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Changing the narrative from the inside: A look at how strength and narrative based service delivery can function as a space of resistance for Indigenous women

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology

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Abstract

This research focuses on the narrative surrounding Indigenous women by examining different knowledge sources – news stories and life stories, as they transpire within different knowledge spaces – non-Indigenous newspapers, the London Free Press and the Globe and Mail, and an Indigenous service delivery organization called Positive Voice. Drawing on an Indigenous aligned feminist mixed-methodological approach, this research had three main objectives: 1) to document and critically analyze the current mainstream narrative surrounding Indigenous women; 2) to understand the narratives Indigenous women share themselves in order to bring meaning to their experiences, from their own voices; and 3) to understand how service delivery might act as a thread between these diverging sources of representation. Methods included a critical thematic narrative analysis of 289 newspaper articles, 15 in-depth interviews with Positive Voice participants and other persons involved with the program, and a brief examination of program material. Several overarching findings were identified. First, the narratives surrounding Indigenous women and the mainstream news spaces that produce them continue to reflect non-Indigenous and Western cultural memories of Indigeneity. Second, although the narratives that interview participants shared in some ways reflected these Western cultural memories, they were shared within a context of change and strength. In particular, the Positive Voice women’s life stories reflected self-reflection and insight, with Positive Voice representing a transition in how the women understood and approached themselves and their narratives. Finally, it became clear that Positive Voice functioned as a space of resistance and disruption to mainstream narratives and dominant knowledge processes. In conclusion, Positive Voice became a space for challenging mainstream narratives and for exploring personal identity through sharing, listening, and teaching within a comfortable and safe space.

Keywords

Indigenous Service Delivery, Cultural Memory, Narrative Analysis, Storytelling, Knowledge Space, Indigenous Representation, Indigenous Women

Summary for Lay Audience

Working with an urban Indigenous program called Positive Voice, this research examines the stories that surround Indigenous women. It focuses on the stories that are told about Indigenous women in two mainstream newspapers– the London Free Press and the Globe and Mail, and the stories that Indigenous women tell about themselves and Indigenous women generally. It stemmed from the understanding that mainstream representation of Indigenous women tends to be negative. This research has three main objectives: 1) to document and critically analyze the current mainstream narrative surrounding Indigenous women; 2) to understand the narratives Indigenous women share from their own voices; and 3) to illustrate the role of service delivery within these representations. I analyzed 289 newspaper articles, conducted 15 interviews with Positive Voice participants and other persons involved with the program, and examined program material. Several overarching findings were identified. First, the newspapers tend to produce non-Indigenous representations of Indigenous women and people generally. Second, when given the opportunity, Indigenous women’s stories illustrate strength, change, and insights towards their experiences. Finally, Positive Voice as a program challenged common sense ideas surrounding processes of knowledge production and representation by becoming a safe and relevant space for urban Indigenous women. In conclusion, Positive Voice became a space for challenging mainstream narratives and for exploring personal identity through sharing, listening, and teaching within a comfortable and safe space.

Acknowledgments and Dedication

First and foremost, I would first like to acknowledge and extend my deepest gratitude to the women of Positive Voice and those involved in the Positive Voice program that generously and openly shared their stories and knowledges with me.

I would also like to thank my past and present supervisors. The completion of my dissertation would not have been possible without your support and belief in me. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with you both.

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Dedicated to Ruth Elgie who first showed me storytelling as a relational and life giving experience.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Summary for Lay Audience	iii
Acknowledgments and Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	x
List of Stories	x
List of Appendices	xiii
Chapter 1	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Positive Voice at Nokee Kwe	2
1.2 Situating the Researcher	7
1.3 Terminology and Naming	9
1.4 Chapter Overview	13
Chapter 2	16
2 Western Spaces, Cultural Memory, and Indigenous Women	16
2.1 Indigenous Peoples and Western Spaces	19
2.1.1 ‘Othering’ as Cultural Memory	19
2.1.2 The ‘Indian’ and ‘Told-to’ Narratives	21
2.1.3 Durability of Western Cultural Spaces	25
2.2 Discursive Violence of Contemporary Western Spaces	31
2.2.1 ‘Common Sense’ as a Form of Violence	31
2.2.2 Absence of Indigeneity in Western Spaces	33
2.2.3 Contemporary Homogenization of Indigenous Peoples	35

2.3 Gendered Spaces and Violence.....	41
2.3.1 Gender as a Mechanism of Control	41
2.3.2 Violence Against Indigenous Women	47
Chapter 3.....	59
3 Newsprint, Service Delivery, and Storytelling	59
3.1 Newsprint and Violence Against Indigenous Women.....	59
3.1.1 Newsprint and Meaning Construction	60
3.1.2 A Complex History of Indigenous Visibility/Invisibility	63
3.1.3 The use of Violence Templates.....	70
3.2 Service Delivery and Cultural Memory	72
3.2.1 Indigenous Peoples as Policy Problems.....	74
3.2.2 Narratives of Mainstream Solutions	79
3.2.3 Erasure of Urban Peoples, Voices, and Identities.....	83
3.2.4 Disruptive Potential for Indigenous Centered Service Delivery.....	85
3.3 Storytelling, Resistance, and the Proliferation of Alternative Spaces and Indigenous Voices.....	86
3.3.1 Storytelling and Indigeneity.....	87
3.3.2 Growth of Indigenous Spaces Offline and Online	91
3.3.3 Proliferation of (Mis)Information	98
Chapter 4.....	100
4 Methodology	100
4.1 Current Study	100
4.1.1 Methodological Summary.....	101
4.1.2 Conceptual Framework.....	104
4.1.3 Research Methods.....	111
Chapter 5.....	129

5	Stories of ‘Othering’	129
5.1	News Space and Article Context	130
5.1.1	Article Distribution	130
5.1.2	Violence as a Topic of Interest	132
5.1.3	Consistency in Representations	135
5.2	Main Themes	137
5.2.1	Violence Against Indigenous Women	138
5.2.2	Violence as an Indigenous Issue	141
5.2.3	Reinforcing non-Indigenous Power	154
5.2.4	Removal of Indigenous Women’s Power and Agency	166
5.3	Summary	179
	Chapter 6	181
6	Stories of Change	181
6.1	Narrative Structure and Organization of Themes	183
6.1.1	Temporal-Based Rememberings and Organization of Findings.....	183
6.1.2	Multidimensional Understanding and Sharing	186
6.2	Pre-PV Stories of Limitations and Barriers	188
6.2.1	Stories of Personal Lacking	189
6.2.2	Stories of Negative Relations.....	200
6.2.3	Threads of Strength.....	205
6.3	Post-PV Stories of Change.....	206
6.3.1	Stories of Personal Growth	207
6.3.2	Stories of Claiming Space and Belonging	217
6.4	Summary	222
	Chapter 7	224
7	Space of Disruption and Resistance	224

7.1 Program Deliverables and Connections.....	225
7.1.1 Program Deliverable Success	226
7.1.2 Connection to Program	231
7.2 Stories of Disruption and Resistance	233
7.2.1 Disruption of ‘Expert’ Knowledge	235
7.2.2 Disruption of Deficit-Centered Understanding.....	244
7.2.3 Safe Learning Space	253
7.2.4 Space for Personal and Shared Development	261
7.2.5 Engaged an Extended Community.....	265
7.3 Program Challenges	272
7.3.2 Summary	280
Chapter 8.....	282
8 Discussion	282
8.1 Media as a Site of Colonial Power Reproduction.....	283
8.1.1 ‘Recognition’ Narratives and Institutional Power	283
8.1.2 Calculated Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples	287
8.1.3 The Ideological Role of the ‘Narrator’	291
8.2 Getting Comfortable Talking Strength	293
8.2.1 Recognition of Narrow Past Narratives	294
8.2.2 Confidence towards Self and Belonging.....	295
8.3 Storytelling as Healing and Power Sharing	297
8.3.1 Intrinsic Benefits of Storytelling.....	298
8.3.2 Power Sharing through Storytelling.....	299
Chapter 9.....	302
9 Conclusion	302
9.1 Policy Implications	303

9.2 Change by Claiming the Narrative	306
9.3 Limitations and Future Research	309
References.....	312
Appendices.....	343
Curriculum Vitae	371

List of Tables

Table 1: Number of Articles by Year and Newspaper.....	132
Table 2: List of Individual Women in Articles	169

List of Figures

Figure 1: Institutional Distancing	145
Figure 2: Institutional Distancing	150
Figure 3: Collective Association of Indigenous Women and Violence.....	153
Figure 4: Undermining Indigenous Power.....	157
Figure 5: Government Control.....	161
Figure 6: Law Enforcement Alignment	164
Figure 7: Descriptions of Annie Pootoogook from Globe article.....	174
Figure 8: Individual Women as ‘Infotainment’	177
Figure 9: Stories by the Positive Voice Women Interviewed.....	248

List of Stories

Story 1: Deb’s Story of Nokee Kwe	3
Story 2: Heather’s story of the Positive Voice Drum Group	7
Story 3: Alison’s Story of Challenges.....	185
Story 4: Recollection of Sarah’s Story of Layered Experiences.....	187

Story 5: Anne’s Story of Lacking full Sense of Self.....	191
Story 6: Heather’s Story of Shame	193
Story 7: Nikki’s Story of Cultural Change.....	196
Story 8: Heather’s Story of Learning to be with Women	199
Story 9: Alison’s Story of Discrimination	202
Story 10: Nikki’s Story of Personal Change.....	208
Story 11: Anne’s Story of Photography.....	211
Story 12: Colleen’s Story of Cultural Growth	214
Story 13: Alison’s Story of Connecting.....	216
Story 14: Heather’s Story of Claiming Space.....	220
Story 15: Elizabeth’s Story of Service Delivery	227
Story 16: Tunchai’s Story of Connections.....	232
Story 17: Frances’ Story of Offering	236
Story 18: Cassie’s Story of Support.....	239
Story 19: Tunchai’s Story of Relational Teaching.....	242
Story 20: White’s Story of Strength-Based Approaches	245
Story 21: Thorp’s Story of Complexity	251
Story 22: White’s Story of Centering Women.....	257
Story 23: Thorp’s Story of Cultural Importance	259
Story 24: Deb’s Story of Group Support	263

Story 25: Frances’ Story of the Museum Exhibit	270
Story 26: Anne-Marie’s Story of PV’s Intrinsic Benefits.....	273
Story 27: Deb’s Story of Service Delivery	274
Story 28: Cassie’s Story of Community Challenges.....	277

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Tree of Life Activity Instructions By Summer Thorp	343
Appendix B: News Release-Warrior Womyn Exhibit at Museum of Archeology.....	353
Appendix C: CAN Analysis Guide.....	354
Appendix D: Recruitment Material	357
Appendix E: Letter of Information and Consent Form.....	359
Appendix F: Interview Guides.....	362
Appendix G: Descriptions of Select Individual Women	365

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

I first became involved with Positive Voice in 2016 as an advisory committee member. In our initial meeting, Summer Thorp, the program developer, explained her thought process behind the program with a question: “when you google ‘Indigenous women’, what pops up”? From this question, Thorp shared her twofold observation. First, that the common narrative shared by mainstream media surrounding Indigenous women and their experiences tends to be ‘issue’ centric, and second, that this media representation has negative implications for Indigenous women and Indigenous peoples generally. One of these overarching implications being the reproduction of mainstream understanding of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous experiences of racism and discrimination as a result. Another related and more localized implication that Thorp focused on was the observation that this ubiquitous negative storyline shaped the success of the Indigenous women that came to Nokee Kwe. Thorp, in her role as employment counselor, had observed that Indigenous women seeking employment related programming at Nokee Kwe often embodied the narrow understanding of themselves that is so regularly portrayed by mainstream representations. This includes having one-dimensional storylines, a lack of confidence or recognition of skillset, and experiences of isolation – all reflections of a narrow self-perception.

With this context in mind, the main objectives of this research are threefold: 1) to document and critically analyze the current mainstream narrative surrounding Indigenous women; 2) to understand the narratives Indigenous women share themselves in order to bring meaning to their experiences, from their own voices; and 3) to understand how service delivery might act as a thread between these diverging sources of representation. Through these objectives, the aim was to tell an interconnected and multi-level story of representation at the macro level of mainstream media and micro level of Indigenous women’s individual stories, while illustrating the role that service delivery can have in mediating these levels of representation within the context of Positive Voice. This research utilized a combination of critical narrative analysis (CNA) of media representations,

in-depth interviews with individuals involved, and an analysis of program related materials, and was situated within an Indigenous aligned + feminist research methodology. Positive Voice (PV) as a space for fostering and nurturing narratives of strength and resilience to challenge dominant mainstream representations by providing space for Indigenous women's stories and voices is a central thread of this research.

The media analysis is critical for situating the women's stories and the PV program within the existing socio-historical context. However, the main focus were the stories shared during the interviews. In relation to these stories, this research follows PV's lead by extending away from the trauma focused framework that tends to define mainstream representations and understandings of Indigenous women and their experiences. This is not to discount the very real history of colonialism and the continued colonial contexts that shape Indigenous experiences. Further, mainstream media has a responsibility to report on the lived realities facing Indigenous women and peoples, including challenges such as experiences of violence and the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). This responsibility is particularly important given the history of Indigenous erasure within and by mainstream institutions. However, in its focus on Indigenous women and their stories, this project strives to extend the representation practices surrounding Indigenous women. It does so by highlighting the nuances of experiences as both personal and lived experiences, in such a way that recognizes the implication of power within both the developing and sharing of those representations.

1.1 Positive Voice at Nokee Kwe

Briefly, Positive Voice is a program that works with urban Indigenous women. It operates out of Nokee Kwe, an Employment Ontario organization in London, Ontario. Nokee Kwe began as an Indigenous organization that was developed by three Indigenous women in the late 1970s who saw an employment need in their community among urban Indigenous women. Deb, a supervisor at Nokee Kwe and interview participant, shared a story of how Nokee Kwe developed and its connection to Positive Voice that I wanted to include.

Story 1: Deb's Story of Nokee Kwe

It actually started with three Aboriginal women sitting around their kitchen table, who were concerned about Aboriginal women and employment. So, they were really the ones who got this whole thing started and they even had what would now be considered a social enterprise. They had a bookbinding business as a way of building skills among Aboriginal women. So, some hard skills, some soft skills, that sort of thing. And as that grew, they started to include men because they perceived "Well, we're having success with this. Why don't we include the men"? That's why it was originally Nokee Kwe — working women. It was just women. So, Positive Voice is kind of a throwback or testament to how Nokee Kwe originally started, the focus on women. So, then they agreed to include men and then in some time, around maybe the late 80s, mid 80s, the Federal Government recognized the work that they were doing. Back then it was Human Resources Development Canada, and they said, "Could you duplicate a program like this for non-Native individuals"? And so, a 42 weeklong employment program was created.

As Deb continued to share, Nokee Kwe has undergone many shifts throughout its years in operations, morphing from its Indigenous women roots to serve Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the London community who are experiencing barriers¹ in education and employment related capacities. According to Deb, the transition of employment related training programs from federal to provincial jurisdiction in the early 2010s spurred the most prominent of shifts. What Deb noted as most significant about this jurisdictional change was that it altered Nokee Kwe's role in the London service delivery framework in relation to other employment/education programs in London. Instead of each Employment Ontario program in London having distinct purposes and targeting specific populations, as was the case under federal jurisdiction, under provincial guidelines each program was mandated to focus on the general population for their region, with the same target goals and cookie-cutter approach, with a particular focus on outcomes.

Yet, even with this shift, Nokee Kwe still strove to maintain Indigenous principles of holistic and client centered frameworks in relation to needs and service delivery. As the organization and employees were able, Nokee Kwe continued to provide the niche care they carved out and became so well known for when funded by the Federal Government. For instance, they continue to provide clients with standardized and vocational diagnostic testing and assessment, despite now being paid

¹ Barriers include but are not limited to addictions, homelessness, age, language, mental and physical health, unemployment/work history, being a new graduate, and care-based responsibilities.

only for outcomes instead of delivery. Further, Nokee Kwe has retained Indigenous principles and some cultural aspects, which Deb discussed as beneficial for even non-Indigenous clients.

Now we retained a lot of the Aboriginal principles or philosophies or however you want to word it, and some of the cultural aspects too. And that was also part of the reason a lot of people would come to us. A lot of people didn't know anything about Aboriginal culture or customs, and they would pick some of that up, you know, in the workshops, or with the counsellors, or just with other participants. So a lot of people thought that was really cool and of course we had a number of clients who would come in with all kinds of prejudices and biases and then after working with us, or with other First Nations clients, they would complete our program and go, "you know what, this is giving me a whole new perspective on things and I think I'm going to change my way of thinking". Which is wonderful.

Nokee Kwe offers a variety of services within two major centres – the Employment Centre and the Native Education Centre, which you do not have to be Indigenous to attend. An important aspect of the Native Education Centre is that it does not operate like a mainstream school. It recognizes that many individuals who seek out Nokee Kwe do so because they were not successful in mainstream schooling. As a result, Nokee Kwe programming aims at finding out individual needs and meeting their clients where they are at. In addition to this regular programming, Nokee Kwe programming also includes some cultural activities and has offered various (funding dependent) Indigenous specific programming over the years. Positive Voice (PV) is one such program, aimed at urban Indigenous women.

As discussed, PV at Nokee Kwe was developed by Thorp, an existing Nokee Kwe employee, as a pilot program for working with urban Indigenous women. Advertised as a professional development and bridging program, attendees were expected to be seeking transition to education or employment, on their own healing path, and not in any immediate ‘crisis’. The first session ran from September 13, 2016 to October 27, 2016, and the second from November 8, 2016 to December 22, 2016. Although PV was able to secure more funding to continue offering sessions beyond these two initial pilot sessions, this research focuses on these two initial pilot sessions. Each session was seven weeks long with participants meeting Tuesday to Thursday every week from 10am-2:30pm. Every week focused on a different topic for developing everyday literacy skills within the context of positive narrative development and social media. Topics included narrative writing, twitter, memes, photography, and infographics, and general narrative and

computer/technology-based skills throughout. A curriculum was developed for each week that included instruction, guest speakers, and individual projects that became a portfolio.

A variety of teaching methods, learning styles, and program applications were incorporated. For instance, hands on learning, teaching through examples, tutorials, presentations, group work and discussion, individual work time, and guest speaker presentations were all included in the program. The women received a workbook with handouts for all the programming to use for the weekly projects, and then as a reference book post-PV. Programming incorporated a variety of voices including Indigenous and non-Indigenous guest speakers, instructors, activists, and artists, with varying relations to the Indigenous community, levels of government, and service delivery. Although multiple activities and presentations were completed throughout the course of each week, each week had one or two main creative projects that were often the culmination of several mini projects/activities/skills/lessons. The main project was always creative and built off learning from previous weeks, and required the women to learn a variety of skills that had use outside of PV in employment, education, activism, and growth-related capacities

The overarching goal of this program was to assist urban Indigenous women in developing the hard and soft skills necessary for transitioning into and being successful in education or employment, while combating community isolation within the context of positive narrative development. Although it was not expected that all participants would finish the program and automatically jump into employment or education, the intent was to provide women with skills and tools so when they were ready to move forward, in whatever respect that meant for them, that they would feel more confident in their abilities and have tools to be more successful.

Programming began small in terms of narrative development and disclosure level with a creative activity – the Tree of Life (Appendix A). This activity gave the women space to start thinking about aspects of their lives and narratives that were important to them. From there, programming progressively built skills and increased the amount and depth of narratives required. This process of building knowledge also functioned to progressively building comfort around sharing within the group. The intention was that as the program progressed, so too would the women's skills and

their comfort in both developing and sharing their narratives with the other women that would culminate at the exhibit.

The two pilot sessions culminated in an exhibit at the Museum of Archeology in London (see Appendix B for news release). With the help of the museum curator, select works created by the women from the two pilot sessions were displayed in an exhibit titled Warrior Womyn. This exhibit began with an opening night ceremony on January 26th, 2017 and ran until March 28th, 2017. The opening night of the exhibit was extremely well attended — the largest that the Museum ever had — by family and friends of the PV women, Nokee Kwe employees, people in service delivery, friends of the museum, other Londoners, and the Press. The ceremony included speaking by the PV women, a sharing of original poetry by Tunchai Redvers, and a drumming performance by the PV women. The opening exhibit gained media attention from both the London Free Press and the Western Gazette, and the program has been active on social media since the beginning of the first session. Further, an evaluation was completed by Jerry White about the first two sessions, with findings indicating positive engagement by participants and program success, and outcomes that exceeded expectations. In addition to the museum exhibit, another planned event – the Matika Wilbur² night – was co-hosted and held at Western University at the end of the first session. This event was similarly well attended by members of the university and the wider Indigenous and London community. The PV women performed at the event, which inspired the development of the Positive Voice Drum Group.

The development of the Positive Voice Drum Group was a notable yet unexpected outcome from the program. This group was developed by the PV women themselves, spearheaded by Heather, a participant of the first group who then became a member of the advisory committee. It was developed as a way for extending the work and goals of the program post PV, and as a method for

² Matika Wilbur is a Swinomish and Tulalip photographer. Her most recent work is Project 562 – a “a multi-year national photography project dedicated to photographing over 562 federally-recognized tribes in The United States in an effort to create an unprecedented repository of imagery and oral histories that accurately portrays contemporary Native Americans” (Matika Wilbur, 2017).

the women to continue working and being together as a collective. A story of Heather's was included to illustrate this natural, yet unexpected outcome from a service delivery perspective.

Story 2: Heather's story of the Positive Voice Drum Group

I had Summer come to me and say "some of the girls are trying to come up with entertainment for the night. They were kind of wondering if you'd drum". Well, so I developed the Positive Voice Drum Group here... It was so important to me to keep the dialogue going. I did it for myself because I missed the women, and yet I also saw this very clear opportunity to still discuss Aboriginal women issues. Like we discuss where there's resources – "I need free this, I need free that", "okay, who knows where she can get that?" You know? We talk about this kind of thing. And a lot of the women who are strapped for funds, they know what churches they can go to eat and take the children... So, it's about, you know, learning to help each other. It's more than just drumming. But we call it the Positive Voice Drum Group and then we get together for lunch and we... There's only about two of them that are really good drummers. I've always been a drummer, but I've always been a drummer in private. I just drum when I feel down in the dumps and I sing my own songs. So, I thought since they want to try to get a drum group going, let's do that. And if I stink, so what! We all stink really [laughs], we're all working at this, we all stink, I'm not the only one [laughs]. And we're still working hard at that.

In this story, Heather shared the transition from PV to the drum group and what it meant to her and the other women to be a part of this group.

1.2 Situating the Researcher

I first became involved with Positive Voice in March of 2016. I had learned from a colleague that Summer Thorp was developing a program aimed at empowering Indigenous women within a narrative/social media context and was looking for people for an advisory committee. I attended the first advisory committee meeting at the end of April 2016 where we discussed various actions and program related items ranging from screening criteria for potential program participants, to the possibility of providing cameras for the program participants, to the program structure as centered around social media, to the program evaluation criteria. After this initial meeting, the advisory committee met regularly throughout the spring and summer of 2016, assisting in program development. The first session began September 13, 2016 and meetings continued throughout these first two sessions, and after. In my advisory committee member capacity, I observed the

incredible experience that the women were having during those first two sessions. It was during the second session that I became interested in pursuing these ideas of mainstream representation, service delivery, and strength-based narrative development at the individual level within a research context. In December of 2016, nearing the end of the second 7-week session, I approached Thorp about the possibility of developing a research project that addressed the existing narrative, the PV women's storied experiences, and the program. I drafted up a research proposal that Thorp brought to the board at Nokee Kwe, which was approved; and the advisory committee, who supported the research. I began moving forward in a researcher capacity, but also remained a member of the advisory committee.

A critical aspect of situating my role as a researcher within this program was reflecting on my existing role as an advisory committee member and recognizing that this membership would shape my relationship to the research. Early into the program, it became evident to the committee that the program was already having great, even unexpected, levels of success. The PV women were really engaging with the programming and with the program concept in general — that of positive narrative development and the focus on building connections. The women were experiencing various forms of personal and group-based success, were participating in community outreach, and the wider London community was participating back. It is within this context of observed and shared success that my desire to engage with the program in a research capacity morphed. I felt that research, if done properly, could continue and extend the conversation surrounding Indigenous women, positive representation, and power through narrative development.

As well, I reflected on my place in other spaces that I occupy as a cisgender, white woman academic. Academia in particular has a complicated relationship with Indigenous peoples, reflected in a long history of colonial research. Academic spaces tend to be issue and vulnerability focused, that is, illustrating issues/inequalities/problems/and challenges facing populations that are deemed vulnerable – in other words, research worthy. This is particularly the case for research aimed at Indigenous peoples and groups. Although examination of the challenges facing Indigenous peoples, communities, and populations is necessary, the monolithic privileging of deficit-based research can also have pathologizing implications for Indigenous peoples.

Beyond this issue-centric framework of contemporary research; academia, research, and researchers have a long and exploitive history with Indigenous peoples. As Alcock et al., (2017) noted, “We need not dig too deeply into the history of research to see how Indigenous communities have been exploited, subjected, and harmed by their involvement in research” (p.1). This sentiment has been reflected in the works of many Indigenous scholars, activists, and community members such as Smith (1999, 2012), Deloria (1995), Brant Castellano (2004), and Adams et al., (2014), among others. Indigenous peoples’ bodies have been prodded, sampled, and sterilized; communities and knowledges have been mined, extracted, and appropriated; and Indigenous voices as knowledge holders and producers have been ignored, erased, and invisibilized, all in the name of research.

Coming in as a researcher, I had a vested interest in both the program’s success and the goal of empowerment of the PV women. These two things shaped my role within this researcher capacity. Further, as a non-Indigenous researcher, my foundational intent to focus on the strength and resiliency of the women’s stories stemmed from the intent to not re-colonize. With this in mind, I approached my research within the context of what I and others had observed, and that the PV women had already shared — that Positive Voice had generally been a positive and successful experience for the participants. With this in mind, I focused on illustrating the parameters and context of this positivity and success, to develop greater understanding and to illustrate how the women’s stories differed or extended beyond those stories portrayed in media representation.

1.3 Terminology and Naming

Terminology and the language used to discuss and describe Indigenous peoples (usually by non-Indigenous peoples and institutions) reflects a long history of colonialism and colonial violence. Through forms of erasure, homogenization, categorization and naming Indigenous Nations and peoples, Western labels and terminology for discussing and defining Indigenous peoples have been constructed to the benefit of colonial institutions and colonizers. Indigenous peoples in Canada make up over 50 different Nations in hundreds of different communities with Nation specific

cultural customs, practices, and beliefs, languages, and socio-economic and political systems — all of which reflect land-based connections and relations. Indigenous Nations are geographically diverse. Similarly, where Indigenous peoples call ‘home’ is also diverse, with Indigenous peoples living within and outside First Nation communities (also known as reserves), and within urban centers. Despite this diversity, homogenizing and collectivizing terms like ‘Indian’, Aboriginal, First Nations, and Indigenous have been assigned to Indigenous peoples throughout history by non-Indigenous institutions and people that aim to simultaneously erase Nation based cultural diversity and re-define Indigenous peoples.

Under Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982, Indigenous peoples in Canada include three groups: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. First Nations or ‘Indian’ have both been used interchangeably to refer to Indigenous peoples who are not Inuit or Métis and include both Status ‘Indians’ and Non-Status/Treaty ‘Indians’. Although the term ‘Indian’ continues to be used in legal/constitutional matters, in discussion of rights and benefits on the basis of ‘Indian status’, and by some Indigenous peoples in discussion of identity, it is generally recognized as an outdated and offensive term, particularly when used by non-Indigenous people. The terms Indigenous and Aboriginal are both collective terms encompassing all original peoples of the land. However, the term ‘Aboriginal’ generally reflects the Canadian legal context. It came into popular use during the 1980s when selected by the Canadian government to codify the rights of First Nations peoples. While some organizations and peoples continue to use this term for clarity reasons, more people reject this term due to its close association to the Canadian government/law and its history as a term developed by the government.

Instead, ‘Indigenous’ is increasingly the preferred term in Canada and around the world. It is used within international human rights instruments and generally tends to have positive associations with self-determination and continued pride and resiliency of culture and identity, often referred to as Indigeneity. Use of the term ‘Indigenous’ began during the 1970s – a time when Indigenous groups began organizing transnationally for greater presence in the United Nations (UBC, 2009), and has gained more popular usage since the establishment of the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2008). It has more frequently been used within international

contexts. However, it is becoming more commonplace as it recognizes land-based connection to traditional territories since time immemorial. ‘Indigenous’ is capitalized as a form of respect, while the plural ‘peoples’ is used in recognition that Indigenous peoples make many diverse and distinct Nations (UBC, 2009). Using ‘people’ when discussing multiple Nations denies both legal and cultural identity as Nations.

While the term ‘Indigenous’ shows respect to ancestry, the language used throughout this research is imperfect and is inherently limited in its decolonizing potential. For instance, the term Indigenous has inherent limitations as it continues to homogenize and classify Indigenous peoples within a collective framework, which can be offensive. Referring to Indigenous peoples by their Nation-based identity, or however a person or community prefers, is the most correct way for discussing Indigenous peoples. I use the word Indigenous to refer to the PV women and other Indigenous interview participants, as well as in any discussion of the first peoples of Turtle Island³ including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada, but sometimes also Alaskan Natives and American Indians in the case of the literature review. While this research is focused on the experiences of Indigenous women within the Canadian context, the work of Winder (2020) and many others have stressed that the Canada-United States border is an arbitrary line created by colonizers, with many Nations spanning across Canada-US borders. For instance, the peoples of Batchewana First Nation near Sault St. Marie are part of the Anishnabek Nation that is on both sides of the Canada/US border.

I use the term ‘community’ throughout this research when discussing both the research participants and Indigenous peoples generally. The term ‘community’ is used within many different contexts. It is used to refer to geographically specific First Nation communities, which is the preferred terminology over the colonial term ‘reserve’. As well, I use ‘community’ to refer to cultural/Nation-based membership and identity regardless of geographic place or status, and across geographic place. This includes peoples living outside of a First Nation community in urban areas who are still members of their Nations, Inuit communities, status and non-status peoples, and

³ Often known as North America.

Indigenous organizations, and recognizes that many First Nations communities across Turtle Island are members of the same Nation. In this respect ‘community’ is used broadly to signify a sense of belonging and/or being, be it legal, emotional, spiritual, or geographic belonging to a space, Nation, group, or collective. I also use the term Indian when discussing legal concepts like the Indian Act or Indian-status, recognizing that it is both a colonial and legal term, and ‘Indian’ in quotations when referring to this concept as a colonial construction and representation of Indigenous peoples. For example, in the literature review where the construction of Indigenous peoples within Western colonial frameworks like the ‘authentic Indian’ or the ‘Vanishing Indian’ is discussed. Finally, as a matter of clarification, I use the term ‘participant’ to refer to the research participants that I interviewed. I use to the term ‘PV women’ when discussing the women who were participants of the PV program, although on occasion, the PV women refer to themselves as participants during their stories. In these stories, they are referring to themselves or others as Positive Voice participants, not as research participants.

The decision was made early in the research process that interview participants would have the option of having their name used. This intention mirrored that of PV where the women also used their names in the dissemination of their stories at the museum exhibit. On the surface this could be construed simply as a ‘research decision’. However, naming in research is a decolonizing process of knowledge construction and research. It challenges the all-encompassing adoption of Western research norms and can be situated within discussion of Indigenous Research Methodology. It is a decolonizing process as it allows participant agency in terms of claiming space within research. It asserts voice, power, and ownership over the stories and insights – representations that are shared during the research process. Although I had to justify this decision during the ethics process, the continued tendency of awarding decision making power to the researcher should be challenged.

The use of ‘naming’ should not undermine the value and necessity of confidentiality and anonymity in research, as both of these practices are cornerstones of ethical research and participant safety. Further, I recognize that while naming worked for this context, it may not work for all research particularly when addressing more intimate or traumatic topics. As well, naming

may not work for all participants, and in cases where not all participants want to be named, careful decisions surrounding the ability for anonymity have to be considered. As a result, naming in research is not perfect, does not make up for centuries of colonizing research, and is certainly not enough in the goal of decolonizing research. For instance, while the women's names were used as an act of claiming their stories, the stories included throughout this work were both selected by me and mediated by my interpretations – both of which illustrate researcher power over representation within the research process.

Yet, naming can also extend and reframe these important discussions of participant agency and safety to one that includes empowerment. Claiming space and stories is a form of empowerment that can, in fact, be a matter of feeling safe within the research process. Claiming stories through naming can convey participants' insights and knowledge as a form of research legitimization in the participants' eyes. While they may illustrate common themes or experiences, stories reflect unique and individual lived experiences with shared contexts. Ultimately, stories illustrate the complexity of individual lived experiences that exist throughout Indigenous and colonial histories, and their intersections.

1.4 Chapter Overview

In this first chapter I briefly introduced and set the context of this research project. I introduced Nokee Kwe and Positive Voice, and I discussed terminology and the process of naming within the research. I also situated myself within this research as a non-Indigenous woman.

In Chapter 2 and 3, I present a review of the literature as it pertains to Indigenous women and violence, and two common narrative spaces or spaces of representation. **Chapter 2: Western Spaces, Cultural Memory, and Indigenous Women**, focuses on providing context to the colonial history of Western spaces and their creation of dominant cultural memories. It illustrates the durability of Western spaces' telling of history within Canadian society, with a focus on Indigenous women. **Chapter 3: Newsprint, Service Delivery, and Storytelling**, looks more specifically at two Western spaces – service delivery and news media. It highlights the importance

of Indigenous storytelling and the renewal of Indigenous storytelling through the growth of alternative narrative spaces as a form of resistance to Western cultural memory. I also briefly address the rise of (mis)information, particularly in the last four years. The overarching intent is to understand the ways that Western narrative spaces and storytelling reproduce colonial power, and the necessity of Indigenous spaces, storytelling, and representations for elevating Indigenous voices and combating Western colonial cultural memory

I present my methodological approach in **Chapter 4**, which includes a brief outline of the main objectives before moving on to discussing the theoretical underpinnings and methods of this research project. In this chapter I discuss my mixed-methodological approach — an Indigenous aligned feminist research methodology – that builds off both Indigenous and feminist ways of knowing. I then introduce my research methods – critical narrative analysis, in-depth interviews, and pragmatic analysis of program materials – and situate their relevance within this methodological framework.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are the three findings chapter. In **Chapter 5: Stories of ‘Othering’**, I provide the macro level context by examining the ways that mainstream newspapers report on and thereby construct, Indigenous women. In this chapter I look at articles published in two newspapers – the Globe and Mail and the London Free Press – between November 6th, 2011 and November 7th, 2016. This chapter illustrates the media’s focus on violence and shows how common narratives and narrative practices both illustrate and reinforce Western cultural memory of Indigenous women and peoples generally.

In **Chapter 6: Stories of Change**, I aimed at understanding the experiences of the Positive Voice women as told by the women themselves through their stories and reflections. My interest was in understanding what stories the women draw on to frame, explain, and bring meaning to their experiences before, during, and after PV at the individual level. Main themes stemmed from the insights gained from the women as experts of their own experiences.

In **Chapter 7: Space of Disruption and Resistance**, I aimed at understanding the Positive Voice program as an approach to service delivery and narrative development from the perspectives of

those involved in the program and through evaluation data completed and shared by White. In this chapter I was interested in understanding both the ‘deliverability’ of this type of program and its value to the goal of ‘changing the narrative’ as it relates to power and representation at the meso level. In particular, I was interested in thinking about how Positive Voice might mediate existing dominant representations by providing space for women to create and nurture their own narratives.

In **Chapter 8: Discussion**, I draw on the main themes stemming from stories, reflections, and my interpretations within the context of the three research questions that guided this research and the aim of telling an interconnected and multi-level story of representation, Indigenous women, and service delivery. Several overarching aspects are discussed. First, that the narratives and narrative spaces surrounding Indigenous women tend to reflect non-Indigenous power and reproduce Western cultural memory. Second, while the stories shared by the PV women in some ways illustrate themes of internalization, the women’s stories reflected insight that was situated within a context of change and strength. And finally, PV functioned as a space of resistance and disruption to Western cultural memory and dominant knowledge processes — those of holding knowledge, defining knowledge, and knowledge production and reproduction— with it evident that storytelling was akin to healing and an aspect of power sharing.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, **Chapter 9**, I consider the implications of my findings for the task of representation and service delivery. I return to how Positive Voice presents an innovative way of challenging the existing narrative from the inside, by awarding Indigenous women power and control over their representations. In this chapter I discuss contributions that this research has in terms of policy implications and best practices for working with Indigenous women and peoples generally. I end with a brief discussion of research limitations and future research.

Chapter 2

2 Western Spaces, Cultural Memory, and Indigenous Women

Indigenous peoples, communities, cultures, experiences, and locations are diverse. What is known as Canada is home to more than 600 First Nations communities, which represents 50 different Nations and nearly 900,000 peoples living in urban areas (Anderson, 2017; Wilson, 2018). Prior to the centuries-long European invasion and throughout the colonial history, Indigenous peoples have always occupied highly diverse realities and Nation/community specific economic, social, political, and cultural systems. Ultimately, Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island are and have always represented culturally diverse peoples. Despite this diversity, Western cultural/knowledge spaces tend to focus discussion surrounding Indigenous peoples in relation to colonialism and continually conflate Indigenous peoples with a “heavily stereotyped monolith, patterned on a colonial ideology that flourishes to this day” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.3). This Western construction of Indigeneity holds an important role in the very fiber of Canadian society in the form of a Western cultural memory of who Indigenous peoples are. This cultural memory in turn mirrors a Canadian identity – one that exists and is maintained within Western spaces of representation.

Within this context, Western spaces of representation include any specific or general space/sphere like academia or governing bodies wherein narratives, images, stories, and storytelling – all types and forms of representation – related to knowledge, discourse, and culture are reproduced and shared. While the concept ‘storytelling’ within the Western understanding often provokes notions of fiction, storytelling includes any form of knowledge reproduction. It considers that what is often represented as truth – like the Western version of Canada’s history – has been carefully constructed. What has been delegitimized within Western spaces throughout history as ‘stories’ – like Indigenous knowledges – represents place based and scientific knowledge systems that have existed since time immemorial. Ultimately, all forms of knowledge are constructed in the sense that they are told and retold and tell a story that reflects power over the representation process.

Storytelling, stories, and narrative have been described as intrinsic aspects of identity formation and maintenance at personal, communal, and broader cultural levels (Bell, 2020; Rappaport 2000; Somers, 1994; Sonn et al., 2013). Critical of this identity formation is how stories teach identity in relation to groups of people. For instance, Bell (2020) explained the power of storytelling and its significance for exploring topics of racism, and the ways that groups who hold power create and reproduce this power through stories:

Stories are one of the most meaningful and personal ways that we learn about the world, passed down from generation to generation through the familial and cultural groups to which we belong. As human beings we are primed to engage each other and the world through language. Thus, stories can be deeply evocative sources of knowledge and awareness (p.13).

As an ontological condition of social life, stories become sites for cultural continuity and a mode through which “identities, subjectivities, and relationships are produced and transformed (Quayle et al., 2016, p. 264). Power is an intrinsic aspect of this relationship between stories and identity, with storytelling a site for maintaining, analyzing, challenging, and reproducing power (Bell, 2020; Rappaport 2000; Solórzano & Yosso 2002; Somers, 1994; Sonn et al., 2013).

With this in mind, Western spaces of representation have a long history of working in tandem to produce Western representations of Indigeneity that are illustrative of the colonial context that they wish to portray and reproduce. These Westernized stories “[play] strongly into the cultural memory of who Indigenous people are” (Cooper & Driedger, 2019, p.11). This review explores some of these narrative spaces and how they have contributed to a cultural memory of Indigeneity through ‘stock stories’ that exist as an aspect of Western culture, and the impact for Indigenous peoples and communities. The terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ are approached as blanket terms that signify the production and reproduction of knowledge by and within Indigenous spaces and Western spaces. The term ‘cultural space’ is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘narrative space’, ‘knowledge space, or ‘spaces of representation’ to illustrate the relationship between narrative, culture, identity, knowledge, and power over the representation process. Each of these terms represents the reproduction of knowledge systems and typically the dominant sociocultural context. Generally speaking, Western – white, colonial, state supported – spaces have been

preoccupied with constructing Indigeneity as a colonial function of control and power. The durability of the colonial imaginary within Western narrative spaces is indicative of the contemporary colonial context.

Indigenous spaces are also narrative/cultural/knowledge spaces that produce and reproduce cultural identities – individual and collective – through stories and storytelling. However, Indigenous spaces of representation, stories, and narratives tend to exist outside of the Western dominant cultural sphere and are regularly framed as counter-narratives or counter-storytelling. Despite some internalization of the Western cultural memory by Indigenous peoples over time, Indigenous spaces, stories, and memories produced within these spaces are generally distinct from Western stories of Indigeneity or Western cultural memory. For instance, the concept ‘blood memory’ as a form of shared story has been discussed as a critical aspect of Indigenous identity formation (Fontaine, 2001; Sefa Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2007; Winder, 2020). Blood memory is defined by Fontaine (2001) as “similar to having a pass into your history, culture and spirit as an Aboriginal person even if you didn’t have that knowledge and/or access to these elements before. It is an assured connection to those ancestors who have come and gone before you as well as to those who are yet to come” (p.49). It refers to stories that Indigenous peoples carry with them, consciously and unconsciously, that allows connection to culture and self (Fontaine, 2001; Winder, 2020). Further, it is an articulation of human connectedness “that transcends Western notions of identity predicated on homogeneity and static/fixed racialized conceptions of culture and the nation-state” (Sefa Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2007, p.659).

With these differences in memory in mind, this review has six aims, discussed in two chapters. The first chapter focuses on providing context to the colonial history of Western spaces and their production of dominant cultural memory. It illustrates the durability of Western spaces’ telling of history within Canadian society, with a focus on how this has implicated Indigenous women. The second chapter looks more specifically at two Western spaces – service delivery and news media. It ends by highlighting the importance of Indigenous storytelling and the renewal of Indigenous storytelling through alternative narrative spaces as a form of resistance to Western cultural memory. The overarching intent is to understand the ways that Western narrative spaces and

storytelling function as a form of colonial power, and the necessity of Indigenous spaces and storytelling for elevating Indigenous voices to combat and disrupt Western colonial cultural memory.

2.1 Indigenous Peoples and Western Spaces

Western narrative spaces have been preoccupied with controlling the narrative around Indigenous peoples since contact. As discussed in the terminology section, the term ‘Indian’ is generally recognized as outdated and offensive, particularly within non-Indigenous contexts. Yet, in many ways, this term is the embodiment of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Western spaces. It signifies the control claimed and manipulated by Western spaces towards this Indigenous/Canada relationship. The use of the term ‘Indian’ by Western spaces and non-Indigenous people to refer to Indigenous peoples reflects the critical role of colour, ethnicity, and ‘race’ in the productions of the Canadian identity. By portraying Indigenous peoples through these ‘othering’ lenses, Western spaces participate in a critical two-part approach: first, ensuring non-Indigenous ‘separation’ from Indigenous peoples and second, the ‘denigration’ of Indigenous peoples. The role of Western cultural memory and the construction of Indigenous peoples, as well as the durability of this construction over time, will be discussed.

2.1.1 ‘Othering’ as Cultural Memory

Through processes of constructing, representing, persevering, and reproducing Western ideas of Indigeneity, Western spaces have constructed Indigenous peoples as ‘other’ – as “designated outsiders in their own homeland” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.8). The process of ‘othering’ has been summarized as the:

historical processes that have systematically sorted the world’s people according to differential categories that fit with imperial, colonial, and capitalist expansion at a global scale, as well as zoom in on the everyday practices through which difference is constituted among people in direct contact with one another (de Leeuw et al., 2011, p. 41).

In other words, ‘othering’ functions through colonizing categories of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, ability, and other social locations that represent tasks in asserting power and control (de Leeuw et al., 2011). Othering is not unique to Indigenous peoples. Yet, the othering of Indigenous peoples represents a longstanding tradition of colonizers categorizing certain groups of people in relation to themselves as a form of colonial identity construction “to remind the mainstream about the value of its own self-perceptions” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.8). This is accomplished through stock stories and Western cultural memory.

Studies related to ideas of memory – individual and collective – have held space within Western research spheres since the 1920s. Yet, this work was largely forgotten until the 1980s, which saw a resurgence of memory work. The concept of ‘cultural memory’ emerged in the 1980s to account for differences in group level collective memories. For instance, there are differences in memories that exist at the familial level and the more institutionalized level. Further, there are collective memories that exist at a national level and that “rest on symbolic objectivations”, where ‘memory’ is used metaphorically as versions of a shared past (Erll, 2011; Erll & Young, 2008). Cultural memory is defined in Erll (2011) as “a memory tied to material objectivations” that is “consciously established, media-based, and ceremonialized” (p.311). A central aspect of cultural memory is that it reflects “the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts” (Erll & Young, 2008, p.2) and an intersection of Western institutional spaces. Among Indigenous peoples, Western cultural memory is an intrinsic aspect of ongoing historical trauma, with historical trauma “compounded by neoliberal racialized policies, triggered by experiences of racialized violence, and legitimized by cultural memory” (Cooper & Driedger, 2019, p.3).

Western understanding of Indigenous peoples has come to exist as cultural memory – a contemporary way for conceptualizing Indigenous peoples that draws on the past and is reflected in stock stories. Bell (2020) defines stock stories as follows:

Stock stories are a set of standard, typical or familiar stories held in reserve to explain racial dynamics in ways that support the status quo, like a supply of goods kept on the premises to be pulled out whenever the necessity calls for a ready response. As “canned” stories they are stale and predictable, but they have a long shelf life. They preclude originality, immediacy or surprise that fresh, unscripted, potentially uncomfortable stories or

encounters might open up about racial/social life in the United States and thus about how we understand racial patterns and the dynamics that sustain them (p.27).

Stock stories have functioned similarly across Turtle Island “to legitimize the perspective of the dominant white racial group in our society” (p. 27), through practices of telling and retelling, as well as erasure or delegitimization of Indigenous stories.

The cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’ flourishes within the tendency of Western spaces to compare Indigenous experiences to the experiences of white Canadians. Anderson and Robertson’s (2011) ‘rule of three’ used to discuss media representation provides a useful framework for understanding othering, power, and representation of Indigenous peoples, and lends itself to the discussion of Western construction and cultural memory. Anderson and Robertson (2011) found that when compared to white Canadians, stories and representations of Indigenous peoples “exemplify three essentialized sets of characteristics – depravity, innate inferiority, and a stubborn resistance to progress” (p.6). These characteristics have been expressed in a variety of stereotypical constructions and have taken shape in what they describe as “popular archetypal packing” – that of ‘the dying’, ‘the savage’, ‘the warrior’, ‘the Indian Princess’, and so on (Anderson & Robertson, 2011 p.7), that have become stock stories of Western cultural memory.

2.1.2 The ‘Indian’ and ‘Told-to’ Narratives

The most ubiquitous illustration of ‘othering’ and the power of Western narrative spaces is that of the ‘Indian’ cultural memory and its durability over time (Lischke & McNab, 2005; Sayre, 2017; Francis, 2011; Berkhofer, 1978). The ‘Indian’ represents a longstanding colonial mechanism. It is a Western lens of who Indigenous peoples are that has long occupied non-Indigenous spaces and has been used to define non-Indigenous relations with Indigenous peoples. It situates all the archetypal images mentioned previously into one generalized representation of Indigeneity.

Representations of Indigenous peoples within Western spaces soon followed the arrival of Columbus in the 15th century, where individuals deemed ‘historians’, ‘adventurers’, and ‘travelers’ became intent on describing the “customs of the savage” (Sayre, 2017, p. 141). Seventeenth

Century travel writings, such as diaries and travel logs, and other accounts – written by European colonizers, for European colonizers – are some of the earliest renderings of the ‘Indian’ and were majorly influential for shaping Europe’s understanding of Indigenous peoples (Sayre, 2017). Over time, Western narrative spaces have all shared a compulsion towards producing and reproducing the ‘Indian’ construct. Although dreamed up and bearing little resemblance to reality, the ‘Indian’ has come to represent a ‘common sense’ colonial imaginary or stock story that is deeply rooted in the Canadian colonial context and identity (Anderson & Robertson, 2011; Francis, 2011; Lambertus, 2004). It has been a persistent figure in Canadian culture, having a real role within Western spaces and real consequences for Indigenous peoples. In particular, the ‘Indian’ is a Western cultural memory that has transgressed past with present, and represents a collective reduction of Indigenous peoples through Canadian legal and socio-cultural understanding of ‘Indian-ness’.

2.1.2.1 Authenticity and the Memory of ‘Vanishing’

Western ideas of ‘authenticity’ have been critical in the historical construction of the ‘Indian’. Western perception of ‘authenticity’ stems from the essentialized characteristics previously mentioned (depravity, innate inferiority, and a stubborn resistance to progress) that have shaped ideas of ‘Indianness’. Within Western cultural spheres (literature, art, film, etc.), the ‘authentic Indian’ looks a certain way, acts a certain way, and has specific experiences that reflect Western constructions of authentic ‘Indianness’ (Anderson & Robertson, 2011; Francis, 2011; King, 2012). Legislative spaces and corresponding policies that followed soon after European invasion have similarly relied on and reproduced stereotypical ideas of authenticity through combined ideas of ‘Indianness’ – a socio-cultural representation of set characteristics, norms, and values – and legal blood quantum as defined by the Indian Act. For instance, individuals who worked for the Hudson Bay Company and knew some English were deemed ‘less authentic’ due to Western perceptions of ‘Indianness’ and could be classified as ‘half-breed’ by legal spaces (Lawrence, 2004). Over time, Western defined ‘authenticity’ became the lens through which the validity and truthfulness

of imagery and representations, and the justification for ‘Indian’ policies, were measured. This is particularly evident in the cultural memory of the ‘vanishing Indian’.

While many prepackaged and stereotypical images of ‘authenticity’ within Western spaces have existed, one of the most popular archetypal images throughout the history of Western narrative spaces has been the image of the vanishing or moribund ‘Indian’. The ‘vanishing Indian’ was based on the prescribed idea that Indigenous peoples were ‘dying out’ due to a naturalized (i.e. authentic) incompatibility with progress. Before WWII, the notion that Indigenous peoples were disappearing was a conventional aspect of Western common sense – naturalized and totalized, and deeply rooted in the Western belief that authentic Indigenous peoples were incompatible with Western understandings of the ‘modern world’. Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, Western cultural spaces continuously re-produced this image of Indigenous peoples as a part of history soon gone that must be ‘preserved’ before it was too late. Paul Kane was one of the first Canadian artists to take on the deemed essential artistic task of documenting Indigenous peoples across Canada in 1845 (Francis, 2011). As a portrait painter, Paul was praised by white consumers for his truthfulness and accuracy – praise that was rooted in Western assumptions of authenticity that were generally measured by the uncritical use of visual and prosaic signifiers⁴ (Francis, 2011; King, 2012).

In addition to visual representations of culture, this period of fascination with the ‘vanishing Indian’ marked the introduction of what McCall (2011) describes as ‘told-to’ narratives, where “typically, non-Aboriginal recorders collect, edit, and structure stories by Aboriginal narrators” (p. 2). In the late 19th century/early 20th, ‘Native voice’ became an important object of ethnographic and anthropological study. Like others in the business of representation, white ethnographers and anthropologists – ‘collectors’ – became preoccupied with documenting and, in their eyes, ‘preserving’ and sharing, ‘Native voice’ before it was too late. Anthologies like Colombo’s *Songs of the Indians* (1822) and Curtis’s *The Indian’s Book* (1907), were praised for their entextualization of Indigenous oral narratives, stories, songs, traditions, and cultures generally. Praised as

⁴ Headbands, feathers, bows and arrows, loincloths, tomahawks, bone chokers, stoic facial expressions; and laziness, drunkenness, childishness, etc., are all used to non-Indigenous people and spaces to manufacture an image of authenticity (Francis, 2011).

preserving ‘Native Voice’, these entextualized oral texts became “museumized fragments frozen in the past” (McCall, 2011, p.25), as Western delegated Indigenous cultural artifacts, contributing to the Western cultural memory of ‘vanishing’. Many genres and approaches to ‘told-to’ narratives continue to exist today⁵ that reflect Western ideas of ‘Native Voice’ and are rooted in a history of dispossession and appropriation (McCall, 2011).

The idea of vanishing made Indigenous peoples even more attractive as subjects of Western cultural spheres. Non-Indigenous spaces and individuals sought to capitalize on the xenophobic and morbid curiosity of white Canadians towards Indigenous peoples, while ignoring any evidence that contradicted this ‘vanishing’ image (Francis, 2011). While Western cultural spaces romanticized this morbid fascination with the ‘vanishing Indian’ story, the ‘vanishing Indian’ construct similarly shaped legislative spaces (Coulthard, 2014). Through oscillating practices of aggressive assimilation policies (McCall, 2011) and calculated inaction, the Canadian government’s relationship with Indigenous peoples reflected a desire for Indigenous peoples to vanish and perpetuated this image of Indigenous depravity, inferiority, and incompatibility.

One reflection of this is the reserve system. By the end of the 19th century, Indigenous peoples were geographically and politically isolated from Western spaces through the reserve system. Reserves have been framed within government discourses and mainstream cultural as deeply issued, an image that supported the narrative of Indigenous peoples as ‘dying out’. While cultural narratives claimed ‘saving’ Indigenous peoples from extinction, the Canadian government has historically done little to address challenges experienced among First Nation’s communities. The ‘vanishing’ stereotype also found space in assimilative policies like the Indian Act and residential schools, with images of ‘dying out’ intersecting with ideas of Indigenous incapability and racial superiority that was then used to justify non-Indigenous dominance. Ultimately, Western ideas of authenticity have been constructed through myth, ideology, and prejudice, rather than actual knowledge.

⁵ Not all genres and approaches to ‘told-to’ narratives are colonial. In fact, even narratives where Indigenous peoples are sharing other Indigenous peoples’ stories can be a type of told-to narrative.

2.1.3 Durability of Western Cultural Spaces

Although the language surrounding non-Indigenous/Indigenous relations has shifted over time, the ‘Indian’ cultural memory has found durability. Prior to 1969 and the White Paper⁶, federal policy was “unapologetically assimilationist” (Coulthard, 2014, p.3) with Western spaces defined by unabashed narratives of domination. However, in the last 50 years, colonial spaces have become cast in narratives of ‘recognition’ (Cairns, 2000; Coulthard, 2014; Macklem & Sanderson, 2016). That is, the recognition of Indigenous rights and the recognition of past assimilative policies. Most significant of this shift was the eventual recognition of Indigenous rights in section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982, which provides that “the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed”. Coulthard (2014) situated this shift from assimilation narratives to recognition narratives within the resurgence of Indigenous activism in the 1960s and 70s, outlining three watershed moments in Indigenous/Canada relations: Indigenous opposition to the White Paper in 1969, the partial recognition of Aboriginal ‘title’ in the Supreme Court of Canada’s 1973 Calder Decision, and the “cluster of events” following the oil crisis of 1970s that brought Northern development and unresolved issues surrounding Indigenous rights and title issues to the forefront.

Yet, the politics of ‘recognition’ within these narratives have been heavily critiqued as largely unchanged in nature from previous assimilationist goals and lacking in effort to extend beyond surface level recognition (Coulthard, 2014; Neeganagewdgin, 2019). Rather, non-Indigenous attitudes and recognition narratives produced by Western spaces have been challenged as maintaining and reproducing “the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (Coulthard, 2014, p.3). In fact, borrowing from prominent anti-colonial theorists Frantz Fanon’s 1952 work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard (2014) describes ‘recognition’ as “the field of

⁶ The White Paper was released in 1969 by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau disguised under the rhetoric of addressing inequality (Neeganagewdgin, 2019). However, Indigenous leaders vehemently opposed the White Paper for what it was – an assimilative policy aimed at the legal elimination of Indigenous peoples (Hartley, 2013). In response, a counter statement – Citizen Plus also known as the Red Paper – was released by Alberta chiefs and presented to the Canadian government, refusing Canada’s attempt at assimilation (Indian Chiefs of Alberta, 2011; Cairns, 2000; Cardinal, 1999; Neeganagewdgin, 2019).

power through which colonial relations are produced and maintained” (p.17), with politics of ‘recognition’ often still serving the interests of colonial spaces.

More recently, Western spaces have been undergoing another narrative shift towards narratives of reconciliation. In particular, the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015 has been discussed as evidence of a more hopeful shift to reconciliation-based service delivery (Lachance & Rose, 2020). However, it is unclear how this reconciliation rhetoric has translated into meaningful changes in relation to the goals held by Indigenous spaces – self-determination, autonomy, and sovereignty. In many ways, the structures, relations, and power frameworks of these shifting narratives have remained stable. For instance, the ‘Indian’ cultural memory continues to have material consequences for Indigenous peoples and continues to shape non-Indigenous spaces. Two themes that illustrate the stability of the ‘Indian’ Western cultural memory will be discussed further: the commodification and overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples within Western cultural spaces, and the continued relationship between Western ideas of authenticity and responsibility.

2.1.3.1 Commodification in Western Cultural Spaces

The ‘Indian’ is a heavily commodified, naturalized, and normalized image of contemporary Western culture. Early cultural representations were often framed as documenting and explaining Indigenous peoples. More contemporary ‘Indian’ representations tend to be romanticized as a lifestyle beacon and prop in Canadian life – something to be ‘honoured’ that can be embodied, bought, and sold by non-Indigenous peoples, while supporting the stability of the Western cultural memory. Examples of the commodification of the ‘Indian’ as an aspect of Canadian life are rampant throughout history and have come to represent a Western sense of entitlement over Indigenous peoples. One example are ‘Indian’ camps that have existed since the early-mid 20th century (Edwards, 1960).

While still inaccurate, early colonial representations of Indigenous peoples were often attached to real events or places. ‘Indian’ camps, however, were one of the first examples where the ‘Indian’

became detached from time and place as a stereotypical and archetypical stock image. Marketed as an escape from modern life, since the late 19th century non-Indigenous children could attend ‘Indian’ camps and retreats as an escape or ‘appreciation’ (appropriation) of a romanticized past (Francis, 2011). For instance, campers at Camp Ahmek in Algonquin Park founded in the 1920s learned how to make sweat lodges, how to perform ‘Indian’ dances, and how to live like ‘Indians’ (Edwards, 1960). Today, several camps developed and run by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous youth exist across Canada. For instance, Koeye Camp in BC focuses on teaching Indigenous youth aspects of Heiltsuk First Nation culture. However, many other camps like Camp Tonkawa in Texas (founded in 2002 by a white family) mimic ‘Indian’ practices and ceremonies and include activities like making and wearing ‘Indian’ signifiers and participating in ‘tribal war’ games. In 2015, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) published an article in which Chief Lance Haymond of the Eagle Village First Nations in Kipawa, Quebec described his disgust towards two summer camps in Ontario that participated in stereotypical and dehumanizing ‘Indian activities’ like tribe wars, without any actual Indigenous peoples present (Gignac, 2015).

Another example of ‘Indian’ commodification is in the fashion industry. Since the 1960s and 70s, the fashion industry has included similar narratives of ‘honouring’ to describe and justify romanticized commodification and appropriation. One example that stands out as illustrative of this commodification and the deeply engrained Western perception of entitlement towards Indigenous peoples is the 2016 appropriation by fashion brand Valentino. In 2016, high fashion brand Valentino received permission from Indigenous artist Christi Belcourt to collaborate several pieces for their upcoming collection (K, 2017; Metcalf, 2017). It was later uncovered by two Indigenous bloggers Adrienne K and Jessica Metcalfe that several other ‘Native-like’ designs and ‘Indian’ signifiers had been used within this same collection under the pretense of ‘collaboration with Christi Belcourt’ (K, 2017; Metcalf, 2017). Several mainstream news and fashion magazines⁷ published articles praising Valentino as setting the standard for collaboration not appropriation, despite this blatant appropriation of Native designs and commodification of ‘Indian’ signifiers.

⁷ Like Vogue and Fashion Magazine, and the Globe and Mail. See <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/metis-artist-christi-belcourt-inspires-valentino-fashion-line/article25824113/>

Western art spaces similarly continue to appropriate and reconstruct Indigenous culture into Western defined ideas of Indigeneity. For instance, in the spring of 2017 a Toronto exhibit featuring a white artist was taken down after protest from the Indigenous community, who showed that the artist essentially copied Indigenous woodland artist Norval Morrisseau without any consultation or collaboration with the Woodland School of Art (The Canadian Press, 2017). That this person felt entitled to mimic Indigenous art traditions further reiterates the Western sense of entitlement towards Indigeneity generally and the power held by Western spaces.

Another blatant example of commodification, appropriation, and non-Indigenous entitlement is the use of ‘Indian’ imagery within the sporting industry. ‘Indian’ imagery has been used by amateur and professional sports teams as mascots and names since the establishment of these corporate spaces in the 19th century (Fisher, 2001; Monaghan, 1992; Staurowsky, 1998). Many efforts by Indigenous activists and others to be rid of ‘Indian’ imagery from both professional and amateur sports and marketing have been successful (Pewewardy, 1991; Davis, 1993; Guggenheim, 1998; King & Springwood, 2001; Dolley, 2003). However, a 2014 article cited at least 2,128 known sport teams across the United States that reference Indigenous peoples in some way through this ‘Indian’ memory (Munguia, 2014). Yet, some are hopeful that as anti-racism efforts gain momentum from the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement throughout the summer of 2020, more changes will continue happening (Brassil et al, 2020; Schontzler, 2020).

Stereotypical images are also recurrent and widespread within advertising spaces (Green, 1993; Francis, 2011). For instance, the United States Patent and Trademark Office records indicated that 600 active trademarks for insignia and logos featuring ‘Indian’ images, registered to 450 different companies existed in 2014 (Wilson, 2014). Similarly, many companies have begun rebranding in light of the increased visibility and vocalization of the murders of Black people and other people of colour, and the resurgence against institutionalized racism – something that is way overdue. Only very recently (2020) did Land O’Lakes remove the ‘Indian maiden’ from their packaging, which has been the company's trademark since the 1920s (Nesterak, 2020).

While not an exhaustive list, these examples indicate the durability of the ‘Indian’ as a stock story of Western culture. They illustrate a sense of entitlement shared across Western spaces towards

Indigenous peoples' bodies, cultures, and knowledges. They reiterate a cultural memory of Indigeneity that is "at once trivialized and domesticated" (Francis, 2011, p.171-172). The reliance on and entitlement towards the 'Indian' in Western cultural spaces is a method of sustaining the denigrated construction of Indigenous peoples as inferior. Ultimately, the 'Indian' continues to exist as a meaningful symbol of Western culture.

2.1.3.2 Contemporary Responsibility and Authenticity

The durability of the 'Indian' cultural memory is similarly evident in the contemporary relationship between institutional responsibility and authenticity. Indigenous Inherent and Treaty rights continue to be constructed using 'authentic' (static) perceptions of Indigeneity. To illustrate, according to the Supreme Court in *R. v. Van der Peet* 1996, Indigenous rights "are sourced in practices, customs, and traditions that were integral to the distinctive culture of an aboriginal group prior to European contact and that continue to be integral to the distinctive culture of that community today" (Bell & Paterson, 2009, p.27). This ruling illustrates a narrow framing of history and rights that effectively freezes contemporary Indigenous peoples and culture within the past as static and unchanging, and in search of the 'original' history (Borrows, 2017). Although Indigenous entities have advocated flexibility to account for evolving culture, a preoccupation towards historical moments of contact — that of 'authentic' lives and 'original' activities — continues. By framing a static portrayal of Indigeneity as the touchstone for Indigenous rights, determination of contemporary Indigenous rights is grounded in proof of an 'original' form of existence that reinforces Western constructions of authenticity (Burrows, 2017) and continues to 'other' Indigenous peoples.

The durability of the authentic 'Indian' cultural memory is similarly evident in discussions of government responsibility surrounding service delivery (See British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, 2009; Jacklin & Warry, 2004; Lavoie & Forget, 2008; Pierre et al., 2007; Kelly, 2011), particularly in the issue of jurisdictional responsibility. Section 91(24) of the Constitution states that the Federal Government has exclusive authority over "Indians and Lands reserved for

Indians". However, a framework of authenticity surrounds the translation of this responsibility to service delivery that results in a jurisdictional gap between federal and provincial service delivery. This jurisdictional gap continues to shape identity and Indigenous/Canada relations, by negatively impacting Indigenous peoples whose state-determined identity is delegated as not 'Indian' enough, and Indigenous peoples whose needs are deemed outside governmental jurisdiction, for instance, people living off-reserve and/or non-status peoples (Evans et al., 2010; Hawkes, 1995).

One of the most well-known examples illustrating this gap is the federal/provincial dispute over paying for the care of Jordan River Anderson. Jordan was a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation who had high medical needs (The Caring Society, 2021). After spending two years hospitalized unnecessarily while the provincial and federal governments argued over who was responsible for paying his home care, Jordan died in 2005 before making it to the home (Gunnarsson, 2018). From this discriminatory tragedy, Jordan's Principle was developed – a child-first policy aimed at ensuring First Nations children can access services and resources when they need them (The Caring Society, 2021). Under Jordan's Principle, the government of first contact must pay for the services when they are requested and resolve jurisdictional payment disputes later. Despite this development, payment disputes between provincial and federal governments over services for First Nations children remain common.

Recent attempts have been made to clarify jurisdictional disputes and to improve government accountability. For instance, on January 26, 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered that the Federal Government "immediately stop applying a limited and discriminatory definition of Jordan's Principle, and to immediately take measures to implement the full meaning and scope of the principle" (The Caring Society, 2021). Yet, despite this ruling, colonial ideas of 'authenticity' and legal delegation continue to frame government responsibility, which reinforces colonial images of Indigeneity and the cultural memory of the 'Indian'.

2.2 Discursive Violence of Contemporary Western Spaces

The history of colonialism is reflected in the intersection of various Western narrative spaces. For instance, 19th century paintings naturalizing Indigenous peoples as ‘closer to nature’ and ‘dying out’ supported long periods of government inaction. Similarly, cinematic construction of Indigenous peoples as ‘bloodthirsty savages’ in the early 20th century supported government policies of assimilation and containment and on-reserve law enforcement practices aimed at controlling the movement of Indigenous peoples, including direct violence. Together, Western spaces of representation and knowledge construction have supported and upheld colonial power in their reproduction of Western cultural memory of Indigeneity. While many Western spaces have histories of using direct violence against Indigenous peoples, these spaces of representation are also spaces of discursive violence as the narratives and discourses produced have sought to reduce and control Indigenous experiences. This is illustrated in interconnected processes of undermining Indigenous peoples as knowledge producers, as normalizing colonialism, and as collectively reducing Indigeneity.

2.2.1 ‘Common Sense’ as a Form of Violence

The discursive violence of Western spaces stems from the ‘common-sense’ and naturalized framework surrounding colonialism, stock stories, and the ‘Indian’ cultural memory. For instance, Furniss (2000) found that non-Indigenous spaces’ representation of history is presumed to be natural, neutral, or common-sense – having gained widespread acceptance despite the lack of Indigenous inclusion in this knowledge construction process. Illustrative of this ‘common-sense’ understanding of ‘Indian’ stereotypes are the ritualistic qualities that have been found to frame non-Indigenous discussions of Indigenous peoples (Furniss; 2000; Stymeist, 1975). For example, in a 1995 study on cultural politics and race relations in Williams Lake, BC, Furniss (2000) found that non-Indigenous discussions of land claims and treaty processes followed a standard pattern of criticism and ridicule, derogatory comments, and often racist jokes towards Indigenous peoples. This ritualistic pattern built off naturalized stereotypical constructions that were a part of the residents’ common-sense understanding of Indigenous peoples (Furniss, 2000). As well, a general

acceptance exists towards the non-Indigenous history of colonialism in Canada, illustrated in the common-sense understanding of colonialism as necessary and inevitable in the progress and the development of Canada (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). This position continues to exist and has both justified colonial violence while simultaneously limiting the call for critical analysis and intervention.

Although Indigenous spaces and allies have always challenged this ‘common-sense’ construction and have resisted colonial control, critical Indigenous pursuits in knowledge have only recently gained increased acknowledgement by Western spaces. Frideres (2011) attributes the lack of critical discourse surrounding colonialism by mainstream Western spaces to processes of concealment that have taken place since contact by historians, the government, popular culture, and other Western spaces that govern Canada’s social, political, and economic spheres of knowledge production. Other work has shown how false nostalgic romanticizing of Indigenous experiences of trauma by Western spaces have similarly contributed to a limited critical narrative by and within these mainstream institutions (Giancarlo et al., 2021; McKee & Forsyth, 2019). In many ways, the cultural memory of the ‘Indian’ reflects calculated processes of covering up colonialism and not addressing past atrocities in meaningful ways, through an actively constructed memory of history. McKee and Forsyth (2019) illustrate this active construction of history by Western spaces in their work on sport imagery from residential schools. They show how spaces like the media have used images of sports at residential schools “to evoke ideas about nation and Indigenous-settler relations in Canada” (McKee & Forsyth, 2019, p. 177) by framing sports as a ‘positive’ of residential schools and as distinct from the cultural genocide that transpired within these colonial spaces (Te Hiwi & Forsyth, 2017). Ultimately, the ‘Indian’ cultural memory speaks to the active participation that Western spaces and spheres like government, academia, public sector, media, and other spaces have had in reproducing colonial discourses and maintaining non-Indigenous institutional distance through processes of discursive violence.

2.2.2 Absence of Indigeneity in Western Spaces

A connected reflection of the discursive violence of Western spaces is the absence of Indigenous peoples as critical subjects and knowledge producers within Western spaces. For instance, Indigenous peoples are rarely portrayed in popular culture other than as images of Western culture (Leavitt et al., 2015). Leavitt and colleagues (2015) described Indigenous representation in mass media as that of absolute invisibility, with Indigenous peoples rarely portrayed as contemporary figures like doctors, lawyers, or teachers, or as occupying public spaces like schools and hospitals. Although a greater focus on news media will follow, Anderson and Robertson (2011) described the pattern of Indigenous inclusion within media as structured around events and reflecting a Western colonial lens. They explained that the intensity and quantity of news coverage surrounding Indigenous peoples increases dramatically “as a result of a flash point”, like the 1990 coverage surrounding the Oka crisis⁸, only to dramatically decrease after (p.61). Further, despite being heavily regulated by government policies, Indigenous peoples have rarely been the subjects of government/social service actions and policies. Similarly, despite professing a language of recognition and reconciliation, consultation with Indigenous peoples on policy development and issues by various levels of government continues to be variable and haphazard at best (George et al., 2019).

Indigenous peoples also lack representation within Western spaces as knowledge producers. For instance, before the 1970s Indigenous scholars were rarely recognized within academia and were regularly labelled as ‘primitive’, having little to offer to historical and scientific knowledge production (Frideres, 2011). In addition to absence within mainstream spaces, Indigenous spaces and Indigenous developed discourses have not been awarded the same amount of space or

⁸ The Oka crisis or Kanehsatake Resistance was a 78 day long land dispute between the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk Nation), the Quebec provincial policy, and eventually the Canadian Army (The Secret Life of Canada, 2020a; 2020b). The Mohawk land defenders were protecting disputed lands that included a Mohawk burial ground from the proposed expansion of a golf course and townhouse development (The Secret Life of Canada, 2020a; 2020b). Beginning July 11, 1990, it became a highly publicized violent conflict between First Nations and the Canadian government, defined by unapologetically colonial and racist coverage (Anderson & Robertson, 2011).

authority as non-Indigenous counterparts. Instead, Indigenous knowledges and knowledge spaces tend to be framed by Western knowledge spaces as ‘niche’ or alternative, and as existing outside of the ‘dominant knowledge’ framework. For instance, Indigenous governments and leadership continually have to fight for power and control as decision makers regarding community and Nation-based decisions and Indigenous rights, and as having authority over defining Indigenous experiences.

2.2.2.1 Privileging of non-Indigenous Voice and Knowledge

Instead, non-Indigenous voices and spaces, particularly institutions, continue to be privileged as offering legitimate, neutral, and unemotional truths or ‘expert’ knowledge. This simultaneously legitimizes the silences and erasures by Western spaces that Indigenous peoples have experienced throughout history. Western spaces such as governments, popular media, service delivery organizations, and Canadian society generally have a long-standing history of being silent about the real experiences of Indigenous people and excluding or appropriating Indigenous voices. This undermining of Indigenous experiences and voices and privileging of non-Indigenous interpretations is evident in the history of violence experienced by Indigenous women and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) phenomenon.

In 2004, the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) raised the issue of violence to the Federal Government. By 2010, NWAC had estimated at least 500 Indigenous women had gone missing or had been murdered since the 1980s (NWAC, 2010a; 2010b). However, the Canadian government, law enforcement, and the Western media were all slow to react and generally silent about this experience of violence. This institutional response directly contributed to a continued undermining and ‘othering’ of Indigenous knowledges regarding this phenomenon which stemmed from both lived experiences and data collection, and of Indigenous women generally (Beniuk, 2012). In fact, the 2010 report released by NWAC’s Sisters in Spirit project was the first of its kind to exist, despite anecdotal evidence of violence for hundreds of years. Although this 2010 report forced institutional recognition, mainstream spaces continued to downplay and ignore the

issue of gendered and racialized violence and claimed control over defining, representing, and distributing knowledge surrounding the experience of violence. To illustrate, only after the RCMP report titled *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operation Overview* was published in 2014 did the issue of violence really start to gain mainstream media attention. In general, non-Indigenous perceptions of Indigenous women continue to be told and retold within and by Western spaces.

2.2.3 Contemporary Homogenization of Indigenous Peoples

While comparatively absent within Western spaces overall, Indigenous peoples and experiences became more a ‘topic of interest’ during the transition to ‘recognition’ based relations, as discussed previously. Yet, despite increased visibility within contemporary Western spaces, Indigenous inclusion as subjects or as voices within Western spaces still tends to illuminate colonial tendencies (Lischke & McNab, 2005). For instance, Indigenous inclusion within Western spaces often reflects patterns of collective reduction and group identity (Frideres, 2011). While Indigenous communities approach collective identities from positions of empowerment and cultural connections, the Western assignment of ‘group identity’ tends to support a cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’ and as having experiences that are distinct from white experiences. Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island do have shared experiences that stem from the colonial history and contemporary colonial context and cultural similarities. However, spaces aimed at demonstrating these shared contexts and experiences tend to reflect a colonial Western lens, illustrated through stereotypical representations that oscillate between the objectified and dehumanized ‘historical Indian’ images, highly politicized contemporary stereotypes (Fryberg et al., 2008), and monolithic framings of collective experiences as knowledge. Alternatively, very little is known by non-Indigenous people or shared within Western spaces about the everyday lived experiences of Indigenous peoples (de Finney & Saraceno, 2015; de Finney, 2015).

The contemporary reduction of Indigenous peoples is particularly evident in the ubiquitous and uncritical adoption of ‘trauma narratives’ by Western spaces, and the resulting erasure of

individual and community level experiences – particularly, those of Indigenous strength, resistance, resiliency, and power.

2.2.3.1 Diverging Trauma Narratives

The ongoing and intergenerational effects of colonial policies continue to be felt by Indigenous peoples in terms of contemporary manifestations of the colonial past as well as in contemporary experiences of racism, discrimination, and institutional neglect. To understand and contextualize these ongoing and intergenerational experiences, non-Indigenous and Indigenous spaces have adopted trauma narratives. Trauma narratives – representations detailing historical and intergenerational traumas (often framed as issues) – have become almost ubiquitously associated with Indigenous peoples and are the defining frame of Western, and often Indigenous, discourses (Aguiar & Halseth, 2015; Lawrence, 2004; Menzies, 2010; Mohatt et al., 2014; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). For instance, academic research tends to center around demographic issue or deficit-based frameworks. In fact, Jiwani (2009) found that when positive stories about Indigenous women are covered by the news – a rarity overall – these stories tend to give the impression of rarity and of ‘transcending’ Indigeneity. This idea of ‘transcending’ stems from the Western characterization of trauma and Indigenous ‘issues’ as the standard and naturalized Indigenous experience. In general, trauma is an intrinsic aspect of both Western and Indigenous memory.

Although both Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces approach historical and contemporary trauma, trauma narratives by Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces tend to diverge in intent and approach. Western narratives reflect cultural memory that ‘others’ Indigenous peoples. Whereas Indigenous narratives – what have been framed as blood memories or Indigenous memories – are aimed at ideas of testimony and storytelling through individual and collective rememberings of experiences, that also disrupt contemporary Western constructions of histories as complex and interpretive. For instance, Giancarlo and colleagues’ (2021) photo elicitation and repatriation work with former members of the Sioux Lookout Blackhawks, an Indian residential school hockey team,

illustrate the process of reconciling past rememberings of abuse at residential schools within the context of hockey photographs taken to convey ‘positive’ imagery about residential schools. Challenging these past constructions through Indigenous storytelling is particularly important given the tendency of Western spaces like the media and the government to use these false ‘positive’ photos⁹ to engender a “complex interpretive legacy for viewers” about residential school experiences (Angel & Wakeham, 2016, p. 109). This Western construction of ‘complexity’ aimed undermining Indigenous experiences, necessitates Indigenous trauma narratives.

Looking first at the Indigenous context, trauma narratives have been described within Indigenous spaces as providing a road map for understanding and a way “to interpret colonial histories and the ongoing legacies of these histories for the colonized” (Quayle & Sonn, 2019, p. 47). With this in mind, many Indigenous peoples have adopted a language of trauma as a way for discussing past experiences and for situating contemporary experiences within this context (see for example Archibald, 2006; ATSIHF, 2017; Krieg, 2009). This language of trauma and remembering has been framed in a variety of ways –for instance, the concept ‘blood memory’ discussed previously. As well, Duran et al. (1998) use ‘soul wound’ to describe the destructive and ongoing legacy of colonization for Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island. Similarly, in the Australian context, Atkinson (2002) used the idea of ‘trauma trails’ to illustrate the ways that collective traumas have seeped “into the fabric and soul of relations and beliefs of peoples as community” (p. 53). In this respect, trauma narratives have been drawn on by Indigenous peoples and spaces as a method of increasing understanding and contextualizing contemporary challenges that Indigenous peoples and communities face (Atkinson, 2002; Brave Heart, 2003; Duran et al., 1998; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). As a result, Indigenous centered trauma narratives have been critical in bringing awareness to the ongoing colonial context, including the intergenerational impacts of past historical trauma and contemporary experiences. Yet, through practices of storytelling, Indigenous

⁹ Photos taken of the Sioux Lookout Blackhawks conveyed a false narrative of the residential school experience – of successful assimilation while suggested students as being “healthy, thriving, and well-cared for” (Giancarlo et al., 2021, p.4). As Giancarlo and colleagues (2021) explained, engaging with these photos elicits a sense of nostalgia that undermines what is actually happening – cultural assimilation.

trauma narratives reflect the power that is elicited from claiming and sharing one's own stories (Giancarlo et al., 2021).

Trauma narratives have also been identified as important for healing, related to the legacies of shame and suffering that have kept many Indigenous peoples from sharing their stories. The healing potential of broaching trauma narratives have been particularly evident within Indigenous spaces that foster storytelling and interactive testimony (sharing) and witnessing (listening) among Indigenous peoples, which together allow for collective memory and meaning making (Cooper & Driedger, 2019; de Finney, 2015; Emberley, 2015; Episkenew, 2009). As Episkenew (2009) explained, "silence leads to isolation, causing many Indigenous people to suppress their feelings, believing that they are alone in their experiences and responses. The effects of emotional repression on emotional and spiritual health are long lasting" (p. 16). Therefore, both testimony, which "involves moments that provide an instance of recognition and interconnectedness", and bearing witness by peers are forms of healing by addressing historical trauma responses that stem from memory (Cooper & Driedger, 2019, p.12). Further, Cooper and Driedger (2019) illustrated the importance of Indigenous trauma narratives for challenging and transgressing Western cultural memory by focusing on collective rememberings that stem from Indigenous voices and lived experiences.

Work on visual repatriation by Giancarlo and colleagues (2021) lends itself to this discussion on the healing potential of sharing trauma narratives. While Giancarlo and colleagues (2021) focus on visual repatriation as a form of *returning* images "of ancestors, documents, and historical knowledge – often from museum collections" to communities (p. 6), having space to *reclaim* and *retell* narratives can be similarly empowering. Ultimately, trauma narratives can provide Indigenous peoples with a source of collective memory.

However, within the context of Western spaces and memory, trauma narratives have also become a site of colonial reduction and a way of pathologizing Indigenous peoples through the a disguised perpetuation of Western cultural memory. 'Indigenous topics' became increasingly popular throughout the 1990s and 2000s among non-Indigenous researchers interested in explaining the 'Indigenous problem' in Canada. However, this non-Indigenous interest in Indigenous experiences

of trauma has been heavily critiqued by Indigenous peoples and spaces as monolithic, narrow, highly politicized, and colonial in nature –resulting in new homogenizing challenges for Indigenous peoples (Bullen & Flavell, 2017). For instance, contemporary research spaces tend to focus on quantifying Indigenous experiences into population level social demographic characteristics, with particular interest in health-related risks. This narrow focus on trauma reinforces the cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’, as negative health ‘stock stories’ have become an intrinsic aspect of the Western cultural memory and provide justification to continued colonial control. Trauma statistics and stories, generally related to Indigenous health, are usually negative, situated in comparison to non-Indigenous health experiences, and present Indigenous peoples as the problem (Sullivan, 2011). Presentation of these experiences tend to be stark, erase the colonial context, undermine Indigenous determinants of health, and remove Indigenous voice – all approaches to research that are supported and naturalized within academic institutions (Biddle, 2012; George et al., 2019; Cooper, 2011). As a result, dominant trauma narratives rarely award space for lived experiences and for Indigenous peoples to exist as persons outside of these assigned collective experiences of trauma.

Many non-Indigenous and Indigenous academics and others have approached Indigenous experiences through a critical lens. Further, population level approaches to understanding experiences are not inherently negative and have been important in illustrating shared colonial trauma. However, for the most part, an in-depth critical awareness beyond a surface level understanding of trauma as a common Indigenous experience is absent from Western institutions and mainstream common-sensical knowledge. Instead, trauma continues to exist as a dominant cultural memory and as a Western image of authenticity. This normalization and naturalization of trauma has pathologizing implications, ignores the diversity of experiences, undermines the history of colonialism, and diverges discussion of ‘Indigenous issues’ from institutional responsibility (Sullivan, 2011).

2.2.3.2 Erasure of Lived Experiences

Themes of erasure play an important role in the Western, trauma-based cultural memory. In terms of membership, trauma narratives within non-Indigenous spaces lack Indigenous voices, with Indigenous peoples as living, breathing persons with experiences generally erased in these trauma depictions. As a result, trauma narratives tend to erase the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples – in particular, individual and community-based narratives of resistance, strength, and resiliency.

Indigenous peoples have always resisted colonialism through familial, social, and cultural structures and have found strength in this resistance (Haig-Brown, 1988; Kirmayer et al., 2011). As explained by Iwama (2000) in relation to the legacy of residential schools, “simply surviving uprootings is one kind of resistance” (p.244). In addition to surviving, everyday resistance has been part of the daily lives of Indigenous peoples since contact. For example, many Indigenous parents hid their children from residential school officers (Dupuis, 2016); children attending residential schools would steal food and resist in other ways (Haig-Brown, 1988; Iwama, 2000); peoples continued to practice traditional ceremonies and political organizing that were made illegal under the Indian Act underground to avoid on-reserve Indian agents (Hanson, 2009b); Métis peoples hid wild game caught through ‘illegal’ trapping and hunting (Campbell, 1973); Indigenous peoples rejected the ‘White Paper’ of 1969; and Indigenous women and their allies have continually fought for gender-based rights and equality under the Indian Act (Barker, 2008; Fiske, 2006; Kuokkanen, 2012; 2014).

Yet collective and individual experiences of strength, resiliency, living, and thriving generally exist outside of Western cultural memory of Indigenous peoples. Instead, Indigenous lived experiences are regularly undermined or erased through various narratives and narrative practices. For instance, practices aimed at freezing Indigenous peoples in historical contexts, the tendency to discuss Indigenous peoples and their histories only in relation to non-Indigenous peoples and histories, the erasure of Indigenous voices from trauma experiences, and the pathologized portrayal of trauma that is constantly reiterated all undermine the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples.

2.3 Gendered Spaces and Violence

The history of colonialism has negatively impacted all Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island (Hargreaves, 2017; National Inquiry, 2019; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). While neither men's nor women's experiences are more valid or commanding of further examination and redress than the other, gender serves as an important site of the colonial history. Indigenous women have been uniquely targeted and framed by Western spaces, resulting in uniquely gendered narratives and cultural memory of Indigenous peoples (National Inquiry, 2019). In many ways, Indigenous women have been at the center of colonial spaces — treated as vessels for the colonial agenda through simultaneous erasure and hypervisibility within these spaces (England, 2004). Today, evidence of the ongoing history of colonialism is often situated within discussions of experiences of violence. The ways in which gender has functioned as a tool of Western spaces and the outcome of violence, will be discussed.

2.3.1 Gender as a Mechanism of Control

Marginalization along lines of gender is not something experienced only by Indigenous women. Rather, the hegemonic system of patriarchy results in common experiences of gender marginalization, inequality, and other gender-based forms control across national and international contexts. For instance, much research has addressed various forms of gender inequality like the gendered wage gap, the feminization of poverty, and gendered-based violence to name a few, experienced among all groups of women (Budig et al., 2012; Chant, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008).

While it is important to recognize that women face similar forms of gender-based oppression due to the patriarchal system, gender does not exist in isolation. Rather, gender intersects with various other social locations and forms of oppression to create diverse and complex experiences of inequality. For instance, race, ethnicity, ability, country, age, class, religion, immigration status, and sexuality all intersect to create diverse forms of oppression and mechanisms of control. Concepts like double jeopardy, double discrimination, or double burden have long been drawn on to explain the additive impact that multiple inequalities have on women's experiences (Berdahl,

2006; Greeman & Xie, 2008; Mendelson et al., 1982; Rousso & Wehmeyer, 2001; Wilks & Neto, 2013), often with focus on gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Extending this additive approach, Black feminist researchers in particular have stressed themes of intersectionality for understanding oppression, and the adaptive quality of control mechanisms (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020; Gines, 2011; Hill Collins, 2020; 2015; hooks, 1989; 2000). Intersectionality, with focus on intersectional forms of oppression, recognizes the fluidity and complexity of oppression as not simply additive but as interactive, context specific, and “reciprocally constructing phenomena” (Hill Collins, 2015, p. 1).

While Indigenous women also experience gender-based oppression in relation to the patriarchal system, Indigenous women’s experiences of oppression are in many ways heightened. The racialized and colonial contexts that surround Indigenous women result in experiences of oppression and mechanisms of control that are distinct from other racialized groups of women, and diverse even among and between groups of Indigenous women. Ultimately, the colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada reflects mechanisms of control and intersectional forms of oppression that are wholly distinct for Indigenous women. The gendered history of colonial spaces has been well documented¹⁰, and a detailed account of this history is not the intent here. Rather the intent is to illuminate how gender has been used as a colonial mechanism of control – as a tactic of undermining Indigenous communities and justifying colonialism and racialized treatment through Indigenous women, drawing on some key examples.

2.3.1.1 Undermining Communities

To begin, colonial institutions have specifically targeted Indigenous women as a tactic for undermining Indigenous communities. Prior to contact, Indigenous Nations were generally absent of power relations, ideas of individual authority, and gender-based hierarchies (Belanger, 2018;

¹⁰ See Anderson, 2016; Barker, 2008; Beniak, 2012; Bopp et al., 2003; Brennan, 2011; Culhane, 2003; García-Del Moral, 2011; Gilchrist, 2010; Green, 2007, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2013, 2017; Jackson, 1999; Jacob & Desautels, 2013; Lawrence, 2004; Palmater, 2013, 2016; and many, many others.

Boatman, 1992). Although Nations and communities vary greatly across Turtle Island, Indigenous women have a long history of occupying important community spaces and of having roles that command respect and dignity (Tsosie, 2010; Hanson, 2009a). Contemporary Indigenous women continue to occupy important roles in community spaces and have resisted colonial imposition since contact. Yet, prior to contact a sense of equality and balance existed within communities that has been systematically undermined by Western spaces since contact, and continues to be challenged within the contemporary Canadian context.

Soon after contact, colonizers began imposing colonial institutions of heteronormativity, patriarchy, Christianity, and racial superiority within Indigenous communities (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010; Tsosie, 2010; Barker, 2008; Dunaway, 1997). The impositions were aimed at undermining Indigenous peoples by undermining Indigenous women and Nation-based ideas of Indigeneity. Although Indigenous peoples and communities resisted Western ideas of gender and race, over time the constant imposition of Western ideologies alongside growing community vulnerability from continued colonial violence and other mistreatments had the effect of wearing down the status of Indigenous women. The large numbers of deaths due to disease by European immigrants and warfare was critical in this wearing down. Western ideologies of gender and race were cemented into Indigenous communities by the Indian Act of 1876. Through the Indian Act, the delegated (and colonial) definition of ‘Indian’ – which included legal delineation of status, rights, and privileges – was purposefully and maliciously structured around gender (Barker, 2008; Jacobs & Williams, 2008; Stevenson, 1999).

Through the Indian Act 1876, early forms of gender discrimination and marginalization by missionaries and European immigrants became entrenched through legislation that “discriminately undermined the traditional roles, authority, and autonomy of Aboriginal women” (Stevenson, 1999, p. 65; Jacobs & Williams, 2008). Although colonial institutions like the Indian Act had negative implications for all Indigenous peoples, they simultaneously elevated Indigenous men relative to Indigenous women – a gendered process that became naturalized even as it had the effect of destabilizing whole Indigenous systems and community stability. Indigenous women

became legally subordinated to Indigenous men through restrictive identity categories for determining status that also dislocated generations of women and their children.

Through the construction of status, Indigenous women's legal identity became entirely dependent on men's status. Women who married outside of their community either assumed their husband's status or were compulsorily enfranchised¹¹ if their husband did not have status. In all cases, women were expected to move if their husband was not from their natal community. Further, if a woman's husband died or left them, that woman would lose her existing status and status from her natal community would not be reinstated. Provision surrounding status and subsequent rights, including the right to live on reserve and the right to access resources, had monumental impacts on Indigenous women and their families "by displacing them from their Indigenous identity, their community, and rights via legislative means" – all while normalizing and naturalizing male-dominated forms of political and cultural organization, and material benefits (Hargreaves, 2017, p.11; Lawrence, 2004).

Although enfranchisement policies also displaced Indigenous men, Holmes (1987) estimated that most of the 25,000 Indigenous peoples who were externalized from communities between 1876 and 1985 was due to the ongoing gender discrimination in the Indian Act. For every woman who lost status, all of her descendants "were also alienated from communities", with the number of individuals ultimately removed estimated to be between 1-2 million (Lawrence, 2004, p. 56; Palmater, 2013). This has been described as a process of 'bleeding off' Indigenous peoples, with full assimilation and therefore elimination of Indigenous peoples the long-term goal of this gendered policy (Lawrence, 2004; Palmater, 2013). This process of 'bleeding off' Indigenous women and their children from their communities was in place for 116 years, until 1985 and the

¹¹ Enfranchisement – the legal process for terminating an Indigenous person's Indian status – was a key feature of the Canadian Federal government's assimilation policies regarding Indigenous peoples (Hanson, 2009b). Although at first voluntary under the *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857*, enfranchisement became compulsory under the Indian Act of 1876 until 1961 (Hanson, 2009b).

development of Bill C-31¹² (Lawrence, 2004) – although, residual gender-based discrimination remained until the amendment of Bill S-3 in 2019¹³.

Despite these amendments aimed at legislatively addressing gender discrimination, gendered discrimination within the Indian Act has had long term residual effects on community stability, related to the institutionalization and internalization of violence that will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

2.3.1.2 Symbolic of Colonial Justification

In many ways, Indigenous women have become symbolic of colonialism. Processes of constructing and representing Indigenous women and their bodies has been intimately tied to colonialism and used by Western spaces to justify colonial violence and control (England, 2004; Jiwani, 2006; National Inquiry, 2019). In fact, Indigenous women and their bodies have been described as representing the divide between colonizers and Indigenous peoples (García-Del Moral, 2011), with colonial imagery of Indigenous women long been used to represent themes of colonial conquest, possession, exploitation, and control over Indigenous land and peoples (Anderson, 2016). This is not unique to Indigenous women and Turtle Island. Rather, a long pictorial tradition of using women's bodies to represent continents has existed, with colonial imagery depicting certain continents “as available for plunder, possession, discovery and conquest” (Loomba, 2015, p.153). Two common images — the ‘Indian Princess’ and the ‘squaw’ — have had an enduring place within Western cultural spaces and the cultural memory of the ‘Indian’ as forms of colonial justification.

The exotic ‘Indian Princess’ has been a prominent archetype of Western spaces that has been drawn on to support colonial needs of expansion and exploitation. The ‘Indian Princess’ stereotype

¹²Bill C-31 was passed in 1985 in an attempt to address gender inequality under the Indian Act (Indigenous Foundations, 2009). It removed remaining enfranchisement classes and reinstated status among those who had their status removed through marriage.

¹³ Bill S-3 included two parts with the first part coming into effect in 2017 and the second in 2019. It aimed at eliminating all remaining sex-based discrimination under the Indian Act including the second-generation cut off, unstated paternity, cousins discrimination, sibling's discrimination, and Metis scrip (Palmer, 2011).

was constructed as a desire to be white — someone to be saved by colonists and/or someone who would assist colonizers in their colonizing (Anderson, 2016; Carter, 1997; Green, 1975). This image served to justify colonial pursuits by simultaneously vilifying Indigenous men while uplifting white colonizers through a common ‘white saviour’ narrative (Schultz, 2020). One of the most well-known examples of the ‘Indian Princess’ narrative is Pocahontas who, as Western spaces of representation would lead to believe, saved John Smith from the Powhatan people in 1607 then followed Smith to England in 1609 (King, 2012; Green, 1975). In reality, the story of Pocahontas is tragic history of a young girl who was captured, raped, and enslaved by a colonizer, and represents one of the first MMIWG (Schultz, 2020).

This narrative of the ‘Indian Princess’ assisting white men and giving up her ‘Indianness’ in all its eroticism and exoticism has been revisited throughout Canadian history in musicals, books, and other forms of cultural representation. It continues to exist today within Western cultural spaces as a form of Western fantasy. Alternatively, the ‘squaw’ came to be associated with real Indigenous women (Burnett, 2005; Carter, 1997). As it became obvious that Indigenous peoples were not ‘dying out’, Western spaces began denigrating Indigenous women through representations of the ‘squaw’ to further justify colonial policies and expansion (Acoose, 1995; Pearce, 2013). Indigenous women were characterized as vicious, violent, and lewd, in contrast to Western femininity. This image surrounding Indigenous women became a common-place subject of colonial spaces in general post 1880s¹⁴.

In particular, this cultural memory has long been used by colonial spaces to justify relations of violence and mistreatment towards Indigenous women and Indigenous peoples generally, and to justify the legislated subjugation of Indigenous peoples. For instance, since earliest reserve settlements, stereotypical construction of Indigenous women have been used to explain conditions of poverty and negative well-being on reserves, to justify the increasing legal regulation of Indigenous peoples, and to justify negative and violent treatment by legal officials and other members of society (Anderson, 2016; Carter, 1997; Razack S. H., 2000). To illustrate, the

¹⁴ The 1880s marked a tense time between colonizers and Indigenous peoples. The consolidation of Canada’s rule was not yet secure, an uncertain economic climate existed, and the Métis resistance of 1885 produced fears of larger uprising (Carter, 1997).

stereotypical characterization of the Indigenous women as unfit to raise children was used to legitimize assimilation policies and the forced removal of children (National Inquiry, 2019). Similarly, the sexualization and criminalization of this stereotype has been used to justify policies aimed at controlling the movement of Indigenous peoples such as the reserve pass system¹⁵ and the simultaneous mistreatment of women by those in power (Acoose, 1995; Carter, 1997; Hargreaves, 2017; Jackson, 1999). According to Carter (1997) it was commonplace for Indian Agents to withhold family food rations from women in exchange for sex, a practice regularly ignored by police who were often “engaging in their own coercive relations with Aboriginal women” (Razack S. H., 2000, p. 99).

2.3.2 Violence Against Indigenous Women

The durability of gender over time as a tool of colonialism is particularly evident in the material consequence of violence against Indigenous women. To first provide some context, gender-based violence are acts of violence that are gendered in nature in that they are almost exclusively committed by men towards women and “are supported by gender and social inequalities at the cultural and societal level” (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, p. 3). Gender-based violence has been described as “perhaps the most wide-spread and socially tolerated of human rights violations” (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). Violence against women as a gendered experience has been a common narrative of feminist literature since the 1970s¹⁶ (Tjaden, 2005). With an explosion of feminist research and writing, women’s experiences of rape, intimate partner violence, and incest were brought into academic/scholarly spheres (see Wilson, 1981). Positioned within a context of feminist ideology, this early work deemed patriarchy to be the main cause of gendered violence and focused largely on physical violence perpetrated by individual men (Tjaden, 2005).

¹⁵ The pass system was developed by the Federal Government in 1885 to control the movement of Indigenous peoples (Barron, 1988). Through the pass system, Indigenous peoples needed to have travel documents authorized by an Indian agent to leave and then return to their reserve community (Barron, 1988).

¹⁶ See Butler, S. (1978). *Conspiracy of silence: The trauma of incest*. Bantam Books.; Martin, D. (1976). *Battered wives*. Glide.; Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against our will: Men, women, and rape*. Simon and Schuster.

Critiques of the mainstream or white feminist movement have long criticized this paternalistic presupposition that patriarchy is a unified experience (Turpel, 1993), pointing out that this gendered focus ignores the unique and often amplified experiences of racialized women (Hargreaves, 2017; Smith, 2004). Rather, the diverse social locations of women intersect to create unique experiences that affect the likelihood of violence, the impacts of violence, and the social responses to violence such as protection from police and media representation (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). Contemporary feminist work, with its focus on intersectionality, is generally more receptive to the diverse experiences of women. However, additive approaches where experiences related to race, class, sexuality, ability, etc., are categorized and ‘added’ into the gendered analysis continue to draw concern (Hargreaves, 2017). Particularly, that colonialism, race, class, etc., are treated as secondary significance to gender and that these diverse experiences are framed as standardized. Ultimately, additive or gender-centric feminist approaches have been critiqued for their tendency to approach gender-based violence as primarily a reflection of patriarchal control (Smith, 2005).

While the patriarchal system is a concern for Indigenous women, and violence against Indigenous women is indeed gendered, the feminist perception of patriarchy and the goal of targeting ‘male oppression’ as the root cause of violence is an oversimplification (Green, 2007, 2017; Koshan, 1997). In particular, this construction erases how instrumental Canadian institutions have been in Indigenous women’s experiences of violence (Turpel, 1993). For instance, whilst early tenets of mainstream feminist movements advocated for legal recognition of violence against women (Emberley, 2007), Indigenous literature has noted that this approach ignores the unequivocal contribution of Canada’s legal institutions in marginalizing Indigenous women and the colonial origins of gendered violence, which can be traced back to state-based policy and legislation (Monture-Angus, 1995; Episknew, 2009). Overall, while Indigenous women’s experiences of violence share some aspects with all women, the racialized, and more importantly, state-based colonial origins of this violence are imperative to understanding current experiences of violence.

Perspectives surrounding violence have widened since early feminist work to extend discussions of violence beyond more obvious forms of physical violence such as interpersonal violence (Krug

et. al., 2002). Further, violence against women became recognized as a human rights issue following major world events of the 1990s¹⁷ (Tjaden, 2005). Despite the recognition of women's rights as human rights, violence against Indigenous women and girls remains at its core a neglected issue (Kuokkanen, 2012). Ultimately, targeted policies and gendered representations by Western spaces have found stability over time and provide a framework for understanding contemporary violence against Indigenous women as an unbroken aspect of the colonial legacy (Hargreaves, 2017). Western spaces have worked cohesively to dehumanize and subjugate Indigenous women since contact, resulting in both non-Indigenous and Indigenous spaces that are conducive to violence (Anderson, 2016; Carter, 1997; Razack, 2000). Overall, the discussion of violence reflects the multifaceted intersection of lived experiences, the perpetuation of violence in Western and Indigenous spaces, and narratives of violence that exist within the Western cultural memory.

2.3.2.1 Violence as a Lived Experience

In terms of lived experiences, research has shown that Indigenous women do experience a significant amount of violence, reflecting both statistical and anecdotal evidence of this violence (Brownridge, 2003; Bopp et al., 2003; Hargreaves, 2017; National Inquiry, 2019). Further, Indigenous individuals and spaces (and others) *have* found violence to be a critical contemporary concern. In 2010, 582 cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women had been documented by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) (NWAC, 2010b). In 2013, University of Ottawa doctoral researcher Maryanne Pearce indicated the number may be as high as 824 (Pearce, 2013), while a 2014 RCMP reported 1,181 cases between 1980 and 2012 (RCMP, 2014). Other statistics position Indigenous women at much higher rates for gendered violence than non-Indigenous women in Canada (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018; Boyce, 2016; Perreault, 2011; Eberts, 2014; Gilchrist, 2010; Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1996). Additionally, Indigenous women are described as just as likely to be killed by a stranger as they are by an intimate partner

¹⁷ These events included the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, the World Conference on Population and Development in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Tjaden, 2005)

— an experience that is distinct from non-Indigenous women whose homicides are often attributed to partner violence (Standing Committee on the Status of Women, 2011). Research completed for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has also described violence as a major challenge within some communities related to both a lack of adequate governmental support and on-reserve failures to protect Indigenous women (Bopp et al., 2003). Overall, it is evident that violence against Indigenous women is a significant problem, with the narrative surrounding this experience often encased in language of distinction from non-Indigenous women’s experiences. Yet, this experience of violence is highly institutionalized.

2.3.2.2 Institutionalization of Violence

State-sponsored colonial systems of gendered dispossession and representation have remained intact over time. Further, Western narrative spaces responsible for these systems have been foundational in reproducing and maintaining violence against Indigenous women as an institutionalized, structural experience (Hargreaves, 2017). Women’s experiences of violence reflect systemic and unequal relationships between Indigenous women and Indigenous men, and further, between Indigenous peoples and Canadian colonial spaces through intersecting processes of separation and denigration. Much of this unequal manifestation lies in the history of the Indian Act and its criteria for regulating ‘Indian’ registration under the Act, which has institutionalized and effectively naturalized gender and race-based discrimination as a form of cultural trauma (Fiske & George, 2006).

Gender discrimination in the Indian Act has been well documented by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and institutions alike. Further, the gendered experiences of Indigenous women can be situated within centuries of colonial displacement and historic traumas, i.e. collective colonial violence. For instance, the residential school legacy has been described by First Nations as “an experience that wounded their societies more deeply than any other colonial intrusion in their collective memories” (Fiske & George, 2013, p.55). However, alongside the residential school legacy, the Indian Act has had grave and continued impacts, particularly for Indigenous

women and their descendants. To summarize, under Section 12(1)(b), a woman who married a non-registered man would be “stripped of her Indian status, removed from Indian band registration and denied all the privileges and protections of the *Indian Act* including rights to residency, inheritance of property on the reserve, burial on the reserve, and access to traditional resources through fishing and hunting” (Fiske & George, 2013, p.71).

Despite somewhat addressing gender discrimination in the Indian Act, gender-based systems of identity and rights continued to be institutionalized by the Canadian government and within Indigenous communities, with Bill C-31 both reinforcing existing inequalities and creating new inequalities. To begin, Bill C-31 created new classes of registration of status based on paternity: section 6(1) designates are those who have two parents with status, while section 6(2) are individuals with only one registered parent (Fiske & George, 2013). In theory, individuals registered under sections 6(1) or 6(2) have access to the same services and benefits. However, the ability to pass status to descendants differs depending on the registration of the parent. Whereas children with two parents registered under either 6(1) or 6(2) can transmit status to their children, single parents with 6(2) registration cannot. As a result, children whose mother is registered under 6(1) but whose father is not identified as a Registered Indian is designated 6(2). Children whose mother is registered under 6(2) but whose father is not proven to be registered becomes known as a Non-Registered or Non-Status Indian and is excluded from the registry (Fiske & George, 2013). This denial of status to single parent 6(2) registered children has become known as the second-generation cut-off rule – an assimilative strategy aimed at elimination Indigenous peoples (Fiske & George, 2013).

While the second-generation cut-off rule was claimed by government to reflect the concerns of First Nations regarding resource pressures and community cultural erosion, its paternal designation has continued to unequally impact women related to constructions of authenticity that, due to unequitable access to resources, have become internalized in many Indigenous communities over time. Under the Act, Indigenous women were required to prove Indian status of the father by disclosing his identity in order to register their children. Mothers who did not or could not prove paternity were unable to register their children under the same section that they themselves were

entitled to. Indigenous women across Canada, including status and non-status women, have vehemently protested this policy of required disclosure of paternity as a state intrusion and a continuation of gender-based discrimination (Fiske & George, 2013). As discussed by Fiske and George (2013), “disclosure of paternity can place them in social jeopardy, perhaps endanger them, and at the very least cause social conflicts where a man either denies paternity or refuses to acknowledge it to authorities” (p. 53). Ultimately, it puts the onus on women to prove entitlement and ultimately, identity.

Further, Bill C-31 did reinstate status to many individuals who had previously lost their registration and also awarded status to many of these individual’s children for the first time. Yet, it did not address continued issues stemming from the different treatment in women’s and men’s ability to pass on status before the amendment – its patrilineal legacy (Mann, 2013). These issues became known as the ‘cousins’ and ‘siblings’ issues (Mann, 2013). The ‘cousins’ issue referred to differential treatment in how status was gained/passed among first cousins of the same family, based on the sex of the ‘Indian’ grandparent (Cannon, 2013). For example, cousins who traced their status through their ‘Indian’ grandfather were eligible for Indian status, while cousins who traced their ancestry through an ‘Indian’ grandmother were not (Cannon, 2013). The differing legal entitlement to pass status between paternal and maternal lines meant that cousins of the same family often had differing Indian status and subsequent rights, privileges, and entitlement such as the right to inherit property and live on reserve, and the trauma that stems from these differences (Fiske & George, 2013). Similarly, the ‘siblings’ issue concerned differences in ability to pass status between male and female children born of unmarried parents between the 1951 and 1985 Indian Act amendments (Mann, 2013). Whereas registered ‘Indian’ men in this situation could pass on their status regardless of mother’s status, registered ‘Indian’ women could not pass their status to their descendants unless their child’s father had status. These two issues illustrated the residual gender discrimination that were carried forward with the 1985 Bill C-31 amendment due to the 6(1) and 6(2) registration.

Law enforcement has also had a critical role in the institutionalization of violence against Indigenous women. Law enforcement has a long history of perpetuating violence against

Indigenous women through their failure to protect Indigenous women from violence and simultaneous violent tendencies throughout history (Palmater, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2013). The phenomenon of MMIWG has been described as evidence of law enforcement's failure to protect Indigenous women from violence (Palmater, 2016). Research has illuminated stories of domestic violence survivors not being awarded protections by police, of women being blamed or shamed for their experience of violence, of women feeling at risk for arrest despite being the victim, and of police not showing up at all due to stereotypes towards Indigenous women that pervade those spaces (Human Rights Watch, 2017, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2013; Bopp et al., 2003). Similarly, the literature is saturated with stories of Indigenous peoples not being taken seriously when reporting missing women or violence due to their Indigeneity (See for example Bopp et al., 2003; Human Rights Watch, 2013; 2017; Hargreaves, 2017).

In addition to being under-protected and under-served, Indigenous women have been subjected to police abuse and misconduct since the formation of the RCMP and on reserve policing (Brennan, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2017, 2013; Sinha, 2013). Examples of historical and contemporary RCMP and local police misconduct and abuse towards Indigenous women are rampant and widespread¹⁸. A qualitative study completed by the Human Rights Watch in 2017 documented 64 cases of police violence and misconduct in Saskatchewan, with women sharing stories of excessive use of force, degrading and abusive body/strip searches by male officers, and sexual harassment during these searches such as groping. Additionally, 37 women came forward in 2015 as having experienced abuse by police in Val-d'or, Quebec (Shingler, 2016).

While some experiences of police abuse and violence have come to light in recent years, the relationship of fear and distrust between Indigenous women (and peoples generally) and law enforcement has limited Indigenous reporting of police violence. Further, the culture of systemic violence within law enforcement spaces is generally denied, covered up, or downplayed – common tactics that extend beyond Indigenous experiences. For instance, after pleading guilty to assaulting and abusing his wife in December 2020, Chatham-Kent officer Darcy Lunn returned to work but in a demoted position for 6 months. He had been suspended with pay since November 2019 – a

¹⁸ See Brennan, 2011; Sinha, 2013; National Inquiry, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2013, 2017

response that ultimately downplays women's experiences. Palmater (2016) found that when instances of police abuse towards Indigenous peoples did make the news, these stories were regularly framed in narratives of individualism and abnormality toward the perpetrator that lacked colonial context. Yet, as the example of Lunn illustrates, it is not only Indigenous women whose violence is undermined. Rather, a contradiction is manifested in this individualistic construction of violence that exists beyond Indigenous women. Actions of violence are framed within individualistic narratives, yet the system continues to employ those violent individuals illustrating the deeply contradictory and systemic nature of this violence and the patriarchal system.

Further, in an effort to downplay police violence, these stories often contained counter-narratives that portrayed perpetrators as "hard-working men with lengthy service records and even as heroes" (Palmater, 2016, p.269). A CBC article covering the 2015 Val-d'or case mentioned previously illustrates this, as a police union rep is quoted describing the police violence as 'just allegations', while also implying that the women were using the police as scapegoats (See CBC News, 2015). In contrast, a report of police violence in Quebec released by the National Inquiry into MMIWG found that "the systemic violence and rights violations experienced by Indigenous women and girls in this province [by police] amounts to genocide" (Lalond, 2019, para. 1).

In general, law enforcement's historical and contemporary relationship with Indigenous women is contentious at best, with a history of blaming women for the violence they experienced. Law enforcement has done little to address or circumvent the systemic issue of violence. The stereotypical sexualization and criminalization of Indigenous women as a form of discursive violence has both legitimized physical and sexual violence while also prevented Indigenous women from protection under the law (García-Del Moral, 2011; Razack, 2000; Anderson, 2016; Pierce, 2015).

2.3.2.3 Internalization of Violence

As discussed previously, institutionalized gendered hierarchical systems and women's legislated subordination over time became internalized within Indigenous spaces as a natural way of framing

identity, rights, and privileges (Barker, 2008; Kuokkanen, 2012). This has contributed to an atmosphere that is both conducive to violence and that undermines Indigenous women's experiences of violence within Indigenous spaces.

Since contact, the imposition of colonial institutions has had the effect of reordering gender relations in subordination of Indigenous women (Barker, 2008; Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010; Tsosie, 2010; Dunaway, 1997). Although Indigenous women are reclaiming their positions within Indigenous spaces, gender and intra-Indigenous violence remain a complicated issue within Indigenous communities and spaces (Kuokkanen, 2015). Many studies have indicated a history of Indigenous men, male-dominated organizations, and others with community power (often male) dismissing issues of gender-based inequality and women's experiences of violence (Kuokkanen, 2015; Barker, 2008). For instance, Bill C-31 discussed previously was hard fought and ill received within many Indigenous spaces (Jamieson, 1978; Silman, 1987). During the 1970s and 80s, status men who at the time dominated band governments and organizations "protested vehemently against the women and their efforts" (Barker, 2008, p.259). Indigenous women who were seeking equality were often demonized as 'women libbers', complacent in the imposition of Western institutions like feminism, reiterating a selfish ideology of individualism, and as overall 'anti-Indian' (Barker, 2008; Kuokkanen, 2012). Additionally, the passing of Bill C-31 did not necessarily translate into overarching change at the community level. Women and their children who had their status reinstated were often viewed as second-class citizens – as 'C-31s' or 'C-31ers' (Fiske and George 2006, 2013; Lawrence 2004; Macklem 2001).

Further, the designed intention of Bill C-31 – to repair harm done to women through gender-based discrimination – regularly contradicted amendment outcomes. For instance, although section 10 of Bill C-31 awarded First Nations some control over their membership, it also had negative repercussions for many reinstated women and their families. Through this new control, some women were put in conflict with their First Nation, who could deny membership rights such as voting privileges and refuse or limit access to resources on reserves such as to housing — in addition to marginalizing them in their social/cultural spheres through the denigrated 'C-31er' identity discussed previously (Fiske & George, 2006, 2013). Research has also indicated that

Indigenous women's experiences of violence continued to be both overlooked and sometimes even rationalized within First Nation communities in the post Bill C-31 era. For instance, a study completed for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in 2003 found that in communities where violence had been identified as an issue, community members in positions of power rationalized or dismissed violence, protected perpetrators of violence, and even punished women for seeking help – framed as a form of community betrayal (Bopp et al., 2003; Kuokkanen, 2012, 2015; LaRocque, 1993; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

'Internalization of violence' within Indigenous communities point to complex realities related to the overarching vulnerability that continued, uninterrupted colonial violence and cultural trauma has caused within Indigenous communities. Within Western spaces, politics and narratives of 'recognition' tend to oversimplify intra-Indigenous violence as an *Indigenous issue* existing outside of colonial relations. For instance, institutional reports detailing statistical evidence of gendered violence and related experiences regularly brush over the colonial history and the history of state-inflicted structural violence against Indigenous peoples. This qualified recognition by Western spaces can makes discussions of lateral violence by Indigenous spaces challenging for fear of issues of violence being taken out of context, of erasing or minimizing structural violence and the colonial context, and of pathologizing Indigeneity. However, Kuokkanen (2015) cautions against externalizing responsibility for intra-Indigenous violence away from Indigenous men, while simultaneously recognizes intra-Indigenous violence to be a complicated issue with foundations in colonialism.

2.3.2.4 Violence and Cultural Memory

Despite functioning as a colonial mechanism since contact, the topic of gendered violence has only recently surfaced in mainstream discourses and garnered national and international concern in the #MMIWG era of social media and activism. In recent years, experiences of violence have become highly visible and almost synonymous with Indigenous women, as a cultural memory and the dominant narrative surrounding Indigenous women. Yet, even with this increased visibility of

violence, an in-depth critical understanding of the relationship between colonial spaces and contemporary violence remains largely outside of the scope of mainstream common-sense understanding. As a result, the narrative of violence reflects a simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility of Indigenous women.

Central to understanding the simultaneous invisibility/hypervisibility of Indigenous women's experiences of violence is the long history of Western spaces sexualizing and criminalizing Indigenous women. As discussed, the sexualization and criminalization of Indigenous women has both contributed to and is a product of a naturalization of violence (LaRocque, 1994). Sexualized images of Indigenous women are a recurring image of Western culture with dehumanizing impacts. Fashion designers are regularly criticized for appropriating and sexualizing Indigenous regalia¹⁹ (Soh, 2018). Hit tv shows and movies regularly include 'Indian Princess' images as exotic sex symbols²⁰, while the sexy 'Indian Princess' remains a common Halloween costume. In general, sexualized caricatures of Indigenous women based on Western ideas of authenticity and fantasy reoccur in Western cultural spaces, and function as a form of discursive violence that also justifies and perpetuates lived experiences of violence.

The constant subjugation and dehumanizing sexualization of Indigenous women are heavily linked to deviance, with Indigenous women constructed as existing outside "the conventional boundaries of privileged femininity" (Morton, 2016, p. 303). This perpetuates stereotypes of Indigenous women as willing victims, whose lifestyle choices mean they deserve the violence they face (Comack & Balfour, 2004). In fact, Indigenous women are regularly blamed for experiences of violence, as an aspect of the Western cultural memory of Indigenous women (Henry & Tator, 2009; Strega et al., 2014). For instance, Morton's (2016) research found that the portrayal of

¹⁹ For example, the Victoria Secret Fashion Show has included 'cultural' segments since the early 2000s. In 2012 a model wore a Native American Headdress, and again in 2017 in a segment titled 'Nomadic Adventures', models wore Indigenous-inspired headdresses and accessories that had a "tribal" look without caring what 'tribe' they were referencing, [where] they deliberately took these elements and stripped them of their cultural meaning" (Stechyson, 2017).

²⁰ For example, in a 2012 episode of the hit TV show *Gossip Girl*, a female character dresses up in a 'stripper Pocahontas' costume in an effort to comfort another male character by way of seducing him. See <http://newspaperrock.bluecorncomics.com/2012/12/pocahontas-in-gossip-girl.html>

Indigenous women as hitchhikers in advertisements along the Highway of Tears²¹ implicitly assigned blame of violence to Indigenous women. The narrative of Indigenous women as sexually disposable and criminalized has shaped Western spaces, their discourses, and relations with Indigenous peoples throughout history and exists today as a Western cultural memory.

²¹ The highway of tears is a 724 kilometre corridor of highway between Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada (Sabo, 2019). Since the 1970s, many murders and disappearances have been located along the highway of tears, including a disproportionately high number of Indigenous women (Sabo, 2019).

Chapter 3

3 Newsprint, Service Delivery, and Storytelling

This chapter looks more specifically at two Western spaces of representation – mainstream news and service delivery. This section focuses on the contemporary rise in visibility and accessibility of Indigenous produced narratives and spaces as a form of resistance to the Western cultural memory. The intent is to highlight the necessity of Indigenous centered spaces for elevating Indigenous voices to disrupt the colonial cultural memory of ‘other’. It also briefly addresses the rise of (mis)information, particularly in the last four years²².

3.1 Newsprint and Violence Against Indigenous Women

The news has been a critical space in the colonial process of constructing and representing Indigenous peoples and the ‘common-sense’ cultural memory of the ‘Indian’ (Anderson & Robertson, 2011; Nesbitt-Larking, 2001). News media spaces have been described as both complicit in “fortifying the cultural hierarchy” and acting as the “moral authority at the heart of an existing social order” (Fleras & Kunz, 2001, p. vii). The news has not existed in a vacuum, but both reflects and contributes to the overarching cultural memory that exists within Western spaces. It is recognized as being both “grounded in and reflective of the culture in which it operates”, serving as a mirror of sorts of public sentiment (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.15). Not only has non-Indigenous newsprint been a critical narrative space, it has been relatively stable in its representation of Indigenous peoples (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). This is particularly evident in the reproduction of colonial values, ideologies, norms, and practices, the reliance on the ‘Indian’ stereotype, and the qualified inclusion of Indigenous voice (Anderson & Robertson, 2011; Henry

²² Particularly, during the Trump regime.

& Tator, 2009). Further, the news has gained increased importance as a space of meaning construction surrounding the Indigenous women experiences, particularly that of violence.

3.1.1 Newsprint and Meaning Construction

In terms of spaces of representation, newsprint is considered one of the first forms of mass media and of mass-produced commodities, having a long history of being a space of meaning construction (Anderson, 2006). The consumption of daily news has been described as the modern akin to reciting a morning prayer – a daily ritualized act of nationhood construction that produces an imagined sense of community (Jiwani, 2009). Although the online era has transitioned many away from the physical newsprint, a 2017 study found that 85% of Canadian adults read a newspaper each week using a variety of technology platforms (laptops, phones, tablets, and print) (News Media Canada, 2017). Further popular local and national newspapers, like the *Globe* and the *Free Press*, continue to have a high readership despite shifts in consumption patterns (Newspaper Canada, 2015). Overall, mainstream newspapers remain valued spaces for obtaining information. They are institutionalized as neutral, credible, reliable, and unbiased spaces, particularly among those who share similar ideological positions as those of the newspaper (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). Further, new articles reach a wide audience, particularly in the expansion of online spaces. As a result, newspapers are important spaces for guiding and shaping public perception and perpetuating cultural memory.

Despite the image of neutrality, the myth of objective journalism and reporting has been well acknowledged. In fact, some argue that no other type of discourse is more ideological in nature than that produced in news spaces (Bell, 1991; White, 2000). Beginning with the selection of stories, news making is highly subjective, with stories not just selected but constructed around cultural and social criteria (Fowler, 1991; Gilchrist, 2010; Harding, 2005; Henry & Tator, 2009; Jewkes, 2004; Schudson, 1989; Zelizer, 2005). The ideological nature of the news is evident in the content that is selectively chosen and included in the article, and in story framing – the process of selecting some aspects of information as important (Entman, 1993). Frames often define problems,

diagnose causes, make moral judgements, evaluate causal agents, and suggest remedies – thereby functioning as an ideological tool and shortcut for consumers to understand complex issues and ideas (Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Hallahan, 1999). What this means is that frames explicitly and implicitly shape opinions, attitudes, and overall understanding of an issue based on what information is and is not selectively included (Hallahan, 1999).

Accordingly, the news as an institution and a commodity simultaneously shapes existing social perception while ignoring this very function by maintaining a guise of authenticity, credibility, and objectivity. Yet, the objectivity or authenticity of news spaces has been described as illusionary, with the news embodying four inherent biases (Bennett, 2003). These include ‘dramatization’ due to the focus on crisis, escalations, and resolutions; ‘personalization’ where the news is constructed to appeal to the individual through emphasis on dominant social norms over “social realities that differ from one’s own” (Bennett, 2003, p.38); ‘fragmentation’ evident in the decontextualized and piecemeal fashion of story development; and an ‘authority-disorder bias’ evident in the heavy reliance on experts and other authority figures for restoring order within stories (Bennett, 2003; Jiwani, 2006). As a result, newspapers have agenda-setting premises. They lead by way of influencing consumers, but also are led by “what its paying public desires to read” and in many ways, what these consumers already believe or are “likely to accept” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.5). As Jullian (2011) points out, “the selection of the event, the framing, the sources, the way the events are presented, the heading, etc. are all ideological decisions” (p. 767).

In terms of story construction, van Dijk (1985) described the use of ‘relevance structuring’ in news to indicate to readership which information in the text is most important. Headlines, for example, tend to be the first thing that readership sees and has the purpose of “[expressing] the most important topic of news” (p. 70). Construction of news follows existing narrative structures that have been refined over time as a type of template, similar to templates that provide narrative expectations for novels and other forms of texts. In fact, Anderson (2006) compares the news to novels in terms of the goal of enticing readership and the process of following a set of norms and conventions regarding the components of news stories. Producing news stories is an ideological process of appealing to consumers. Yet, the institutionalization of mainstream media has awarded

news spaces an authority, with many viewing the news as providing factual, disinterested, and impersonal representations with a perceived objectivity assigned to journalists, news pieces, and the news as an overarching institution (Jullian, 2011).

3.1.1.1 Infotainment and the Idea of 'Newsworthy'

To determine content and frames, news spaces use principles of 'infotainment' where the selection of news stories and their presentation serves both information and entertainment purposes (Bastien, 2018; Thussu, 2007). The United States news institution has been described as the inventor of the infotainment industry, when news spaces began publishing a high quota of human-interest stories related to crime and punishment in the early 19th century (Mott, 1962). The use of contemporary infotainment principles within news spaces saw a rise in the 1980s in response to changes in the ways that people were beginning to consume information. For instance, the launch of the cable news network resulted in an increasingly competitive news environment as individuals could consume the news at all hours from an increased number of sources (Thussu, 2007). Research throughout the 1990s noted news trends of deliberate dramatization. In particular, policy-relevant stories of government and foreign affairs were being overshadowed by entertainment-based stories related to lifestyle, crime, scandal, and celebrity (Graber, 1994; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1998). The infamous 1995 O. J. Simpson story has been described as a historic moment in the encroachment of entertainment into news and the global hook on tabloid culture (Thaler, 1997).

Establishing a story as newsworthy is a critical aspect of the meaning making that takes place within this space. This idea of 'newsworthiness' is also a critical aspect of infotainment. Newsworthiness is defined as "amounting to what makes a story worth telling" and is related to a set of criteria that are filtered through a predominantly white, Western, middle-class, heteronormative, male lens (Gilchrist, 2010; Henry & Tator, 2006). Criteria surrounding newsworthiness include relevance, unexpectedness, immediacy, intensity, resonance, spatial proximity, cultural proximity, intelligibility, shock value, and clarity of stories (Greer, 2003;

Galtung & Ruge, 1973) – all criteria for establishing news value that are situated within the context of Western cultural norms.

Once established as ‘newsworthy’, a variety of techniques and literary practices are used to construct meaning and provide a frame to the content. The inclusion of external voice through quotes is an important technique that serves a variety of purposes including providing a perception of evidence, credibility, authenticity, and authority to how the content is framed (Jullian, 2011). Additionally, the use of quotations and external voice provides a sense of objectivity to the story as a form of ‘reporter detachment’, as the quote or inclusion of external voice signals that the content is coming from a source outside of the reporter (Gilchrist, 2010). However, the inclusion of external sources and voice is similarly an ideological process. Sources are chosen for a variety of reasons including story goals, the authority they can bring to the content, and to support or juxtapose the story. However, it is the author that has power over giving or withholding voice (Scollon, 1998; Fairclough, 1995). Further, while news reports rely heavily on information provided by external sources (e.g. Van Dijk, 1988; Fairclough, 1992; Waugh, 1995; Scollon, 1998; Smirnova, 2009), voices and sources are not treated equally and reflect power embedded within news practices.

3.1.2 A Complex History of Indigenous Visibility/Invisibility

As illustrated, colonial spaces of representation have been preoccupied with constructing Indigenous peoples. Much like other spaces, Indigenous peoples have been the subjects of Western news spaces since the formation of Canada. Also, like other spaces, the news has reiterated a narrow portrayal of Indigenous peoples that supports and reflects non-Indigenous needs and Western cultural memory – when Indigenous peoples are represented in the news at all (RCAP, 1996; Harding, 2005). When Indigenous peoples do “register on the public agenda” of news spaces, their inclusion tends to follow specific linguistic practices and narratives that support Western interests and purposefully shape audience perception (Harding, 2005, p.313). For instance, in their examination of Indigenous women boxers in the media, Ross and Forsyth (2020)

found that while Mary Spencer – an Indigenous boxer who competed in the 2012 Olympics – was mentioned as Indigenous in the opening paragraph of a *Chatelaine* article, the remainder of the article took a gendered approach – of a female boxer struggling to make it in a man’s world. This focus on gender was a tailored attempt to appeal to the mostly white middle- and upper-class women who read *Chatelaine* and who could relate to struggles of gender but not to the struggles faced by Indigenous women (Ross & Forsyth, 2020).

Practices such as ‘fronting’, where the writer “present[s] a point in the first sentence of the article thereby setting its tone” (Henry & Tator, 2002), and argumentation are purposefully used to shape audience perception of Indigenous peoples. Further, stereotyping has been identified as one of the most common news practices surrounding Indigenous peoples, where Western ideas of authentic Indigenous experiences are built into news stories to shape reader interpretations (Harding, 2005). In their examination of Indigenous representations in news media since 1869, Anderson and Robertson (2011) found that as a whole, reportage “collectively tells us little, certainly nothing accurate, about Aboriginal people *per se*, but tells us a great deal about Canadiana, that is the Canadian mainstream imagination” (p.14). Rather, news media has functioned alongside other Western spaces to reiterate the three essentialized sets of characteristics discussed previously – depravity, innate inferiority, and stubborn resistance to progress (Anderson & Robertson, 2011) – that have become grounded within Western society as core cultural attributes of Western cultural memory. The news also provides a discursive means for translating that cultural memory into the physical and ideological domination of Indigenous peoples by Canadian society. The news not only reminds audiences of existing stereotypes as reflections of ‘common-sense’, but also reproduces and builds off pre-established ‘common-sense’ through aspects of the selection processes that are embedded within the news process (Harding, 2005)

It has been well established that the news as a colonial space has remained stable over time. For instance, Harding (2005) notes the stability of historical stereotypes of Indigenous people as victims, warriors, and environmentalists, with the inclusion of these stereotypes in contemporary stories reinforcing “old and deeply imbedded notions of ‘Indians’ as alien, unknowable and ultimately a threat to civil order” (RCAP, 1996, p.5). In other words, the news represents an

interplay of past and present (Erlil & Young, 2008) reflected in the formation and durability of Western cultural memory. While generally stable in terms of dominant archetypal stereotypes, Harding (2005) also noted the introduction of a new stereotype in the 1990s, that of ‘Indigenous incapability’, where news stories functioned to cast doubt on the ability of Indigenous peoples to look after their own affairs. This theme emerged at a time when Indigenous peoples were becoming increasingly active in their efforts of “reclaiming control over their lives and, in doing so, contesting the subservient nature of their relationship...with Canadian society” (Harding, 2005, p.312). As a result, this new stereotype was aimed at undermining Indigenous aims by discrediting, obfuscating, and essentially ‘othering’ Indigenous peoples.

Despite some shifts or developments, Anderson and Robertson (2011) describe news spaces and the narratives they produce as relatively unchanged, much like the reality of colonialism in Canada. Coverage generally expresses anti-Indigenous narratives through a white lens, when Indigenous peoples and their experiences are reported on at all. While the narrative function has remained stable, Anderson and Robertson (2011) note that the press itself has shifted from an unapologetically partisan pose to a guise of nonpartisan, championing objectivity in the last few decades. However, this hegemonic position similarly ‘others’ Indigenous peoples, just from a naturalized framework of colonial ‘common-sense’ rather the blatant racism and racial superiority used by early news spaces.

3.1.2.1 Newsworthiness and Indigeneity

At the center of this relationship between Indigenous peoples and news coverage are interconnected processes of ‘new judgement’ (Wallace & Martinez, 2019a) and ideas of newsworthiness. Establishing the relative value of news – the newsworthiness of a story, of a person, and their experiences – is a process that has been identified in activist/journalistic spaces as professing ‘news judgement’ (Wallace & Martinez, 2019a). Ideas of newsworthiness and the language used to frame stories offer a road map for readers to think about and understand ‘self’ in relation to those being portrayed in news stories (Anderson, 2006). News spaces tend to reinforce

objectification of those deemed ‘other’ through the use of binary terms – ‘us and them’ and ‘modern and traditional’ – and conceptualizations involving racialization and the absence of race. Although news judgement is not unique to Indigenous peoples, it perpetuates a distinction between Indigenous subjects and non-Indigenous readers and a perception of Indigenous peoples as people of the periphery (Denis, 1997; Alia, 1999).

Similarly, the language of newsworthiness reflects a strategy of political containment and the silencing of Indigenous concerns (Furniss, 2001). In particular, Indigenous peoples are often framed as threatening the social order or as people who either have or create problems, through practices of “withholding history and context about complex issues [which] limits the interpretive choices available to audiences” (Harding, 2005, p. 315). For instance, in their research on news reporting surrounding Indigenous and non-Indigenous conflicts, Lambertus (2004) found that news spaces regularly erased the historical context of disputes and unsympathetically built stories off common-sense assumptions of Indigenous volatility. As a result, the news took advantage that non-Indigenous Canadians are critically unaware of this context, and purposefully built off and fed into the cultural memory and Canadiana psyche. Essentially it has been illustrated that, “what is not said in a news report may have as great an influence on the production of meaning as what is said” (Harding, 2005, p.314).

As well, more space is awarded to stories that fit into existing stereotypes, as those experiences are judged as more newsworthy. For instance, stories illustrating the ‘plight of Indigenous peoples’ are more likely included as worthy content when the story can be constructed to fit pathologizing stereotypes. Notably, Anderson & Robertson (2011), found that the number of news stories surrounding Indigenous peoples surged when Indigenous actions and experiences reflected and supported common negative stereotypes of violence and deviance²³ or intra-Indigenous violence

²³ A photograph taken on September 1, 1990 during the Kanehsatake resistance by Shaney Komulainen that represents a stereotypical construction of an Indigenous ‘warrior’ has become one of Canada’s most famous images, having a perceived longevity. For instance, in a 2015 Toronto Star article titled ‘A Warrior, a Soldier and a Photographer: Remembering the Oka Crisis’, the photographer of that original photo is quoted discussing the ‘menacing threats of the Ojibway warriors’ in comparison with the noble valiant efforts of the Canadian soldiers/military (Wells, 2015).

in First Nations communities. Similarly, Indigenous peoples have been received more positively by contemporary news spaces when viewed as ‘transcending’ common ‘Indian’ stereotypes or as embodying the ‘noble Indian’ stereotype (Tennant, 1990; Harding, 2005). For example, in their research on reportages surrounding Indigenous protests and land claims, Tennant (1990) found that “journalists... quickly came on side when chanting Indians in traditional costume confronted white loggers on magnificent coastal islands...less attention was paid when Indians in blue jeans and baseball caps did the same thing in the dreary spruce forests of the northern interior” (p. 209).

3.1.2.2 Invisibility + Hypervisibility of Indigenous Women

The importance of news stories in terms of cultural memory and their stability over time is particularly evident in media coverage of the topic of violence against Indigenous women. In conducting this review, it became evident that while some positive stories exist, the majority of news stories (and narratives generally) surrounding Indigenous women published in the last 20 years have been negative, largely related to the experience of violence, and more recently, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls phenomenon (MMIWG).

Yet despite being the dominant news frame surrounding Indigenous women, violence against Indigenous women has historically been erased, ignored, justified, or downplayed within news spaces. Not only are experiences of violence against Indigenous women less likely to receive news coverage than non-Indigenous women, but coverage is less sympathetic and regularly relies on stereotypical representations of Indigenous women that reinforce the cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’ (Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; National Inquiry, 2019). According to Gilchrist (2010), Indigenous women and violence in the news oscillate between themes of invisibility towards violence as a systemic issue and as victims, and hypervisibility as an Indigenous specific experience and as deviant bodies (Ardovi-Brooker & Caringella-Macdonald, 2002; England, 2004; Gilchrist, 2010). Translations of invisibility and hypervisibility shape both the initial likelihood of news coverage, as well as framing when Indigenous women and violence are covered. Indigenous women’s invisibility and hypervisibility lies in stereotypical

ideas of ‘Indigenous culpability’ as a Western associated idea that shapes how mainstream spaces engage with what are constructed as ‘Indigenous experiences’.

Considering that over 1,200 Indigenous women and girls have been identified as missing or murdered since the 1970s (RCMP, 2014), the deeply rooted colonial experience of violence has been overall invisible within news spaces, with news media seemingly underwhelmed by the issue that is deemed routine. It was not until the highly publicized and sensationalized arrest of Robert Pickton in 2002 and conviction in 2007 that the image of ‘Indigenous women as victims’, along with the story of police misconduct, surfaced in any meaningful way (Jiwani, 2009). In particular, violence against Indigenous women has been invisible as a form of structural, gendered, and racialized violence, with Indigenous women similarly invisible as worthy victims. Yet, the invisibility of Indigenous women as ‘worthy victim’ is deeply tied to the racialization of Indigenous women and its intersection with Western perceptions of femininity – as well as perceptions of culpability that frame this intersection. In particular, the binary of worthy and unworthy victim is deeply tied to intersections of race, gender, and class, and maintains that not all victims of violence are considered equal or newsworthy (Gilchrist, 2010). Rather, the determination of ‘newsworthy’ is filtered through a Western, white, male, heteronormative, and middle-class lens (Henry & Tator, 2006).

Yet, alongside this general invisibility as worthy victims, the experience of violence is simultaneously hypervisible as a Western cultural memory associated with Indigenous women. For instance, in their analysis of newspaper articles on violence against Indigenous women published in the *Globe and Mail*, Jiwani (2009) found that most new stories on Indigenous women were either about violence or referred to violence in some capacity, often in such a way that assigned violence to Indigenous women as a naturalized experience. Interacting with this hypervisibility of ‘Indigenous violence’ is the hypervisibility of Indigenous women as deviant and victimized bodies, evident in the near conflation of Indigenous women with sex work and other perceived drudgery in news coverage. This conflation further justifies the narrative of ‘unworthy’ as Indigenous women are constructed as having a proclivity to violence and therefore at least partly culpable.

The first extensive report on missing and murdered Indigenous women began in the late 1990s and early 2000s by Vancouver Sun reporters Lindsay Kines, Kim Bolan, and Lori Culbert, who focused on women who had been murdered or gone missing from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver (Jiwani & Young, 2006). Despite somewhat sympathetic framing, the 11-part series published in 2001 presented the women as drug-addicted sex workers, with it regularly noted that the women were Aboriginal (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 897). Police reactions and responses that were included reiterated an air of culpability and focused on the easy victimization of Indigenous women. Further, the close-cropped photos of the missing women were stark like police portraits and highlighted their Indigenous heritage – which both reinforced and reflected a Western cultural memory of Indigenous criminality (England, 2004; Jiwani & Young, 2006). Since these 2001 reports, little has changed in terms of the hypervisibility of Indigenous women as victims and ‘easy targets’, or in the language of the stories that frame Indigenous women as existing outside of Western society and norms.

Gilchrist (2010) provided some explanation to the simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility as two sides of the same coin, related to ideas of ‘newsworthiness’. In general, not all crimes are considered ‘newsworthy’, and Indigenous women’s experiences of violence reflect something that can at once be sensationalized and also naturalized. On the one hand, the naturalized association between violence and Indigenous women that exists as a Western cultural memory makes Indigenous women’s experiences of violence not worthy. However, because violence reinforces a preexisting image of who Indigenous women are as ‘other’, when Indigenous women’s stories are covered by the press the narrative tends to be around violence. At the same time, qualified news judgement illustrates a difference in what type of experiences within that violence narrative are ‘newsworthy’. For instance, within the hierarchy of crimes, violent crimes that can be sensationalized, like the Robert Pickton serial murderer case, are more newsworthy than violence that is deemed routine or ordinary, like partner violence or non-fatal violence, which is what Indigenous women experiences of violence are regularly framed as.

Further, as already mentioned, the idea of Indigenous culpability intersects with the idea of newsworthiness, thereby shaping quantity and quality of news coverage. For instance, in their

research into news representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Vancouver's downtown Eastside, Jiwani and Young (2006) found that news stories about Indigenous women often used descriptions like sex workers, transient, and substance abusers and rarely referenced the colonial context – the narrative being that Indigenous women make choices and are at least somewhat culpable in their own violence (Jiwani & Young, 2006). Further, Wilcox (2005) explained that male offenders of violence are only guilty to the extent that women victims are viewed as innocent, and women are only innocent to the extent that they are viewed as blameless. The common labelling of Indigenous women as 'high-risk' or 'at risk' within news stories implies blame and 'choice', while also obscures unequal social conditions that shape women's 'choices' (Jiwani & Young, 2006). This narrative of Indigenous culpability supports and reinforces stereotypical and 'common sense' Western cultural memory surrounding Indigenous peoples, while simultaneously distancing non-Indigenous spaces and individuals from the issue of violence. As a result, although Indigenous women are framed within narratives of choice, violence is also constructed as an inherently Indigenous experience.

3.1.3 The use of Violence Templates

News spaces have adopted what can be described as 'violence templates' for constructing and sharing stories about Indigenous women. As discussed, the literature points to 'violence' as the dominant theme and cultural memory surrounding Indigenous women, with violence "bleeding into all other depictions of Indigenous women" (Jiwani, 2009, p.5). As a result, this deeply ingrained cultural memory of violence functions as a template for news spaces. Kitzinger (2000) described normative templates as 'rhetorical shorthand' used by both journalists and audiences to make sense of news stories through a process of building off past knowledge – or pre-established 'common-sense'. In practice, historically entrenched stereotypes that have become accepted as legitimate past knowledge provide a foundation for contemporary news reporting by constraining and limiting how Indigenous women and experiences are approached and framed. In fact, Jiwani (2009) argues that violence templates underpin most of the coverage surrounding Indigenous

women with stereotypical themes of prostitution, substance abuse, inept mothering, and transient behaviour – all aspects of a template through which violence is defined (Jiwani, 2009).

3.1.3.1 Erasure of Structural Violence

An intrinsic aspect of these violence templates and news spaces with respect to Indigenous women is the erasure of state maintained/inflicted structural violence. News spaces are not void of structural and systemic discussion. For instance, Jiwani (2009) identified stories where Indigenous women are discussed in relation to experiences of inequality like poverty, addictions, homelessness, high infant mortality rates, and health issues. Similarly, a cursory examination of literature illustrates that statistics released by Statistics Canada, the RCMP, Amnesty International, and the Native Women's Association of Canada are often included in stories when the topics of violence are addressed. Therefore, there is some acknowledgement of structural realities. However, the structural aspects of violence are consistently framed in such ways that erase the colonial context and undermine institutional responsibility, through the construction of what are defined as Indigenous issues. For instance, Jiwani and Young (2006) found that while framing missing or murdered Indigenous women from Downtown Eastside Vancouver as structurally disadvantaged, popular news sources at the time included little discussion of state inflicted structural inequalities, such as the lack of facilities and services and police violence, that characterized the area.

In particular, discussion on the historical context of government actions and inactions tend to be non-existent within news spaces, with very few stories situating contemporary experiences within the historical legacy in any meaningful way. For instance, Jiwani (2009) found that the few stories that did reference Canada's colonial history did so within a "mantle of paternalism... [that] inscribed an 'us' versus 'them' binary" (p.8) and included a narrative of moral responsibility. The narrative of moral responsibility — to save Indigenous women from bad Indigenous men or from themselves — is not new. Rather, it has justified cultural and legislative relations between Indigenous peoples and mainstream spaces since early colonialism. In addition, Jiwani (2010) described another news tendency of focusing on state actions, such as funding monuments,

supporting Indigenous initiatives, or scholarships, that support an image of the benevolent state without claiming responsibility or admitting to the colonial context. Overall, news coverage on violence against Indigenous women “unhing[es] the present from the past in its coverage... and create[s] a supportive environment for state structures and practices that reproduce material and social inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people” (Harding, 2006, p. 206).

3.1.3.2 Perpetrator and Victim Profiles

A related aspect of these violence templates is that the stories of violence create distance by ‘othering’ Indigenous subjects from non-Indigenous audiences through common perpetrator and victim profiles (Jiwani, 2009; Jiwani & Young, 2006). Indigenous women were found to be often profiled as substance abusers, homeless or transient, sex workers, and inept mothers, with limited inclusion of details of them as persons, their qualities, or lives beyond these stereotypes (Jiwani, 2009; Jiwani & Young, 2006). As a result, the victims of violence become unknowable to white readers as distinctly other and seemingly responsible for the violence experienced – a “discursive strategy of blaming the victim” (Jiwani, 2009, p. 9). The perpetrators of violence were similarly constructed within common frames. White male perpetrators were commonly discussed within frames of personhood or as pathologized abhorrent members of society, yet still as individuals (Jiwani & Young, 2006). On the other hand, Indigenous perpetrators of violence were found to be framed collectively and defined by their Indigeneity in ways that reinforced existing stereotypes (Jiwani, 2009) and supported the cultural memory of Indigenous proclivity to violence or culpability, and the criminality of Indigenous peoples.

3.2 Service Delivery and Cultural Memory

Alongside news spaces, service delivery spaces have been recognized as critical spaces in the development, maintenance, and transmission of Western cultural memory surrounding Indigeneity. Like other spaces, service delivery exists within the context of its epoch, and is

similarly rooted in the colonial history and ongoing oppressive policies and practices (Wylie et al., 2019; Browne, 2017; Germove & Hornosty, 2012). Alternatively, Indigenous specific service delivery has been identified as central for disrupting Western cultural memory (Cooper & Driedger, 2019). Yet, institutional discussion of service delivery still tends to center around mainstream services, reflecting a maintenance of the status quo. Like other Western spaces, the literature frames the history of service delivery in Canada as occurring within three eras: assimilation, recognition, and more recently, reconciliation (Kelly, 2011; Lachance & Rose, 2020). These eras reflect the colonial context of the time and illustrate Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations from a non-Indigenous position.

Policies that emerged under the assimilation paradigm, such as historic treaties (1871-1921), British North American Act (1867), the residential school legacy, and the Indian Act (1876), were developed through “process[es] that heard no Aboriginal voices and did not wish to” (Cairns, 2000, p. 95). The Federal government’s 1969 proposal of the White Paper and the official Indigenous response in the form of the Red Paper of 1970, pushed federal policies from the assimilation agenda into the new recognition era (Cairns, 2000). In terms of service delivery, the recognition era was defined by policies designed with the intent of recognizing Indigenous culture and increasing Indigenous autonomy over key areas like health (Kelly, 2011). However, this shift still tended to reproduce contradictory pressures of assimilation and exclusion through a paternalistic framing of government responsibility as a form of social policy not as an aspect of Indigenous inherent rights and Treaty rights, and through a top-down representation of knowledge (George et al., 2019; Klein, 2016; Anderson, 2007). In short, despite veils of increased recognition towards Indigenous autonomy, relations of the recognition era have continued to erase Indigenous lived experiences, rights, and knowledges while producing policy *for*, not policy *by* Indigenous peoples.

Stephen Harper’s 2008 Federal Government apology to survivors of the residential school system and the establishment of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) marked the introduction of a new policy era — reconciliation. Yet in many ways, this era simultaneously illustrated a lack of change at the service delivery level. Service delivery spaces continue to reproduce Western narratives and cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’,

as reflected in Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations and policy translations. For instance, a year following Harper's 2008 apology for residential schools, he stated that Canada does not have a history of colonialism. Harper also continually cut funding for Indigenous centered programming, ended Indigenous related services, and vilified Indigenous peoples in the media throughout his nearly decade long duration in office (Palmater, 2015). In fact, the Harper decade has been described as "one of the most racist and aggressive governments that First Nations have had to work with in many generations" (Palmater, 2015, para. 1). The release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015 is discussed as evidence of a more hopeful shift to reconciliation-based service delivery in relation to ideas of self-determination and Indigenous autonomy (Lachance & Rose, 2020).

While the 2015 final report was in many ways eye opening, the literature surrounding service delivery continues to reflect paternalistic relations and mainstream goals, with the Federal Government seemingly hovering between mutually exclusive objectives of assimilation and reconciliation (Palmater, 2011). Instead, service delivery spaces reflect an overarching theme of reluctance towards giving up power and control in the form of Indigenous self-determination, and perpetuate a cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as 'other' through narratives that simultaneously embolden 'Indigenous issues' and undermine Indigenous capabilities. Ultimately, power within service delivery spaces lay in the maintenance of cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as 'other', with non-Indigenous spaces reflecting only a rhetoric of reconciliation through the construction of Indigenous peoples as 'policy problems', mis-matched translations to actions, and the erasure of urban peoples and experiences.

3.2.1 Indigenous Peoples as Policy Problems

A considerable amount of research has documented the unique health and social experiences of Indigenous peoples, and the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups in the context of social demographic characteristics and social determinants of health (Biddle, 2012; George et al., 2019; Wylie et al., 2019; Czyzewski, 2011; Reading & Wien, 2009). Further, there is a growing

recognition that *Indigenous* social determinants of health – colonialism, racism, geographic location, delegated identities, cultural identity, access to culture, self-determination, sovereignty, and Indigenous knowledges – are critical in shaping Indigenous experiences of health (George et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2007; Carson et al., 2007). Yet, this recognition has not been uniform, and the practical translation of both social determinants of health and Indigenous social determinants of health into policy, action, and service delivery spaces has been fragmented (Chandler & Dunlop, 2015; Dion Stout, 2015; George et al., 2019; Makokis & Makokis, 2015; Polanco & Arbour, 2015; Scott, 2010; Stewart, 2008; Tagalik, 2015; Wylie et al., 2019). This has led researchers to the conclusion of service delivery as embodying a hollow rhetoric of recognition that lacks practical reconciliation goals (George et al., 2019).

To illustrate, in their analysis on social determinant inclusion in cancer policy, Carter and colleagues (2009) found that the naming of these determinants appeared to be ritualistic — “an incantation to be said before the policy or plan got on with the real business of reducing risk” (p. 1451), and did not necessarily translate to tangible actions and recommendations. Fisher and colleagues (2016) found similar patterns in health policy documents — although social determinants were generally acknowledged, “policies generally did not recognize broader policy settings affecting the overall distribution of socioeconomic resources as determinants of health inequities” (p. 553). Finally, key determinants of *Indigenous health* such as racism, cultural identity, self-determination, and community governance structures are rarely identified in mainstream policies (Carson et al., 2007). For instance, Phillips and colleagues (2016) found that despite some acknowledgment of determinants, Australian child and youth health policies tended to propose few strategies to address these identified problems, and often framed broader determinants like colonialism as existing outside the health sector scope entirely or as not a priority. Instead, the literature surrounding policy and service delivery continues to shape Indigenous peoples and their experiences as a ‘policy problem’ – something to be framed and fixed within a Western lens (Sullivan, 2011), with common narratives defined by a reluctance towards Indigenous knowledge, self-determination, and autonomy over service delivery.

For instance, a distinction is made between deficit-based and strength-based approaches to policy and service delivery (Carter et al., 2009; Klein, 2015; Sullivan, 2011). In this distinction, the latter, which stresses the value of strength and culture, exists as more of a rhetoric than as something actionable within mainstream service delivery spaces. Instead, Western perceptions of Indigeneity, situated within a context of cultural memory, tend to be framed more as part of the problem than part of the service delivery solution (Cooper, 2011). An intrinsic aspect of this narrative is that it reiterates the cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’ through deficit-based processes of ‘normalization’ where Indigenous peoples and their experiences are continually situated in contrast to non-Indigenous peoples and experiences (Sullivan, 2011). By centering the narrative as focused on mainstream services for Indigenous peoples (Brown, 2009; Browne et al., 2016; Cooke & McWhirter, 2011; Cooper, 2011; Ronald & Koea, 2013; Unal, 2018), normalization represents the “failure of Indigenous peoples to fit in with dominant, White social norms and institutions” (George et al., 2019, p.17). As well, principles of normalization frame the solution in terms of making Indigenous experiences more aligned with non-Indigenous experiences by targeting what is ‘wrong’ based on white dominant perceptions of Indigeneity, and fixing these deficits. This understanding is highly Eurocentric, as it erases Indigenous perceptions of holistic well-being. As well, cultural knowledge and expression through access, language, and traditional knowledge are not recognized as indicators of ‘progress’ (Cooper, 2011).

3.2.1.1 Western Definitions of Health, Needs, and Actions

The undermining and delegitimizing of Indigenous healing, ceremonies, and medicines by Western spaces has been integral to the colonial history (Robbins & Dewar, 2011; Webber, 1973). Contemporary discussions of Indigenous health continue to privilege Western definitions and responses. Notably, service delivery spaces – through researchers, academics, policy makers, doctors, and others – are constantly trying to sort Indigenous ideas of health using knowledge systems of Western science and religion, which alters how Indigenous knowledges are both perceived and interpreted (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). For instance, the term ‘traditional, often used to describe Indigenous medicine and knowledge, has been challenged by many Indigenous

scholars as a Western concept used to signify distinction and denigration of Indigenous knowledge in relation to Western knowledge. Whereas, Indigenous peoples might simply describe ‘traditional knowledge’ as knowledge or medicine. Furthermore, this Western preoccupation with defining ‘traditional healing’ in terms of Western standards simplifies and reduces Indigenous knowledges to fit into Western health frameworks despite the diversity of Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island and the globe. Further, as predominantly oral based cultures, direct experience with healers is imperative to grasping traditional healing (Robbins & Dewar, 2011), without which full knowledge is not possible. However, Western conceptualizations of Indigenous health, needs, and actions continue to dominate service delivery narratives.

Looking more specifically at health, Indigenous cultures approach health and well-being as a holistic concept related to intersections of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. While this holistic nature of well-being has been recognized in the literature since the late 1980s (See National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party, 1989), this recognition has not translated to mainstream policy and service delivery in any meaningful way (Wylie et al., 2019; Chandler & Dunlop, 2015; Dion Stout, 2015; Makokis & Makokis, 2015; Polanco & Arbour, 2015; Scott, 2010; Stewart, 2008; Tagalik, 2015). Rather, the health of Indigenous peoples continues to be situated within Western frameworks of health statistics and demographic characteristics. These narratives are primarily situated “in terms of comparison with non-Indigenous population...with emphasis on poorer outcomes in relation to health, education, and employment determinants” (McRae-Williams et al., 2018, p.1). These population level discussions and non-Indigenous comparisons pathologize Indigenous peoples and play “strongly into the cultural memory of who Indigenous peoples are” (Cooper & Driedger, 2019, p.11), thereby justifying colonial actions. For example, Cooper and Driedger (2019) found that the reliance on stark statistics related to child welfare have painted a picture of Indigenous children as suffering, that has then reinforced a narrative in support of the removal of Indigenous children from their communities. The Westernized construction of Indigenous health is maintained by other Western spaces like academia and the research tendency of dissecting health into negative health statistics. Ultimately the narrative is that Indigenous health is unlike non-Indigenous health, and Indigenous experiences are issue centric – existing as a remembered Western cultural memory.

Similarly, the federal ‘on-reserve’ construction of responsibility continues to be centered around a Western and colonial construction of needs, which perpetuates the cultural memory of delegated identities and government responsibility, discussed previously (Wylie & McConkey, 2019). As a note, despite federal recognition of responsibility for on-reserve services, First Nations infrastructure are perpetually underfunded and under-resourced resulting in poor health and health care delivery (Browne, 2017; Germove & Hornosty, 2012; Lavoie & Forget, 2008; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). This shortcoming aside, the on-reserve focus is limited in its potential for community compatibility. For instance, this focus reflects a top-down approach to needs and actions that stem from population-level data such as the national census (Richardson & Murphy, 2018; Chambers & Burnett, 2017; Blackstock, 2009), yet census data often does not include peoples living within First Nations communities and also undercounts urban populations (Walter & Anderson, 2013; Rotondi et al., 2017). As a result, government determined needs are not reflective of the Indigenous population.

Despite the perpetual underfunding and under-resourced state of Indigenous service delivery, many Indigenous-centered organizations have had incredible success for the populations they serve. In particular, a notable exception of this top-down service delivery is the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF). The AHF is one of the most well-known Indigenous organizations within the discussion of Indigenous service delivery and has been illustrative of the potential that changes within service delivery spaces can have. This Indigenous-managed, national, Ottawa-based, non-profit private corporation was established in March of 1998 as part of Canada’s ‘Gathering Strength’ action plan. This action plan aimed at renewing Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples by setting a new course through policy (Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1997). Unfortunately, the AHF was shut down in 2014 by the Harper government.

Throughout its 16-year life span, the AHF supported some 1,500 community healing projects and programs with notable success (Chansonneuve, 2007; CTV News, 2016; Waldram, 2008). Although it has ceased operation, the AHF is often included in discussions of service delivery because it represents an important time in the history of Indigenous service delivery, and in the relationship between Indigenous communities and Canada. In particular, the AHF highlights the

potential for Indigenous self-determination in service delivery. The AHF was uniquely community-driven as First Nation communities were invited to tell the AHF what they wanted and needed, a major difference from the top-down approach commonly taken (Robbins & Dewar, 2011).

3.2.2 Narratives of Mainstream Solutions

Alongside the tendency of constructing Indigenous peoples and their experiences within service delivery narratives as a ‘policy problem’, mainstream policy and action in the form of service delivery are generally posed as the solution. Research has shown that Indigenous specific and focused programming is often more effective and desirable than mainstream services. For example, research completed for the AHF showcasing 5 community-based, Indigenous-driven addiction prevention and intervention programs across Canada illustrated their immense success (Chansonneuve, 2007). One of these healing programs – that of Alkali Lake, British Columbia – was described as having “broken new ground in a *culture as healing* approach” and became an effective healing model for other program development. This model is grounded in ideas of healing through cultural revitalization with four main strategies: restoring a sense of belonging, restoring the wisdom of traditions, providing opportunities to practice with others who are similar, and restoring roles of Elders and women to strengthen individual and community capacity (Chansonneuve, 2007).

In general, both the preference for and intrinsic benefits of Indigenous community-driven service delivery has been well recognized (Chansonneuve, 2007; Robbins & Dewar, 2011). For instance, the use of traditional healing methods that involve the direct and practical application of Indigenous knowledge systems and spirituality have been identified as essential to creating spaces for healing, and as major contributors to the success of service delivery (Cooper & Driedger, 2019; Evans et al., 2010; Robbins, Dewar, & 2011). Further, the benefits of being within a space with other Indigenous peoples is an essential aspect of creating a safe space (Cooper & Driedger, 2019; Chansonneuve, 2007). Indigenous traditional healing is holistic, related to the interrelation of

physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and well-being, and recognizes that weakness in any of these areas can cause unbalance (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). Although healing traditions, ceremonies, and medicines are diverse, they come from a place of community mind (Ermine, 2009) and center on connection to land and the planet, with human health connected to the health of the earth (Looking Horse, 2009).

An equally important aspect of the success, benefit, and preference for Indigenous centered service delivery stems from experiences within mainstream services that also influence the likelihood of mainstream service use by Indigenous peoples. A significant amount of research has illustrated a reluctance by Indigenous people to access mainstream health care services despite health care needs due to past and ongoing negative experiences (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Blumenthal & Sinha, 2015; Browne, 2017; Browne et al., 2016; de Leeuw et al., 2015; Frohlich et al., 2006; Gernove & Hornosty, 2012; McCallum & Perry, 2018; Reading, 2015; Wylie & McConkey, 2019). In particular, it has been well documented that mainstream services tend to be unwelcoming and even hostile places for Indigenous peoples related to issues of structural and local racism, discrimination, and a lack of understanding and responsiveness to Indigenous needs by service delivery personnel that limit service provision effectiveness (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Browne, 2017; Culhane, 2003; Harris et al., 2006; McCallum & Perry, 2018; Smith et al., 2006; Varcoe & Dick, 2008; Wylie & McConkey, 2019; Wylie et al., 2019).

Looking more specifically at discrimination and racism, numerous studies have shown interactions of racism and discrimination to be a root aspect of health inequalities that exist for Indigenous peoples (Adelson, 2005; Allan & Smylie, 2015; Browne & Fiske, 2001; Senese & Wilson, 2013; Wylie & McConkey, 2019). A major area of concern has been the treatment of Indigenous peoples by health care workers, with research indicating that health care providers often have positive implicit biases towards white people and negative implicit biases towards people of colour (Hall et al., 2015). Wylie and McConkey's research with service providers is illustrative of this. In their study, service providers admitted that stereotypes, stigmas, and racist ideas of blame towards Indigenous peoples perpetuated by the media have negatively impacted the way they have provided care to Indigenous patients (Wylie & McConkey 2019). As well, the lack of

understanding by health care providers continues to be a significant barrier for Indigenous peoples when accessing care, with detrimental and sometimes fatal consequences (Leyland et al., 2016).

The death of Brian Sinclair, who was referred to the emergency room by his physician due to a blocked catheter, is a case in point. Emergency room staff assumed Brian to be a poor, drunk, homeless man seeking shelter. Brian was pronounced dead after 34 hours of waiting in the waiting room (Dehaas, 2014; Leyland et al., 2016; Puxley, 2014). Although over a decade ago, recent research and experiences shared by Indigenous peoples have demonstrated that experiences like Brian's are not an anomaly, but a strong factor in health care provider interactions and a contemporary barrier to health equity (Adelson, 2005; Allan & Smylie, 2015; Browne & Fiske, 2001; Senese & Wilson, 2013). A more recent example is the experience of Joyce Echaquan, who died on September 28, 2020 at a hospital in Quebec after receiving inadequate care and racist treatment by hospital staff – an experience that she live-streamed on Facebook before she died.

Further, white men make up the majority of decision makers, including “public health researchers and policy makers, medical educators and officials, hospital administrators, and insurance and pharmaceutical executives, as well as medical personal” (Feagin & Bennefield, 2014, p.8). This lack of diversity not only shapes the types of knowledges and experiences that are validated, but it also shapes who feels welcome within these spaces and who has the best access to health care (Feagin & Bennefield, 2014; Gay et al., 2020). Indigenous people's narratives illustrate a reluctance to access health services, with some Indigenous peoples avoiding it altogether due to the existing expectation of mistreatment by health care providers (Adelson, 2005; Allan & Smylie, 2015).

3.2.2.1 Culture of Recognition and Language of Inclusivity

Overall, despite recognition of Indigenous service delivery as preferred/more effective and mainstream service delivery as a potential barrier to health equity, the narrative and subsequent actions still remain centered around mainstream service delivery. This continued focus illustrates a lack of sincerity towards ideas of true reconciliation and reiterates Western cultural memory of Indigenous incapability. Instead of building off Indigenous needs, mainstream spaces tend to

frame the service delivery narrative within a language of inclusivity – of ‘how to make mainstream service delivery more inclusive’ (Klein, 2015; Sullivan, 2011). The literature surrounding this inclusivity narrative illustrates three interconnected parts. First, the recognition that mainstream service delivery has a history of inadequately addressing the needs of Indigenous peoples, and this has led to Indigenous peoples not feeling safe accessing these services (Evans et al., 2010). Second, there is a government expectation that mainstream services should respond to the needs of Indigenous Peoples (Brown, 2009; Browne et al., 2017; Ronald & Koea, 2013; Victorian Council of Social Service, 2016). And third, the assumption that if mainstream services were to better respond to Indigenous needs, Indigenous peoples would be more likely to use mainstream services (Cooke & McWhirter, 2011; Cooper, 2011; Klein, 2015; Sullivan, 2011).

A common aspect of this inclusivity narrative is the importance of consultation, a theme which has foundations in the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling that the Crown “has a duty to consult, and where appropriate, accommodate when the Crown contemplates conduct that might adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal or Treaty rights” (INAC, 2011, p. 1). Literature promoting consultation emphasizes the need for those involved – government, mainstream services, and Indigenous community – to work together (Bishop et al., 2009; Cooper, 2011; Kelaher et al., 2015; Meo-Sewabu & Walsh-Tapiata, 2012; Victorian Council of Social Service, 2016). Yet, not surprisingly, researchers have found often a weak or low-quality translation of this theoretical consultation position in practice (George et al, 2019), with policy and service delivery translations of consultation inconsistent and variable (Lavoie, 2014).

As well, the idea of ‘engagement through consultation’ has been critiqued as a Western approach to engagement and reconciliation that can have disempowering implications for Indigenous peoples, as this commitment to consultation does not equate to commitment to self-determination (Anderson, 2007; Black & McBean, 2016; George et al., 2019). As Nakata (2007), a Torres Strait Islander, explained, “Things aren’t just black or white, and things cannot be fixed by simply adding in Indigenous components to the mix” (p. 8). Although Nakata was talking about education spaces, it is applicable to all Western spaces aimed at ‘Indigenizing’ through consultation. Further, few mainstream health services actually include Indigenous peoples in the decision making, planning,

designing, and implementation processes (Lavoi, 2014). As a result, strategies of engagement are often tokenistic in nature and reflect a consultation rhetoric that lacks sincerity and translation to action (Kelaher et al., 2015; Mitchell & Macleod, 2014). Overall, service delivery spaces are still very much colonial in nature and reiterate a Western narrative of ‘working with’ Indigenous peoples in such a way that still maintains Western overarching control.

3.2.3 Erasure of Urban Peoples, Voices, and Identities

Urban Indigenous peoples are part of larger collectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who do not live within First Nations geographic communities. While Indigenous individuals have been moving to cities (by choice or lack thereof) since the legal creation of the reserve system, relatively few Indigenous peoples lived in urban centers prior to the 1940s (Peters, 2010). Today, census data has indicated urban Indigenous peoples to be the fastest growing segment of Canadian society, with 56% of Indigenous peoples living in urban areas in 2011, up from 49% in 1996 (INAC 2016). While a ‘churn’ amongst Indigenous peoples between First Nation and city living that may account for some of this increase²⁴ (Clatworthy & Norris, 2013), Indigenous peoples are increasingly calling cities home (Environics Institute, 2010). Within this urban population, urban Indigenous women represent a unique subset – still diverse yet connected through shared realities of being an Indigenous woman in an urban center. Although more scholarship exists today, urban experiences, particularly gendered experiences, remain understudied. Further, the overall Western cultural memory associated with Indigenous peoples tends to be associated with First Nation communities, defined by a lack of gendered understanding. This is evident within service delivery spaces and narratives.

Despite the growing number of Indigenous peoples living in urban centers, only British Columbia and Ontario have developed policies specific to funding health services for urban Indigenous

²⁴ Churn migration refers to the pattern of population movement “between reserves, rural communities, and urban areas” of Indigenous peoples (Clatworthy & Norris, 2013, p. 207). It recognizes that the movement of Indigenous peoples is significantly different from non-Indigenous populations in Canada (Clatworthy & Norris, 2013).

peoples (Lavoie et al., 2012). Lavoie and colleagues (2012) attribute this lack of focused policy and action as related to both the dispersion of Indigenous peoples and, more importantly, the deeply rooted cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as existing outside of mainstream society, literally and figuratively. Service delivery and related policy spaces and narratives reflect an erasure of urban Indigenous peoples, voices, and identities. In fact, that many Indigenous peoples live in urban centers is largely absent from the cultural memory of the ‘Indian’, related to ideas of authenticity and the assumed incompatibility between the ‘real Indian’ and the modernity of city living (Lavoie et al., 2012). It should be noted that the erasure of urban peoples is also reinforced in many Indigenous communities and spaces, where this hierarchical way of framing identity is often naturalized and translated into community-based policies, for instance, in the allocation of resources, as discussed previously.

Further, urban Indigenous peoples remain highly underrepresented in municipal government and service delivery planning – a reality that shapes policy narratives including the construction of needs and the translation to action. Despite the growth of urban Indigenous populations, Ontario was the only province to have an Indigenous composed council for advising on regional healthcare as of 2010 (Lavoie et al., 2012; Lavoie et al., 2010). As well, only in large prairie cities have a few Indigenous peoples been elected as city councilors (Walker & Belanger, 2013). In general, local municipal government administration and planning have “scarcely engage[d] in relational processes with Aboriginal peoples” (Heritz, 2018; Walker & Belanger 2013, p. 196). This lack of engagement challenges goals of self-determination, as urban peoples are left out of the discussion surrounding how to make mainstream policies more conducive to Indigenous peoples. This is particularly important as urban spaces present unique experiences and challenges for Indigenous peoples that are distinct from those within First Nation communities. For instance, unequal access to housing in urban centers poses important challenges for urban Indigenous women (Cohen & Corrado, 2004). Further, as Nation-based services are generally limited, most people living within First Nation communities often have no choice but to access services in urban centers (Wylie et al., 2019), illustrating what Fisher and colleagues (2011) described as a “significant mismatch between supply-side activities and demand-side realities” (p.65), and an incompatible service delivery situation from multiple perspectives.

3.2.4 Disruptive Potential for Indigenous Centered Service Delivery

Mainstream service delivery spaces in general reflect the Western cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’. There are some indications that this is beginning to shift. For instance, the First Nations Health Alliance in Northern BC has been described as making history due to the increasing awareness in health sectors and academia of the need to partner with Indigenous spaces and peoples to “co-create Indigenous-specific and culturally safe modalities” (Christensen et al., 2018, p.93.). However, this shift has been slow, sporadic, often haphazard, and certainly not teleological, as evidenced in the ceasing of the AHF. Although generally under-focused as a service delivery option and under-researched within the service delivery narrative, research has indicated the disruptive potential of Indigenous service delivery spaces (Cooper & Driedger, 2019).

An example by Cooper and Driedger (2019) will be shared to illustrate this disruptive potential of Indigenous centered service delivery. As has been indicated, Western cultural memory of the ‘Indian’ lives within some Indigenous spaces through forms of internalization. However, Indigenous peoples also share memories of trauma, and of culture and traditions that are distinct from Western cultural memory. In their work, Cooper and Driedger (2019) found that in creating a culturally safe space, this space became a site of remembering these Indigenous cultural memories and of disrupting the Western cultural memory. As a result, Indigenous centered service delivery spaces have the potential to disrupt colonial narratives from within, by disrupting the Western cultural memory that has been internalized among Indigenous peoples and by providing space for new or renewed cultural memory making. Cooper and Driedger (2019) engaged Indigenous women and their daughters in a community-engaged research project that used an intergenerational workshop model to understand the ways that safe and positive Indigenous centered spaces can shape self-narrative and intergenerational narrative passing. The workshop space was created for collective testimony and witnessing and focused on safe/positive space association. For instance, words of welcome in different Indigenous languages surrounded the space, a wood inlay blanket pattern was put in the middle of the space, and art and artifacts such

as moss bags, drums, and photos of chiefs from across Canada adorned the walls. These elements and the memories associated constructed the space as both safe and positive, and set the tone “of respect for Indigenous cultures and cultural safety within the workshop” (p.8). By placing value on Indigenous culture and histories, participants were encouraged to share stories with one another. The project found that the combination of being surrounded by artifacts and the act of remembering and sharing within the space enabled healing. For instance, at the beginning of the study, the women saw the future for their daughters “through a cautionary lens”, with their stories often filled with despair and melancholy (Cooper & Driedger, 2019, p. 10). Yet, by reconstructing and re-characterizing personal and community narratives by strength, participants were able to begin addressing trauma to lessen the intergenerational effects. By using testimony and witnessing as a form of narrative sharing, participants were able to nurture strength-based Indigenous centered cultural memories, while also brainstorming practical ways of circumventing common Western stereotypes and cultural memory associated with Indigeneity.

Australian based research in particular has addressed the benefits of storytelling and experience sharing service delivery frameworks for both personal and community healing, and for disrupting Western cultural memory as a form of counter-storytelling (See Quayle et al., 2016; Quayle & Sonn, 2019). While benefits within the Canadian context can be assumed similar, the idea of representation-based programming within service delivery has been under researched within this context. Storytelling, as a central aspect of Indigeneity will be explored further in the next section.

3.3 Storytelling, Resistance, and the Proliferation of Alternative Spaces and Indigenous Voices

Despite the ubiquity of Western spaces and forms of representation, Indigenous peoples, communities, spaces, and narratives have always resisted these colonial institutions and existed alongside and outside of dominant cultural spheres. Scott (1990) offered the concept of ‘hidden transcripts’ to account for the representations that take place ‘off stage’ and to illustrate the constant resistance of subordinated groups of peoples towards dominant or public discourses.

Although this conceptualization of ‘hidden’ wrongly implies secondary, the importance is that Indigenous peoples have always created and maintained narratives, discourses, traditions, and remembrances of experiences through various modes and methods of expression and existence. Particularly, that of storytelling. For instance, Indigenous peoples have always shared and passed down cultural traditions through storytelling and ceremonies like the potlatch, even when these ceremonies were illegal under the Indian Act. As well, a long history of Indigenous-produced media exists across Turtle Island. The continued existence and reproduction of Indigenous spaces and stories is a critical form of resistance to dominant narratives, spaces, and colonialism in general. Yet, Indigenous resistance, strength, and resiliency has largely been absent and actively erased from Western historical and contemporary spaces, narratives, and cultural memory. As well, Indigenous accounts of history and experience have largely been ignored by dominant Western spaces and mainstream understanding. Yet, Indigenous peoples, communities, and organizations — all narrative spaces — *do* exist and Indigenous spaces and narratives have experienced a resurgence in recent years.

3.3.1 Storytelling and Indigeneity

The existence of Indigenous spaces, the practice of creating and sharing narratives, and the narratives themselves are intricate aspects of Indigenous living and thereby resistance related to ideas of representation as power. For instance, in Archibald’s (2008) work with Elders and storytelling, an Elder drew on both traditional and personal life-experience to teach about storytelling — “to help people think, feel and ‘be’ through the power of stories” (p.ix). As has been illustrated, colonialism can be deconstructed as a history of non-Indigenous spaces constructing and representing Western versions of Indigenous peoples and experiences. In fact, Indigenous peoples have been systematically removed from the task of representation by Western narrative spaces. Although there has been some internalization of Western cultural memory by Indigenous peoples and spaces, Indigenous-centered cultural memory is distinct from Western cultural memory in that it is multi-dimensional and rooted in lived experiences.

Indigenous cultural memory lives and is shared through the long and continued tradition of storytelling. Storytelling as a form of knowledge sharing and cultural renewal is an intrinsic aspect of Indigenous traditions and peoples (Archibald, 2008). Storytelling is often discussed in terms of passing traditional knowledge, yet it also includes “personal life experience and is done with a compassionate mind and love for others” (p.2). In his 2003 CBC Massey Lecture *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, Thomas King wrote “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (King, 2003, p.2). Similarly, Leslie Silko, a Laguna storyteller stated, “I will tell you something about stories... they aren’t just entertainment. Don’t be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death. You don’t have anything, if you don’t have the stories” (1977, p.2). Further, Christensen and colleagues (2018) described storytelling as “a mode of understanding, sharing, and creating knowledge” (p. xii). While Quayle and colleagues (2016) described storytelling as “both product and productive of culture” (p. 262). Overall, while Indigenous peoples are diverse across Turtle Island, storytelling is an intrinsic aspect of Indigenous culture and of being around the world.

3.3.1.1 Storytelling as Resistance and Empowerment

As those explanations of storytelling and Indigeneity illustrated, storytelling is an essential aspect of living and being. Yet, as a product of the colonial goals of physical, spiritual, cultural, and emotional extermination of Indigenous peoples, storytelling and living in general are also acts of resistance to dominant narratives, spaces, modes of expression, and cultural memory. As a result, storytelling is a form of Indigenous empowerment — of claiming self and culture as own. Storytelling is central to learning and understanding colonial histories and in constructing present identities, and therefore is an essential aspect of connecting resistance to self-determination (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999).

Through the centering of Indigenous voice and experiences, storytelling and counter-storytelling are acts of resistance and empowerment that have decolonizing implications (Montero et al., 2017; Smith, 1999, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Sonn et al., 2013; Wingard & Lester, 2001; Zavala,

2016). Counter-storytelling is described by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) as a method of “telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26), in such a way that reveals “the very bones and skeletons of domination, re-cast the workings of subordination and re-tell the history of how things came to be” (Harris et al., 2001, p. 14). Storytelling and stories have been recognized as important sites of resistance to dominant narratives and Western cultural memory, as “coming to know the past” by amplifying non-white histories and knowledges (Smith, 1999). For instance, Bell (2020) developed a pedagogical model for teaching about racism in the USA called the Storytelling Project. This model emphasized the pervasiveness of ‘stock stories’ – stories that “operate in everyday talk to legitimize the perspectives of the dominant white racial group in our society” (Bell, 2020, p.27), and the necessity of critical counter-storytelling for disrupting these stories through critical and thoughtful dialogue.

Three types of counter-stories were identified by Bell. The first are resistance stories, which are stories that “draw from a cultural/historical repository of narratives by and about people and groups who have challenged racism and injustice; stories that we can learn from and build on to challenge stock stories that we encounter today” (Bell, 2020, p.71). The second type, concealed stories, are those spoken by peoples at the margins that challenge or speak otherwise to stock stories (Bell, 2009). Finally, emerging/transforming stories are stories that challenge the status quo and “give an alternative version of reality and can resonate with people who have been excluded from mainstream stories” (Bell 2009, p. 113). All three types can be considered a form of resistance.

Dion and Dion (2004), describe this process of learning and sharing Indigenous ways of knowing through (re)telling as an approach to storytelling that challenges taken for granted Western histories and ways of knowing in the form of stock stories and cultural memory. This approach frames the process of sharing stories as re-telling, where the re-teller learns from the lived experiences and (re)tells the stories of ancestors and Elders, “with the intention of offering readers an alternative listening position” (Dion & Dion, 2004, p. 98). Re-telling includes engaging with previously hidden histories including the re-telling of texts that had previously been written by non-Indigenous people. As a result, re-telling is a form of re-learning about the past. It is critical to resisting and disrupting the Western colonial memory of Indigenous peoples as a mode for

rethinking current understandings in response to these stories. Ultimately, as Smith (1999) in her influential work *Decolonizing Methodologies* has explained, “Telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past are all strategies which are commonly employed by Indigenous peoples struggling for justice” (p. 34).

3.3.1.2 Cultural Continuity and Growth

Related to storytelling as resistance, storytelling and stories are also important sites of empowerment in terms of promoting cultural continuity and growth. Research around Indigenous storytelling has illustrated the ways that creating, telling, and sharing stories can promote empowerment by increasing connection to culture and cultural continuity (Quayle & Sonn, 2019; Quayle et al., 2016). By centering Indigenous voices, knowledges, and experiences, stories and storytelling “play an important role in fostering pride in identity and belonging and processes of cultural reclamation and renewal” (Quayle & Sonn, 2019, p.56) by nurturing cultural relations. For instance, storytelling and narrative-based projects have been important in creating an archive of stories of lived experiences and the history dispossession for future generations (Quayle et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2015). Further, a facilitator of a community-based storytelling project commented on the significance of storytelling-based programming as “opening up that permission again for people to feel proud and comfortable” in terms of embracing their culture (Quayle et al., 2016, p. 270).

The literature also indicates the personal healing that comes from sharing experiences and telling stories to others and from having others bear witness to these stories (Cooper & Driedger; Quayle et al., 2016; Quayle & Sonn, 2019; Wood et al., 2015). For instance, in their narrative therapy project, Wood et al., (2015) found that witnessing the sharing of stories helped individuals disrupt silences in their personal lives. Further, they found that deep relationships were established among project members throughout these processes of witnessing and the re-telling of significant stories (Wood et al., 2015).

3.3.2 Growth of Indigenous Spaces Offline and Online

As we have seen, mainstream news coverage of Indigenous peoples in Canada has long been characterized by racist preconceptions and stereotypes, and sensationalized portrayals (Anderson & Robertson, 2011; Fleras, 2011; Pierro et al., 2013; Clark, 2014). In fact, Duncan McCue, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina island First Nation in southern Ontario and journalist, developed the 'WD4' rule for explaining common inclusion criteria surrounding Indigenous peoples. Particularly, that Indigenous peoples are only included in mainstream news when they can be portrayed as Warriors, when they are Drumming or Dancing, when they are Drunk, or when they are Dead (McCue, 2014). However, more so than stereotypical inclusions, Indigenous peoples are highly under-represented in mainstream media despite Canada becoming the first country to officially adopt federal legislation of multiculturalism for broadcasters in 1971 (Clark, 2013; McRoberts, 1997). Rather, an analysis of 171 print and online news organizations in Ontario over three years found "Aboriginal-related stories are barely on the radar of most media outlets" (Pierro et al., 2013, p.17), with just .28% of all the news stories about Indigenous peoples or issues.

With this in mind, Indigenous media, including print and television news, has been critical for better representing Indigenous perspectives, culture, and relevant issues. Indigenous peoples have always resisted colonialism and colonial representations, challenged Western cultural memory, and produced counter-narratives within Indigenous media spaces through multifaceted forms of digital self-determination (McMahon, 2013). Digital self-determination reflects various processes where Indigenous peoples have and continue to shape and use newly developed technologies to meet their needs as "self-determined collectives" (McMahon, 2013, p.1). News organizations like Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), Two Row Times, Wawatay News, and the Indigenous broadcasting sector have continually challenged dominant Western cultural memory through forms of self-representation that reveal Indigenous histories, culture, and stories to Indigenous peoples and broader society.

Largely beginning in the 1970s and 80s, Indigenous communications societies began lobbying the government for explicit policy directed at Indigenous broadcasters to better provide information to Indigenous populations living in Canada (Szwarc, 2018). As a result, radio has been a critical

space in the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures through media empowerment. According to the Canadian radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), there now are 47 companies holding licenses for Native Type B²⁵ radio stations in Canada, largely serving rural and First Nation communities across Canada. One important triumph within Canada's media system was the launch of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) in 1999 – the world's first Indigenous national broadcaster dedicated to Indigenous programming. Two years after its launch, the APTN had reached 8 million homes via cable television, direct-to-home, and wireless service (Baltruschat, 2004). APTN is now available in nearly 11 million households and broadcasts more than 85% Canadian content (ATPN, 2021). The emergence of the APTN began a new chapter in Indigenous broadcasting. The network is unique in its programming focus but also in how it operates and its mandate. Programming blends “traditional forms of storytelling with contemporary genres adapted from mainstream media” (Baltruschat, 2004, p.47). It includes programs on Indigenous issues and experiences, cooking and crafts shows, news, documentaries, and children's programming in various Indigenous languages, English, and French (Baltruschat, 2004).

In reflection of these examples of Indigenous centered spaces, Indigenous peoples have always lived their lives as persons and members of diverse Nations, producing their own accounts of lived experiences while utilizing various modes of expression. Yet, as has been illustrated, this Indigenous centered side of history is largely absent from dominant discourses and mainstream understanding, and Indigenous stories have been highly devalued within mainstream spaces. However, the growth of online spaces and community in particular is changing this.

The growth of online spaces has been described as revolutionizing political discourses by expanding coverage to underrepresented groups (Soriano, 2012; Balkin, 2004), like Indigenous peoples. In particular, the expansion of online platforms has led to the proliferation of Indigenous

²⁵ Type B refers to an Indigenous radio station that where at the time of license issue or renewal, “at least one other commercial AM or FM radio licence is operating in all or any part of the same market” (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, 2019).

voices in terms of knowledge construction. Not only has the rise in technology resulted in the proliferation of Indigenous controlled and produced digital spaces, it has also extended the reach of current or historically offline spaces (Intahchomphoo, 2018). For example, most ‘offline’ Indigenous services and organization have an online presence that extends their reach, while organizations like the We Matter Campaign²⁶ that would historically be situated within offline contexts like therapy, are able to function solely or predominantly online. As a result, the growth of online spaces has provided Indigenous peoples (and allies) with avenues for challenging existing cultural memory and Western knowledge processes, for widening the understanding of lived experiences, and for (re)creating knowledge from Indigenous perspectives (Clark, 2020; Intahchomphoo, 2018).

Online spaces also provide opportunities to foster cultural-based knowledges and identities as a mechanism for connecting to other peoples, articulating counter-narratives, and sharing lived experiences. As peoples who have been systematically pushed to the far reaches of Canadian society literally and figuratively, online spaces are widening the scope and reach of Indigenous voices and stories through increased visibility of counter-narratives. For instance, James Jones, from Edmonton, Alberta, has become famous on social media platforms. With over 500,000 followers on Instagram and 2.5 million on TikTik²⁷, Jones, who is Cree, uses TikTok and Instagram to connect, share, and teach about traditional Hoop dancing and other cultural and educational based teachings to Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples alike.

Alongside knowledge construction, the growth of online spaces has fostered the development of online communities and support networks across Turtle Island, as a site of collective connecting, sharing, resistance, and activism. These online spaces have functioned to destabilize the singular construction of identities and experiences that make up Western cultural memory (Petray, 2015). For example, the hashtag #itriedtobeauthenticbut²⁸ started trending in 2012 after a member of the

²⁶ <https://wemattercampaign.org/>

²⁷ @notoriouscree

²⁸ Some tweets included ‘#itriedtobeauthenticbut google maps is quicker than tracking’ and ‘#itriedtobeauthenticbut law school wouldn’t accept my essays in dot form’ by @PeteDawson, and ‘#itriedtobeauthenticbut my wristwatch was closer than the sun’ by @blaqchic42

Australian Parliament, Tony Abbott, classified the first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives, Ken Wyatt, as an ‘urban Aboriginal’ in relation to Abbott’s vision of having a more ‘authentic’ Indigenous person in parliament in the future (Petray, 2015). Indigenous peoples were quick to point out this member of parliament’s tokenistic definition of authenticity and Indigeneity and began using online spaces and the #itriedtobeauthenticbut hashtag to challenge Western singular perceptions of Indigenous peoples. Petray (2015) also shared how online spaces can foster a sense of community and belonging through personal identity development. In her research on online activism, Petray (2015) joined the Cherokee Nation Facebook page. Having grown up away from culture and family, Petray (2015) shared not feeling comfortable with publicly claiming her Cherokee identity prior to this research. However, Petray found that “engaging in an online community can solidify an understanding of self” (2015, p.26).

Further, online spaces have also widened networks of support by diversifying spaces for providing support and care work to others. For example, the We Matter campaign mentioned previously developed by Kelvin Redvers and Tunchai Redvers utilizes a national online multi-media campaign that connects Indigenous youth across Canada who may be struggling, to Indigenous role models and allies. For this campaign, Indigenous role models and leaders across Canada create videos and messages of hope, support, and education by drawing on their own experiences of overcoming hardship to show Indigenous youth that there is a way forward. Although access inequality to technology remains an important issue when discussing online spaces²⁹, Indigenous peoples and communities have been able to successfully utilize available technologies for expanding the reach of Indigenous voice, knowledge, and community (Kral, 2020; Intahchomphoo, 2018).

²⁹ While discussion of access inequality in Ontario are often situated around Northern and Southern differences, even Nations that are located more Southern, like Oneida Nation of the Thames, also experience connectivity issues related to a lack of infrastructure.

3.3.2.1 Social Media and Online Activism

Online activism came with the development of the internet, beginning with organizing through email, Facebook groups, social media campaigns, and now live streaming of events and experiences. Social media is a new and meaningful platform to explore identities, amplify voices, and connect to others. Described as a form of ‘taking back’ voice and ‘everyday’ form of resistance, Indigenous peoples, like others, use social media as a space for learning and to “challenge stereotypical representations of themselves through simply being themselves online” (Petray, 2015, p. 27). In fact, social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Tik Tok are quickly becoming a norm for asserting self-determination and agency. They have transformed the way Indigenous peoples interact and connect with each other, with non-Indigenous peoples, and mainstream spaces generally. By facilitating interactions and relationship development and promoting social and political connectivity (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2017), the level of visibility social media has provided Indigenous peoples and Indigenous concerns is unprecedented. Through social media, “Indigenous people can ‘reterritorialise’ and ‘Indigenise’ the information and communication space” (Wilson et al., 2017, p.2), by reclaiming, rewriting, expanding, and challenging existing narratives.

Social media has become a space where Indigenous peoples can “represent their lived realities to broader society... mitigate negative racialized representations and reframe a more truthful story by and for Indigenous peoples” (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018, p.55). As well, social media has transformed the way Indigenous peoples interact and connect with non-Indigenous populations. Social movements such as *Idle No More* have gained a wide Indigenous and non-Indigenous following aimed at mobilization efforts, social action, and public awareness (Carlson, 2013; Wilson et al., 2017). Social movements like *Idle No More* are increasingly reliant on social media to network, share information, and mobilize for action, with research beginning to examine social media use for both social movements and other forms of political communication (Wilson et al., 2017; Carlson & Frazer 2016). Another important example of this transformation is the role that social media has had in the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, often identified on social media through the hashtag #MMIWG. In terms of the issue of violence against Indigenous women, #MMIWG and social media have been used to pressure government action, build public

awareness, and as a space for women to reclaim the narrative surrounding this experience of violence (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018).

As a tool of mass production, social media has been a source of mobilization and collective conscientization for Indigenous peoples. It has provided Indigenous peoples, who have traditionally been silenced, a space to reclaim their narrative, present their voices, and press for change as a form of narrative repatriation. The importance of visual repatriation – returning images to source communities – has been discussed in relation to Indigenous experiences of historical trauma, particularly the residential school experience (Giancarlo et al., 2021). Although nothing is being ‘returned’ necessarily in online narrative sharing, having space and a platform to create and share stories online widens discussions of repatriation as a form of reclaiming historical and contemporary narratives that are regularly false Westernized constructions of reality. Further, there is power in reclaiming that comes from having space to produce and share one’s own narratives on one’s own terms.

Research has indicated the importance of social media for large social movements like Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street (Uldam & Vestergaard, 2016) and a rapid rise of social media use among Indigenous peoples, organizations, and movements (Clark, 2020). However, social media is not without issues, particularly due to the potential for slacktivism (Petray, 2015). ‘Slacktivism’ is a form of feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact. Those who participate in slacktivism benefit from the feel-good illusion of having a meaningful impact without demanding more than clicking the ‘like’ button, signing an online petition, or joining a Facebook group (Morozov, 2009; Petray, 2015; Christensen, 2011). However, the relationship between Indigenous activism and social media has not gained much traction in academia, with the use, benefits, and challenges of social media use requiring additional focus.

3.3.2.2 Space for Indigenous Leadership

What we are seeing is that social media has become a space for Indigenous leadership. The simultaneous under-representation and trope-based representation within mainstream spaces has

made the necessity of Indigenous self-representation paramount. As noted by Clark (2020), “When ‘the means of production’ are controlled by Indigenous storytellers, power binaries and long-held stereotypes are replaced by authentic Indigenous voices and perspectives” (p.169). Social media has been described as functioning in a similar way – without mainstream gatekeepers determining ‘newsworthiness’ and contributing to the discussion of digital self-determination (Clark, 2020; McMahon, 2013).

Social media has become a space for positive role models and Indigenous self-representations that previous generations lacked. As well, whereas Indigenous peoples have historically been excluded from political spaces, social media has become a tool and space for activism where Indigenous peoples can connect and mobilize (Duarte, 2017). To this end, scholars have described the direction behind Indigenous social media movements and self-representations as a form of ‘soft-leadership’ (Clark, 2020). Felt (2016), in a study examining the MMIWG inquiry campaign, contextualized soft leadership as “users who generate viral tweets, especially those retweeted daily by countless other users in an otherwise leaderless network” (p.4). In other words, soft leadership takes advantage of “the interactive and participatory character of the new communication technologies” (Gerbaudo, 2012, p.13) in creative yet strategic ways, along national and international lines. The months leading up to Canada’s sesquicentennial in 2017 reflect this theme of social media as a space for Indigenous leadership.

Across Canada, many Indigenous peoples and others strongly objected to the notion that Canada’s 150th birthday was a day of celebration for many reasons, including that those 150 years have been marked by continued colonial violence, that Indigenous experiences in Canada continue to be very different compared to non-Indigenous experiences, and that Indigenous peoples have long histories that are excluded from this celebration of 150 years (Clark, 2020). In response to the federal preparations, several Indigenous activists – Isaac Murdoch, Anishinaabe artist and storyteller; Christi Belcourt, Michif visual artist; Tanya Kappo, Cree activist; and Maria Campbell, Métis author – developed the hashtag #Resistance150 “as a way to inspire other indigenous people to reclaim what they lost during colonization” (Dunham, 2017, para. 6). Another group of Indigenous leaders developed a similar campaign around the same time called

#UnsettlingCanada150 (Unsettling Canada 150, 2017). Research examining tweets by 11 Indigenous activists and artists on Twitter during the months leading up to 150 found that hashtags like #resistance150, #UnsettlingCanada150, and #Colonialism150 were used as a method of “challenging the mainstream narrative through Indigenous remediation” (Clark, 2020, p.174), self-representation, and Indigenous points of view. For instance, in their tweets, these Indigenous leaders also shared additional Indigenous content like speeches and interviews from YouTube, art and memes from First Nations leaders and artists, and other Indigenous media like articles from the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) (Clark, 2020).

Although the informal nature of social media campaigns can lead to what Castells (2015) asserts as ‘leaderless’ social media movements, it is evident that social media has emerged as an important tool and space for digital leadership amongst Indigenous peoples. Indigenous artists and activists that would have previously been out of reach are functioning as role models and leaders for Indigenous youth and peoples generally. Further, Indigenous peoples are able to use these spaces to circumvent traditional mainstream spaces and media gatekeeping, effectively influencing how the narrative is framed through counter-narratives and self-representation.

3.3.3 Proliferation of (Mis)Information

As has been illustrated, the growth of online spaces has provided previously hidden and marginalized groups like Indigenous peoples space for teaching, learning, and living, and for challenging mainstream, dominant, Western representations, historical and current. However, it must also be briefly noted that the growth of online spaces, including social media and alternative news sources, has also resulted in the proliferation of (mis)information. In particular, throughout the last four years of the Trump regime, media consumers have been systematically misled with astronomical impacts. The Trump regime will be marked by a legacy of lies and misinformation to the point of violence and death as was seen in the recent insurrection against democracy in the United States, the renewed of racial violence towards Asian American and Canadians, and the hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 related deaths in the United States, to name a few. Ultimately,

while the internet and the proliferation of online spaces has opened doors for marginalized peoples to report their stories, it has also opened the door even wider for those with racialized, gender discriminating and hating views.

Chapter 4

4 Methodology

My roles within academia and other narrative spaces have taught me that the long and continued history of colonialism in Canada exists outside of mainstream common-sense knowledge. Mainstream understanding of how this history as an ongoing experience shapes Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, and the representations that exist and stem from Western spaces, is inconsistent. Mainstream media spaces like the news have been critical for shaping these relations and influencing non-Indigenous and Indigenous understanding in the form of Western cultural memory. In particular, the media has served a critical function in the Western construction of Indigenous women. Trauma, victim, and deficit-based representations continue to dominate common Western narrative spaces like the news, while discourses of resilience and strength are generally few or isolated. These issue-based narratives tend to perpetuate simplistic constructions of complicated issues that pathologize Indigenous women, often vilify Indigenous men, and erase or negate the colonial context, all within an institutional message of sympathetic indifference. Changing the narrative that surrounds Indigenous women from the inside out from one that privileges negative and simplistic representations to one that highlights the depth and the nuanced nature of experience is imperative for changing the current dehumanizing nature of mainstream knowledge spaces.

4.1 Current Study

The main objectives of this project were threefold: to understand the existing mainstream narrative surrounding Indigenous women; to illustrate and share the narratives that Indigenous women draw on to bring meaning to their own experience; and to understand the role service delivery might have as a thread surrounding these diverging sources and locations of knowledge – mainstream media, Indigenous women, and service delivery. In addressing these objectives, the aim was to

tell an interconnected and multi-level story of representation. For this research, I examined media representations from two mainstream newspapers and worked with a program located in London called Positive Voice. The following research questions guided this research:

- What are the existing mainstream narratives surrounding Indigenous women and their experiences, and how are their stories represented by the media as a dominant narrative space?
- What narratives do the Positive Voice women draw on to bring meaning to their experiences and sense of self?
- How can service delivery function as a space of resistance and disruption to mainstream narratives and narrative practices surrounding Indigenous women?

With these questions acting as a guide, this research tells a story of Indigenous women and representation. It focuses on identifying common themes of media representations at the macro level, sharing the women's stories from their own perspectives, while illustrating how service delivery can positively contribute to a more dynamic dialogue and shape representations surrounding Indigenous women's experiences from the inside, within the context of Positive Voice.

4.1.1 Methodological Summary

This research used a mixed-methodological approach — an Indigenous aligned feminist research methodology that built off both Indigenous and feminist ways of knowing. My approach recognized both the inclusiveness of contemporary feminism, as well as its historical foundations as a movement built off the exclusion and often oppression of women of colour through its patriarchal focus, and the contemporary challenges this still manifests. However, this approach also recognized the history of women-focused knowledges and the prevalence of matrilineal systems of existence within many Indigenous communities since time immemorial that allow these ways of knowing — feminist and Indigenous — to co-exist within a research context.

Indigenous researchers and others have shown that, in many ways, Indigenous women were the first proponents of women-centered knowledge and power, and that they continue to wield that knowledge for the benefit of their communities (See for example Green, 2007, 2017; Monture & McGuire, 2009; Suzack et al., 2010; Valaskakis et al., 2009). Additionally, some Indigenous scholars and activists identify with the feminist tradition by focusing on the link between patriarchy and colonialism. Yet this approach also recognized that Indigenous epistemology and methodology is distinct from feminist epistemology. Namely, feminism, as is generally conceptualized within sociological research, is a Western form of understanding. What this means is that Indigenous methods cannot simply be utilized within a Western research framework and be called ‘Indigenous research’. Indigenous methods should not be assumed as able to be subsumed within Western ways of knowing, even critical ways of knowing like feminism. Instead, this approach drew on two ways of knowing that are distinct but that also allowed for convergence along axis of similarities in a pragmatic yet respectful fashion.

By privileging story as both sources of knowledge and a way of sharing this knowledge, this methodology drew on an Indigenous epistemology. Within an Indigenous epistemological context, “story is methodologically congruent with tribal knowledges” (Kovach, 2009, p.35). Therefore, this methodology was mixed methods in that an Indigenous method of story (thereby tribal epistemology), was utilized alongside feminist ways of knowing, as two distinct methodological approaches that can co-exist due to their relational processes. For instance, both feminist and Indigenous epistemological positions recognize the multiplicity and co-creation of knowledge – that storytelling is a form of knowledge sharing, construction, and presentation, and that research participants are knowledge holders. Throughout this research, participants shared their stories with me through a form of knowledge co-creation, and I later presented their stories in a further act of co-creation. The co-construction process of storytelling is a form of decolonizing research and Indigenous Research Methodology. This research built of these areas of intersection by pragmatically borrowing and aligning Indigenous and feminist principles of research in ways that were fruitful yet non-extractive, that recognized my limitations as a non-Indigenous researcher, and that built off the goal of producing useful results for the Positive Voice program.

With this in mind, this methodology was framed as ‘Indigenous aligned’ not as an ‘Indigenous methodology’ because it did not stem from any specific tribal knowledge system and because I am not an Indigenous person. Rather, the methodology drew on epistemological aspects that are shared across tribal knowledges such as decolonizing frameworks and storytellers as knowledge holders. This methodology aimed at challenging dominant Western ways of thinking in terms of sticking to one theory and conceptual framework — a common practice even when aspects of that theory are not useful or even oppressive and colonial in nature. Further, as an aspect of decolonizing research, main themes were built around the insights, perspectives, and knowledges that were shared to me through the participants stories.

Taking this further, a central question informed my methodology: how do I negotiate and operationalize feminist and Indigenous research principles in ways that do not re-colonize or claim expert status, and that respect the epistemological foundations of Indigenous methodology. A narrative method was used that privileged story as a relational process of knowledge sharing and construction. Indigenous scholars have long referenced story as a means of gathering knowledge that is congruent with Indigenous epistemology (Kovach, 2009; Thomas, 2005; Bishop, 1999). Kovach (2009) describes the conversational method as a method that “honours orality as means of transmitting knowledge” (p. 42). Narrative based inquiry has also become more accepted within Western qualitative research (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). However, intrinsic to this research approach was not simply conducting research using culturally appropriate methods. Rather, this research aimed at conducting research that recognized Indigenous epistemology and had a purposeful aim — of decolonizing while ensuring Indigenous knowledge and voice was at the forefront of meaning making and representation.

This methodology seemed to work for this urban Indigenous research context as Positive Voice (PV) similarly adopted a more holistic ‘all-Nations’ approach to its service delivery. However, when working with Indigenous peoples, methodology should be approached as context specific, given that Indigenous epistemologies stem from tribal and land-based knowledge. Therefore, adoption of this type of methodology that utilizes both feminist and Indigenous ways of knowing should be approached cautiously, but also enthusiastically in an effort to disrupt Western ways of

knowing. Yet, this methodology should not necessarily be considered a ‘best practice’ but as a learning process and a process of changing currently privileged processes of knowledge production.

4.1.2 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are important because they, as Kovach (2009) explains, “make visible the way we see the world” (p. 41). As noted previously, this research utilized an Indigenous-aligned feminist research methodology that pragmatically drew on Indigenous and feminist ways of knowing, while recognizing the multiplicity (not submerging) of the two epistemological traditions. The intent was to ground this research within a decolonizing framework that recognized my limitations as a non-Indigenous researcher, the colonizing history of research, and the need to conduct non-extractive research. I strove to find a way to merge Indigenous and feminist knowledge in a way that did not re-colonize — a very base level expectation — and that actually had decolonizing potential despite the recognition that, paradigmatically speaking, these two knowledges emerge from different paradigms. For some, combining Indigenous and feminist knowledge systems and approaches to research is epistemologically divisive. I do not agree with this divergence in an absolute sense of total incompatibility, but also recognize that this research framework is imperfect. The need for a pragmatic research approach was evident.

The framework was pragmatically centered in that the methodology did not rely specifically on one paradigmatic approach but drew on ‘what worked’ and ‘what was appropriate’ in this specific research context. This approach was aimed at disrupting and transcending Western traditions of monolithic research, and at opening possibilities for new and diverse research methodologies. Yet, care was taken to thoughtfully build off Indigenous principles of relational knowledge gathering, and constructing and sharing, that put the research participants at the center and recognized the researcher as a co-constructor. At the same time, this project focused on three different levels – mainstream newspaper narratives of Indigenous women, the PV women’s life stories, and service delivery-based explanations of PV, gathered from diverse sources of information – the mainstream

media, Indigenous individuals, and non-Indigenous individuals. As a result, the type of narratives and knowledges that were examined and represented differed significantly.

With this in mind, it should be noted that assessing the intersectionality of multiple sources and levels of information presents challenges. Particularly when these sources of information are historically divisive, and when also combining historically divergent methodological frameworks at the same time. With so many sources of information and levels of knowledges, there are innate difficulties in determining how these multiple sources and knowledges intersect. Beyond this innate methodological difficulty, sources and spaces of knowledge do not exist in a bubble. Rather, knowledge produced at one level of knowledge space shapes the knowledge produced by other levels of knowledge spaces, reflecting unique intersections and impacts of diverging sources of macro, meso, and micro information that can be challenging to define and decipher.

Yet various levels and types of knowledge have always co-existed as converging ways of knowing. Western institutional knowledge structures at the macro level have in particular influenced what types of stories are shared and how among individuals. For instance, knowledge shared within mainstream spaces influences and shapes the stories that individual Indigenous women share in relation to their own experiences and understanding. Similarly, Indigenous women's experiences (and mainstream perception of those experiences) influence the stories that these institutions share, or more aptly, that they ignore. Ultimately, there will always be difficulties in examining multiple levels of information – something that is heightened by the divergent nature of these sources. However, within this multi-source, multi-level context there was a high level of consistency in that the story that flowed and intersected in an expected and logical way. Some conceptual grounding will briefly be explored to better situate this methodology.

4.1.2.1 Combining Indigenous and Feminist Methodology

The conceptual framework utilized the insights of Indigenous scholar and activist Margaret Kovach on Indigenous Methodologies who equated storytelling with Indigenous epistemology/ways of knowing; combined with feminism – a critical epistemology. Its

development lies in the recognized legacy of unethical Western knowledge gathering and representation of Indigenous peoples, and the need to move research practices beyond this deplorable history of extraction, misrepresentation, and appropriation.

As an analysis framework, both newspaper articles and interview participants stories were analyzed for the narratives that were told. However, both did not share stories in the Indigenous sense of relational knowledge development. Therefore, I drew on different epistemological approaches to understand how knowledge was being created and represented within these diverging spaces. The representations shared within the newspaper articles were non-Indigenous portrayals of Indigenous peoples. In this sense, they might be understood from a Western perspective as ‘knowledge’, but only to the extent that they represent a Western system of knowing that has become accepted as such. Western beliefs of Indigenous peoples interact with the beliefs of the predominantly non-Indigenous readership to create an understanding that is equated with knowledge. Therefore, a critical feminist approach broached this discussion, with focus on critically identifying common themes of the news articles and narratives, not on providing space to the actual narratives. The knowledge shared in the interviews through the stories, and the subsequent representation of these stories was a multifaceted and relational processes of knowledge construction. These stories were analyzed and represented in relation to the knowledge and insights that were shared with me. In terms of Indigenous epistemological understanding, story as a way of knowing was understood as a multifaceted and relational process that existed within the context of the research process.

Kovach (2009) explains that an Indigenous approach is not simply about the involvement of particular ethical guidelines or including Indigenous methods, like sharing circles. Rather, it is about recognizing the epistemological positioning that is always present when those methods are being used. It is the specific way of knowing — the epistemology — that makes Indigenous research approaches, often characterized by these specific methods, distinct. Further, from a decolonizing perspective, Indigenous methodologies both reveal and transgress the methodologies that have long been privileged within the Western institutional research context. In an effort to both reveal and transgress, a storytelling methodology was utilized. Story as a relational process

of meaning making was the central guide of this Indigenous aligned approach. As defined by Kovach (2009), “Indigenous knowledges comprise a specific way of knowing based upon oral tradition of sharing knowledge” (p.40) — story. Within this research context, narrative development and storytelling are methods of knowledge sharing, analysis frameworks, and forms of representation.

Although the focus was on storytelling, it should be noted that not all stories can be shared. Rather, there are culturally understood limits to the sharing of knowledge. For instance, there are innate limitations in what can be understood in terms of translation given the differences between Indigenous languages which are verb-based, and the English language which is noun-based. As well, there are culturally understood limitations surrounding the sharing of sacred cultural knowledge, particularly to non-cultural peoples. Therefore, as noted previously, the stories and knowledges that were shared to me were understood within this context as incomplete yet simultaneously complete in terms of the women sharing only what they wanted to.

As noted previously, feminism can be a challenging concept to broach within Indigenous contexts. The issues experienced by Indigenous women are “compounded by the fact that a critical component of colonialism... involved the imposition of Western gender roles and patriarchal social structures” (Suzack et al., 2010, p. 2). This colonial reality presents a challenging context for utilizing a Western way of knowing, even a critical approach like feminism. As mentioned, one approach that has been used to broach feminism and Indigenous research has been that of researchers from ‘critical’ camps adopting an Indigenous method and using that method within a Western critical approach like feminism. There have arguably been cases where this has proved successful, particularly in cases where Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers have a more nuanced understanding of Indigeneity and decolonializing goals, and identify as feminist. At the same time however, critical approaches do not necessarily equate to decolonizing research or a one-and-done solution to the colonial history of research spaces. Moving the discussion forward in terms of privileging Indigenous ways of knowing means doing and validating research that can extend beyond utilizing an Indigenous method within a non-Indigenous framework.

However, despite being a Western approach, feminism has value within this research context, that extends beyond its usefulness for examining discourse. Contemporary feminism that equates feminism with intersectionality aligns well with Indigenous principles of research. On the one hand, the normalization of intersectionality has made contemporary feminism a more inclusive space than its predecessor. Still, it can't be ignored that Indigenous women — their experiences, their voices, their stories — have been, and continue to be, invisibilized within the women's movement, which has as “failed to see Indigenous women in their full historical and contemporary contexts” (Green, 2007, p.20). Historically, women of colour and their experiences have been both purposefully excluded from the feminist movement or oppressively used to further white, liberal, heterosexual goals. While women of colour became more actively involved within the feminist movement during the second and third waves, it is an ongoing concern for groups of women whose experiences are often relegated to the periphery of the women's movement. The unique but often invisibilized relationship that Indigenous women have with the Canadian state within feminist research state further elucidates this concern.

Yet, feminism, particularly that of Indigenous feminism, has been found useful among many Indigenous women due to the link between patriarchy and colonialism (Suzack et al., 2010). Feminist Indigenous researchers have noted that many Indigenous women organize on apparently feminist issues – how patriarchy and misogyny shape the lives of Indigenous women – which led to the development of ‘Indigenous feminism’ (Green, 2007, 2017; Suzack et al., 2010). Indigenous feminism is much like other feminist propositions in its “foregrounding of women's experiences and advocacy for women's rights and interests, in its recognition of the gendered and raced nature of social experiences, and in its identification of the oppressive nature of patriarchy” (Green, 2017, p.5). However, it is distinct from other feminisms in its focus on the oppressions enacted through colonialism “as the single most urgent structural condition affecting Indigenous women” (Green, 2017, p.5). Indigenous feminism maintain that colonialism is the overarching structure that shapes Indigenous experiences – providing the framework through which all other forms of marginalization, like that stemming from patriarchy, manifest (Suzack, 2010). Through colonialism, systems of patriarchy became naturalized within many Indigenous communities over time. For instance, in the constant devaluing of Indigenous women's roles and the “re-placement

of traditional gender roles with Western patriarchal practices” (Suzack et al., 2010, p. 1), that became ingrained. As a result, key goals of Indigenous feminism include making visible and challenging the internal patriarchal oppression within communities within the colonial context of dominant mainstream society that guides and reproduces it (Suzack, 2010; Blaney, 2003).

The value of ‘feminism’ within Indigenous spaces has been hotly debated, with some critics rejecting Indigenous feminism as a contradiction – as un-traditional, unauthentic, and not liberatory for Indigenous women (Green, 2007, 2017). Yet since the early 2000s, gender-based discussions and the potential for drawing feminism into Indigenous focused policy, research, and ways of knowing as a matter of addressing colonial policies like Bill C-31, have been well established. For instance, at the second triennial Aboriginal Policy Research Conference (APRC) in March 2006, nearly 700 policymakers, researchers, scientists, academics, and Indigenous community leaders came to Ottawa to examine and discuss existing research on Indigenous issues, including gender-based topics (White et al., 2013a; 2013b). In addition to a generalized integration of gender, an entire day was dedicated to addressing policy related issues affecting Indigenous women, which included discussions of building trust and compatibility between Indigenous knowledges and more progressive forms of feminism (White et al., 2013a; 2013b).

Those who identify as an Indigenous feminist maintain that feminism and feminist analysis can be a tool for challenging colonialism through racism and oppression. Further, given the history of women-focused knowledge since time immemorial, it can be argued that feminism is actually grounded in Indigenous traditional understandings of knowledge and experience. Indigenous feminism and the value of feminist approaches for examining Indigenous experiences is not a unified vision and varies significantly across contexts. Yet, while Indigenous women represent diverse cultures, they share a common history of colonialism and colonial violence, particularly that of patriarchy which “has transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women’s power, status, and material consequences” (Suzack et al., 2010, p.3). Further, many Indigenous Nations like the Lunaapeew peoples, whose traditional territory extended along the eastern seaboard of what is now North America, were matrilineal and had matrilineal clan systems that were passed through mothers. Although many of these matrilineal systems were disrupted by

the shared colonial violence mentioned previously, contemporary Indigenous communities across Canada are working towards reviving and renewing this and other aspects of their Nations' heritage. It is these intersecting contexts that makes Indigenous aligned forms of feminism both relevant and timely.

In practice, my methodological approach was a product of a pragmatic convergence of Indigenous and feminist ways of knowing. For instance, the methods that were utilized to gather knowledge — Critical Narrative Analysis and in-depth interviews, are methodologically Western. As a non-Indigenous feminist research, these methods aligned with my expertise. Methods were approached within a critical feminist context that aligned with Indigenous research principles like challenging dominant narratives and relational knowledge production. However, they were Western, nonetheless. Yet the analytical approach and the representation of knowledge drew on both Indigenous and feminist ways of knowing. Both the newspaper articles and interviews were examined for the stories that were shared, recognizing the multilevel relational meaning making processes at work within both. For instance, the meaning within newspaper articles is produced between the author and the readership, and in this context, the researcher.

The newspaper analysis focused on illustrating common themes within the stories that were told, drawing heavily on my interpretation, as is common of feminist approaches. Less focus was aimed at co-construction and privileging the news stories as knowledge itself, or at providing space for representing those stories and the voices telling those stories. As these stories are colonial in nature, and a product of non-Indigenous institutions and Western understandings of Indigenous peoples, I drew more on presenting a critical feminist position. Representation of the stories focused on my interpretations.

However, the in-depth interview analysis stemmed from an Indigenous approach. Analysis focused on 'meaning making' from the knowledges shared with me, as a relational process of co-construction. The aim was to focus on the stories and insights that were being shared with me as sources of knowledge and on representing these knowledges. Within this approach, knowledge that was shared with me and the knowledge that I interpreted from what was shared are not necessarily the same. With this in mind, the aim was to center my interpretations around the

insights that were shared by the interview participants, with most of the main themes stemming from the insights that were offered through stories. For instance, the overarching theme of ‘change’ that will be discussed came from the women’s own insights. As a result, storytelling is understood as a method of knowledge sharing, an analysis framework, and a form of representation.

The methodological distinctions between the media analysis and the interview analysis stemmed from the varying epistemological understanding of knowledge that guided those processes of knowledge construction and my varying research intent — to critically challenge the knowledge being presented in the case of the media analysis and to privilege and represent the relational knowledge being shared in the case of the interviews. Ultimately, the media representation and the individual representations were inherently different and embodied different ways of knowing. It was in this understanding that my approach both diverged and converged. Although this research framework includes two often contradictory ways of knowing, they were drawn together in complementary ways. This Indigenous aligned + feminist research approach illustrated one way for practically bridging feminist and decolonizing knowledges and diverging research focuses — non-Indigenous narratives and Indigenous stories – into a pragmatic approach.

4.1.3 Research Methods

Research methods – Critical Narrative analysis of mainstream representations and in-depth interviews – were chosen for several reasons. Including their suitability with the methodology, their alignment with the Positive Voice program, and related to the interconnected and multi-level goals of this research – to understand: the existing overarching narratives, the stories Indigenous women share to bring meaning to their experiences, and the usefulness and role service delivery might have in this narrative process. In general, I wanted this research to compliment the Positive Voice (PV) program. Methods included a critical thematic narrative analysis of newspaper articles, in-depth interviews with past PV women and other persons involved with the program, and a brief examination of program material, including the program evaluation completed about the first two

sessions, programming schedules, and some programming instructions. NVIVO was employed to systematize and analyze all data collected.

4.1.3.1 Critical Narrative Analysis

A critical narrative analysis (CNA) was conducted on two mainstream newspapers: The Globe and Mail and the London Free Press to provide an overarching macro level understanding of the current narrative shaping both the development of the PV program and the potential participants of the program. The critical narrative analysis method used is similar to that of discourse analysis in its goal of understanding meaning construction — what ‘truths’ are produced and how in the form of Western cultural memory, including how these ‘truths’ are sustained, legitimized, and also challenged (Hacking 2000; Atkinson & Gregory, 2008). However, it builds off the understanding by intersecting critical discourse and narrative analyses (Souto-Manning, 2014; Kristeva, 1980). Within this framework, the micro-macro separation of discourse analysis and the focus of critical discourse analysis on institutional discourses is questioned. Instead, this CNA method recognized the “intertextual recycling of institutional discourses in everyday narratives and at the adoption of everyday narratives in institutional discourses” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p.159). Ultimately, while institutional discourses may have the power to shape or reflect existing social relations, the power of these discourses lay in their recycling through the stories that everyday people tell (Souto-Manning, 2014).

With this in mind, CNA is particularly relevant for examining the narrative surrounding Indigenous women, as it provides a way for looking at Western cultural memory and existing common-sense perceptions of Indigenous peoples that exist and are reproduced at institutional and individual levels. As illustrated earlier, the news is a highly ideological space that both reflects and shapes mainstream opinion, in relation to what have become common-sense based perceptions. Western cultural memory of Indigenous peoples, in the form of commonsensical understanding, is reproduced at both institutional and individual levels. In other words, the cultural memories that exist within non-Indigenous everyday narratives of Indigenous peoples also exist within

institutional spaces and their representations, like the news. CNA allowed for the critical analysis of narratives in the lifeworld – the everyday stories and narratives that people tell and that exist within the context of institutional discourses.

Further, CNA allowed for patterns and themes to systematically come from the sources, while still recognizing pre-existing knowledge and Indigenous/non-Indigenous power relations stemming from the colonial history, as well as the overarching goal of social change. This matters as the goal of critical discourse or narrative analysis is not to just document and explain, but to foster social change (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; van Dijk, 2016; Wooffitt, 2005) and in this case, decolonize. A thematic-based narrative analysis allowed for an approach that focused less on descriptive data and content-based quantification, and more on critically engaging with questions of power dynamics and representation in the articles. A particular focus was on what stories are being told, whose voices are being heard, and how these stories are framed. With this in mind, I focused on overarching frames and common themes rather than an intense examination of each article (a necessity given the number of articles) to understand the mainstream representations surrounding Indigenous women.

Some quantitative analysis in the form of keyword searches was used to provide context to themes and to identify patterns within the narrative. For instance, I used a keyword search to identify the number of articles that refer to missing and murdered Indigenous women, a national inquiry, variations of ‘colonialism’ and other terms referring to colonial policies like the Indian Act or residential schools, and the number of individual women included within the articles by name. However, most analysis focused on common narrative themes. Further, analysis recognized the pre-existing knowledge that is located within this history of mainstream spaces representing Indigenous peoples. Particularly, the news stories that were examined do not exist in a bubble, yet are part of a long history of non-Indigenous institutions asserting control over Indigenous peoples.

4.1.3.1.1 Sources of data

News spaces are one of the oldest and most relied upon spaces of knowledge construction. This research focused on understanding the narratives within two mainstream newspapers. The value of the existing narratives within these newspapers stem from the understanding that while

constructed, existing representations have real and ideological implications that often go unrecognized in the form of cultural memory. While many Western institutions have been important in constructing, characterizing, distributing, and reproducing knowledge about Indigenous peoples through representation, mainstream media through newspapers have been identified as “a powerful force for perpetuating biases and stereotypes about Indigenous peoples” (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018, p. 57). By reading newspaper articles, individuals are participating in an ideological process of social construction that is situated in a hegemonically normalized but value-laden context of ‘staying informed’. Despite being highly ideological, the news as an institution represents authority, legitimacy, and objectivity that reiterates its function in the construction process surrounding Indigenous women. The ways that Indigenous women and their experiences are (or are not) included, represented, and discussed in news stories, and by whom, matters. These representations produce and reinforce a cultural memory of Indigenous women that is consumed by non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations. As a population whose stories have historically been absent from mainstream media sources or included only on non-Indigenous terms, the examination of stories about Indigenous women within Western news spaces is particularly relevant for understanding this cultural memory.

Mainstream newspapers were chosen for this analysis for a number of reasons. First and foremost, Thorp advised that the mainstream media shaped the women who came to Nokee Kwe in terms of the narratives they had for themselves. For instance, in shaping the women’s own self-perception while also shaping mainstream perception and the implications for potential PV participants. Second, as previously discussed, mainstream newspapers exude a sense of objective reliability to mainstream readership. Due to the institutionalization of mainstream media, there is a general acceptance of mainstream news as relatively credible knowledge spaces in terms of producing reliable information. As well, due to the permeability of mainstream media and its accessibility, mainstream news tends to have a high readership. For instance, Canada’s weekly news circulation stands at 34 million, with 8 in 10 Canadians reading every week and between 50 – 60% of Canadians reading newspaper content every day, with print continuing to be the primary source (News Media Canada, 2020a). As a result, mainstream newspapers are likely to both represent and influence non-Indigenous perception of Indigenous women and peoples generally, and reach

Indigenous audiences as well. A lack of data exists on the circulation of Indigenous newspapers in Canada. However, in comparison to mainstream news sources, Indigenous media sources and newspapers have a smaller readership and also tend to be politicized, and therefore undermined, by non-Indigenous spaces as having an agenda or bias. As the women generally lacked technological literacy and access to online spaces, it was felt that mainstream news spaces were apt to be influencing.

Two newspapers were chosen for this analysis due to their relevance and their likelihood for reaching Londoners. The original intention was to include additional newspapers located in Southern Ontario. However, this was found to be too repetitive and too large of a task for this research. Therefore, in an effort to examine both national and local contexts, I looked at one major national paper (Globe and Mail), one local paper (the London Free Press). The Globe and Mail had the second highest circulation rate of Canadian newspapers in 2015, while the London Free Press had the largest circulation of newspapers in Southwestern Ontario (News Media Canada, 2020b). The Globe has been identified as one of the earliest Canadian newspapers, and has included stories about Indigenous peoples since the sale of Rupert's Land in 1869³⁰ (Anderson & Robertson, 2009). The London Free Press was chosen due to its popularity and proximity to Positive Voice, which is located in London, Ontario. According to the London Free Press website, the Free Press reaches over two thirds of all households in London, making it a potentially influential source for shaping the local narrative. In addition to being relevant, these sources had online archives that were very accessible through the LexisNexis Academic database and the London Free Press Archive, both subscribed to by the Western library.

4.1.3.1.2 Data collection

Using LexisNexis Academic and London Free Press Online Archive, two keyword searches were conducted. Data collection focused on articles published between Nov 6th, 2011 and Nov 7th,

³⁰ In 1869, Canada purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company, without consulting the First Nations or Métis inhabitants of the area. The land was included in the dominion of Canada three years after confederation, making way for white settler colonialism in western Canada.

2016. This time frame represents the five-year period prior to the start date of the second Positive Voice session, November 8th, 2016. I used the second session start date as a parameter as I was interested in understanding the existing mainstream narrative in relation to its potential for shaping Positive Voice participants' understanding of self and the narratives they shared. It was felt that a five-year time frame was adequate to identify patterns and common narratives.

As stated, LexisNexis was used for searching within the Globe and Mail archives. LexisNexis contains archival coverage of the Globe and Mail from November 14, 1977 through current. LexisNexis does have access to the London Free Press archive, but the archival coverage is only from March 15, 2016 through current, which did not cover my five-year timeframe. Instead, I utilized The London Free Press Archive Online, which has archival coverage from August 15, 1998 through current. Having to use two different databases led to some variations in search methods, although efforts were made to keep the searches as consistent as possible. Using LexisNexis' 'Advanced Search' options, I developed the following search for the Globe and Mail, focusing on document segments *headline* and *headlead*:

HEADLINE(Indigenous OR Aboriginal OR First Nation* OR Métis OR Inuit OR Native OR community) AND HLEAD(wom*n OR Female)

The headline segment (HEADLINE) was used to narrow down results to include any articles that had an Indigenous indicator word in the heading or subheading. The headlead (HLEAD) segment further narrowed results to articles that also refer to women. The headlead segment contains document sections: headline, highlight, and lead sections which are the first few sentences or paragraphs of a story's text. By including 'women' indicator words in the headlead segment rather than headline segment, I was hoping to catch articles that included the name of a woman instead of the actual term "woman or women", and also those articles that were looking at Indigenous women but did not include a 'women' indicator word in the title. Although it is likely I missed some articles that did not include an "Indigenous" or "woman" indicator word, such as those with a non-specific title, given the magnitude of articles available I had to refine my search by placing specific parameters. I then reversed the segments to find any additional articles that might have a

‘woman’ indicator in the headline and an Indigenous indicator in the headlead, recognizing that the existing limitations discussed previously still applied:

HLEAD (Indigenous OR Aboriginal OR First Nation* OR Métis OR Inuit OR Native OR community) AND HEADLINE (wom*n OR Female)

Another key word search was developed to account for more specific terms and words that are commonly used to refer to local Indigenous peoples and communities in the Southern region of Ontario. The decision to keep these terms local was due to the diversity of Indigenous peoples across Canada. Although this limited the national context, trying to include all possible First Nations would have not been manageable. Similar to the previous search, I also reversed the segments. The following two searches were performed:

HEADLINE (Caldwell OR Walpole OR Moravian OR Moraviantown OR Munsee-Delaware OR Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit OR Chippewas OR Oneida OR Kettle OR Mississaugas OR Six Nations OR Nation* OR Mohawk OR Cree OR Iroquois OR treaty OR Anishinaabe OR Haudenosaunee OR Ojibwe OR Aamjiwnaang) AND HLEAD (wom*n)

HLEAD (Caldwell OR Walpole OR Moravian OR Moraviantown, Munsee-Delaware OR Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit OR Chippewas OR Oneida OR Kettle OR Mississaugas OR Six Nations OR Nation* OR Mohawk OR Cree OR Iroquois OR treaty OR Anishinaabe OR Haudenosaunee OR Ojibwe OR Aamjiwnaang) AND HEADLINE (wom*n)

I then manually examined each entry to determine relevancy. Articles were deemed relevant if Indigenous women were included or referred to in any way – individually, collectively, as the focus of the article, or mentioned in passing – and if Indigenous women were specified as distinct from Indigenous peoples and men, even if Indigenous peoples were also collectively referred to. Articles were included regardless if they were originally published by a different news source. For instance, some articles were originally published in by The National and then picked up and republished by the Globe and Mail or the London Free Press. After manually going through the results for relevancy and duplicates, 247 Globe and Mail articles were examined.

Using London Free Press Online Archives, a similar series of searches was conducted under the ‘Expert Search’ option using the segments ‘title’ and ‘lead’ to refer to article headline and first 500 characters of the body text. Although my method may have resulted in some omissions (for

example, articles that did not make reference to an ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Woman’ indicator term within the first 500 characters), like previous searches, it was necessary to place parameters to keep results manageable. The following searches of the London Free Press were conducted:

TITLE (Indigenous OR Aboriginal* OR First Nation* OR Métis OR Inuit OR Native OR community) AND LEAD (wom*n OR female)

LEAD (Indigenous OR Aboriginal* OR First Nation* OR Métis OR Inuit OR Native OR community) AND TITLE:(wom*n OR female)

TITLE (Caldwell OR Walpole OR Moravian OR Moraviantown OR Munsee-Delaware OR Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit OR Chippewas OR Oneida OR Kettle OR Mississaugas OR Six Nations OR Nation* OR Mohawk OR Cree OR Iroquois OR treaty OR Anishinaabe OR Haudenosaunee OR Ojibwe OR Aamjiwnaang) AND LEAD (wom*n)

LEAD (Caldwell OR Walpole OR Moravian OR Moraviantown, Munsee-Delaware OR Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit OR Chippewas OR Oneida OR Kettle OR Mississaugas OR Six Nations OR Nation* OR Mohawk OR Cree OR Iroquois OR treaty OR Anishinaabe OR Haudenosaunee OR Ojibwe OR Aamjiwnaang) AND TITLE (wom*n)

After manually going through all articles for relevance and duplicates, 42 London Free Press articles were examined.

4.1.3.1.3 Analytical approach

Analysis aimed at identifying themes related to common narratives, actor/voice groups within the narratives, and inclusion practices surrounding Indigenous women.

The narrative analysis included two complementary analytical processes — a non-linear analysis and a more theoretically informed analysis. This two-process model has found success within critical discourse analysis (see Miele, 2020), and was adapted for this critical narrative analysis (CNA). The initial analysis modelled after Clarke’s procedural method (1992, 1999, 2004, 2010), involved non-linear stages of reading that inductively allowed analytical flexibility towards emerging ideas and questions. This method draws out manifest meanings – obvious and countable surface meanings, and latent meanings – those less obvious often subtextual meanings that require multiple readings and re-readings. The second analytical process was more theoretically informed,

using an analysis guide (Appendix C) adapted from Jäger (2001) and Miele (2020) to focus more on narrative themes than on linguistic tools and rhetorical devices common of CDA.

This first analytical process included several stages of read-throughs of each news article with the goal of getting a general understanding of the narratives that were present and absent, and to build an analytical framework for further analysis. During the first read through, I focused on determining article relevance and finding duplications and on getting a general sense of what the narrative was about. From this read-through, I began developing connections between theoretical perspectives of Indigenous representation and discussions of Indigenous women. For instance, it became evident very quickly that most of the articles were issue and deficit focused, centered around the experience of violence against Indigenous women. A second read-through was completed where I built off this observation of violence as a dominant narrative, looking at how violence was approached and framed. This reading focused more specifically on power relations within the narrative, particularly the inclusion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices for telling the story. My line of inquiry included: What stories are being told/absent? Whose stories are being told/absent? Whose voices are being heard/absent? What Western cultural memories, in terms of values, beliefs, and representations of Indigenous peoples, are present? Building off this second read-through, a final reading was completed that focused specifically on the inclusion of Indigenous women. This reading focused on how Indigenous women were framed and approached individually and collectively. From this initial analysis, a framework was built for further analysis which began the development of a theoretical perspective.

Following the initial more inductive analysis, a more in-depth and systematic analysis was conducted using an analysis guide (Appendix C). This guide included a number of specific questions that I posed to the texts to derive further meaning about how Indigenous women were represented within the articles. Questions built off the theoretical and analytical work of Jäger (2001) and Miele (2020) and were constructed to understand the existing dominant narratives within the historical context of knowledge production and reflection. They were developed and organized around the framework developed from the initial analysis. Guided by my analysis guide, I engaged with the texts in multiple close readings. As I read, my theoretical framework and

research question — *What are the existing mainstream narratives surrounding Indigenous women and their experiences, and how are their stories represented by the media as a dominant narrative space?* — was at the forefront of my analysis. I read each article several times, coding broad and specific observations, while keeping notes of common threads, meanings, and themes, and any variations or contradictions. Overall, this in-depth analysis focused on understanding the inclusion of Indigenous women in mainstream newspapers – specifically, the construction of violence, the role of specific actor groups, and the inclusion practices surrounding Indigenous women, with a focus on what narratives were being told and how. Although the Globe and Mail and London Free Press articles were analyzed separately, it became evident very early in the initial analysis and coding process that main themes were consistent across both papers.

4.1.3.2 In-depth Interviews

The next method that was used was in-depth interviews with participants of the PV program and with others involved in the program, analyzed using a critical dialogical analysis. In-depth interviews were chosen due to the effectiveness of the method as well as its conduciveness to Indigenous aligned research. In-depth interviews are one of the oldest and most common/respected methods of qualitative research. Despite the ubiquity of in-depth interviews, interviewing is not without its challenges and, like research in general, is not immune from the colonizing histories and tendencies of research. In an effort to both recognize and attempt to transcend the colonial context of Western research, this method built off existing work on Indigenous research methodologies in terms of how the interview process was approached and analyzed, and the presentation of findings. In particular, the focus on co-construction and life stories. Blix and colleagues (2012) defined life stories as “the stories people tell about their lives in the context of the qualitative research interview” (p.69). This framing of the plural ‘stories’ makes the distinction between life stories and life history. It recognizes that individuals have many stories and the stories individuals choose to share within the context of an interview are shaped by the interview context and process, and do not equate to a ‘life history’ (Blix et al., 2012).

4.1.3.2.1 Participants

In-depth interviews were conducted with Positive Voice participants and others who were involved in the first two sessions of the Positive Voice program. Interviews were limited to those involved in the first two sessions of the program for several reasons. To begin, there was a practical need to define research parameters. Second, the first two sessions were developed as a pilot program, with the intention of completing both sessions regardless of the success of the first session. Third, while there was funding for the first two pilot sessions, there was no guarantee that the program would be able to acquire additional funding to continue after the pilot sessions. And finally, although funding for a third and fourth session was secured, it was decided to alter the third session to 6 weeks instead of seven in an effort to appeal to funders. It was not within the parameters of this research project to do a comparison between the six-week and seven-week models. However, it should be noted that after the third and fourth session the program went back to the 7-week model. For all of these reasons, focus was on the first two sessions. Six women completed the first session and 5 women completed the second session, for a total of 11 women completing the pilot program.

4.1.3.2.2 Data collection

A total of 15 interviews were conducted with 6 of the 11 PV women, 4 advisory committee members, one volunteer, Nokee Kwe employee, and guest speaker, Thorp – the program developer and facilitator, and Jerry White – the Director of Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium International who was hired to conduct an evaluation of the pilot sessions. One of the women, Heather, was interviewed twice – first as a participant of PV than as an advisory committee member as she joined the committee after completing the first session. Throughout this discussion, participants are differentiated between the PV women, which includes the 6 PV participants that were interviewed, and other program people, which includes the 9 other individuals interviewed. However, on occasion more specific terms are used to refer to specific interview participants or group of participants – for example, advisory committee member or evaluator.

Participants for this research were recruited through a variety of methods. Given my role as an advisory committee member, I had access to the advisory committee, Thorp, and White, who I contacted via email. Those interested in participating were asked to contact me. For the remainder

of the participants, Thorp distributed a poster that I developed via email and at Nokee Kwe to Positive Voice women, Nokee Kwe/PV staff and volunteers, and others involved in the program who were also asked to contact me if they were interested in participating. See Appendix D for the recruitment material that was used with the PV women. Materials for other participant groups were similar but with some different wording to reflect differences in their role and our relationship.

Interviews were semi-structured in nature and lasted between 45mins to 3.5 hours, with the majority of interviews lasting around 1-1.5 hours. The majority of the interviews (10) were conducted at Nokee Kwe, as requested by the participants. Other interview locations included a restaurant, a place of work, one phone interview, and one email correspondence. At the beginning of the interview, I went over the letter of information and consent form³¹. All of the participants wanted their names to be used. All but one of the interviews were recorded and transcribed later. Participants were given the option to check their interview transcripts in the form of member checking; however, all declined. One participant requested that I share any quotes for verification before including them in any write-up of findings.

Five similar semi-structured interview guides were developed to guide the stories that were shared with me in reflection of the interview participants' various roles in relation to PV. For instance, I was interested in understanding the stories that the PV women share as they bring meaning to their experiences before, during, and after PV. Whereas with the advisory committee members, I was more interested in learning about the program, the insights they had gained, and their relationship to the program. Interview guides were developed around the following groups: 1) PV women; 2) advisory committee and PV volunteers, employees, and guests; 3) program developer; 4) program evaluator; and 5) Nokee Kwe employees. Each interview guide included base questions and follow-up questions that were used in relation to individual responses. Although care was taken during the interviews to avoid re-traumatization, I had access to community-based resources from Thorp if there was a need.

³¹ See Appendix E for consent form used with the PV women. Materials for other participant groups were similar but with some different wording to reflect differences in role and our relationship.

When conducting interviews, I was careful to balance probing with being non-extractive. As noted previously, knowledge creation is an interactive process, with storytelling no different. With this in mind, the stories that were shared reflected the interactive process of an interview – of questions, sharing, and follow-up. While many of the stories the women shared were lengthy, requiring little follow-up on my part, other stories were more interactive. Although follow-up probes/questions were prepared, I approached the task of follow-up as a participant-by-participant and individualized process. I worried less about making sure that each interview was the same and focused more on creating a respectful sharing space by moving on when it seemed that the participant was finished and not prodding for answers. As a non-Indigenous person asking for Indigenous peoples to share their experiences and knowledges with me, this was a way for me to practically recognize that knowledge is sacred and should be shared freely and without pressure. As well, it was a way to recognize that experiences are individual and should be shared within a framing and understanding that is desired by that individual, instead of solely as requested by the researcher. Of course, there was a trade-off in that the interviews were not all the same. However, there are always limitations to any research method, and this was felt to be the preferred trade-off in that it was less a limitation than a reality of decolonized meaning making.

Apart from the interview guide used with the PV women, the other four interview guides were very similar in that they aimed at understanding their role within the program and their experiences/perspectives regarding the program. Guides included some role specific questions. For instance, the Nokee Kwe staff and volunteers were asked some open questions about Nokee Kwe, whereas, Thorp was asked about how she developed the PV program. See Appendix F for the interview guides. Overall, interview guides were just that — guides. I took care not to interrupt participant stories and I let the conversation wander, following the participant's lead. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.

4.1.3.2.3 Confidentiality and naming

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of Western scientific research. It is not only a standard research expectation, but it is often an essential aspect of recruiting, protecting, and respecting research participants. However, Indigenous peoples and others have illustrated a long history of erasure of

Indigenous stories and voices. In response to this erasure, the PV space encouraged the PV women to develop their own narratives and claim and share their own stories. For instance, by putting their names on their work and by sending their work to family, friends, politicians, and others. In line with PV, the decision was made to ask the women individually if they wanted their name to be used within the research or if they wanted to remain anonymous. All of the PV women wanted their names to be used. Similarly, although not all program people were Indigenous, they were also asked if they wanted their names to be used as an aspect of decolonizing the research process.

4.1.3.2.4 Analytical process

The aim of this interview analysis was twofold: to understand the stories that participants shared to bring meaning to their experiences, and to understand the PV program within the service delivery context. Analysis aimed at addressing the second and third research questions: *What narratives do the Positive Voice women draw on to bring meaning to their experiences and sense of self? And, how can service delivery function as a space of resistance and disruption to mainstream narratives and narrative practices surrounding Indigenous women?* The interview analysis included two analytical processes — coding using grounded theory and dialogical narrative analysis. Grounded theory is a very common coding method in qualitative research. It is an inductive approach to inquiry aimed at theory construction by encouraging constant research interaction with data and emerging analyses (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Henwood, 2010). Dialogical Narrative Analysis suggested largely by Frank (2005, 2010, 2012), is a newer approach to inquiry and a theory of reflexivity (Yang, 2015). Combined, these processes aimed at finding key themes while maintaining the agency of those whose stories were shared. Overall, analysis reflected a thematic narrative approach that combined category-centered common themes with individual stories, within a reflexive dialogical framework.

Looking at the first process, transcripts were coded using grounded theory and a common software program, NVivo. NVivo allows researcher to select blocks of text and name them based on what participants have said. These blocks of meaning are called nodes. After I coded all of the transcripts there were nearly 3000 nodes that were categorized into 31 different codes related to participant experiences, perspectives, observations, and insights. These were then recoded into 9 main themes,

that reflected two overarching contexts – stories of change, and PV as a space of resistance. Notes about the participants stories were taken throughout and resulted in many subthemes.

This form of analysis is a common way of analyzing data and developing common themes within qualitative research and is thought to be more ‘grounded’ in participant voice. While this type of analysis was useful for bringing some theoretical grounding and understanding to the participants' stories, this ‘standardized’ method is also problematic due to its tendency to “tear apart the stories of the participants”(Lavallée, 2009, p.34). With this in mind, I built off research practices by Lavallée (2009) and Blitz and colleagues (2014) to bring the participants’ stories back together. Stemming from the established main themes, I took a dialogical approach to narrative analysis that aligned with Indigenous research methodological principles of co-construction and storytelling, and a relational sense of being.

Dialogical forms of narrative analysis are a reflexive form of inquiry that recognize the role the researcher has in meaning construction. Reflexivity is the examination of how research experiences and subjectivities impact all areas of research (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Aranda, 2018). It has been defined as an “ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings” (Etherington, 2004, p. 19). Reflexivity is a central aspect of feminist research and has become a key theoretical concept in contemporary qualitative research (Yang, 2015). Reflexivity recognizes that researchers’ subjective values are embedded within the social sciences. Thereby, instead of trying to eliminate these subjectivities, they should be incorporated into their work (Finlay & Gough, 2003; Shaw, 2010). By emphasizing the value-laden nature of inquiry (Pels, 2000), reflexivity is generally approached as a critical reflection of the self (Guba & Lincoln, 2008), and the process of situating the researcher within the processes of knowledge and meaning construction they take.

With this in mind, dialogical approaches to narrative analysis align well with principles of Indigenous research methodology as they recognize the co-constructive nature of the research process and storytelling, and the relational nature of the world in general. For instance, dialogical narrative analysis extends this thinking of reflexivity to include the concept participant reflexivity,

and the dialogical and unfinished process of research. The concept participant reflexivity refers to both the researcher's and the research participant's involvement within the research process. For the researcher, participant reflexivity refers to the process "of listening and of responding to what is heard" (Frank, 2012, p. 37). The researcher becomes involved in the interviewees stories, shifting between researcher and participant, by asking questions or sharing their own stories — both of which shape the stories that are shared by the interviewee. Further, participant reflexivity illustrates the active role research participants have within the research process as they reflect on their experiences and share insights through stories that are shared in the context of the interview.

Transcripts were read for stories using a dialogical narrative analysis. Focus was on drawing out the stories the women shared to frame and explain their experiences before, during, and after PV, and the meaning they attached to these experiences. Focus was also on drawing out the stories that were shared about PV to understand its deliverability as a program and to illustrate the potential role of service delivery for disrupting dominant Western narratives. Stories were noticed during the interviews, the transcription processes, and the coding process. While some stories were evident right away, more subtle stories surfaced through subsequent purposeful readings, with some stories only amounting to a few sentences. As Riessman (2008) noted, textual stories produced within the research context often do not have clear-cut borders. Rather, "the researcher participates in the creation of stories, rather than 'finding' them in the interviews, by deciding what to present as stories" (Blitz, 2014, p. 72). Further, Frank (2005) describes stories as "acts of engagement with researchers" (p.968), as researchers shape stories through questions and other forms of engagement — a dialogical understanding that shaped my analysis and the presentation of main findings. As noted previously, stories were recognized as created within the context of the research, not as a direct representation of participants histories or identities.

Stories, as illustrations of themes, were approached as interactive and reflexive processes of co-construction. While common themes did reflect my interpretations of the participant's stories, more importantly they stemmed from the insights shared to me by participants within their stories. Participants shared personal reflections and insights about themselves and others, with most of the main findings coming from the participants themselves as they reflected on their experiences and

shared their knowledges. The PV women in particular moved back and forth between stories about specific past experiences, reflections about these experiences, reflections on the present, and thoughts about their futures. As a member of the advisory committee, my interpretations were also informed by previous meetings that had taken place with other members of the advisory committee, many of whom made up the program people that were interviewed for this research. As a result, common themes reflected layers of meaning. These layers included *personal stories* in the form of rememberings and insights shared mostly by the PV women to explain and illustrate their own experiences; *observed stories* in the form of insights shared about other PV women and Indigenous women generally; *participant reflections* where research participants provided reflections and insights about their own experiences or the experiences of others including mainstream perceptions; and my *inferences* towards these stories in the form of synthesized themes across the many stories. Common themes were illustrated with individual stories.

As noted previously, interviews were transcribed verbatim. Pauses, part sentences, trailing off, and going back-and-forth between thoughts are natural and inevitable aspects of conversational discussion and storytelling, and reflect both the uniqueness and context specific nature of knowledge exchange. In an effort to maintain story integrity and participant agency, participant stories were kept as accurate and intact as was possible without sacrificing clarity. With this in mind, the use of ellipses (...) within the participants stories indicate pauses – where a thought or explanation was started then shifted. Some part sentences were edited if it became difficult to understand. However, most stories are verbatim.

4.1.3.3 Pragmatic Analysis of Program Materials

Finally, an examination of select program content was completed. This included examining advisory committee emails and reports, the program schedule, the evaluation completed by Jerry White, and content created by the PV women to gain specific information. As a member of the advisory committee I had access to most of the materials regarding the program. However, any materials that I did not have were shared with me by Thorp, the program developer. As an advisory

committee member, I also had access to digital copies of the content that was created by the PV women. However, I only accessed these digital copies with permission from the PV women I interviewed.

This analysis of program material was of secondary importance and treated as supplemental to the interviews. The analysis had a more practical and pragmatic goal of providing a fuller picture of the program and the PV women's experience. With this in mind, I focused only on the material deemed relevant for addressing gaps or enriching understanding. For instance, the program evaluation conducted by White was analyzed to provide more data to the theme of 'program success' that was identified by participants. Additionally, other documents were analyzed for specific data. For instance, transcripts of the three focus groups that were conducted by Thorp during the early development of PV were analyzed specifically to understand how the ideas that participants of the focused groups shared with the program developer were translated into the program. Similarly, data from advisory committee reports that detailed social media traction were examined specifically to get those numbers to better illustrate program reach. As well, program activities were examined to support interview findings and to illustrate program structure. For instance, project content — the lessons and schedules — were examined to support themes that were identified by program people, like the progression of lessons.

Chapter 5

5 Stories of 'Othering'

The first goal of this dissertation was to examine and illustrate the ways that mainstream news spaces report on, and thereby construct, Indigenous women and their experiences at the macro level. This was completed in an effort to provide some context to the Positive Voice (PV) program by framing the macro level context in which it was situated, as advised by Thorp. Using a Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA), this chapter focuses on the narratives that are being told, the actor groups that are telling these stories, and the ways that Indigenous women are included in these narratives. A particular focus is on the narratives that are being represented in relation to Indigenous women, including both the story content and narrative practices/strategies. Given the breadth of this analysis (247 articles) and context of these sources (non-Indigenous newspapers reporting on Indigenous women), focus was on understanding common themes, not on maintaining the integrity of any one specific story. This chapter seeks to address the first research question: *What are the existing mainstream narratives surrounding Indigenous women and their experiences, and how are their stories represented by the media as a dominant narrative space?*

To address this question of Western cultural memory, articles about Indigenous women found in two mainstream newspapers — the Globe and Mail and the London Free Press — were analyzed. As a reminder, analysis focused on articles published between November 6th, 2011 and November 7th, 2016 – the five-year period prior to the start date of Positive Voice. A total of 247 articles from the Globe and 42 articles from the London Free Press were identified using the search term sequences discussed previously. The discrepancy in the amount of Globe versus Free Press articles seems to indicate less overall engagement by the Free Press compared to the Globe. However, this is difficult to conclude given differences in the size and scope of the newspapers, with the Globe and Mail a national paper and the London Free Press a local paper. Thus, comparisons were not made between the number of articles on Indigenous women and other groups of people, and claims related to relational inclusion practices and or narrative space was outside the scope of this

analysis. What did stand out, and what subsequently guided the analysis and discussion of findings, was that the *Free Press* and the *Globe* were aligned in terms of content (the stories and narratives being told) and practices (how the stories are being told), and reflected a consistent overarching narrative and common themes across the two papers.

Overall, the articles reflected an overarching theme of ‘othering’ Indigenous women and peoples through the removal or erasure of Indigenous power that supported and reinforced Western cultural memory surrounding Indigeneity. With this overarching context in mind, common themes in the form of common narratives and common narrative practices are discussed in relation to the two papers as one common source and Western space.

5.1 News Space and Article Context

Before addressing themes related to common narratives and narrative practices, some context-based findings related to the two spaces (the *Globe* and the *Free Press*), the articles, authorship practices, and actor groups are discussed.

5.1.1 Article Distribution

First, the majority of the articles from *The Globe and Mail* were included in the *News* section³². Inclusion in this section remained consistent throughout the period of analysis. A second site, the *Comment* section, is a daily section located at the end of the paper, which includes letters to the editor, editorials, and other opinion pieces. A larger proportion of the articles/pieces were found in this section beginning in 2014³³. This change illustrated a potential development in outside interest and opinions surrounding Indigenous women. Other news sections that included a minimal number of articles include *Focus* (1 in 2013 and 2014, 2 in 2015, and 4 in 2016), *Life & Arts* (1

³² 13 of 15 articles in 2012, 16 of 17 articles in 2013, 59 articles of 75 articles in 2014, 61 articles of 81 in 2015, and 42 articles of 60 in 2016

³³ Ten of the remaining 18 were located in *Comment* in 2016, 16 of remaining 20 in 2015, 13 of remaining 16 in 2014, and remaining 2 in 2012.

in 2014, 2 in 2015, and 1 in 2016), *Sports* (2 in 2016), and *Obituaries* (1 in 2014 and 2016). As noted, the majority of articles were published in the *News* section – a section that is located at the beginning of the paper, constructed as unbiased and fact based, generally awarded high levels of authority and importance, and whose reporting is often national or international in scope and institutionalized. The lack of stories in sections related to family, human interest, and culture reflect patterns of mainstream distance from Indigenous peoples and their experiences, voices, and stories. Articles from the London Free Press were similarly located, although the proportion of articles found in the *News* section and *Opinion* section were more similar³⁴, seemingly indicating more equal ‘news based’ reporting and ‘opinion/discussion’ based stories surrounding Indigenous women, which may be related to the construction of a story as being newsworthy. It would be interesting to understand how this section distribution compares to other racialized/gendered issues; however, that comparison is outside of the scope of this research.

The articles were not evenly distributed across the four-year period of analysis. Rather, 2014 marked a shift in the amount of news coverage surrounding Indigenous women, particularly evident in the *Globe*. Prior to 2014, relatively few articles were published. For instance, 15 *Globe* articles and 4 Free Press articles were identified in 2012 and 17 and 4 articles respectively in 2013, before increasing to 75 and 13 in 2014 (table 1). One of the most poignant Free Press specific findings was the consistently limited coverage surrounding Indigenous women, a finding that was initially surprising given London’s proximity to several Indigenous communities³⁵. As noted previously, this may be due in part due to the size of the Free Press relative to the *Globe*, as well as to the local context, as more women had gone missing or had been murdered in the prairie and West Coast provinces throughout the period of analysis than in Ontario (Sovereign Bodies Institute, 2020). However, that is only speculation. Further, it does not explain why more positive

³⁴ In 2012, 3 articles were included in the *News* section and 1 in *Life* - located at the end of the paper before *Obits* and *Classifieds*. In 2013, 1 article in each *News*, *Opinion*, and *Life*; 2014 had 8 in *News* and 5 in *Opinion*; 2015 8 in *News* and 3 in *Opinion*; and 2016 saw 6 *News*, 3 *Opinion*, and 1 in *Business* (second section).

³⁵ Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation, and Delaware Nation at Moraviantown are all an hour drive or less from London.

local stories were not published. Additional research that examines London’s reporting practices on other national and local experiences is needed.

Table 1: Number of Articles by Year and Newspaper

Year	Globe and Mail		London Free Press	
	Total	Violence	Total	Violence
2016	60*	48*	10*	10*
2015	81	74	11	10
2014	75	63	13	12
2013	17	10	4	1
2012	15	9	4	3
2011	0*	0*	0*	0*

* indicates number is not reflective of entire calendar year

5.1.2 Violence as a Topic of Interest

Across both papers and throughout the period of analysis, violence was the overarching topic of the narrative – a finding that both illustrated and reproduced Western cultural memory surrounding Indigeneity. However, the breadth of this narrative throughout the period of analysis experienced a shift in 2014. It has been shown elsewhere that the stereotype of Indigenous women as existing outside of hegemonic femininity has existed since early colonialism. This construction has contributed to a cultural memory of Indigenous women as ‘other’ that has erased the topic of violence against Indigenous women as newsworthy. Although most of the articles published prior to 2014 also included framings of violence, it is evident that Indigenous women and the experience of violence became a topic of interest and constructed as ‘newsworthy’ in 2014, evident in the Globe’s increased focus and several narrative themes across both papers.

To begin, MMIWG was specifically identified as a topic of interest by the Globe and Mail in 2014, which may both reflect this increase and account for some of the differences in the number of articles between the Globe and the Free Press. At that time, the Globe and Mail developed a reporting team dedicated to investigating MMIWG in a way described as ‘unprecedented’ by media outlets (Hillman Foundation, 2016). The team’s investigative efforts were focused on three areas that were identified by the team as previously ‘under-focused’: the Federal government’s

lacklustre plan to link unsolved missing-person cases with unidentified human remains; the failures of Manitoba's foster-care system; and the over-representation of Indigenous women among Canada's female serial-killer victims (Hillman Foundation, 2016). These three areas became main topics of the news coverage and shaped the construction of violence as a topic of interest.

With the introduction of the MMIWG news team, fewer people were writing more articles, producing a greater sense of MMIWG as part of the Globe's own 'news story' agenda and ultimately reflecting shifts in the 'newsworthiness' of Indigenous women and the experience of violence. Globe authorship practices from 2014 onwards included an increased number of articles published 'in house'. Prior to 2014, The Globe and Mail bylines were inconsistent in that they were written by many different authors, with many articles pulled from outside newspapers. For instance, in 2014, 23 of the 75 Globe articles were written by the same reporter, a pattern that was consistent across the remainder of the period of the analysis. Further, in 2012, 6 of the 15 articles published in the Globe were first published in the Canadian Free Press, compared to only 10 of the 75 articles published in 2014, illustrating a shift in the Globe's perception of 'newsworthy' in 2014. Anderson and Robertson (2011) describe mainstream reporting on Indigenous peoples as generally rotating between periods of erasure and exposure throughout history related to constructions of newsworthiness at the time, with these current shifts seemingly reflecting a period of newsworthy. In contrast, the Free Press continued to draw on outside sources quite consistently, with a variety of authors contributing throughout the period of analysis.

Ultimately, Indigenous women and the experience of violence gained more exposure within the media in 2014, as illustrated in the increased number of articles and the narrative focus. It is difficult to pinpoint what was responsible for this increase, and outside of the scope of this research. However, several narrative themes related to understanding and responding to violence against Indigenous women were introduced at this time. In particular, the narrative largely began to reflect an institutional debate around the topic of a national inquiry – the Globe's first area deemed 'under-focused'. Prior to 2014, the albeit limited narrative centered around the Conservative rejection of a national inquiry. Yet in 2014, the topic of 'violence against Indigenous

women' became situated within the 2014 electoral campaign between Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau. The Liberal pro-national inquiry election platform and the Conservative rejection of a national inquiry became central narratives of the articles. Also, in 2014, the RCMP published their report on MMIWG. Discussion of this report and the police rejection of a national inquiry in relation to this report, were also introduced as central narratives in 2014. These two interconnected aspects – the 2014 election campaign and the 2014 RCMP report – became central organizing factors of the narrative, with the topic of violence against Indigenous women organized around these competing positions.

As well, the murder of Tina Fontaine and the attack against Rinelle Harper — both in 2014 — also seemed to shape and embolden the construction of violence as a topic of interest. This interest surrounding Tina in particular can be situated within the *Globe's* focus on the failures of Manitoba's foster-care system, as Tina had been involved in the foster-care system when she was murdered. However, both Tina and Rinelle became 'the faces' of the *Globe's* violence narrative. Both Tina and Rinelle were included in significantly more articles than any other Indigenous woman, with Tina referred to in 47 different articles and Rinelle in 16 articles. Interestingly, despite being 'the faces' of MMIWG in the *Globe*, Tina and Rinelle had a very limited inclusion in the *Free Press*, with both girls only mentioned in 1 article each. Most of these *Globe* articles were not focused on the two girls specifically. Rather, Tina and Rinelle were regularly mentioned in passing as a method of introducing the topic of violence. For instance, Tina and Rinelle were both regularly framed as sparking 'renewed' interest in the issue of MMIWG, and Tina in particular was often discussed as indicative of what were framed as key systemic issues facing Indigenous peoples — issues of child welfare.

As noted previously, it is difficult to decipher if Tina and Rinelle's experiences of violence really sparked the outrage that the *Globe* was representing or if their experiences offered an easy story to piggyback on – of systemic foster-care issues and Indigenous perpetrated violence – in the social media age of increased exposure. Although still often ideologically undermined, Indigenous experiences of violence and racism are more difficult to sweep under the rug when videos, photos, and stories of those experiences surface in online platforms. Tina and Rinelle seemed to provide

an organizing frame and template for approaching and discussing the experience of violence and the national inquiry within the Globe.

While the increased exposure surrounding Tina and Rinelle might on the surface reflect a shift in news practices – of Indigenous experiences no longer being ignored – common narratives that will be discussed in subsequent sections seem to suggest something different; what Anderson and Robertson (2011) describe as the natural wave of mainstream reporting on Indigenous peoples over time from erasure to exposure to erasure again. This episodic nature of reporting is particularly evident given that many other Indigenous women and girls, with experiences similar to Tina and Rinelle, have not sparked the same ‘outrage’ or led to the same amount of news coverage historically or currently³⁶. With this in mind, Tina’s and Rinelle’s experiences of violence can be situated within the Globe’s construction of violence against Indigenous women as a ‘newsworthy’ topic in 2014. However, further research aimed at understanding current reporting trends would be beneficial.

5.1.3 Consistency in Representations

Despite the 2014 increase in media coverage, the main themes of representation surrounding Indigenous women were largely consistent in terms of common actor groups, narratives, and narrative practices throughout the period of analysis and across both papers. First, the narrative overall was largely national in scope and framed within collectivizing language, with a ‘local’ context in terms of local advocacy, service delivery organizations, and individual stories minimal in both papers³⁷. Further, of the few local/individual storylines that were included, these were often (but not exclusively) included as examples and situated within the context of MMIWG as a collective phenomenon.

³⁶ A least 36 Indigenous women were identified as missing or murdered in 2012, 30 in 2013, 26 in 2014, and 9 as of March 1, 2015 (Clare, 2015).

³⁷ The Free Press did have a local narrative between Atlohssa and trafficking of Indigenous women in the London areas that spanned across a couple of articles.

As well, several main actor groups were identified in the narrative as having a voice and being awarded space in the articles. These groups were generally consistent throughout the period of analysis. Indigenous actor groups that were provided space included Indigenous organizations and leaders, and family and friends of MMIWG. Looking first at Indigenous organizations, two Indigenous organizations had a considerable and consistent presence throughout the period of analysis — the Native Women’s Association of Canada³⁸ (NWAC) and the Assembly of First Nations³⁹ (AFN). These two national political advocacy organizations made up much of the ‘Indigenous voice’ that was included within the articles. A limited local perspective was also included in the Free Press from the organization Atlohosa⁴⁰. Further, some community-based Chiefs and organizations were present in both the Globe and Free Press articles. The ‘family and friends’ of women who had gone missing or had been murdered was the second main Indigenous actor group identified, which consisted mostly of family members.

The other two main actor groups, ‘government’ and ‘law enforcement’ were generally non-Indigenous groups. Government voice was largely federal in scope and included Liberal and Conservative representatives. When present, provincial voices generally aligned with federal counterparts in terms of similar narratives and inclusion practices, and therefore were considered together. Provincial narratives sometimes critiqued the Federal Government in relation to issues of jurisdictional-based service delivery and responsibility. When present the New Democratic Party tended to align with Liberal representatives, although, the inclusion of this actor group was minimal. The final main actor group was law enforcement, which included the RCMP as well as some Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and municipal police. Narratives between RCMP, OPP, and municipal police were similar and therefore considered together. Within these institutional

³⁸ NWAC is a national organization focused on empowering Indigenous women through legislation and the development and delivery of programs, with the objective of being the national voice of Indigenous women (NWAC, 2018). <https://www.nwac.ca>

³⁹ AFN is a “national advocacy organization representing First Nation citizens in Canada” consisting of the National Chief, 10 Regional Chiefs, the chairs of the Elders, and Women’s and Youth councils, and who advocate on behalf of Indigenous peoples in Canada (AFN, 2019). <https://www.afn.ca/about-afn/>

⁴⁰ Atlohosa is an organization in London that provides healing and recovery services for Indigenous women and families experiencing violence; including shelter, housing assistance, and other specific programming. <https://atlohosa.com>

actor groups (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), many of the same individuals were awarded space and had voice as representatives of the organization/institution.

These main actor groups – Indigenous leaders, family/friends, Conservative and Liberal Government, and law enforcement – had the most audible and consistent presence throughout the narrative. Other groups and individuals that had sporadic presence included survivors of violence, Indigenous artists and activists, academics, non-Indigenous NGOs, and non-Indigenous civilians. However, the inclusion of these other groups was minimal, and therefore the analysis focused on the main actor groups that were identified. While ‘family and friends’ were identified as a main actor group, the narrative largely existed at the institutional and national level, between NWAC, AFN, Conservatives, Liberals, and law enforcement. Main overarching themes were generally consistent throughout the period of analysis, and across both newspapers. Discussion of these themes will make up the remainder of this chapter.

5.2 Main Themes

As discussed, the narrative before 2014 was minimal, with few articles in 2012 and 2013 compared to 2014 and later. This is significant, as it illustrates an absence of a mainstream narrative surrounding Indigenous women. Despite the 2014 shift from absence to the development of a more active narrative, the overarching narrative throughout the entire period of analysis was consistent in terms of main narrative themes and how stories were being told. The overarching theme across the articles was one of ‘othering’ and power removal, with the articles reinforcing and contributing to an othering Western cultural memory of Indigenous women and peoples generally. As mentioned, although there were significantly fewer Free Press articles, the narratives and practices were consistent with those of the Globe. Therefore, common themes were discussed collectively, with any exceptions noted.

Four overarching themes related to the stories told, including how, why, and by whom, were identified across the two papers:

- First, the dominant narrative surrounding Indigenous women was generally that of violence against Indigenous women, centered around the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls phenomenon (MMIWG) and a national inquiry.
- Second, the experience of violence was constructed as an ‘Indigenous cultural issue’ through narratives that produced institutional distance and a collectivizing association between violence and Indigeneity.
- Third, stories surrounding this violence tended to reinforce and display non-Indigenous power, by constructing non-Indigenous institutions as ‘expert’ and undermining Indigenous knowledges, voice, and power.
- And finally, the inclusion practices and narratives surrounding Indigenous women tended to remove Indigenous women’s power and strength from the narrative and from control of the narrative.

Each of these consistent themes observed throughout the period of analysis will be explored below, along with additional subthemes. They reflect the processes of construction and engagement that surrounded the news space and illustrate the positions of the various actor groups through the voice and additional content that was strategically included, constructed, and represented in the narratives. The representations and subsequent common themes that stemmed from the actor groups were all shaped by author voice/narration.

5.2.1 Violence Against Indigenous Women

The first overarching theme was that the dominant narrative surrounding Indigenous women was one of violence, organized around sub-themes of MMIWG and a national inquiry, and presented through narratives of negotiation. Of the 247 Globe articles and 42 Free Press articles, only 16 Globe and 3 Free Press articles could be considered “positive” stories. The three positive Free Press articles were about individual women’s achievements—two were about Mary Lou Smoke, the 2013 YMCA Woman of Excellence, and the third was about Leslee White-Eye, the first chief of Chippewas of the Thames First Nation in more than 60 years. The 16 positive Globe articles

also included stories of individual achievements, as well as stories of collective changes. Four articles highlighted ‘firsts’ — the first Indigenous woman to take the lead of an RCMP division in Canada, the first Indigenous woman appointed as head of a Canadian law school, the first female First Nations student to graduate from the University of B.C.’s medical school, and recognition of the first Native Catholic Saint (historical). Other articles, such as “Leading the way in Canada’s Labour Market: Aboriginal women outperforming other groups” (Grant, 2015), focused on collective changes, and sometimes included individual women as examples. For example, Krystal Abotossaway’s story of becoming the first in her family to go to university provides a front to the news story of Indigenous women changing Canada’s labour market. Although framed as positive changes, ‘positivity’ was often conditional — framed within language of ‘transcending’ and often including comparisons to non-Indigenous populations.

Most of the stories, however, were issue or deficit focused, with the issue of violence against Indigenous women the dominant frame. Most articles were either directly about violence experienced by Indigenous women or contained the subject of violence against Indigenous women. This was consistent throughout the period of analysis and across both newspapers, with 204 of the 247 Globe and Mail articles and 36 of the 42 Free Press articles referring to violence against Indigenous women in some capacity (Table 1). The remaining 27 and 2 articles did not include any discussion of violence specifically, although many included topics that surround the issue of violence. For instance, one of the articles discussed the use of derogatory terms by a Canadian designer who was asked to outfit the Canadian Olympic team for the 2016 summer games. Four articles discussed child welfare issues, and another two were about resistance to Idle No More reconciliation efforts.

Within this violence theme, articles were regularly situated within the context of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and Girls (MMIWG) phenomenon and often included discussions related to a national inquiry. A keyword search found that variations of the phrase ‘missing and murdered Indigenous women’ came up 388 times in the Globe and 142 times in the Free Press articles. Similarly, variations of the terms ‘national inquiry’ or ‘federal inquiry’ were found 210 times in Globe and 27 times in Free Press articles. In general, violence, specifically discussions

of MMIWG and the inquiry, guided the narrative, with the most common themes and group-based narratives stemming from these topics. For instance, although Conservative government and law enforcement narratives did not promote an inquiry as a solution, the inquiry was still a prominent aspect of their narratives.

5.2.1.1 Actor Group Variations

Rather, while MMIWG and discussions of a national inquiry guided the narratives, there were variations in how the groups constructed and approached these topics. As discussed, five main actor groups were included in the narrative of framing MMIWG – Conservative government, Liberal government, law enforcement, Indigenous organizations and leaders, and family/friends of women and girls⁴¹. Representations across actor groups signified a consensus that violence experienced by Indigenous women was an issue. It was generally recognized that Indigenous women experience a disproportionate amount of violence in comparison to non-Indigenous women. Additionally, all actor groups generally agreed that some form of action should be taken to address the disproportionate amount of violence. Lastly, it was recognized that the disproportionate amount of violence towards Indigenous women was happening across Canada.

However, there were variations in how violence was constructed and defined and how subsequent actions were discussed. In particular, actor groups did not agree on the contribution of a colonial history and structural barriers, or that a national inquiry into MMIWG was necessary. These contrasting positions among actor groups were major aspects of the narrative. For instance, the Conservative government regularly rejected the construction of MMIWG as a “sociological phenomenon” and the need for a national inquiry, instead urging Canadians to view violence within an individualized crime-based lens. This construction is not unique to MMIWG. For instance, Prime Minister Stephen Harper was the subject of ridicule in 2013 after warning “this is not a time to commit sociology” in relation to global terrorists attacks and root causes. Law

⁴¹ This group was mostly all family and therefore assumed to be Indigenous, although the narrative did not always specify.

enforcement narratives also rejected a national inquiry but were more likely to recognize the structural barriers facing Indigenous peoples. In contrast, Liberal government narratives both recognized structural barriers and called for a national inquiry. Finally, Indigenous leader narratives recognized the colonial history of violence, the contrition of structural barriers, and lobbied for a national inquiry. In general, negotiation among actor groups was a central structuring agent of the violence theme, with most narratives stemming from this negotiation and varying positions. The segment provided below from the Globe and Mail illustrates this common theme of ‘negotiation’:

"We have a good sense of the individuals who are perpetuating these crimes and I think that's something that's very, very important for us to take into account, and it allows us also to take action," Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch told The Globe and Mail on the eve of Friday's round table with premiers, native leaders and victims' families. **Indigenous groups, however, point out that many of the women met their fate in major Canadian cities or on highways - not just reserves - and that some of the worst aggressors, including Vancouver's Robert Pickton, have been non-aboriginal men. Indigenous groups also argue that the violence has deep social roots in poverty, discrimination and poor education that lead indigenous women into high-risk lifestyles.** Some of the victims' families who gathered at a downtown Ottawa hotel Thursday are looking for a different kind of action than what Ms. Leitch described: the national inquiry the government has rejected (GM, 27/02/2015)

In this example, the narratives of Indigenous-based crime and the rejection of an inquiry portrayed by Conservative voice was presented in contrast to Indigenous narratives of wanting an inquiry and rejecting government ‘Indigenous-based crime’ narratives. It illustrates how Indigenous narratives were always shaped and constrained by the non-Indigenous construction of violence and action, with Indigenous voices having to respond to, and essentially legitimize, non-Indigenous institutional voices.

5.2.2 Violence as an Indigenous Issue

The second main theme surrounding violence was the framing of the experience of violence as a distinctly Indigenous issue. This construction of violence as an Indigenous issue was evident in two interconnected types of narratives: those that *distanced non-Indigenous institutions from the*

experience of violence; and those that constructed a *collectivizing association between Indigenous women and violence*. These narratives were evident in discussions aimed at defining the experience of violence and determining subsequent action. Overall, these narratives contributed to a representation of violence as an Indigenous cultural issue – a foundation of Western cultural memory that others Indigenous peoples as distinct from non-Indigenous people through practices of separation and denigration. These two subthemes – non-Indigenous distance and the collective association of violence – will be discussed further.

5.2.2.1 Narratives of Institutional Distance

Defining the experience of violence and determining actions were central discussions throughout the narrative, with all of the various actor groups negotiating these topics. Representations from non-Indigenous institutions (government groups and law enforcement) portrayed violence as an ‘Indigenous issue’. These representations were often positioned in opposition to Indigenous definitions of violence and suggested actions. A central aspect of this institutional construction of violence as an Indigenous issue was the theme of ‘institutional distance’ where non-Indigenous institutions downplayed or erased the colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous institutions. Instead institutional constructions promoted a sense of difference and distance between Indigenous experiences and non-Indigenous institutions/people as a form of circumventing blame and responsibility. It speaks to the relative stability of non-Indigenous institutions over time, whose authority to construct the narrative surrounding Indigenous women is legitimized. In particular, institutional distance was evident in the lack of colonial context, the use of ‘non-blaming’ recognition narratives, the individualized and crime-based construction of violence, and the social policy/paternalistic framing of action and responsibility that functioned to undermine the long colonial relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples.

5.2.2.1.1 Lack of colonial context

To begin, representations from government and law enforcement reflected an absence of colonial context. For instance, a keyword search of the terms residential school, variations of colonialism,

and the Indian Act came back with relatively few results⁴². Most colonial terms were included only in passing, such as to describe someone as having attended a residential school, with only one editorial in the *Globe* discussing in detail the impact of colonial policies such as the Indian Act on Indigenous women. Further, there was a general lack of discussion in government and law enforcement narratives about systemic and structural issues. The limited discussion of the historical and contemporary colonial context that was included usually came from Indigenous voices or other International/human rights organizations like Amnesty International. In particular, government and law enforcement narratives rarely included any discussion of their long standing and ongoing colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples. This absence of an institutional colonial narrative produced an image of violence as existing outside these institutions and reinforced the construction of violence as an Indigenous issue. Overall, the institutional framing of violence and Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations lacked colonial grounding and discussion of structural issues.

5.2.2.1.2 Non-blaming ‘recognition’ narratives

While minimal overall, discussions of structural and systemic issues in non-Indigenous representations reflected a combination of ‘recognition narratives’ towards structural inequalities and Indigenous/Canada relations, and non-blaming language. Although this was common among non-Indigenous institutional groups, there were some group-based variations among Liberal, Conservative, and law enforcement groups.

Representations stemming from each of these three groups included some recognition of structural issues. However, these recognition narratives were selective in that they tended to discuss select structural issues but not colonial relations, and generally relied on frames that were non-blaming towards their own institution. For instance, some Liberal government and law enforcement representations included recognition of systemic barriers like poverty, addiction, homelessness, and other systemic issues, with some discussion by these two groups on how these inequalities

⁴² 42 mentions of residential schools in the *Globe* articles and 2 in the *Free Press*, 16 and 0 variations of ‘colonialism’ in the *Globe* and *Free press* respectively, and 17 mentions of the Indian Act in 14 *Globe* articles and twice in one *Free Press* article.

shaped Indigenous women's experiences of violence. There was also some discussion by these two actor groups (Liberal and law enforcement) about how systemic issues influence Indigenous women's involvement in activities deemed 'risky', like sex work. However, both Liberal and law enforcement narratives still contributed to the construction of violence as an Indigenous issue due to a lack of discussion regarding ongoing colonial relations and an omission of the government and law enforcement's role within the issue of violence against Indigenous women. Of the three groups, Liberal representations included the most discussion of colonial relations, although this was still minimal, and narratives were often paternalistic in nature – an issue that will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Conservative representations generally lacked any narratives of systemic issues and structural inequalities. Further, Conservative and law enforcement representations regularly included narratives that ignored, rationalized, or downplayed colonial relations, including historical and current examples of institutional mistreatment and racism. For instance, a common law enforcement narrative downplayed past and current police racism by attributing these experiences to resource issues and individual actions. This is illustrated below in the second and third references of Figure 1. In the second reference, negative past policing practices are attributed to a lack of resources, while the third reference provides an example of how police violence was commonly downplayed as individual incidents of bad policing.

The second and fourth references are the only examples over the entire period of analysis that law enforcement addressed the negative institutional relationship with Indigenous peoples. In the second reference, a former officer recognizes that there might have been more that could have been done about cases of past missing and murdered Indigenous women cases. In the fourth reference, the potential for Indigenous peoples to distrust police is stated; however, no critical dialogue surrounding this distrust is included. Rather, by noting "*What you heard is not foreign to us*" and then stating, "*I'd apologize to her that she feels that way*", the officer simultaneously acknowledges the theme of police as a barrier for Indigenous peoples yet negates this Indigenous experience by undermining and invalidating it.

Another common law enforcement representation that can be understood as downplaying colonial relations is the inclusion of narratives that framed Indigenous marginalization (in housing, poverty, etc.) in terms of the impact on policing. This is illustrated in reference 1 (Figure 1). In this example, the Police chief situated the issue of violence within a marginalization + crime + victimization narrative and framed this marginalization as ‘not a police issue’, but rather in terms of impacting law enforcement capabilities to serve. This type of construction removed law enforcement from Indigenous experiences of marginalization by flipping the narrative to focus on the impact marginalization has on policing in terms of police capacity, instead of law enforcement’s impact on Indigenous peoples by, for example, functioning as a barrier to reporting. Effectively, the message within law enforcement and Conservative representations was one of sympathetic indifference – that the Conservative government and law enforcement is and has always done all they can, and what is not being addressed is outside their control.

Figure 1: Institutional Distancing

1. Chief Weighill said the statistics are startling. Studies in his city show aboriginal women are five to six times more likely to be victimized than non-aboriginal women, and aboriginal people account for more than 80 per cent of the population of Canada's prisons. **"The drivers for this are not a police issue," he said. "A lot of times it's a health issue, it's a housing issue, it's a poverty issue. They're issues affecting people that are disadvantaged - that's what's driving some of the vulnerability for some of our First Nations women."** Earlier this year, RCMP released a report that found 1,181 cases of murdered or missing aboriginal women between 1980 and 2012. The report said aboriginal women make up 4.3 per cent of the Canadian population, but account for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women. And it's not just aboriginal women, Chief Weighill pointed out. Eighty per cent of Canada's prison populations are First Nations, Inuit and Métis, he said. **"Those within the law enforcement community cannot help but recognize the marginalized conditions that too often face First Nations people," he said. "Poverty, poor housing, racism, etcetera, are pre-conditions to heightened criminal activity and more victimization. We need to work with the federal government on strategies to improve living conditions and prevent recruiting by gangs and enticement towards prostitution and drug abuse."** The federal government has firmly rejected an inquiry (GM, 27/08/2014)

2. Ray Michalko, a former RCMP officer who is a private investigator in B.C., said he believes there would be much to gain from the reopening of cold cases involving victims in every part of Canada. Police in B.C. say that **"back in the day," they were not given the resources to adequately investigate the murders and disappearances of indigenous people,** Mr. Michalko said. **"If I am right, then there are going to be cases across the country where more could have been done or should have been done," he said. "Maybe by reviewing these files, they may come up with something."** Families of victims remain skeptical that the police are truly interested in finding out what happened to their loved ones - especially in those cases where much time has passed (GM, 11/09/2015).

3. On Thursday, Radio-Canada's investigative "Enquete" program broadcast interviews with various women, including one who alleged police officers took her to a remote road in northwestern Quebec and asked her to perform oral sex for \$200. Another told the show that officers allegedly broke her cellphone and threw her footwear into the snow before abandoning her about a kilometre from her house. Theriault urged other women who have been abused or assaulted to report the incidents. **"It is reprehensible and unacceptable for a police officer to use his power to abuse people who are vulnerable," said Theriault, Infomart who shed tears at her Quebec City news conference. "If the criminal allegations are founded, those involved will be brought to justice.** We cannot remain insensitive to these shocking and troubling revelations." Theriault also defended the original decision to not assign the investigation to a force other than the provincial police when her office first heard about the allegations last May. **"Provincial police officers who are involved in these types of investigations are experienced men and women and their integrity must not be called into question,"** she said. In Montreal, provincial police Capt. Guy Lapointe said the 14 allegations involved nine officers, one of whom has died, and include two of a sexual nature. There are also allegations of assault. **"Let's be very clear on one thing," he told a news conference. "The type of behaviour that allegedly took place is unacceptable and in no way reflects the values of Quebec provincial police"** (LFP, 24/10/2015).

4. The problem, as Ms. Herman and many others see it, is that the RCMP have been too quick in the past to write off the missing and dead as "high-risk" on the grounds they were unemployed and/or homeless, and abused drugs and alcohol. The 2014 report labelled these "risk factors contributing to their disappearance." This has left the family and friends of victims convinced the Mounties see their missing daughters, wives and sisters as the authors of their own misfortune, and not a high priority. **The Mounties are willing to admit this was true in some cases. Vickey Hulm, the sergeant in charge of the province's fulltime missing-persons unit in Edmonton, said in an interview that the distrust "may have come through my organization through history."** **"Absolutely I understand that feeling," Sgt. Hulm said when told of Ms. Herman's perception that native women are of little importance to the RCMP. "What you heard is not foreign to us." When asked what she would say to Ms. Herman if she met her, she said, "I'd apologize to her that she feels that way."** Amnesty International says this "high-risk" labelling, combined with racism and stereotyping, denies "the dignity and worth of Indigenous women." The human-rights group also blames federal government policies, especially residential schools, for breaking up families and "leaving many Indigenous women and girls extremely vulnerable to exploitation and attack." (GM, 14/03/2015)

5.2.2.1.3 Individualized crime and Indigenous culpability

Another common narrative in the articles was the construction of violence as an individualized crime and a focus on Indigenous culpability. Law enforcement and Conservative representations regularly focused on the crime itself and professed Indigenous culpability in relation to defining the experience of violence, both of which reiterated institutional distance and contributed to the construction of violence as an Indigenous issue.

Conservative government and law enforcement representations commonly framed violence against Indigenous women as an individual crime and dismissed notions of violence as a

“sociological issue”. For instance, Harper and other Conservative representations are continually quoted as stating that MMIWG is not a sociological issue or part of a sociological phenomenon, but a criminal matter. Further, Conservative and law enforcement representations commonly included narratives that focused on the individual criminality of the experience, as illustrated in reference 1 of Figure 2. In this reference, violence is constructed as something that is unimaginable, with narratives professing disbelief that this type of violence could occur. For instance, by saying “I can't even pretend to describe what I think they were thinking”, the superintendent simultaneously individualizes the crime while ignoring the historical context by describing the violence as shocking, despite the prevalence of this type of violence since early colonialism.

Another common representation woven throughout Conservative and law enforcement crime narratives were narratives focusing on the culpability of Indigenous men and Indigenous communities generally. This narrative was prevalent throughout the period of analysis. However, the focus on Indigenous culpability seemed to be emboldened after the 2014 RCMP report was released. This report attributed 70% of violence against Indigenous women to Indigenous men. After this release, the Conservative government's narrative regularly included this RCMP statistic to justify their position towards MMIWG and the national inquiry, as illustrated in Figure 2, reference 2. In this example, violence is discussed in terms of Indigenous men's lack of respect for Indigenous women, with action subsequently framed as a community responsibility.

In contrast, Liberal representations were generally framed within narratives of support towards Indigenous leaders and peoples and did not focus on Indigenous culpability in the same way as Conservative or law enforcement representations. Instead, Liberal representations commonly framed violence in terms of the structural issues discussed previously. However, overall the Liberal representations were generally focused on promoting a national inquiry, not on defining the experience of violence and not on the government's colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples – an avoidance that similarly promoted institutional distance.

5.2.2.1.4 Vague and paternalistic action

Similarly, government and law enforcement representations of ‘action’ also illustrated the theme of institutional distance. While the need for action was commonly recognized, as discussed

previously, this recognition of action was rarely framed inwardly. Instead, institutional narratives related to action were often nonspecific in the form of ‘social policy’ and paternalistic in nature. While not exactly promoting ‘non-action’, Conservative government and law enforcement representations regularly included narratives that downplayed any inherent responsibility to act. This included downplaying the responsibility to align actions with Indigenous needs and interests, and vague or general discussion of actions that ignore the structural nature of the violence. In particular, ‘action’ was generally constructed within frames of action as ‘social policy’, not as part of an inherent responsibility to Indigenous peoples.

Conservative representations regularly promoted police action or ‘tough on crime’ policy/practices and rejected a national inquiry, despite Indigenous calls for a national inquiry. As well, Conservative and law enforcement framings of ‘action’ were often vague – for example, promoting general ‘police action’ that was not specific to Indigenous peoples and the MMIWG phenomenon but a matter of social policy without clear and concise actionable steps. These non-specific action narratives flowed from the crime and Indigenous culpability constructions and the erasure of the colonial context. By constructing action as a matter of social policy, the unique relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada was erased, ignored, and downplayed. Together these narratives that were included and excluded constructed an image of limited institutional responsibility to act in Indigenous focused ways, or to align actions with Indigenous interests. These narratives give the impression that institutional action was ‘above and beyond’ Conservative and law enforcement responsibility.

In addition to being vague and constructing action within frames of ‘social policy’, institutional action narratives were also commonly paternalistic in nature. The paternalistic construction of responsibility was evident in Conservative and law enforcement narratives that reflected themes of ‘we know best’, and Liberal narratives that reflected themes of the ‘right thing to do’ based relations. Neither recognized the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples or the unique relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government. Yet both maintain a sense of government authority – an overarching position that nurtures an erasure of the colonial context.

Common narratives that reflected a ‘we know best’ relationship to action and Indigenous peoples included urging Indigenous leaders to act, rejecting the National Inquiry, and reiterating ‘tough on crime’ action. For instance, Conservative and law enforcement regularly framed a national inquiry as not necessary. Common reasonings included claims that the underlying issues of violence were well established and rooted in community violence and individual criminals, and that the solutions needed were also well known – tough on crime practices and community-based actions. On occasion, individual examples of Indigenous peoples who did not want the inquiry were referred to in these narratives, seemingly to justify the institutional rejection of an inquiry as ‘Indigenous approved’. However, for the most part these Conservative and law enforcement narratives provided little explanation, evidence, or context to support and illustrate these claims of existing knowledge. This ‘we know best’ framing of responsibility was present until after the 2015 election, after which saw a decrease in the Conservative voice.

Liberal representations of action tended to center around a construction of Liberals as Indigenous centered and supportive of Indigenous needs. In particular, the Liberal calling for a national inquiry became a common narrative in 2014. As well, Liberal representations regularly claimed to be Indigenous centered through narratives that both professed alignment with Indigenous institutional interests and claimed distinction from the Conservative position. For instance, Liberal critiques of the Conservative rejection of the inquiry was common. Yet, the language surrounding Liberal narratives was similarly non-blaming, as discussed previously, and was also paternalistic in nature. Liberal representations commonly alluded to the government’s moral responsibility to act, with narratives reflecting a ‘right thing to do’ framing of an inquiry as an aspect of building Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. Yet, despite this recognition of moral responsibility, Liberal action narratives did not include any discussion of the institutional role in violence against Indigenous women beyond vague statements of Canada “needing to do better”. For example, in reference 3 of Figure 2, Liberal voice vaguely refers to the colonial history, without discussing specific actions. Further, while Liberal narratives were more supportive towards Indigenous needs and aligned action with Indigenous interests, there was no discussion of the inherent and Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples or the unique Nation-to-Nation relationship between Indigenous Nations and Canada that underlies government responsibility to act.

Overall, non-Indigenous institutional narratives reflected a common theme of institutional distance. Government and law enforcement representations reflected a non-colonial based framing of Indigenous needs that focused on ‘helping’ Indigenous peoples work through violence as an ‘Indigenous’ challenge. As a result, non-Indigenous institutions maintained institutional distance and claimed overarching authority within the narrative.

Figure 2: Institutional Distancing

1. Justin James Hudson, 20, and a 17-year-old male have been charged with attempted murder, aggravated sexual assault and sexual assault with a weapon. **"The crimes, and the viciousness of them, speak for themselves," Superintendent Danny Smyth told reporters. "I can't even pretend to describe what I think they were thinking."** The Harper and Fontaine cases are enough alike - attacks on native girls left for dead in or near rivers in Winnipeg - that police will probe whether there are links. "We will certainly take a closer look at [the co-accused] now," Supt. Smyth said. Mr. Hudson is facing charges of possessing stolen property related to an alleged offence in August (GM, 13/11/2014)
2. Mr. Valcourt and other members of the federal Conservative government have rebuffed calls for an inquiry, saying enough studies have been done and they are addressing the problem through broad public safety and criminal justice measures. **Last fall, Mr. Valcourt said the deaths and disappearances came down to a lack of respect among aboriginal men on reserves for aboriginal women, and urged chiefs and councils to take action. He sent a wave of anger rippling through First Nations on March 20, when he told a private meeting of chiefs in Calgary that unreleased RCMP statistics show "that up to 70 per cent of the murdered and missing indigenous women stems from their own communities."** Several chiefs, including Ms. Martial, emerged from that meeting to demand that the RCMP release numbers to support Mr. Valcourt's claim and any other data about the crimes it has withheld (GM, 10/04/2016).
3. "We will listen clearly to their voices," Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould told reporters, just hours after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau assured a gathering of hundreds of First Nations chiefs that no relationship is more important to him than the one with Canada's indigenous people. **"No inquiry, as we know, can undo what has happened, nor can it restore what we have lost. But it can help us find ways forward, because we know, as a country, that we can and must do better"**(GM, 9/12/2015).

5.2.2.2 Association Between Indigenous Women and Violence

Alongside narratives that supported and reiterated institutional distance, violence was also constructed as an Indigenous issue through representations that othered Indigenous women by normalizing a collective association between Indigenous women and violence. This collective association was particularly evident in the construction of Indigenous women as violence prone.

To begin, the relative absence of non-violence related narratives is telling of this ubiquitous association between Indigenous women and violence, and its normalized existence as a cultural memory. Recall that 204 of the 247 Globe articles and 37 of the 42 London Free Press articles included topics of violence against Indigenous women, with violence against Indigenous women the overarching frame of both newspapers. Similarly, of these 204 and 37 articles, 192 and 35 articles, respectively, included variations of the phrase ‘missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls’. The sheer number of articles focused on violence and/or referring to MMIWG compared to any other topic supports an existing cultural memory of violence and Indigenous women, and reiterates this negative association.

Alongside this relative absence of non-violence narratives, two other common themes reflected this collective representation of Indigenous women and violence: the construction of violence as a collective experience that is distinct from non-Indigenous women, and the criminalizing and pathologizing construction of Indigenous women.

5.2.2.2.1 Collective + distinct

Violence was constructed throughout the articles as a collective experience, distinct from non-Indigenous women’s experiences. This was evident in the consistent use of collectivizing descriptors that both represented Indigenous women as violence prone and represented violence as an aspect of Indigenous culture. For instance, although some individual women were included within discussions of violence (which will be discussed in more depth in relation to representation and power), violence was more often approached through narratives that implied a shared reality and generalized experience – a Western cultural memory. This was evident in the ubiquitous use of collectivizing descriptors – labels, statistics, and other numerical and experiential descriptors – that were used to frame violence and to define Indigenous women’s experiences of violence.

Recall that any mention of Indigenous women was almost always accompanied by some mention of ‘Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’ or within the experience of ‘violence against Indigenous women’. In this respect, MMIWG was used throughout the articles as a generalized indicator or signifier of Indigenous women. Further, common statistics and numerical descriptions were also regularly included, often in conjunction with the ‘missing and murdered Indigenous

women' label, to describe and define violence as an experience associated with Indigenous women. The most common numerical descriptions were taken from the RCMP report that was published in 2014 – that 1,181 Indigenous women had been murdered or had gone missing between the years 1980-2012 (RCMP, 2014). In articles published before 2014, other statistics produced by NWAC were sometimes cited; however, not to the same extent as the RCMP study. Ultimately, mention of Indigenous women was almost always associated with the negative collective phenomenon of being murdered or going missing, through commonplace collective descriptions.

5.2.2.2.2 Pathologizing and criminalizing Indigenous women

In combination with collectivizing descriptors, the association between Indigenous women and violence was also evident in the pathologizing and criminalizing representations of Indigenous women. In particular, representations surrounding Indigenous women as a collective often included narratives centered around themes of victimhood, risk, and vulnerability. Further, these narratives constructed Indigenous women's experiences of violence as both unknowable and unrelatable, reiterating an ideological distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women.

For instance, Indigenous women were often collectively described as victims and positioned as more likely to experience violence, death, be targeted, and be victims of serial killers than non-Indigenous women. Further, representations often included narratives detailing risk and vulnerability alongside these victimhood narratives. While sometimes used interchangeably, there was some distinction in how the concepts 'risk' and 'vulnerability' were framed. 'Risk' was often used to describe behaviours in relation to the likelihood of becoming targets of violence; primarily sex work, but also other activities deemed risky such as drug or alcohol use, transient behaviour, and homelessness. More so than 'risk', constructions of vulnerability were often situated within frames of structural conditions/inequalities like poverty and other barriers. As such, 'risk' narratives were often less sympathetic than descriptions of 'vulnerability', which generally included more sympathetic language and less judgment or blame, as conveyed by discussion of the need for protection and prevention measures.

The first two references in Figure 3 highlight subtle differences in how risk and vulnerability were framed. In the first reference, Indigenous women are described as vulnerable, poor, and targeted

by serial killers, and includes a critique of law enforcement as contributing to the MMIWG phenomenon. Alternatively, in the second reference Indigenous women are framed as involved in risky activity that leads to their victimization and a decreased chance of the crime being solved. The first reference uses language that implies some sympathy and constructs the serial killer in relation to both the police and the women, highlighting that the murders were, at least in part, associated with police not taking it seriously. Alternatively, the latter description of women as ‘involved’ in sex work signifies constructions of choice and responsibility. Yet both constructions of risk and vulnerability, as well as narratives of victimhood and being targeted, reinforce an image of Indigenous women as at least somewhat culpable in their violence.

Even when approached more sympathetically, these collectivizing constructions of Indigenous women reiterate a relational association between Indigenous women and violence that supported the representation of violence as an Indigenous problem. This image of Indigenous women supports a Western cultural memory of Indigenous incapability in terms of ability to transcend what are framed as ‘Indigenous issues’. This is a Western cultural memory that simultaneously constructs ‘trauma’ as an innate aspect of Indigeneity, while producing distance between mainstream Canada and Indigenous peoples. For example, in reference 3 of Figure 3 the colonial context provided by an Indigenous leader is juxtaposed with the author’s construction of ‘social ills’ and ‘neurological’ implications — terms that have pathologizing implications and imply a sense of innateness.

Common themes related to narratives used to represent specific Indigenous women and their impact will be discussed in greater detail in the final thematic section in relation to the removal of Indigenous women’s power and agency.

Figure 3: Collective Association of Indigenous Women and Violence

1. Several reports have focused on **violence plaguing aboriginal women in their home communities and in broader society**, but they have not brought much change, Ms. Blaney said. Last year, researchers for a coalition of groups, including Women's Legal Education and Action Fund and the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, reviewed 58 reports related to violence and discrimination against indigenous women and girls and concluded that only a handful of more than 700 recommendations had been fully implemented. Those 58 reports included the 2012 Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, which was written by **former B.C. attorney-general Wally Oppal and focused primarily on the**

botched police investigations of serial killer Robert Pickton, who preyed on poor, vulnerable women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (GM, 13/01/2016).

2. Between 1991 and 1995, 63 known prostitutes were murdered in Canada. Prostitutes in British Columbia are estimated to be 60 to 120 times more likely to be murdered than someone from the general adult female population. **As First Nations females are disproportionately involved in the street sex trade in Western Canada (estimates range from 14 per cent to 63 per cent), this is the risky activity that lies at the core of aboriginal serial-murder victimization.** Roughly 25 per cent of murders go unsolved, but this figure doubles if the victim is a prostitute. Some have suggested that police investigations of these murders and disappearances suffer from bias. Generally, however, other factors are at play. While no detective wants to see a murderer go free, let alone a serial killer, many homicides remain unsolved. The more difficult the investigation, the less likely there will be a resolution. These are often stranger crimes, difficult to clear because of the lack of a victim-offender relationship. If the victim is part of the street demimonde, co-operative witnesses can be hard to find and routines impossible to establish. **Moreover, powerless victims may receive inadequate attention from an overworked criminal justice system** (GM, 26/11/2015).

3. "That's one of the things that struck me so intensely," says Ms. Pearce, whose work helped to inform the RCMP's unprecedented 2014 report that found 1,181 indigenous women were killed or went missing in Canada between 1980 and 2012. "I wondered, 'How much can one family take?' "Indigenous families have endured trauma over many generations - from colonization to the Sixties Scoop and the residential school system. The last of those, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recently said, was central to a national policy aimed at committing "cultural genocide." Families were torn apart. Children were abused, stripped of their self-worth and robbed of their identity. This deeply rooted trauma resonates today, amid a **litany of social ills** such as poverty, poor housing conditions and unemployment. Abuse and instability in the home, experts say, can affect the childhood development of the brain, including such things as substance dependence, response to fear, impulse control and learning. **"There are real neurologic reasons why folks exposed to high doses of adversity are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviour,"** California's Dr. Nadine Burke Harris said in a recent TED talk that has been viewed nearly 1.5 million times. (GM, 15/08/2015)

5.2.3 Reinforcing non-Indigenous Power

Power is a critical mechanism of representation, with themes of power underlying all common narratives and narrative practices. The construction of violence against Indigenous women is shaped by who has power over defining the experience and controlling action – evident in what is included and what is excluded in the narrative. Variations in the amount of space awarded to the narratives of different actor groups is a reflection of the power they hold. Further, the types of narratives that various actor groups are even allowed to have are similarly a reflection of power. Overall, power to define the experience of violence and dictate action was regularly negotiated by

Indigenous actor groups. This process of negotiation can be seen in Indigenous calls for an inquiry and non-Indigenous institutional responses and was a main structuring agent throughout the news articles.

The reinforcement of non-Indigenous power was illustrated in two interconnected types of narratives and narrative practices. First, narratives that *undermined non-Indigenous power and authority*, including the emotional and reactionary construction of family and friends of MMIWG and the assignment of a position of ‘negotiating’ to Indigenous leaders. Second, narrative practices that *privileged non-Indigenous power*, including the unquestioned nature of government control over defining MMIWG and determining action and the space and power that was awarded to institutional narratives.

5.2.3.1 Undermining Indigenous Power

Common representations tended to reinforce non-Indigenous power, often by way of undermining Indigenous voices. As a reminder, main Indigenous actor groups included Indigenous institutional voices (predominantly the NWAC and AFN) and family and friends of MMIWG. While the presence of these two actor groups may on the surface reflect an active Indigenous presence within the narrative, the inclusion of these voices did not equate with power over representation. Rather, Indigenous actor groups held limited power over defining the experience of violence, controlling actions, and representing Indigenous interests. The undermining of Indigenous authority and the lack of power were evident in two common themes: the emotional construction of family and friends, and the ‘negotiator’ role that was assigned to Indigenous leader groups.

5.2.3.1.1 Emotional and reactionary purpose of family and friends

Overall, the inclusion of family and friends in the narrative primarily served emotional and reactionary purposes. Despite being the closest connection to the women experiencing violence, family and friends were not included for their perspectives on the issue of violence against Indigenous women or a national inquiry. Instead, the narratives constructed around this actor group tended to reinforce existing stereotypical frames of Indigenous peoples as highly emotional

and incapable of dealing with their own affairs. For instance, family and friends were often framed as emotional, distraught, and helpless by both author narration and the content that was selectively included around this group. This included the common narrative of family and friends pleading the public for answers and help. For example, in the first reference of Figure 4, the parents of CJ Fowler are described by the author as emotional, while the narrative of “*I’m going to find who did this*” associated with the parents’ voices was both non-informative and highly emotional. While the emotion and pain experienced by family is warranted, the prevalence of this portrayal as emotional combined with few narratives of strength and specific actions aligns with stereotypical Western cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as emotional, irrational, and incapable of taking care of their own affairs.

Not only were family and friends constructed as highly emotional, their inclusion within the narrative was also found to serve a reactionary purpose — to ‘paint a picture’, enhance the drama, and encourage an emotional reaction from readership; all while providing limited pertinent information/perspectives to the story. For example, in reference 2 of Figure 4, the inclusion of Bella Laboucan-McLean’s grandmother Wanda is purely reactionary, as she constructs an image of Toronto as inhospitable to Indigenous peoples. This reactionary purpose was most evident in the descriptions of those who had been murdered or had gone missing by family and friends that were selectively included. In general, descriptions attached to family and friend’s voices were found to be highly curated in that they tended to reflect pre-existing stereotypes and support existing cultural memory.

Further, they also served to provide a sense of authenticity to the narrative. For example, in the third and fourth reference (Figure 4), Brandy Vittrekwa’s mother provides a sense of authenticity to the common ‘runaway’ stereotype, while the author’s reactionary description of Marlene Bird as ‘lost to the streets’ in the fourth reference is supported by Marlene’s aunt, Lorna Thiessen’s description of Marlene as dysfunctional and transient. Although both examples illustrate the importance of the author within the construction process, the inclusion of family and friend’s voices make the reactionary descriptions, such as ‘lost to the streets’, seem like they are coming from the family and friends. As a result, these representations seem more ‘authentic’, rather than

as part of a purposeful and selective ideological task in othering, power negotiation, construction and representation. A more in-depth look at how Indigenous women were framed will be discussed in the last theme related to Indigenous women's lack of power. Overall, the inclusion of family and friends provided a sense of authenticity to the narrative, without awarding power to their lived experiences or the knowledge they have from those experiences. Rather, friends and family of women were included in a way that reinforced non-Indigenous power, knowledge, and authority.

Figure 4: Undermining Indigenous Power

1. Matilda Fowler and Glen Wilson, the mother and father of 16-year-old CJ Fowler, joined Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo and other aboriginal leaders in Vancouver on Wednesday to renew the demand for the government to look into such tragedies. **The girl's parents sobbed during a news conference as they spoke about losing their daughter. "I'm going to find who did this. I want justice for my daughter and I don't want any more young girls going missing or murdered. Nobody deserves to lose a daughter,"** Ms. Fowler told the media (GM, 13/12/2012).

2. It was Mi'kmaq grandmother Wanda Whitebird who led the ceremonies, with help from other community members. **All had performed too many such rituals before.** Wanda smiled warmly at Bella's impossibly young and fresh-faced college friends. **She explained that we should all take our bags of tobacco home and sprinkle their contents somewhere they would feed the life cycle - a garden, a body of water, a potted plant. "Not here, though," she said, "nothing grows in this place." "This place" is part of Toronto that feels very much like no place.** The official name is CityPlace - a barrage of glass-on-glass condo towers bracketed by the CN Tower to the East, train tracks to the north. The street where Bella died did not exist five years earlier. Neither did the building from which she fell. It's not the density that makes this area strange. It's the monotony of all that newness, the born-yesterday-ness (GM, 20/12/2014)

3. Norine Vittrekwa got official word of the death hours later. **"I don't know what happened to her," she said at the time. "That's what I need to know. And I need to see her. To say goodbye."** The teen left behind an 11-year-old brother who, when told of the death, said, "But Mom, I just wanted to see her one last time." Brandy Vittrekwa moved from Fort McPherson, NWT, to Whitehorse in September, 2012, because her mother had enrolled in college there. **She made friends quickly, her mother said, but she also started going missing, here and there, for a day or two** (GM, 30/04/2015)

4. Ms. Bird grew up in a small community in northern Saskatchewan called Molanosa and left, at an early age, to attend residential school. She returned home in her teens and lived for a couple years by trapping and fishing with her grandmother. But, **by the time she was in her early 20s, she was lost to the streets. "She fell into a dysfunctional system and she was transient most of her life after that," said her aunt, Lorna Thiessen.** Relatives offered to take her in but she didn't want them to burden them with her alcoholism. Then, last week, someone very nearly killed her (GM, 14/06/2014).

5.2.3.1.2 Narratives of negotiation

In addition to the non-informative roles assigned to family and friends, the narratives surrounding Indigenous leaders and institutions (NWAC and AFN) reflected a common theme of negotiation. This ‘negotiating’ role that Indigenous institutions and leaders were assigned signaled a lack of power and also undermined Indigenous control over the narrative itself.

Representations surrounding the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) did reflect more power compared to family and friends because they were awarded space to define and respond to the issue of violence against Indigenous women. For instance, NWAC narratives held more institutional authority and power in terms of representing and supporting Indigenous women and Indigenous interests generally. NWAC was often positioned as representing Indigenous women’s and family/friend’s interests at the institutional level, and representatives often spoke on behalf of Indigenous women and their families. AFN representations commonly included narratives of ‘showing support’ towards Indigenous women, NWAC, and the goal of a national inquiry, and included narratives that situated the MMIWG phenomenon within the colonial context of Indigenous peoples experiences generally.

However, the power that Indigenous leaders held was constrained by non-Indigenous institutional narratives. As discussed previously, Indigenous institutional narratives were regularly positioned in contrast to Conservative and law enforcement narratives, with NWAC and AFN in the position of responding to these non-Indigenous institutions. This ‘negotiating’ position signaled less representative power, with Indigenous leaders’ role within the narrative shaped and constrained by non-Indigenous organizations. For instance, Indigenous narratives were commonly centered around illustrating the realness of MMIWG and the need for a national inquiry. Further, it was regularly noted that Indigenous organizations and peoples have been asking for an inquiry for a long time. The inaction of the Conservative government both illustrated a lack of pre-existing power and undermined Indigenous leaders’ authority over the matter. This narrative of ‘asking for a national inquiry’ effectively constructed an image of lacking power among Indigenous leaders. Another illustration of the ‘negotiating position’ can be seen in the response of Indigenous leaders

to the 2014 RCMP report, which attributed 70% of violence experienced by Indigenous women to community violence. Following this report, the AFN and NWAC were put in a position of having to address this finding, with Indigenous perpetrated violence becoming a dominant narrative of Indigenous leaders' voices. Conservative and law enforcement's reliance on this report undermined Indigenous power to define the experience of violence and control action. Having to continually respond to non-Indigenous mainstream institutions ultimately shaped the type of narratives that Indigenous leaders could have and undermined Indigenous leadership.

5.2.3.2 Privileging non-Indigenous Knowledge

The other side of this common theme of undermining Indigenous power was the privileging of non-Indigenous knowledge. The authority and knowledge of non-Indigenous institutional actor groups (government and law enforcement) were privileged through the space awarded to institutional narratives and the material consequences that these narratives illustrated. Whereas representations surrounding Indigenous actor groups produced an image of being overly emotional, 'too close', lacking in capabilities, or having less authority, non-Indigenous institutions were represented as providing an unbiased and authoritative perspective. This framing constructed an image of 'expertness' that reflected a general acceptance of institutional authority on the issue of violence against Indigenous women.

Critique towards the lack of institutional action came from many sources, including Indigenous leaders and family and friends, as well as the Liberal government. Critiques also came from other groups including Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists, artists, and academics, NGOs, the United Nations, and from some civilian opinion pieces. However, despite the inclusion of 'critique narratives', the structural authority held by non-Indigenous institutions was not questioned in any meaningful way. Further, the knowledge that government and law enforcement representations produced in the form of common narratives was consistently reproduced. This non-questioning reproduction of institutional narratives was evident in the amount of space that was awarded to non-Indigenous narratives and reflects non-Indigenous authority, control, and power.

Three common themes illustrate the privileging of non-Indigenous knowledge: government control over the National Inquiry, the acceptance of law enforcement ‘alignment narratives’, and the space and power awarded to non-Indigenous data.

5.2.3.2.1 Unquestioned government control

Although many of the articles contained narratives of critique towards the Conservative rejection of an inquiry, the government’s decision-making power over the inquiry was generally left unquestioned. As a result, both the Conservative rejection and the Liberal support reflected and reinforced governmental power, as the implementation of a national inquiry unquestionably remained a government decision. Liberal narratives still lacked any critical commentary towards the Federal government’s decision-making power over Indigenous concerns and leadership.

Further, despite the Globe claiming interest in reporting on the government’s lackluster action plan, much space was awarded to government representations of the violence and discussions of action. For instance, the Conservative government presented an unwavering rejection of a national inquiry – a position that undermined and opposed Indigenous knowledge and experiences. It was also often critiqued in Liberal and Indigenous narratives. Yet this Conservative position, reflected in three common narratives, was awarded space without meaningful challenges. These three common narratives are illustrated in references 1 and 2 of Figure 5 and suggest that 1) enough studies had already been done, 2) that awareness of the causes of MMIWG already exists, 3) and that more studies would slow down action. In the first reference, the president of NWAC discusses the necessity of an inquiry for understanding the complexities of MMIWG; a position that is juxtaposed to the Conservative rejection of the inquiry in favour of non-specific action. The second reference provides an example of the Conservative rejection of an inquiry based on ample knowledge about Indigenous violence, accompanied with an action plan of targeting Indigenous men. Absent is critique or challenge towards the Conservative position or towards the space awarded to these narratives.

For instance, while representatives of the Conservative government regularly state that enough studies have been conducted, only the RCMP study is ever cited within the narrative. Similarly, there is limited Conservative follow-up or explanation on how past studies have translated into

current actions or policies, or any explanation/context surrounding who conducted these studies, when, how, and the findings or outcomes. Likewise, the narrative of MMIWG as an outcome of community violence and individual crimes was often vaguely described using nonspecific language. Instead, the language and framing that was used implied a pre-existing understanding of MMIWG that relied on existing perceptions and Western cultural memory, with this narrative generally providing little evidence to support this position of community violence or individualized crime. Similarly, the promotion of ‘police action’ and ‘anti-violence’ initiatives included limited explanations in terms of what this practically means and specific actions that will be taken. Yet, these Conservative narratives took up space in most articles until the 2015 election results. That these Conservative government positions which undermined Indigenous experiences and knowledges existed as common narratives at all was itself an overarching reflection of non-Indigenous authority, control, and power.

Alternatively, although Indigenous voices offered more specific critiques and challenges, as illustrated in Dawn Lavell-Harvard’s critique of the Conservative explanation (reference 1, Figure 5), little space was awarded to Indigenous critiques and explanations or to challenging the structure of power in general. The generally unquestioned and unchallenged authority of Conservative narratives illustrated the privileging of non-Indigenous knowledge.

Figure 5: Government Control

1. The fact that many aboriginal women were killed by someone who shares their ethnicity is something that holds true for most victims of homicide, regardless of their ethnic origin, said Dawn Lavell-Harvard, the president of the Native Women's Association of Canada. "So I don't think it's a way that we can therefore write off this issue [by saying] it is aboriginal men killing aboriginal women and therefore not a [federal] responsibility or there is not a need for an inquiry or any of these kinds of excuses that seems to be inferred," said Dr. Lavell-Harvard. While homicide rates of Canadian women have decreased over the past 30 years, the rate of murders of indigenous women have increased, she said. "We don't understand the complexities of how this is happening, the kinds of ways that the system is failing our women," said Dr. Lavell-Harvard. "And without an inquiry where you can have that judicial power of subpoena, where you can find out where things went wrong, then we're never going to have a clear understanding." **Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and other members of the Conservative government have rebuffed calls for an inquiry, saying there have been enough studies and now is the time for action. Mr. Valcourt has said it is up to native leaders on reserves to get a handle on the problem.** And, at a closed door meeting in March, he angered chiefs by saying "**up to 70 per cent of the murdered and missing indigenous women stems for their own communities,**" attributing the statistic to information collected by the RCMP but withheld from a report last year on the missing and murdered

women (GM, 11/04/2015).

2. The federal Status of Women Minister hopes to emerge from Canada's first national round table on murdered and missing aboriginal women with plans for anti-violence initiatives directed at aboriginal men, saying she has a "good sense" of the people who are committing the crimes. The Conservative government is using its assertion that **the disproportionate number of deaths and disappearances is largely related to domestic violence to bolster its arguments against a national inquiry into the tragedies.** "We have a good sense of the individuals who are perpetuating these crimes and I think that's something that's very, very important for us to take into account, and it allows us also to take action," Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch told The Globe and Mail on the eve of Friday's round table with premiers, native leaders and victims' families (GM, 27/02/2015).

5.2.3.2.2 Space awarded to 'alignment' narratives

Another common theme reflecting the privileging of non-Indigenous knowledge was the inclusion and general acceptance of police alignment narratives, evident in the space awarded to these narratives. Law enforcement narratives regularly constructed an image of the institution as Indigenous focused and aligned. This representation of alignment contradicted Indigenous narratives, as family/friends and Indigenous leaders briefly shared negative and discriminatory experiences with law enforcement.

Law enforcement narratives tended to undermine Indigenous experiences and colonial histories. This was performed through tactics of non-addressing, as illustrated in the previous theme of colonial erasure, as well as two additional common narrative types: *active-centric narratives* that focused on police commitment and successes, and *humanizing narratives* that focused on humanizing the police force. Both interconnected types of narratives had the effect of undermining Indigenous experiences and privileging non-Indigenous knowledge.

Looking first at the active-centric narratives, law enforcement narratives were commonly framed around their commitment to Indigenous peoples and crime successes. For instance, law enforcement narratives commonly represented law enforcement as actively working to solve crimes of violence against Indigenous women and committed to addressing violence. These alignment narratives were regularly positioned in contrast to Indigenous narratives as illustrated in references 1 and 2 of Figure 6. In the first example, police actions in trying to locate a specific missing Indigenous woman, Angeline, are listed in response to a critique by a family member that

police had not taken her disappearance seriously. This contrasting representation undermines the family's experience by focusing on actions that were taken. A similar active-centric narrative was the tendency to focus on law enforcement 'successes'. This includes, for example, news stories detailing positive crime rate statistics and discussing women whose murder/disappearance had been solved. Interestingly, among the individual women who were included within the narrative, those whose disappearance/murder had been solved by the police were included in more articles than those women whose disappearance/murder had not yet been solved.

However, much like governmental narratives surrounding action, law enforcement alignment narratives were generally vague and left unchallenged, signifying a generalized and unquestioned acceptance of institutional authority. For example, in reference 2, Figure 6, police discuss their commitment to enact recommendations that were made about police misconduct in relation to the Pickton serial murder case. Yet, no details about the specific discrepancies that they are responding to are made, nor are any details about which recommendations are being enacted and how – two things that are also left unquestioned by the narrative.

Another common theme that contributed to a representation of law enforcement alignment was the humanizing narratives that commonly surrounded law enforcement representations. Language played a critical role in these humanizing narratives, with police narratives regularly including reinforcing statements like 'committed', 'actively working', and 'taking this seriously' to emphasize law enforcement commitment. These statements implied action. However, outside of individual cases like Angeline's (reference 1, Figure 6), this commitment lacked translation into specific police practices. This lack of expansion illustrated a generalized acceptance and a limited expectation of follow-up or clarification in terms of police accountability. The limited expectation for follow-up, expansion, or explanation spoke to the overarching institutional authority of law enforcement.

A common aspect of these humanizing narratives was the emotional construction of law enforcement. Police narratives sometimes included emotional and empathetic language and stories of personal connections to specific cases that had humanizing implications and positively reinforced police commitment by positioning law enforcement as on the side of Indigenous

women. For example, in reference 3 of Figure 6, Edith Turner, a police sergeant, is described by author narration as emotional and as 'leaving her uniform at home' for the funeral of Tina Fontaine, producing a humanized image of compassion. Turner also makes an emotional claim to the connection she felt as a mother. This description is juxtaposed to the actions of the two officers who had been in contact with Tina before she was murdered. The actions of these two unnamed officers are framed as the 'actions of individuals', whereas Turner's position is framed as reflective of law enforcement generally.

Interestingly, whereas the emotional construction of Indigenous peoples was found to reduce Indigenous power and authority, emotion, feelings, and illustrated connections by law enforcement was positively portrayed as evidence of compassion that reinforced law enforcement authority. This sentiment promoted a positive public perception of invested commitment and Indigenous alignment that seemed to increase trust in police, justify law enforcement's authority, and reinforce the truthfulness of their narratives. By stating commitment and focusing on emotional connections, law enforcement narratives claim power over the Indigenous/law enforcement relationship that is portrayed to the readership.

Figure 6: Law Enforcement Alignment

1. In October, 2011, her case was passed to the detachment's serious crime unit, landing there after general duty officers had run down the straightforward leads - hospitals, banks, friends and family, social media - and found nothing. The file went to Corporal Gord Reid, who this year joined the detachment's professional-standards unit. Cpl. Reid has talked to dozens of people about Angeline, including her former fiancé, Robert Calden, and her former boyfriend, Darryl Stauffer. He and other officers have followed up on well over 100 tips, including what turned out to be a bogus claim by someone in jail that he had spoken to Angeline after she disappeared. "I would say I have invested more hours on this than any other file I have worked on in four years," he says. RCMP say Mr. Calden was questioned, submitted to a polygraph test and has co-operated with the investigation. Cpl. Reid has Angeline's dental records. More than once, he has taken images to the scene when alerted to the discovery of an unidentified body. He always wonders if it's her. Police have been stung by the suggestion that they did not take the case seriously. On Dec. 5, 2011, an article in The Province newspaper quoted **Ms. Dixon as saying she didn't think investigators were "trying hard enough." The next day, the RCMP put out a statement outlining the steps it had taken and emphasizing that the force was "actively working" to locate Angeline and ensure her safety.** Police have looked into rumours that she may have been in trouble for stealing drugs or money. They found the people involved and ruled them out as having anything to do with her disappearance (GM, 20/08/2016).

2. The Vancouver Police Department says **it can afford its commitment to enact the recommendations of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, noting it has already acted on many of the issues** because of its own 2004 review of the case of serial killer Robert Pickton. **The only recommendation that might result in new costs is the creation of an aboriginal liaison officer position to help native people deal with the force's missing-persons unit. The force is deciding how to proceed, Constable Randy Fincham said in an e-mail on Monday. "The VPD will do its best to implement the Commissioner's recommendations while maintaining the current budget approved by the Vancouver Police Board and the City of Vancouver.** This is feasible given the department's substantial efforts to be proactive in implementing changes following the VPD's Missing Women's Investigation Review," Constable Fincham said. "It does not appear that the Vancouver Police Department's current budget will prevent the force from implementing any of the recommendations." The force also indicated its support for relevant recommendations through a report on the issue to be presented to Tuesday's meeting of the Vancouver Police Board, where there may be further discussion of the issue. **"The VPD is committed to moving quickly to implement the Commissioner's recommendations as they apply to the VPD and to working with the Provincial Government's report champion, former Lieutenant Governor Steven Point, and other stakeholders in ensuring that all police-relevant recommendations are addressed in a comprehensive and timely fashion,"** Deputy Chief Constable Doug LeParé said in the report to the police board. The missing women's inquiry report was released on Dec. 17, 2012, after months of hearings and testimony from dozens of witnesses. The 1,448-page report included 63 recommendations. Constable LeParé notes that "although broader in scope," inquiry commissioner Wally Oppal's report reached conclusions about "deficiencies" in the investigation of missing women from the Downtown Eastside that were consistent with the force's own Missing Women Investigation Review. That review was completed in 2004 and released in 2010. (GM, 22/01/2013).

3. Sagkeeng First Nation was in mourning, grieving the loss of an aboriginal girl who days before became the latest indigenous woman to go from missing to murdered. In nearby Winnipeg, where Tina Fontaine's body was found in the Red River, **Patrol Sergeant Edith Turner spoke tearfully at a vigil honouring the teen. But when she attended the Aug. 23 funeral a few days later, she left her uniform at home. She wasn't there as the Winnipeg Police Service's aboriginal liaison officer; she was there as a mother of a 13-year-old girl. "It hit so close to home," she told The Globe and Mail. "I feel like I have a responsibility to First Nations women. ... I felt that I needed to be there."** In a sitdown interview in the Manitoba capital, Patrol Sgt. Turner discussed the challenges police face in protecting native women and the importance of building trust with the aboriginal community. **But the inroads she and the force have made are now under threat in the wake of news that two police officers had contact with Tina the last day she was seen alive but let her go,** despite her being the subject of a missing-person report (GM, 04/10/2014).

5.2.3.2.3 Space for non-Indigenous data

Finally, the privileging of non-Indigenous knowledge was evident in the space that was awarded to non-Indigenous evidence and data. Several common aspects illustrated this privileging. First, Indigenous experiences and experiential data lacked space and authority within the narrative, and were often undermined by non-Indigenous institutional voices, as illustrated previously. While

family and friends were awarded space to create an engaging and entertaining story, data provided by this group, as well as by and Indigenous leaders, about experiences of violence and of their relations with non-Indigenous peoples and institutions, were not awarded space as ‘evidence’. The lack of impact Indigenous experiences had in terms of shaping Conservative and law enforcement narratives and spurring material action in the form of an inquiry, was evidence of this. This theme illustrates the privileging of non-Indigenous knowledge used to reiterate non-Indigenous authority and reproduce non-Indigenous power.

Similarly, the relative lack of articles prior to 2014 illustrates an indifference to Indigenous produced data on violence against Indigenous women. Although data produced by NWAC as early as 2003⁴³ indicated a disproportionate number of Indigenous women experiencing violence, this data had not spurred mainstream media examination. Rather, the 2014 RCMP report⁴⁴ became the most relied upon form of ‘evidence’ regarding violence against Indigenous women. This reliance on RCMP data for determining action/inaction, in addition to the finding that Indigenous women and their experiences of violence gained more news presence after the RCMP report was released, are further reflections of the discounting of Indigenous experiences in favour of non-Indigenous, RCMP produced data.

5.2.4 Removal of Indigenous Women’s Power and Agency

The final theme identified throughout the period of analysis was the erasure and removal of Indigenous women’s collective and individual power and agency. The erasure of Indigenous women’s power is related to previous discussions of othering, with most of the themes discussed thus far also contributing. Two interconnected themes illustrate Indigenous women’s lack of power over *constructing* the narrative, in terms of defining their own experiences, and *within* the narrative, in terms of representations. First, there were comparatively *few inclusions of individual*

⁴³ In 2003 NWAC president Terri Brown estimated over 500 women had been murdered or had gone missing. https://www.cjfe.org/2014_vox_libera_award_winner_native_women_s_association_of_canada_nwac

⁴⁴ Data obtained from <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-national-operational-overview>

women in constructing the narrative, representations, and descriptions of Indigenous women's experiences. Secondly, the descriptions that were included about Indigenous women were not included for the purpose of learning about the women. Instead, descriptions reflected the *symbolic function of individual women*, with descriptions focused primarily on experiences of trauma and victimhood that served as a form of infotainment. Overall, Indigenous women lacked space within the narrative and when they were included, their inclusion tended to reinforce pre-existing frames of Western cultural memory and an absence of power.

5.2.4.1 Limited Representation of Women

Indigenous women lacked inclusion in a variety of capacities. Overall, despite being *the* group of interest, Indigenous women did not exist as a main actor group and knowledge producer outside of institutional (NWAC) and 'family and friend of MMIWG' capacities. Even in these capacities, common narratives illustrated that Indigenous women had less power compared to non-Indigenous institutions. In addition to lacking space and power as knowledge producers, there were also few stories of individual women. The limited inclusion of individual women was illustrated in three intersecting themes: the collectivizing tendencies of the narrative, the absence of stories of individual women, and the narrow descriptions surrounding the individual women.

5.2.4.1.1 Collectivizing tendency and few individual women

Overall, there were more representations of Indigenous women as a collective than there were of individual Indigenous women. For instance, reference to Indigenous women as a collective group was present in 224 of the 247 Globe articles. While Indigenous scholars and others have long shown the need to discuss shared experiences and the collective colonial context, previous findings illustrated that the collective nature of the narrative reflected 'othering' tendencies, with Indigenous women collectively framed as distinct from non-Indigenous women and prone to violence. Alongside this 'othering' tendency, the collective reduction of Indigenous women's experiences into statistics and MMIWG labels also functioned as a form of dehumanization and power removal. By collectivizing and homogenizing Indigenous women's experiences, common

representations erased individual women's stories and experiences, particularly those of strength and resiliency.

Reflective of this collectivizing tendency, few individual women were included within the articles. Of the 192 Globe articles that mentioned MMIWG or violence against Indigenous women, only 99 articles included representations of individual women. Fewer than half of the Free Press violence articles (9 of 35) included representations of individual women. The remaining articles only referred to Indigenous women in narratives of collective experiences, such as sharing statistics and common MMIWG phrases. Within those 99 and 9 violence articles, 53 (Globe) and 11 (Free Press) women who had gone missing, were murdered, or had been attacked/trafficked before or during the research period, were included. As some of the women (6) were in both papers, there was a total of 58 different women included across both papers. Of these 58 different women, 20 of the women had gone missing, been found murdered, or survived violence during the research period (now referred to as 'current women'), while 38 of the women had gone missing, been found murdered, or survived violence prior to the period of analysis (now referred to as 'past women'). Table 2 provides a list of all the women included in the narrative and some pertinent information related to their experience of violence and newspaper data⁴⁵.

Considering the RCMP study cited over 1,000 women who have gone missing or been murdered between 1980 and 2012⁴⁶, the representation of 58 women in total is low. Further, data compiled by Maryanne Pearce illustrated at least 36 Indigenous women had been identified as missing or murdered in 2012, 30 in 2013, 26 in 2014, and 9 as of March 1, 2015 (Clare, 2015). Most of the individual women were included only in a few articles and often just mentioned in passing. For instance, most of the women in the Globe and Mail were represented in 1 article (31 women), with 8 women represented in 2 articles, and 12 women represented in 3 articles or more. As noted previously, two women – Tina Fontaine and Rinnelle Harper – were exceptions to this finding of limited representation as they were included in 47 and 16 articles, respectively. All of the

⁴⁵ Most additional information, including age and year of murder or missing occurrence, was not included in the articles but the result of additional research.

⁴⁶ Evidence has shown that this rate of violence has not changed. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/mmiwg-inquiry-new-cases-statistics-databases-1.5162482>

individual women represented in the Free Press had a comparatively limited presence, with only two women – Sonya Cywink and Theressa Wilson, who were both murdered in London in 1994 – included in more than 1 article, with 4 and 2 articles, respectively. All the other women were only in 1 article each, including Tina and Rinelle, which was surprising given their construction as ‘the faces of MMIWG’ in the Globe narrative.

Table 2: List of Individual Women in Articles

Name	Age	# of articles	Date published	Violence and date	Place of violence
<u>Globe and Mail</u>					
1. Tina Fontaine	15	47	2014 (30), 2015 (13), 2016 (4)	Murdered in 2014	Winnipeg
2. *Rinelle Harper	16	16	2014 (10), 2015 (5), 2016	Attacked in 2014	Manitoba
3. Claudette Osborne	21	8	2014, 2015 (5), 2016 (2)	Missing since 2008	Winnipeg
4. Brandy Vittrekwa	17	4	2014 (3), 2015	Murdered in 2014	Whitehorse
5. Jennifer McPherson	41	4	2014, 2015 (3)	Murdered in 2014	Vancouver
6. Loretta Saunders	26	4	2014 (2)	Murdered in 2014	Halifax
7. Maisy Odjick	16	4	2012, 2015 (2), 2016	Missing since 2008	Quebec
8. Myrna Letandre	36	4	2014, 2015 (3)	Missing in 2006. Found murdered in 2013	Winnipeg
9. Phoenix Sinclair	5	4	2014 (2), 2016 (2)	Murdered in 2005	Winnipeg
10. Amber Tuccaro	20	3	2015 (3)	Missing in 2010. Found murdered in 2012	Edmonton
11. Cindy Gladue	36	3	2015 (3)	Found murdered in June 2011	Edmonton
12. Helen Betty Osborne	19	3	2014, 2015 (2)	Murdered in 1971	Manitoba
13. *Marlene Bird	47	3	2014 (3)	Attacked in 2014	Saskatchewan
14. Shannon Alexander	17	3	2012, 2015 (2)	Missing since 2008	Quebec
15. Bella Laboucan-McLean	25	2	2014, 2016	Suspicious death Jul 2013	Toronto
16. Carolyn Sinclair	25	2	2012, 2015	Found murdered 2012	Winnipeg
17. *Chrisma Denny	25	2	2014 (2)	Missing/found 2014	Nova Scotia
18. Cynthia Maas	35	2	2015 (2)	Found murdered 2010	BC

19.	Delores Brown	19	2	2015,2016	Found murdered 2015	BC
20.	Delores Dawn Brower	32	2	Apr 2015, Aug 2016	Missing in 2005. Found murdered in Apr 2015	Edmonton
21.	Felicia Solomon	16	2	2015 (2)	Found murdered 2003	Winnipeg
22.	Sindy Ruperthouse	44	2	2015, 2016	Missing since Apr 2014	Quebec
23.	*Alaya McIvor	12	1	2016	Survivor of trafficking	Manitoba
24.	Angela Poorman	29	1	2014	Murdered in 2014	Winnipeg
25.	Angeline Pete	28	1	2016	Missing since 2011	BC
26.	Anna Mae Pictou Aquash	30	1	2016	Found murdered in 1975/76	South Dakota
27.	Annie Pootoogook	46	1	2016	Found dead in 2016	Ottawa
28.	Bernadette Ahenakew	22	1	2015	Found murdered 1989	Edmonton
29.	*Beatrice Wallace-Littlechief		1	2016	Survivor of trafficking	Saskatchewan
30.	*Bridget Perrier	12	1	2016	Survivor of trafficking	Toronto
31.	Cheryl Duck	15	1	2015	Found murdered 1987	Winnipeg
32.	CJ Fowler	16	1	2012	Found murdered Dec 2012	BC
33.	Elsie Sebastian	40	1	2012	Found murdered 1992	Vancouver
34.	Emily Norma Ballantyne	24	1	2014	Missing since 1997	Manitoba
35.	Hillary Wilson	18	1	2015	Found murdered 2009	Winnipeg
36.	Janice Desjarlais	35	1	2015	Missing since 2010	Fort McMurray
37.	Jeanette Jean Chief	49	1	2016	Found murdered 2007	Saskatchewan
38.	Karina Wolfe	20	1	2015	Missing in 2010. Found murdered 2015	Alberta
39.	Katie Sylvia Ballentyne	40	1	2015	Found murdered 2003	Leduc, AL
40.	Laura Ahenakew	22	1	2015	Found murdered 1990	Edmonton
41.	Lorna Blacksmith	18	1	2015	Found murdered 2012	Winnipeg
42.	Monica Jack	12	1	2016	Missing in 1978. Found murdered 1995	BC
43.	Norma George		1	2015	Found murdered 1992	Vancouver
44.	Rachel Russel	28	1	2015	Found murdered 2007	Cobourg
45.	Ramona Wilson	16	1	2016	Missing in 1994. Found murdered 1995	BC

46.	Samantha Paul	26	1	2014	Missing in 2013. Found murdered in 2014	BC
47.	Sereena Abotsway	29	1	2015	Found murdered 2001	Vancouver
48.	Shelley Napope	16	1	2015	Murdered 1992	Saskatoon
49.	Sonya Cywink	31	1	2015	Murdered 1994	London
50.	Stephanie Lane	20	1	2016	Found murdered 1997	BC
51.	Tamara Chipman	22	1	2015	Missing since 2005	BC
52.	Tanya Nepinak	31	1	2012	Missing since September 2011	Winnipeg
53.	Violet Marie Heathen	49	1	2016	Murdered in 2009	Edmonton

London Free Press

1.	Sonya Cywink	31	4	2014, 2015(2), 2016	Murdered in 1994	London
2.	Therssa Wilson	31	2	2015, 2016	Murdered in 1994	London
3.	Tina Fontaine	15	1	2014	Murdered in 2014	Winnipeg
4.	Tashina General	21	1	2016	Murdered in 2008	Brantford
5.	Shannon Alexander	17	1	2013	Missing since 2008	Quebec
6.	Rinelle Harper	16	1	2014	Attacked in 2014	Manitoba
7.	Maisy Odjick	16	1	2013	Missing since 2008	Quebec
8.	Jean Mocharski	43	1	2014	Murdered in 1961	Winnipeg
9.	Cara Louise Ellis	25	1	2012	Missing since 1997	Vancouver
10.	Debbie Sloss- Clarke	42	1	2015	Murdered in 1997	Toronto
11.	Bella Laboucan- McLean	25	1	2015	Suspicious death 2013	Toronto

* Indicates survivor of violence

Bolded indicates violence happened within the period under analysis

5.2.4.1.2 Narrow descriptions

In addition to relatively few inclusions of individual women, the references surrounding individual women offered little insight into the women themselves by way of personal descriptions (see Appendix G for an illustrative list of select women with the actual descriptions of these women in bold)⁴⁷. From these descriptions readers learn very little information about the women themselves, a finding that was consistent with both past and current women. For example, looking at some of the current women (those whose experience of violence happened during the period of

⁴⁷ Due to space, a few individual women were selected to illustrate the common theme of narrow descriptions. The women selected were reflective of practices surrounding the individual.

analysis), all readers learn about Carolyn Sinclair was that she was vulnerable. Lorna Blacksmith was 18. CJ was a 16-year-old Aboriginal girl, and Sindy Ruperthouse was an Aboriginal woman from Val-d'Or. Although the narrative around some of the current women like Annie Pootoogook, Bella Laboucan-McLean, Loretta Saunders, Tina Fontaine, and Rinelle Harper were lengthier and a bit more descriptive than those surrounding past women, most descriptions consisted largely of demographic details such as Indigenous identity, age, residence location, and place of birth. Little space was provided for learning more about the women.

5.2.4.2 Symbolic Function of Individual Women

When individual women were included in the narratives, their inclusion was more symbolic in nature and served an alternative function outside of the readers getting to know the women. Notably, the narratives surrounding individual women tended to reinforce pre-existing frames and a stereotypical construction of Indigenous women as a form of infotainment and reiteration of Western cultural memory. The symbolic function of individual women was illustrated in the *stereotypical and issue-focused personal descriptions* that surrounding the women, and the *'crime-drama' focused context* of these representations that reflected infotainment tendencies.

5.2.4.2.1 Stereotypical, issue-focused descriptions

Looking first at stereotypical descriptions, Indigenous women collectively were assigned the status of victim, vulnerable, and more likely to be involved in risky behaviour than non-Indigenous women. As discussed previously, this collectivization was a method of othering. Descriptions of individual Indigenous women were similarly stereotypical, with most personal descriptions reflecting 'issue' dominated contexts and Western cultural memory. Almost all of the women's representations that extended beyond demographic details included some description of trauma, struggles, and challenges leading up to the experience of violence. For instance, representations of sex work were included in the narratives surrounding 11 women, which does not include the women who were described as 'taking to the streets' or 'falling into a dysfunctional system' – phrases which could be interpreted by readers as a myriad of things including sex work. Other

common representations included substance use/abuse and addictions (14 women), and transient behaviour such as running away, going missing for periods of time, living on the street, and hitchhiking (14 women). Additionally, and often intersecting with these narratives, some aspect of childhood trauma, abuse, unstable families, histories of residential schools, suicide, and/or other forms of general and specific trauma were included in the narratives around most of the women whose descriptions went beyond demographic details.

Interestingly, even when the individual women did not fit into these ‘victim’ or trauma representations, stereotypes and assumptions still often found a way into the surrounding narrative. For instance, in the references surrounding Bella Laboucan-McLean, readers learn that Bella would *not* have harmed herself and did *not* have a history of depression or drug problems. About Delores Dawn, readers learn that she was *not* a runaway, with it noted that it was “*out of her character to disappear*” and that “*she had never gone missing before*”. In these examples, both women are situated into an issue-focused framework that highlights stereotypical perceptions and Western cultural memory of Indigenous women. Without stating that Delores was a runaway, the ‘runaway’ stereotype that has been used by mainstream institutions to justify not looking for Indigenous women is reiterated, contributing to its normalization.

Similarly, when positive characteristics, accomplishments, and hopes were included in the narratives surrounding individual women (usually in family/friend narratives), these positives were often accompanied by representations of negative experiences that tended to overshadow or tarnish the positives. For instance, positive description was often bookended by trauma. This way of framing suggested that the women had not been able to overcome the negatives in their lives or transcend past traumas before they were murdered or went missing — a tactic of othering that also removes individual power. An example of this bookending way of framing is illustrated in Figure 7. Figure 7 includes all of the actual descriptions (bolded) of Annie Pootoogook, a famous Inuk artist. In this example from the *Globe and Mail*, Annie’s artistic accomplishments are bookended by her struggles in a layout that can be summarized as follows: street/shelters, alcohol/drug abuse, unwanted pregnancy, many artistic accomplishments, stops producing art, has hard years, is murdered. Overall, the descriptions, imagery, and inclusion practices – narratives – surrounding

individual women were found to reiterate stereotypical constructions of Indigenous women as trauma and issue centered. Descriptions of individual women were not all negative. However, strength and resilience-based descriptions were limited, with it made evident that the 'victim' stereotype was the common construction.

Figure 7: Descriptions of Annie Pootoogook from Globe article

Title: TRIBUTES; Inuit artist's **body found** in river; **Troubled** Annie Pootoogook, 47, had lived in Ottawa for past nine years **after a string of artistic successes**

She was the artist who put the contemporary in contemporary Inuit art, a catalyst for other Inuit artists, young and old, to deal with life as it was in Canada's North, an award-winning international standard-bearer. And now Annie Pootoogook is dead at 47. Officials with the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in her hometown of Cape Dorset confirmed Friday afternoon that the woman whose body had been recovered Monday morning from the Rideau River in Ottawa was Ms. Pootoogook. Police said they were not treating the incident as a homicide but crime investigators are seeking the public's help in retracing the artist's last hours and days. **Ms. Pootoogook had been living for roughly the past nine years in Ottawa, sometimes on the street and in shelters, sometimes plagued by alcohol and drug abuse and, in 2012, an unwanted pregnancy. She'd relocated there from Nunavut in the wake of a string of major artistic successes in southern Canada and internationally. These included an acclaimed solo exhibition, in 2006, of her ink, crayon, pencil and chalk drawings at Toronto's Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, one of Canada's premier venues for cutting-edge art. This in turn led to her winning the \$50,000 Sobey Art Award that same year, given annually to an artist of singular talent under 40. In 2007 she was invited to participate at the prestigious Documenta 12 showcase, held every five years in Kassel, Germany. Two years later, she was given a solo show at New York's National Museum of the American Indian George Gustav Heye Center.** Ms. Pootoogook's art was far removed from the imagery of kayaks, walruses, harpoons and the other tried-and-true themes and subjects that had informed much Inuit art from the 1950s onward. She wielded a matter-of-fact, almost deadpan style to closely depict all facets of modern Inuit life, from a husband beating his wife and families shopping, to men watching television porn and women beading. Ms. Pootoogook, who began drawing in 1997, was the granddaughter of Pitseolak Ashoona, one of the earliest Cape Dorset drawers and print-makers. Her mother Napachie was a prolific graphic artist while father Eegyvuudluk was similarly esteemed as a carver and print-maker. **However, after her triumphs of 2006-09, Ms. Pootoogook's output slowed, then seemed to stop. Toronto dealer Pat Feheley, who'd given Ms. Pootoogook her first commercial bow in 2001 as part of a group show called The Unexpected, then her first solo outing in 2003, told The Globe and Mail in July, 2012, that she hadn't received an original Pootoogook drawing in more than three years. In an interview Friday, Ms. Feheley said she was "stunned" by the loss. "She had a rough couple of years but I always thought she'd be back. We'd go back to Dorset and the image bank she would have had would have been amazing." Ms. Pootoogook's art, at least initially, was almost a kind of therapy, Ms. Feheley said. "It was simply to get it out of her head (GM, 26/09/2016).**

While an in-depth discussion of inclusion criteria and the construction of ‘newsworthy’ is outside of the scope of this research, it was evident that some women received greater media attention than others. For example, two past women – Angeline Pete and Cindy Gladue, were both the topics of lengthy exposés (one each), which was likely related to their stories as fitting into pre-existing cultural memory of transient lifestyles and sex work, with Cindy’s story in particular being sensationalized. These differences illustrated highly selective processes around determining inclusion and of determining deserving/undeserving victim distinctions, in relation to Western cultural memory and a context of ‘infotainment’.

Another aspect of this newsworthy construction seemed to be related to age, as Tina and Rinelle – both young teenagers – were included in a significant number of articles relative to other women. However, other teenagers did not gain the same amount of coverage as Tina and Rinelle, illustrating additional factors contributing to this construction of newsworthy. For instance, neither Brandy Vittrekwa, 17 (murdered in 2014), nor CJ Fowler and Lorna Blacksmith, 16 and 18 respectively (both found murdered in 2012) spurred the kind of coverage that Tina and Rinelle did. Both CJ and Lorna were included in only one article each — Lorna not until 2015 and only mentioned in passing. Other factors that shaped the significant inclusion of Tina and Rinelle likely included time frame, as Tina’s murder and Rinelle’s attack were easily swept into the election campaign and discussions of the RCMP’s MMIWG report. Further, Tina and Rinelle’s experiences also allowed for the development of specific narratives of blame that made reporting on these women’s experiences more newsworthy from a non-Indigenous institutional standard and as a form of infotainment. Tina’s experience became a story of the failures of Manitoba’s child welfare system, while Rinelle’s experience became a story of a vicious attack by Indigenous men. Neither story provoked a meaningful look at the colonial history by the news.

5.2.4.2.2 ‘Crime-drama’ inclusion and narration

With only 58 women discussed or even named, the ability to structure individual women’s stories into engaging pre-existing narratives was seemingly influential in determining which women were included and at what depth. Overall, the narratives surrounding individual women functioned as a form of infotainment that reflected a ‘crime-drama’ framework. This crime-drama framework was

evident in three intersecting common types of narratives, those that focused on the criminality of the women, the act of violence, and the perpetrator.

Looking first at the women, narratives detailing individual women's experiences of trauma and criminalized activities like sex work, drug use, violent behaviour, and even homelessness were highly animated. The language used to describe these experiences had an entertaining/enthralling quality – narrated in such a way as to entertain. For example, Marlene's experience of homelessness was described using the phrase 'lost to the streets' — a vague almost romanticized colloquial description that had the narrative purposes of engaging readership. This type of narration reflected a strategy of appealing to readers while providing readership distance and also feigning a sense of authenticity regarding who the women were.

Yet, if the romanticized/sensationalized narrated pretexts shaping the women's stories were removed, most personal descriptions of individual women could be summarized into 1-3 sentences, as illustrated in Appendix G. For instance, looking at the actual bolded descriptions of some of the individual women, sans dramatization, the reader is left with narrow, issue-centric representations of who the women are: Karina had been in rehab, was probably a sex worker, and was possibly paying for her addiction with sex; Jennifer married a serial killer and had isolated herself from her family; Delores Brower was a sex worker who lived in an area known for gang violence and was possibly suicidal; Myrna had tried committing suicide before; Angela came from an unstable family and her family was unstable herself; and Chrisma was receiving social assistance. Overall, the representations surrounding individual women provided a very narrow picture by reducing the women into pre-existing 'issue' narratives that lacked sincerity around getting to know the women.

While seemingly constructed as 'women focused', the narrative surrounding individual women was more focused on the crime and the killer than on the women. Representations followed a 'crime-drama' framework, with the articles regularly including graphic details of the violence and the perpetrator in a 'crime-drama' fashion. For example, in the narratives surrounding Rinelle Harper and Marlene Bird included in Figure 8., both women are described as surviving horrific violence with the articles providing step-by-step detail of the violence that occurred. Similarly,

Cindy Gladue’s ‘story’ of being found murdered in a motel bathroom included graphic details of the violence and discussion of Cindy’s body parts. While such details may be important for the criminal case, the inclusion in this context functioned to sensationalize the violence and to create imagery for the readership that was simultaneously enthralling yet ‘othering’ as it removed the readership from what was constructed as an unknowable experience – violence against Indigenous women.

The crime-drama framing of the narrative was particularly evident when perpetrators were known and when the men fit into pre-existing narratives, including that of Indigenous culpability and serial killers. Indeed, the perpetrator's alignment with stereotypical and pre-existing narratives may have influenced the newspaper’s focus on particular women’s stories. For instance, in the case of Rinelle and Marlene, both attacks were by Indigenous men. In the articles that discuss Jennifer McPherson and Myrna Letandre, two women who were killed by the same serial killer, readers learn almost as much about the killer as they do these two women.

In general, the inclusion of individual women in the news narratives tended to serve crime-drama and infotainment purposes, with descriptions disguised as informative serving entertainment goals. The narratives surrounding individual women suggests a careful and mediated process of producing a narrative that dramatized the victimhood/criminality of the women, and/or the criminality of the violence and the perpetrator, while giving the impression of sharing information and reporting on the issue of violence against Indigenous women, and of having concern for the women themselves.

Figure 8: Individual Women as ‘Infotainment’

1. Police have charged a man in the **horrific assault of a native woman who was found in the parking lot of a Prince Albert, Sask., community centre a month ago with half of her face cut off and her legs burned to the bone.** The attack on Marlene Bird bolstered calls for a public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and prompted her supporters to question whether a similar assault on a middle-class, non-native woman would have garnered more national attention. **Leslie Ivan Roderick Black, a 29 year-old man from Prince Albert whom Ms. Bird knew as a casual acquaintance, was charged with attempted murder and aggravated sexual assault. The two were apparently left alone together a few hours before she was discovered barely clinging to life, and in the same location.** The police say they are not looking for other suspects, though they are asking for any additional information that could bolster their case. Ms. Bird, 47, who was born in the small community of Molanosa in northern

Saskatchewan and started living on the streets in her early 20s after years at residential schools, **had both legs amputated after the attack. She was sent to the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton for treatment because her injuries were so severe. Lorna Thiessen, Ms. Bird's aunt, said Ms. Bird is recovering well, under the circumstances. Doctors have reattached her face and the stitches are barely visible. But she has phantom feelings where her legs used to be, her aunt said. "She sees her legs are not there, but then she will say an hour later, 'Oh, I need to buy some shoes when I get out of here.'**" Ms. Bird, who acknowledged her alcoholism but could not control it, was a regular fixture at the YWCA shelter for homeless women in Prince Albert and the workers there knew her as a sweet person (GM, 01/07/2014)

2. **Hudson, who was said to have consumed about five or six beers before going out, planned to break into cars using tools they had in a backpack,** Crown attorney Debbie Buors said. However, they ended up **finding the young woman in the downtown area and lured her to a footpath under a bridge near the Assiniboine River around 12:30 a.m. The teen and Mr. Hudson, who was said to have no recollection of some of the details but did not dispute them, hit and stomped on the young woman, who fought back until she passed out, the court heard. While she was unconscious, the two accused took turns sexually assaulting her. She came to, but was knocked out again, the Crown said. The young woman ended up in the frigid river and crawled out after drifting about 100 metres. Mr. Hudson and the teen then assaulted her again, this time with a hammer,** the court heard. The pair fled with her iPod, jacket and white runners. The young woman was found, half naked and nearly dead, by a passerby around 7 a.m. that day (GM, 01/12/2015).

3. Ms. Letandre disappeared in 2006, weeks after **Mr. Andretti came into her life in an unusual way - one that speaks to the lengths to which serial predators will go to track down vulnerable people,** said the prosecutor on the Manitoba case, which culminated in a guilty plea in August....Mr. Andretti, **who was born Dylan Harold Grubb in Ontario in 1975, found Ms. Letandre in August of 2006 through her sister, Lorna Sinclair.** Like hundreds of others in Winnipeg, Ms. Sinclair had signed up for a free voicemail service that allows people who do not have a phone, and are seeking work, to receive messages from prospective employers. **Mr. Andretti exploited the service by dialing random extensions and, if a woman "sounded cute," he would leave a message, he told police.** Ms. Sinclair introduced him to Ms. Letandre, who had leg braces and screws in her spine after a 1990 suicide attempt triggered by her jarring transition from Pinaymootang to the capital. In explaining his use of the voicemail system to police, Mr. Andretti mentioned "Mama Wichita," a possible reference to Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, an indigenous organization where people can sign up for the voicemail program. **"He knew what he was doing by calling this specific line," executive director Diane Redsky said in a recent interview. "He knows the line is used by women in poverty. ... Clearly, they're vulnerable people."** Shocked at the revelation, she said she would direct staff at Ma Mawi locations to warn women that the system may be used for nefarious, and possibly criminal, purposes. Based on publicly available information, Mr. Andretti does not appear to have ever explained to authorities why he murdered Ms. Letandre, with whom he told police he spent a "really special" few weeks. **After strangling Ms. Letandre, he decapitated her and lit some of her remains on fire in a dumpster behind his home. He buried her head in his basement crawlspace. Months later, in May of 2007, he married Ms. McPherson in that same home. He met her through a dating website using his birth name, Kim McPherson said.** She said the relationship moved fast and that her sister, who had been working at a local indigenous organization, started isolating herself from her family. By 2008, the couple moved to B.C., where Jennifer McPherson, who had taken a computer application program after high school, found a job as a caretaker at a fishing lodge on Hanson Island. **It was there, around April 29, 2013, that Mr.**

Andretti killed his wife and then placed some of her body parts in lobster traps. When Ms. McPherson's two adult daughters arrived in the area on May 1, 2013, for a planned visit with their mother, they did not buy Mr. Andretti's explanation that she had gone to Las Vegas. They refused to travel to the island with him and, in fact, one of the daughters said plainly to him, "**You killed my mother, didn't you?**" **Kim McPherson recounted** (GM, 26/11/2015).

5.3 Summary

The period of analysis reflected an interesting time frame in Indigenous and non-Indigenous institutional relations, including media relations. Findings pointed to a shift from an absence of representations to Indigenous women becoming a newsworthy topic in 2014. While 2014 may have been a turning point in news coverage, the stories that were told and by whom, remained consistent throughout the period of analysis and across both papers, reflecting few changes in terms of meaningful representation, and representation as it relates to power and Western cultural memory. First, the narrative surrounding Indigenous women is one of violence, with the MMIWG phenomenon and the negotiation of a national inquiry the main structuring agents of the narrative. Despite variation in how different actor groups defined violence and approached the national inquiry, the resulting representation supported the overarching frame of violence as an aspect of Indigeneity — as a cultural issue that is deeply ingrained in Western cultural memory. This was accomplished through narratives that produced distance between the Indigenous women's experience of violence and mainstream institutions, and through representations that collectively constructed Indigenous women and the experience of violence as an Indigenous specific experience, distinct from non-Indigenous experiences.

An important aspect of this 'othering' was evident in how power was illustrated and perpetuated throughout the articles. Non-Indigenous power was illustrated and reinforced in narratives that undermined Indigenous authority over framing MMIWG and controlling action, and through narratives that privileged non-Indigenous institutions as 'expert'. Additionally, the stories of individual women removed Indigenous women's power, and illustrated and perpetuated Indigenous women's lack of power. Indigenous women did not represent a main actor group or knowledge holder, but as a group at risk of being murdered or going missing. Yet, relatively few

individual women were actually represented within the narrative at all. Additionally, the representations surrounding those individual women who were in the narrative included limited personal details, with descriptions following stereotypical frames that reflected ‘infotainment’ based inclusion criteria and ‘newsworthy’ construction practices. These overarching themes reiterated the continued ‘othering’ of Indigenous women in particular and Indigenous peoples in general.

Chapter 6

6 Stories of Change

The second goal for my dissertation was to extend away from the macro-level narrative to understand the experiences of the Positive Voice women and the *narratives that they draw on to bring meaning to their experiences and sense of self*, as told by the women themselves through their own stories and reflections. I was interested in understanding what stories the women drew on to frame, explain, and bring meaning to their experiences before, during, and after Positive Voice, including how they differed and related to the dominant narrative. As a reminder, interviews were conducted with Positive Voice participants (referred to hereafter as the PV women or the women) and other key persons involved in the first two sessions of the Positive Voice (PV) program. This includes advisory committee members, a volunteer, the developer and main facilitator of PV, the evaluator, a guest speaker, and a Nokee Kwe employee (referred to hereafter as program people). The PV women were asked open questions about their lives, experiences, and perspectives in and outside of the PV program. The program people were similarly asked about their lives, experiences, and perspectives with Indigenous service delivery and PV. This chapter utilizes Critical Dialogical Analysis (CDA) to understand the stories shared by the PV women as they discuss and explain their experiences, and the meaning they assign to these stories within the context of PV.

This narrative analysis combined a category-centered approach (common themes) with a case-based approach (individual stories), within a dialogical context of meaning construction. Common themes that are discussed stemmed predominantly from the interview participant's own reflections on their experiences, and the insights they had gained and then shared with me about their experiences and about PV. However, like the interactive processes of storytelling, themes were produced dialogically as layers of meaning that included personal stories, observed stories, participant inferences, and my inferences. With this in mind, main themes are presented as a

layered process in that they stem from the knowledge that interview participants' share, which are then mediated by my interpretations.

Main themes are illustrated with select stories. While both groups — the PV women and program people — shared personal and observed stories and inferences, common themes discussed within this chapter were illustrated predominantly with the PV women's stories in an effort to maintain the women's agency and power over their stories, as this chapter is focused on them. Stories were chosen for their applicability and theory construction capabilities. However, care was also taken to include at least one story from each of the women as a form of respect, as they all shared their knowledge with me. It should be noted that Sarah's story was my paraphrased remembering, as her interview was not recorded.

It was recognized that the stories were shared within the context of PV and therefore are not considered reflexive of the women's life histories. What is of interest is that the women shared similar, albeit nuanced, stories, and offered similar, albeit nuanced, insights and interpretations of their lived experiences. As discussed in the methodology, some of the PV women and program people engaged in more traditional 'storytelling' than others, with stories ranging from lengthy rememberings with little prompt, to more succinct memories gained through a meaning making process of questions, stories, and follow-up. Although my interpretations are weaved throughout, individual stories were kept intact in an effort to tell the collective story as it was shared with me. As a result, some of the stories are quite lengthy and reflect the intersection of themes mentioned previously.

As interviews were conducted with 6 of the total 11 PV women and 9 of the roughly 30 program people⁴⁸ involved, common themes are not necessarily reflective of all involved. However, based on evaluation data, observations at PV events including the Matika Wilbur night and the museum exhibit, discussion with other advisory committee members, and similarities in the narratives and perspectives shared, it was felt that these common themes and stories extended beyond those

⁴⁸ The program evaluation completed by Jerry White found 8 Nokee Kwe staff, 6 outside volunteers, 9 Students from Fanshawe College and Western University, 7 advisory committee members to be involved in the program in some volunteer/placement capacity.

interviewed. For instance, the PV women spoke knowingly about the other PV women, with their stories and insights cast in a language of intimate understanding towards the life stories of others that seemed both genuine and sincere. In fact, the women regularly situated their own stories within a shared context, framing their stories in relation to other PV women's experiences or Indigenous women generally. Similarly, all of the interview participants tended to use generalized language of the 'Positive Voice women' and 'us' that indicated insights and understanding that extended beyond their own experiences and perspectives.

6.1 Narrative Structure and Organization of Themes

Before addressing common themes, I will discuss some observations about the organization of the women's stories. In general, there were commonalities in how the women shared their experiences and how meaning was negotiated. Notably, participants stories reflected temporally based remembering and multidimensional contexts. These findings, along with their implication on how the discussion of common themes was approached, will be presented below.

6.1.1 Temporal-Based Rememberings and Organization of Findings

First, the stories and reflections shared with me were temporally situated within an overarching context of transition. This temporal organization was undoubtedly shaped by the interview structure. The women were asked open questions about becoming involved in PV, and their experiences during and after PV, which encouraged a temporal recollection of memories. However, the temporal construction of stories also came from the women themselves and their desire to focus on 'transition' and 'changes'. Discussions of the past and the present provided a mechanism for the women to contextualize their own lived experiences. Positive Voice was constructed by the women as a turning point⁴⁹ or a point of interest/transition within their stories.

⁴⁹ Most of the women identified PV as marking a positive turning point. However, it should be noted that for one of the PV women, Positive Voice made her realize she needs to speak up for herself – which she did not do during her

This transition was discussed in terms of experiences before PV, and experiences during and after PV. Although nuanced, the women's stories reflected an organizational shift in their own rememberings where 'before PV' and 'after PV' marked different periods of their lives.

The temporal recollection of stories, and the women's focus on transition and change functioned as a framework through which the women shared their stories and brought meaning to their lived experiences. As a result, content-based themes were organized around this framework of pre-PV stories and post-PV stories. Although rememberings of lived experiences reflected temporal negotiations of before and after PV, the women's stories were not told teleologically. Rather, within the same breath that the women talked about their pasts they also drew on present rememberings, often as aspects of the same story. Despite this relational context, common themes were organized along lines of pre-PV narratives and post-PV narratives in an effort to highlight the overarching context of transition. However, following Algonquin, Cree, and French Métis scholar Lynn F. Lavallée (2009), the stories selected to illustrate these themes were kept intact (not dissected) in an effort to tell the collective story, to maintain the integrity of the story, show respect to the women's experiences, and maintain the women's agency and power over their stories. As a result, the individual stories also reflect the intersections among the themes discussed and the nuances of experiences.

Pre-PV reflections were generally framed around stories of 'lacking', where PV provided a tangible path forward to stories of strength and resiliency. However, the women's stories were multifaceted, and this shift was not absolute or linear. Most of the women situated PV and the changes they experienced within a context of continual healing and/or learning as a life-long journey, with these 'changes' reflecting their renewed focus on strength and resiliency. Two of the PV women in particular shared stories of continually working on themselves and negotiating their experiences during and after PV and using the skills they learned during PV to continue that journey.

time at Positive Voice. Therefore, while not necessarily positive, being in Positive Voice made her realize she needed to make a change.

A story shared by Alison was selected to illustrate the temporal recollection of experiences and to highlight the complexity surrounding her pre- and post-PV perceptions. In this story, Alison describes the challenges she faced at the beginning of PV in terms of being positive, and how that shaped her work. Alison continues on to describe her process of transitioning to a more positive state emotionally, although not absolutely or without complexities.

Story 3: Alison's Story of Challenges

Yeah, so in the beginning it seemed very dark. One of the filters on Canva is called dramatic and that was the one I used for all of my images [laughs]. Cause it was kind of mood setting and I can be kind of dramatic [laughs]. My emotions can be very dramatic! And around the fourth week is when I started feeling more settled and was starting to try to think more positively. Not that I didn't try to in the beginning, but my symptoms were really hard during that period, in the first four weeks, then I could start to 'see through the forest' kind of thing. And I go through this anyhow, I mean that's the ups and downs with the whole PTSD thing. Nothing's ever... within that window of tolerance you're kind of going here and you're just trying to kind of level off.

Alison's story was somewhat unique due to her experience of PTSD, which uniquely shaped the meaning she brought to her 'transition' and experience of change. Alison shares her struggle with PTSD as a life-long experience, one that she works through in her daily life after PV. Alison continues on to frame her experiences through a story of taking photos and being with her mother, and the change she experienced during PV in terms of becoming more strength focused.

Like the thing with... like my mother... I was taking pictures when her and I were out for a drive and one of my pictures was three trees. And with that picture I was talking about my mother and I also talked about my grandmother, but it was making me think about my mother more. Not that I don't think about my mother, I'm always worrying about her [laughs], but just the fact that I was processing. Like this is the kind of life she had and... Here's the type of life she's had, and it slowly changed her but with each change she's still beautiful. Things weren't great but still, she's still a beautiful person. Trees weather storms and stuff, and they're still beautiful, it ends up making them more beautiful, and have more character and things like that. So slowly my thoughts were starting to change. Because in the beginning I was at this one point and then at the end I wasn't at that point anymore. It was like setting me on course. Aside from that, I am more balanced. So being in Positive Voice has helped me come out of that. Not to say that I don't struggle with it, but it's not to the degree that I was struggling before. And on top of that it's helped... I always have it in the back of my head, you know, being positive and feeling happy. And it's also stuff that I've learned in therapy because I've been in therapies, different type of therapies for years, like building my own history, my own memories, you know what I mean? Replacing the old stuff with the new stuff, new good stuff. To where... You know, like let's say in my garden, all of a sudden, I'll think of

something about being positive and thinking more deeply about what it is. Sure, I'm gardening but what does that really mean? Well, it's something that I've always wanted to do, and I never did it before, and these are kind of things that... being in Positive Voice has given me goals. I'm going to follow through with the things that I've wanted to do that I enjoy, that make me happy, things like that.

Alison's story begins to illustrate the process she went through, and the shift she experienced before, during, and after PV. Although, an important aspect of Alison's shift was her realization that 'change' was not absolute or linear. Rather, 'change' for Alison meant gaining acceptance towards her truth of living with ups and downs, having goals, and keeping on her journey.

6.1.2 Multidimensional Understanding and Sharing

A second observation related to the organization of stories was the multidimensional way of understanding and sharing that the PV women brought to their stories. Most of the stories that the PV women shared centered around aspects of identity, understanding, and insights into their own experiences. These identity stories included personal self-perceptions and insights into ideas of belonging and connecting within their environments — their sense of self and sense of belonging in their worlds. Common themes related to the content of these identity stories, including themes of self-perception and belonging, will be discussed in subsequent sections. However, there were also commonalities in how these identity stories were structured.

Both the understanding the women brought to their stories and how they shared these stories reflected a multidimensional lens and multilevel approach. For instance, stories where the women talked about self-perception (micro perceptions) and belonging (meso/macro connection) were often told in relation to their understanding of identity and personal experiences. In other words, the PV women framed their personal stories by drawing on interconnected stories about themselves as individuals, as part of a community, and as part of a collective. This multidimensional lens was also evident in the relationally layered way that the participants shared their stories and insights. For instance, the PV women's stories and insights were often framed and understood in relation to the experiences of others. The PV women would often compare their stories to other PV women, Indigenous women generally, and non-Indigenous women. The PV women shared personal

experiences, stories of other PV women's experiences, and stories of other people in their lives like friends and family. Some stories reflected intergenerational experiences, where the PV women shared stories about their parents, children, and grandchildren in relation to their own experiences. Overall, most of the PV women framed their own experiences in relation to the experiences of others, drawing on stories about other people to illustrate and explain their own experiences, or to provide examples of differences or similarities in experiences. Finally, narratives were layered in terms of content and story type. For instance, the PV women shared event-centered stories (the recollection of specific memories), emotional-centered narratives (the recollection of how specific memories made them feel), and generalized memories (what the women considered to be generalized experiences among Indigenous women and/or Indigenous peoples), and other insights.

A story shared by Sarah and recollected by me was included to illustrate the multidimensional layers the PV women used to both understand their own experiences and share their stories. As Sarah's interview was not recorded, the following is my paraphrased recollection of the story, its content, and context. Sarah began her story by talking about her how PV had been a negative experience for her.

Story 4: Recollection of Sarah's Story of Layered Experiences

Sarah wanted to become involved in PV to tell her story and get her story out. However, while working on one of the projects she did not receive the help she needed to complete this project. This became a negative experience for her and she almost 'shut down' in terms of feeling connected to the program.

Sarah discussed with me the disconnection she felt to the program. She continues to share the regret she felt for not speaking honestly and openly to Thorp at the time about her feelings. She then began to frame her experience with a story of her grandson that had taken place that week.

Sarah's grandson had been accused of something at school. She had him write out what happened, and she shared what he wrote with the Principal at a meeting. In her meeting with the Principal, Sarah expressed that the teacher had lied about what happened. Although she felt that people might not believe her grandson, she was teaching him to stand up for himself and speak up, and confront people, because she had not spoken up during her time at Positive Voice. But she has learned to stand up for herself and say something when she feels that something is not right.

Although Sarah's experience was different from all the other PV women, who expressed only positive thoughts about the program, it did illustrate the common structuring of stories as relationally layered. In this story, Sarah drew on her grandson's experience to provide context to her own experience at PV.

6.2 Pre-PV Stories of Limitations and Barriers

The remainder of the chapter focuses on common themes from the stories, observations, perspectives, and insights that were shared with me. It focuses on commonalities in the stories shared by the women about their experiences, including both their own insights and interpretations and my interpretations. All of the PV women shared stories about their experiences before, during, and after PV. However, the most in depth and descriptive stories shared were those related to pre-PV lives and experiences. This made sense as it was these stories that had shaped the women's understanding of themselves and their identities over time, despite changes they experienced during PV that will also be discussed.

Overall, the stories that the women shared to bring meaning to their lives pre-PV reflected an overarching context of limitations and barriers in terms of the women's sense of self and belonging, of which they offered many insights. Three interconnected themes stood out from the stories that the PV women shared about their pre-PV lives.

- The first theme was that the women's lives had been lacking in some ways, with these narratives categorized as *stories of lacking*.
- The second main theme was that the PV women had experienced significant traumas and racism/discrimination throughout their lives. While related to the previous theme of 'lacking', this theme is discussed separately as *stories of negative relations* due to the significance the women attributed to these stories, and in an effort to highlight Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations.
- Weaved throughout these stories of lacking and racism was a third main theme reflecting the women's desires and hopes for their lives, with these narratives categorized as *threads of*

strength. This final theme was more of an underlying narrative that the women weaved throughout their stories of lacking and racism to highlight their own strength and resiliency.

These themes, along with additional subthemes, will be discussed and illustrated through the women's stories.

6.2.1 Stories of Personal Lacking

As discussed, the women were asked about what had brought them to PV. While their stories were nuanced and multidimensional, they also reflected a similar overarching theme of feelings of personal 'lacking' and negative cultural memory in relation to their sense of self and identity and belonging. Each of the PV women reflected on aspects of themselves or their lives that they felt had been lacking prior to PV, sharing stories that reflected a narrow sense of self and a limited sense of belonging that shaped their sense of identity. Gained from the women's stories, this idea of 'lacking', in terms of multidimensional and connected understanding of identity, had over time become normalized, something the women shared to me with a renewed self-awareness. The stories that the women shared to explain their pre-PV lives drew on common areas of motherhood and abilities, cultural identities, and support systems that contributed to a narrow identity pre-PV.

6.2.1.1 Narrow Sense of Self

Reflecting this overarching theme of lacking was the PV women's narrow sense of self prior to PV. While the women's stories illustrated unique individual experiences, there were commonalities in the stories the women shared to explain their sense of self. The women's stories reflected two interconnected narratives: conceptualization of 'self' as tied to motherhood and a limited perception of abilities.

6.2.1.1.1 Perception of self as tied to motherhood

Most of the PV women shared stories of having a narrow, almost one-dimensional sense of self prior to PV that was tied to motherhood and a limited sense of their abilities. All 6 of the women identified themselves as single mothers and/or main caregivers in the first few minutes of the interviews, describing the active role they had in their children's lives. A common reflection was that motherhood played a dominating role in their lives. For instance, four of the PV women reflected on the all-encompassing nature of motherhood, as both the main source of their identity and the main structuring agent of their daily life prior to PV. The general sentiment was that motherhood had, over time, limited their sense of outside identity. The women shared stories of putting their lives on hold, of feeling only seen as a mother, of not pursuing outside interests, of sacrificing aspects of themselves, of not realizing their full potential, and of feeling isolated.

Most of the PV women shared positive aspects of motherhood including a deep love for their children and no regrets towards their choices of putting their children first. However, the women simultaneously situated this love within the realization that they had not been meeting their personal needs, something the women shared as not fully realizing until PV. The women also commonly shared their processes of coming to realize the limiting qualities of motherhood, sharing common narratives of forgetting who they were, erasure of outside self, losing part of themselves, lacking in outside interests, and having been consumed by motherhood.

6.2.1.1.2 Lacking abilities

These reflections about motherhood were intrinsically tied to another theme related to sense of self – the perception that they were lacking in terms of real or imagined skills and abilities. All the PV women reflected that this combination of lacking in skills and abilities and a sense of self tied to motherhood resulted in their view of themselves pre-PV as one-dimensional. In discussing themselves, four of the six PV women noted they had not finished high school, sharing stories of disrupted learning. All but one of the PV women also described very basic use and knowledge of computer skills prior to PV. In their stories, the women also reflected on the imagined lack of skills or abilities that had reinforced a narrow perception of self. In particular, the women shared stories of having lacked the confidence to see their own abilities and to recognize the skills they

had gained throughout their lives. The women shared stories of not pursuing outside interests, devaluing the existing skills and abilities they had, and a sense of disbelief they previously had felt towards their own abilities – all things they had come to realize during their time at PV.

A story shared by Anne was selected to illustrate this theme. In this story, Anne shares the all-encompassing role motherhood had assumed within her life prior to PV, and the narrowing effect this had on her overall sense of identity, including her negative perception of her own abilities and lack of connection to others.

Story 5: Anne’s Story of Lacking full Sense of Self

I'm married but I feel like I'm a single mom because I do everything, okay? I went into Positive Voice because I wanted to... I wanted to find myself, I didn't want to feel like a single mom anymore. Now, my son is 21 years old, but everything was about him. "Do you need anything baby, do you want me to do this, do you, do you...". It was always "do you need this, do you need that", and it was never, "okay, I'm going to do this". I always checked with him first. And I wanted to just find me. And throughout the program I did find me. And I think that's what helped heal me. You know? Because now it's not "do you want this for dinner, do you need this done", you know? It's about me now and that's what Positive Voice did for me.

Anne discussed her relationship with her son and the role motherhood had in her daily life. She described feeling like a single mother whose life revolved around her son, and she discusses how her self-concept changed throughout PV as she began reconnecting with herself.

I love my son, he is everything in the world to me, but he's not my first, you know? Like I'll get up and I do my thing – "I'm leaving, I'll see you later". Positive Voice has made me understand who I was and has helped me become who I am. So, that seven weeks it didn't... It didn't change me as a person, it helped open my eyes to the person that I am. I just wasn't living up to my potential and my mind wasn't open to it... That seven weeks... I have a bond with two of the girls that were in the class and like... I would die without them, and I was the oldest in our group and these girls are like the same age as my children but the bond that we share, it's insane. I've never had a bond like that with anybody especially somebody so young. We text all the time, we go to movies, like we hang out, we go shopping, and it's really weird because I always thought that I was old, okay? But the girls that I hang out with, they say that I'm not old for my age. I'm like that crazy one [laughs]. Even though I'm 42, I'll be the one to go play in a puddle. That's me and that's my personality. And that didn't change. But then as Positive Voice went on and I started to become more like me, Summer and the rest of the girls noticed that.... I was just more positive and open.

Anne shared the importance of the relationships she developed with other PV women. She continues on to share her process of coming to realize her personal abilities outside of motherhood, as well as her awareness of the lack of prior connections she had to other women.

Like I didn't know much about computers but then as it progressed, I was just more positive about things. I was like "Oh wow I can do this. This is crazy, I didn't know". But I watched everybody and then I knew what I was doing once they sat down with me. I was just like, I know this, I've watched my kids do this. But it was because I was so closed off before. I knew what I was doing, but I didn't know I could do it because I was always just... I was just a mom. And I had that whole mentality that I don't need to know this because I just had to be a mom. I didn't have to know how to use a computer, I didn't have to know how to use anything outside because all I had to do was be a mom. And I didn't want to be just a mom anymore. And so, talking to the women in the first session, I thought maybe I don't just have to be a mom, you know?

In her story, Anne shared that her whole identity had been centered around her son's needs to the point where she had rejected other possibilities for utilizing existing skills or developing new ones, and had generally been closed off, lacking relationships with others, lacked self-confidence, and felt like "just a mom" prior to PV.

6.2.1.2 Complex Cultural Identities

Another theme that emerged from these stories of lacking relates to cultural identity. The women shared stories of complex cultural identities throughout their lives, reflecting commonly held perceptions of a lack of cultural grounding or inward confidence in their cultural identities. Despite unique individual experiences, there were commonalities in the stories the women shared to explain their cultural identities pre-PV that reflect three interconnected narratives: rememberings of shame, a lack of positive access, and themes of cultural renewal and pride particularly in adulthood. Stemming from these first two common narratives – shame and a lack of access – the PV women shared the negative cultural association that had, at different times in their lives, negatively shaped their cultural identity. When sharing these two narratives, the women's stories often included discussion of how mainstream society had made them feel. The PV women intersected the third common theme – cultural renewal and pride – with the previous two themes to illustrate the complexity of their cultural identities. Most of the women had already been

experiencing a kind of cultural renewal throughout their adulthood and had great cultural pride prior to PV, yet these feelings of pride and cultural identity were mediated by past rememberings.

6.2.1.2.1 Rememberings of shame

To begin, in explaining their cultural identity and their relationship to that identity, all the women shared rememberings of cultural shame. The PV women commonly recalled both specific memories where they had been made to feel shame and general reflections on shame as related to Indigenous identity. The longevity of this feeling of shame varied among the women – as something that was fleeting, a childhood experience, intermittent throughout their lives, or part of a constant negotiation. However, all the PV women described some shame that they had been made to feel at some point in their lives, a theme that still occupied a space in their stories in relation to their understanding of self and their cultural identity.

A story shared by Heather that included both childhood memories and some insights into this feeling of shame in relation to mainstream spaces was selected to illustrate this narrative.

Story 6: Heather's Story of Shame

Oh, there comes a time in every Aboriginal person's life where they're ashamed of themselves because of what has been in the media. I mean when we were kids, we didn't even want to play cowboys and Indians, we wanted to be the Cowboys because of the Hollywood Indian movies. The same things were in cartoons, which were in newspapers... A lot of fun was made out of us, you know? Which everybody probably thought was humorous, but it wasn't funny. And it did... There's not one person I know that didn't feel, at one time, ashamed to be Aboriginal because of what was said about us and our leaders who were trying to fight for our rights. Like they... Some of the film footage that I've seen of the ways that our leaders were treated was so disrespectful. You know? And it's like wow, this is our leader and you're treating him like a piece of dirt? Just the body language alone... I spent a long time studying body language working as a waitress for so many years that you get to recognize a person when they're impatient, when they're angry, when they're happy, and I saw a lot of angry, impatient people in these videos where our leaders were just trying to talk about things like fishing rights, and Aboriginal rights, and I thought, wow these people just don't get it. We're here, we've always been here... it was like uggghhh. You know? It was so... I could never do that to somebody even if I didn't care for them. I would still face them one on one and talk to them and listen to them.

Heather discussed shame as a common Indigenous experience and situated both this common story and her personal memories in relation to media representations and treatment by non-Indigenous people. Heather continues on to frame this negative representation with a childhood memory.

So, when I think of media, I think of the behaviours that came with the media and the way that society perceived us. We had to jump on a bus and go into town to attend school and none of us were allowed in the children's homes. It was really a sad time to realize that you had such a good friend and you just loved your friend and then your friend said "please come home after school", and you make all these arrangements with your mom to stay, and she's gonna pick you up at such a time. And then you get to the door and all of a sudden, the child's crying, coming to tell me you can't come in cause you're a dirty Indian. And then I said "oh" and she was crying, she goes, "I didn't say that Heather, my mother said that", and I said, "okay". I didn't even discuss it with my mother. I went back to the school playground and I just played on the swings and played with whoever was there until the designated time that my mother agreed to pick me up and I just told her I had a good time. And I went home because I was too ashamed to tell her that.

What stood out in Heather's story, and similarly reflected in other women's stories, was that feelings of shame were an extension of the treatment she had experienced and the lack of positive representations available to disrupt or counter that treatment. The PV women shared these stories with a sense of awareness towards how non-Indigenous peoples and spaces had created and fostered these negative feelings.

6.2.1.2.2 Lack of cultural access and belonging

Another common narrative that reflected this theme of complex cultural identities was the lack of access to culture that the women discussed as having shaped their relationship to culture and their cultural identity. All the PV women identified with some Indigenous cultural background and First Nation. Additionally, Heather described a deep connection to culture and several of the women shared some involvement or relationships with a First Nations community. Although the women described their current cultural identities as stronger, they shared having not been able to foster deep and meaningful relationships to their culture for most of their lives, due to various circumstances and a lack of opportunities. The PV women shared stories of lacking access in terms of exposure to positive media representations and role models, and of lacking access to community-based connections. It was common among the women that they experienced lack of

cultural access had shaped much of their lives and had impacted their ability to build and foster meaningful cultural identities.

In terms of the media, all of the women discussed the lack of positive media representations and role models throughout their lives. The PV women shared stories of having either stereotypical images or none at all and reflected on how these images (or lack of) had impacted their relationship to their culture, which related to the feelings of shame and the resulting lack of cultural confidence discussed previously. The women shared having internalized the negative images in the media, and also reflected on how the media had shaped non-Indigenous treatment of them.

In addition to this absence of positive representations and role models, the women also shared stories about lacking physical and emotional access to their culture in the form of cultural events, connections to their communities, and connections to Indigenous peoples generally. The women commonly reflected on how this lack of access had made fostering positive cultural identities throughout their lives challenging. The women shared various explanations for their lack of access. These included living within an urban environment, being seen as ‘urban’ by other Indigenous peoples, the role of intergenerational trauma that limited the cultural knowledge that was shared with them, not being able to visit community-based family and participate in events and ceremonies as children, and general memories of not learning about culture.

The women’s stories also illustrated various impacts of the lack of access to their culture, including having to self-teach culture, of not belonging within their urban environments, and of not fully belonging within First Nation communities. In particular, struggling to belong in both urban and First Nations environments, and being treated differently due to ‘urban’ identity, was commonly discussed as shaping complex cultural identities. Personal stories of not belonging, of not being accepted, being treated differently, and thought of as “white” or less Indigenous was discussed by two of the women and was identified as a common urban experience by others. Overall, the PV women lacked both emotional and physical connections to First Nation communities and cultural identities throughout their lives. This had resulted in a limited sense of belonging and cultural awareness or confidence, although the extent of this varied among the women.

6.2.1.2.3 Cultural renewal and pride

While rememberings of shame and limited access and connection to culture were common narratives, the stories the women shared were nuanced. For instance, negative rememberings were often shared in relation to current pride and cultural renewal. Although the women reflected on past negative aspects, they also commonly shared stories of change, feelings of pride in their adulthood, cultural renewal, and positive memories. In particular, all of the women shared stories of developing more positive cultural identities in their adulthood and described a desire that had existed before attending PV to find ways to foster this identity and develop deeper cultural connection. This shift was framed as coming to recognize the importance of their culture, a desire to learn more about their culture, and a desire to develop more culturally-based connections to other Indigenous peoples.

A story shared by Nikki was selected to illustrate this shift or transition that was common among the women. In this story, Nikki shares her shift from feeling shame and a lack of belonging to feelings of pride. Like Heather, Nikki situates this feeling within mainstream perceptions of Indigenous peoples and her own growth.

Story 7: Nikki's Story of Cultural Change

I am ashamed and disgusted that the non-Aboriginal person's portrayals have only chosen to look at the negative side. Not look at how they got there, what they can do to help get them out of there, out of the spot they're in, or, you know, give them guidance. But I believe everything can change, you know? Like this program. To come here and attend this program, it's built self-esteem and given courage, and a new outlook on stuff. It's impacted how I see myself. Well, when I see that stuff portrayed by the media, I don't feel shame, but I feel pity and sorry that that's what the other people are only going to see. They're only going to see the negative side of a Native woman, you know? And the negative baggage that comes along with that. It makes me happy when I see successful Native women or men. Yeah, it makes me very proud.

Nikki began this story by talking about the media and their negative construction of Indigenous peoples. She continues on to describe how PV is changing this by focusing inward to provide Indigenous women space for changing these images from the inside.

Positive voice is changing that. I think it opens doors to oneself. Saying that you don't need to stay in the negative stuff. There are programs and people that can shed light and show you that you

have a choice to stay where you are or move ahead in a new direction and not be, so called, portrayed as "oh that Indian", right? And to move ahead and be proud. My culture is very important to my identity now. But before, like when I was younger in my teens and early 20s, I was... I'm sorry to say, but I was ashamed of being Indian. And that's something that I've worked on for many many years. And now within the last 20 years I'd say, I embraced my culture, you know? And I am proud to be Native. Because... I was not in a good place in my 30s. Not in a good place. But through growth and everything I've been able to leave those things behind and, you know, embrace my culture and move ahead in a positive way. It's been important for healing experiences and moving ahead in a new direction.

In this story, Nikki shared the shame she felt when she was a younger person, and her growth-based transition to pride and a healthier cultural relationship as an adult.

Similar stories of experiencing some negative feelings as children and youth, and pride and desire for stronger cultural identities as adults, were common among the women. Although this sort of transition was common, there were also variations among the women. For instance, Heather's strong cultural identity stood out from the other PV women. Although Heather framed shame as a common Indigenous experience, she described always having a strong and positive cultural identity – only feeling shame for brief specific instances. Alternatively, three of the PV women — Sarah, Alison, and Nikki — outlined a more specific timeframe for their cultural renewal and development, noting distinct transitions from shame as youth to pride during adulthood.

Overall, the lack of safe spaces and opportunities to form, nurture, and grow meaningful cultural identities was shared among most of the women as having impacted their ability to nurture cultural identities pre-PV. However, despite these challenges, culture was still identified as an inherent aspect of the women's identity, reflecting the complexities of cultural identity. Notably, although cultural identities were mediated by non-Indigenous spaces, the women still wanted to nurture their own sense of culture and identity, illustrating innate strength and resilience. In particular, the women commonly reflected on a long-standing desire to develop deeper cultural identities that had existed prior to PV.

6.2.1.3 Limited Support System

The final area that was commonly discussed as lacking concerns the limited support systems shared by many of the women. This includes few positive and supportive connections to family and friends prior to PV. The women did share some stories of positive and loving relationships, particularly with immediate family — mostly children but also partners (for two of the women, Anne and Heather). However, what stood out to the women about their pre-PV lives was their overall lack of in-depth support-based friendships, and how this lack of support had shaped their identities and experiences. Outside of immediate family relationships, only one of the PV women shared having active and ongoing friendships with urban Indigenous women.

Rather, the women commonly shared having few, if any, close friendships and support-based connections with urban Indigenous women, Indigenous peoples generally, and even non-Indigenous people. The women reflected on having few people, women in particular, that they could talk to and share with in supportive and companionship capacities prior to PV, and limited access or knowledge of how to connect to others. Ultimately, the women felt that had not been connected to many people who were like them. Further, the connections the women did have had not translated into relationships of meaningful and active support between people with similar experiences. Instead, the PV women commonly shared that they often felt alone in their experiences.

In addition to lacking close relationships, the PV women shared stories of feeling disconnected from Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and spaces within their everyday lives. Alison shared stories of not connecting to Indigenous service delivery; most of the women shared stories of lacking extended family support; and most of the women shared general reflections of having mostly surface level connections with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. For example, despite loving family relationships and being involved in social environments with non-Indigenous people, Anne described feeling like a single mother and unable to develop meaningful connections. Similarly, while Heather described a positive relationship with her sister, this relationship did not include active support due to the physical distance between their homes. Some extended family relationships were also described as strained or as difficult to maintain, and even negative sources

of pain for two of the women. Further, all but one of the women had been attending the Native Literacy Centre at Nokee Kwe prior to PV. Yet they shared that the connections with others attending the program had been friendly but lacked depth.

Heather's story was selected to illustrate this theme of a limited support system prior to PV, and how this shaped sense of self. In this story, Heather discusses her process of learning again how to be with women – something she had forgotten but had regained during her time at PV.

Story 8: Heather's Story of Learning to be with Women

I did talk about the camera. I learned how to develop that skill. I love Canva. You know, I didn't even know Canva existed when I went into the Positive Voice program. But I would say, even though I keep going over the computer thing, I learned once again to be with women. I know this sounds a bit off-topic, but sometimes you're very isolated when you're bringing up a special needs' child. We lived out in the country and even though I was immersed in her school, the reason why I did all those things was to keep my eye on my daughter. I had received great advice from her public health nurse, and she said "You know Heather, when a parent is very visible in the school atmosphere, people are less likely to mess with your child. And when you're very visible in volunteer work, you get to know the other parents, you get to know who to trust, you get to see the people who want your child to come over and play". So even though I worked in the school and even though I was working very hard at the church and had those jobs, I was still isolated.

Although the story Heather shared was different from most of the other women's in that she described being more active in her community spaces — at her daughter's school and with her church's Sunday school — her story also reflects common narratives of feeling isolated despite some connections, lacking meaningful relationships based on similar experiences, and the process of coming to realize the impact that this isolation had on her understanding of self. Heather continues on to share how good being with the other PV women had made her feel.

So, when I came into the Positive Voice program it felt so nice to be literally shoulder to shoulder with the women, to hear their experiences. To me that was a skill that I think I didn't lose, I just forgot about it. I was used to conversing with doctors, and clinical psychologists, and teachers, and worrying about my daughter, and reading more and more information for Asperger's syndrome. And just my whole life was just... I think I was just... I was just so focused on my little girl. And the day that I explained to Colleen, a girl who went into the second session, I was telling her about the Positive Voice program, I showed her my camera, I talked about what we did, how it made me feel, and all of a sudden I felt the tears coming out of my eyes because I thought "I'm

missing it now. I'm not going to be having lunch with them ever again, not going to be doing this again, it's over".

Heather's story highlighted the common narrative of lacking adult friendships prior to PV and coming to recognize the necessity of being around and actively connecting to people and feeling supported by people with similar experiences.

And I thought I finally felt like I had some sisters and good friends. See my sisters live at Kettle Point and I hardly ever get the chance to see them. And they're surrounded by kids, adult children, and grandkids. There's never hardly any one-on-one time with them. And I actually started, the tears were coming, and I thought, I had missed that for so long just being with women, you know? It was really different in the church setting. I didn't feel that there. I felt like I was building bridges for our First Nations people for sure, and I was being fought at every corner. And that's okay, that's okay because I always handled things as diplomatically as I could, and I became the superintendent of the Sunday school and you know that showed me they had... Well one of two things, either they were all sick of doing it [laughing], or it showed they had confidence in my abilities. Because I was pretty good at teaching Sunday school lessons and creating curriculums. And... So... But still I missed that, being with women. So, it was more than just the computer skills. It was just being with women and knowing I'm with somebody who can understand my situation as much as I could understand theirs.

Heather's story illustrated the importance of not only being in a space with other people who have similar experiences, but also of having the opportunity to connect and offer support along those lines of similarities within that space.

6.2.2 Stories of Negative Relations

The PV women were not asked about past traumas, yet many of the women's stories about their pre-PV lives included narratives of negative relations and often traumatic experiences. As a reminder, the goal of this research was not to examine common stories of trauma and sensationalize trauma-based or challenging experiences. As we have seen, the media does that enough already. Rather, the intent was to gain understanding of how the PV women brought meaning to their own experiences through their stories. Still, the women did share many stories of negative relations throughout their lives, with it evident that these memories were central aspects of how the women

contextualized their past and present lived experiences, their sense of self, and feelings of belonging and connection.

6.2.2.1 Individual Traumas

Without going into the specifics, the PV women (and other interviewees) shared stories of individual traumas – of family-based trauma, including abuse, loss, fractured family units, and distance; and personal struggles like depression and substance abuse. Collectively, the PV women had experienced significant traumas and pain throughout their lives and this trauma had inwardly shaped their sense of self. The women's stories drew on childhood rememberings in addition to adult experiences with it evident that childhood rememberings continued to play an important role in how the women understood their lived experiences and their identity as adults. In fact, childhood and adult stories were often framed simultaneously as reflecting an unchanged context, with both childhood and adult experiences situated within a narrative of 'lack of mainstream changes', that will be discussed subsequently.

The women's stories of trauma were generally shared through a lens of self-awareness. The women knowingly reflected on the power and space that they had allowed these experiences to occupy in their overall sense of self and identity prior to PV. Most of the PV women (5) reflected on complex multi-generational and intergenerational contexts to explain traumas they had experienced within their families or that other PV women had shared with them. For instance, Sarah described a traumatic relationship with her family mother and shared how that relationship continued to influence how she saw herself and the relationships she has made throughout her adulthood. Similarly, Anne discussed her challenging relationship with her biological family, and how that contributed to a complex cultural identity.

Trauma was framed by the women as an experiential constant that had, over time, become a central aspect of their self-perception and identity, bleeding into all other aspects of identity including the women's relationship to motherhood, their real and imagined sense of abilities, and culture and community that was discussed previously. Ultimately, the PV women had experienced significant

personal traumas and offered reflections on how these experiences had shaped their sense of self and identity throughout their lives.

6.2.2.2 Racism and Discrimination

However, more so than personal and family level traumas, the PV women shared many stories of racism and discrimination in their urban life spheres. These experiences were also forms of trauma and the women shared how these experiences shaped other challenges throughout their lives. In particular, the PV women shared how these experiences impacted their sense of connectivity and belonging within their urban environments. The women shared rememberings of relationships, interactions, engagement, and involvement with non-Indigenous individuals and organizations that included stories of being targeted, feeling unsafe, feeling ‘different’, and generally being treated badly within non-Indigenous spaces and by non-Indigenous people throughout their lives. Stories were often in the form of recalling specific memories or incidents that stood out, with many childhood memories shared. The school setting was a common site of these rememberings.

In addition to specific memories, racism and discrimination was also discussed more generally as a daily experience associated with being Indigenous and living within their urban communities. The women reflected on general experiences of feeling unwelcome and unsafe in everyday public spaces like the grocery store, at restaurants, and walking down the street. In fact, this generalized feeling of ‘not belonging’ and feeling unsafe was how many of the women conceptualized and understood their overarching place within their urban environments.

A story of Alison’s was selected to illustrate experiences of racism and the meaning the women attached to these experiences in relation to sense of self and feelings of belonging. Alison begins by reflecting on the negative media portrayals of Indigenous women and peoples and discusses how those portrayals influence how she is treated by non-Indigenous people in her daily life.

Story 9: Alison’s Story of Discrimination

I guess one of the things I think about is, do I feel safe? Let's say, if I go to the mall. Do I feel safe? Yes. But do I ever, in the back of my mind, do I ever feel like I have to be on guard just in case somebody says something to me? Yes, most definitely. I guess in other kinds of scenarios, let's say going out for a night. Do I feel safe? No, for the most part I don't. I know that I have to be more careful. I know that in a group of women and I'm the only Native woman that I will be targeted by men, and it does happen. A friend of mine was actually... I went to meet her at her work one night – she's a waitress at a bar – and we always sit at the same table, kind of thing. And one of the other waitress' dads was there, and he friggen targeted me that night, and harassed me.

Alison described having to be 'on guard' when out and made distinctions between spaces where she generally feels safe and spaces where she does not feel safe, as an Indigenous woman, although always staying cautious. She continues on to frame this story and explanation within childhood experiences of being treated badly in school.

And so, you know, definitely. Growing up, did I feel like I was treated differently? And did I have negative ways of thinking about myself? Yes, I did, most definitely. I used to... I believed the picture people painted of us and that's how I felt about myself. Teachers would actually teach very negative things, and use words like 'savages' when I was in public school. I had a history teacher that actually used the words, even still at that point, that day and age, referred to us as being 'savage like', and blah blah blah blah. And he was trying to teach us as if it was a history lesson, but you knew what his view of us was, and it was primarily a non-Native class in the city. I would want to crawl under my desk and hide, that kind of feeling. In the community outside of my reserve that I went to when I was even younger, we were segregated and put at a separate table than the rest of the class. The rest of class got to stay in desks and everything and have a different lesson. There was a lot of stuff. I mean I was at a high school and the teacher had all of the students chanting 'fuck those Indians, shit on those Indians'. It was during the Oka time, and he was talking about a reserve out West that had gotten awarded... I think it was like \$5000 each or something like that, and he goes, "oh yeah and what are they gonna do with that money anyhow? They're just going to blow it on VCRs and TVs. There's not going to be anything to show for it and who are they to expect anything back after". And he goes "that was 100 years ago". And in the whole class, literally the only person that wasn't chanting was the girl right beside me.

Drawing on memories of racism, Alison reflects on how non-Indigenous treatment had made her feel and had shaped her own perception of herself. Her story also speaks to the pervasiveness of these experiences throughout her school years, having attended three different schools and sharing stories from all. This was shared as a common experience, with three of the women drawing on stories of school experiences to bring meaning to their sense of self and belonging. Alison continues by shifting back to her current experiences of being targeted and the impact of this in terms of her PTSD.

So, did I believe a lot of the stuff? People would strike up, and still do, want to bring up 'Indian' topics. You know what I mean? And actually, it's one of the issues that I haven't addressed with my PTSD, because it does contribute to it in a huge way. Do I believe what they say now? No. But it still triggers me in my brain and how it reacts to it, like my emotional state of my body, shakes and stuff.

Alison's story spoke to many common narratives, including the shared recognition of how negative and racist interactions had shaped the women's sense of self and self-perception — a reflection that most of the PV women touched on. As well, Alison's story spoke to the common theme of being defined within urban environments by a Western cultural memory of Indigeneity, and non-Indigenous presumptions of what that Indigeneity means. Further, her story reflected a hyper awareness of the Western cultural memory that existed among the PV women. Particularly, how the pervasiveness of Western cultural memory had negatively influenced the types and quality of relationships and the sense of belonging within their urban environments that could be fostered throughout their lives.

6.2.2.3 Unchanged Colonial Context

Alison's story, and many others like it, illustrated another common reflection that the PV women and others had – the unchanged colonial context. The women's stories illustrated that mainstream spaces and environments from their childhood continue to function as sites of racism, discrimination, and cultural othering by reproducing Western cultural memory. As noted, stories of life-long racism held a defining space in the PV women's self-reflections towards their sense of self and belonging within their urban environments. While there was some recognition that explicit racism may no longer be viewed as 'socially acceptable', the women shared that their interactions with non-Indigenous people and within non-Indigenous spaces still tended to be dictated by non-Indigenous terms, as a form of 'othering'.

For instance, Heather shared her love for her church and stories of her involvement; however, she framed her involvement as mediated by the non-Indigenous congregation – of constantly building bridges between the church and Indigenous peoples. Similarly, one of the advisory committee members — Frances — offered some context, sharing that she was regularly asked by well-

intended colleagues/friends to provide an “Indigenous perspective” on various topics, and the emotional labour of this form of interaction. Alison similarly discussed this expectation that non-Indigenous people had towards Indigenous peoples to converse on ‘Indian’ topics. Overall, this expectation of being constantly engaged towards non-Indigenous needs was commonly felt among the participants. Common within the women’s stories of ‘othering’ interactions with non-Indigenous people were themes of a non-Indigenous sense of entitlement towards Indigenous emotional labour, ignorance, a perception of responsibility to respond or educate, hyper-awareness of own Indigeneity, and a hyper-awareness of non-Indigenous perceptions of Indigeneity that, not unlike racist interactions, had limited the women’s sense of meaningful urban belonging.

In general, the women’s stories of non-Indigenous interactions reflected shared themes of explicit and aggressive racism, non-Indigenous categorizing and stereotyping, and non-Indigenous prescribing of Indigenous responsibilities and roles. Additionally, the women’s stories highlighted interactions with non-Indigenous peoples and organizations as serving non-Indigenous needs and reinforcing non-Indigenous cultural memory of Indigeneity. The women’s stories reflected deep-seated power dynamics that prohibited meaningful connections within the everyday spaces they occupied, which they viewed as generally unwelcoming.

6.2.3 Threads of Strength

From the women’s life stories and insights, it was evident that they had collectively experienced an overarching lack of confidence and limited sense of belonging within their various life spaces as prior to PV as urban Indigenous women. Past rememberings and stories of lacking, trauma, and racism and discrimination presented these experiences as important aspects that shaped how the women brought meaning to their past and present. However, woven throughout these stories of limitations and barriers were stories of desires and hopes that the PV women had for their lives, reflecting common threads of strength. The PV women’s rememberings also included reflections and stories of healing and strength, a hopefulness towards the future, and a desire for something

more – all feelings of which the women recalled as mediating their experiences of lacking prior to PV. In other words, the PV women were collectively on a journey of growth prior to PV.

Indeed, all of the PV women described themselves as already on a path of healing and learning when they became involved with PV. In an illustration of this journey, the women reflected on desires that had existed prior to PV ‘for more’ — to be more than a mom, to have more skills, to increase connections. In fact, it was these hopes and desires that the women described as pushing them to make the jump into PV. It was within the context of desiring change that PV became a turning point, catalyst, tool, or mechanism for many of the PV women, providing a hopeful and tangible path forward that built off these hopeful aspects that had taken shape in adulthood.

6.3 Post-PV Stories of Change

As discussed, the women’s stories were regularly situated within a context of change with pre-PV stories intertwined with post-PV stories. For instance, Anne shared her story of her son and her perception of herself as a mother to show her changes and growth. Heather’s story of lacking relationships with Indigenous women before PV also highlighted the relationships she gained during PV. However, in an effort to illustrate this temporal construction of experiences and the context of change described by the women, the stories the women shared to describe their time during and after PV are discussed separately from pre-PV stories. Overall, the stories that the women shared about their post-PV lives reflected an overarching context of growth and development in their sense of self and belonging. Two interconnected themes stood out from the stories regarding the women’s lives and experiences during and after PV.

- First, the women described many personal/individual level changes that they experienced during the program, categorized here as *stories of personal growth*.
- Second, building off the confidence that the PV women had gained were *stories of claiming space*. Although a product of personal growth and increased connections, it is discussed separately to highlight the community-based impact that the new sense of belonging brought to the women.

These themes, along with additional subthemes, will be discussed and illustrated below through the women's stories.

6.3.1 Stories of Personal Growth

The women's stories about their experiences and lives during and after PV remained nuanced and multidimensional. Past experiences continued to influence current perceptions, and experiences were diverse and varied. However, an overarching theme of the women's life stories was that of personal growth. All the PV women described changes in their sense of self and belonging that developed throughout their time at PV, with stories reflecting the development of a more nuanced sense of self and pluralistic identities.

Each of the PV women reflected on aspects of themselves or their lives that they felt had changed, shifted, developed, or grew during their time at PV. For instance, the women shared stories of developing multidimensional selves and gaining self-awareness, of building confidence in self and abilities, increasing positive connections, and an increased sense of belonging (and entitlement to belong) within their social and cultural environments. By fostering their nuanced and pluralistic identities, the PV women commonly expressed a more confident sense of self and sense of belonging in their worlds. This change or shift was illustrated through a variety of common narratives, including changes in mindset, the development of skills and interests, the development of more culturally confident identities, and the development of an extended support system – all of which contributed to and stemmed from a more nuanced sense of self and pluralistic identities.

6.3.1.1 Changes in Mindset

The first commonality within this overarching theme of personal change was a sense that the PV women had experienced changes in their mindset during PV. The PV women reflected on both their inward emotional changes and the growth they had experienced. The development of forward/positive thinking was one of the main changes the women discussed. For instance, three

of the women shared experiences of no longer feeling physically and emotionally stuck in experiences that had previously been defining or debilitating. Instead, the women shared how they were moving forward, recognizing their own strengths and value, and being proud and confident in who they are and their abilities to move forward. Three of the PV women described forward thinking in terms of resiliency, which included narratives of not feeling stuck in the past, of shifting thinking to resiliency, of learning to privilege their strengths, and of not letting challenges overshadow these strengths.

Within these narratives, ‘moving forward’ was described as a mindset that reflected an increased sense of optimism about both the past and present as a form of healing, and of self-confidence. Similarly, two of the women described positive thinking as a tool they now had in their arsenal for processing self-perceptions and experiences, and as a method for dealing with challenges they currently face or might face in the future.

Nikki’s story of her personal change was selected as an example of the types of change in mindset that most of the women described. In this story, Nikki focuses on the personal changes she experienced, but also situates these changes within a context of collective shared experiences.

Story 10: Nikki’s Story of Personal Change

Positive Voice gave me an insight into the direction and the possibility that I have within myself. So, I appreciated that. And also forming the sister bond with the other women because we shared a lot and a lot of stuff, and became friends. I think PV was more like building up courage and understanding and possibility for women to not stay stuck in one spot and to be able to move forward and improve their lives and their situations. Whether it be personal or educational or just life.

Nikki focused on the changes she saw in herself and the new outlook she developed for understanding and approaching her experiences. During the interview you could hear and see the pride Nikki felt towards the changes she had made, with most of these changes stemming from a change in mindset and the development of self-esteem, courage, and confidence. Nikki continues on to discuss her development of positive ‘self-talk’.

I learned about photography and storytelling and prioritizing my abilities to myself. Like the whole thing about positive self-talk versus the negative. So, I don't pay attention to the negative self-talk anymore. I'm more aware of the positive stuff in my life now. It was challenging finding the good stuff about myself – what we worked on. But that was an advantage because I learned through finding the good stuff about myself and applying them and thinking them more than paying attention to the negative. So, I learned that I don't need that negative stuff. I believe it was healing for me because like shutting down all the negative self-talk and the negative thoughts of the past and coming to learn.... Well a person already probably knows their positive stuff, but they just don't hear it enough, and they don't think it enough about themselves. So now I don't focus on the negative anymore. When a negative thought comes into my head I just... "Get out of here", stop thinking that way. So, it really pointed me in the direction of thinking positive, mostly about everything and not let the negative dictate my life. You know? It had a positive effect on the way I view myself now and to not be harsh on myself. Be gentle. And the other women, like all females are sisters. The sisterhood of women. It made me more insightful, you know, to not judge a woman, another woman.... I think it's... I would say it's [PV] self-esteem building because certainly it's done that for me and probably the other women also. It's built up self-esteem and I can say nothing but good things about it. It brings a certain awareness to oneself. You know, not be stuck in a dark place and to see ahead, go ahead, and see possibilities.

In her reflections, Nikki explained that focusing on the good and being positive was not always easy for her, but that she was able to develop ‘positive thinking’ as a tool for not letting negativity dictate her life.

These themes of recognizing possibilities and potential, and translating that potential into tangible actions was common among the women as they each shared stories of coming to recognize their value, of being proud of themselves, and of gaining confidence as both a mindset and a tool. Ultimately, the women approached their changes as a recognition of their own power and strength. Nikki's story also provided some context to the complexity of this change in mindset — that ‘forward thinking’ is not linear and that ‘positivity’ is not an absolute or cookie-cutter outcome.

Three of the women in particular reflected on forward and positive thinking as part of a healing journey towards self-acceptance. These women shared stories that highlighted working through their past and/or working towards being okay with past experiences. They also recognized that this journey of ‘positivity’ is not a form of erasure of past and present experiences. Rather, for the PV women, ‘positivity’ meant being open to explore possibilities and utilizing positive thinking as a tool or method for approaching self that privileged strengths. Overall, all the women described

changes in their mindset but the adaptation of this mindset or new way of thinking was nuanced, complex, nonlinear, and looked different for each of the women.

6.3.1.2 Development of Skills, Abilities, and Interests

A second and related commonality within this overarching theme of personal growth was the development of skills, abilities, and interests, with the PV women reflecting on the positive impact these changes had on their self-perception. All the PV women discussed skills they developed during the program. These skills included general computer skills such as creating and saving files, understanding copyright issues, and computer applications like Twitter and Canva⁵⁰. Other skills included writing poetry and narratives, creating infographics from these narratives, and camera and photography skills. The PV women shared stories of developing an increased comfort with technology and increased abilities, with their reflections exuding pride and confidence. However, the stories that stood out the most were those related to developing interests and passions alongside those skills.

All the PV women shared stories detailing the skills they learned, of using these new skills to develop outside interests and passions, or of becoming reacquainted with existing interests and passions through these skills. For instance, Colleen, Sarah, Heather, and Anne shared stories of connecting to the skills they learned — poetry, meme development, narrative development, and photography — as these skills allowed them to tell their own stories and express themselves in their own voices and images in ways that had previously been unknown to them.

In addition to becoming interested in programming, Alison and Heather also shared how they were able to connect the skills and projects they were learning to pre-existing passions, and how good that made them feel. For instance, Alison described the many ways she was able to connect the skills she was learning to her passion of animal welfare, while Heather discussed the pride she felt being able to use the skills she learned to talk about, educate, and express her culture — a pre-

⁵⁰ Canva is a free graphic-design website. <https://www.canva.com>

existing passion. Another common theme was that the women also developed unintended or secondary/soft skills outside of the tangible program-based skills being taught. For instance, Heather also discussed the leadership skills she had learned and how she was applying them to the Positive Voice drum group that she developed, while Alison described becoming interested in art therapy because of one of the guest speakers.

Anne's story was selected to illustrate this theme of skill development as an aspect of personal growth. In this story, Anne shares her process of coming to realize both her love of photography and her innate skills.

Story 11: Anne's Story of Photography

Okay, so Summer gave us cameras and ohhhhhh, I totally love this part. I was scared, terrified. She sent us on a scavenger hunt. I took my first picture and ahhhh... It wound up being my postcard picture. Oh, I love that leaf, oh my god. It was my first picture and it turned out to be the best picture ever. Love it, absolutely love it. Everybody has it. And after that, I started taking pictures like crazy. Like I just want to cry [laughs]. And she [Summer]... That was the best thing she ever gave me and... That camera... I think that is where everything changed. I could not put that camera down. I couldn't stop taking pictures. She wanted us to take pictures and write a little story. Not even a story, just a couple lines to go with the picture. And London had its first snowfall... oh my God... Sunday morning, I remember it. I woke up and I was so happy, and I just seen all the snow and I got dressed and I grabbed my camera and I grabbed my money and I hit Tim Hortons, it was like 11 o'clock in the morning and I hit the trails and I could not stop taking pictures. And then I came home, and I took a selfie. I was covered in snow and I had my Tim Horton's cup in my hand, and I posted on Facebook "oh my God it's a beautiful day". I brought my pictures back and Summer was like, oh my God. And I was like, "oh my God, I was outside and there was snow everywhere". And then I was on the train going to Toronto and I started taking pictures. And when I was in Toronto, I was taking pictures. And I just couldn't stop! And it's... That camera. I just couldn't stop. And it's amazing. I don't know if it's always been there or... But to have a camera....like, I don't know... And it's just Summer....

Anne shared about her introduction to photography – the fear she first had and how quickly that changed to passion. Anne continues on to detail the change that photography had on her, describing this introduction as her main positive thing within the program – the thing that produced change in her.

I still hang out with everybody, especially the two women I'm really close with. But I'm the only one who... I mean I have my camera everywhere I go. Well, except for when I come to school. But

on weekends and after school, I have that camera with me. I utilize it. And I don't know. It's Summer, that camera that she gave me just... that was my big thing. That was my massive positive thing. That changed everything. That camera was it. I think with the camera, that's where I found me because I wasn't home anymore. I was gone. There was no mealtime, there was no "do you need laundry done", there was no "I'm going grocery shopping, what do you need", there was no more of that. There was, "I have to go grab some more picture frames" and "I have to go, you know, print off these picture", oh I gotta do this, oh what you think of this, oh hey look what I did.... It was just me – "I'm hitting the trails. I'll be back later". It was just me. Me on the trails, me on my hands and knees taking pictures. It was me. And I think that's when everything changed. There was my independence, there was me alone on the trails, me alone in a bush trying to get that perfect picture. But it's like I found... That camera... It found me. It gave me time to myself to realize, you know, my past and why I left home at 14. And it made me understand, you know, my messed up Native family and why they're doing what they're doing. And it also made me understand my freedom and my pictures....

Anne drew on photography to illustrate her development of self, describing how she found herself through photography by developing a more pluralistic identity, with confidence. She continues on to share how this change was an aspect of healing for her because it opened herself up to her own potential.

Like literally that one picture. And I can't help but explain and cry. I always cry. You know? And it's Summer... Summer really had an impact on me. My change may not be as related to the Native part of Positive Voice. It was a personal healing for me. And yes, it was a growth because she opened something up mentally that will not close. Like, it will not. And if somebody breaks that camera they better run [laughs]. I insured it too because that baby is going to travel. Like it went to Winnipeg with me last month. I took the Greyhound out there, so I could take pictures along the way. Like, I could have flown. My husband's like "why don't you fly out?" No man, I'm gonna take the Greyhound! He's like "you're crazy that's a 30-hour bus ride". I get to stop on the way, man! And it's just for the pictures.

Anne continued to share about a personal achievement – that she had been asked to take portraits of the PV women for the museum exhibit. These portraits were a collaboration with Aura Last who was one of the Indigenous artist guest instructors at PV. Anne's story illustrated the connection she made between realizing her passion for photography and the resulting changes in her mindset towards herself.

6.3.1.3 Culturally Confident Identities

The third common theme within this overarching theme of personal growth was the fostering of culturally confident identities, and the positive impact these changes had on their self-perception and sense of belonging. All the PV women shared stories of identity and community-level changes they experienced in relation to their culture. Reflecting on their experiences during PV, the women shared relational stories of developing and fostering stronger and more culturally confident identities. These stories highlighted common themes of learning more about culture and having increased access to cultural knowledge from the other women and guest speakers; and developing deeper and stronger connections related to positive exposure to Indigenous mentors and representations. This cultural development was also situated within the framework of positivity that PV nurtured. For instance, one of the women noted that her time at PV was the first time she had ever been in a space where Indigenous culture was talked about positively. Overall, the PV women not only learned about their culture but were exposed to cultural positivity and other Indigenous peoples that fostered a cultural confidence.

A common aspect of the women's stories about cultural development was the development of relationships with other Indigenous women, describing both culturally based relations and relations of friendship and community that contributed to culturally confident identities through a sense of belonging. In terms of culturally based relations, three of the PV women shared specific stories of learning about their culture from the other PV women and guest speakers that nurtured their cultural development. However, more so than specific instances of cultural learning, all the PV women shared stories of connecting with other PV women and the Indigenous guest speakers on a more relational level, highlighting the sense of pride that they felt from being around Indigenous women.

A story of Colleen's was selected to illustrate this cultural development. In this story, Colleen discusses some of the barriers she has faced in terms of developing a cultural identity and describes her cultural pride. Colleen also discusses her goal of teaching her family about their culture as she learns it herself.

Story 12: Colleen's Story of Cultural Growth

It's big, it's a really big part of my identity now because growing up I didn't know a lot. My dad was in the military. We moved like everywhere, we weren't around family, we weren't... You know, like... So, I didn't have a lot of opportunities to participate in certain things. So now as I'm older I try and teach my kids what I do know as I learn, kind of thing. And it's difficult for them because... It's almost like it's not, it's not... I don't want to say 'cool', but they're struggling with their identity because of the negative stuff that's out there about Natives. I think it kind of affects them in a negative way. And they should be proud, right? And for me that shifted as I got older and it became important for personal growth and healing...

Colleen shared her children's struggles with their cultural identity related to negative images in the media, and connected their experience to the pride that she developed as she got older and the role culture has had in her journey of growth and healing. She continues on to share how she had been learning about culture at Nokee Kwe, but how that experience was different at Positive Voice because of the involvement of outside Indigenous women.

I was kind of getting connected to my culture at Nokee Kwe because we have a lot of things going on there. But it was really neat to see the artists, and the poetry lady Tunchai. She was like a poet that was in there [at Positive Voice], and they're Native, they're in school, they're successful... It's good to see that kind of stuff. I love seeing that kind of stuff. I'm always like "look, look", I show my kids, you know just to show them, right? That it's possible.

Colleen's story illustrated the benefits of having cultural role models for positively shaping personal cultural identity. All the PV women expressed changes they experienced in terms of cultural pride due to being involved in a positive culturally based program related to being exposed to culture and cultural teaching and learning and working side-by-side with Indigenous women. As illustrated in Colleen's story and other stories, cultural identities are relational, with the PV women reflecting on their new confidence and pride as stemming largely from interactions and experiences with others in a positive cultural environment.

6.3.1.4 Extended Support Systems

The final common aspect within this overarching theme of personal growth was the development of extended support systems among the women. The PV women commonly reflected on these

supports systems and the positive impact this development had for their self-perception. The PV women shared stories of developing an extended community and support network that stemmed from cultural connections and was nurtured within the ‘learning’ aspect of the space. However, these relations also extended beyond cultural connection and learning together, in that they were described as contributing to a sense of safety. Most of the PV women shared stories of developing friendships with other PV women as well as the connection they felt to the wider Indigenous community, highlighting the positive impact that connection to others had on their self-value, related to belonging.

When describing the relationships that were developed with the other PV women, the women used words like special bond, sisterhood, family, and friends. For instance, Anne described the friendship she developed with two of the women as unlike any bond she had ever had. Culture and being Indigenous provided a line of connection and contributed to a sense of safety within the space. However, the women shared stories of connecting based on additional shared experiences and the sense of ‘feeling understood’ and ‘at home’, and of feeling entitled to exist within the space – things they had never felt in service delivery or other spaces before. These feelings nurtured connectivity. The women shared stories of connecting with each other along lines of similar experiences – fractured families, experiences of trauma, feeling discriminated against, feelings of disconnect, strength and resiliency, motherhood, taking care of family members, and other experiences that women tend to face related to their intersectional identities as urban Indigenous women.

In addition to developing friendships and bonds with the PV women, the women also shared the feelings of connectedness they had gained with an extended Indigenous community. The PV women shared stories of connecting to the Indigenous guest speakers and other Indigenous peoples via social media. The women also spoke about their increased knowledge – that they had the tools and *could* connect with others along lines that were important to them, culturally or otherwise. For instance, Anne shared how she was using social media to lobby politicians for action.

The women described the guest speakers as role models and reflected on how having access to these women helped strengthen and reinforce their own personal growth goals and their sense of

their abilities. In addition, the women's stories of friendship and extended community illustrated that they had developed both tangible and intangible connections and no longer felt isolated, and the positive impact of these connections on their renewed their sense of self and belonging.

One of Alison's stories was selected to illustrate the development and benefits of a support system. In this story, Alison reflects on what it was like for her to be in a space with other Indigenous women. Alison shares her experience of moving off the reserve as a child and she reflects on how this impacted her connections to Indigenous peoples.

Story 13: Alison's Story of Connecting

I left the reserve when I was 11 and I went to another reserve, and then I was in the city ever since. And in my community back then, there was a whole bunch of issues. I never felt accepted. Only by some. But with the majority of people, I didn't. And then being off the reserve, I didn't feel that either. And then it gets to where you're an urban Indian and Rez Indians treat you differently because you're not exactly like them, and they can see there's a difference, and I can see there's a difference as well.

Alison's continues on to describe how that sense of belonging shifted for her during PV. She discusses the value of being in a space with women who have shared experiences, reflecting on the understanding and acceptance that stems from shared experiences.

And so being in a program with other people that may be more Rez over urban or more urban, I really liked the dynamic of it because it's kind of like, but we're all First Nations, first of all. And knowing that we each had our own history, the whole intergenerational impacts of residential school and our experiences, being able to share them and know that you're not going to be judged by it because if you are put into a situation where you're talking about experiences with people that haven't gone through a lot of the stuff it's totally different. Like, I've been to a private hospital for PTSD and the processing group, and I know that what I shared sometimes was too much for them, for what they had PTSD for. It was kind of like, whoa. And then being in this kind of atmosphere at Positive Voice, I could actually relate to a lot of the women, and the women could relate to me and not go "Oh my God. That really happened to you?" Because you do get that from people if you ever share something, that kind of... "Like whoa".

Alison reflected on being with people that she could share with and be open with, even though each woman had their own history. She continues on to share her process of getting to know some women during PV and the feeling of empowerment that came from these connections.

Now as far as women, I don't hang around with a lot of women even when I was younger. I had a certain group of girls that I hung around with, but I hung around with guys for the most part. I know I need more women in my life, so I did like that. There's something else when you put men and women together and then you wouldn't be able to share so much. Women can relate to women in different ways that men wouldn't be able to, and having that opportunity to actually meet other women... I don't meet a whole lot of women, so that was really nice. And actually, I got to know my cousin better, and I didn't know her before. I remembered her from when I was a little girl before I left the reserve, but I hadn't seen her. I saw her once in all those years at a meeting. So that actually gave me an opportunity to get to know her. And there's another lady that was an acquaintance of my mom's and I got to know her better. And it's really those two ladies that I basically got to know a little bit better by being in Positive Voice. Which is nice! Now we have each other on Facebook [laughs]... So yeah, I mean... But being in Positive Voice, it really... It helped me in the sense of being, like with other Aboriginal women, where it made me feel empowered and a sense of pride about myself. Instead of being in groups where I'm the minority, I'm no longer the minority in that group. It really really helped. And helps your self-esteem.

Alison's story spoke to the intrinsic benefits of being with people who are like you and who can relate to or at least understand your experiences, for shaping personal identity and a sense of belonging. This was a common thread of the PV women's stories – that being able to learn together, laugh and cry together while sharing both positive and negative past and current stories provided a way for validating each other's experiences, supporting each other, and combating loneliness, all the while enriching a sense of self.

6.3.2 Stories of Claiming Space and Belonging

Reiterating this theme of change, the PV women described an overall change in their self-confidence. Increased confidence was discussed by the women as an outcome of the changes they experienced – for instance, an outcome of learning new skills. As well it was discussed as providing a way forward for continued changes and growth – for instance, confidence in future abilities. The women's stories of confidence in terms of skills often centered around a specific skill, set of skills, or area where they felt more confident such as confidence in photography skills or confidence in ability to succeed at school. However, confidence was also approached more generally – for instance, in stories of increased self-esteem, as illustrated in Alison's previous story about being around other women or 'recognizing potential'. The women also shared stories that

reflected or illustrated a more confident state of being in terms of providing a way forward – of feeling comfortable expressing thoughts, feeling secure, inspired, and having courage to try new things.

Overall, the women’s stories of their increased confidence reflected an ability to recognize value in their own experiences, abilities, thoughts, and opinions. A critical illustration of this increased confidence was found in the stories that the PV women shared of claiming space within their social environments. Not only did the women share stories of claiming space, they also felt *entitled* to claim space and to exist as individuals with interests, needs, and goals, and as members of a collective of urban Indigenous women within the spaces they occupy.

6.3.2.1 Individually Claiming Space

The women shared many stories of ‘claiming space’, both as individuals and members of a collective, during and after PV. As individuals, the women shared stories of their accomplishments, future plans and aspirations, goals they were working towards, and the many ways they were actively pursuing new or renewed interests. Colleen shared that she had been accepted to Fanshawe college after PV and felt confident in her ability to attend and succeed. Nikki and Heather both described their goals of going to university after they complete their GED. Alison shared her future aspirations and plans for animal welfare work and had also created a garden at her apartment. Heather joined the Positive Voice advisory committee. Sarah discussed her goal of continuing with her own business. And Alison and Anne shared stories related to their artistic accomplishments, with Positive Voice providing Anne with her first photography opportunity.

Nikki, Heather, Sarah, and Colleen also shared stories of speaking for a social work class at Western University, where they shared their individual perspectives and experiences with students. Further, Anne shared stories of her activism— of reaching out to local politicians about general community issues like sidewalks, going to different service delivery organizations to advertise PV, and engaging with government representatives and journalists about Indigenous concerns via

online spaces like social media. The women also shared stories of participating in interviews for newspaper stories. Overall, the PV women had found ways to occupy space within their personal environments, and they reflected on this as an important change that transpired through PV. A common thread within the women's stories was the confidence they felt towards their new extended support network. There was a sense among the women that they now had networks of help and support. If the women ever needed anything from the other PV women, the guest speakers, or even within the wider London community they knew how to reach out, that they could reach out, and who to reach out to – particularly in terms of local politicians and local resources.

6.3.2.2 Collectively Claiming Space

In addition to claiming space as individuals, the PV women also shared stories of claiming space as members of a collective. All the women shared stories about being involved in community events as members of PV – particularly their experience at the Museum Exhibit, which was the culmination of the first two sessions of PV. The PV women discussed the size of the event and the excitement they felt towards sharing their work with their family, friends, and the local news. Although many of the women also reflected on feelings of nervousness related to claiming this space – of putting their work on display, using their names to identify their work, and speaking and drumming at the event – and of pride towards overcoming this nervousness.

Another example of this theme of 'claiming space' were stories about the development of the Positive Voice Drum group. Heather developed the Positive Voice Drum group as an unofficial offshoot of PV, which in and of itself was an act of claiming space. The group was developed with the goal of continuing the growth and support work of PV, while learning how to drum. Three of the women shared stories of their time with the drum group — of joining and attending the drum group, and the events they had performed or would be performing at in the future as members of that group. In addition to these stories of experiences within the group, most of the interview participants reflected on the intrinsically beneficial nature of the drum group, as a space for the women and by the women.

Overall, the women were seizing opportunities to create spaces for themselves, to occupy existing spaces, and to have their voices heard, with their stories and reflections on their experiences illustrating a renewed sense of confidence towards their entitlement to occupy these spaces. A story of Heather's was selected to illustrate some ways the PV women were claiming spaces. This story was shared in the interview with Heather as an advisory committee member as an explanation for why she became involved with the advisory committee. In this story, Heather shares how she became a mentor during her time at PV and discusses the natural translation of this mentor role into the Positive Voice Drum Group. Heather describes the drum group with pride and also explains its importance as a way for Indigenous women to stay connected.

Story 14: Heather's Story of Claiming Space

I guess I wanted to be on the board [advisory committee] because I wanted to be someone who could always be an encourager. Someone who could be a mentor. And I believe I've done that because I developed a Positive Drum Group, and we've been very successful, and we've just performed recently at Brescia College. They had a Native Literacy conference there, I don't know if you're aware of that, a week ago, and we were part of the opening ceremonies. So, our Positive Drum Group, we really practiced like crazy, "Let's practice, let's choose the songs". I mean it's not just about singing it's about knowing the history of the songs. And it's a wonderful extension of the Positive Voice program and it's not just about drumming. I made it very clear that we make our own mandate, which is about carrying on about issues the urban Aboriginal woman has in this town; sharing resources, still listening. Even though we're not participants of the program anymore, we're still sisters, and we still have the confidentiality in place so that if someone walks in for a drum circle, and we're gonna sing, and they have a problem or had a difficult day they can discuss things. Or if they need a resource, they have a problem, we provide them with resources to the city... You know... To continue on that work. So, it's an extension. And that just happened. Just a simple request by Summer, "can somebody do a drum song?". So, we took action and got our drums together and started practicing... So, we eat [laughs]. All us women we get together to discuss what we want to eat, we talk, we've had drum practices where there was no practice at all. It was just about how we're all doing, you know? About our kids, about what's happening in our lives that's good, that's sad – things like that. Helping each other to the food banks... A lot of them just don't have vehicles and some days my vehicle is just packed to the brim, really, with girls. Squishing them in, helping them out because, you know, that helps them to continue on with school. That helps to put food in their children's stomachs and that's one worry that's alleviated, hopefully.

Heather's story offers some context to how the drum group became a multifaceted space for the women, by offering space to connect to one another as urban Indigenous women — to listen and

provide support, and to function as an additional resource for each other. I asked Heather if she had a good turnout of women involved, and if most of the members were from the first two sessions. She continues on to explain that yes, most of the current women were from the first two sessions, but that they were taking measures to recruit other women from the next sessions.

We're getting more. Right today I think there was seven of us performing. We do have some that don't wish to perform in public. We have some that still show up, and they're still trying, and some that have never drummed, but they'll sit in and watch and listen and that's a good thing. So, to say performing in public drumming, that would be about 7 to 8 ladies. But we do have interest and of course we're making plans to meet this next session and drum for them like we did the last session and to let them know how very welcome they are to come in and join our drum group. I've got a Facebook page dedicated to the Positive Voice Drum group only. It's a closed group, and we keep adding members. We let people see what's happening. I email them, the women I don't know. And just to let them know what we are about, and that they're very welcome, and that it's here [Nokee Kwe] so that they don't have to travel from very far, especially when they're already involved with the program. We try to make it so that some days it's here at the same time [as Positive Voice], and they have rushed right in from lunch to join us and then go back for their afternoon classes. Just to give them a glimpse of what we're about. Put a drum in her hand, let them have some fun, munch down their lunch quickly, and then back to PV.

Heather continues on to share about the impact the group was having in the community in terms of their performances and the outside interest in the group.

It's a way to stay connected to the women and the work. And I needed that myself. When we performed last week, last Thursday evening, it was such a wonderful feeling. I was just so proud that we were able to go to this conference with the literacy people from all over Ontario who were attending it and to show them what we had going here, what programs were. And of course, Summer did a workshop on the Positive Voice program, so she was able to say, "those were our girls performing". And we've got a lot of positive feedback. We were all on the news, I was interviewed by CBC radio. It generated a lot of interest and Jake [instructor at Nokee Kwe] said he's still getting emails about the performance. And the girls were very happy, and they could hardly wait to learn more songs and have another 'gig', as they put it [laughs]. And we're also very lucky that another gal who is a present participant of the Positive Voice program is also quite the seamstress. She wants to make matching skirts for the whole group. You know, because we kind of showed up in what we had. So, she would like to make traditional skirts for the drum ladies, and we're all going to be involved with that, as well. So, I like that. We [Positive Voice] have a white and red insignia, so we're going to kind of try to stick to that. So that's what we all decided on.

What stood out in Heather's story is the collectivizing effect that being a part of the group had for the women, and that they were claiming space within the wider London community. In fact, the

women's reflections suggested that the increased confidence and sense of entitlement to claim space within their environments was very much related to being and feeling part of a group and a collective – in terms of the Positive Voice program and the drum group, and as urban Indigenous women.

The PV women discussed their desire to maintain connections to each other and to claim space in concrete ways as an aspect of continuing their own self-development. The women shared feelings of excitement towards the future and an expanded recognition of personal possibility. Overall, the PV women developed outlets, tools, and goals for continuing personal growth and development after PV. This expansion of space was shared by the women as becoming part of their identity or as enriching their identity in terms of feeling confident towards their abilities and entitlement to be within their spaces. With this in mind, PV was identified as a turning point, as it inspired the women to continue their healing and learning journeys post-PV.

6.4 Summary

Several common themes existed in the stories that the PV women told and the reflections and insights they offered on their experiences. While these themes also stood out in my analysis, the importance of these narratives were identified by the women in the insights they offered, and in the observations shared by other program peoples. The women's stories reflected a timeline of before PV and after PV — with PV framed by the women as a turning point or a point of change in their lives. Using PV as a point of reference, the women's pre-PV stories reflected an overarching context of limitations and barriers – a framework that was consistent with mainstream narratives. All but one of the women described having a more one-sided, limited, or narrow perception of themselves and their experiences prior PV illustrated in their stories of limitation and barriers. While varied, the women's stories were commonly organized around areas of motherhood, abilities, cultural identity and connections, trauma, and othering.

From both the amount of space the women awarded to these themes in their narratives, and the women's own reflections on these areas, it was clear that the women's experiences of limitation

and barriers – of lacking and of racism and discrimination – had been defining aspects of their identity prior to PV. These experiences had shaped the meaning the women assigned to their lived experiences, often related to what was assigned to them in terms of Western cultural memory. However, unlike mainstream narratives, the women’s narratives of lacking were not absolute or linear. The women shared insights on their pasts and reflected on the hopefulness and the desires they had prior to PV to create change in their lives. The women shared how their experiences, and the areas to which they assigned meaning, had shifted during PV. They described changes in their identities, sense of self, connections, and their overarching sense of worth and entitlement to occupy space.

Stories, reflections, and observations indicated changes in mindset and the development of positive and forward thinking, increased skills and abilities, new interests and passions, re-acquaintance with existing interests, a sense of awareness towards their potential, the development of culturally confident identities, meaningful friendships, and a sense of belonging. These narratives of change were founded in the women’s increased pride and confidence in themselves that resulted in pluralistic identities and increased self-expectations – illustrated through stories of claiming space. Overall, the women recognized their value not just as individuals but as members of their social environments and as urban Indigenous women.

Chapter 7

7 Space of Disruption and Resistance

The final goal of my dissertation was to situate the Positive Voice program (PV) within this multi-level story of representation – to understand the Positive Voice program as one approach to service delivery from the perspectives of those involved in the program (including the PV women, program people) and through program evaluation data. I was interested in understanding both the deliverability of this type of program and its value within the context of changing the macro-level narrative from the inside as an aspect of power and representation. In particular, addressing how PV might mediate existing dominant representations by providing space for women to create and nurture their own narratives. Recall that interviews were aimed at understanding the women's experiences and the Positive Voice program through the stories, reflections, and insights from those involved, mediated by my interpretations. Like the previous chapter, a thematic narrative analysis that combined common themes with individual stories was used. In addition, this chapter also reflects on findings gained through secondary analysis of program evaluation data and program content. As a member of the advisory committee, many of the common themes identified by interview participants also coincided with my experiences and interpretations. In this chapter, common themes are illustrated through stories from program people. These stories were chosen for their applicability and theory constructing capabilities, with care taken to be inclusive of all the program people who shared their time and offered valuable insights.

This chapter focuses on addressing the third research question: *How can service delivery function as a space of resistance and disruption to mainstream narratives and narrative practices surrounding Indigenous women?* Interest was in understanding how the Positive Voice program as a narrative space might mediate, disrupt, combat, and transcend existing narratives and narrative practices – Western cultural memory. To address this question, analysis focused on program success and function, with the aim of understanding 'what worked' about the program and why. Findings are organized into two sections related to varying but interconnected definition of

‘success’ — findings related to program deliverables and participant connection to PV, and findings related to PV as a narrative space of resistance.

Findings related to program deliverables are briefly discussed first as they provide some context to PV’s potential as a service delivery program model. The remainder of the chapter then focuses on findings related to PV as a space of resistance, with some program-based challenges discussed at the end of the chapter. Overall PV was successful as both a deliverable program and a space of resistance – two forms of success that illustrate the potential of PV as a space of disruption, resistance, and cultural empowerment.

7.1 Program Deliverables and Connections

The previous narrative chapter illustrated the PV women's personal understanding of their own experiences of successes and achievements that transpired during their time at PV. These representations of success, shared through the women’s stories, are invaluable as evidence, as they illustrate both the uniqueness of individual experiences and also shared experiences. Yet, stories are also less ‘measurable’ in a quantifiable sense. With this in mind, program success was also evident in terms of program-based outcomes, including quantifiable measures and deliverables. In addition to these deliverables, experiential reflections illustrated participant connection to programming – a necessity for program longevity. Overall, findings pointed to the success of PV as a deliverable program. These successes were evident in the key findings from the program evaluation completed January, 2017 by Jerry White after the completion of the first two sessions, and were supported by participant stories and reflections. A brief discussion of some of these key findings is included, as they extend the potential of the program beyond the 11 PV women. Two overarching themes gained from evaluation and interview data illustrate this potential:

- First, program-based deliverables and key outcomes indicated program success.
- Second, the PV women’s connection to the programming.

The program evaluation, completed and provided to me by White, was the main source for deliverable and outcome related findings. These findings are summarized below and supported by interview participant reflections and observations. Additionally, as a member of the advisory committee, I had access to program reports, attended advisory committee meetings, and attended both the events — the Matika Wilbur night and the exhibit opening. This secondary and observational data shaped my interpretations.

7.1.1 Program Deliverable Success

In general, PV was deemed successful in terms of measurable deliverables/outcomes, as defined by program goals. Program goals determined and shared by Thorp (the program developer), White (the program evaluator), and others involved in program development, included the completion of an evaluation, participant engagement and satisfaction, the development of community connections, and narrative development. These areas were all identified as important for determining the success of the program as a program delivery model and the potential for continuation and duplication of this type of program beyond the initial two pilot sessions. Success in these areas was measured and outlined in the evaluation. Interviewee stories, reflections, and insights, as well as advisory committee reports, also reflected the importance of these areas for establishing program success, as well as actual successes in these areas.

7.1.1.1 Successful Completion of Program Evaluation

The first tool for determining success in terms of program deliverability was the successful completion of a program evaluation. Although the data gained from the evaluation was critical for understanding program success, four of the program people discussed the evaluation in and of itself — the process and its completion — as an aspect of success. The process of conducting an evaluation was framed as an act of disruption and resistance, due to the creation of data documenting successful Indigenous centered programming. The literature describes the importance of evaluation as a form of knowledge production surrounding Indigenous service

delivery, that integrates participants within the process (Jacob & Desautels, 2013). By functioning as a form of quantifiable evidence, evaluation is a valuable mechanism of success within the context of service delivery. The evaluation provided systematic understanding of program related experiences and increased the potential for program longevity through the production of statistical and experiential evidence.

A brief story of Elizabeth's was selected to illustrate the value of having data to support service delivery. Elizabeth frames the importance of the evaluation in terms of program success, discussing its usefulness and the value that it brought to the program from a service delivery perspective.

Story 15: Elizabeth's Story of Service Delivery

When you run programs in the Native community you just say, hey we're going to do this every Wednesday and we're gonna do this all year. Where Positive Voice was, hey this is what we're going to do, but we have very specific rules and we also have very specific goals that we want to achieve, and we also want to see how we can use data to see if it really is working. Because a lot of times our communities don't have the ability to evaluate internally. And that is a big... I would say that's a big gap in the things we do in our communities. Like a lot of us don't even have a good handle on what our skilled labor force is in our communities. The last time they ever did a survey was like 15, 20 years ago. So, like if somebody came to us and said I have a whole bunch of jobs what's your skilled labor? It might take us a good couple months just to put that report together. So that's what I really liked about Positive Voice and that's a difference I saw. There was a mechanism for evaluation that was already predetermined. To see, this is really going to make a difference.

In this story, Elizabeth explained the challenge of lacking data in Indigenous communities related to program evaluation and community demographics. She expressed what she felt to be a benefit of having data to support experiences. Elizabeth's story begins to highlight the disruptive quality data collection can have by illustrating or legitimizing program success from a quantifiable perspective.

In other words, the evaluation was itself disruptive as it brought attention to the program and added to the existing data and discussions of effective/meaningful Indigenous programming. Although program evaluations are not always possible or appropriate, program people commonly shared that the evaluation gave PV more credibility within the service delivery sector, which is an important

aspect of program longevity. Aside from the stature that came from having an evaluation, the data produced through this evaluation was essential for framing PV in terms of quantifiable success, with the measures speaking to the tangibility and effectiveness of Indigenous centered, narrative based programs for engaging Indigenous women and disrupting existing narratives. Some of these measures will be discussed and illustrated through stories shared by program people.

7.1.1.2 Participant-Level Successes

The evaluation included exit interviews with all 11 PV women and was an important source for detailing quantifiable ideas of success within a service delivery context of program value, capacity, and longevity. Several measurables were included in the evaluation related to recruitment, completion, and satisfaction. The evaluation also included community-level deliverables like community buy-in, engagement, and impact beyond the program, as well as the successful execution of an exhibit. Looking first at quantifiable participant-level deliverables, PV was considered successful on measures of recruitment, completion and satisfaction. The first session began with 9 participants, 6 of whom completed. The three women who left the program did so for reasons outside the program's control including family illnesses and childcare issues. The second session had five participants begin and complete the program. These numbers indicated successful recruitment and completion, and the evaluation concluded that 6 participants per session was the ideal number in terms of time, resource distribution, and participant engagement.

The evaluation also indicated general participant satisfaction with the program, with 100% of participants indicating they were satisfied with the program, felt the program was well organized and well run, learned how to share positive stories about themselves, found the other women in the program to be helpful, found the program to be helpful, and attended PV because they wanted to. Further, 91% of participants described the program timing as convenient, felt that the coordinator respected them and their opinions, and felt that relationships to other people have been improved because of PV. When asked about future plans, 36% of the women indicated that they were planning on attending training programs, 55% were going to go back to school, and 9% were

continuing with activist projects and self-healing. In general, these evaluation findings illustrated success in terms participation and participant satisfaction and began to illuminate the general need for these types of programs for Indigenous women. These findings were reflected in the women's stories shared in the previous chapter, as well as in the observations offered by the program people.

7.1.1.3 Community-Level Successes

Another indicator of program success related to community buy-in and engagement, and the extended impact of the program (which included the exhibit and its reach). These areas further speak to PV's potential for program longevity and as a service delivery model.

7.1.1.3.1 Successful and unsuccessful community buy-in

PV was found to be both unsuccessful and successful in obtaining community buy-in, a theme examined in the evaluation and supported in interview stories and advisory committee reports. Looking first at areas that were not successful, PV was not successful in developing a recruitment-based relationship with existing Indigenous and non-Indigenous service organizations in London, such as Ontario Works or Atlohsa. Thorp explained during her interview that the goal was to develop a working relationship with other service delivery programs, so that other services in London would refer clients to PV. Although Thorp shared that several service delivery organizations in London seemed to connect to the program, this did not translate into a referral-based relationship for the two pilot sessions. Four of the program people spoke to the challenges associated with establishing these types of reciprocal service delivery relationships, particularly with a new program. Related, PV was similarly unsuccessful at finding a stable funding partner.

However, PV was successful in engaging other important community partners in areas of program development and implementation. The program successfully conducted three focus groups with Elders, urban service delivery representatives, and other Indigenous leaders on best practices for engaging and developing curriculum for urban Indigenous women. Additionally, an advisory committee consisting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous service delivery persons, academics, and others was successfully established and engaged. The program was also successful in securing

guest speakers and instructors, most of whom came to the first session and then returned for the second after being so impressed. Guests included two city councilors who visited during the planning stages and again during program operation, another city counsellor, two MPPs, one MP, and three other guests from University and community groups. As well, three Indigenous artists/activists attended as guest speakers and instructors and worked with the program participants, one of whom was local. Another Indigenous artist engaged with participants virtually through social media.

Thus, most aspects related to community buy-in were successful, with recruitment and funding partners recognized as important areas going forward. Additionally, despite not developing recruitment partners, PV was successful in getting self-recruitments as well as other practices that will be discussed in subsequent sections.

7.1.1.3.2 Extended engagement and impact

Another community-level indicator of success was the successful extension of program engagement and program impact beyond the PV women. For instance, the program successfully engaged with media in terms of sharing the women's stories in a variety of ways. The local CBC covered the program on multiple occasions, including for their major 'Sounds of the Season' Radio programming. The London Free Press also published at least one article about PV and the museum exhibit opening. Additionally, the wider community engaged with the program and the women through social media platforms. In addition to the stories that the women shared about social media engagement, advisory meeting reports on the first two sessions also indicated outside social media engagement with the PV Facebook page having 140 likes and the Twitter page having 121 followers, over 15,000 tweet impressions (number of interactions with content shared), and 537 profile visits. Ultimately, individuals outside of the PV women were interested in PV and what the PV women were doing.

Beyond media outreach and engagement, PV also provided avenues for the women to engage with local communities in a more tangible way. By the end of the second session, the PV women and program administrators had been involved in 5 guest speaking engagements and events to discuss both the program and their knowledge as Indigenous women. Additionally, the PV women found

ways to continue engaging with each other and with the London community by creating their own drum group – a learning, community engagement, and performance group commonly described as an extension of PV.

7.1.1.3.3 Successful exhibit

Finally, an exhibit was successfully held, which included an opening night ceremony and a three-month long exhibit that displayed the PV women's work. PV was successful in finding a partner to hold the exhibit — the Museum of Archaeology in London. PV and museum staff worked together to create the exhibit. The exhibit was also successful in terms of having enough materials to display at an exhibit, as this exhibit was displayed in its own large room at the museum. As well, the exhibit was successful in terms of holding an opening ceremony and engaging the London community, evidenced through my observations and the observations shared to me by most participants. Everyone interviewed shared stories relaying the success of the exhibit, with most stories framed around the opening night and the incredible turnout it had, as it was standing room only. In fact, museum staff noted this exhibit to be the largest opening event they had ever had.

These participant and community level indicators were important indicators of program success. Although the evaluation provided many quantifiable indicators of success related to service delivery, evaluation data is of course limited in that the measures of success were pre-determined and lacked participant voice. However, these measures of success were reiterated in the stories that were shared detailing the women's connections to the program.

7.1.2 Connection to Program

Beyond these quantifiable outcomes, the connection that the PV women felt is a central aspect of program success as it speaks to its potential for program longevity. In fact, much of the success that PV had in terms of measurable outcomes stemmed from the women and their connection and commitment to the program that grew out of their identification with the program itself. Overall, very minimal complaints were shared with me about the program in general or anything more specifically. The women enjoyed that it was a lengthier program, with four of the PV women

expressing that they wished it had been even longer. From the stories the women shared, it was evident that they enjoyed the program structure – that is, having space to write and share their own stories and create their own projects in reflection of themselves, their experiences, and their interests. As well, the women enjoyed the interactive aspects of the program – working with multiple and diverse instructors/guests, sharing and working with other women, and participating in the museum exhibit. The program people similarly shared observations of the women connecting to each other and the program. For instance, stories were commonly shared detailing the women’s connection to the narrative focus – of being able to write individual and personal narratives, the opportunity to be positive and look at strengths, and the opportunity to be creative.

A brief story by Tunchai was selected to illustrate the connection that was observed by the program people in relation to the women and the program itself. In this story, Tunchai shares the connection she observed between the women and the programming she was teaching.

Story 16: Tunchai’s Story of Connections

So, there were women who had never written a poem in their life before and we would all write poems together, and I would have them all read out what they had written. And all of them, every time, I got so emotional in every session that I facilitated because everything that each one of them came up with was just so profound and so beautiful and so personal to their own experience and story. And seeing the women who hadn't written poetry before, or had maybe even felt uncomfortable writing poetry before coming up with something that they felt really proud of creating was really awesome. And again, having an opportunity to share their words with everybody else and to feel that support or enthusiasm reciprocated in reading their words in poetry was really cool and I think it just speaks to the power of... You know when you give someone the means to be able to express themselves in a way that they didn't otherwise before see was possible... like what can come out of that, is something really amazing and really beautiful, and really profound.

Tunchai explained that the women were able to create their own individual narratives, that they were proud of their creations, and proud that they could share their work with each other. What stood out in Tunchai’s story, and other stories from most interviewees, was that despite not being advertised as a ‘healing program’ necessarily, having space to learn new skills and write personal narratives that prioritized strength, was healing.

A more in-depth look at specific programming and practices that worked within the program will be examined further in the next section. However, it should be noted that the PV women (along with others involved) and the connection they felt to the program were central to its success. The PV women were open to learning and had a deep desire to learn, create, and focus on their strengths. Most women who came to PV were open to new possibilities and were already on their own learning and healing journeys. As discussed, several of the women were working on their GED, and all described being previously motivated for self-growth and self-exploration prior to PV. In addition to having a desire to learn and engage, the women wanted to produce their own narratives and had a desire to collectively reject dominant Western representations. Overall, the connection and commitment that the women developed to the program was intrinsic to its success.

These findings related to program deliverables and participant connections illustrate the do-ability of the program in terms of potential for longevity as a deliverable program.

7.2 Stories of Disruption and Resistance

Successful deliverables and the positive connection that the PV women felt to the program provided some insight into its potential to continue as a service delivery model beyond the two pilot sessions and outside of London. Alongside this service delivery potential, the function of PV as a space of disruption and resistance to the dominant narratives was illustrated in common stories that together reinforced the ability to create and disseminate alternative narratives. The stories that were shared redefined how narrative development can and should be approached. Particularly, they illustrated that service delivery practices and structure can influence aspects of construction and processes of representation surrounding Indigenous women. As stories from the previous chapter indicated, all the PV women disrupted existing representations and narrative practices simply by telling their own stories in their own words and images, and sharing these representations with others. In general, the women acted as a form of ‘resistance’, and it was their personal and collective strength and resiliency that resulted in program success.

Beyond the women and their successes, there were several specific ways that PV functioned as a space for disrupting and resisting dominant narratives and narrative practices. The remainder of this chapter aims at illustrating the disruptive potential of PV and shows how disruption is a form of resistance to Western cultural memory. Five common themes are discussed:

- First, the program disrupted ‘expert’ centered ideas of knowledge and knowledge production through power sharing strategies — from development of the program to dissemination of the women’s work.
- Second, delivery strategies disrupted the deficit-based approach that dominates common narrative spaces like service delivery and media by approaching programming from a strength-based position.
- Third, PV functioned generally as a safe learning space through practices that simultaneously encouraged growth while also meeting the women ‘where they were’ in terms of abilities and needs.
- Fourth, within this safe learning space, the PV women were able to foster both individual and collective narratives and identities, effectively expanding the narrative surrounding Indigenous women to one that builds off individual and shared strength and experiences.
- Finally, PV both functioned as an existing community and created an extended community, which contributed to PV’s success in terms of its disruptive potential.

These themes were gained from participant stories, insights, and observations, as well as my interpretations. Common stories reflected PV was a space of resistance by disrupting common narratives and common practices surrounding narrative development. Themes reflected specific service delivery practices, program-based decisions, and strategies that were used during PV – all of which contribute to the discussion of service delivery best practices. Particularly, they speak to the potential for PV to add to the literature on Indigenous service delivery best practices, as a narrative space.

7.2.1 Disruption of ‘Expert’ Knowledge

The first theme that illustrated Positive Voice as a space of disruption and resistance was that PV continually found ways to disrupt ‘expert’ centered ideas of knowledge production (construction and dissemination) through its service delivery methods – particularly as it related to ideas of white expert knowledge construction. As evidenced in previous chapters, mainstream narrative spaces like the media and service delivery tend to reflect ‘expert’ voices and representations when it comes to knowledge production and translation. These ‘expert’ voices are generally white and institutional representations of Indigenous experiences. As a program developed by a non-Indigenous person, finding strategies to disrupt accepted types of knowledge production was particularly relevant, as well as timely. Some strategies of disruption were built into program delivery methods. Other forms of disrupting the ‘expert’ happened more organically, flowing out of the program as a relational learning experience. In general, the disruption of ‘expert’ voice existed at all stages of the program – development, implementation/teaching, learning, and dissemination – through the inclusion of multiple perspectives and the non-traditional (non-Western) learning environment.

7.2.1.1 Multi-Perspective Development Strategies

A multi-perspective environment was created at PV throughout all stages of the program through specific service delivery strategies. The various strategies that were employed disrupted the expert by challenging monolithic expert assumptions’ surrounding knowledge production and service delivery.

Looking first at the program development stage, an initial literature review was conducted of existing practices and programs – looking at what has been done in the past and to what success, and what has been recognized as best practices. Thorp explained that the goal of this review was to gain knowledge from Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, researchers, and service delivery people about best methods to incorporate into the program without appropriating, homogenizing, making cultural assumptions of participants, and without reinforcing an ‘expert’ position.

As well, three different focus groups were conducted with Indigenous community members prior to PV to gain perspective on the potential needs of Indigenous women for developing PV, recognizing that service delivery literature may still erase community-based voice. Finally, an advisory committee was established that consisted of service delivery persons and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples who had a wide variety of knowledge, skills, and connections. This group functioned as an input generating and collective decision-making body, that has continued to meet throughout the program. While the literature review and focus groups were critical aspects of the development stage, the creation of this hands-on advisory committee ensured that multiple voices would continue to shape PV beyond the development stage. Together these multi-perspective strategies combined institutional perspectives with lived experiences into the program development that disrupted Western ideas of expert knowledge.

A story shared by Frances was included to illustrate the value of the multi-perspective environment that was employed at PV, particularly the inclusion of multiple Indigenous voices. In this story, Frances shares her perspective towards her role at PV, and her original intent of joining the advisory committee to make sure Indigenous perspectives were included.

Story 17: Frances' Story of Offering

I'll be honest. One of the reasons I wanted to participate was to make sure that there was some sort of Indigenous voice on the board [advisory committee]. Because you can study and you can, you know, be aware, but sometimes there's those lived experiences that you don't know. I'm in my 30s [laughs], I still make mistakes that I get corrected for all the time. I'm an Anishinaabe woman. Well, you can address somebody, I often use my own language, and I can be addressing a Haudenosaunee woman and... There are certain things that are difficult to navigate, and there are certain things that you just don't learn until you do it wrong and you're corrected. So, my perspective was just making sure there was some sort of Indigenous voice, preferably more than one. Another reason to participate was that if there's no Indigenous voice, reluctance for the community to participate was going to be there. I mean we've had, and this is not Summer at all, but we've had 'white saviours' that think that they're kind of doing us a favour. And it's like no, no, we just need someone who is on our side.

Frances explained the importance of having many Indigenous voices involved in the development stage. This multiplicity is essential to challenging the notion of the homogenized 'Indigenous expert' — a Western assumption that tends to frame individual Indigenous persons as providing

the needed ‘Indigenous perspective’ to effectively Indigenize. Frances continues on to share some of the valuable knowledge that she could offer due to her own experiences, and explains that she became more trusting in a sense towards the program’s conduciveness with Indigenous values and common practices, and of those involved.

I am certainly more trusting, if that makes sense. Not that I've ever been necessarily skeptical, but you kind of always go into these things with your eyes open. So yeah, definitely more trusting and more apt to not be as influencing, if that makes sense. So, to not say like, “okay this is how this should be, or it should be like this”. And I mean I have done some of that. I've been like, “okay we have people coming in, did you compensate them? Are you making sure there’s some sort of offering?” Just stuff that is minor cultural things – Make sure there's some sort of gift, you know? And I'm sure some of the stuff Summer already knew, but it was also because I was attaching my name to it.

While sharing that she became more trusting of the program, Frances also continues on to share some of the ways she was able to positively shape PV to be more community focused by building off her knowledge and community position in such a way to encourage and foster potential participant buy-in.

I think it's more of the community piece that I'm able to provide. So, soliciting participants through connections at At^Lohse and N'Amerind, in a different way. Because Summer went in the front door to the proper contacts. Whereas I just went "hey have you heard... ", and kind of put it out there that way. I've had ideas that I have thrown her way, like different artists, different approaches. So, the UWO Powwow for example. I was like "why aren't we going to Powwows?" Because you're gonna reach a large First Nations audience, because we all go. And she was like, "I don't know, why aren't we going to powwows"? And if you're there and the participants come [PV women] and they speak to it, then it also gives a face. Like Heather went and talked it up amazingly well. And that’s the other thing, putting a participant voice in there as well. I think it certainly shifted it [PV] potentially from more academic to a mix of academic and grassroots, which is what I think allows some trust to kind of happen. We're not terribly trusting of academia necessarily, so I think the balance kind of helps that out. And then also just having a voice and face within the community, being very much like "your auntie might enjoy this" or " if you know anybody share it" and seeing it kind of snowball throughout the community, is fantastic. I loved that.

Frances’ story illustrated the value of clear and specific multi-perspective strategies like the advisory committee. What stood out in her story was the necessity that these multi-perspective strategies include many Indigenous persons not just as a decolonial strategy but to promote community engagement, which relates to program longevity. Elizabeth shared a similar story,

where she discussed one of her roles regarding her involvement — of being a resource for potential participants and offering another Indigenous perspective.

7.2.1.1.1 Nurturing organic developments

In addition to employing purposeful development strategies, an important aspect of PV's success was that it nurtured the multi-perspective environment that transpired organically with the PV women. For instance, Frances' story also illustrated how the PV women became involved with the program in areas outside of their role as program participants, like engaging the community and becoming program spokespersons. This involvement was unanticipated yet critical in promoting PV as a safe and welcoming environment. Similarly, the PV women shaped the program implementation, which also became critical to the program's success. It was not the initial intention that the PV women would shape the program in terms of the daily teaching/learning strategies. However, when it came down to actually delivering the program, the programming was adapted in almost instinctual ways to meet the women's needs and include their perspectives. Thorp shared that she would often change, adapt, or even scrap the daily programming based on the women's needs and interests – a theme that was supported by the PV women, most of whom shared stories illustrating the time that was spent on non-program related activities and interactions to address needs that came up.

What stood out from this organic multi-perspective environment was that everyone involved — the developer, Indigenous community members, the advisory committee, instructors and guest speakers, the PV women, and others — were respected as having valuable knowledge, skills, perspective, and lived experiences that could all contribute to the program. For instance, from the literature review, the narrative based service delivery method was developed. From the focus groups with Indigenous community members, valuable information surrounding topics like the days of the week and timeframes that are convenient, types of support that might be useful, and skills that are of interest to learn was gained. Some of the knowledge and strengths that individuals brought were more experiential, related to aspects of lived experience, as illustrated in Frances' story. Whereas other knowledge was more skill or resource based. For instance, knowledge of specific technologies and other tech skills. In fact, some people were asked to be involved

specifically due to their skillset. For instance, White was asked if he would conduct the evaluation due to his skills and experience as a program evaluator.

A story shared by Cassie, one of the placement students, was selected to provide some context to the varied skills that different program people brought to PV, and to illustrate how PV built off these skills and knowledges. Cassie's story discusses her technological role and how that morphed into more administrative duties after the third session. Although brief, Cassie's story can be considered in relation to Frances' previous story – as together illustrating the varied types of knowledge brought into the program and the various forms of support that program people could offer. Ultimately, both stories illustrate the benefits of having many diverse perspectives and voices.

Story 18: Cassie's Story of Support

At first...so when I was a student, I helped to facilitate the program with Summer. My role specifically just due to my skill set, was that I helped a lot with technology issues. Just because that's what I'm good at. And I did some administrative kind of things like thank you cards, posters, things like that just because Summer was spending all the time actually facilitating the program and making sure that it's working. The kind of behind-the-scenes stuff. There was me and another student and we kinda shared those responsibilities. Now I'm a volunteer and I'm doing a lot more of the administrative work, just because that's... Like I don't have a lot of time during the week to volunteer so that's the stuff that I can help out with. I can't be here three days a week. I'm doing a lot more behind-the-scenes stuff right now than during the first two sessions. Creating displays for when Summer goes out to talk about the program and advertise it, market it, and stuff like that. Filling in if she's away. Like one day she had, it was the Breakfast of Champions she had to attend. So, I took over for that day, I just did the program myself. But yeah mostly behind-the-scenes stuff right now.

Cassie described her role as more 'behind the scenes' and involved in the 'everyday functioning' of the program. Whereas, Frances also works in service delivery and had much to offer in that respect, she described her knowledge, skills, and role in terms of community understanding and connection.

In general, PV became a site for knowledge engagement and exchange through both planned and organic multi-perspective strategies that disrupted individual ideas of 'expert' and monolithic service delivery. Care was taken to practically establish PV through the feedback and active input

of multiple voices including the PV women themselves, and to continually adjust the program throughout its duration based on this input. As well, efforts were made to practically incorporate many Indigenous perspectives and to privilege Indigenous knowledge. For example, when ‘expert’ knowledge was sought out, for example the focus groups, guest speakers, and advisory committee members, care was taken to seek out Indigenous peoples with those relevant knowledges or skill sets.

7.2.1.2 Non-Western Teaching and Learning

A related aspect that illustrated the disruption of the non-Indigenous ‘expert’ and knowledge production was that PV was developed as a non-Western teaching and learning space. Building off this multi-perspective environment, several aspects and learning strategies stood out. To begin, both the program objectives (example: narrative development), and the specific programming and types of skills (example: social media, art skills, networking) challenged ‘expert’ ideas of knowledge. PV’s programming and skill types fell outside of the usual Western classification of employment and education-based skills, despite these skills being very timely in the technological landscape of employment and education sectors. The project-based learning — writing tweets, making memes — was similarly ‘non-traditional’ in the Western understanding of education. Further, the incorporation of many teachers in the form of guest speakers disrupted traditional teachers/student relationships, and the power dynamics that tend to exist within these relationships. Moreover, the instructors used a variety of instruction methods from Western lecture type instruction and individual worktime, to more interactive forms of teaching such as group discussions and online twitter chats. The interactive teaching methods stood out to the program people, with each sharing about ‘hands-on’, ‘peer-to-peer’, and ‘guiding’ as opposed to ‘instructing’ types of learning that happened at PV, as well as the ‘levelling of the playing field’ between the PV women and instructors/guests that took place.

While the skill development and teaching strategies challenged Western ideas of service delivery and programming, what really stood out among interview participants was the value awarded to

sharing and listening, and to lived experiences within the PV space as relational teaching methods. This creation of a relational learning space was described as unintended and as happening organically. As a teaching method, instructors and guest speakers drew on their own experiences to illustrate the skills they were teaching. For instance, Tunchai shared her own experiences with the women through her poetry, while teaching about poetry.

In addition to teaching specific skills, lived experiences were used by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous instructors to connect to the women. Four of the program people explained that sharing lived experiences allowed the instructors and guests to find common ground and connect to the PV women, which contributed to greater learning. While the stories shared suggested that the connections between the PV women and Indigenous guest speakers were deeper, non-Indigenous instructors and guests also connected through lived experiences that was similarly discussed as ‘levelling the playing field’ and disrupting power dynamics. For instance, Thorp shared that the politicians who appealed to the women through their lived experiences were able to connect more to the women. Further, Thorp discussed her own process of realizing the value in sharing her experiences with the women as a single mother who went back to school as an adult, as a way of ‘levelling the playing field’ a bit. The PV women supported this reflection, with four of the women sharing stories of connecting to the stories and experiences that guests and instructors told.

Further, the relational learning space and the connections that were made along lines of shared lived experiences extended the learning and teaching beyond the structured programming — an unintended outcome that positively shaped program success. The relational learning environment widened the topics of learning to include life skills and life experiences, and other areas of interest for the women like ideas of healing, that were outside of the structured programming. Instructors drew on their own experiences to illustrate a point, offer perspective, and/or advice to women towards life experiences. For instance, not only did the Indigenous guest speakers Tunchai and Aura Last share about their artistic mediums, it was commonly shared that their instruction also included discussion of personal experiences as a form of experiential teaching — things that have worked for them.

Similarly, the PV women connected and taught each other, as well as others involved, further illustrating forms of relational learning and power sharing. The PV women and program people shared stories about sharing their experiences with the other women and guest speakers as a form of peer-to-peer connecting and teaching. These stories reflected the value that the PV women brought to the program through their knowledge sharing. One of Tunchai's stories was included to illustrate the relational teaching and learning environment that was fostered at PV. In this story, Tunchai shares her understanding of her role within PV — of facilitating by sharing her knowledge within the context of her experiences.

Story 19: Tunchai's Story of Relational Teaching

My role as a facilitator was to come in and share my story, and share a bit about the work that I do. And share my knowledge, and share my experience, and to share my gifts, I think. And so, when I came in to facilitate and present with the women, I was sharing my story of using 'We Matter' social media to create this organization, this campaign, all centered on Indigenous hope and strength. And I drew on my own work as a writer, as a poet, and as an advocate, as a 'how to use different platforms in different modes of expressions to tell my story and get across what I want to get across'. And so, in facilitation, I was running hands-on activities specifically around poetry. Like how to write, how to create your own narrative, healing narratives around means of poetry. Because a lot of the women... you know, haven't written poetry before. Or maybe they were a little intimidated to write poetry, or just haven't had that opportunity. So, facilitating activity around how poetry can be used as a mode of healing and as a mode of advocacy, but also while the women are re-creating their own personal narratives. You know? So, how we are in charge of telling our own stories was a key message that I brought to the program.

Tunchai explained that she shared her knowledge and her experiences, by sharing the campaign that she and her brother developed – the We Matter campaign⁵¹. Further, Tunchai discussed sharing her poetry with the women to teach them about poetry and about writing their own poetry. Tunchai continues to describe the sharing that took place between the women, and between her and the women.

⁵¹ As stated on the We Matter website, “We Matter is an Indigenous youth-led and nationally registered organization dedicated to Indigenous youth support, hope and life promotion... Indigenous role models, youth, and community members from across Canada submit short videos, written and artistic messages sharing their own experiences of overcoming hardships, and communicating with Indigenous youth that no matter how hopeless life can feel, there is always a way forward”. <https://wemattercampaign.org/what-is-we-matter>

And the women were just so thoughtful and so engaged, and you could really see... I mean all of them, right? They all had their struggles and their hardships in their past and what they were currently dealing with. And there was a lot of pain and challenge there, but also the beauty and resilience of the women in the program was just so amazing. And coming in and seeing the relationship that they had built with each other and how comfortable they were with each other. And, you know, the women would come in and they'd be chatting about their families and telling stories about their kids, you know, what happened that morning or the night before and filling each other in on happenings in their life and in their family and it was really just like a sense of community, or a sense of family that was in the room. And so, it was really amazing to be a part of that and experience that and listen to their story. To share my story, but also just let them speak and let them share. Give them the opportunity to share with me a bit of their experience, a bit of their story, and really listen... Listen to each other and share together in a space that felt safe.

What stood out in Tunchai's story as common was the exchange that took place within her facilitation, and the value that exchange held alongside the scheduled programming. Stories around teaching strategies commonly reflected this relational knowledge exchange – a form of learning and teaching through sharing experiences within a shared space – as undermining dominant perceptions surrounding what is considered knowledge and who are considered to be knowledge holders within narrative spaces.

Rather than teaching by assuming a singular expert position, instructors taught through facilitating knowledge sharing around lived experience, where everyone was recognized as having valuable experiences. Although there were still instructors and Western models of instruction, the teaching and learning that transpired at PV in practice were more reciprocal in nature, which contributed to the disruptive potential of PV as a narrative space. The reciprocal nature at PV created a more receptive and engaged environment of 'learning together' rather than 'teaching to' – a focus that disrupted the common power dynamics of teacher/student relationships and fostered connections between instructors and participants, and between participants that extended beyond PV. Additionally, the value awarded to lived experiences was itself a form of resistance as experiential knowledge and lived experiences are regularly devalued within Western knowledge spaces.

7.2.2 Disruption of Deficit-Centered Understanding

The second theme that illustrated Positive Voice as a space of disruption and resistance was that PV continually found ways to disrupt the deficit-centered Western cultural memory of Indigenous women and peoples that tends to occupy service delivery approaches and other narrative spaces. As a result, PV became a space of resistance to dominant mainstream narratives and narrative practices through both program structure and the creative work that the participants produced.

The individual narrative framework of PV was in and of itself disruptive, as it encouraged personal and individual narratives that tend to be absent in dominant representations and discourses. Further, the focus on ‘narrative development’ provided space for the women to add to the representation that exists surrounding Indigenous women, as their narratives illustrated Indigenous women as individuals and members of a collective with unique, diverse, and shared experiences. Essentially, an overarching aim of PV was to disrupt existing narratives by creating narratives and providing an alternative to the dominant Western deficit-based service delivery approach. With this in mind, PV encouraged this disruption through the learning and positivity focused programming and goals. It was in this disruption of deficit discourses through individual narratives that PV became a narrative space of resistance.

7.2.2.1 Learning + Strength Based

PV was learning focused in that it aimed at increasing participant skills and specific knowledge through skill-based programming. Although it was commonly shared that PV fostered healing, PV was not created as a healing-based program, per se, in terms of program capacity and specific programming. Rather, the expectation was that women would already be on their own healing journey.

Similarly, as part of this ‘learning focus’, the program took a strength-based approach through its focus on positive narrative development. Although ‘positivity’ and creating positive narratives was the goal, the program was structured in such a way that did not ignore negative experiences or force participants to put a ‘positive spin’ on negative experiences. Instead, positivity was

approached as an individual journey or process related to a recognition and embodiment of strength. As a uniquely personal experience, positivity was less about always being positive in the narrow sense of the word and more about possessing forward thinking and recognizing the inner strength and resilience of still being here. This positive strength-based approach was described by the women and other program people as something new and unique — as different from other programs they had been involved with and a new way of approaching experiences that the PV women truly enjoyed and connected with.

A story of White's was selected to illustrate the positive focus of PV and the disruptive potential of strength-based approaches generally. In this story, White situates PV's strength-based approach in relation to the common deficit-based focus from a research perspective, sharing the limitations of this common focus.

Story 20: White's Story of Strength-Based Approaches

Yeah, I mean if you think about it, we always start with the same story, right? And it can be addressed in a lot of different ways. We can either look at the demographics and the statistical story and then work our way back and say, you know, Suzanne is just like the statistics say. High incarceration rates, divorce rates extremely high, life expectancy, chronic...blah blah blah. I don't have to go through the list, right? So, if that's the story that is told, then that's the story that is led with, and...the press and others believe that they're being honest and admitting "oh we haven't done a good job", by putting those things forward. And actually, it's contradictory because all it does is it paints a story for people who haven't got a clue and then that becomes a stereotype that works its way through, and everybody assumes that it's a natural state of affairs. Starting with positive undermines that colonial story, and that colonial view and what you find is that people go... "She's doing what? Oh wow!" and then you find out there's more and more.

White explained that while negative experiences may exist, the trauma focus of dominant narrative spaces can reflect and reinforce existing Western cultural memory, and perpetuate existing Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations within these spaces like academia. White continues on to frame this narrative within his own initial skepticism towards the 'positive' focus.

And so, you start to...you learn about what was wrong by looking at what's right and by looking at best practices. So, I thought that was an important way to go and it seemed to me that they [the women] really built on that. What I was worried about in the actual process of it was, would the women be able to let go of those [negative] stories? And of course, what do I know! They were

galloping. They were so excited that somebody wanted to hear about their ideas about what was going to be improved and what was going to happen, right?

White explained that the women were eager for the opportunity to be positive and to share their own narratives and knowledge from a strength-based point of view. He continues on to explain how the positive focus that the women took challenged the dominant deficit-based narratives simply by not giving those narratives space, something he found during his exit interviews with the women.

Although they said they were giving women tools for addressing negative representations, I think it was more a reverse of that, like a negative effect. I think they were given tools to tell their positive story and that undermined the negative story. I don't think they address the negative story directly. I think they just pushed it off to the side. And I mean the participants were really shy when I first met with them, but they were forthright. As soon as I asked, "why are you doing this"? Boom. They just started talking. They were very very articulate about why – why they chose the things they did and other things. And what I found interesting about that was that people brought in parts of their past into their stories, but through traditional past, not just their personal past. Kind of... there was obviously a collective feeling among those who were in the particular group. But there was also a growing notion that they were Indigenous women and the collective was the Indigenous community at large and then their community and they were able to talk about teaching and introducing different things and sharing them. So, I found it really...that they, to get back to your question, they addressed the negative by talking about what's positive and what's important. I didn't hear anybody say ohh 'I'm really tired about being thought of as a sex worker or being thought of as somebody who has no home'. I didn't hear that. I heard, you know, 'I really want to get my sister to be able to come and stay with me so we're going to get a new bigger place, and we're going to do this, and we're going to do that'. It was a challenge to the negative by not talking about the negative.

What stood out in White's story was his twofold observation – that the women and their stories were disrupting common deficit-based narratives and Western cultural memory of Indigenous women by not discussing these negatives, illustrating the disruptive potential of narrative development.

7.2.2.1.1 Examples of the women's strength-based work

Critical to this disruptive potential is that the strength-based approach aligned with the PV women's wants and needs. In particular, the women wanted to create positive strength-based work that still reflected the depth of their own individual experiences.

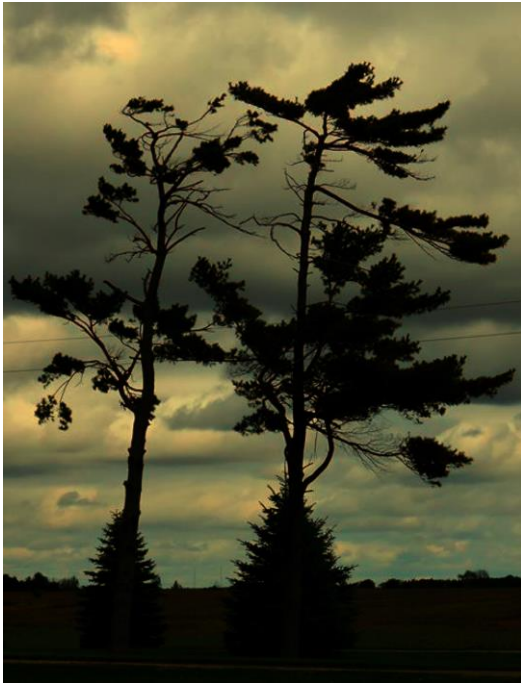
As White explained in the previous story, the women were ‘galloping’ at the opportunity to tell their stories from a position of strength. PV targeted a specific population — urban Indigenous women who were seeking change and something different in their lives related to skills, education, and employment. This, along with the learning strength-based framework, meant that PV aimed at disrupting the narrative by providing space for the experiences that tend to be absent within dominant Western narratives — of individual women, their strengths, and the depth of their experiences. With this in mind, the work that the women produced during their time in PV further existed as a form of disruption and resistance by adding strength and resiliency to the stories that exist and that are commonly disseminated surrounding Indigenous women. With permission from the women⁵², some of the stories that the PV women created and shared during their time at PV are included to illustrate and give space to the women’s voices and to this strength (Figure 9).

The first story (image and narrative) in Figure 9 is one of Alison’s works. In this story Alison describes her connection to pine trees, noting their imperfect beauty and their ability to withstand storms and other conditions. In this story, pain and resilience are shared as aspects of collective Indigenous identity. However, Alison frames this experience with pride and personal strength. The second story is by Anne. In this story Anne describes the challenging relationship she has with her biological family. However, like Alison, Anne focuses on being true to herself and her inner strength as an act of self-love. The third story is one of Colleen’s. In this story, Colleen offers insights into the challenges she has faced as a single mother, using the image of a set of footprints away from other footprints to tell a story of her isolation. Colleen shares how she learned to find strength in that solitude. The fourth story is by Sarah. In Sarah’s story she describes growing up as an Indigenous person, comparing life on and off the reserve. Sarah describes the stereotyping and negative treatment she has endured, yet juxtaposes these experiences with unaltered pride and strength as an Indigenous person, ending with the exclamation “*I AM NATIVE AMERICAN*”. The fifth story is by Heather. Heather offers a teaching on the kettles from her community of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations and the negative impact of destructive tourism. The final story is by

⁵² These stories were included with permission from the PV women. Each story was created during the course of the PV program. They were created as individual stories and have been resized and reformatted to fit into this document as one figure.

Nikki. Nikki uses an image of her wearing moccasins that her daughter made for her, and describes them as a metaphor for the journey she has walked and the confidence she has gained, ending with the sentences, “*I am a strong, confident woman. Miigwetch*”.

Figure 9: Stories by the Positive Voice Women Interviewed



Perfect Pine
By Alison

I discovered my fascination with pines only several years ago, which stemmed from my childhood climbing trees. The imperfect formation creates beauty in itself. The outcome has been granted through the environment that it exists within. The weathered, tattered, and worn still holds beauty. It is what gives it shape and character. The pine has stood all types of conditions, yet still exudes beauty with its experiences. In life this is what each of us also holds. Regardless of our story and storms we have our own beauty even if we are weather beaten. This is what creates our beauty...the storms we have endured and the sunshiny days that have given us relief until the next challenges. The pine signifies endurance and is an example to us.



Alone
By Anne

Alone in a family of people who are all the same is difficult. They act the same and think they are all better than the rest. They have to dress better and try to have better things and out do the next. They compared me to themselves and made up stories about me and made me the outcast. I was marked as the black sheep when I was a child and the stigma still remains. I refuse to be like them. I live my life my way. I didn't hide my mistakes. I never hid my flaws. I showed my personality. And embraced my beauty. I stood out. And just recently did they start to accept me, and I stood my ground and stayed true to me... Smiled, spoke quietly, respectfully (out of respect for my parents) and told them I am here, but only until my dad passes, and then, I too will be gone to them, since they have made me nothing to them my whole life.

So looking at this beautiful vibrant leaf among all the common dried up leaves and grass, I see myself standing alone, tall and proud. Full of life.



Solitude
By Colleen

I took this photo because the sun was shining bright down on me. I felt the warmth as I walked on my path. Notice the single path the leads up to the paths taken by others. It reminds me of the many times I have felt alone as I did when I was a single mother. I overcame many things in my own time of reflection. I find strength in looking at where I am as to where I was in life.

In the depths of despair crying till I couldn't cry no more- I would look at you while you slept and remember that I needed to be strong for you. Many nights I would sit in the silent still of the darkness worrying about how I could make it on my own and be everything you needed. It was in those moments of shedding a tear where I broke out of that hell and realized my strength because failure was not an option. Reflecting in the quiet became the time I needed.

Solitude was what I feared and also where I found my reflection.

When I feel like things are tough and I need a break I just go off by myself and regain all of me

Solitude is where I find my sense.

I AM NATIVE AMERICAN



I am Native American
By Sarah

Growing up on Six Nations, I was not taught to use please and thank you.

It was pass the salt, pass the potatoes, pass the gravy.
If I wanted to go for a walk in the bush, I just went.
If I wanted to go swimming, I just went.
If I wanted to go to my Uncle's, I just went.

I am NOT ignorant
I am NOT unlearned.
I AM NATIVE AMERICAN.

At the age of 18 I moved to urban Hamilton, the Indian in me came too!

I was frowned upon for not saying "please" and "thank you".
I was asked to call first, before going to a non-native home
I had to pay to go swimming.
I couldn't just show up on their door step.

I am NOT ignorant.
I am NOT unlearned.
I AM NATIVE AMERICAN.



The Kettles
By Heather Hammond

The kettles of The Kettle and Stony Point First Nations have a fascinating history. Scientists believe these sphere like kettles are actually prehistoric dinosaur eggs. It is estimated that they are over 350 million years old. The Elders say they are the eggs of the Thunderbird. The Thunderbird eggs still exist and live on vast shale beds under water. When a kettle is removed from the water it will begin to break and disintegrate. In earlier years, they dominated the Lake Huron shorelines but sadly they have been taken by

tourists or broken. Each year, students of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nations are encouraged to walk and visit these sacred, unique fossils. It is our desire for the students to become their guardians as

the kettles are the essence of our community.



Moccasin Walk - Walking Gently on the Earth
By N.P.

These moccasins were made for me by my daughter. My feet in these moccasins have walked in many directions in life. Some paths were filled with wonder, such as giving birth to my four beautiful children. Some paths have had some adversity while teaching me at the same time. Today, I'm happy that my path has led to Positive Voice, which has helped me find my self-confidence. I am a strong, confident woman. Miigwetch.

Each of these stories is unique in focus and in execution. However, they were all shared from positions of strength, with strength and resiliency overarching themes. The strength-based approach that the women took in their work automatically challenged the existing deficit-based framework that tends to be assigned to Indigenous women. Additionally, the control the women had over their narratives similarly challenged existing narrative practices as the PV women were represented as experts in their own lives.

Yet, the PV women's work also illustrate the depth of individual experiences. Like mentioned previously, despite being learning and strength focused, developing 'positive narratives' did not mean ignoring hardships, erasing past struggles, or putting a positive spin on the women's experiences. These challenges and traumas were important to the women's identity. Rather the strength-based approach allowed the depth of the women's experiences to come through. The PV women developed and represented a more nuanced perception of their experiences while having control over their narrative. A story provided by Thorp was selected to illustrate this flexible understanding of 'positivity'.

Story 21: Thorp's Story of Complexity

So, as the women share their stories, they often say at the beginning, “well, I don't have anything positive to say”. And the feedback I give them is, “you're still here, so what's valuable about the fact that you're still here”? The women are totally welcome to talk about the challenges that they've been through, and we do. We talk about really hard things as part of the group. And when they're talking about where they've been, or what the context is that they're living in, they often choose to write stories that are really challenging. But they want to be hopeful. It's not something that I'm imposing on them. They express that they want to get to the point, maybe it's now, maybe it's one year from now, maybe it's five years from now, where they can be positive about everything that's going on in their life. Or that they can develop the resilience so that they can survive the experiences and the contexts that they're currently in, in a more positive way. And so again, just like identity is framed individually, their own perception of positivity is also framed individually.

Thorp explained that positivity is a unique experience that was individually felt and expressed. She discussed that she did not impose ‘positivity’ on the women, yet encouraged them to instead look at their own strengths. Thorp continues to explain that the stories the women shared with each other were often not positive.

And so, some of the stories are very very frank, and they lay their trauma right out for everyone to see. Some of them, you know... I had one woman where she was in her 50s and she'd never talked about her family's experiences with residential schools. And that door opened as part of the program. And so, she was at a stage where she was still working through her loss, and that was fine. I was fine with that. And as she worked through that loss. She identified that the difference was, again, that she was still here, and that she was trying to install hope in her children, and her grandchildren. So again, I don't see ‘positivity’ as a destination. Every one of the women is on their own journey and they're respectful of each other, of where they're at, and I'm also respectful of where they're at, at the time that they're in the program.

As Thorp’s story illustrated, ‘positivity’ was approached as a multifaceted experience that included a recognition of strength and an awareness of resiliency despite adversity and structural barriers. Further, while works that the PV women produced were not exclusively positive in the narrow understanding of ‘positivity’, that the women were telling their own story in their own words was an aspect of strength that challenges existing narratives. The control that the PV women had over their stories was disruptive as it translated to representative power over what was said and what stories were disseminated.

7.2.3 Safe Learning Space

The third theme that both illustrated Positive Voice as a space of disruption and resistance and contributed to the disruptive potential of PV was that it functioned as a safe learning space. Creating a safe learning space was commonly discussed by program people as a critical aspect of the women's successes and thereby the program's success.

Recognition of the colonial context was described by several program people as an overarching aspect of creating a safe learning space. Thorp and Deb both explained this recognition as understanding that the residential school legacy and other aspects of the colonial context continue to influence the relationship that Indigenous peoples have with Western models of education and service delivery. Two intersecting narratives were shared – that an apprehension may exist among Indigenous peoples towards Western forms of learning and the disengagement this could pose; and the potential that PV participants may not have previously been successful in the Western education system. With this Western disengagement in mind, most program-based decisions, including those planned and organic decisions previously discussed — multi-perspectives, non-traditional skills, and learning through lived experiences — were made with the intent of creating a safe and engaging space.

Through the stories and insights shared, it was evident that PV successfully created a safe learning space that was conducive to participant engagement. PV both encouraged individual, personal, and collective growth and simultaneously met the women 'where they were' in terms of individual and collective needs and interests. This was illustrated in several common aspects that together contributed to a safe learning space. In addition to building the program off a recognition of the colonial context, three related program delivery themes stood out as important within discussions of creating a safe learning space: that PV was a space for urban Indigenous women, that programming aligned with needs and interests, and that programming was situated within Indigenous cultural values. These themes stemmed from discussions of specific strategies and decision making that were employed, that together contributed to a safe learning space.

7.2.3.1 Space for Urban Indigenous Women

Critical for the construction of PV as a safe space were the efforts that were made to create PV as a space for ‘like peoples’. Particularly, PV was created with the intersections of being an urban Indigenous woman in mind. For instance, measures were taken to ensure that Indigenous voices, particularly women, were involved at all stages of the program, and that Indigenous to Indigenous interactions and engagements were nurtured, as discussed. In addition to disrupting Western models of learning, the inclusion of Indigenous women outside of PV participants promoted a comfortable and safe learning environment. For instance, most of the PV women described the Indigenous guest speakers, who were all women, as providing them with positive examples of successful Indigenous women and role models that contributed to their comfort and connection to the program.

In addition to these specific involvements, there was a generalized recognition that the intersections of being an urban Indigenous woman would shape both the collective and individual needs and interests of the participants. Although non-Indigenous peoples were involved, and recognizing that Indigenous identity is diverse, it was commonly discussed that urban Indigenous women have unique experiences and needs, with the decision to be a program ‘for urban Indigenous women’ critical to its function as a safe learning space. For instance, most of the PV women and program people shared insights towards the critical need for PV to be a space specifically for Indigenous women. The women shared stories of Indigenous men not fully understanding the experiences of Indigenous women, and the impact this would have towards the safety of the space. Further, three of the women also discussed the importance of being a space for urban women, sharing that the urban focus contributed to them feeling safe within the PV environment. It was commonly shared that the PV women could open up to each other due to similar experiences, noting that this sense of comfort is not always there in the First Nation community setting where “everyone knows everyone”. Ultimately, PV provided space for urban Indigenous women in various capacities (instructors and participants), who would not normally be together, to come together; and highlighted the intrinsic value of being around people with shared experiences.

7.2.3.2 Participant Centered Programming

Another common theme that contributed to PV as a safe space was that PV was developed to be participant centered. As framed by Thorp and shared by most interviewee participants, PV ‘met the women where they were’ in terms of programming and the alignment of program expectations with needs and/or interests. This alignment was reflected in the non-traditional learning framework discussed previously, that recognized that many Indigenous peoples have been disengaged with the Western education framework related to the colonial context. This alignment was also reflected in the focus on developing London-based knowledges and connections, recognizing that urban women may have both unique needs but also varying access to services and resources than in the First Nation community context.

Alongside these alignment examples, the structure, content, and expectations of the program and programming were developed and executed in such ways that put the PV women at the center. This centering was reflected in two commonly discussed aspects: that the program was both accommodating and accessible; and that the methods of delivery were situated within the diversity of Indigenous cultural values, interests, and identities.

7.2.3.2.1 Accommodating and accessible

Looking first at the theme of accommodating and accessible programming, the program structure, content, and expectations put the women at the center. For instance, the program was structured to accommodate school schedules of children and other roles that women tend to share. The schedule was three days a week, Tuesday to Thursday to account for potential PA days, and the program hours accommodated women who had to drop off and pick up children from school. In this way, the PV women did not have to choose between caring for their children and attending the program.

Another example of the accommodating and accessible programming was that the programming was simple enough to account for varied technological skills that participants might have, yet interesting and relevant enough to appeal to women with varying skills and abilities. As well, the programming was purposefully chosen for its accessibility outside the program in terms of being

free with access to a computer and internet. Further, the programming had value outside of PV in that the programs and skills were useful and could translate to other aspects of the women's lives. For instance, the women gained technological skills by learning to use social media. These skills could then be translated to engagement in social justice issues, online job applications, or connecting with family and friends. Ultimately, the intent was to meet the women where they were in a way that would foster and nurture growth, not hinder it with uninteresting programming and unrealistic demands or expectations.

Several other intuitive delivery methods were identified by participants as contributing to a safe learning space, related to accessible and accommodating programming. First, programming drew on skill and disclosure-based forms of progression. Programming started with projects that required fewer skills and minimal amounts of life story disclosures, and worked up to projects that required greater skills and more depth in terms of life story disclosure. For instance, one of the first projects was creating tweets, which need to be 140 characters or less. By starting small with these short stories that required limited disclosure, the women could develop their comfort and narrative writing skills over time.

As well, programming was diverse and integrated different ways for engaging women in learning and growth. This diversity of programming realized that women would connect to different instruction styles, methods, and projects in different ways and allowed for that variance. For instance, Anne shared a story about connecting to an ice breaker activity at the beginning of the program because it was one of the first times that she had realized her connections to other women and their experiences. She reflected on how this stood out to her as a moment of change, yet she shared that when she brought it up to the other women near the end of the session, it had slipped everyone's mind, illustrating the diversity in connections to programming.

Finally, flexibility and pragmatic decision making became important aspects of the day-to-day learning environment for meeting the women where they were on any given day. This flexibility and pragmatism were described by Thorp as initially unintentional, yet integral to the program's success. Thorp shared her initial intent of being more structured, and the process of adapting this framework in relation to the women's needs. In support of Thorp's adaption, the PV women shared

many stories where the programming became of secondary importance to sharing and talking about lived experiences with each other, an aspect that contributed to a safe space.

A story offered by White illustrated how the program put the women at the center. In this story, White explains the many things that stood out to him about the program, including what, in his perspective, made it different from other programs. White begins by describing ways that the programming met women where they were in terms of having realistic technological and project-based expectations.

Story 22: White's Story of Centering Women

First of all, they [PV women] had a really low level of understanding of how to use the Internet and communicate using the Internet. They had an idea of the Internet and some of them have phones, so they understood email and things like that, but there was a really really basic level. Like they didn't.... The first time the word 'meme' was used, everybody was like "oh what's that?" And so, what was done right was that it wasn't introduced like a tidal wave of 'here's all the things you have to learn'. They took a thing like a meme, or a thing like a postcard, or a thing like a Facebook page and said "we're going to do a project and talk to people about whatever you want to talk about and then... Oh by the way here's how we use this tool", instead of a sterile "here's the 5000 skills you need and practice". So, they learned in the process of doing projects which really struck me as an important and nicer way for them to learn, like learning hands on.

In this story, White explained some of the benefits of progression. He continues on to explain that the programming encouraged the women to explore areas of interest and identity – a focus that promoted connection to the program and a safe learning space.

The other is, I found that a lot of the participants had things that were very important to them. One woman wanted... She was very knowledgeable about traditional ways. She felt she was, and she thought she had a responsibility to try and make sure people understood traditional knowledge and the role of Elders and others. So, she had that project in her heart before she learned how to use the Internet. All the tools did was give her way to do that with more people and in a different and more effective way. So, these were like opening gates, right? There was a woman who had been... And these examples just strike me as kind of typical... But she was an animal rights person, very strong. And she wanted to make people more aware of being kind to animals. But when she started to see what she could do, she decided that she could actually make social change. Her community had a real problem with wild dogs. And in fact, there was so big of a problem that the annual March of Women wouldn't come near their reserve. And so, she... People really wanted to see these women and take part in the march, but the women said no you got a dog problem, we're not going to go through there. Well then, she could use that desire that people had and her

knowledge about what do we do, you know, “we gotta have these dogs spayed so we don't have more, and we gotta start taking them into our houses and training them”. So, she was able to marry her community's interest and her interest with the skill set that she'd been given.

Through some examples, White described PV as distinct from other programs by allowing women to build off existing interests and passions. He continues on to describe PV as culturally respectful, and as encouraging networking and learning about resources – two aspects that to him, make it stand out from other Western programs.

So, the way it was run is, you know, they would talk in circles. Which for any of them [PV women] that were knowledgeable of traditional ways, that would seem very respectful. The whole idea of letting people speak while other people listen, really worked incredibly well. Western ways often have a curriculum set out. This one was much more evolutionary. If they wanted to spend extra time on something, they could spend extra time on something. I think if we compared this to the more traditional job training and service provision, there's a lot of things that are different. The use of traditional methods, like culturally familiar things, was different. Putting the participant at the centre and engaging that person to build spokes. Like the women were being taught to do something and then they [instructors] would say “you can use this to reach this, you can use this to do that”. So, they were creating a hub and spoke kind of approach, which I thought was really good. People were treated as participants not as clients. Big big difference from job training. And they built the program with their knowledge and skills while enhancing skills in ways that empowered. So always trying to look for what people already did know and try and say you can leverage that capacity into something bigger. There were three or four of them that said “I wish I'd known how to do the things we've been shown a long time ago” which really is an instantaneous positive, right? “I'm using these skills in my life to promote things that I believe in like animal-rights”, “this was a challenge when I started but now I'm comfortable, I can do this”, and “it gives me a new way to actually talk about my life, my people, my family, and my culture”. So, I think there were lots of those kinds of things that came out in the process. And so, I say it's quite different from Western ways of teaching job skills – do a CV letter, do a job app – which makes sense to academics. But I think it makes sense, maybe as adjuncts to having already built skills in a much more comfortable way.

In general, White's story and other stories shared by the PV women and the program people commonly illustrated that PV functioned as a safe but relevant learning space for the women by reflecting the women's needs within the program structure and layout, and by including skills that were interesting, engaging, and useful beyond the program.

7.2.3.2.2 Aligned with multiplicity of cultural contexts

A related theme of being participant centered in the creation of a safe space was that the methods of delivery aligned with Indigenous cultural values, interests, and identities. Particularly, with the diversity of these contexts for the women. As White noted in the previous story, the program built in culturally familiar methods like sharing circles and storytelling. Most of the PV women shared stories of connecting to the storytelling aspects of sharing and listening, and reflected on the safe and comfortable learning space that stemmed from this approach. In addition, program structure also recognized the potential for varied cultural contexts among the PV women in terms of levels of connectivity and Nation-based identities by taking a more holistic or ‘all Nations’ type of approach. The literature has indicated many issues with pan-Indigenous perspectives within narrative spaces like service delivery — particularly, in terms of non-Indigenous service providers and the tendency to rely on pan-Indigenous approaches as a form of ‘Indigenizing’. However, while recognizing this limitation, this type of holistic service delivery seemed to work within this context — a finding that could be related to the diversity of experiences and cultural connections that seems to stem from urban identities.

A story of Thorp’s was selected to illustrate the varied cultural contexts, and the ways that PV functioned culturally. Thorp begins her story by discussing her observations of cultural importance among the women and the varying tangible cultural situations. This variation in cultural identities and experiences was supported by the women’s own stories.

Story 23: Thorp’s Story of Cultural Importance

Culture was important, definitely. The interesting thing that I learned too, was being culturally sensitive or being culturally competent is not a destination, it's a very fluid thing. So, I came into it wanting to be very respectful of the beliefs that the women had, but then I found that they fell on a very broad spectrum. So, I had women who had a strong history of residential schools in the family and they were very Christian. They had held onto that religious tradition. I had other women who were very traditional, they were connected with the longhouse, smudging was a regular part, if we had guests they would ask if they could smudge with the guests, or at the end of a particular intense session they would all agree that they were going to do smudging. And then I had, in the same session, someone who is very Christian who would choose to opt out of that and say, I want nothing to do with that. I also had participants who were raised in the city and they had no connection to their community whatsoever. I've had participants whose parents were part of the

60s scoop and had been adopted out. And so, they had no connection with their culture. They didn't have any. In some cases they didn't even know what community they were identified with. Like they may know broadly the Nation, but they had no idea which community.

Thorp explained that the PV women all had varying cultural identities and experiences. She continues to share how these differences influenced the interactions that took place during the program, and in turn the relationships that were nurtured.

And so, it was interesting to watch the women teach each other and tutor each other. If they did have a common identity then they were teaching each other songs, they were teaching each other teachings that were important to their community. They were also, you know, we've had women from Northern Ontario, the West Coast, central Canada, East Coast, United States, and so they would kind of feel each other out and look for the commonalities, and they would share things like, "we make fry bread this way, we put bologna on ours, what do you put on yours? How big do you make it? We sing these songs, and we use these drums or these rattles. Our regalia looks like this, what does your regalia look like"? And so, there was this constant ebb and flow of information and a willingness to share. Some of the women didn't find out that they were Indigenous until middle-age, and they've come to the program to connect with other Indigenous women, to be able to reclaim that identity. And some cases you know, I had one participant who said "I've never been in a room where Indigenous women were spoken of positively, and this is my first experience with feeling proud". So as far as culture, I've really found that another secondary result of the program is that they feel proud to say that they're Indigenous, whereas in the past maybe they've passed, or been bullied, or mistreated because people have learned that they were Indigenous.

In this story, Thorp explained that for some of the women, this was their first time being in a room where Indigenous women were celebrated, sharing that cultural pride was an unanticipated program outcome. She continues on to frame this story within the urban context, reiterating the diversity of 'urban identity'.

Most of the women are urban. And some of them have flowed back-and-forth between community and the urban environment. Some of them just recently have moved to the city and they're trying to figure out how they fit. And then some of them have traveled here for better opportunities and it's been several years, like their community is so far away that it's beyond them to be able to reconnect.

Thorp's story illustrated a recognition towards the importance of culture, and the importance of including culturally based aspects like Indigenous guests. However, what stood out from Thorp's story was that the more open and fluid cultural context allowed the PV women to control the

cultural inclusion. Particularly, that the PV women found their own ways to organically bring culture into the daily functioning of the program.

7.2.4 Space for Personal and Shared Development

The fourth theme that illustrated Positive Voice as a space of disruption and resistance was that PV became a space for personal and shared development. PV fostered both individual and collective narratives and identities, effectively expanding the narrative surrounding Indigenous women. These developments disrupted the homogenizing focus and the erasure of individual experiences that commonly surrounds Indigenous women. For instance, as discussed in the previous chapter, the women developed more nuanced personal identities, and increased their sense of connectivity and collective group awareness. Similarly, the PV women occupied the space as knowledge producers — teachers as well as learners — who had valuable life experiences and knowledge. The simultaneous individualized and collective learning environment created at PV was critical in these developments. Specifically, it was identified by participants that the combination of project-based learning and learning within a group environment encouraged both individual and collective development.

7.2.4.1 Individual Development through Projects

As mentioned previously, the women completed weekly creative narrative projects, beginning with the tree of life project (Appendix A). This project-based learning style was commonly shared as a central aspect of individual development. For instance, the PV women shared many stories of learning different skills while also focusing on aspects of their lives that were important to them as individuals. Although the use of project-based learning was a planned and structured aspect of the program, the PV women had control over how they wanted to approach their projects and the narratives they chose to develop and share. As a result, the project-based learning nurtured an individual connection to self and identity and empowered the women to claim power over their stories.

The individual development that the project-based learning successfully encouraged was reflected in several common aspects. To begin, the combined positive, narrative, and creative focuses encouraged uniquely personal work. For example, the Tree of Life project encouraged the women to think about the qualities they valued in themselves and aspects of their lives that were important to them, and come up with ways to represent those things in a physical way. As a result, in addition to developing various skills and interests, the project-based learning gave the women time and space to both recognize aspects of their lives that they valued and develop other aspects of themselves outside of these specific skills. For instance, the women and other program people shared stories of becoming mentors to one another and leaders, as well as the chance for cultural development, greater confidence, and developing other aspects of their identities.

Further, the multiple project framework increased the potential that all the PV women would personally connect to some aspect of programming and thereby themselves in the process. Exposure to many different projects gave the women more opportunities to reflect on themselves and different experiences, or to refocus on the same experience if they chose to. Ultimately, the project-based learning disrupted the homogenizing tendencies of service delivery in that it empowered the women to decide what stories they wanted to share and how. Through these projects, PV became a space for learning and engaging with individual aspects of self and lived experiences, and for developing identities and narratives. The project-based learning put control and power over the process of knowledge exchange in the hands of the women, which contributed to PV as a space of disruption and resistance to Western cultural memory and narrative practices.

7.2.4.2 Collective Development through Group Learning

The group-based learning environment at PV also encouraged collective development, which similarly contributed to PV as a space of disruption and resistance. It was commonly shared among the program people and reflected in the women's stories that few spaces exist for urban Indigenous women to come together. Four of the program people shared stories that detailed a lack of space within service delivery for urban Indigenous women. Similarly, as discussed previously, most of

the PV women shared having few relationships with urban Indigenous women and limited involvement in urban service delivery spaces. In this respect, PV was described as filling an existing service delivery gap. As well, as a group-based program for urban Indigenous women, the space was also an act of resistance.

The group learning environment encouraged collective development in the form of connections between the PV women and other Indigenous persons along lines of shared and differing experiences that promoted a sense of collectivity and belonging. In terms of collective growth, the group-based learning environment at PV promoted a sense of collective identity. PV was group-based in terms of program structure, in comparison to one-on-one therapy sessions. Additionally, group activities and programming, like ice breaking activities, twitter chats, group sharing, and discussions, encouraged the women to get comfortable with one another and to work together and engage with one another on matters related to their own experiences and those of Indigenous women generally.

In addition to more organized program aspects, much of the group learning and collective development happened organically as unintended outcomes of working in a group setting. These organic transpiring's reflected the intrinsic benefits of being in a group setting, that were then nurtured through pragmatic program decision making. For instance, once the potential for collective development became evident, Thorp shared that she began adapting the program to be conducive to this development. One example that stood out was providing lunches and having a shared lunch space once it became obvious that the lunch hour was an important time for informal connecting and sharing of space.

A story offered by Deb provided some insight into the intrinsic value of working and existing as part of a group. In this story, Deb discusses the importance of feeling supported as a member of a group, and how that value might be amplified for groups like Indigenous women who tend to experience racism and might be isolated from this form of support.

Story 24: Deb's Story of Group Support

You know looking at the stats too, a lot of women that have been abused or mistreated. One of the things that we know that abusers do is that they isolate them. So, they don't get a chance to connect with other women, or with their peers, or with their culture. And so, I think it was really important. And especially with all the racism and discrimination that exists out there in general. You know, the whole Pocahontas thing and crap like that, right? I think it's important to have some sort of solidarity among Aboriginal women to ensure that... you know... "hey wait a minute that's not right, that doesn't accurately reflect who we are". Rather than standing out there all by yourself, you got a bunch of women around you saying "I support what she's saying". And yea, some women have not been allowed those positive relationships with other women, or have not had the opportunity, or they've had negative relationships with other women, for all different sorts of reasons. So being able to create an environment where they can establish healthy positive relationships with other women, I think is important.

What stood out in Deb's story was the intrinsic empowerment potential of being and feeling a part of a group. Although the learning was not initially designed to be 'interactive' or group-based, all of the participants shared stories of the PV women becoming a group – of sharing with each other, getting feedback on their work, and giving each other advice beyond the programming. These group-based practices promoted a sense of working together, being there for each other, and collectivity that was empowering. All of the program people described the PV women as becoming a unit, and shared stories of the women traveling together, working together, and being together.

Overall, PV provided space for both individual and collective development. Creating a space that allowed the PV women to focus on their own journey as an individual disrupted common narratives and narrative spaces by awarding women a level of control over their learning and sharing process. Having space to develop collective narratives and identities was similarly disruptive as it disrupted the common Western cultural memory that is assigned to Indigenous women by approaching the 'collective' as a source of strength. Through project and group-based learning, PV fostered an interaction between individual and collective experiences and identities. PV successfully created a space that was learning focused yet put the control in the women's hands, all while learning useful skills and shaping the collective representation of Indigenous women. Therefore, the prioritization of both individual and collective development was a defining aspect of program success in terms of confronting, disrupting, and resisting existing narratives and narrative spaces.

7.2.5 Engaged an Extended Community

The final theme that illustrated Positive Voice as a space of disruption and resistance was that PV engaged an extended community within and beyond PV. As the program people and PV women shared, the connections and community that transpired during PV made PV unlike other service delivery programs that they had previously been involved in. In addition to the PV women and the program people who were often directly involved, many other individuals and organizations were ‘drawn in’ to the program in the creation of an extended community and in the sharing of the women’s narratives.

PV as an engaged community space was evident in three main aspects. First, PV (its everyday and overall functioning and success) functioned within an extended community. Second, PV fostered an extended community within and beyond the program. Finally, the program and the women successfully engaged within a larger community through their narratives. The extended community of PV was commonly discussed as a central aspect of the program’s success in terms of its disruptive potential as a narrative space, but also in terms of deliverable outcomes. For instance, without the community, PV may have been less effectively ‘deliverable’ or even ‘desirable’ for participants. Further, outside engagement with the PV women and their narratives extended the reach of the women’s stories beyond the program.

7.2.5.1 Functioning as an Extended Community

Looking first at the theme of functioning as a community, PV was not developed out of nothing. Rather, PV was established within an already well-established London based service delivery organization, Nokee Kwe. As a result, PV started with connections to the London service delivery community including Nokee Kwe and its employees, and Nokee Kwe’s extended service delivery network as an Employment Ontario organization. As a result, most of the program people who became involved in the program had some pre-existing connection to Nokee Kwe or Thorp, and had heard about the program directly from these sources or other service delivery networks. For instance, Anne-Marie (advisory committee) had been a colleague of Thorp’s in a variety of

capacities; Elizabeth (advisory committee) shared that she had been previously connected to Nokee Kwe in a service delivery capacity; White (evaluator) had a previous academic relationship with Thorp; and Frances (advisory committee) worked within the service delivery sector and learned about PV from a colleague who had heard about PV at a committee meeting. Similarly, Nokee Kwe had a pre-existing relationship with the social work placement program at Fanshawe College, which is how Cassie (volunteer instructor) became involved with PV.

Additionally, once established, the advisory committee members and even one of the PV women also provided connections to guest speakers, performers for events, and others involved. For instance, some of Frances' friends were guest speakers, while Heather's family performed at the Matika Wilbur event at Western University that was held after the first session. Therefore, this pre-existing network that became available to PV was a critical aspect of PV's success as a pilot program. In many ways the success of PV was related to its functioning within an extended community.

7.2.5.2 Extended Community at Nokee Kwe

In addition to connections and networking, Nokee Kwe also provided the benefits of an extended community to the PV program. In particular, Nokee Kwe and Nokee Kwe staff provided layers of support for the successful implementation of PV and access to a pool of potential participants. Looking first at these layers of support, four of the program people and three of the PV women described Nokee Kwe and the employees as offering support at more theoretical, community, and day-to-day levels. In terms of theoretical support, Nokee Kwe provided a foundational layer of understanding towards the unique experiences and needs of urban Indigenous women, and the value and necessity of having specific programming.

At the community level, Nokee Kwe and employees acted as another resource for the women during and after PV. For instance, program participants would automatically be connected to Nokee Kwe for employment or education related needs. As well, participants could access the extensive knowledge of other resources and services available within the London community that

Nokee Kwe staff have access to. For instance, Thorp shared how she would talk to the women about things related to gaining status and community membership or existing Indigenous programs – things that Indigenous peoples are often assumed to know but that can actually be very challenging to navigate. Further, Thorp discussed how she was prepared with resources and contact lists to share with participants should they need them, like lawyers or therapy contacts. Ultimately, Nokee Kwe and Nokee Kwe employees provided PV with access to an extensive knowledge and resources base for the London community and beyond, that supported the PV women beyond the specifics of the program.

Nokee Kwe and the employees also provided practical support at the day-to-day level. Cassie and Thorp shared stories of feeling supported by Nokee Kwe staff towards the program. Additionally, three of the PV women who had previously been involved at Nokee Kwe in the Native Education Center⁵³ shared specific examples of support they received from their literacy teacher, sharing stories of getting advice on projects and of the Nokee Kwe employees attending events. In general it was felt that Nokee Kwe as an organization provided a level of understanding towards the unique experiences and needs of Indigenous women, and that Nokee Kwe employees were another line of resources to support these needs.

In addition to these forms of support, Nokee Kwe also provided access to a pool of potential participants through the co-location of two main centres at Nokee Kwe – the employment centre and Native education centre. With all but one of the women interviewed already accessing the education or employment services at Nokee Kwe prior to PV, it was evident that this access was central to the success of the program. Additionally, by running the program in a separate room at Nokee Kwe this pool was maintained beyond the first session. During the first session, Indigenous women who were accessing the employment and education services at Nokee Kwe could see PV happening, which attracted other women — a finding that was supported by the program people and Colleen and Anne who both shared that they wanted to participate in the second session after seeing the women in the first session. Overall, Nokee Kwe offered a source for engaging potential

⁵³ The Native Education Centre offers “culturally sensitive, client-centered and holistic approaches” educational and training needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth and adults <http://nokeekwe.ca/>

participants, which ended up being essential to the recruitment process as there was a lack of initial mainstream service delivery buy-in terms of referring people.

7.2.5.3 Nurtured an Extended Community

In addition to functioning within a pre-existing extended community, the impact of PV extended beyond the PV women with the program contributing to an extended PV community. The extended community that was created at PV was identified as a unique aspect of this program, with all the program people sharing stories related to this uniqueness. Most of the people interviewed, including program people and the PV women, discussed the meaningful connections they felt to the program and the invested interest they felt towards its continuation. Most interview participants shared a common sentiment of feeling like a member of community or network due to PV. Stories and explanations of this connection illustrated a sense of relationship and responsibility to the program including a shared belief in the value of PV, a commitment to maintaining the program, and an overall commitment to program longevity.

Those involved in the service delivery side of PV shared stories that illustrated their role as committed and as feeling as part of a community, not just as having a perfunctory role. For instance, although only one guest speaker was interviewed (Tunchai), many of the other interviewees shared a common observation – that the guests had become committed to the program and they wanted to have a meaningful role as a resource for the PV women. This thoughtful involvement was evident in many of the guests' return to the second session and their involvement in the PV events, and in the manner in which they engaged with the women. For instance, the program people commonly shared that the guest speakers had been very generous with their time beyond the set programming, sharing stories of the guests establishing collaborations with the women, trading their time for art pieces, and staying connected to the women post-PV via social media. In these exchanges, guests reinforced their commitment to the program through the relationships they established with the women.

Maybe even more so than the guest speakers, several of the advisory committee members also became like an extension of the PV program, sharing stories of helping set up events and attending events, helping with planning, and ultimately going out of their way to act as a resource for the program. Most of the advisory committee members shared stories where they stated their commitment and stories that reflected their commitment — for instance, in stories of promoting PV within their networks, connecting PV to potential guest speakers, recruiting potential PV women, promoting Thorp as an ally and friend, and generally promoting PV as a positive program.

Most of the PV women also shared stories about the sense of commitment they felt towards PV. All but one of the women expressed a deep desire that it continue in the future and shared stories of promoting PV within their own circle and beyond. For instance, most of the women shared stories of telling other Indigenous women about the program and encouraging others to join PV, including their family members and other women they knew. Additionally, Anne shared that she went to different services in London to promote the program by dropping off flyers and registrations sheets. Overall, those directly involved in the program – the PV women, guests, instructors/volunteers, advisory committee members — developed a strong positive connection to the program and subsequently became highly involved in efforts related to its continuation.

7.2.5.3.1 Community beyond PV

Beyond those more directly involved in the program, an extended PV community was created with family, friends, the London community more generally, and beyond London. Some of this extension happened organically. For instance, the women shared stories of involving their families and friends in their learning processes – of sharing their lessons and introducing them to the Indigenous artists and activists, and of sending their family and friends copies of their art. Additionally, the PV women and other program people shared that they had invited friends and family to events that PV hosted.

However, practices of extending the PV community were also built into the program structure and a part of the planned programming. One of the projects the women completed was the creation of postcards that the PV women and others could send to government officials as a form of activism. These postcards with the women's art on the front were sent across Canada by the women and

others who were given them or had bought them at PV events including the Matika Wilbur night and the Museum Exhibit, or from Nokee Kwe directly. These two free public events – the Matika Wilbur night and the museum exhibit – were also planned aspects of the program structure that extended the PV community by involving the London community. The Matika Wilbur night was co-hosted by Western University, with the university and the London extended community invited to attend. The Museum exhibit similarly nurtured an extended community. All of the PV women shared stories of their families and friends attending the event and of sharing their stories with them. Further, the size of the event and the media presence was commonly discussed among interview participants. The events were advertised on social media, by Western University (Matika Wilbur night), and the London Free Press (Museum exhibit), and the Museum was also attended by the Free Press and the Western Gazette.

A story offered by Frances about her experience at the Museum Exhibit was selected to illustrate the community that was fostered through PV. In this story, Frances describes the museum exhibit as bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people – some of whom had a connection to the PV women or advisory committee members, and others who were previously not connected.

Story 25: Frances’ Story of the Museum Exhibit

With the exhibit, I severely underestimated the participation from the community for that event. I was like ... yeah, okay... We have this many participants and their immediate family is going to show up, and even I joke because immediate family can be big. Like my dad is one of 22, and then they got married, and then they had children, and then depending...not all immediate families are the same because people might live with their aunties or uncles depending on how the household works. So anyways, I was like "oh yeah whatever. We'll have like 50 people, 100 people, whatever". But being at the event and seeing some of the people that were there, that aren't actually in the community... wow. So, like one of my colleagues showed up with a couple of his friends. And he's like "oh my gosh I didn't realize you were involved", I'm like "uhhhh it's kind of my event [laughs], you didn't realize?" [laughs]. He's like a 6 foot 2 white man with a beard. Like what are you doing here? [laughs]. So, it wasn't just our community. It extended out further which was great. I loved it but I totally underestimated how many people were gonna show up. I didn't underestimate the art, there are certain ones I still love, like the one meme, it was "I'll give a man my love but not my fry bread" or something like that. It's still my favourite one, I have that postcard framed. And our sense of... Indigenous sense of humour is dark and strange and funny and sometimes people just don't get it.

Frances described Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as coming together to celebrate the PV women's achievements – a type of celebration that generally lacks space in mainstream society. Frances also discussed the art she loved. She continues on to frame this community engagement in relation to the media's presence and the media bias that she felt transpired from the event.

The one thing that I didn't like was the media bias for the exhibit. So, the news that showed up. I had reached out and provided the information and it literally changed hands like three different times. And then I show up and there's a man with the camera. And he is not any of the people that I had spoken to. And clearly he had kind of googled 'Indigenous women's issues' when he was in the parking lot. Cause some of the questions I was like... So same thing I said to you, I asked "do you want me to introduce myself to you traditionally? Like how do you want ...?" And none of that was in. I know a lot of it, of course, ends up on the editing floor. Understandable. But by the same token, what they picked when they edited was totally missing the point, totally. Summer's piece, she was lovely, but I was standing right beside her. I know what they cut out and they cut out some important stuff. Again, I realize they have like 30 seconds but... They cut it as if they had an idea before they even showed up. They knew what they wanted it to look like.

What stood out from Frances' story was the challenge with media engagement. Despite being present, which can be construed as positive, the media's engagement was strategic, with Frances noting the intentional shaping of representation that happened.

Other unintended community extensions were the speaking and performing engagements that the PV women and the Positive Voice drum group participated in and performed at. For instance, by the end of the first session, some of the PV women had already been involved in a speaking engagement at Kings University. Finally, through the Positive Voice Drum group the PV women were able to continue fostering the community that they had begun developing in PV among each other and within the London community, as they had begun performing at different events. With these examples in mind, it was evident that PV inspired many opportunities to grow a sense of community through exposure and engagement outside of the PV program.

7.2.5.4 Outside Engagement with the Space and Women's Narratives

Finally, the program and the women successfully engaged an extended community through the stories that the PV women shared. The use of social media to share narratives and connect with

other people and organizations was a critical aspect of this extension. As a reminder, the second session of PV was completed on December 23rd, 2016. As of December 10th, the PV twitter account had 121 followers, nearly 25,000 impressions (number of interactions with content shared), and over 700 profile visits. Mainstream media had also covered Positive Voice on multiple occasions, including articles in the London Free Press, the Western Gazette, CBC, and coverage by CTV. As well, CBC radio covered Positive Voice on numerous occasions. In addition to social media and media engagement, postcards featuring the women's art were printed and sent to MPs and other government officials, as noted previously. As well, two PV women presented during a guest lecture at King's University College to a Social Work Policy class, and another PV woman wrote up what she wanted to say and it was read to the class as she was unable to attend due to illness.

In addition to these areas of community engagement, all 11 of the PV women from the first two sessions shared their stories at the museum exhibit titled "Warrior Womyn: Reclaiming Our Identity", located at the Museum of Ontario Archaeology in London. The exhibit opened January 26th, 2017 to an opening crowd that was described as the biggest opening the museum ever had, and ran from January 26th to March 28th, 2017. Since the first two sessions, Positive Voice has won the 2017 Pillar Community Innovation Award, has been constantly engaged on social media, has attended London community events like the Home County Music and Art Festival, has been covered by various media outlets, and has had several community exhibits with PV participants at multiple public locations in London. Clearly, the PV women's stories – including women outside of the first two sessions – have circulated and been shared throughout the London community and beyond.

7.3 Program Challenges

Overall, the stories and the reflections that were shared and supported by additional data showed PV to be a highly successful program. PV was a success from a program delivery perspective in terms of its deliverable outcomes and the PV women's engagement and connection to the program.

It was also a success in that it functioned as a space of disruption and resistance towards Western cultural memory and the dominant narratives that tend to surround Indigenous women.

A brief explanation provided by Anne-Marie (advisory committee member) summarizes some of the key aspects of the intrinsically beneficial nature that seemed to come from PV as a space for being and learning among urban Indigenous women.

Story 26: Anne-Marie’s Story of PV’s Intrinsic Benefits

Love, relationships, and knowing someone cares about you, your future and your well-being is an integral part of being a whole human. So, relationship development absolutely is an important aspect of healing. Further, in any context, learning how to turn negative words and phrases into positive, actionable statements is a skill that takes many years to learn. This is an amazing step for women to be able to tell their story about where they’ve excelled, what their dreams are, and what makes them special. They are not their history, or the things that happen to them.

Albeit brief, Anne-Marie’s explanation spoke to the intrinsic value of having meaningful relationships, and of being able to positively think of yourself and your experiences – two things that were nurtured within the PV space.

Although PV had great success, it was not without its challenges. Interview participant’s stories and reflections, and my observations reflected three main types of challenges that the program faced and that manifested throughout the program:

- First, it was clear that issues of program instability related to funding was a major concern.
- Second, challenges arose related to community buy-in.
- And finally, there were some challenges related to participant experiences within the program.

These challenges – how they transpired and their impact – will be briefly discussed.

7.3.1.1 Program Uncertainty and Unstable Funding

The uncertainty of having funding for future sessions was discussed by all of the program people (and most of the PV women) as a major issue within the service delivery sector and PV in particular. A story shared by Deb was selected to provide some context into the precariousness of funding generally, and for Indigenous specific services at Nokee Kwe, specifically. Deb begins her story by discussing the impact the shift from federal to provincial funding had for Nokee Kwe.

Story 27: Deb's Story of Service Delivery

Back when we were funded through the feds, we carved out a niche in that one of the things we were really good at was standardized or vocational diagnostic testing and assessment. And people loved our program, I mean we were well known outside of London. People from everywhere wanted to come. We just had a really kick ass program. It was great, and all the other agencies referred to us as like the Cadillac of programs. So, it was wonderful. Of course, then the feds downloaded to the province, and the province said, "you will now all do exactly the same thing, and you are now in competition with each other [London services]". So, when the feds funded us we were paid to deliver programs and services. Now under the province, we're paid for outcomes. So, a client comes in, they could go to workshops, they could do assessment with us, they could receive all kinds of vocational counselling. None of it counts. We don't get paid for any of that work until that person finds a job, or is in school. So, it is very much a business model.

Deb explained that where Nokee Kwe was once niche and specific, service delivery organizations in London were now in competition with one another. I asked about Indigenous service delivery and Deb continues to discuss two Indigenous centered programs they had at Nokee Kwe previously.

So, we have our Native education centre, which, you don't have to be First Nations to attend. In fact, there are people who are not First Nations who attend just because they like the difference. So, part of the... I mean there's lots of things that make that unique with the culture perspective. One of them is that we do cultural activities. But the other part is that if you're somebody who dropped out of high school, so you want a GED or you want high school credits, there are other places you can go, like the centre for lifelong learning, and others, in London. But they're still very much like mainstream school and if you didn't do well in mainstream schools the first time there is no guarantee you're going to do well the second time. So, we don't operate like a mainstream school. We really meet the person where they're at and find out what their individual needs are and we provide the support based on what their individual needs are. So that's one. Positive Voice is the other one we have right now.

In this story, Deb explained the benefits of Indigenous centered learning for Indigenous peoples and also non-Indigenous people. She continues to explain that they have had other Indigenous centered programs over the years, but that they are always tied to funding.

So, we've had different programs that have come and gone, depending on funding, right? Depending on what proposals we've applied for and we've gotten. We had funding for an Aboriginal youth job fair. We had a life skills one. That was strictly for Aboriginal women. We did open it up to men I think after the first year or two that we ran it. But then we couldn't get funding for it anymore. So, there have been different ones on and off. It doesn't necessarily matter how successful something is. It doesn't mean they're going to get funding. Employment Ontario, they don't recognize that we are unique and special, at this point. I mean... They do and they don't. It depends. I mean we get a little extra funding for the cultural activities in the Native Education Centre, but we don't get anything special on the employment side. When the transition first happened, they said "you are no different than anyone else, you serve everyone like everybody else, and if you don't like it, too bad, so sad. Let us know and we'll just stop funding you". Kind of thing, right? But again, it all depends on who's in seats in terms of politics at the time, right? Provincial and federal... Now that we've got Justin who's a little more sympathetic to the Aboriginal cause, I don't think, I mean we'd have to do something pretty outlandish to be at risk of losing our funding. So, it's very much driven by politics.

What stood out in Deb's story was the uncertainty and instability surrounding programming, with programming tied to funding, and tied to the political climate regardless of program success. Narratives and themes embedded within this story were shared by others. Particularly, the uncertainty of funding as an aspect of program longevity was discussed by most interviewees including most of the PV women and all of the program people.

When the development process surrounding PV began, enough funding was awarded to run two sessions by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Funding uncertainty surrounding whether the program would be able to continue past these two sessions lasted into the second session. PV successfully obtained enough funding to continue a third and fourth session at the end of the second session. However, funding was a constant topic of our advisory committee meetings and was also discussed throughout the interviews. PV received a Grow Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2018 after the fourth session that included funding for two years, until January 2020. In January 2020, PV was awarded a four-year grant from the city of London until December 2023. However, this funding worked out to a slightly less than half of the previous funding. As PV has had to continue online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this has resulted in lower overhead costs.

However, it is uncertain how PV will continue post COVID with considerably less money. Overall, funding was a main concern commonly voiced throughout the interviews, and long-term funding remains uncertain despite the participants having excelled in the program and the many positive outcomes beyond the first two sessions.

7.3.1.2 Challenges with Community Buy-In

As discussed, people from Nokee Kwe and others involved in the service delivery sector were generally supportive of the program. However, getting community buy-in to the initial goal level of a reciprocal referral/funding-based relationship was a challenge. To begin, while the staff at Nokee Kwe were supportive in many different ways, several of the program people shared stories of some initial pushback during the development stages towards the program from the Nokee Kwe board of directors. This pushback was related to two things: its target population of urban Indigenous women, and program specific deliverable outcomes. In relation to the target population, Thorp shared that at least one board member wanted PV to be for Indigenous men as well as women, while another member wanted the program to be for all women. Although Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women would benefit from a similar program, the decision to stay focused on urban Indigenous women was ultimately accepted as it was grounded in the focus groups conducted by Thorp, that reiterated the need to stay specific related to participant feelings of safety and comfort.

Alongside this population related pushback there was some initial pushback related to outcomes. In particular, some board members questioned the value that PV could bring to Nokee Kwe, in relation to Nokee Kwe's outcome-centric mandate. Deb's story shared previously provides some context to this pushback. Although the PV women were learning skills that would contribute to success beyond PV, PV as a program does not directly stream into employment or education. Rather, the many positive outcomes that the PV women shared were less quantifiable and clear-cut than the outcomes that Nokee Kwe and other Employment Ontario organizations tend to seek out or require when funding additional programming.

As well, there was a lack of tangible buy-in from other London service delivery organizations, as discussed previously, similarly related to outcome matrices. A story of Cassie's was selected to provide some explanation for this lack of buy-in. Like in Deb's story, Cassie situates this lack of buy-in for the first two sessions within the outcome-centric context of service delivery.

Story 28: Cassie's Story of Community Challenges

Well anyways, one of the findings was they didn't have a ton of buy-in from outside organizations like Ontario Works in terms of actually referring people. I think Positive Voice is very important in a mental health and building community way. But when Ontario Works is looking at it, I think they're looking at it as "is this going to get someone a job"? Which, you know, getting a job is important but I think maybe Nokee Kwe comes from a different perspective than other agencies. It's a very holistic perspective like, yeah you can go get a job, but it's going to be way more helpful, way easier for you to get a job and retain it if you have the mental health support and if you have community support. Which is what I think Positive Voice provides. As well as employable skills. And I think that has become a bigger focus for [Positive Voice] moving forward, is the emphasis on employable skills. On paper. But it's about so much more than that, and I think that's not seen as important by the organizations who could support it.

In this story, Cassie shared that as a pilot program aimed at more holistic outcomes, PV was not necessarily conducive to outcome-based programs like Ontario Works. In her explanation of 'moving forward', Cassie discusses the transition of PV into a 6 week, more outcome focused program in sessions three and four, although PV transitioned back to a 7 week program after the fourth session. Cassie continues on to explain that his holistic approach made PV a good fit for Nokee Kwe.

I think Positive Voice is a good fit for Nokee Kwe because Nokee Kwe is based on Aboriginal values. It's an Employment Ontario organization though so it's... Nokee Kwe has that holistic perspective where you can't excel in one area of your life if the other areas of your life aren't supported as well. So, I think Nokee Kwe is a good fit for it, but maybe Employment Ontario might not be. Because Nokee Kwe is an Employment Ontario location but... It's interesting because sometimes I think that the values of each kind of conflict, conflict with each other. But I think Nokee Kwe, like the people who work here, the volunteers, and the staff, I think it fits in great with those people and within the organization. But... I mean I'm not an expert but [laughs], I don't think it fits in with the values of Employment Ontario, maybe.

Cassie framed the holistic approach of Nokee Kwe as housed in conflict — that the people and the general values of Nokee Kwe coincide with the holisticness of PV, yet PV is not necessarily in

line with the Employment Ontario mandates that guide Nokee Kwe. This conflict is reflected in Deb's previous story and discussion, which notes the aim of maintaining more holistic service delivery at the practical service delivery level, that is in conflict with the official outcome-centric mandate.

7.3.1.3 Participant Level Challenges

Finally, the PV women and others did note some challenges related to participant experiences during and after the program. Looking first at challenges during the program, most of the women shared stories of things they struggled with or did not connect with during the program in terms of programming. Many of these challenges were often program specific. For instance, several women shared stories of enjoying some of the projects more than others, or of having challenges with certain projects and feeling frustrated. Yet, most experiences were generally positive with these stories often including descriptions of how they were able to work through these challenges. Although not every tool and subject were enjoyed equally among the women, this was less of a challenge and more an expected occurrence due to the diversity of experiences, interests, and personal tastes. Other things that some of the participants noted included falling behind – that due to the variation in skills and daily progression it was easy to get behind if a day was missed (which was not encouraged). Two of the women also noted some issues with technology — the computer not working and the camera deleting photos — that were frustrating at the time.

Another challenge that was not common but noted nonetheless was the potential for issues related to the program being run by a non-Indigenous woman. Although participants shared mostly stories of praise towards Thorp, one of the PV women did share a story where she described noticing two women in the program who initially resisted Thorp's help. Similarly, that PV was directed by a non-Indigenous woman was described by two of the advisory committee members as one of the reasons they wanted to be involved, sharing issues with non-Indigenous peoples in service delivery in the past, although not with Thorp.

There were also some personal challenges and struggles that surfaced during PV that shaped the women's experiences during the program. This area of challenge stemmed from lived experiences and some challenging pasts the women had. For instance, Colleen shared a time where she felt overcome with emotion because of the stories that were being shared, and their applicability to her own lived experiences. As well, Alison shared how her personal struggles with PTSD impacted engagement with the projects at different times.

In general, it can be challenging for service delivery spaces to navigate being a space for growth and skill development, while addressing the potential for re-traumatization. As noted previously, PV was not necessarily developed as a healing program. Yet, the connections that were born towards the program, between the other women, and towards the women's own sense of self had healing implications. With PV becoming a safe space for this healing, the PV women felt more open to sharing their stories and feeling their emotions. This opening-up among the women resulted in challenging conversations and emotional responses. In becoming a space for these conversations and responses, Thorp shared her process of situating herself among the women as a resource – a person that the women could count on to meet a variety of needs. For instance, while the PV space became a sort of therapeutic space in and of itself, Thorp shared developing resource lists that should be shared with the women in response to their needs including counselling services in London or lawyer services, and as acting as that connector for the women.

In addition to these inherent challenges, one of the women shared challenges with her needs not being met during the program. Although found to be atypical, Sarah went into detail about her negative experience during the program. She shared that she needed more help and that she did not feel supported in terms of receiving the help that she needed. This led her to feeling disconnected from the instructors and the other women. Sarah did share that she enjoyed learning the skills, sharing her story, and getting her narrative out into the community through the social work talk and the exhibit at the museum. However, Sarah also described feeling like she was 'going through the motions' at different points during the program due to the disconnection and lack of support she felt. As well, this experience was continuing to shape her emotions, although she noted feeling better to finally get it off her chest.

Other women also noted some challenges related to their experience after the program, framed in terms of ‘aftercare’— particularly, the lack thereof. For instance, Alison and Sarah both shared that they did not have the same level of connection that some of the women had to one another after PV. This lack was generally situated in relation to the drum group. Alison explained that she was not able to be involved in the Positive Drum Group because the time commitment was not accessible to her. As well, even with many of the women involved in the drum group, most shared that they wished the program had been longer, or that it had some follow-up programming. For instance, while the drum group was not doable for Alison, she shared that a continuation of the program on a more ‘drop-in’ level would be highly beneficial. Overall, the creation of the drum group has been an incredible transition, particularly in that it was participant led. However, follow-up or aftercare is always a challenging area for service delivery to navigate that is regularly overlooked.

7.3.2 Summary

Several common themes were identified related to the successful functioning of Positive Voice. These themes stemmed from the program evaluation that was completed by Jerry White and the stories that were shared during the interviews about PV. To begin, evaluation data pointed to the overall success of the program in terms of successful development and implementation. Further, this success was evident in the connections that the PV women developed to the program. The PV women were not just completing the program, they were, in a sense, becoming a part of the program, and the program was becoming a part of them. This connection that the women felt to the program became a major contributor to its success, as the PV women brought others into the program.

In addition to these quantifiable reflections of success, PV was successful in terms of creating a space of resistance and disruption. As a space, PV provided the PV women with the tools they needed to successfully disrupt common mainstream narratives and the Western cultural memory that surrounds Indigenous women at the individual level by providing the women space to both

create and share their own stories. Further, PV also provided tools to disrupt common narrative practices surrounding what is considered to be knowledge, who are knowledge holders, and the production and reproduction of knowledge.

Chapter 8

8 Discussion

This research aimed at understanding the narratives surrounding Indigenous women, as told within the context of news spaces and service delivery spaces. The intent was to look at the interconnected and multi-level relationship between mainstream media and Indigenous women in terms of macro and micro level stories, and the role that service delivery might have in navigating and mediating this. It was rooted in the recognition that representation and representation practices at both the macro and micro levels matter and reflect issues of power. In addressing different spaces of representation and types of narratives, the findings chapters illustrated the multifaceted and multilevel practices of construction surrounding Indigenous women. As a reminder, this research aimed at addressing three main research questions:

- What are the existing mainstream narratives surrounding Indigenous women and their experiences, and how are their stories represented by the media as a dominant narrative space?
- What narratives do the Positive Voice women draw on to bring meaning to their experiences and sense of self?
- How can service delivery function as a space of resistance and disruption to mainstream narratives and narrative practices surrounding Indigenous women?

In this chapter I draw on the main themes — stemming from the newspapers and interview participant stories, reflections, insights, and my interpretations — to address these questions.

From the main themes, several overarching aspects related to these questions were clear. First, the macro-level narratives surrounding Indigenous women, and the institutional spaces that produce these narratives, tend to reflect non-Indigenous power and reproduce Western cultural memory of Indigenous women and Indigenous peoples generally. Second, in some ways the narratives that the PV women drew on to bring meaning to their pre-PV experiences and sense of self reflected Western cultural memory. However, these experiences were shared through a renewed lens of self-reflection and insight, with PV manifesting a transition in how the women understood and

approached themselves and their narratives in relation to this overarching context. This was evident in the women's stories of strength and resiliency, often shared to challenge mainstream perceptions. Finally, PV functioned as a space of resistance and disruption to Western cultural memory and dominant knowledge processes — those of holding knowledge, defining knowledge, and knowledge production and reproduction — with it evident that storytelling was akin to healing and an aspect of power sharing by providing space for the women to develop and renew those stories of strength. This chapter will expand on these aspects.

8.1 Media as a Site of Colonial Power Reproduction

The first aim of this research was providing the macro-level context in which PV and the Positive Voice women's experiences were situated. Findings illustrated the news as a site of continued colonial power and knowledge reproduction. Common themes illustrated that Western cultural memory, cemented in the 'othering' of Indigenous peoples and the normalization of non-Indigenous power and control, continue to have a critical function in the representation surrounding Indigenous women.

Although disguised as 'objective reporting', the stories surrounding Indigenous women and the practices used to tell these stories did little in terms of informing readership about Indigenous women or giving voice to Indigenous women. Instead, the stories and narrative practices both illustrated and reinforced non-Indigenous power. Overall, the story portrayed by the media was one of 'othering' Indigenous women and peoples generally by reiterating Western cultural memory of who Indigenous peoples are, in relation to non-Indigenous peoples, and appealing to non-Indigenous audiences through these narratives.

8.1.1 'Recognition' Narratives and Institutional Power

An overarching theme of violence guided the narrative surrounding Indigenous women. These violence narratives were pervasive, with findings indicating a lack of alternative narratives. The

relative absence of non-violence narratives indicates a ubiquitous association between violence and Indigenous women. Even when articles were not strictly about violence against Indigenous women, they still tended to include some violence-based framing. Overall, the experience of violence came to signify Indigenous women as a collective, with some inclusion of violence in the majority of articles.

This theme of violence was situated within a frame of ‘recognition’. Although violence was the dominant narrative, the articles illustrated a temporal context that both reinforced and illustrated Western institutional power and control. As a reminder, this research focused on articles published within a specific timeframe — November 6th, 2011 and November 7th, 2016. Differences in the number of articles published across these years indicated a shift in the reporting practices surrounding Indigenous women and indicate a shift from invisibility to visibility, and the construction of violence as newsworthy. Very few articles were found before 2014, a finding that is supported by the literature, which has illustrated a history of erasure of Indigenous peoples within mainstream institutions. As a result, the period of analysis seemingly reflected a shift in Indigenous/institutional relations from institutional erasure to media recognition.

According to Anderson and Robertson (2011), media representation of Indigenous peoples throughout history has existed in waves, rotating between periods of erasure and periods of exposure when something ‘newsworthy’ takes place, such as a war or another event. They draw on the surge of mainstream media representation surrounding the Oka crisis to illustrate this. In this respect, violence against Indigenous women as a systemic issue — the MMIWG phenomenon — became a ‘newsworthy’ event in 2014. Several things about this shift and surge in reporting are worth noting. First, the issue of violence against Indigenous women does not represent a specific ‘event’, but has been an overarching aspect of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations since early colonialism. Yet in the *Globe* narrative, the murder of Tina Fontaine and the attack of Rinelle Harper in 2014 became ‘events’ and were framed as sparking a ‘renewed’ interest in the topic of MMIWG.

Second, although the *Globe*’s media focus was situated within a self-proclaimed ‘critical’ frame, the narrative actually had ‘othering’ implications. The *Globe* focused on three things — the

Federal government's lacklustre plan to link unsolved missing-person cases with unidentified human remains; the failures of Manitoba's foster-care system; and the over-representation of Indigenous women among Canada's female serial-killer victims (Hillman Foundation, 2016). These focuses – deemed essential by the Globe – resulted in more pointed coverage on the issue of violence. However, the shift from erasure to exposure does not reflect a straightforward transition of lacking representation to having representation. On the one hand, the erasure of violence as a systemic issue prior to 2014 was critical in reproducing Indigenous women's experience of violence. Therefore, media interest in the issue of violence is necessary. However, common themes illustrated that the Globe's self-proclaimed 'critical' and essential take on the issue of violence was in reality not critical at all. Instead the Globe's focus reinforced existing Western cultural memory surrounding Indigenous women by focusing on what the Globe had deemed essential, not on what Indigenous peoples had deemed essential. Particularly, the construction of violence within those three essentialized frames had pathologizing and homogenizing implications towards Indigenous women that did little to address the over-representation of violence and continued colonial context, by reflecting non-Indigenous constructions of violence.

Further, this shift to 'recognition' did not reflect a shift in power. In fact, the recognition narratives illustrated a maintenance of institutional power in that mainstream institutions like law enforcement and government have maintained control over defining the narrative surrounding Indigenous women and resulting material consequences. In particular, the narrative remained largely institutional and reflected topics and themes deemed important by these institutions. For instance, discussions of violence were largely centered within an institutional debate regarding the national inquiry, and the media defined areas of interest previously discussed. Overall, the narratives surrounding the experience of violence, including those aimed at defining the violence and other common narratives, illustrated processes of power negotiation.

8.1.1.1 'Recognition' as a Social Policy

The overarching institutional power was evident in the construction of 'recognition' narratives within frames of social policy, absent the colonial context. Although reflecting a recognition of violence, common narratives did little to actually disrupt the institutional power underlying Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. Instead, 'recognition' was generally 'othering' in construction and execution, and common narratives normalized non-Indigenous power and control over defining the narrative and its material consequences in the form of an inquiry. The maintenance of institutional power (colonial power) was evident in the erasure of the colonial context and in the distance from violence and from Indigenous peoples that institutional actor groups built into their narratives. The 'othering' of violence as an Indigenous experience that resulted warranted space for non-Indigenous institutions to be main actor groups in the narrative which further normalized the construction of non-Indigenous institutions as existing outside of this violence.

Rather, any institutional recognition of violence and responsibility to act were generally constructed within a framework of 'social policy'. This citizen-focused construction lacked grounding in the colonial context, the Inherent and Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples, and the unique Nation-to-Nation based relationship between Canada and First Nations in Canada. For instance, while most non-Indigenous actor groups recognized some systemic barrier facing Indigenous peoples, this recognition was rarely focused inwards and was often only mentioned in passing or used to negate or shift responsibility through processes of erasure. To illustrate, there were several instances where law enforcement described government inaction as contributing to violence against Indigenous women, yet this institution maintained their own distance from the violence. Similarly, the Liberal narrative continually critiqued the Conservative government for not acting. Yet, the Liberal narrative rarely situated this critique within the historical relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples, and lacked any critical commentary towards the Federal government's decision-making power over Indigenous peoples. By limiting the colonial context to calculated and qualified discussion, and by denying current manifestations shaping Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations like the structural issue of violence against Indigenous

women, a social and political cultural memory of Indigenous peoples as ‘issue centered’ was reproduced.

8.1.2 Calculated Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples

A critical aspect of non-Indigenous colonial power reproduction was the calculated inclusion of Indigenous peoples within the narratives as knowledge holders, producers, and subjects. For instance, although Indigenous women were the main focus, Indigenous women were not a main actor group – thereby knowledge holder – within the narrative. Further, although family and friends and Indigenous institutions were main actor groups, this inclusion did not translate to power within or over the narrative. Harding (2006) provided some context to this mismatch — that while Indigenous peoples’ views might be included in the form of quotations, this inclusion often reflects practices of deflection, decontextualization, misrepresentation, and tokenization. As well, the Indigenous quotes that do make it into the news tend to support non-Indigenous framing and concerns, and report or promote stereotypical representations of Indigeneity (Harding, 2006). Although Harding was examining news practices in the early 1990s, common themes illustrate not much has changed surrounding Indigenous inclusion.

Across the Globe and Free Press articles, Indigenous peoples were routinely represented within stereotypical and issue-centered frames that supported dominant Western cultural memory of Indigenous peoples. For instance, family and friends were presented as highly emotional and Indigenous women as a homogenized collective. This homogenization of Indigenous women was evident in the overarching association between Indigenous women and violence that was represented throughout the articles, with violence becoming synonymous with Indigenous women. The collective experience of violence was constructed as a normalized way of speaking about Indigenous women, with ‘MMIWG’ becoming almost a catchphrase for discussing Indigenous women. Further, Indigenous women as a collective were framed within stereotypical frames of risk and vulnerability that supported an image of Indigenous women as violence-prone victims. Descriptions detailing experiences of risk and vulnerability were often situated in relation to non-

Indigenous women that functioned to ‘other’ Indigenous women through processes of normalization. Although Sullivan (2011) draws on ideas of normalization to frame Indigenous peoples and service delivery, normalization manifests itself in all Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations where Indigenous peoples and their experiences are being compared to non-Indigenous experience as a norm and baseline goal.

Similarly, descriptions of individual Indigenous women supported pre-existing stereotypical frames that removed Indigenous women’s power and agency. An in-depth look at inclusion criteria surrounding the inclusion of individual women and their experiences within the narrative was outside the scope of this research. However, that most of the individual women that were included could be situated within pre-existing issue-centric frames seemed to be telling of inclusion practices guided by stereotypical frames of Western cultural memory, which influenced ideas of newsworthiness.

Overall, Indigenous inclusion was often tokenistic in nature. That is, it contributed a sense of ‘authenticity’ to the narrative by way of reinforcing and supporting stereotypes that already exist within Western cultural memory. As noted by Anderson and Robertson (2011), the ideological nature of newsprint stems from the tendency to both reproduce what audiences already think they know, and teach audiences what they should know — with both reflecting a Western ‘common-sense’ construction of Indigeneity. Several aspects related to this ‘common-sense’ and stereotypical construction were evident. First and foremost, the association between violence and Indigeneity were constructed as a relationship of common-sense, with Indigenous women constructed as violence prone, Indigenous men constructed as perpetrators of violence, and Indigenous communities as sites of violence. As a result of this framing, Indigenous institutional narratives were positioned in relation to non-Indigenous institutional narratives, reflecting non-Indigenous institutional power and a calculated inclusion of Indigenous voices. The representation of Indigenous voice only in relation to non-Indigenous narratives reflected the stereotypical frame that Harding (2005) described as developing during the 1990s – of Indigenous peoples as incapable of taking care of their own affairs and in need of non-Indigenous direction.

The ‘us and them’ framework that emerged from this double-sided cultural memory of ‘Indigenous incapability’ and ‘non-Indigenous superiority’ was supported by the power non-Indigenous institutions had over defining the issue of violence and controlling actions. It reflects the continued reproduction of a ‘white savior’ ideology with Indigenous peoples framed as hopeless and non-Indigenous institutions as having a social responsibility to intervene and make decisions on behalf of Indigenous peoples. Despite some differences between Conservative, Liberal, and law enforcement narratives, all reflected a social policy narrative – that action should be taken as a matter of social policy to protect this group of individual citizens, effectively erasing the colonial context as discussed. Further, this frame of Indigenous incapability supports the old colonial frame of saving Indigenous women from Indigenous men, that underlined this ‘helping’ narrative.

By deflecting responsibility and framing action as intervening or helping, the underlying representation was that Indigenous peoples are responsible for the violence that is happening against Indigenous women and that this violence is evidence of culturally based differences. Yet, that Indigenous peoples are simultaneously incapable of addressing this violence – a two part construction that reinforces non-Indigenous power and removes or undermines Indigenous power. Ultimately, Indigenous peoples were framed as ‘issue-centered’ with this stereotypical construction and inclusion both a reflection and reinforcement of Western cultural memory.

8.1.2.1 Infotainment Purposes of Narrative

As an aspect of this calculated inclusion, news stories and narratives were found to reflect practices of infotainment. With more than 1,181 Indigenous women having gone missing or been murdered between 1980 and 2012⁵⁴, it was clear that the number of individual women included in the news narratives (58 different women across both the Globe and Free Press) was low. Further, more past women (those who had gone missing or had been murdered prior to the period of analysis) than

⁵⁴ Further, more Indigenous women had been identified as murdered or missing throughout the period of analysis. At least 36 Indigenous women in 2012, 30 in 2013, 26 in 2014, and 9 as of March 1 2015 had been identified by Maryanne Pearce as missing or murdered (Clare, 2015).

current women were included in the narrative. Ultimately, the women that were included tended to align with stereotypical representations. This stereotypical inclusion of Indigenous women can be situated within Duncan McCue's (2014) discussion of mainstream media's inclusion criteria surrounding Indigenous peoples – drumming, dancing, drunk, or dead – noting that if you take these four D's, “and add a ‘W’ for warrior, you could make it a rule” (para. 5). With this in mind, it was clear that the goal was less about learning about Indigenous women and addressing the issue of violence, and more about appealing to a readership and maintaining the status quo. For instance, the stories that received the most expansion were those that could be sensationalized or constructed as unknowable and unrelatable to white experiences, as well as those that could reinforce a sense of distance between readership and the experiences — i.e. stories with horrific violence, serial killers, or Indigenous perpetrators.

Thinking back, this infotainment construction of the narrative had foundations in the Globe's three-pronged focus of their MMIWG reporting team that was developed in 2014. The team focused on three areas deemed ‘under-focused’: the Federal government's lacklustre plan to link unsolved missing-person cases with unidentified human remains; the failures of Manitoba's foster-care system; and the over-representation of Indigenous women among Canada's female serial-killer victims (Hillman Foundation, 2016). Each of these focuses included topics that could be easily sensationalized, particularly given that the focus was on the experience of violence not on the colonial context. Even the focus on Manitoba's foster-care system failures, which seemed to indicate a focus on structural barriers and colonialism, was constructed within frames of infotainment that relied on narrating Tina's experience of violence in a step-by-step, enthralling fashion.

In general, the intent of the violence narrative was not to understand the experiences of Indigenous women from the perspective of Indigenous women, but to co-opt Indigenous women's experiences to tell a story of trauma that already exists within Western cultural memory of Indigeneity. This story, told within a disguise of objectivity and authenticity, has the effect of making readership feel powerless towards the constructed ‘inevitable’ experience of Indigenous women. However, the narrative is in fact very much constructed to appeal to a non-Indigenous readership. Violence

is not an inevitable experience. It is an experience that is rooted in the colonial context, and that is reproduced and maintained by the very mainstream structures claiming to explain it. Wallace and Martinez (2020) use the term ‘poverty porn’ to explain the contradictory and harmful objective theory of change that surrounds the creation and consumption of news stories about marginalized peoples. Particularly, that marginalized peoples are reported about, but are rarely assumed to be the audience or producers of those stories. The assumption being that “powerful people elsewhere will hear a story about oppressed people and care... and then the change will kind of trickle down in the form of policy or legislation or electoral choices” (Wallace & Martinez, 2020, audio). Within this objective theory of change, those institutions reporting on or speaking to the issue of violence, along with readership, exist outside of this issue — an important aspect of this readership ‘appeal’.

8.1.3 The Ideological Role of the ‘Narrator’

Ultimately, the news space as a site of colonial power reproduction was reflected in the ideological role of the author/narrator. Although this research focused less on the author than on the common narratives, the role of the author was central to the power that different narratives and actor groups held and to the reflection of Western cultural memory. Just like a narrator in a story, the author makes decisions on the types of stories that are included, the reporting practices surrounding these stories, who will have a voice and who will be awarded space, and how these voices are constructed and represented in relation to each other and to storylines. This effectively translates into who will be empowered. The ideological role of the narrator stems largely from the non-partisan construction of mainstream news spaces, marking an innate contradiction of the news.

Anderson and Robertson (2011) note that the press “has never been non-partisan or strictly objective in Canada” (p.3). Throughout the 19th and 20th century, mainstream news spaces were generally unapologetically partisan and proudly colonialist in intention (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). However, contemporary mainstream news spaces tend to maintain a disguise of unbiased, fact based, non-partisan representation. The discussion of the colonial context, or more accurately the lack thereof, reflects an innate contradiction of this ‘non-partisan’ portrayal. To begin, the lack

of discussion of the colonial context by author/narration is constructed to suggest a position of being unbiased. That is, Indigenous actor groups wanted to address the colonial context, and non-Indigenous actor groups wanted to ignore the colonial context, and therefore instead of ‘siding’ with one or the other, the narration takes a ‘neutral’ footing by presenting both sides, that are often in conflict with one another. I say ‘neutral’ in quotations because the notion that anything related to colonialism — its history and continued context – could be debated or could reflect differing ‘sides’ is colonial in nature. However, the lack of discussion of colonialism within the narrative is fitting, as mainstream media is a colonial institution that reflects and reproduces colonial power.

In this respect, the news maintained a disguise of non-partisanship that appeals to a white readership through a constructed image of objectively presenting ‘both sides’ and letting the readership make up their mind. However, nothing is neutral, and not taking a stand against colonialism – being silent or presenting ‘both sides’ – effectively awards and reproduces colonial power. Wallace (2019b) summarizes this farce of objectivity in the news quite succinctly as “objectivity is the ideology of the status quo”. Meaning, that if your ideology – your viewpoint – matches the status quo, then you are constructed as ‘objective’. By not framing the narrative within the continued colonial context of Canada, authors reproduce an image of objectivity that in fact supports an institutional ideological construction through the awarding of space and voice. This construction effectively ignores, erases, and downplays the colonial relationship that exists between Indigenous peoples and Canada. Further, this overarching representation that frames ‘all of the Indigenous news is bad news’ does not reflect the diverse experiences of Indigenous peoples across Canada, and therefore is not non-partisan but rather reflects calculated and ideological decision making by the media institution.

In summary, the overarching narratives surrounding Indigenous women were ‘othering’ in nature. Through common narratives, it was clear that the ‘othering’ lens through which Indigenous peoples were portrayed is a critical facet of Western separation from Indigenous peoples and denigration of Indigenous peoples. While the media tended to report on Indigenous women in ways that supported Western cultural memory, it should be noted that this reportage was not monolithic.

For instance, the media was critical of issues of child welfare, continually critiqued the Conservative decision against a national inquiry, and was sympathetic to the issue of violence. However, news stories continued to be cast within old stereotypical frames of Indigenous peoples as emotional, irrational, and incapable, with mainstream institutions constructing a narrative that did little to challenge existing colonial relations between Indigenous peoples and Canada. The media shared news stories that were catered to non-Indigenous consumption through narratives that fit within Western cultural memory of Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous perspectives of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. In particular, readership learned about violence in ways that distanced non-Indigenous people and institutions from the issue.

Notably, the representations surrounding Indigenous women illustrated an interconnected issue of visibility and representation. Arguably, Indigenous women and their experiences are represented in mainstream media to a greater extent than in previous decades, illustrating increased visibility. For instance, ‘MMIWG’ has become a household phrase. Yet despite this visibility, Indigenous women still lack representation and power over their representations. As a result, representations tend to exist within the realms of white feelings of ‘shock and disbelief’ and /or sympathetic indifference, with a lack of critical discussion of the continued colonial context or representations of Indigenous women as strong, diverse, living, breathing, human beings. Instead, the narrative surrounding Indigenous women is one of dehumanizing objectification, with Indigenous women constructed as victims. Which leads to important questions of representation and power – who is writing and telling the story, who benefits from the story, and who is missing from the story?

8.2 Getting Comfortable Talking Strength

The second aim of this research was understanding the individual level stories and common narratives that Indigenous women tell to bring meaning to their experiences. The intent was to understand these stories in relation to mainstream narratives, with interest in understanding how media and service delivery might shape the stories that the women told. Although interviews took place after the women had finished PV, the women reflected on the stories and narratives that had

defined their lives prior to PV and shared how these stories or perspectives changed or shifted throughout PV. Cooper and Driedger (2019) have noted that Indigenous cultural memories are often different than Western cultural memory, in that they include memories of the colonial context. For instance, remembering of the residential school legacy, of gender discrimination in the Indian Act, and of racist treatment. As well, some research has illustrated how Western cultural memory has over time become internalized among Indigenous peoples.

There was some evidence of internalization within the women's stories. However, the women were more insightful in their stories and reflections on how Western cultural memory had shaped them, and in turn their narratives, throughout their lives. Their stories were told within narratives of recognition and change. Overall, through PV the women were getting comfortable and more confident with approaching themselves, their experiences, and their stories from positions of strength and possibilities.

8.2.1 Recognition of Narrow Past Narratives

Although the women's stories generally came from positions of overarching strength, many of the stories that were shared to bring meaning to their experiences reflected a recognition towards their narrow sense of self and place within their worlds prior to PV. The PV women discussed narrow identities and sense of self, sharing stories and reflecting on experiences related to areas of motherhood, abilities, and culture. The PV women also shared stories and reflected on their sense of connectivity prior to PV.

Collectively, the PV women had lacked positive connections to mainstream institutions and people, sharing stories of not belonging or not feeling welcome in mainstream institutions, of institutions not meeting their needs, and of racism and discrimination. Further, although some of the PV women had connections to individuals or groups, a common narrative among the women was that they were not connected to people who were like them. The PV women shared not belonging or feeling fully welcome in either urban or First Nation environments, and most shared stories of lacking more intimate and meaningful support systems of family and other Indigenous

women. This lack of support systems made navigating mainstream environments all the more isolating. It was also clear that the PV women had collectively experienced a significant amount of trauma, challenges, and racism throughout their lives, and that these experiences shaped the understanding and meaning that the women brought to their lives.

The PV women shared insights into how these experiences had been, and in many instances continued to be, important aspects of who they are. However, these experiences of lacking, trauma, and racism were shared within a lens of remembering and reflecting. That is, the PV women shared stories of their experiences that stood out to them. Yet they also reflected on how these experiences had made them feel, illustrating a self-awareness that they had developed, and a widening of their sense of self and place within their worlds and the spaces they occupy. Further, the stories that the PV women shared to illustrate the narrowness they had previously felt or occupied prior to PV were anchored in desires for change. As well, even the more negative stories were an act of strength and resistance as the women each shared their own unique stories in their own words, reflecting the depth of the women's experiences.

8.2.2 Confidence towards Self and Belonging

Overall, through PV, the women developed a sense of confidence towards themselves and a greater sense of belonging. In addition to developing self-reflection and self-awareness towards their pasts, the PV women also developed new narratives for understanding themselves in relation to the development of skills, new aspects of self, and new experiences. The women's stories of their past tended to focus on specific defining experiences like a childhood memory or specific areas where the women felt lacking, like in terms of their skillset. However, the women's narratives of changes were often more generalized. Some specific areas stood out, like increased skills; yet, the PV women tended to focus more generally on their overarching sense of ability and renewed confidence towards their sense of self and identity, as well as a new sense of belonging and right to occupy their everyday spaces.

Overall, the development of skills was a critical aspect of the changes that the women experienced and the confidence they gained. The women's development of skills and abilities throughout PV were central to their new narratives, with these skills seeping into all other aspects of change. In particular, the PV women shared their processes of turning to their skills and lived experiences as valuable — a process that contributed to feelings of a pluralistic identity that reinforced and validated their sense of belonging. The increased confidence that the PV women felt provided a foundation for the women to explore themselves and be hopeful for their future, including their right to occupy space.

Recognition of a collective identity also contributed to a sense of belonging among the PV women. The PV women often shared personal stories about their life experiences and reflected on what made them unique, illustrating an individualized sense of self. However, the PV women also reflected on their increased recognition of a collective identity. This recognition was evident in the relational ways that the women told their stories and the language that was used. For instance, the women often discussed their stories in relation to other PV women and Indigenous women in general, noting similarities and differences in their own experiences. As well, the women often referred to themselves as members of a collective – as the 'PV women' and as part of a sisterhood. Evidently, having space to foster individuality in terms of developing skills, interests, and learning to see self as valuable, as well as having space to foster group/collective identity were both intrinsic to the renewed sense self and belonging in their spaces that the women experienced.

To summarize, the stories presented by mainstream spaces did occupy some space within the PV women's own stories. However, these stories were discussed within a context of recognition and self-awareness, for instance, in the women's rememberings of shame and discussions of how this shifted. The women did not want to forget or ignore the trauma and challenges that they had been through, and they were aware that they had internalized some Western cultural memory in the past. These experiences were important aspects of their identities. Yet the women expressed a desire to move beyond past stories to nurture other aspects of themselves as an aspect of feeling more whole and of feeling a sense of belonging. Further, there was power in this recognition and in the

women's control and agency over the stories they told throughout the PV program and within the context of the interview.

Through PV, the women gained understanding and insights towards their old narratives that had aligned with mainstream narratives and reflected issue-centered approaches, and developed new narratives for understanding self and experiences that stemmed from a position of strength. In addition to new narratives, the women shared developing new ways for approaching past experiences that similarly included coming from a position of strength.

8.3 Storytelling as Healing and Power Sharing

The third aim of this research was to understand how service delivery – a meso level connector within the context of PV – might function as a site of disruption and resistance towards the current narratives surrounding Indigenous women by providing space for those individual level stories and growth. In general, most of the interview participants raved about the PV program. Only one of the PV women shared stories of negative experiences. Sarah's stories were important as they illustrated the challenges of service delivery and the absolute importance of continuing the work of improving service delivery with and for Indigenous peoples. However important, Sarah's stories were not reflective of the experiences of the other women. There were many themes that reflected the success of PV and the connection that the PV women and others felt towards the program. Several data-based indicators also pointed to its success. As a new program, sufficient recruitment, completion, and measures of satisfaction provided some numerical evidence of the program's feasibility and success in terms of specific program goals.

Beyond this numerical evidence, the success of PV was reflected in the women's stories of how the program made them feel and the impact it had on them, which is difficult to quantify but telling nonetheless. Many program-based aspects were identified by the women as contributing to their sense of success. Yet it was the storytelling and the practices stemming from this storytelling as a form of individual and group based sharing and listening — or testimony and witnessing as described by Cooper and Driedger (2019) — that stood out. The storytelling that took place

reflected interconnected sharing of knowledge and experiences and included both traditional and personal life-experiences stories. Through the storytelling framework, a space was created that disrupted the colonial narrative by resisting mainstream narrative practices and facilitating alternative narrative production at the individual level. Ultimately, storytelling became an aspect of healing and power sharing for those women involved in the program and beyond, that resisted and disrupted the Western cultural memory that is reinforced in media representations, from the inside.

8.3.1 Intrinsic Benefits of Storytelling

Although not a direct intention, Positive Voice became a space for healing through storytelling. With the aim of skill development through narrative based work, PV participants were expected to already be on a healing journey and to be focused on employment and education-based goals. However, ‘healing’ is an altogether nuanced experience. While ‘healing’ can refer to a specific event or experience, the language of ‘healing’ from a Western perspective is inherently limited and often colonial in nature in that it signifies a desired end result of ‘healed’. In reality, healing, like storytelling, is a form of being and living — it takes many interconnected and interacting forms and often has no one specific end result, with no person ever altogether ‘healed’. Similarly, storytelling reflects a journey with stories never ‘finished’ but living and breathing within the context that they are told. Some of the women did describe themselves as specifically on a healing or learning journey. However, all of the women shared stories of living — of changes, developing understanding, and growth — that spoke to the diversity and everyday nature of healing. For instance, the women shared stories of personal growth, developing skills and resulting confidence, of creating relationships, of reflecting on past experiences, of feeling like they belong in their spaces, or of finding a space where they belong. All of these stories and experiences are aspects of living that had previously lacked recognition or space within the women’s personal narratives. Therefore, storytelling and the practices that surrounded this storytelling were synonymous to this diverse concept of healing.

Findings illustrated the intrinsic benefits of being in a space dedicated to storytelling. This intrinsic nature flowed from the group memberships and the development of PV as a safe space. Research has indicated the benefits of sharing stories and speaking to experiences in the form of testimony and witnessing within an Indigenous context – of both having someone to listen to stories and being the listener (Cooper & Driedger, 2019). Further, storytelling is an important aspect of Indigenous culture, related to teaching and passing knowledge between generations and renewing land and spirit relations. In fact, sharing what one has learned through experiences is described by Archibald (2008) as an important Indigenous tradition, “done with a compassionate mind and love for others” (p. 2). As peoples whose stories have long been erased, made illegal, misrepresented, and co-opted by mainstream spaces like the news, even the act of storytelling can be viewed as a form of resistance to mainstream spaces and empowerment for Indigenous peoples. Storytelling allowed the women to reconnect to themselves and their own experiences. Further, the group-based sharing allowed the women to feel heard by others and to connect to other women along shared and differing experiences.

8.3.2 Power Sharing through Storytelling

Not only did storytelling function as a tool for healing, it also challenged mainstream power and power relations. To begin, the storytelling framework created an environment of power sharing where everyone — from the guest speakers to the PV women — had valuable lived experiences and knowledge worth sharing, and a role within the process of knowledge exchange. Participants of the focus groups shared stories with the program developer; the program developer sought out stories from the literature; the advisory committee shared stories with each other; the PV women shared stories with each other and the guests; the instructors and guests shared stories with the women; and the PV women shared their stories with the wider London community at the exhibit. In standard service delivery and other employment and education-based spaces, there are clear relations of power where the instructor, teacher, boss, or other heads hold the majority of power within those spaces. The efforts that PV took to disrupt those ‘expert’ centric ideas of power through storytelling — sharing experiences and sharing knowledge — had the effect of putting the

PV women's experiences at the center, and allowed them to connect to others involved in instructional and personal capacities – relations that are generally dissuaded.

The confidentiality associated with service delivery generally means that the stories that are shared stay within the confines of that space. Confidentiality is often essential for ethical and safe service delivery in many contexts, and the PV women discussed the confidentiality that was in place as contributing to a safe space. However, having the opportunity to choose to share stories within PV and beyond to the London community was similarly empowering and awarded the women agency over their experiences and knowledge. As a result, not only did the storytelling framework — of sharing lived experiences and knowledge — contribute to an atmosphere of power sharing, it also allowed the development of a community among the women and others involved. In fact, the development of a community that truly cared about the program and its continuation into the future was foundational to PV's success.

In addition to power sharing, the storytelling methods disrupted dominant Western narrative practices as the women produced primary narratives that were disseminated first-hand. This was different from the tendency for stories to be shared as secondary data — as is the case of mainstream media and even within the sharing of stories within this research. The PV women had power over their own stories in terms of what to share and how to share it, and they were given the tools they needed to approach their stories creatively and from a position of strength. These efforts similarly spoke to the questions of who is writing and telling the story, who benefits from the story, and who is missing from the story?

In general, PV functioned by putting the PV women at the center, with storytelling a critical component. The comfort and safety that the PV women gained from connecting to others through storytelling — listening, sharing, and learning — translated into feeling comfortable and confident in exploring own abilities and aspects of self, and sharing those abilities with others. Further, PV provided space for the women to explore how their experiences intersected or differed from shared Indigenous experiences, and what that meant for them in their own context and sense of self and

belonging. PV provided space for the women to focus on what made them individuals while simultaneously creating an environment that built off the energy and comfort of group-work and the establishment of a collective group identity.

PV successfully created a safe space that was learning focused, with the PV women in control of their work. While recognizing shared experiences, being able to pursue individual interests and passions, and having control over the narrative process within a learning framework was intrinsically beneficial. By learning skills through storytelling, the women's stories became valuable aspects of their own learning journeys as well as the journeys of others. This contributed to a sense of value towards personal lived experiences that extended beyond one's own journey. As a result, the PV women learned useful skills while increasing their own self-awareness and collective awareness. Ultimately, having space to connect to other urban Indigenous women yet still maintain an individualized focus — both through stories — was central to the program's and the women's successes.

Overall, Positive Voice, the PV women, and others involved in the program illustrated the disruptive potential of service delivery by reiterating the necessity of constantly asking: who is writing and telling the story, who benefits from the story, and who is missing from the story? Through the creation and sharing of narratives, the PV women produced a narrative that challenged dominant Western narratives and narrative practices surrounding Indigenous women. Ultimately, the PV program and the PV women – their stories and their reflections – illustrated the need for Indigenous women to tell their own stories and the necessity of spaces that foster Indigenous sharing for challenging and disrupting Western cultural memory.

Chapter 9

9 Conclusion

Western cultural memory of Indigenous peoples was evident throughout this research. It was evident in the media's stories of trauma and violence, and in the erasure of strength within these portrayals; and in the stories and reflections that the PV women shared about their experiences. The negative implications of Western cultural memory were similarly illustrated in Frances' story of the London Free Press reporter who 'googled' Indigenous women prior to the exhibit; and in White's reflection on academia's issue-centric tendencies. Clearly, Western institutions and the people that exist within those spaces have a standard baseline – a frame, or gaze, or starting point – that guides their process of meaning making and knowledge construction in relation to Indigenous peoples. Western institutions like the news have a story they tend to portray about Indigenous peoples – of trauma and issues. These stories tend to include an erasure of contemporary cultural continuity and the colonial history, and illustrate an absence of Indigenous voice, strength, and power. We see these stories within the media, within academia and research, within mainstream service delivery, and other mainstream institutions as mechanisms in the 'common sense' construction of Indigenous peoples. The ubiquity of this macro-level framework makes it challenging to transcend, particularly without conscious effort. With this in mind, the value of the Positive Voice program extended beyond the education/employment benefits it had for the women involved in the program and their feelings of connection to the program. As an inherent aspect of the program, PV added to the narrative surrounding Indigenous women simply by the PV women producing their own narratives and sharing their stories of strength, and the discussion of power and agency this control provokes.

9.1 Policy Implications

Overall, a lot can be learned from Positive Voice. Positive Voice also adds much to the discussion of service delivery in terms of policy implications and best practices for working with Indigenous women and peoples generally. To begin, the positive and strength-based focus of PV was incredibly effective and distinct from the therapy type programming that tends to dominate ‘healing’ based services. Not only were the PV women challenging the negative cultural memory by sharing the nuances of individual experiences, they also learned to create space within their own stories for their strengths and for future possibilities. Even though the PV women’s stories were not all ‘positive’, there was something intrinsically valuable about working within a framework of strength. Anne referred to this framework as an individual inner knowledge of “you are good, you are strong, you can do this”. This foundational aspect set the women and the program up for success that seeped into all other aspects.

Related to this foundation of positivity, the group-based setting — also a foundational aspect of PV’s success — is particularly relevant to discussions of service delivery and best practices. Of course, group settings and group work are not always appropriate or effective. However, here the group-setting provided unanticipated value and outcomes and resulted in the PV women feeling like they were a part of something bigger than themselves, which contributed to a sense of self-worth and value. PV nurtured a sense of community and belonging that had been lacking in their lives. Further, the group effect that transpired out of PV strengthened the program benefits at the individual level, contributing to individual outcomes that might not have been possible or as prominent in a one-on-one type of program. The PV women worked on individual projects and told individual stories but also shared those experiences with the group. As a result, space was created for the women to support one another, to build relationships, to share experiences and perspectives, and to relate to each other as Indigenous women living in London.

Another aspect that lends itself to the discussion of best practices was the focus on *relevant* skill building through timely, accessible, engaging, and transferable mediums. First, program activities allowed the women to build off existing interests, as well as introduced them to new interests — aspects that made the program more engaging. As well, programming was timely in the sense that

it focused on skills relevant in the current technological age — for example, social media and online programming. Further, this construction of ‘timely’ recognizes the value of social media beyond particular skill development for reducing knowledge gaps and inequalities in online connectivity that are an aspect of the current digital divide. Social media and online based skills are not only more engaging than traditional teaching/educational models, but also are transferable to other spaces that individuals tend to occupy. For instance, learning how to create an online account through social media is a fun and engaging way to learn and get comfortable with skills that are necessary for online job application platforms. In this sense, the skills learned were transferable to other aspects of the women’s lives. As well, these skills had additional benefits of combating isolation through promoting connectivity. For instance, learning how to engage with others on social media is a relevant way for gaining knowledge, connecting to other Indigenous peoples and relevant issues, and connecting to friends and family – all of which decrease feelings of isolation.

PV also illustrated the value of focusing on both hard and soft skill development. As stated by Deb during our interview, “The hard skills can get you in the door, but the soft skills keep you there”. Hard skills are important for finding employment, however, soft skills such as confidence, self-esteem, and teamwork can be just as critical for success within employment and educational spaces. Similarly, PV illustrated the value of building progression into the programming, which allowed the PV women to build on existing interests and what they were learning to progress throughout the program. PV focused on the process of getting the women comfortable and building confidence, not on any specific outcome.

Another contribution that adds to the discussion of best practices is community involvement within service delivery. Within the PV context, community involvement included the wider London community and beyond — both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Londoners such as Indigenous artists and activists, politicians, and family and friends, including other urban and First Nation peoples. While most service delivery programs tend to focus inwards on individualized client-based goals and practices, including confidentiality and anonymity, the practice of sharing with others — of outwardly claiming experiences and accomplishments as your own — can have

empowering and emancipatory impacts. There is intrinsic value in seeing people you care about and other members of your community succeed, and this practice of sharing can extend the benefits of a program beyond the direct program participants.

Finally, PV added to the discussion surrounding Indigenous focused service delivery and the incorporation of culture; particularly, in terms of its culturally pragmatic programming. The role of culture and the inclusion of culture within programming reflects flexibility in terms of decision making, program capacity, and participant-level assumptions. Within the PV context, the developer realized her limitations as a non-Indigenous person in terms of running a culturally-based program and sought out other Indigenous perspectives on decision making. Further, cultural inclusion was pragmatic in that the program did not assume any cultural connections, Nation-based memberships, or knowledge of cultural policies in the legal sense. Instead, cultural inclusion was focused on being respectful and non-appropriative by bringing in Indigenous individuals like activists, artists, and others to teach and share with the PV women; and by allowing the PV women to guide the cultural inclusion. For instance, it was up to the women to bring in their culture through sharing and teaching one another, or through focusing on culture within their projects.

As well, PV reiterates the importance of not assuming participants' cultural-based identities, or their breadth of knowledge as it relates to cultural knowledge or knowledge of resources for Indigenous peoples and Indigenous policies. This is something that might be particularly relevant within an urban context where participants may identify with different First Nations or have varying levels of connections and knowledge of their Nation-based identity. As Thorp noted, Indigenous peoples are often assumed by non-Indigenous peoples to have a wealth of knowledge regarding Indigenous culture, 'Indigenous issues', and Indigenous policies, and often expected to be ready and willing to educate and debate with non-Indigenous peoples. However, being Indigenous does not equate with absolute knowledge; particularly, given the diversity of Indigenous peoples, the history of colonialism, the depth of federal Indigenous policies, and experiences of racism and discrimination that purposefully impede Indigenous knowledge development. And this tokenistic perception of Indigeneity can be emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually exhausting. With this in mind, there are both benefits and challenges to

taking a pragmatic approach to culture within service delivery, with many critiques existing towards pan-Indigenous or holistic type services.

However, this pragmatic approach of allowing the women to guide the cultural inclusion seemed to work in this urban context of varying Nation-based identities and levels of connection/knowledge. In sum, PV illustrated the value of recognizing and building off an intersectionality of experiences and targeting participant's needs. This includes building a safe space that celebrates the diversity and individuality of Indigenous women, as well as shared experiences.

9.2 Change by Claiming the Narrative

As a member of the PV advisory committee, I began this research with first-hand observations of the benefits of PV for the women participating in the program. It was these observations of strength and stories that shifted my involvement from an advisory committee capacity to include researcher. I aimed at exploring the existing dominant narrative, the individual narratives that the PV women shared to bring meaning to their experiences, and the role of positive narrative development and strength-based service delivery for these narratives. Through the course of this research, the PV women illustrated that PV became a space for challenging the Western cultural memory that had also taken up space in their lives; and for exploring personal identity in relation to each other, through sharing, listening, and teaching, within a comfortable and safe space.

Examination of newspaper articles illustrated the stereotypical, discriminatory, and erroneous representations that continue to exist at the macro-level within the foundations of Western cultural memory and subsequent narratives about Indigenous women. Even when stories are veiled behind a disguise of 'critical' inquiry – such as discussions of non-Indigenous responsibility to act – the dehumanizing implications of Indigenous peoples as 'other' and distinctly and adversely different were evident. This construction has had deleterious effects for Indigenous peoples and for non-Indigenous understandings of Indigenous peoples throughout history. Western cultural memory of Indigenous women as 'violence prone' and of Indigenous peoples and communities as

perpetuating this context (all while devaluing Indigenous voice and experiences through careful and qualified inclusion) exists as a form of discursive violence that has dehumanizing implications.

With these newspaper findings providing context to the existing narrative of mainstream spaces, it was of interest to understand how the stories shared by the PV women compared. Overall, the stories that the PV women shared challenged Western cultural memory, including the trauma framework and dehumanizing narratives that tend to be naturalized at the macro-level. The women's stories challenged this cultural memory simply by reflecting more nuanced narratives and their role as knowledge producers. While the women did have stories of trauma, they approached these stories within frameworks of strength, resilience, and ultimately insight. The PV women shared their stories within frameworks of 'I'm still here, my experiences are valuable, and I deserve space to tell them'. Further, by claiming these stories as theirs, the PV women challenged the long colonial tradition of mainstream spaces constructing and representing Indigenous experiences. As well, the women's stories were hopeful and future-focused, yet illustrated a sense of continuity in that they recognized their pasts as an aspect of their present and future, but not as a limitation.

Critical to the women's successes and positive experiences with PV was the program itself and their connection to it. Both the PV women and other program people shared story after story praising the program as spurring their self-development. The women's stories illustrated the intrinsic benefits of having access to spaces for Indigenous women to tell their own stories, and access to safe spaces for learning the skills necessary to tell and share these stories. Not only were the women challenging existing narratives and frameworks, they were doing these things while at the same time increasing their individual capacities and skills. Further, PV's programming was intuitively developed to support unique and diverse participant needs and interests, which included adapting programming when necessary to meet those needs. The process of reflecting on experiences and sharing these stories through skill development fostered participant choice and control, encouraged personal reflections, increased self-awareness, and nurtured a potential for personal growth and healing.

Overall, this research has illustrated the intersection between themes of visibility, representation, and power. Particularly, that Indigenous visibility within mainstream spaces is not the same as Indigenous representation or indicative of Indigenous power within representation processes. Forsyth's (2016) examination of commodification of Indigenous culture in the 2010 Olympic games in Vancouver is indicative of this disconnect between visibility, representation, and power. Indigenous peoples were included in these games in unprecedented ways, with more performers, cultural imagery, volunteers, and merchandise for sale than ever seen before (Forsyth, 2016). Yet, despite this increased visibility, power relations between Indigenous peoples and Olympic organizers remained unchanged in terms of actual benefits for Indigenous peoples, and claims of Indigenous representation more so reflected Indigenous commodification⁵⁵ (Forsyth, 2016). Further, present relations between Indigenous peoples and the Olympic industry may have even worsened (Forsyth, 2016; Blaze Aum, 2016). For instance, the Canadian designers that were awarded to outfit Team Canada at the 2016 Olympic Opening ceremony had used a derogatory term in 2015 to promote their new women's collection and its 'Indigenous flair' (Blaze Aum, 2016).

Ultimately, it has been illustrated that representation – having a voice and spaces for sharing those voices – matters. Yet, that some Western spaces like the news share stories about Indigenous women is not enough. This type of mainstream visibility is not the same as meaningful representation. Rather, Indigenous women need to both guide practices of representation and be the main voices in those representations, as expert knowledge holders and knowledge producers.

⁵⁵ As noted by Forsyth (2016), "all three Olympic mascots were designed to represent imagery taken from First Nations mythology [and] Inuit throat singing was available for ring tone downloads; and a temporary 8,000 square foot pavilion that reportedly looked like a 'cross between a traditional [Aboriginal] longhouse and Planet Hollywood' (Scalza, 2009, para.5, as cited in Forsyth, 2016) was assembled in a high traffic area to attract tourists willing to spend their money on the sale of Olympic-related goods (p. 29).

9.3 Limitations and Future Research

No research is without its limitations. Looking first at the media analysis, there were some limitations in the searches used to identify articles for examination. To begin, the search terms did not reflect the immense diversity of Indigenous peoples. This is a major limitation as it can contribute to the homogenizing and collectivizing representations of Indigeneity and can reflect practices of erasure. As well, the time-frame parameters that surrounded the search terms were somewhat arbitrary. The choice of a 5-year time frame resulted in me having to make some assumptions about representation patterns outside of the 5-year period of analysis. Further, even though parameters were necessary to keep the project manageable, the search terms that were chosen omitted other Indigeneity-based indicators. As a result, it is possible that Indigenous women who were included in other articles by name were missed in this research.

Another limitation of this research is the scope of its media focus. Although mainstream newspapers in print form remain important information sources for many Canadians, there has been significant changes in media spaces over the last 15 years. There has been a proliferation of online news spaces, including both mainstream and alternative news spaces, including social media. In fact, the popularity of social media spaces among young people in particular necessitates caution in even calling these spaces ‘alternative’ as they have become the only or main source that many turn to for gaining information. Beyond social media as an information dissemination platform, we have seen in the last four years the development of deeply partisan ‘alternative’ news spaces and a proliferation of racist, homophobic, and generally discriminatory voices that are now being awarded space on national news (and social media) platforms. Further, not only have these spaces expanded, but how they reach consumers is in many ways unimaginable from 15 years ago. Social media algorithms have made the assault of alternative media and news particularly troubling. Further research is needed to better examine these changes in news spaces in relation to Indigenous peoples and the rise of alternative media generally.

Similarly, while mainstream media continues to hold an authoritative role within the ideological construction processes surrounding Indigeneity, shifts in Indigenous visibility and Indigenous people’s constant resistance to assimilative efforts by mainstream institutions illustrate a necessity

of future research to examine Indigenous led and owned sources of representations. For instance, of Indigenous newspapers like the APTN National News, but also of micro-level representations as many Indigenous individuals use social media to connect to others, to resist Western images of Indigeneity, and to create new narratives through the mass sharing of individual and collective stories. In general, a more diverse and accessible repository of Indigenous forms of representation exists today than in previous generations like when the PV women were growing up. The impact of this shift was discussed by the PV women and other program people, many of whom shared how hopeful they felt that their children and youth have greater access to Indigenous role models and positive Indigenous representations now than they did as children, via social media and other online spaces. As well, by increasing their own comfort with technology, the PV women had also widened their access to Indigenous representations that had felt out of their reach, inaccessible, or absent prior to PV. With this in mind, it is pertinent that future research examine Indigenous representations and their reach.

Another limitation was that not all of the PV women and program people were interviewed. This makes the extension of any common themes beyond those interviewed limited. The evaluation did include exit interviews with all 11 of the PV women who completed the first two session. Yet, the evaluation itself, is also not without limitations. For instance, one of the PV women Sarah noted that she had been more positive on the evaluation than what she currently felt towards the program when we spoke. Ultimately, no research method can fully reflect the depth and nuances of personal experience. Individuals constantly, and often unknowingly, edit and morph their experiences and the meaning they assign to those experiences as they themselves learn within the context of sharing. In fact, this is not necessarily a limitation but a reality of the research process that should be embraced. Human beings are constantly changing and are never completely knowable. The stories and knowledges that are shared always reflect the context within which they are being shared.

As well, it would be useful to continue and update this research by interviewing more recent program participants to understand if the experiences and common themes that were shared in this research extend beyond these first two sessions. Similarly, to understand how the program has

morphed under its various facilitators and in relation to the service delivery community in London, the challenges that have come up, and any best practices that have been fine-tuned.

Finally, for non-Indigenous researchers there are limitations surrounding the conversations had with Indigenous peoples in a research context related to power relations and comfort towards sharing. In this case, I felt that the women were quite forthright with me. They were confident in the knowledge they were sharing and in themselves, and were coming from a place of personal empowerment. Further, I was also an insider in the sense that I was connected to the program as an advisory committee member and I felt there was some comradery that stemmed from the mutual acknowledgement of both Positive Voice's and the women's successes.

This research is not perfect. It should not be approached as a best practice for working with Indigenous peoples, but as part of the discussion for moving forward. Future research should continue this discussion around working with Indigenous peoples, organizations, and communities as non-Indigenous and Indigenous researchers. Particularly, around methodology and the need to extend the Western preoccupation with monolithic research to include more pragmatic, appropriate, and diverse methodologies that amplify Indigenous voices in a good way.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Tree of Life Activity Instructions By Summer Thorp



Tree of Life

Leaves: Who is special to you? People, pets, characters in stories, films, imaginary characters, people whom you may or may not have met, people who may or may not be living.

Fruits: What gifts have you been given - tangible and intangible contributions to your life? What have you received in relation to wellbeing?

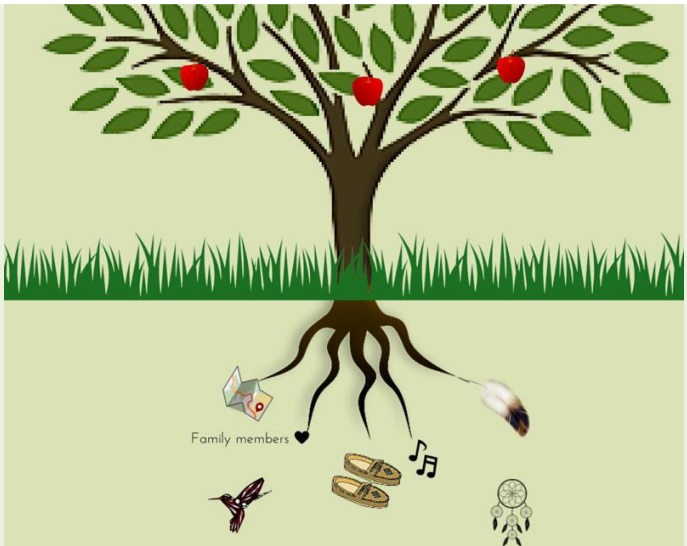
Trunk: What values and qualities are important to you? What special skills and abilities (sporting, creative, musical)? What likes, passions, beliefs? And what do you contribute to the wellbeing of others?

Branches: What dreams and hopes for the future do you hold for yourself, your family and your community? And what do you hope for in relation to wellbeing?

Ground: What are you involved in during your everyday life - schooling, sports, working? And what do you regularly do in relation to wellbeing?

Roots: Where were you born and who are you connected to? Ancestors, religion, spirituality, your family connections, favorite song or dance, favorite places, those who have contributed to and influenced your life.

#PositiveVoice




Roots

Roots

Family members

Roots: Where were you born and who are you connected to? Ancestors, religion, spirituality, your family connections, favorite song or dance, favorite places, those who have contributed to and influenced your life.

#PositiveVoice



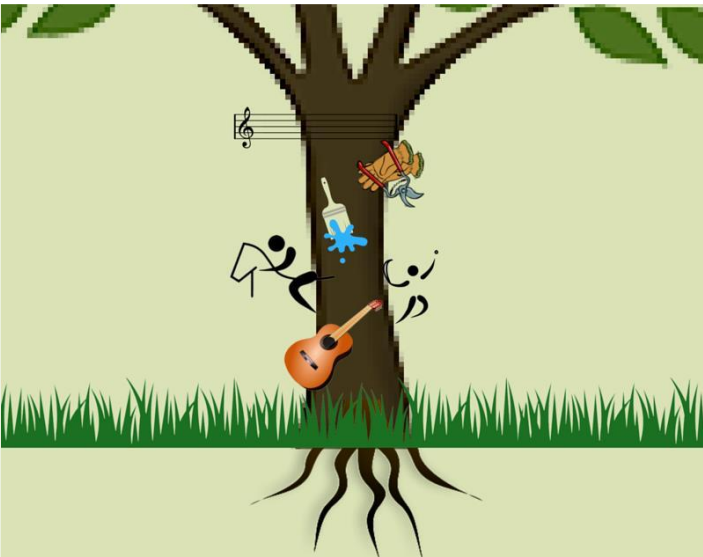
Ground

Ground

Ground: What are you involved in during your everyday life—schooling, sports, working? And what do you regularly do in relation to wellbeing?

#PositiveVoice

Trunk



Trunk

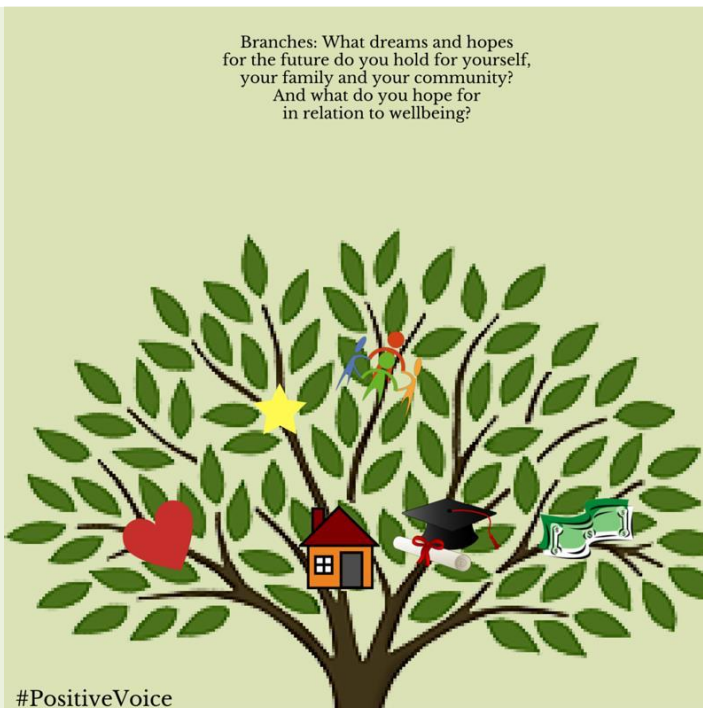
Trunk: What values and qualities are important to you? What special skills and abilities (sporting, creative, musical)? What likes, passions, beliefs? And what do you contribute to the wellbeing of others?

#PositiveVoice

The illustration shows a tree trunk with various icons: a guitar, a person painting, a person climbing, a person playing a trumpet, and a musical staff with notes. The tree is set against a light green background with grass at the base.

Branches

Branches: What dreams and hopes for the future do you hold for yourself, your family and your community? And what do you hope for in relation to wellbeing?



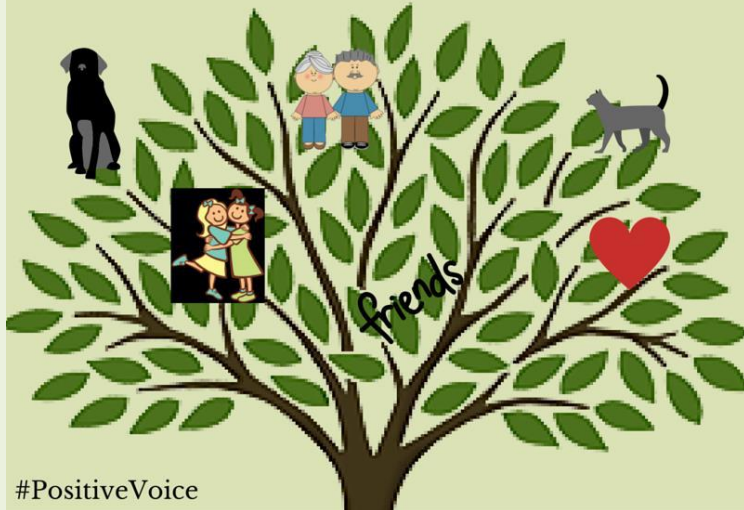
Branches

#PositiveVoice

The illustration shows a tree with various symbols on its branches: a red heart, a house, a graduation cap, a star, and a person climbing. The tree is set against a light green background.

Leaves

Leaves: Who is special to you?
People, pets, characters in stories,
films, imaginary characters,
people whom you may or may not
have met, people who
may or may not be living.



#PositiveVoice

Leaves

Fruits

Fruits: What gifts have you
been given - tangible and intangible
contributions to your life?
What have you received
in relation to wellbeing?



#PositiveVoice

Fruits

Source: <http://dulwichcentre.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/tree-of-life-sculpture.pdf>



Example of Tree of Life Sculpture

- Created members of three communities in Manitoba and Ontario (Lake St. Martin First Nation, Cross Lake Band and Pikangikum First Nation) in 2009
- **The Roots:** Names and communities on the base of the sculpture.
- **The Trunk:** “The skills and abilities of Aboriginal people are recorded on the trunk of the tree and include trapping, fishing, hunting, cooking, baking, raising children, listening, art, dancing, storytelling, strong culture, family values, sense of direction, and sense of humour.”
- **The Branches:** “We chose to represent our hopes and dreams as well as things that are important to us as leaves and other special objects on the tree. Our hopes and dreams include prosperity, good health, respect, safety, traditional teachings, expanding communities, finding ways to deal with challenges, networking, bringing workshops into our communities, finding better coping mechanisms, success, staying clean and healthy, peace and unity.”
- **The Leaves:** “The people who are important to us include family, grandparents, elders, pastors, friends and neighbours. There are a few other things we have included which have special meaning. There is a bird looking after her young in a nest which represents the importance of family. There is a spider hanging in the tree, which represents our respect for all living things. There are people holding hands and coming together, which represents unity.”

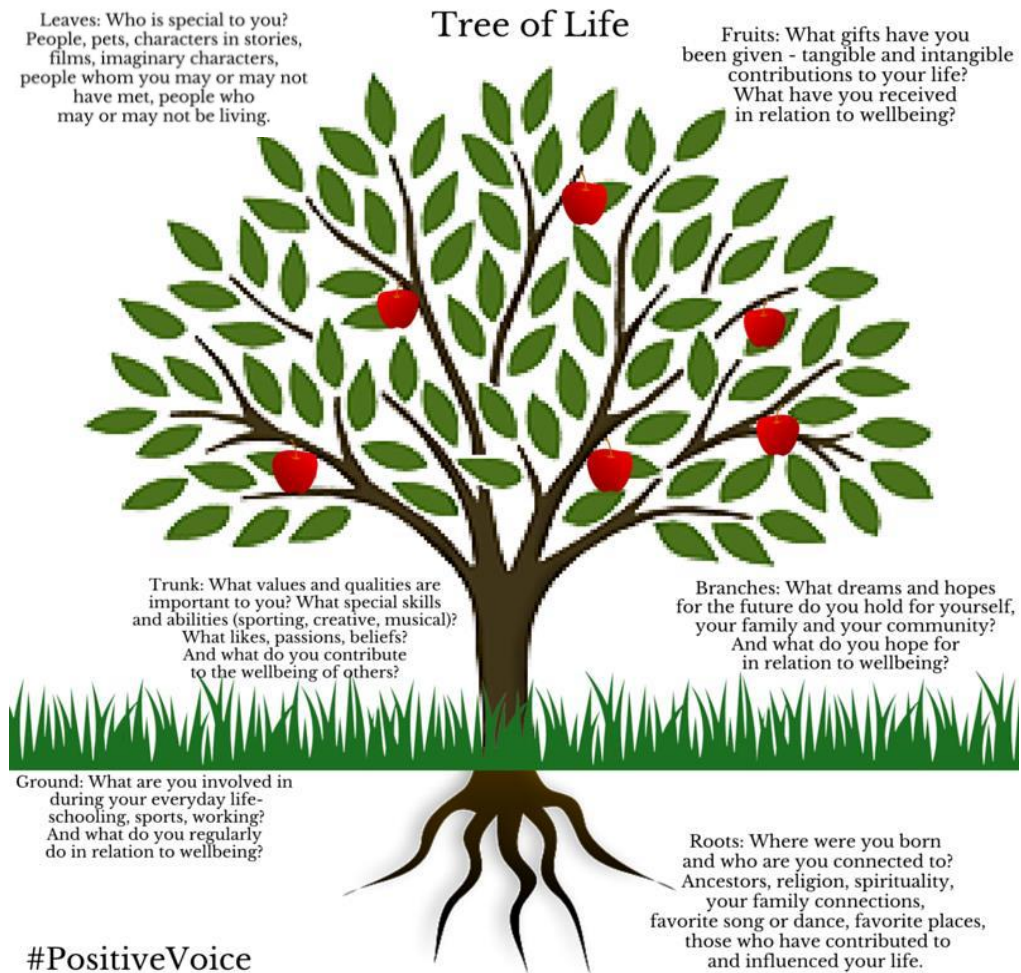
Source: <http://dulwichcentre.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/tree-of-life-sculpture.pdf>

Witnessing Each Other's Tree Stories and Lives

- What did someone else from the group say that will stay with you for a long time?
- What images of their life or of them did these stories bring? What did these images suggest to you about this person and the community's purposes, values or dreams?

Witnessing Each Other's Tree Stories and Lives

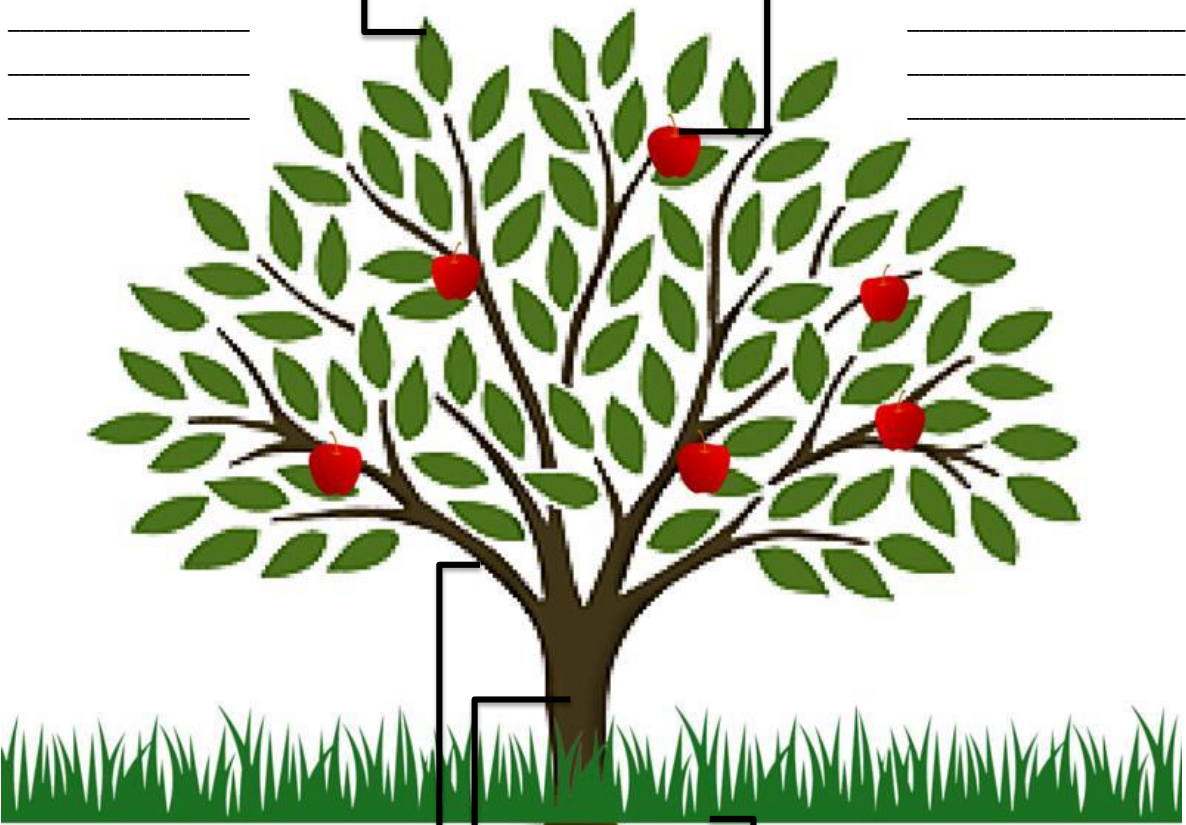
- What is it about your life that got you noticing these things? What did it connect to?
- Where has this experience of hearing their story taken you to, that you would not otherwise have arrived at?
- How are you different now that you have heard the stories of others?



Leaves: _____

_____ 's
Tree of Life

Fruit: _____



Branches: _____

Ground: _____

Trunk: _____

Roots: _____

Wire Tree Instructions

You will need:

- 26 Gauge Wire (Cut into 30cm lengths)
- A rock to attach tree to
- Beads
- Labels
- String
- Scissors

Instructions:

- ✓ Start by cutting the wire into strands that are 30cm long. (Already done)

To make a branch:

Proceed after completing steps with Beads or Labels before completing this stage.

1. Create the end of the branch you want using one wire (curved, bead, circle.)
REPEAT
2. With the two wires (wires you just created with ends) twist them together until they are secure and look like they are coming off a branch.
3. Repeat steps for however many branches you desire.
4. Begin attaching the twisted branches to each other until you reach your desired level of fullness.
5. Use the left over wire at end to twist into a trunk.

✓ **If using beads:**

- Thread the bead through the wire about 5cm from the end.
- When the bead is in place, twist the longer wire (one side of bead), and shorter wire (other side of bead) together in a spiral to secure the bead.
- Proceed with step 2 of creating a branch and continue on making your tree. The bead is your end.

✓ **If using labels:**

- At about 8 cm from the end, make a loop with the wire.
- Begin to twist the longer wire and shorter wire together in a spiral motion.
- When the loop is the size you desire follow through with steps after step 1 in how to make a branch. The loop is your end.
- Pick one of the labels available and write what you desire on the card. Use the given string and feed it through the label hole and tie in a double knot to the created loop. Trim excess string.

To make the trunk:

- From the branches made prior, the majority of your trunk will be twisted together from the ends of the branches wire.
- To achieve a neater, sturdier look, wrap extra wire around the trunk for added support.
- Make sure that you leave enough wire at the end of the trunk to create roots to secure to the rock.

To make the roots:

- Place the tree in the desired spot on the rock
- Wrap the excess wire from the trunk to create roots around the rock.
- Twist all wire to the side so the rock can stand sturdy and not tip.
- Trim wire if needed.



Appendix B: News Release-Warrior Womyn Exhibit at Museum of Archeology

Urban Aboriginal Women Reclaim Their Identities in Exhibit Opening at the Museum of Ontario Archaeology

London, Ontario, January 23, 2017 ... Re-establishing pride as an Aboriginal woman. Persisting despite trauma from residential schools. Breaking the cycle of abuse and addiction. Positive parenting as a single mother.

These personal stories and themes are explored in *Warrior Womyn: Reclaiming our Identity* a mixed-media exhibit opening at the Museum of Ontario Archaeology on Thursday, January 26 and running until March 28, 2017.

Works on display include wire sculpture, memes, infographics, photography and written narratives created by eleven urban Aboriginal women from the London area, ranging in age from 22 to 55. They were all participants in +Positive Voice, an innovative pilot program started through Nokee Kwe, an employment and training services centre in London.

“Warrior Womyn presents the lived experience of urban Aboriginal women in an exceptionally honest and vulnerable manner,” explains Summer Thorp, program coordinator, +Positive Voice. “For some of the participants, this is the first time that they have told their stories publicly. Their work reflects their strength, resilience and accomplishment.”

+Positive Voice was developed to support the development of positive narratives and positive community connections by urban Aboriginal women, 18 years and older, who are experiencing a transition to employment or education. It provides them with an opportunity to learn more about social and digital media, photography and narrative writing through hands-on experience and by interacting with guest speakers and artists.

“Exhibits such as *Warrior Womyn* challenge us to reexamine how we interpret the past and assumptions that are made in understanding archaeological finds,” says Nicole Aszalos, curator, Museum of Ontario Archaeology. “Newer technologies are making it easier for more people to share their stories and perspectives as part of this discovery. We’re happy to support such an innovative initiative.”

The +Positive Voice program is participant driven and overseen by an advisory committee of Aboriginal women and community practitioners. Funding is provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Contacts:

Summer Thorp, 519-667-7088, summert@nokeekwe.ca
Nicole Aszalos, 519-473-1360, nicole@archaeologymuseum.ca

Appendix C: CAN Analysis Guide

1. Article Characteristics

- What year was the article published?
- Who is the intended audience? (Indigenous or non-Indigenous)
- Is the article published in multiple newspapers?
- What section of the newspaper is the article published in?
- Who wrote the article?
- Why was the article written? (e.g., Opinion piece, reporting on recent experience, reporting on past experience)

2. Surface text

- What topics are discussed in the article?
- How do these topics overlap or contradict each other?
- What topics are absent from the article?
- Whose stories are being told?
- Who is doing most of the telling?

3. Actor Groups

- Who are the main actor groups?
- Who have space in the article in terms of voice?
- Are there Indigenous voices?
 - I. How many Indigenous voices?
 - II. How many non-Indigenous voices?
- How do actor groups overlap or contradict one another?
- What actor groups are absent from the article?

4. Indigenous and non-Indigenous inclusion

- What Indigenous voices/groups are represented?
- What narratives are Indigenous actor groups telling?
- How are Indigenous positions included? (e.g., quotes, author descriptions, secondary descriptions)
- How are Indigenous actor groups portrayed? (e.g., as experts, as knowledgeable, positively, negatively)
- What non-Indigenous voices/groups are being represented?
- What narratives are non-Indigenous actors groups telling?
- How are non-Indigenous positions included? (e.g., quotes, author descriptions, secondary descriptions)
- How are non-Indigenous actor groups portrayed? (e.g., as experts, as knowledgeable, positively, negatively)

5. Inclusion of Indigenous Women

- In what context are Indigenous women included? (e.g., as main actor groups, as subjects of others)

- What role do Indigenous women have in the article? (e.g., knowledge holders, examples)
- Are Indigenous women privileged as knowledge holders/experts?
- How many Indigenous women are included in the article?

6. Construction of Violence

- How is violence constructed in the text? (e.g., as a collective experience, as an individual experience, as a structural experience)
- What types of violence are discussed and privileged? (e.g., serial murders, Indigenous perpetrated violence, violent murders)
- How are stories of violence presented in the text? (e.g., as lengthy exposés, as a short descriptor after a women's name)
- How are experiences of violence portrayed in the text? (e.g., as shocking, as something to be concerned about, as expected, as normalized)
- What kind of language is used when violence is discussed? (police jargon, crime language, metaphors)
- What is the cause of violence according to the text?
- What kinds of experts are referenced or cited when discussing violence in the text?
- What topics are absent from discussions of violence?
- Whose voices are absent from discussions of violence?

7. Construction of Cause and Action

- Who is perpetrating the violence according to the text?
 - I. What descriptions surrounding the perpetrator are included? Absent?
 - II. What characteristics of the perpetrator are included? Absent?
- How are Indigenous men constructed in relation to violence?
- How are Indigenous communities constructed in relation to violence?
- How are structural barriers approached in the text?
- When discussing cause, what narratives are awarded space?
 - I. What narratives are ignored?
- How is action constructed in relation to violence?
- How is responsibility to act framed by actor groups? (e.g., social responsibility, part of an inherent colonial relationship, ignored altogether)
- When discussing action, what positions are awarded space? (e.g., national inquiry, police action, First Nation community action)
 - I. What positions are ignored?

8. Construction of Indigenous Women

- How are Indigenous women constructed in the text?
 - I. How are Indigenous women constructed in the text in to relation to violence?
- What is absent in the construction of women?
- When discussing Indigenous women, what comparative representations are used?

- What are characteristics are included in the articles about the women?
 - I. What characteristics are ignored?
- What experiences are included in the articles surrounding the women?
 - I. What experiences are ignored
- How are women portrayed in the text? (e.g., as individuals, as collective, as a topic, as a descriptor for something else)
- What kinds of subjectivity are constructed in the articles with regard to Indigenous women and the experience of violence? (e.g., the victim, the vulnerable, the 'at risk')
- How are Indigenous women who have experienced violence constructed in relation to Indigenous women who have not experienced violence?
 - I. In relation to non-Indigenous women?

9. Construction of Colonial Context

- How is the history of colonialism in Canada discussed in the article?
 - I. What is absent from this discussion?
 - II. What kind of understanding towards colonialism does this discussion convey?
- How do Indigenous actor groups frame the colonial context?
- How do non-Indigenous actor groups frame the colonial context?
- What strategies does the article follow to discuss the colonial context? (e.g., presenting 'both sides', assigning discussion to Indigenous voice)

10. Rhetorical Devices

- What strategies does the article follow to form its argument? (e.g., actor group voices/quotes, statistics, 'common-sense' understandings, expert knowledge)
- What strategies are used by main actor groups to form their arguments? (e.g., statistics, 'common-sense' understandings, expert knowledge)
- What logic does the text follow? (e.g., violence is normal, violence is bound to occur, institutions are doing all they can, Indigenous communities need to take responsibility, non-Indigenous institutions need to take responsibility)
- What kinds of vocabulary and styles of writing does the article use?
- What kind of imagery does article use?
- How are critiques or counter-examples presented in the article?

11. Other

- What is the overall message of the article?
- Whose stories are being told?
- Who is awarded space and power to do the telling?

Appendix D: Recruitment Material

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research on Positive Voice

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Elgie and I am one of the members of the Positive Voice advisory committee.

I am also a doctoral student at Western University. As a participant in the pilot program, I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that myself and Jerry White are conducting. We have permission to invite you to participate from Summer Thorp and the Nokee Kwe board. This research project is distinct from the actual Positive Voice program. Briefly, the study will examine how the strength-based approach used by Positive Voice increases positive self-perception of clients and individual capacity building. Of interest is to better understand how Positive Voice is incorporating innovative ways for developing individual capacity, healing, and self-determination. It is hoped that this project will provide a useful analysis and necessary documentation for developing Positive Voice further as well as contribute to a better understanding of Indigenous healing strategies and capacity development.

If you agree to participate your participation would include an interview taking approximately an hour. The location can be determined based on your preference and I can travel to you. We will also share our findings with you after the research project has concluded. Your participation in this research will remain strictly confidential. No information you share will be connected to you personally.

If you would like to participate or receive more information on this project, please contact me using the contact information given below.

Thank you for considering to participate,

Jennifer Elgie
Department of Sociology

Invitation to participate in research project on Positive Voice

My name is Jennifer Elgie and I am one of the members of the Positive Voice advisory committee. I am also a doctoral student at Western University.

As a participant in the pilot program, I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that myself and Jerry White are conducting. We have permission to invite you to participate from Summer Thorp and the Nokee Kwe board. This research project is distinct from the actual Positive Voice program. Briefly, the study will examine how the strength-based approach used by Positive Voice increases positive self-perception of clients and individual capacity building. Of interest is to better understand how Positive Voice is incorporating innovative ways for developing individual capacity, healing, and self-determination. It is hoped that this project will provide a useful analysis and necessary documentation for developing Positive Voice further as well as contribute to a better understanding of Indigenous healing strategies and capacity development.

If you agree to participate your participation would include an interview taking approximately an hour. The location can be determined based on your preference and I can travel to you. We will also share our findings with you after the research project has concluded. Your participation in this research will remain strictly confidential. No information you share will be connected to you personally.

If you would like to participate or receive more information on this project, please contact me using the contact information given below.

Thank you for considering to participate,

Jennifer Elgie

Appendix E: Letter of Information and Consent Form

The role of positive storytelling for healing: Changing the narrative surrounding Indigenous women's experiences

Letter of Information and consent form – Positive Voice Participants

You are being invited to participate in this research about +Positive Voice because you participated in the first or second 7 week session of the program.

This research is being conducted to understand Positive Voice in its entirety within the context of Aboriginal healing strategies. This project will examine how the strength-based approach used by Positive Voice leads to positive self-perception and individual capacity building. This study will look at the development of Positive Voice from the bottom up, looking at the impetus for this program and surrounding context, the healing framework, implementation, participant experiences, outcomes, and challenges. Of interest is to better understand how Positive Voice is incorporating innovative ways for developing individual capacity, healing, and self-determination. The purpose of your interview is to gain a participant perspective on Positive Voice.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, your participation will include an hour to an hour and a half interview. Your interview will be audio recorded to allow the researcher to fully listen and transcribe later. Once finished, your interview will be transcribed with data kept on the researcher's password encrypted computer. Your audio recording will be deleted. You will have the opportunity to review your transcribed interview if you wish to do so.

Unless requested by you, no names or personal identifiers will be used in the dissemination of this project to protect your anonymity. However, given the small number of participants, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

While there may be no direct benefits, it is hoped that your participation in this project will assist Positive Voice in developing further as well as help other organizations in developing more innovative healing strategies that build on the strengths of Indigenous peoples.

Participation in this project is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of any information collected from you. If you wish to have your information removed, please let the researcher know.

Confidentiality

To ensure your information is kept confidential, no names of persons or places will be used in the analysis of this project. You can decide and tell the researcher how you wish to be identified (a made up name, initials, first name, job title etc.). If you consent for your name to be used, you may withdraw consent at any time and an alias will be substituted. All transcribed interview data will be kept by the researcher in a secure location for 5 years as per University Ethics guidelines. After five years, all data will be deleted and shredded. Despite efforts used to ensure confidentiality, due to the relatively small size of the program the researcher cannot ensure anonymity.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Although no names or other personal identifiers will be used without your permission, to illustrate a theme, the researcher may wish to use unidentifiable personal quotations. You will be asked to consent whether you agree to allow researcher to do so.

The researcher has access to your participant created material due to their position as a member of the advisory committee as well as the publicly available material at the museum of archaeology. The researcher may wish to refer to a piece you created for the museum. You will be asked whether you agree to allow researcher to do so. If you agree, you can be specific if there are some you consent to and others you do not.

There will be no formal forms of compensation for your participation in this research. The researcher will do her best to ensure your costs are low by setting up a time to meet that works for you and by traveling to you if necessary.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. We will give you any new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form

If you have questions about this research study please contact Jennifer Elgie, information provided at beginning of letter. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: ethics@uwo.ca.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

The role of positive storytelling for healing: Changing the narrative surrounding Indigenous women's experiences

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio recorded in this research

YES NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

I consent to the inclusion of *all* participant created materials in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

I consent to the inclusion of *some* participant created materials in the dissemination of this research and would like to be asked prior to inclusion

YES NO

I consent to the use of my first name in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

Print Name of Participant	Signature	<i>Date (DD-MM-YYYY)</i>

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Print Name of Person	Signature	<i>Date(DD-MM- YYYY)</i>

To review your transcribed interview please leave a method for contact _____

Appendix F: Interview Guides

Positive Voice Advisory committee/volunteers/staff

- How did you become involved with the Positive Voice program?
 - o Why?
- What are your expertise or relationship working with Indigenous peoples?
 - o In community/urban/service delivery context?
 - o With women?
- Can you talk about your experience with this program?
 - o compared to other service delivery experiences?
- Can you tell me about your initial thoughts on the program?
- What was your role in Positive Voice?
- One of the main premises of the program is that the popular representation of Indigenous women is often negative. Can you speak to that?
 - o How does this perception relate to your own experiences/perceptions?
 - o Implications of these representations for Indigenous women?
 - o Do you think this shapes Indigenous women's sense of self?
- Has your identity as an Indigenous/non-Indigenous person shaped your involvement with Positive Voice?
- Now that two sessions of the program have been completed, do you have any comments about the success of the program?
 - o challenges
- Did you attend the opening ceremony for the museum exhibit? Can you tell me about that experience for you?
- Any other comments you would like to make?

Nokee Kwe Staff/volunteers

- Can you tell about Nokee Kwe?
 - o types of services?
 - o Indigenous/non-Indigenous components?
- Can you tell me a bit about the clientele Nokee Kwe serves?
 - o How do you serve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples?
- Can you tell me about your role at Nokee Kwe?
 - o What is your expertise or relationship working with Indigenous peoples?
- What is the role of Nokee Kwe within the wider Indigenous community?
- In what capacity are/were you involved in Positive Voice?
- Can you tell me your thoughts about the program?
 - o For women specifically
- How does Positive Voice compare to other Indigenous specific programming?
 - o Mainstream programming
- One of the main premises of the program is that the popular representation of Indigenous women is often negative. Can you speak to that?
 - o How does this perception relate to your own experiences/perceptions?

- Implications of these representations for Indigenous women?
- Do you think this shapes Indigenous women's sense of self?
- Any other comments you would like to make?

Developer/Coordinator

- Can you tell me about Nokee Kwe?
 - types of services?
 - Indigenous/non-Indigenous components?
- What is the role of Nokee Kwe within the Indigenous community generally?
- Can you tell me about your role at Nokee Kwe?
- How do you see your role with the Indigenous community in London?
- Can you tell me about Positive Voice?
- Can you tell me a bit about the participants?
 - How did they become involved?
 - Demographic?
 - Relationship with their culture?
- As Nokee Kwe serves both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and men, how did you come to develop a program for Indigenous women specifically?
- Can you tell me about the methodology/healing strategy?
 - How did you develop it?
 - Compared with other strategies you've come across?
- Can you tell me about the program framework and structure?
 - Positivity?
 - Narrative focus?
 - Learning/skill development?
 - Guest speakers?
- Can you discuss the goals and expectations that were had for the program?
 - Isolation and community connections?
 - Narrative development?
- Can you tell me about your experience working with the women?
 - As a non-Indigenous woman?
- What were some of the challenges that came up throughout the program?
 - Development/delivery
 - Participant level challenges
- Can you speak to the program successes?
 - Outcomes?
 - Participant level successes?
- I know you had some community based events during and after the two pilot sessions. Could you talk a bit about those?
 - Relevance?
- Can you tell me a about the museum exhibit?
- Please add any remarks you think are important

Evaluator

- What were your initial thoughts on the program?
- From your experiences working with Indigenous peoples/communities/organizations, how does Positive Voice compare to other service delivery/ healing strategies?
- Can you tell me about your findings from the evaluation?
 - o Are there things that stood out/surprised you/were expected?
- Do you have any recommendations for moving forward?
- Any other comments you would like to make?

Participants

- Can you tell me what year you were born?
- Did you participate in the first or second session of Positive Voice?
- How did you become involved in Positive Voice?
 - o Why?
- Have you ever attended programming or used services at Nokee Kwe before Positive Voice?
 - o If so, can you tell me about that?
- How does Positive Voice compare to other programs that you have been involved with/heard about?
- Can you speak to the value of having a program aimed at urban Indigenous women?
- One of the main premises of the program is that the popular representation of Indigenous women is often negative. Can you speak to that?
 - o How does this perception relate to your own experiences/perceptions?
 - o Implications of these representations for Indigenous women?
- Can you tell me about the importance of your culture?
 - o Has PV shaped this at all?
- Can you tell me about your experience throughout the program?
 - o Skill development?
 - o Aspects you connected with?
 - o Challenges you faced? Successes you had?
 - o Working with women?
- Do you think your age or life stage shaped your experience in Positive Voice?
- Positive narrative development was a main program goal. Can you speak to that?
 - o What was your experience with that?
 - o Importance generally?
- Another goal of the program was to develop community connections and combat isolation. Can you speak to that?
 - o What was your experience?
- Did you take part in the museum exhibit? Can you tell me about that experience?
- Now that you have completed the seven-week program, what do you think about this type of program for Indigenous women?
- Can you tell me about your life after PV?
- Any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix G: Descriptions of Select Individual Women

Karina Wolfe Karina Wolfe turned up at her mother's Saskatoon apartment in July of 2010 after spending a week at **rehab**. The **20-year-old native girl** dropped off her belongings before going to the home of a male friend, where she had a shower and a bite to eat. That man drove Ms. Wolfe to a **seedy section of the city known for its prostitution**. And then she vanished. Ms. Wolfe has never contacted her family, she has not picked up her **prescription medicine**, she has not touched her bank account. And although her mother continues to look for her, it is easy to conclude that she is not coming back.

Just as Karina Wolfe's family continues to look for answers about her disappearance, so too do advocates for indigenous women want answers to the broader questions of the many deaths and disappearances.

Delores Dawn Brower Delores Dawn Brower, who went by the nickname **Spider**, was a **sex-trade worker** last seen **hitching** a ride in Edmonton

high-risk persons

The **MÈtis woman had long brown hair and brown eyes, stood about 5 foot 3 inches tall and weighed 110 pounds. She had scars on both forearm**

Delores Brower - whom she knew by her **street name "Spider"** - in the late 1990s. The two lived in the same neighbourhood around **107th Avenue**, then a **hive of gang activity**.

Delores Brown **19-year-old First Nations** woman Delores

visit to her **grandmother**

Mr. Charlie described **Ms. Brown** as a "**quiet homebody**"

out of character for Ms. Brown to disappear

had **never gone missing before**

Brandy Vittrekwa Nearly five months after the **body of a native girl** was discovered on a Whitehorse walking trail

Brandy Vittrekwa, who was just **two months shy of her 18th birthday**

She was just **two credits short of a high-school diploma**.

The **girl**, described by friends and family as a **magnetic young woman**, was just two months shy of her **18th birthday and two credits short of a high-school diploma**.

Brandy Vittrekwa moved from **Fort McPherson, NWT, to Whitehorse** in September, 2012, because her mother enrolled in college there. **She made friends quickly**, her mother

said, **but she also started going missing, here and there, for a day or two.** "She would always answer calls the next day," Norine Vittrekwa said. "This time, she didn't."

has joined **native women** such as Brandy Vittrekwa, the **17year-old** who was found dead in Whitehorse last week,

Jennifer McPherson **41year-old, who had been living on remote Hanson Island.**

Ms. McPherson was **indigenous**, her roots tracing back to **Manitoba's Peguis First Nation.**

act of **kindness**,

Months later, in **May of 2007, he married Ms. McPherson** in that same home. He met her through a **dating website**

the relationship moved fast and that **her sister**, who had been **working at a local indigenous organization**, started isolating herself from her family. By 2008, the couple **moved to B.C.**, where Jennifer McPherson, **who had taken a computer application program after high school, found a job as a caretaker at a fishing lodge on Hanson Island.** It was there, around April 29, 2013, that Mr. Andretti killed his **wife**

kill his **wife, a 41-year-old indigenous woman** named Jennifer McPherson, **in British Columbia.** When the **mother of two** went missing in 2013

murder of his **wife**, Jennifer McPherson,

Loretta Saunders This is something Loretta Saunders would surely have researched in her **university thesis, which was to have examined this violent crisis.** But the **26-year-old Inuk woman** was aboriginal woman

26-year-old Inuk woman who has been studying the disproportionately high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada

Ms. Saunders, who is from **Hopedale** in the self-governing Nunatsiavut **region of northern Labrador...** in Halifax near her high-rise apartment building in the Cowie Hill neighbourhood, a community on the city's western mainland dotted with townhouses.

Ms. Saunders sent her **honours thesis** proposal to Saint Mary's professor Darryl Leroux three weeks ago

She planned to investigate three cases of disappearance and/or death of native women in Nova Scotia. Ms. Saunders had sought the guidance of several female Mi'kmaq spiritual and community leaders who have been affected by violence. "Loretta refused to turn away from the traumatic nature of this violence," Mr. Leroux wrote. "**She chose instead to invest all of her energy in a healing journey that would benefit indigenous youth in her home territory and in indigenous communities and territories wherever they**

encountered her. It was both a deeply personal journey, and one filled with intellectual curiosity."

Ms. Saunders was last seen wearing blue jeans, a black Columbia jacket and tan boots. **She is 5-foot-4, and weighs about 120 pounds.**

Marlene Bird

The **47-year-old member of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation**

Ms. Bird **grew up in a small community in northern Saskatchewan called Molanosa** and left, at an early age, to attend **residential school. She returned home in her teens and lived for a couple years by trapping and fishing with her grandmother. But, by the time she was in her early 20s, she was lost to the streets.** "She fell into a dysfunctional system and she was **transient most of her life** after that," said her aunt, Lorna Thiessen. Relatives offered to take her in but she didn't want them to **burden them with her alcoholism.**

Ms. Bird, **47, who was born in the small community of Molanosa in northern Saskatchewan and started living on the streets in her early 20s after years at residential schools**

Ms. Bird, who acknowledged her **alcoholism but could not control it**, was a **regular fixture at the YWCA shelter for homeless women in Prince Albert** and the workers there **knew her as a sweet person. She received money as part of the settlement** with residential school survivors but gave most of it away to family and friends she deemed to be in greater need.

Chrisma Denny

A **First Nations woman from Nova Scotia** missing for more than three months has been found alive in Tennessee.

Ms. Denny, described by her family as **tough and transient**,

It was not unusual for Ms. Denny's loved ones to lose track of her for periods of time - the young woman **is known to travel by hitchhiking and is believed to frequent truck stops and rest areas**, police say. But after Ms. Denny failed to pick **up five biweekly welfare cheques** from the band office

Sindy Ruperthouse

an **aboriginal woman** from **Val-d'Or**.

Angela Poorman

Angela Poorman's **three children will meet for the first time** at their mother's funeral

The 29-year-old

Candice Poorman, one of the victim's five siblings, who were raised separately by foster families and relatives. "I was just really starting to get to know her."

The woman, she said, was seeking treatment for **her addiction issues** and was "trying to get her kids back." **Reflective of her own upbringing, Angela Poorman's three children were being raised in separate homes.** The eldest child, a **daughter, 13**, is living with her grandmother in Saskatoon; the **only son** is being cared for by a relative in the foster-care system on Saskatchewan's Kawacatoose First Nation; the youngest daughter is living with her father in the prairie province's Onion Lake Cree Nation community.

a Kawacatoose band councillor who is raising the woman's 10-year-old son.

Samantha Paul

Tina Fontaine, Samantha Paul and Loretta Saunders - were all **aboriginal** women.

Ms. Paul, 25, wanted to be a **hairdresser**, according to her aunt

Bella Laboucan-McLean

Bella Laboucan-McLean fell 31 storeys off the balcony of a **condo tower in downtown Toronto.**

The family insists Bella **would never have intentionally harmed herself**, that she **had no history of depression, no drug problem**, left no note.

She was **studying fashion at Humber College. Her plan was to become a designer, combining traditional Cree artwork with her own modern flair.** She graduated soon after, her dreams, as her family puts it, "within arm's reach." **She danced at powwows and beaded; she went to clubs and Instagrammed. She was part of an indigenous cultural resurgence, a moment of awakening.**

Confident yet vulnerable, glowing from within.

Myrna Letandre

will go to track down **vulnerable** people

Ms. Letandre, who **had leg braces and screws in her spine after a 1990 suicide attempt** triggered by her jarring transition from Pinaymootang to the capital.

Myrna Letandre in Manitoba and Jennifer McPherson in B.C. - **were indigenous.** He found **Ms. Letandre** through her **sister**,

Ms. Letandre, Cynthia Maas, Sereena Abotsway, Shelley Napope and Carolyn Sinclair - and explores the factors contributing to their **vulnerability**

Amber Tuccaro

Herman was friends with Amber Tuccaro, **a 20-year-old woman from Fort Chipewyan** who disappeared outside Edmonton in 2010 after travelling there from **Fort McMurray - where she was living - with her son** and a friend.

Amber Tuccaro, **20, of Fort McMurray, Alta.**, was last seen visiting the Edmonton area in August, 2010. RCMP have said she was staying at a hotel near the airport when she left **her toddler with** a friend and caught a ride into the city with an **unknown man**. Her family reported her missing two days later and, in 2011, police said developments led them to turn the case over to Project Kare, **a provincial task force formed in 2003 to investigate missing or murdered sex-trade workers.**

Vivian Tuccaro wants the federal government to see her daughter, Amber Tuccaro, who was found dead in 2012, as more than **a statistic.**

Carolyn Sinclair and explores the factors contributing to their **vulnerability.**

Lorna Blacksmith Lorna Blacksmith, **18**

CJ Fowler **aboriginal girl**
16-year-old CJ Fowler

Annie Pootoogook **TRIBUTES; Inuit artist's body found in river; Troubled Annie Pootoogook, 47, had lived in Ottawa for past nine years after a string of artistic successes**

She was the artist who put the contemporary in **contemporary Inuit art, a catalyst for other Inuit artists, young and old**, to deal with life as it was in Canada's North, **an award-winning international standard-bearer.** And now Annie Pootoogook is dead at 47. Officials with the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in her **hometown of Cape Dorset**

Ms. Pootoogook had been living for roughly the **past nine years in Ottawa**, sometimes on the **street and in shelters**, sometimes plagued by **alcohol and drug abuse** and, in **2012, an unwanted pregnancy.** She'd relocated there from Nunavut in the wake of a string of major artistic successes in southern Canada and internationally. These included an acclaimed **solo exhibition, in 2006**, of her ink, crayon, pencil and chalk drawings at Toronto's Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, one of Canada's premier venues for cutting-edge art. This in turn led to her **winning the \$50,000 Sobey Art Award** that same year, given annually to an artist of singular talent under 40. **In 2007 she was invited to participate at the prestigious Documenta 12 showcase, held every five years in Kassel, Germany.** Two years later, she was given a solo show at New York's National Museum of the American Indian George Gustav Heye Center. Ms. Pootoogook's art was far removed from the imagery of kayaks, walruses, harpoons and the other tried-and-true themes and subjects that had informed much Inuit art from the 1950s onward. She wielded a matter-of-fact, almost deadpan style to closely depict all facets of modern Inuit life, from a husband beating his wife and families shopping, to men watching television

porn and women beading. Ms. Pootoogook, who began drawing in 1997, was the granddaughter of Pitseolak Ashoona, one of the earliest Cape Dorset drawers and print-makers. Her mother Napachie was a prolific graphic artist while father Eegyvudluk was similarly esteemed as a carver and print-maker. However, after her triumphs of 2006-09, Ms. Pootoogook's output slowed, then seemed to stop. Toronto dealer Pat Feheley, who'd given Ms. Pootoogook her first commercial bow in 2001 as part of a group show called The Unexpected, then her first solo outing in 2003, told The Globe and Mail in July, 2012, that she hadn't received an original Pootoogook drawing in more than three years. In an interview Friday, Ms. Feheley said she was "stunned" by the loss. "She had a **rough couple of years** but I always thought she'd be back.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Jennifer A. Elgie

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: Brock University
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2009-2013 B.A. Honours, Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2013-2014 M.A., Sociology

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2014-2021 Ph.D., Sociology

Honours and Awards: Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2013-2014 (declined to accept SSHRC), 2015-2016, 2016-2017

Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Canadian Graduate Scholarship, Masters
2013-2014

Distinguished Graduating Student Award in Women's and Gender Studies
2013

Melvin Perlman Scholarship for best all-round student
2012

Related Work Experience Education Research Advisor
The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians
2021- current

Instructor
Qualitative Research Methods; Issues in Social Stratification
Western University, Sociology
2020

Research Assistant
2018-2019

Teaching Assistant

2015-2018

Publications:

Alcock, D., Elgie, J., Richmond, C., & White., J. (2017). Developing Ethical Research Practices Between Institutional and Community Partners: A Look at the Current Base of Literature Surrounding Memorandums of Understanding in Canada. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 8(4)

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