumstances of their deaths. The old people that she talked to did not want to say anything bad. She states that she has had crazy visions of what happened and it has left her wondering for years. She has memories of her mother baking pies. She knows that her father was an alcoholic and she also heard stories about his days as a boxer. She was told that he had boxed in Madison Square Garden.

Gloria lived with her grandparents from the age of four to thirteen. She loved her grandmother and learned a lot from her, but her ordeal during this period was that her step-grandfather was sexually abusing her. This caused great distress for her and she was happy when she was sent to the residential school. It was a safe place for her.

She attended residential school for grade one and two. She recalls not having anyone to talk to and that she never opened up to anyone. She went back to school on the reserve for a while but when her grandmother got sick she had to return to the residential school.

She wrestled with the effects of being abused and when her grandmother died she felt compelled to send the call for help. She started resisting her grandfather and one time she remembers being hit on the head with a hammer because she did resist. On one occasion she set the bed on fire and another time she ran away even though it was wintertime. She also attempted suicide.

She ended up in the hospital after her suicide attempt and this is when she experienced what she calls "an out of body experience." While she was in a coma she recalls seeing herself floating away from her body. She was floating to a river and a bridge and someone was waving. She heard someone crying and when she woke up the nurse was sitting on her bed. She recollects that it was a bright light in the room that was drawing her and when she asked the nurse about it, the nurse told her that it was daytime and the lights were not on. Gloria believes that this experience gave her courage and hope.

Gloria identifies the nurse as one of the individuals who helped her through this difficult time in her early life. The nurse talked to her and helped her to develop compassion for others. There was also a nun in residential school who was a good influence on her. The nun helped her to focus on her strengths, namely, her ability to draw and write.

Her high school years coincided with the integration era of Indian education. While attending a rural school she struggled with "trying to blend in, fit in." She comments that students mainly "hung out " with their linguistic groups. She states, "All the Saulteaux, Cree from Muscopetung, Pasqua all hung out together, and then the Dakota, Lakotas hung out together." She went on to attend high school in Regina and she had to board at a non-native home. This was also somewhat of a negative experience, as she and the other boarders were not made to feel at home.

In the city she encountered racism regularly. They would walk down the hallway and they would hear "the typical Indian holler." Another time somebody said, "Hey squaws, go back to the reserve." She went to report this incident to the office and no one paid any attention. She decided at that point that she could not continue at that school. Later on when she was doing her internship she had to deal with racist attacks. She recalls an incident when the students told her "Squaw teacher, go home." This time, however, she made sure that the students were brought to the principal's office. She states, "I told them that back home we shake hands when we meet people. We touch because we want to have a good relationship with them... I wanted to portray that lesson to make the community that I was working in, better."

She got pregnant while she was in high school. She did not have a support system and Indian Affairs authorities tried to get her to give up her child for adoption. She knew from her grandmother's teachings that she could not give up

her child. She ran away from her boarding place and got a job babysitting for her cousin. She kept in contact with her boyfriend and eventually they got married.

Life was good for a while but "the alcohol kicked in" and the physical abuse from her husband began. She remains committed to the marriage, stating that "As long as people know they are in the wrong and they want to change, then we both can change together." They have been married for thirty-one years.

When she was thirty years old she started university but found that she "couldn't hack it." Later on she began a teacher-training program that was being offered on her reserve. She completed her B.Ed. degree and then she went to work at a band school as a principal for a year. There was internal conflict within the school staff and on one occasion a parent confronted her with a gun. She remained calm by telling herself she should not allow the circumstance to overtake her and to remember that God had control over it. Her husband and an elder supported her through what she calls "the politics of the reserve." These experiences were not always that successful but they brought wisdom.

Gloria attributes her personal strength to her ability to communicate. She was taught to speak out if there was something on her heart. She has been able to resolve the issues in her marriage in this way but a particularly difficult time for Gloria was when her daughter was in the SIFC Indian Education program. There had been a confrontation between her daughter and the department head and Gloria was forced to make a decision to support her daughter.

Gloria relates what she describes as "trying experiences" in her childhood and adult life. She states that she has been "physically and emotionally scarred"

from the physical and sexual abuse that she has experienced. She works at overcoming the feeling of unworthiness brought on by the abuse, and "just keeps working at the issues that come," on a daily basis.

She believes that it is important "to give back to the people." In this spirit she was willing to share her story so that others may benefit. As part of her own healing journey she is writing her autobiography, one that she will give to her children.

Wilma's Story

Wilma is 39 years old and she graduated from the SIFC Indian Education Program in 1995. She is a Cree language instructor and she is teaching at a university level.

When Wilma was growing up there was a lot of alcohol abuse within her family. One of her aunts did not drink and she was the one who took care of them. Her brother also looked after them. He would go out hunting for small game for food. Altogether, there were about fifteen children, including her cousins, who grew up together within this alcoholic environment.

There was poverty and neglect in their family. They had to learn to look after each other. Her cousins had to learn to cook at a young age. Often they had to decide amongst themselves, who would be the one to go school and who would stay home and look after the younger kids.

She remembers her first day in school clearly. Cree is her first language and her first day at school was like going into a whole new world. She did not have that English background and she could not understand what people were saying a

lot of the time. In school she saw how other students were getting physically and verbally abused because they did not understand the language. She states "the teachers sometimes would really get mad at them, even to where he would get hit on the head with a ruler or whatever, or get your head slapped."

She remembers trying to help the other students by whispering to them and telling them what the teacher was saying. She feels that her experiences were not as traumatic compared to what the other students were going through. She was able to pick up the language easily and she thinks that this may be a reason that she chose to teach in the area of languages.

Her grandfather was an influential figure in her life. He was a product of the residential school system and as a result he was able to pass on spiritual teachings in the traditional way as well as the Catholic way. She can relate to both ways of praying and she believes that this has been what has carried her through the bad times.

A lot of times she got dragged into the drinking that was going on in her community but she did not want that kind of life for herself. She wanted to find a way to get out of that situation, even when she was only thirteen years old. She wanted to go to the residential school but her grandfather was against it. He had witnessed sexual and physical abuse in the residential school and he was trying to protect her from that. She begged her grandfather to let her go to the residential school. She knew that if she stayed in her community she would probably end up in the same rut as the others and she was determined to leave.

Wilma's early school experiences were positive. The principal would often stand up for them. She was an eager learner. She is one of six people who have finished a degree program in her community. Her uncle was a positive influence during this time. He would tell them that in order for them to succeed in life they had to finish their education. He would talk to them about skipping out from school and she thought that he really cared for what the kids were doing. She remembered what he was trying to tell them when she was having a hard time in Regina.

She attended a rural school for grade nine. She was able to fit in with the students well enough but she had a hard time with the teachers. The teachers made her feel different. When she would ask questions in class, the teacher would simply tell her to look at her book and then turn away. When a white kid would ask for help they would explain more. Wilma dealt with this situation by "feeding on what the teachers were saying." She felt that the attitude of the teachers was that "Well, you're going to drop out in school anyway and why bother explaining?" She did not let this get to her, however, as she was determined to finish school one way or another.

She dropped out of school in grade ten and soon after she started living in a common-law relationship. She was sixteen years old at the time. She doesn't know if it was out of love that she became involved in a relationship or her need to have a sense of belonging somewhere. In the back of her mind, though, she knew that she wanted to finish school.

She had witnessed alcohol, physical and verbal abuse in her home community and she soon realized that she had gone from an abusive background to an abusive relationship. Her partner physically abused her and would abandon her for a week at a time. She would pray that things would change and her faith in the Creator helped her to survive.

One of her sons had cerebral palsy and she had to bring him to the hospital in Regina regularly. She took this opportunity to look into going to school and finding out where she could go if she left her relationship. She often reflects about why she was in that abusive relationship for so long and she thinks that she had to go through a healing journey. She explains how she kept going back and forth and giving in to his promises that he would change and she "would end up in the same route again."

She bears physical scars from the beatings and she has broken bones that have never fully healed. She accepts that she could not blame him because he went through physical abuse in his life and it was something that he could not control. She feels sorry for him that he has never had a long-term relationship. Because of her experience she has never been able to trust a male person and she will end a relationship before it gets too serious.

While she was with her partner they lived about three miles away from the rest of the community. There was no communication with other community members and she felt very isolated. On one of her visits to Regina she called a shelter and she and her three boys stayed there for about three weeks before her partner found them.

She had looked at different alternatives to going to school and she decided to start an upgrading course. While she went to school she would get her older sons to baby-sit their younger brother. She remembers feeling very alone, as there was nobody else from her home community. Her main struggle during this time was about finding babysitters and about being alone in the city.

She moved into a house with virtually nothing but a few blankets, a knife, a fork, and a can opener. They had to eat cold food, as there was no stove in the house. She is thankful that there were breakfast programs in the schools. Later on she found out about different agencies that she could go to for assistance. She has some regrets about the challenges that her children had to go through. Her sons quit school when they were seventeen years old and she doesn't know if this is because of the negative experiences that they went through.

Her partner used to always come back and upset their lives. He would say that things would change and he would go drinking and start the physical abuse again. It seemed that everything would be going along smoothly and then something would come along and knock her down. Sometimes she did consider giving up and just collecting welfare, but she would always think of the goal she had for herself. Her vision was to be a teacher. In her second year of university she was involved with some partying and smoking but she knew that if she stayed in those kinds of situations she would end up "bailing." She dealt with this by finding new friends.

At times she thinks that her boys had too much responsibility when they were younger. She would have to get her kids out of bed early in the morning in

order to get them to daycare and get herself to classes. It was hard on her and her children. She is thankful that there was a daycare. She recalls how they would have to take her son to the daycare in a stroller. Today when she is finding things hard she reminds herself of the hardship that she went through in her university years. She knows that there is nothing that she has to do today that is as hard as the problems she had when she was going to university.

Racism was not a significant factor in her life. The only incident that comes to her mind is when she was in a store and a floorwalker was following her. She was not aware that they did that to Aboriginals. Now she is more assertive and when she comes across the floorwalkers, she tells them, "Come and walk beside me, walk beside me to make sure…just because I'm Indian that I'm going to be stealing and stuff like that."

She never had any family support in Regina until one of her cousins moved into Regina. After that she didn't feel so isolated. Her cousin would baby-sit for her and that would alleviate some of the expenses. It was a combination of things that helped her to overcome the challenges.

Today, she makes time for a ceremony when she needs it. She thinks that maybe she hasn't been able to completely let go of some of the things that she went through. She describes her upbringing as "kids raising kids." She has gone through a 12 Step program to heal herself and she takes part in the sundance every year.

She would like to complete a master's program and she is confident in her own abilities. She states that, "If I put my mind to it, I can do it, I know that." She

believes that "if anybody can succeed in life, anybody can, because I was able to do it." She tries to help students at the college by finding ways for them to succeed in life when they want to give up. She tells them that they have a future once they finish their education and they won't have to rely on abusive partners. Even just to make that change in one person is what she works toward.

She enjoys working with the language and she likes her work with the students. She sees herself as working in the area of curriculum development. She states that her personal strength comes from wanting to do things for others. When she was in her early teens she was looking after her siblings and even now her children's welfare comes first. When they didn't have a lot of food to go around she would tell her children to eat first and not to worry about her. All of her children have played hockey, including her girls. She keeps them involved in different activities like music, soccer, and gymnastics, to keep them away from hanging around different areas in the city.

Mary's Story

Mary is 44 years old and she graduated from the SIFC Indian Education program in 1992. She completed her Master of Education degree in 2001. She is presently coordinating a School To Work program for secondary students.

Mary's story develops in a spiral fashion. She is using the stage outline as requested of her but as she talks about her life she keeps going back to her relationship with her husband. She was in this abusive relationship for twenty-one years and her story is centred on her attempts to break free from this relationship.

Mary identifies herself as Dakota and begins her narrative the year that she was sent to the residential school. She was six years old and she had never been away from home prior to that. She relates the memory of her mother leaving her and her brothers at the school. She could not understand why her mother had left her. Everything that happened in that year has greatly affected her life. The feeling of abandonment is an issue that she has had to deal with in her healing journey.

Mary describes the residential school as very regimental. She found it hard to adjust to the way they had to follow in line and march from one place to the next. There was no talking and no getting out of line; otherwise they would get a strapping for it. As her story unfolds, the pattern of physical and psychological abuse in her life becomes apparent. She speaks frequently about fighting with the other students and she relates how she was even shot at a house party.

She has shown herself to be a strong-willed individual. At the age of six she was unwilling to accept the authority of the nuns. She became involved in a fight with a childcare worker because, in her words, "the childcare worker was trying to impose her rule on me." She was determined to leave the residential school and was prepared to die leaving that place. In later years she describes how she uses "mental energy" to deal with her migraines.

The happy times were the years spent in her home community prior to going to school where people were "happy, laughing, visiting." The residential school was an important stressor point in time that changed her life before and after she attended residential school. The values she learned in years before going to residential school are embedded in her being. The influential people in

her early childhood included her mother and her step-dad. Both parents worked and she attributes those first six years with her family as helping her the most in her healing journey.

She went to the residential school for two years and then she went to school on the reserve. It was at this time that integrated schools had come into existence and she and her siblings also attended school in a nearby town. Her elementary school years were marked by a lot of fighting. There was non-acceptance from both the reserve children and the white kids in the schools they attended.

Racist attacks were common in the integrated school. The names that she was being called were confusing to her. For instance, she had no idea what a squaw was. Her mother once approached the principal about the fighting but the principal would punish the Indian kids and not the white kids. The end result was that Mary learned to defend herself as no one else would help. There was the fighting with other cultural groups in the residential school and she felt that she was constantly using physical violence to protect herself. She learned to fight well and she herself began bullying the other students. Early in her life she had learned that "violence was a way to make it stop."

During this period the government had taken over from the church and civilians were now employed at the residential school. When her mother became sick, they returned to the residential school. The feeling of being left came back. Again she speaks of the "psychological damage," only this time she had also built up a lot of anger. It reached a point where she would get "fits of rage" and she

became uncontrollable. One time she remembers throwing around tables and chairs in the playroom. The anger and the rage had consumed her and it was overpowering to her and to others.

She was never expelled from school for these actions and she thinks that perhaps they had seen some potential in her. The guidance counsellor was a significant person in her life, as he seemed genuinely concerned about her. He encouraged her to enrol in the Saskatchewan School of the Arts. She felt comfortable being with the white students after her first year, so she went back. She took theatre and she found this experience to be beneficial to her in her later life.

She went back to the residential school for grade ten and this time there was a separate facility for the high school girls and there were Indian people working there. She and the other students took advantage of the situation and they would sneak off to drink and party.

She found it difficult being an Indian and she found it even more difficult being a Sioux woman. There were always the clashes between cultural groups at the residential school because of her background. She talks about the Christian groups who were always trying to push their religion on everybody else. She could no longer stand the idea of being controlled and the constant fighting finally wore her out. She dropped out of school.

Alcohol abuse was prevalent within her community. She recounts the period when there were a lot of deaths in the community. It seemed that she never had time to finish mourning the first death and somebody else would commit suicide. It

was particularly hard on her when one of her friends committed suicide. She felt terribly guilty about this as she always wondered if she could have helped her friend in some way.

The deaths affected her deeply and she started to block out all feeling emotionally. She started to withdraw. She feels that because she had not been allowed to express herself in the residential school, she did not know how to deal with the suicides. Her uncle's death had an acute effect on her. He had always visited her and he was special to her and yet she couldn't cry at his funeral. She felt that there was something terribly wrong with her.

Mary's mother was also in an abusive relationship. Mary had to take care of her three youngest brothers when her parents separated. She was alone and she relived the feeling of being abandoned. The situation was particularly frightening to her as she felt that she did not have the parenting skills.
With the help and encouragement of her uncle, she did learn to make some decisions for herself.

Mary became pregnant when she was nineteen years old and she took on the responsibility of raising a child. Life on the reserve seemed increasingly hopeless; however, and she became depressed. She decided to end her life. While she was contemplating committing suicide she heard a voice. She understood about spirits and it was then that she started having some sense of hope that things would change. She wanted to do something with her life. At this time she remembered her mother's words that she needed to finish school.

She got married but her husband physically abused her. The mentality of the church that " you don't get divorced and you serve your husband" kept her in the marriage for many years. She often felt that her husband had manipulated his way into her life and that it had not been "strictly her choice." In her healing, she has come to understand that she has choices.

In the next series of events, she ended up getting shot at a house party. The doctors told her that she was very lucky to be alive. Today she suffers severe migraines as a result of the shooting. She still has some bullet fragments in her back. This was the second near death experience for her. She had almost died when she was seven years old. These events changed her life in a big way. She came to perceive these events as her second chance at life.

She moved to the city and worked at odd jobs. She moved with her husband again, back to the reserve for a while and then to Winnipeg, Manitoba. She had to deal with her alcoholic husband and he was always trying to put her down. She was determined that she would one day leave her husband.

On this occasion she did leave him and she returned to Regina. She started making plans to complete her grade twelve. She studied for six months in preparation for her GED exam, but in the meantime her husband had come back. There was an episode when he kept her awake for four days and four nights torturing her. He wouldn't let her or the children leave the house. She was at a point where she actually felt like murdering him, but she decided on a different way of getting out.

She made up her mind that she would go to university. She wrote the test and her results were within the top six percent. While she was going to university her husband continued to be abusive and for the first year she states that she allowed him to keep her away from her studies. She was required to discontinue for a year but she returned and was even more determined to succeed. She was working and going to university at the same time and financially things started to be better for her and her children.

She was continually striving to end the relationship and build a new life for herself and her children. She went to great lengths to complete her education but the biggest struggle was with her abusive husband. Once she had made up her mind, however, he could do nothing to discourage her. She went to classes with bruises, no longer willing to cover up for him. Her fears of him were going away and she started to take action to protect herself.

Around this time, there was much more public awareness of domestic violence issues, an outcome of the murder of several women at an eastern university. She was aware that the laws were changing and this gave her the courage to begin laying charges against him for assaulting her. Even so, she recounts one more incident when she became so enraged from his abuse that she used a bat on him. She was letting him know that she was no longer putting up with his abuse.

She eventually completed her B.ED. She acknowledges the faculty members who were especially supportive of her through these difficult times. They had created a safe place for her and going to class was something that she had

been able to look forward to. Moreover, taking university classes influenced her to get to know her own history better. She did research on her family history and on Dakota people. She describes her peer group as warm and cohesive and this helped her immensely.

She worked at band schools and it was a wonderful experience but she felt that she was lacking in cultural knowledge. At this time things were still bad with her husband. Even her children encouraged her to leave her husband and she knew that she would leave him one day. She had more reason to leave now because she did not want her children to be influenced by him.

The well being of her children was important to her and she fought to keep them away from the street life. She often tells her children that everyone has choices. She teaches her children that "everything is a decision and it's a personal decision no matter what it is, and we have to learn to make those right ones, and live by your mistakes and also learn by them."

Her husband refused to do anything to help himself, but she started working on her own healing. Through western therapy and ceremonies she has been able to heal herself. Mary soon developed enough strength to tell her husband to leave. She was able to get a restraining order by telling the police that she was ready to do whatever and use whatever to protect herself. She considered taunting him into hitting her so that she could get a restraining order but she states, "I wasn't about to do that. I had grown past that."

She says that she is a lot happier and more secure since leaving that relationship and now she is helping her daughter deal with the same types of

issues. She believes that abuse is a cyclical thing. Children pick up the same behaviours and patterns as their parents.

She related her experiences in the Master's program and how she struggled with the attitudes of grad students and professors. One time she deliberately went and sat with an East Indian student who did not like her. She thought that she would just keep annoying him just because she knew that he did not like her. She found it upsetting that she was expected to be an expert on Indian people. When she asked a question in class, she explains how the professor would "come directly to me, look in my face about two feet away from me and bend her head down and talk in a real soft voice, you know, like I didn't understand English or whatever."

She describes herself as "blatant and bold" sometimes. She has strong beliefs and she is not afraid to voice them. She understands the terrors of living in an abusive relationship and so she is sympathetic to the plight of abused women. She firmly believes, however, that we all have choices and that blaming others for our problems does not help.

She values time spent visiting with her friends. Through sweats and ceremonies she has learned to forgive, she has learned patience and she has learned to love. She is happy that her children are learning their culture and she is especially proud that her granddaughter is learning the traditional ways. She is working on herself and she is being careful not to rush into a relationship.

She prepares for the sundance, mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. She understands addictions as trying to compensate for something in

our lives and so she strives to maintain balance in her life. She works to have a good relationship with her children and ends by talking about unconditional love for others. She has come to the realization that she had to go through all of the stuff in order to get herself on a healing path. It was to prepare her for whatever it is that is in her life and whatever it is that is coming. She has been able to achieve her goals and she is happy that her family is growing and healing and moving in a positive direction.

Gregory's Story

Gregory is 33 years old and he graduated from SIFC in 1998. He is presently working with at-risk students at a secondary level.

He begins by identifying himself as a band member of a northern community. He has never lived there, however. His mother had married a non-native and they did not have treaty status. His father did not speak English and his mother's first language was Cree. His background had a bearing on his language learning and actually English was his second language.

Gregory felt that there was a certain stigma because of his language and from the outset he has always felt "labelled." He mentions that he was put in a remedial classroom because his English was substandard. He and other Aboriginal students were placed in these classrooms and they were called "the dumb group." When he was placed in a regular classroom for grade four, he started to do much better in school. He enjoyed school from that point on. Math was one of his favourite subjects.

In high school he started to experience some personal difficulties. He would skip school and get into trouble with the law. He did not earn any credits in high school as a result. When he was eighteen years old he heard of a mature student program that would allow him to complete his grade twelve. He made up his mind that he was going to succeed. Gregory's friends told him that he was too stupid to go to high school. In spite of their attitudes he persisted and eventually he got into these classes. He looked at their attitude as another form of oppression.

He never skipped classes and he listened and paid attention to the instructions of his teachers. He took his books home and he read them thoroughly. He passed his exams and graduated from high school. Basically, he went from a grade eight level to a grade twelve level within a short period of time.

After he finished high school he worked for a year with mentally challenged people. In 1985 with the passing of the Bill C-31 legislation he regained his treaty status. He decided to further his education and with his treaty status he became eligible to get funding for university. He was put on a waiting list but he paid for the first semester with the money he had saved up.

He completed a Bachelor of General Studies degree and then he took a job with Corrections Canada. He was a guard at a penitentiary for a time but he did not care for his job. He found it hard to tolerate the racism. The job was meaningless to him and he decided to go back to university.

He was accepted into the SIFC Indian Education Program. The program was very demanding but he worked hard and he made it. While he was in the program his sponsorship ended. He was denied funding. He was told outright that

he was actually a burden to the reserve economy due to his Bill C-31 status. He continues to appeal that decision. He is in grad studies right now and he is providing his own funding. He does this because he believes in lifelong learning and he wants to advance himself. He has to deal with financial difficulties but he would rather spend his money on education.

He is currently working with students who have been out of school for years or who are in trouble with the law. He sees these kids in the same situation that he was in when he was their age. When he was a teenager he had a lot of issues to deal with as well and he can relate to them in this way. He has empathy for them. He likes them because that's who he was when he was their age. He tells them that they can succeed.

He returned to teach in his home community and he had a bad experience there. Classroom management was difficult. He found it exhausting and he was burnt out after one year. He did not want to be a teacher anymore. Something was always coming at him. The parents who were in powerful positions would threaten him. That year was difficult and he was very stressed out. He was unsure whether he would continue teaching. He started subbing in a high school and he found that he could connect with these students. This is where he is presently teaching.

During his teacher training at SIFC the Aboriginal instructors inspired him a lot. This was the first time that he had Aboriginal instructors and they were a good role model for him. They helped him to get into graduate studies. There was also a teacher from the university that he had met at a gym who encouraged him to go to graduate studies.

One of the role models in his life was his brother. His brother influenced him to start weightlifting and this is the way he keeps physically fit. Weightlifting helps him to maintain a healthy lifestyle. He does not push himself to the limit anymore. He used to go on extreme diets and would make himself miserable just to win a trophy. He is well known within the bodybuilding subculture, but he feels that no one acknowledges his accomplishments outside of that subculture. He would like to focus on accomplishments that are going to produce positive changes.

He did struggle with university academics. He persisted and did whatever was required of him. He just recently learned how to type his own papers. He addresses the issue of racism with his students. He tells them that racism is embedded in our institutions and that "we are not to give up, to submit to failure, that we can try and overcome this."

Joseph's Story

Joseph is 38 years old and he graduated from the SIFC Indian Education program in 1997. He is an administrator in a band school and he has been teaching for four years.

His first six years were spent on the reserve. He lived with his parents until they separated. After that his life became quite unsettled. He would live with his grandparents on the reserve for a while and then go to live with his mother. He describes his early life as very hectic and to him, "It was almost like a competition between his grandparents and his mother to see whom he liked living with best."

He states that he felt "like a yo-yo going one place, going another place, like a pawn between individuals that were trying to get back at one another." He feels that there was more stability when he was living with his mother.

He quit school in grade ten. He completed a partial grade eleven and then he quit school again. He had lost interest in school and was drinking and partying. When he was nineteen years old he met a girl with whom he shared a common background and they have been together ever since. They have five children.

While attending a conference he met one of his former teachers. This teacher had always believed that Joseph had leadership qualities. He encouraged him to become a teacher. Joseph entered university as a mature student. After he completed the University Entrance Program he tried business administration but he disliked the math courses. He decided to go into Indian Education and he found that he enjoyed working with children.

In 1993 he was hired by his band as a trustee for treaty land entitlement, a job that took him away from his studies and his family. For a period of three years things were quite tumultuous. He was driving into university every day, he was going through family difficulties and he was trying to handle his job as well. Many times he was ready to give up. Financially he had to struggle. He had to learn to budget his money. He was being pressured from faculty regarding attendance and he did drop some classes.

There was peer support as everybody was going through some stress in their life. He had a good friend who kept encouraging him. One of the most positive role models in his life was his grandmother. She encouraged him to do his

best and she instilled a belief in him that education was going to lead to bigger and better things.

He had to take some classes through the University of Regina but he never felt comfortable there. It was different being with a non-native group. He found that the faculty were racist and were not very friendly to Indian students. It seemed that they thought native students were getting a free ride. Joseph did not let any of their attitudes bother him. He felt that they simply did not realize that conditions on the reserve could be intolerable, with the housing, the roads, the poverty, and the alcoholism.

He encountered some problems with his cooperating teacher during his sixteen-week internship. He regarded her as an apple Indian, believing that she was red on the outside and white on the inside. She seemed to favour the white kids over the native kids and he could not accept the comments being made about Indian kids. He ended up hurting his back and getting a medical withdrawal but he was happy to get out of that classroom.

He completed his internship in April 1997 in his home community. He felt very comfortable there. He felt accepted by the staff and they were very helpful. He mentions faculty who were supportive of his efforts and understood what he was going through. He names certain individuals who helped him and made a difference in his adjustment to university academics.

He mentions that he did do some partying during his university years and this affected his academic work to some extent. He would hand in papers late sometimes. Dealing with the financial stress was the hardest part of his university

years. There was also the racism during his university years. His support system included his peers. The elder at SIFC also gave him good advice. He worked hard to improve his study skills. He states, "I would really, really try hard. I would be there every day. I would take good notes. I would try to get my papers done before they were due and have them professionally done."

He felt a real sense of accomplishment after he completed his internship. He had proved to himself and everyone else that he was not going to be a drunk like his dad. He was proud that he had done what he had set out to do. The biggest day of his life was when he graduated. He acknowledges that it was hard because he was an older student but he did it mostly for his family. He wanted to make a better life for them. He believes that a person has to work to get what they want and they have to say to themselves that they can do it.

He attributes his success to the teachers who took the time to talk to him and show him what to do. He found it easy to learn if he wrote things down and if he was shown what to do. He challenged himself to get good grades and make sure that his grade point average was good. He refused to give up and he would recall his grandfather's words that "To get over that hill, you've got to climb it first. It's the hard part, but then going downhill, that's the easy and that's the fun part."

He stresses the importance of having balance between your family and your university life. To him, balance is keeping things on an even level, an even playing field. What he learned from his experiences is that " no matter what type of day you had, the sun is going to come up in the east in the morning." A good sense of humour helps too.

David's Story

David is 47 years old and he graduated from the SIFC Indian Education Program in1999. He is presently teaching at an elementary school. He has been teaching for two years.

David grew up in foster homes and he did not know his biological family. He was 32 years old when he found out that he was originally from a reserve. He states that he does not remember much from his early years. Much of it is blocked out.

David feels that there was little support for him to complete his education in these foster homes. His teachers were not very supportive of him either. He recalls having his hand up in class and the teachers would never talk to him to see what he wanted. After grade eight he started experiencing problems. When he was in grade nine he was expelled for smoking. It was at this time also that his foster parents told him that he had to be on his own.

He went out and worked at different jobs. After working at a farm and at a gas station he got a job with Canadian Pacific Railway. His job was to follow behind a tamper and shovel in ballast from the shoulder of the track and fill up the holes where the tamper had made holes in the roadway. He was making money and he felt good about what he was doing except that five of his friends ended up being killed in a car accident and he could not handle that. He quit his job and he went out west to Alberta. He worked with CPR again. He worked with what he calls the Steel Pickup Gang and then he made his way up to a machine helper. He was a crane operator and he was also running a beryl crane.

He felt successful at these jobs but he started to think that he was never going to make it home. He felt lost because back then the only family he knew was his sister. During this time he was drinking and doing some drugs and when he started into heavier drugs he decided to quit his job and come home to Saskatchewan.

He got a job with Canadian National Railway and he ended up working with them for ten years. After he was laid off he realized that he needed an education. He took Adult Basic Education classes and completed his grade 12 in two years. At the back of his mind he had always wanted to be a teacher and he made plans to attend university. He found out about the Department of Indian Education and he put in his application. He went through the interview process and was accepted into the program.

He found university academics difficult at first but he learned to adjust. He learned that he had to brush up on his study habits and it was two months before he was able to settle into university life. He got used to the schedules and he learned how to do research, and how to write papers and these were things that he knew nothing about before.

He transferred into Indian Studies after his second year of university due to internal problems within the Indian Education program. He did not agree with what the students were saying about the instructors and he took it upon himself to talk to the president about his opinions. He transferred back to the Indian Education program to prove his point. This was the only hurdle that he encountered in his teacher training.

Financially he had to struggle during his university years. His wife was working though and this helped a lot. He knew that this situation would not be like that forever. He did not experience any racism during his university years but he recounts an incident that he had in a bar. He had gone with a friend to take out some beer and he was told that they did not serve native people. He took the case to Human Rights and it took five years before the case was resolved but he won his case.

His wife was very instrumental in helping him through his years as a university student. She gave him time to work on his studies and she kept encouraging him. Prior to this, family support had been limited. The only one he was close to was the sister who had been in foster homes with him.

David has relied on his own abilities through the difficult times. He did not have any family and he just did it on his own. He mentions that he wishes that he had had the opportunity to get his education when he was younger and a stable family would have helped. He has learned about spirituality through his interactions with elders at the college. They helped him to understand that if he just followed his path he would be okay. This is what he is doing now, following his path. When he was in the foster homes he was brought up as a Roman Catholic but he was dismayed with the façade that these people put on. For this reason he favours the First Nations perspective. To him this is a way of life and not a religion.

His philosophy is to live and use only what is necessary. He has learned that it does not matter what but everyone is going to have stressful life situations and we're just going to have to handle them. All things will work themselves out.

He has faced stressful life situations all of his life and he believes that one should not get too emotional about things. We have to know how to think. If one sits down quietly and thinks about things then they will come to a reasonable decision. He maintains that one has to think of "more of a broader sense than just yourself."

CHAPTER 5

Factors and Themes of Resilience

In this chapter the categorical content analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilbar, 1998) representative of narrative research will be presented. The resiliency framework developed by Kumpfer (1999) and the interview guide that was given to the participants will be used to analyze and discuss the factors of resilience. The themes are the primary protective factors for each participant, taken from the analysis and comparison of the factors of resilience.

Factors of Resilience

Gloria

The high risk factors pertinent to Gloria's family situation were associated with the alcoholism in her family and the loss of her parents. The most negative life experience was the sexual abuse from her step-grandfather. It had a long-lasting detrimental effect on her self-concept and self-confidence. A teenage pregnancy added to the difficulties that she was undergoing. Limited family and social support in her formative years can then be assumed to be the critical risk factors.

The presence of caring adults is identified as a protective factor. Gloria valued the relationship she had with her grandmother and this strong bond acted as a protective mechanism. Her grandmother helped her to believe that whatever the situation was she would not be locked into it forever. Her grandmother's teachings continue to sustain her. Her brother and her husband were important figures in her life. Her husband's abuse was a stress factor but out of love and compassion she sought ways to improve her relationship.

The death of a loved one can be seen as a risk facto, but in Gloria's case this event appeared to be a mediating variable that supported her coping processes. Since she could no longer rely on her grandmother, Gloria was compelled to seek help for herself. Other individuals she identifies as having a significant role in her life include the nurse and the nun. Her support came from these concerned and caring individuals. They helped her to focus on her creative abilities, enabling her to direct her energies in a positive direction rather than simply staying mired in the abuse.

Residential schools and the negative impact they had on the family, culture, and community, were risk factors that had both distal and proximal effects. Being taken away from home at a young age was traumatic and it had an immediate effect on individuals but there was also a distal effect evidenced by post-trauma. In Gloria's case the post-trauma manifested itself while she was walking through the halls of the university. Memories of being pushed into the showers at the residential school came over her and she was unable to cope at the time. This incident influenced her to quit university and go back to the reserve. However, being placed in a residential school was an intervention point in her development. It took her away from the abuse and it brought her into contact with individuals who could help her. Her coping processes were enhanced in this manner.

In Gloria's school experiences, racism was present as one of the stressors and challenges. One of the incidents occurred when she was doing her internship and she had to undergo a barrage of racial insults. No one would act on her behalf and it angered her enough to do something about it. She knew that it was not right

and by dealing with the issue herself she gained some insights into her own abilities to confront challenges. It can be assumed that racism acted as a mediating variable in activating resilience processes. It appears that her communication skills have constituted her main behavioural and social competencies.

Another challenge for Gloria was the adjustment to university academics. She started university when she was thirty-one years old and one of the areas that she had to work on was her reading. She explained how she developed her reading skills by listening intently to her teacher and thus being able to remember what he had pre-taught. In this instance her intellectual abilities acted as a protective factor in facilitating her adaptation. Peer support did not appear to be an important factor for her. She credits her husband for helping her with university academics.

Gloria was able to overcome the challenges in her life through her own personal resources. Her suicidal attempt can be seen as a maladaptive way of coping but in a more positive sense she was seeking to change her circumstances. She has relied on traditional and Christian teachings in her life. She believes that a power greater than herself has helped her through the hard times.

Her personality traits have helped her to succeed. She has shown perseverance in her pursuit of an education. Shortly after quitting university, she enrolled in an off-campus teacher-training program on her reserve and she

completed her degree. The scholarships she has received from university are evident of her intellectual capacities.

Gloria was alert to the opportunities that came her way and she worked to find her way out of the oppressive circumstances that she found herself in. Alcoholism was a factor in her parents' deaths and seeing the aversive effects of alcoholism in her family influenced her to make healthier choices for herself.

The outcome variables in Gloria's life are indicative of healing and recovery from the traumatic events in her life. Gloria presents herself as a compassionate individual, believing that compassion for others is what makes the difference in helping others. She has come to terms with the sexual abuse that she was subjected to. The turning point in her own healing came when she confronted her perpetrator and was able to tell him that she had forgiven him.

Gloria enjoyed learning to be a teacher and she thrived on it. She describes herself as a risk-taker and has taken on challenges as they came along. She strives to have a positive vision. Her marital adjustment is also a positive outcome. She acknowledges that she was able to build up character through those hard times. As an individual with resilient capacities she maintains that one just has to function and walk through what they have to.

Gloria's cognitive, spiritual, and behavioural competencies account for her successful adaptation. These internal resiliency factors provided the balance of risk and protective factors required for her to overcome the challenges in her life. Her stress coping processes can be perceived as resilient reintegration as she has developed a higher level of resilience and strength from her experiences.

Wilma

Wilma experienced problems related to relocation, poverty, limited family support, and domestic violence. In her early childhood there was alcohol and drug abuse in her family. The quality of parenting she received was a risk factor. Her parents drank a lot and, either, the children took care of themselves or the older ones would take on the parental role. This pattern appeared to continue for her children. Although she was not neglecting her children she still had to let them be on their own while she went to classes.

While Wilma was going to university she had no family support. Her family was on the reserve and her partner would only upset her and set her back whenever he was in her life. Domestic violence was a significant issue for Wilma. Life in her community was grim and although this was a risk factor it also helped her to decide that this was not the kind of life that she wanted for herself. Poverty was a factor in her life. She had been poor most of her life and she mentioned that when she first moved into a house in the city she had nothing but a blanket, a can opener, and a knife. Living conditions were most unfavourable in her case but these challenges and stressors served to activate resilience processes as she strived to have a better life for herself. It can be inferred that the adverse circumstances "developed and sharpened" (Cross, 1998) survival skills.

Her early school experiences were positive and it seemed that it was her academic skills that acted as the moderating variable in her adaptation. Cree is her first language and this is the foundation of her identity and self-concept. Her language is a strength that has helped her to have a career and it also gives her a

sense of cultural identity. She was able to grasp the English language easily and she did not report any academic difficulties in university and she did not speak of any problems related to adjusting to university life.

The main protective factor for Wilma came from her spiritual competencies. She was able to integrate the Catholic and the traditional way of spirituality to negotiate the challenges in her life. She has shown remarkable emotional stability. Wilma was able to overcome the stressful events in her life through her desire to have a better life.

Wilma's uncle and grandfather acted as moderating variables in helping her to persevere in her education. It has mostly been through her courage and determination that she was able to rise above the challenges in her life. She made choices for herself that would not interfere with completing her education. She has also been very self-sacrificing, often placing the welfare of her children first before her own needs.

The indicators of well-being and success in Wilma's life include the successful completion of her studies. She is presently teaching at a post-secondary level. She takes pride in her children and she keeps them involved in sports. She is a volunteer in the community. She fasts and takes part in the sundance yearly. She firmly believes that if a person makes up their mind they can succeed. She passes on what she has learned from her experiences to her students. As a caring and responsible individual, she is committed to her family, her work and to her community.

Given the impoverished and underprivileged background that Wilma came from and the strengths that she has developed it can be said that she has achieved resilient reintegration. Her resiliency is at a significantly higher state than would be anticipated.

Mary

The primary risk factor for Mary was her residential school experience. It was a traumatic experience for her and it had a long enduring effect on her. In her later life she did not know how to express her emotions appropriately because of the forced silence in the residential school. It may be that for this reason also, she was not able to cope with the deaths in her community. Everything that happened to her caused her to feel inadequate and it made her think that there was something wrong with her.

What is notable about Mary is the manner in which she responded with anger and frustration to the oppressive structures of her world. Even at a young age she understood that others were "trying to impose [their] rule on her" and she was resisting. Anger is most often viewed as a negative response but actually it can be construed as a defence mechanism. Her anger was an internal high-risk characteristic but her resilience capacity grew from her ability to replace maladaptive coping with more adaptive ones.

Mary's personal power had been taken away from her when she went to residential school and her story, depicts, in many ways, the process she went through to regain that personal power. As her story progresses she comes to the revelation that she has choices. As she finds her foundation she becomes stronger

and she is eventually able to leave her husband and take measures to complete her education. She was empowered to make these choices for the well-being of her children. She was acting to protect them.

Early memories of a happier time carried Mary through the bad times. There was the extended family that helped. Her fortitude has helped her to succeed. Although she believes that the residential school was mentally unhealthy for her it can be assumed that her experiences have served to sharpen her ability to think through and assess situations and act in ways that would ensure her survival.

Her intellectual abilities have facilitated her adaptation. She excelled through elementary school and when she passed her GED exam her results were in the top six percent in the province. She has also completed her master's degree. Her experiences have helped her to develop inner strength. At a particularly low time she did consider committing suicide but her decision not to represents another example of her active coping responses at work. The protective factors in her life include the spiritual ceremonies and the western therapy. The stories that she heard as a child served as a foundation for her healing. Her development of cultural knowledge and self-knowledge has strengthened her.

Mary learned to regulate her behaviours, as she was able to quit drinking and smoking on her own. She made these choices in an effort to make something of herself and build a better life for herself. As she started to believe in herself, she was building up resilience.

Mary's healing journey has marked her adaptation as resilient reintegration. She has achieved a higher state of resilience as shown by the indicators of well-being and success. The spiritual, cognitive, and behavioural competencies noted have enhanced her coping processes.

Gregory

The high-risk factors for Gregory stemmed primarily from his school experiences. Gregory's academic abilities were always in question and he had to work hard to prove himself in this aspect. This was the risk factor but it had the effect of making him even more determined to succeed. Psychological and behavioural factors acted as moderating variables to foster his resilience.

Gregory did get into trouble with the law when he was a teenager but he was able to correct those behaviours and focus on positive ones. In his story he made little reference to his family life, but it was the community's attitude toward his status that had an acute effect on him. It affected his identity and he continues to feel a sense of disconnection from his home community.

Gregory did not have any First Nations teachers until he was in the SIFC program. He acknowledges his instructors as positive role models. Prior to this the only person he really looked up to was his brother. His brother was significant in helping him to get involved in bodybuilding. Physical fitness is perceived as an effective way of coping with stress and Gregory has demonstrated his ability in bodybuilding. His involvement in bodybuilding encouraged him to have a healthy lifestyle and his achievements in this area have helped him to believe in himself. It has motivated him to work toward more positive changes in his life. His resilience

processes can be attributed to his abilities in the physical realm, allowing for the necessary balance of risk and protective factors, and facilitating his capacity for adaptation.

Gregory has achieved a sense of fulfilment through his successes and he has adapted well. His behavioural strengths have given him the capacity to recover from the adversity he encountered in his education.

Joseph

An unstable home life can be identified as the main effect risk factor for Joseph. He came from a dysfunctional background. He had witnessed a lot of violence and drinking. His parents separated when he was young and he was shuffled back and forth between his grandparents and his mother. He himself went through a separation while he was going to university. The financial stress was a significant risk factor. It caused hardship for him and his family. This was a significant risk factor, but it had the positive effect of motivating him to work harder to achieve his goals. He wanted a stable home for his family, something that he did not have in his early life.

The stressors in Joseph's life can be perceived as mediating variables. They had the effect of making him work hard to achieve his goals and dreams. In this instance they activated the resilience process. The protective factors manifested themselves through the significant people in Joseph's life. His grandmother was a positive role model for him. Other individuals who helped him were the faculty within SIFC. Peer support was evident as well.

Joseph was able to regulate his behaviours. When drinking was interfering with his academics he made some better choices for himself. Being involved in sports was a protective factor as physical activity develops stress coping processes. His determination to succeed and the need to prove himself different from his father were compelling factors in his success.

Joseph has acquired a sense of fulfilment from his work. He enjoys teaching and, perhaps, in a way, he is acting out the parental role that was missing in his life. He understands the importance of being a good role model and that is what he tries to be to his students. These behavioural, emotional, and cognitive competencies have supported his coping processes.

David

The stressors in David's life were related to the lack of emotional support from his caregivers. He was raised in foster homes and he states that he has blocked this part of his life from his memory. Blocking memories is sometimes the only way to survive, but, at the same time, in the healing and recovery process, there needs to be some kind of reconciliation. Retreating into denial can be inferred as a reduced level of coping as it would seem that by not dealing with these past issues, he would be vulnerable at a later period in his life. To some degree it is characteristic of maladaptive reintegration, but he has been able to surmount significant challenges in his life and any assessment or prediction of resilience can only be speculative.

His alcohol and drug use were risk factors, but he was able to manage his behaviours in this area. His desire for an education supported his resilience

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processes. His academic skills put him at risk, but his motivation to succeed helped him greatly. Concepts of perseverance and optimism are reflective of spiritual competencies and David has shown strengths in this aspect. David has relied on his personal resources to cope with adversity. Behavioural competencies and environmental and social supports have also facilitated his reintegrating processes.

Themes of Resilience

In further analysis of the data into themes of resilience, six general themes have become apparent (see Figure 5.1). The themes are the main characteristics shown by the participants and they include: self-efficacy, vision, faith, stability, compassion, and resourcefulness. Each of these resilient characteristics or capacities will be defined and presented in relation to how they have been exemplified in the stories and how they relate to existing resilience literature.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1995) has defined self-efficacy as the belief in oneself, a belief in one's own capabilities, that we all have the power to bring about changes in our lives. Self-efficacy can be viewed primarily as a mental capacity that influences self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-realization or self-actualization (Higgens, 1994). Maslow (1970) describes self-efficacy as "positive mental health." Self-efficacy, as explained by these researchers, is articulated in the stories of the participants.

The theme of self-efficacy is evident in Gloria's story as she relates her experiences in the residential school. She began to believe in herself, primarily,

through her interactions with the nun and the nurse. They had "moved [her] in a positive direction" by focusing on her talents and abilities rather than allowing her to continue to live with the negativity. Gloria also developed self-efficacy through her academic achievements. Building on these successes she was able to develop more self-confidence and self-esteem in other areas of her life. Gloria's philosophy of life is to take on the challenges as they come and she understands the need to walk through them "to feel successful in [her] heart." For Gloria, self-efficacy developed from "the victory of being able to start verbalizing and then being able to look for solutions to [her] own feelings" and experiencing success in this area has helped her to overcome "those times that [she] wants to hang back."

Wilma's story also demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy as a factor in resiliency. She has developed confidence in her own abilities as she states that, "If I put my mind to it, I can do it, I know that." She has succeeded in academics and she has overcome the challenges in her life through this mindset. Similarly, Mary knew that she was capable and she knew that it was within her to achieve and be successful. Through all the angry outbursts and what Mary calls "mischief" while she was attending residential school, she always got good grades. She states that she was a "grade A student right through elementary school" and sensing that others had seen the potential in her, Mary began to try different things, like enrolling in the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts, to further herself. Mary's personal struggle was with finding a way to end her relationship and when she finally made up her mind, she states that, "I made up my mind that I

was going to go to university and I was going to get things done." Firm resolve and a belief in her own capabilities helped her to overcome the obstacles in her life.

As Higgens (1994) conceives this notion, self-efficacy can be associated with an individual's intellectual capacity and this has been evidenced in the participants' stories. Gregory knew that he was capable and he states that, "I made up my mind that I was going to succeed, that I was going to pass grade 12." He persisted even when the administration and others tried to discourage him from going back to high school.

Joseph dropped out of school in grade ten, mainly out of boredom, and he states that, "it wasn't that I was dumb, I felt like I had the brains to get by, but it was --- I was with a bunch of younger people that were younger than me, so I just gave it up." Through the encouragement of his English professor, Joseph began to perceive himself as a good writer and he started to feel that he could succeed; hence, he started putting more effort into his studies. When he counsels his children he tells them, "You just don't get something thrown into your lap. You've got to work and if you can't get by a little bit of adversity and give up then you're not going to do it. You've got to say to yourself, "I can do this. I know I can." It is this philosophy that has helped him to succeed.

David felt alienated from the school system in his younger years but he experienced success in the jobs that he had, and this helped him to believe in himself. On his own initiative he started an upgrading course and he finished his grade twelve in less than two years. In university, he relates that he "always managed to get good marks." As far as handling stressful life situations, he

believes that "You have to know how to think... You've got to sit down quietly and think about things. That's the only way you'll come to a reasonable decision." David further states that by "facing everything as it comes up, and that's how you stay healthy mentally, keeping your wits about you."

Change begins with "mental energy" as Mary, one of the participants, describes it. It is the power of positive thinking that brings us to a new level of understanding and awareness. The participants were able to develop insight into their own abilities and worked to produce those desired changes in their lives. As Mary states "We are constantly learning." It is self-knowledge, learning about ourselves that makes the difference. Schaeffer and Moos (1992) refer to this capacity as the "cognitive and intellectual differentiation or self-reliance and self-understanding."

Vision

Vision is a component of resiliency that has become apparent in the narratives. Resilient individuals have an "internal locus of hope" (Higgens, 1994) and it is this quality that leads to developing a vision. Kumpfer (1999) characterizes this as "internal locus of control, hopefulness and optimism and it is connected to life purpose and planning ability" (p. 200). This is an internal resiliency trait that can be related to having goals, dreams and personal aspirations. It includes the hope of a better future and being expectant of better things.

Gloria's first teacher was her grandmother. Gloria states that, "She [her grandmother] would always be living in the future. "You will do this. This is what

you have to look forward to." This kind of mindset is what Gloria carried and it helped her to see that "regardless of the things that happened to me and whether I got the truth from anybody about my family situation, that left me feeling like, if you can look forward to the future, I don't have to live in this situation." This kind of thinking helped her to survive. Gloria credits her grandmother with "that gift within her that she passed me about life, that I would not always be there."

Wilma states that she "had that vision to finish [her] degree or to do something with [her] life, to be able to do something." Education was important as it held new possibilities and this motivated her to pursue her goal of being a teacher. Similarly, when Mary began to see that completing her education was the first step to changing her circumstances, she did not let anything stop her. Mary now looks at her struggles in a different light and states that, "I realize that I had to go through all of this stuff in order to get myself there and prepare for whatever it is that's in my life and whatever it is that's coming."

Gregory has aspirations of completing his master's degree and he feels optimistic about the future. He feels that "with healthy living and a positive outlook that I have a good future and I want to make a good future for my children." Elders passed on vision of a better future to Joseph. His grandmother helped him to see that "education was going to lead to bigger and better things" and this has been part of his vision. From his view "Sometimes the road is rocky and there's no end in sight, but you're getting there." David feels that with his teaching degree he now has a future and he feels that [his] future is really looking bright."

Vision is an important resilient characteristic. The participants have shown a high degree of optimism in their personal and professional lives. They have purpose in their lives and they have pursued their educational goals with an understanding that things are within their control.

Faith

Resilient individuals have "faith in surmounting and faith in human relationships" (Higgens, 1994). Faith implies spiritual awareness and spiritual growth. Kumpfer (1999) maintains that resilient individuals develop a belief system and in her research she has found that "spirituality has been highly predictive of positive life adaptation." In their stories each of the participants has expressed their own concept of faith.

Gloria, who grew up with traditional teachings and Christian teachings, relates that, "the teachings that I had as a young child, the traditional, were a foundation of respect for the Creator, for someone greater than myself, for someone who was always there. And these are Kokum's teachings that, you know, you're never alone."

Wilma relates that "we were taught the Catholic way and then we were taught the Cree traditional ways of stuff. And that's what kept us going. And nowadays I can relate to both traditions, both ways to pray. And I always think that that's probably what got me through a lot of these things." She states that this is how she survived, by praying that things would change and having faith that things would change.

Mary had decided to end her life when she heard a voice calling her and it was then that she started thinking that, "Okay, well, maybe there's something. Maybe my life can change." Her faith developed gradually and it was through sweats and ceremonies that she has been able to work on her issues. She states that, "it's constantly healing...But like following traditional ways is what really helps me become strong and stay strong."

Gregory, Joseph, and David did not elaborate on spiritual beliefs but they have faith and confidence in their own abilities. Gregory was not specific about any traditional beliefs, although, having been through the Indian Education program, he had been introduced to native spirituality. He merely stated that he respected traditional ways and that he was open to traditional ceremonies. Joseph, as well, did not speak of his spiritual beliefs, except in relation to listening to elders. For David, spirituality was a personal matter, as well. He stated that,

> after I discovered the spirituality aspect of First Nations and talked to elders
> and stuff like that, and they told me, "Well, you know, you can choose this
> road and you can choose that road, but a lot of times your path is already
> there, and if you just follow it you will be okay." So that's kind of the way I'm
> doing it, I'm just kind of following my path, wherever it leads me to.

Masten (1994) and Kumpfer (1999), maintain that religious faith and spirituality are key resilient factors and the stories have confirmed that the participants have relied on their spiritual beliefs as a coping strategy. The stories have also shown that faith can be perceived as confidence in one's own abilities. To some degree the participants have survived by believing that they are here for

a "cosmic purpose" and that they have "a sense of uniqueness" (Kumpfer, 1999), as in the case of Gloria and Mary who heard "a voice" at a time when they were experiencing a lot of difficulties. This was a turning point for them as they started to believe that there was some hope for them and they made other changes in their lives by following their religious faith or traditional beliefs.

Stability

Schaeffer and Moos (1992) have stated that confronting adverse experiences fosters a mature approach to life in a person and they refer to this as stability. This capacity can also be inferred as the "ability to focus on the goal and chip away at each problem" (Kumpfer, 1999, p. 205). Kobasa (1979) has formulated a theory of stability in her study of highly stressed individuals. She maintains that hardiness or stability contributes to peoples' resiliency. Commitment and control are aspects of hardiness and adaptation (Kobasa) that can be perceived as stability. It assumes the capacity to develop stable relationships, show responsibility and, generally, to persevere in stressful life situations. The participants in this study have experienced great adversity and they have shown stability in their relationships and in their characters.

Gloria has shown stability in her life by working out the problems in her marriage. She states that, "It took many years. It's 31 years now that we have been married, and we've gone through a lot in those 31 years. We went through the alcoholism, we went through the poverty, and no family support." She understood that she had committed herself to her husband and she states, "when you get married, you become a helper, you want to help that person." She also

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learned about stability through her work. When she started teaching, she had to cope with the internal conflict in the department and she made up her mind that she would learn from the situation. She states,

> I thought, this lady is going to teach me something. You know, she taught me a sense of being—I never had that much stability in a job, and I think I probably would have left if I didn't meet this lady. She started showing me how you can stay and there's certain stability you can have in your life if you just keep working at the issues that come and don't be looking out there at the greener—there are always greener pastures.

Wilma has shown stability by being a responsible parent. She has taken care of her children through the hard times and remains committed to their well-being. She persevered and completed her studies and she remains committed to her work.

Mary remained in an abusive marriage for 21 years and she divorced her husband only after she felt strong enough about herself. After she was able to find that strength and stability within herself and she states that, " I didn't need that man in my life to be a person, I didn't need that man there just to make me feel like a woman or to be strong or to be somebody. I can be myself and still be strong. I don't need that cushion."

Joseph has also shown stability in his marriage. He did go through a separation while he was going to university but he has been with the same partner for 19 years. Gregory is in a stable relationship and he is committed to taking care of his family. He has shown stability by financing his own university education.

David is in a supportive relationship with his wife and his perception of stability is more related to financial stability.

Stability infers "planful competence and maintaining a certain continuity toward the future" (Clausen, 1991). As resilient individuals, the participants have shown that it is important to keep working at issues and to remain committed to our goals. It has also been found that resilient individuals organize their lives out of their early experiences (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). Mary, who relied on the memories of happier times with her family to carry her through the difficult times, has shown this aspect. Gloria and Joseph also relied on their grandmother's teachings to sustain them. Wilma remembered her grandfather's teachings at those times when she wanted to give up and these were the types of experiences that gave the participants stability.

Compassion

It has been found that caring and compassion are essential characteristics of resilient individuals (Higgens, 1994). Werner (1986) also maintains that healing comes through "helping or caring for others." As a result of confronting and overcoming adversity, resilient individuals develop compassion and are able to forgive others and move forward with their lives. The theme of compassion has emerged in the stories in the way the participants expressed and received compassion in their interactions with others.

Gloria found her "people skills" through "understanding people and being very patient and graceful." She has learned "to see that compassion in people, that caring." She acknowledges that her home situation was dysfunctional and she

credits her schooling at the residential school as the place where she found comfort. There she discovered "the teachings were of a compassionate God, a compassionate Creator" and she tries to emulate these teachings.

Wilma has compassion and caring for her students as she attempts to "find ways for them to succeed in life when they want to give up…even just to make that one change in one person. I always feel that I was able to do something for them." Mary feels that she has had to learn to forgive and to learn patience and to learn to love. She states, "all those I had to be able to do to myself first, before I could do it for anyone else. And so eventually I have developed in that way."

Compassion is related to having empathy for others who are experiencing similar distresses. Gregory can relate to his students as he states,

> I like those kids, and I enjoy my job working with these kids… Because I have empathy for them, whereas somebody else might look at them and think they are a bunch of bad news cases and they don't want to work with these troubled kids, troublemakers or whatever they want to label them as. And they get that. Not with me. I like them because that's who I was when I was their age.

Compassion as a predominant characteristic of resilient individuals has been determined in past research. Hanson and Hampton (2000) state that students in residential schools were able to survive by helping each other and by having compassion for others. Joseph shows compassion for his students. He likes working with his students and he states, "From 9:00 o'clock 'til 3:00 o'clock I'm like their parent. And I try not to be too hard on them. If I have to give them

heck, I do it with a smile on my face. But they know when I'm serious and that it's for their own good." David relates that when his students start to get unpleasant with each other he steps in and straightens things out. Compassion is "the ability to be empathetic to the needs of others" (Werner, 1986) and the participants have shown compassion and caring for significant others and the students that they work with.

Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness is another theme, which has emerged from the data. Resourcefulness has been explained as the capacity of individuals to "understand and manage their world in a meaningful way" (McCubbin et al, 1998). Resourcefulness implies that individuals are active participants and they act to access agencies and individuals that will assist them. This capacity can be associated with "behavioural and social competence and problem solving skills (Kumpfer,1999). The participants were resourceful in finding the supports they needed to survive and thrive amidst adversity and to succeed in academics.

Gloria learned to act on her own behalf as her grandmother had always told her to "Speak up if you want something." From her grandmother's teachings Gloria feels that she has gained the courage to venture out into new things and to become a risk taker.

Wilma grew up with poverty but she and her siblings still managed to go to school. She states that,

> we had to look after each other and at the same time we also had to find
> ways to –who would go to school and who would stay home…and we were

able to keep going to school at the same time, even where we used to have to walk probably about a mile to what they call The Corner back home, because that's only how far the bus would come, and then we would have to walk to that area.

Wilma talks about the poverty while she was attending university as well. She relates that, "sometimes we only ate from a can, canned soup, and to where sometimes a can of soup—the four of us had to share that can...I used to always try and tell them to feed themselves and I wouldn't have to worry about myself, because I wanted them to eat instead of thinking about me. Wilma was able to access the agencies and the resources to help her when she experienced financial difficulties. She states, "When I first started university, I tried to make changes to where my kids would go into daycares, or even to where they would go—like they could go into that daycare after school, because I wanted to make changes and stuff like that with them."

Mary demonstrated her resourcefulness by making sure that her children were taken care of and she states that,

I was making sure that we didn't live in the hood. I could never, ever see my children growing up on the street or being part of the street life, and I didn't want that for them. I worked very hard at keeping them out of it. And that meant taking care of the houses that I had so that I would get good references, paying my bills on times so that I know that people would know that I was responsible enough.

Gregory made sure that he passed his grade 12 by putting in the effort required. He relates that, he "listened, paid attention to the instructions of [his] teachers, and took [his] books home and read them thoroughly." He states that he did make the necessary adjustments to university life so that he would succeed.

Joseph worked hard to ensure his success and to take care of his family. He took on a job with his band while he was attending university. In academics, he states, "I would really, really try hard. I would be there every day, and I would take good notes. I would get my papers, try get them done before they were due and have them professionally done."

David brushed up on his study habits to ensure his success. He states that, "It took me about two months before I got settled into actually the university life…You've got to get used to all these different time schedules and how to do research, how to write the papers, the different formats, all the stuff, things I had never ever heard of or thought of before."

The participants have shown resourcefulness by putting in the effort required for success and they adapted successfully to new situations. Resourcefulness includes being self-sacrificing in terms of physical needs. Resourcefulness can be assumed to be a key determinant of resilience as it allows us to take responsibility for our own success.

Summary

It is to be noted that Gloria, Mary, and Wilma attended residential school while Gregory, Joseph, and David attended school on reserve or in an urban school. Their early educational experiences differed in this aspect and yet they

shared problems related to adjustment to university life, adjustment to university academics, financial stress, and alcohol and drug abuse. Gloria, Mary, and Wilma reported various abusive acts against them while Gregory, Joseph, and David did not report any domestic violence or any other forms of abuse. Religious faith and spirituality had helped Gloria, Mary, and Wilma to cope with adversity. Mary and Wilma actively participate in traditional ceremonies for their healing. Gregory, Joseph, and David did not reveal any close ties with spiritual and traditional practices, or, perhaps, preferred to keep their spiritual beliefs a private matter.

Similar to the findings of McCubbin and his associates (1998), participants have shown "positive behavioural patterns" and "adaptive behaviors" (Kaplan, 1999) which supported and enhanced their coping processes. The analysis of the stories has suggested a theory of resiliency that is fundamentally the same as the model developed by Cross (1998). Consistent with the relational worldview model of resilience (Cross), the participants, as resilient individuals, are able to use their gifts of intellect and judgment wisely. They have completed their teacher training programs and two participants have also completed master's degree programs. Similar to the findings of Higgens' (1994) study, the participants have shown high levels of mental health by not allowing negative circumstances to deter them from achieving their goals.

Garmezy (Rolf, 1999) asserts that resilience is "adaptation" and participants have shown that they were able to adapt and make the necessary adjustments to university life and university academics by completing their program. Similar to the findings of Bandura (1995), who states that resilient individuals are able to

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"execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations," the participants described the steps they took to ensure their success through accessing support systems and supportive individuals. Poverty was a significant risk factor for the participants, yet they learned to be resourceful in overcoming financial stress.

Racism has been identified in previous research as a stressor (Clark et al., 1999). In this study participants have reported racism as an occurrence in their lives and they dealt with it by confronting the persons responsible. In one instance, the participant resorted to legal action. Some participants reacted with anger and made the perpetrators accountable or they remained passive and did not allow it to affect them. This capacity to cope with and confront stressful situations fits the model of resiliency developed by Cross (1998), and others. Resilient individuals show high self-esteem and are less concerned by threats to their self-worth (Kaplan, 1999) and the participants did not allow themselves to be threatened by racism. Their reactions can be perceived as "societal coping" which is another level of coping in resilient individuals, according to Radke-Yarrow and Sherman (1990).

Protective factors, which are recognized as defences against life stresses, within the individual/system, and the environment, are important (Health Canada, 1995). The participants have named significant people who protected them and made a difference in their lives. They have, however, succeeded mainly on their own initiative and resourcefulness. They actively sought out means of ensuring their survival and adaptation.

Due to the disruption in their community and family life, participants have experienced language and cultural loss, and they have had to discover other meaningful ways of coping. For example, Gregory does not have close family or community ties, but he proved himself in the area of bodybuilding, demonstrating extraordinary physical resilience. Others, like Mary, have returned to the traditional teachings and she states, "I'm glad that I have been able to learn this and pass it on to my little grandchildren and my children...I think that's where we need to get back to, listening to the elders... and more and more every year there's one or two of our family members that come and join us in the circle and it's really good."

From the Health Canada (1995) study it is held that resilience helps to enhance and maintain health. Results of this study have shown that the participants understand the importance of balance in all things. In this regard, Wilma states, "you have to be able to identify with the balance between physical and spiritual and emotional." Similar to Higgens' study (1994) the participants have demonstrated that they have developed an integrated sense of self as they have worked through personal issues like abusive relationships, and lack of family support.

Higgens' (1994) found that resilient individuals often become social activists and the participants in this study are working towards positive change within the structures they live in. For example, Gregory makes sure to address racism with his students. He states, "Racism is embedded in our institutions and I address that fact with my students and I also tell them that we are not to just give up, to submit

to failure, that we can try and overcome this." Gloria also took action by confronting the students who were being rude to her in the high school.

Resilient individuals are able to love and work well (Higgens, 1994) and the participants have shown themselves to be caring, and compassionate individuals. In their adult life, it appears that these participants are living out their lives in ways that compensate for the lack of emotional support and love in their own childhood. Resilient individuals can forgive those who have mistreated them and they are able to assign blame and responsibility appropriately. Wilma, who states, "I had to go through a healing journey, go through all the things that I went through in life and learn not to blame, it wasn't anybody's fault life because everybody else was --- they had that traumatic experience from the past, too", best expresses this.

In the review of the factors and themes of resilience there are many overlaps and similarities in describing the characteristics of resilient individuals. The themes of resilience are comparable to the self-factors or resiliencies identified by Wolin and Wolin (1993) but the six protective factors that are presented are the most predominant qualities of resilience shown by this group of individuals. These protective factors have been organized into a framework (See Figure 5.1, Weenie Model) that is based on the relational worldview model and the mandella model (Wolin & Wolin).

In this model the self is shown as representing the innermost circle and the six protective factors form an outside circle. The factors are placed within the four domains of self; the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. Self-efficacy and vision indicate mental aspects of resiliency. Vision and faith show the

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spiritual aspect of the self. Compassion and stability can be perceived as the emotional aspects of self. Resourcefulness reflects physical capacity. These protective factors are offered as interactive and interdependent processes and are the basis for the development of theoretical knowledge about resilience that is discussed in the following chapter.

PREDOMINANT RESILIENT FACTORS
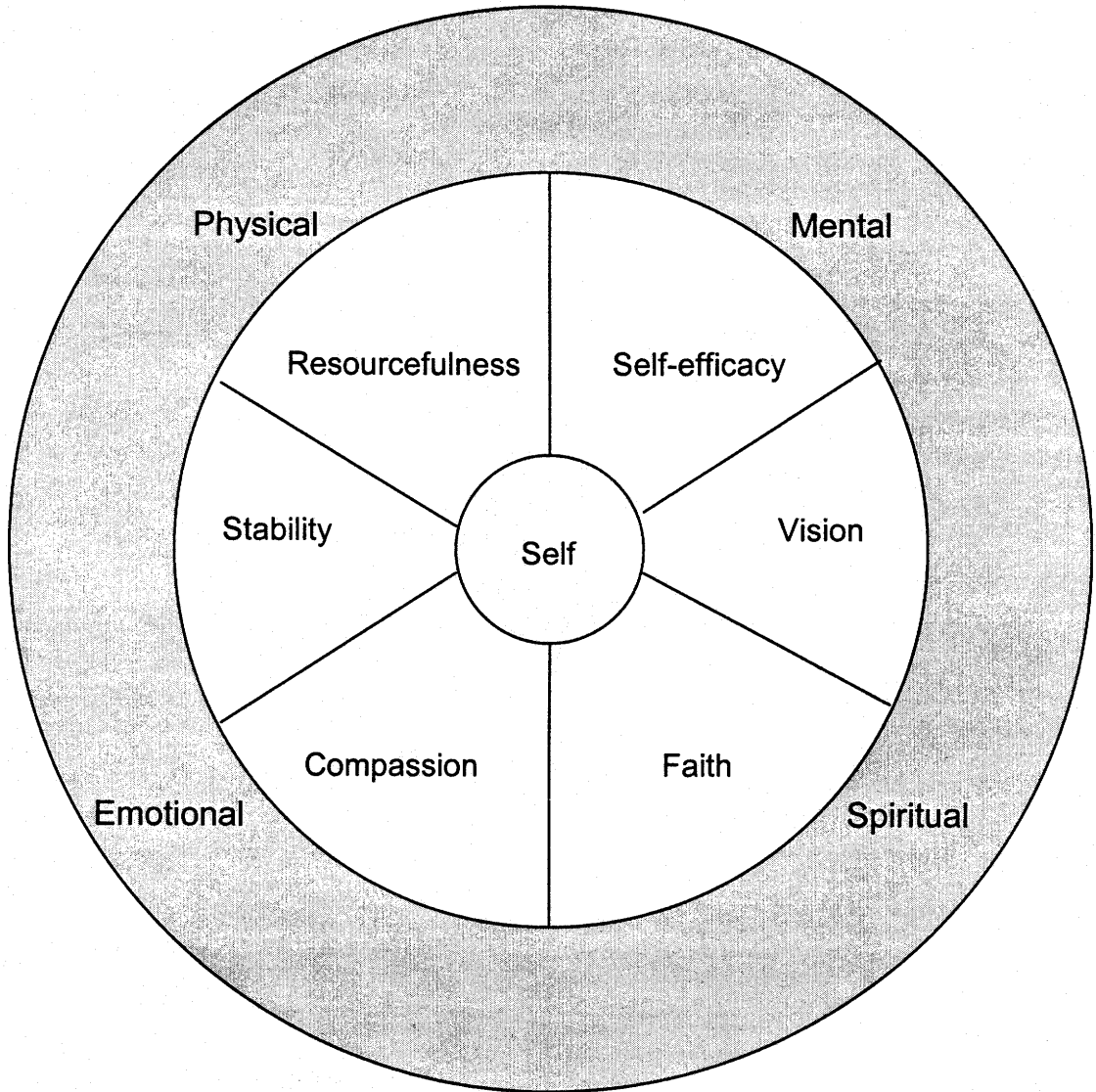
Weenie 2002
Figure 5.1

Chapter 6

Implications of the Study

In the concluding phase of this study, we approach the seventh ring of indigenous visioning, *being*, (Cajete, 1994). To complete the journey we need to reflect on the process and the significance of the research that has been undertaken. The stories are the basis of expressing knowledge about resilience. It is thought that a philosophy of life or worldview, which involves belief systems and values, is embedded in life stories (Cross, 1998) and the analysis has shown a distinctive view of resiliency in First Nations people. The narrative analysis has also shown the relation to existing resilience theories. The results of the study have important implications for the development of a theory or body of knowledge about resilience. In developing a theory of resilience the conceptual and methodological implications of the study are addressed in this chapter

Resilience as Reconstruction of Worldview

It has been affirmed in the conceptualization of resilience that developing a "healthy dispositional worldview" (Health Canada, 1995) is an integral part of the resilience process. In the analysis of the factors of resilience in the participants' stories, reintegration has been demarcated as resilient, homeostatic maladaptive and dysfunctional reintegration (Kumpfer, 1999). After experiencing disruption and disorganization in their lives resilient individuals engage in reconstructing new selves and new foundations through the reconstruction of their worldviews. The reconstruction of worldview is a way to put into perspective the "interdependence of all relationships" (Clark et al., 1999) and is similar to both the "organizational

view"(Egeland, Carlson & Sroufe, 1993) and the "relational view" (Cross, 1998) in resilience research.

The process of reintegration can also be construed, from a First Nations philosophical viewpoint, as finding our place, our identity, and our foundation (Cajete, 1994). In this study it is also posited that resilience can be viewed as resistance. Participants reconstructed their worldview in unique ways. There is variance in how they achieved successful adaptation.

Based on the analysis of the stories, four main assumptions are made. The reintegration process involves developing an integrated sense of self, as Higgens (1994) has theorized. Reintegration implies working to achieve balance and harmony in all of life and being (Cross, 1998). It is further assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and resilience, and that resilience can be conceived as self-actualization. It is within these conceptual frameworks that the results of the study are discussed.

Resilience as developing an integrated sense of self

Egeland and his associates (1993) suggest that resilient individuals integrate behavioral systems and organize their experiences based on early structures. In this study it has become apparent that, as part of the reconstruction process, the participants have relied on the stories and teachings of their grandparents to help them to overcome challenges. The grandparents passed on their knowledge and coping strategies in this manner, enabling the participants to develop values and cultural strengths that would help them to adapt and adjust to stressful life situations. The grandparents were the source of the "strength

producing or harmonizing resources" (Cross, 1998) that lead the way for adaptation and adjustment for the participants. Extended family members also were influential in developing those "systems of care" (Cross, 1998) that are required for effective coping. In Wilma's case and also in Mary's situation, aunts and uncles were dominant figures. These people provided emotional support at an important developmental period of their lives.

From a relational perspective (Cross, 1998) when there is change in one domain then there is a change effect that extends to all other domains. It is inferred that competence in one critical domain of influence leads to competence in other domains (Kumpfer, 1999; Cross, 1998). Physical interventions, behavioral and spiritual interventions can work to stimulate transformation and balance can be restored.

It has been significant that Gregory, Joseph, and David developed physical resilience through their involvement in sports activities or physical labour. Mary and Wilma participated in the sundance, as well, and this requires physical stamina. It appears that for these individuals this was one way in which they were able to achieve balance and develop self-confidence. Physical resilience appeared to contribute to inner stability and resourcefulness. Gregory developed physical resilience through weightlifting and this was an area he felt competent in but he admits to going "to extremes" to prove himself in bodybuilding culture. His adaptation and educational success was marked by his ability to balance this aspect of himself with other areas and carry it to his educational goals. Joseph attempted to balance his family life, work life and his studies and he did have

difficulties in doing that but by participating in sports to relieve the stress and by learning to prioritize his needs he did succeed.

It was significant how spiritual interventions such as prayer and faith and participation in the sundance, stimulated resilience and competence for Mary, Gloria and Wilma. Resilience manifests itself in many ways and the interactions and the interdependence of behavioral, physical, cognitive, and spiritual processes are part of the reconstruction and reformulation of worldview.

Participants experienced disruption in their lives, when there was family breakdown. They were either placed in foster care as in the case of David, their parents separated, or they were taken to residential school. The breakdown and disorganization occurred from being disconnected from their families and communities. A critical perspective of organizing one's worldview is that early experiences shape later adaptation (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). Positive and negative experiences that occurred in the family, in the formative years, can be taken as valuable learning experiences that had "bipolar effects," as Masten (2001) suggests. It can be inferred that risks and assets had an overall effect of successful adaptation. It is assumed that in validating and acknowledging early life experiences we come to know our own strengths and self-worth.

Building physical strength and resilience can be assumed to build up resilience processes in other areas. As well, participants felt they had the intelligence to succeed and this led them to make changes in other aspects of their lives. The process of becoming healthy and whole again or being in balance (Cross, 1998) can be perceived as part of the reintegration process. The

development of an integrated sense of self infers a balancing of the risk factors

and protective factors in order for positive outcomes to occur.

Self-efficacy and resilience

There has been strong evidence that self-efficacy is an underlying principle

in resilience processes and in the reconstruction of worldview. The central theme

in the stories has been that the participants, in surmounting the challenges in their

lives, began to perceive themselves as competent and worthy individuals. The

participants developed new knowledge from their experiences. They formed new

insights into their abilities. These experiences allowed for psychological

adjustment resulting in positive self-concept and a high level of self-esteem. The

self as agent has been advanced as foremost in accounting for resilience

processes (McGinty, 1999) and it is from this perspective that it can be assumed

that Mary, Wilma and Gloria were able to resolve the abuse in their lives and make

healthier choices. From the relational view the psychological distress was a

stressor that is perceived as being beneficial. It triggered new behaviours and new

understanding. The implication is that all of life's experiences are related and

significant.

Resilience as self-actualization

In this thesis, resilience and reintegration is taken to be considerably more

than the process of "self-righting" that Higgens (1994) proposes. It implies the

attainment of "optimal functioning" (Betz, 1989) or self-actualization (Higgens,

1994) that occurs after experiencing disorganization. It also takes into account "the

internal locus of control" (Higgens, 1994; Kumpfer, 1999) and personal agency

(Taylor, 1985; McGinty, 1999) that characterizes resilient individuals.

Analogous to the way the participants have referred to previous foundations

to build new lives, it seems that theories build upon long-standing theories. The

evidence that has been presented resonates with self-actualization theory

developed by Maslow (1970). From this perception, self-actualization is presented

as the highest level of functioning (Higgens, 1994; Rogers, 1951; Maslow, 1970)

and resilience can be understood as the maxim of personal growth and

development. There appears to be a relationship between effective coping and

working to achieve one's full potential in that participants have found fulfillment

and personal success by overcoming challenges and pursuing their educational

pursuits.

Resilience as resistance

The pathways of competence or patterns of behavior can be seen as

"interest in engaging in problems posed by the environment" (Egeland, Carlson, &

Sroufe, 1993) or as resistance efforts. This is an important developmental aspect

of resilience. The participants acted in ways to resist abuse in their homes, racist

acts by teachers and others, and to resolve the issues that were harmful to their

well-being. Protective factors in the individual or the environment counteracted or

intervened to allow them to reintegrate and reorganize.

In summary the stories have reflected, from an organizational and relational

view, the participants' attempts to organize and manage their world through

struggle and hardship, in a manner that allowed them to reconstruct their worldview and fulfill their true potential and capability.

Toward Advancing This Study

The study has been important in that it has shown the inner qualities of those who have survived and thrived amidst great adversity and it has practical implications. The stories provided information on resilience processes of First Nations post-secondary education students. This information could be used to develop specific intervention strategies for other students in the Indian Education program by focusing on the predominant protective factors and resilient characteristics identified in the stories. The participants have identified peer support, faculty support and family support as significant to their success and achievement. Enhanced individual and environmental supports within these different contexts could be considered. Using Maslow's (1970) hierarchical representation of needs, we can understand from the stories that basic needs sometimes override all other concerns for students and we can understand that continued and sustained efforts to develop individual resilience are required.

The discussion of the results of the study has verified the notion that resilience is a "relational concept" (Kaplan, 1999; Bartelt, 1994) and is also a "descriptive concept" (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999). It substantiates that resilience entails a "transactional process" (Glantz & Sloboda) and this has implications for the methodologies and the designing of research instruments. To this purpose, this study has endeavoured to determine the interactions and the interplay between the different systems in individual resilience processes. There are,

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however, questions that have evolved from this study that can serve to extend knowledge of resilience processes.

This thesis offers possibilities of how data can be gathered, to further refine methodologies. This has been a qualitative study employing a resiliency framework (Kumpfer, 1999) and observations to analyze life stories and to measure resilience processes. Using the triangulation process this study has examined the subjective experiences and the personal and social resources of the individual. The triangulation process is a comprehensive way of understanding the complexity of coping processes at work (Bartelt, 1994).

To advance this particular study it would be beneficial to balance the approach that has been taken by utilizing quantitative methods to measure the extent and degree of risk and protective factors. This could produce more comprehensive results and could possibly address the "multivariate approach" advocated by Kumpfer (1999). The variability of factors in resilience processes can be addressed by using a person-focussed and variable-focussed approach, as presented by Masten (2001).

Person-focussed Study

1. To examine and compare the coping processes of individuals with a strong language and cultural foundation with those who have experienced language and cultural disintegration.

2. To determine factors of resilience in individuals within different contexts as an interdisciplinary study thus making it a more functional concept across disciplines.

3. To study the resilience processes of this particular group over time presents another level of analysis.

4. To learn more about specific gender differences in resilience processes with adults and with different cultural groups.

Variable-focussed Study

1. To determine what other factors influence resilience processes.

2. To focus on specific risk factor and protective factors or single life stressors like racism, to determine coping processes.

Conclusion

The oral tradition is a method of traditional pedagogy and stories can constitute an effective framework for further research. There are many other stories that we can learn from. Using narratives is a functional approach as it can capture diverse perspectives. Using Cajete's (1994) connected rings of indigenous visioning also presents a unique way of carrying out First Nations research.

From the study I have discovered that the pathway to competence entails different paths and different ways of reconstructing our lives. As a parent, I understand that struggle and hardship is positive. There is growth and change that occurs from overcoming stressful life situations. As an educator, I understand that the student has to be committed to his or her own success, in the same manner that I have to be committed to their growth and development.

When I listen to the elders, I am reminded time after time about the importance of "kisewatisowin," which is a Cree word for kindness and compassion.

Our elders teach us that, "kindness is healing," (W. Fox, personal communication, February, 2002). It implies doing our work with heart.

When I was lost in the world of addictions and abuse, the memories of what my mother had tried to teach me were what I had, to anchor me once again. Today, the teachings of the elders and ceremonies are what ground me and sustain me. It has been a struggle to complete this thesis, but I had a responsibility to uphold to the participants and to myself, and perhaps that is what resilience is about. The process of becoming whole again involves being responsible, and being true to ourselves, and trusting in the process. I have been told that what we receive is a gift and to keep it, we have to give it away. It is in this spirit that this thesis has been written.

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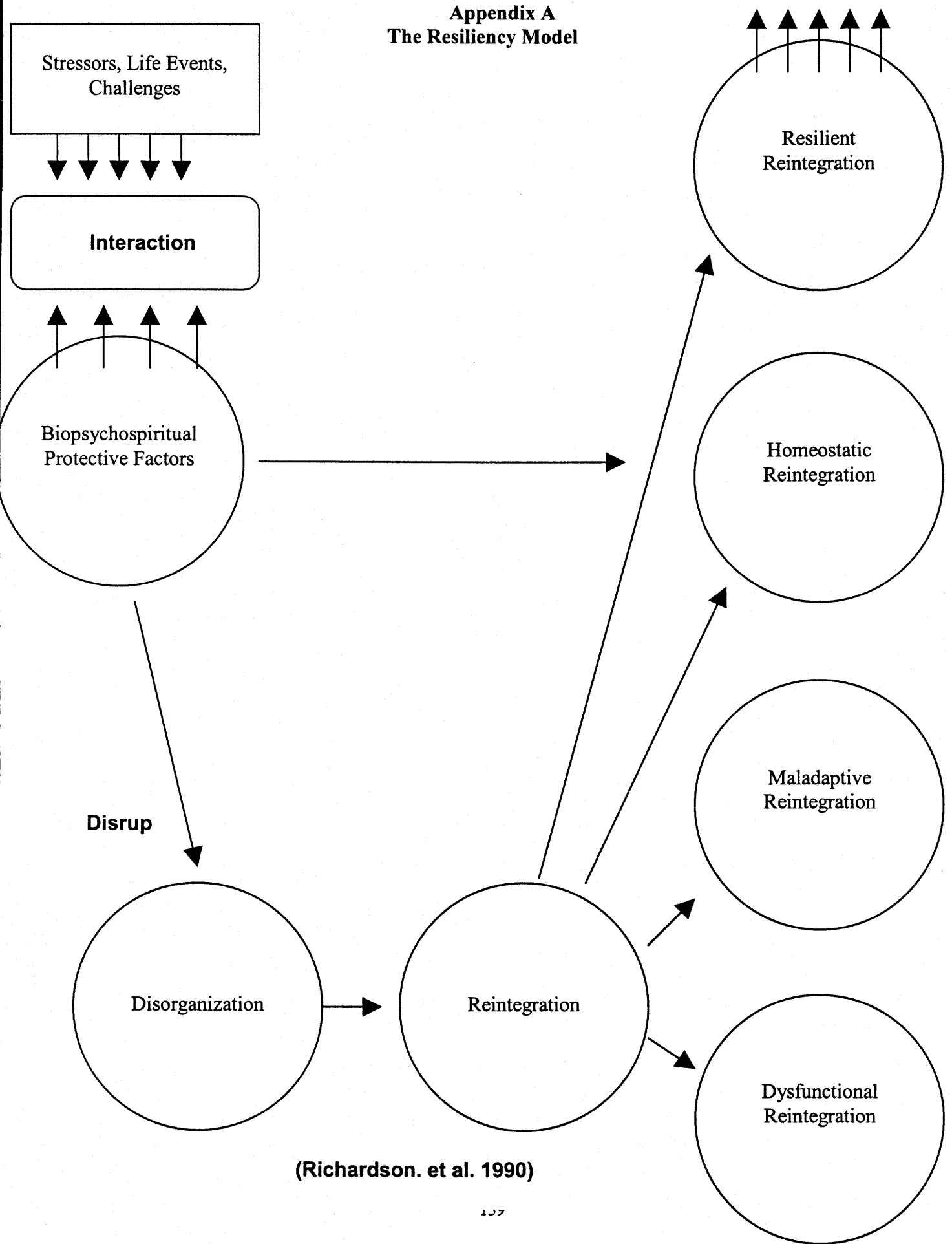Taylor, C. (1985). <u>Human agency and language</u>. New York: Cambridge University
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Appendix A
The Resiliency Model

Stressors, Life Events, Challenges

Interaction

Biopsychospiritual Protective Factors

Disrup

Disorganization

Reintegration

Resilient Reintegration

Homeostatic Reintegration

Maladaptive Reintegration

Dysfunctional Reintegration

(Richardson. et al. 1990)

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The Resiliency Framework

Context
Transactional Process

Resilien Processe

Resilie Reintegra

Risk Factors

Family Culture Community

School Peers

Stressors

or Challenges

Prot ective

Cognitive

Emotional

Spiritual

Physical

Behavioural

Adapta

Maladap Reintegra

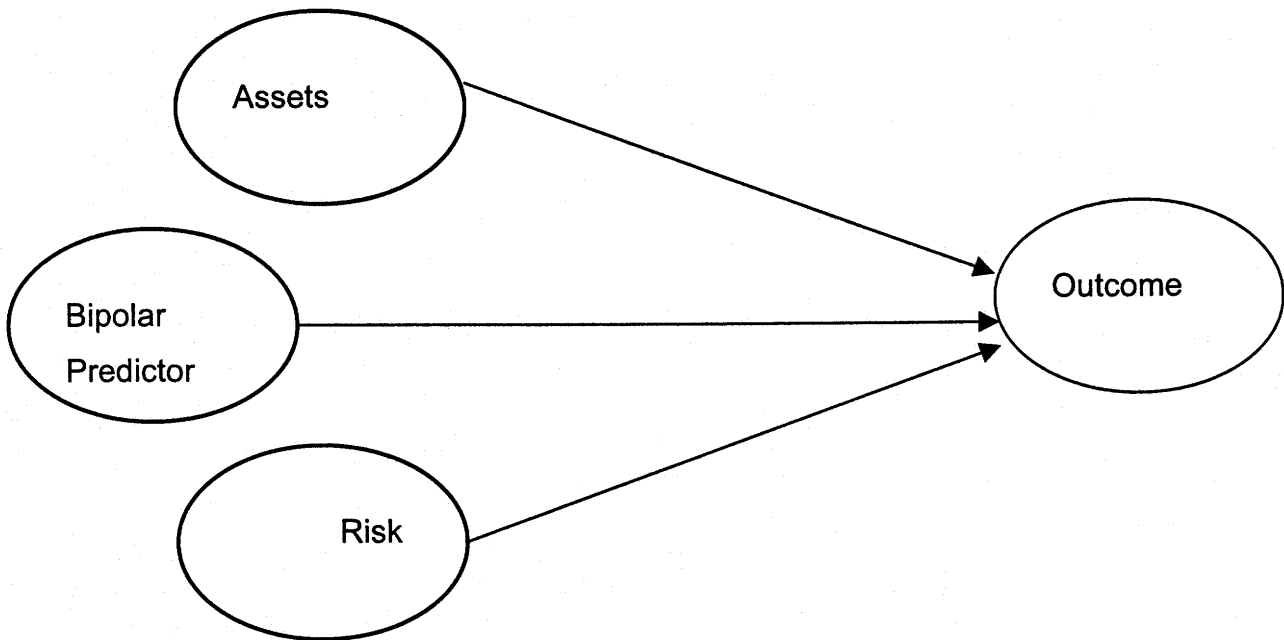Perception
Reframing
Changing Environments
Active Coping

(Kumpfer, 1999)

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Appendix C

Path Diagram

Masten (2001)

Appendix D

Resilience and the Relational Worldview Model

(Cross, 1998)

CONTEXT

Family
Culture
Work
Community
History
Climate / weather

MIND

Intellect
Emotion
Memory
Judgement
Experience

SPIRIT

Spiritual practices / teachings
Dreams / symbols / stories
Gifts / intuition
Grace / protecting forces
Negative forces

BODY

Chemistry
Genetics
Nutrition
Substance use / abuse
Sleep / rest
Age
Condition
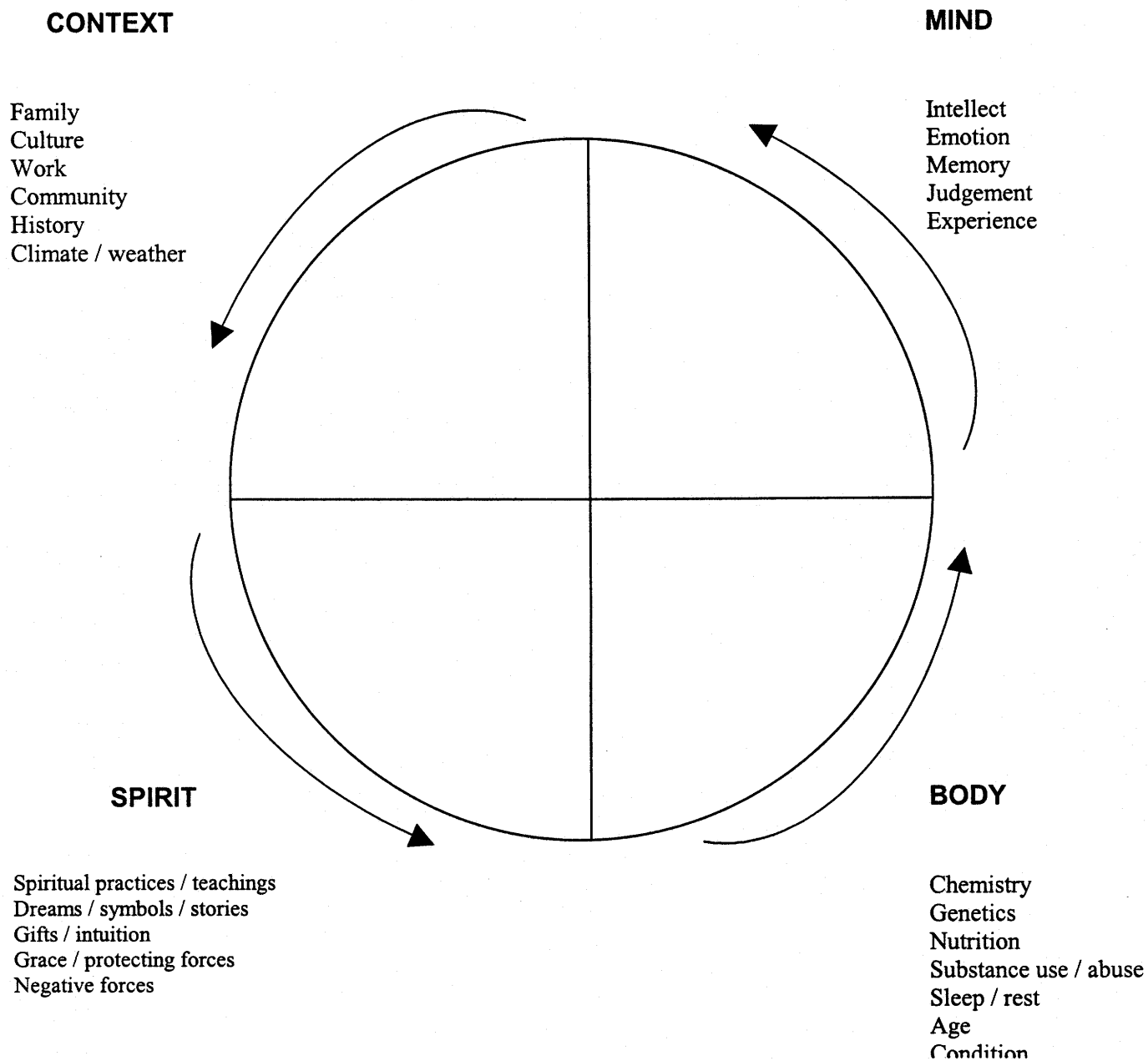
Appendix E

Ethics Approval Form

NAME: V. St. Denis (Angelina Weenie)   **BSC#:** 2000-190
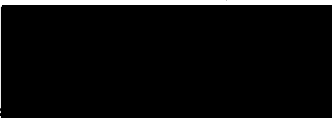Department of Educational Foundations

DATE: January 17, 2001

The University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research has reviewed the revisions to the Application for Ethics Approval for your study "A Study of Resiliency in First Nations' Post-Secondary Education Students" (00-190).

1. Your study has been APPROVED subject to the following minor modifications:

    - Please indicate your departmental and institutional affiliation on your recruitment poster, and also indicate the time commitment that would be requested of participants

2. Please send one copy of your revisions to the Office of Research Services for our records. Please highlight or underline any changes made when resubmitting.

3. The term of this approval is for 5 years.

4. This letter serves as your certificate of approval, effective as of the time that you have completed the requested modifications. If you require a letter of unconditional approval, please so indicate on your reply, and one will be issued to you.

5. Any significant changes to your proposed study should be reported to the Chair for Committee consideration in advance of its implementation.

I wish you a successful and informative study.

Valerie Thompson, Chair
University Advisory Committee
on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research

VT/bk

Appendix F

Interview Guide

(This interview guide has been adapted from <u>A Study Of Resiliency in Communities,</u> published by Health Canada, 1995).

Part I -- Risk Factors

1. Describe any problems related to:

    - Adjustment to university life/

    - Adjustment to university academics

    - Moving to a new city

    - Financial stress

    - Poverty

    - Alcohol and drug abuse

    - Limited family support

    - Domestic violence

    - Personal trauma

    - Racism

Part II -- Protective Factors

1. How did you overcome these challenges? What were your personal strengths? Who were the people most significant to you during times of hardship?

2. What support system did you rely on to help you (family, friends, professionals, self-help)?

Part III -- Outcome Variables

(Outcome variables are the indicators of success.)

1. What did you learn from these stressful life situations?

2. What do you do to keep yourself healthy physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually?

   - Nutrition
   - Physical/sports activities
   - Smoking rates
   - Drinking rates
   - Safe sexual behaviour

3. What goals do you have for yourself?

4. To what extent do you feel hopeful about the future?

Appendix G

Call For Participants

Graduates of
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College
Teacher Education Program

Would you be willing to participate in a study of resiliency in First Nations Post-Secondary Students?

Resiliency is defined by the active process by which individuals adapt to change and adversity. Resilient individuals are able to achieve their goals, maintain healthy worldviews and lifestyles despite great challenges.

The stressful life changes that First Nations post-secondary students encounter include:

- Adjustment to university life
- Adjustment to university academics
- Financial stress
- Relocation
- Limited Family Support
- Racism

If you have experienced three or more of the above stresses and have managed to achieve your goals and are interested in sharing those experiences of resiliency as part of my thesis research please contact me.

Ideal candidates must be willing and able to meet with the researcher on four separate occasions.

Angelina Weenie
Department of Indian Education
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

(306) 790-4319 (work)
(306) 585-0637 (home)

Appendix H

Consent Form

1.   Title of study: A Study of Resiliency in First Nations Post-Secondary

Education Students.

2.   Researcher: Angelina Weenie
                             College of Education
                             Department of Educational Foundations
                             University of Saskatchewan
                             Saskatoon, SK.
                             Telephone: (306) 790-4319 (work)
                                          (306) 585-0637 (home)

2.   Objectives of Study:
This is a qualitative study of resiliency in First Nations Post-Secondary
Education Students. Resiliency is defined as the capacity of individuals to
adapt to and stressful life situations. To honour my commitment and belief
in active agency, I wish to focus my research on those who survive and
thrive in spite of tremendous challenges. Through narratives and interviews,
I will analyze the themes that are present in the lives of resilient individuals.

3.   Benefits of the Study
This study can contribute to greater knowledge of resiliency in individuals. It
will validate the strength and resilience of First Nations people. This study is
intended to promote development toward health and wholeness in First
Nations communities.

4.   Procedures
Narrative and interviews will be used. Graduates of the S.I.F.C. TEP will be
interviewed and tape-recorded. The researcher will meet with the
participants four times in a place where privacy is ensured.

The Starquilt Boardroom at the Department of Indian Education, located at
Suite 220, 1230 Blackfoot Drive, Regina, Saskatchewan, will be used for
participants residing in Regina. A suitable place at the College of Education,
will be used to interview participants residing in Saskatoon.

The first session will begin with a smudging, if the participants so choose.
Smudging is the burning of sweetgrass, and it is used to cleanse the spirit
and the mind. Smudging is an integral part of the Department of Indian

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Education program. Participants are graduates of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and they are familiar with smudging and other traditional spiritual practices. S.I.F.C. Elders have published a brochure entitled, "What To Do At Our Ceremonies", which is available upon request. Following cultural protocol when seeking knowledge from another, the participants will also be offered cloth and tobacco.

In the first session participants will be asked to reflect on the significant people and the significant events in their lives, using a stage outline. For example, the stage outline could include their years prior to beginning school, their years spent in elementary and secondary school, their years as a university student, and their life as it is presently. They will be asked to talk in general terms about personal challenges and the ways that they have coped. The purpose of this first session is to get to know the participants better.

The second session will involve interviews. An interview guide will be used (Appendix B). The questions are divided into three sections. Part I includes questions about the risk factors related to their years as university students. Part II comprises questions about the protective factors that have been identified in respect to family support and professional support. Part III entails the outcome variables related to their quality of life.

In a third session, the narratives and the interviews will be transcribed and presented to the participants for clarification. The researcher and the participant will come to an understanding of the contents of the stories and the interviews.

Finally, a fourth meeting will be held to review the findings and the interpretations of the results. To bring closure to this part of the research we will end with a smudging, if the participants so choose.

An estimate of the time commitment of the participant is about 4 hours.

5.   The use of sweetgrass during the sessions is a way of ensuring that any side effects or discomforts will be minimized. As an individual who has had to overcome adversity in order to succeed, I consider myself a resilient individual and I can share my experience, strength and hope with participants who are experiencing side effects or discomforts. For further in-depth therapy I will contact Dr. Mary Hampton, my co-supervisor, who is a registered psychologist, to make a referral. Elders employed by the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, are also available for consultation, if necessary.

6.   The participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. If the participant withdraws, his/her data will be deleted from the

study and destroyed. If appropriate I may choose to discontinue a participant's involvement in the study and the data will be deleted from the study and destroyed. The condition under which the participant's involvement will be discontinued is if the individual moves away and the full interview process cannot be completed.

7. I am committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the participants of this study. I will not reveal any information that can be connected to the participants personally. To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant, the audiotapes and the transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet. The study results and associated material will be safeguarded and securely stored by the researcher in her office for a minimum of five years.

8. The data collected will be incorporated into the thesis. The data will also be used to write articles. In any publication only aggregate data will be reported.

9. If the participant has any questions with regard to the study or to his/her rights as a participant in the research study, he/she can contact the Office of Research Services (306)966-4053, or my advisors.

    My advisors are:

    Verna St. Denis   Dr. Mary Hampton
    Assistant Professor   Associate Professor of Psychology

    College of Education   Luther College
    University of Saskatchewan   University of Regina
    Saskatoon, Sask.   Regina, Sask.
    Phone: (306)966-2734   Phone: (306)585-4826

10. The researcher will advise the participant of any new information that will have a bearing on the participants' decision to continue in the study.

11. Debriefing and Feedback Procedures
    The participants will be involved in all aspects of the study. A final copy of the study will be given to each participant.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date