Putting the community in community engagement in an urban Indigenous context

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Community Engagement

Faculty of Extension
University of Alberta

Abstract

Overall, the research aimed to situate urban Indigenous perspectives and experiences within the field of community engagement and inform the practice of urban Indigenous community engagement. The research is focused on understanding the ways that urban Indigenous people in Edmonton are involved in efforts to address the challenges they face. As well as, whether a decolonizing lens informs engagement processes in an urban Indigenous context.

For several decades, Indigenous organizations in urban centers have been working to address socio-economic inequality created by the impacts of colonization. The elimination of poverty and broader inequality is an important aspect of improving the overall wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. Public engagement is one of the tools used by government to identify needs and priorities on various issues, however, this type of engagement has become a repetitive cycle that has not resulted in the kinds of changes desired by the urban Indigenous community. How can engagement processes better ensure the inclusion of the diversity of urban Indigenous peoples' voices and perspectives and counter their marginalization?

The research project used qualitative methods to capture Indigenous perspectives on their experience participating in engagement processes. The research project used Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) which has a decolonizing agenda that aims to further social justice. Further, IRM is informed by relational accountability, positionality and reflexivity as well as privileging the experience and knowledge of Indigenous peoples. The methods include the use of semi-structured interviews with urban Indigenous people who have experience with local engagement processes and thematic analysis was used in the analysis of the data.

The research findings highlight Indigenous perspectives on identity and connection,

experiences with engagement and examples of successes and challenges specific to EndPovertyEdmonton. The participants' experiences with engagement are reflected within the five themes of representation, relational, meaningful involvement, action-orientated and self-determination. The implications of the findings point toward an emphasis on community-based approaches when working within an urban Indigenous context. That at a minimum is based on co-production but ideally supports self-determination. At the same time, the urban Indigenous population need the time and space to engage amongst ourselves. In the conclusion wise practices to working with urban Indigenous populations are put forward that align with the five themes from the research findings.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Lori-Anne Sokoluk. Research ethics approval for the research project, of which this thesis is a part, was received from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, No. 00096927, May 4, 2020.

Dedication

To my ancestors who came before me and the generations after me.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people, some who are based in the community and some within the academy but who all contributed in some way to the completion of this thesis.

All of the interview participants for their willingness to be a part of this research project ~~and~~ through sharing their perspective, experience and knowledge regarding the engagement of the urban Indigenous population and their participation in the work of EPE.

Members of Indigenous Circle for welcoming me and making space on their busy agenda to hear about this work, who provided their insights and kind words of encouragement and support.

Dr. Pat Makokis and *Carola Cunningham* for their endless support and encouragement. Who shared with me teachings they have gathered along their journey and who taught me about love and kindness in how they treated everyone around them.

EndPovertyEdmonton Secretariat and *Social Innovation Institute* for their support through the Mitacs Accelerate Program and their interest in this work.

Dr. Fay Fletcher, who was my co-supervisor, for our regular and ongoing discussions about my research and the development of my thesis. I appreciate her ability to shine a light on what was right in front of me when all I could see was trees.

Dr. Kevin Jones who was my co-supervisor, for his willingness to have long conversations about the socio-political aspects of community engagement and policy development. Our many conversations helped me to find my way to my research focus and this thesis.

Dr. Shalene Jobin who agreed to sit on my thesis committee, I value the insight and perspective she brings as an Indigenous scholar in the Faculty of Native Studies.

Dr. Patsy Steinhauer and Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer who together taught a course on Indigenous Research Methodologies that was both affirming and empowering in that it created a sense of belonging within the academy.

Dr. Kate Pratt for her patience, encouragement and mentorship in the development of my writing skills at the graduate level. I am grateful for the many conversations that helped me find clarity and a way forward in my writing.

And last but not least, my *close friends and family* who put up with endless references to graduate school and my thesis and who were understanding over the last two and a half years as I took on the monumental task of figuring out how to be a graduate student and write a thesis.

This research was partially supported by the Mitacs Accelerate Program.

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Overall, this research project aims to situate urban Indigenous perspectives and experiences within the field of community engagement and inform the practice of community engagement with urban Indigenous populations. The research is focused on understanding the ways that urban Indigenous people in Edmonton are involved in efforts to address the challenges they face. As well as, whether a decolonizing lens informs engagement processes in an urban Indigenous context. Providing context is an important part of this research project in hopes that it extends knowledge and understanding of the unique circumstances that have shaped urban Indigenous experiences and realities.

In this chapter, to introduce my thesis, I will start by locating myself in the research study. This approach is similar to when Indigenous people are meeting someone new, we share a bit about ourselves so we can understand our connections to one another and to help us better understand where we are coming from, literally. Following that, I will provide relevant context and background that highlights the urban Indigenous population in Edmonton while pointing to the long-standing socio-economic disparities that continue to exist despite attempts to address these challenges. As a result, Indigenous people are seeking increased control over the issues that affect them. Over the years, engagement is a tool that governments have used to gather input into their own programs and policy concerning urban Indigenous peoples. In addition, a table that includes a list of definitions for key terms is included in this chapter. The chapter ends with an overview of the subsequent chapters and provides a road map for readers.

Locating Myself in the Research

> *"To locate is to make a claim about who you are and where you come from, your investment and your intent, to put yourself forward means to say who you are, give yourself voice, and claim your position" (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 112).*

Where I am from…

I am from this land and those who came before me,
from mixed-blood, survival and resistance.
I am from before section 35 and 91(24),
from colonization, disconnection and loss,
my first language not spoken.
I am from the northern prairies and peace country.
(where the big blue sky, sprawling and bright,
distracts you from the long cold winters.)
I am from fry bread, perogies and hard work,
the fish in primrose lake and my grandmother's garden,
from blue eyes and the canola fields of my grandfather's farm.

"We have our own experiences on which to base our research" (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 44).

Who I am…

I am from Shirley and Jim, saskatoons and moose meat,
the youngest of four, and a blended family,
from four generations of more XXs than XYs.
I am from curiosity killed the cat
and better late than never,
from sarcasm! and curse words!
I am from struggle and perseverance, introspection and resiliency
creativity and growth.
From asking why can't we? and who says?
I am from seeing the world and blending into the cityscape,
from a metropolitan and wandering spirit.
I am from a contemporary expression of Indigeneity,
from blood memory, at times uncertain of authenticity,
I am urban and Aboriginal.

"The researcher must be certain that the motives for doing the research will result in benefits to the indigenous community" (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 42).

My Research Motives…

I am from observation and lived experience,
creating change and taking up space.
I am from deconstruction and emancipation,
critique and hope, autonomy and non-interference
from both/and, in all its wholeness and complexity.
I am from left leaning and collectivist notions,
community-driven, building solidarity and relational accountability
from being part of the solution and not part of the problem.
I am from self-actualization and self-determination
from re-membering, re-claiming and re-searching
Because there is more than one way to see the world.

"Remembering and reflecting on my experiences as an Aboriginal person is Aboriginal re-search" (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 101).

The exercise of locating myself in my research provides an opportunity to recognize and appreciate how my background, experience and motivations have contributed to the person I have become and what informs my perspective. In the article, *Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal Research*, Absolon & Willett (2005) provide many insights on the purpose of positionality, a reflective practice, that is a key part of Indigenous research methodology. For Absolon and Willett (2005), "[t]o locate is to make a claim about who you are and where you come from, your investment and your intent. To put yourself forward means to say who you are, give yourself voice, and claim your position" (p. 112). I wrote the preceding poem to explore and capture the three key areas relevant to locating myself in my research that includes: where I am from, who I am and my research motives. Through the process I am situating myself in relation to place and my ancestors and making my position known. In addition, to self-locate is truth telling as well as asserting and defining oneself in the present tense (Absolon & Willett, 2005). As a result, reclaiming our location can both validate and make visible the reality of Indigenous peoples' lived experience (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 117). Consequently, the act of "[r]emembering and reflecting on my experiences as an Aboriginal person is Aboriginal re-search" (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 101). As an exercise in locating myself, the poem I wrote helped me to connect with and come to know myself, my truth and my reality through the process of re-searching and re-claiming my experience as an urban Indigenous person. This creative activity also helps to situate myself as an urban Indigenous person in relation to the focus of the research project: community engagement, the urban Indigenous population and decolonization.

More specifically, I am a Métis woman who also identifies as an urban Indigenous person. I have lived my whole life in an urban environment while my maternal ancestors have deep roots in the historic Métis communities of Northwestern Saskatchewan. I have lived experienced with many of the common socio-economic challenges Indigenous people face. As a member of the urban Indigenous population in Edmonton, I have both a personal and professional connection. I have spent many years working with various segments of the urban Indigenous community in Edmonton across several sectors and in a number of capacities. Over the last 20 years, I have worked for government in programs and policy areas focused on serving Indigenous people and I have experience working for industry in the area of Aboriginal consultation.

I decided to pursue a graduate degree due to the ongoing conflict between working within existing systems and my growing awareness of and disappointment at the lack of action or change desired by the urban Indigenous population. In addition, I was concerned about how engagement with urban Indigenous people had taken place up to this point. I noticed that all levels of government in Canada spend a lot of time and money doing needs assessments to identify key issues and priorities of the urban Indigenous community but never seem to move past this stage. Engagement has become a repetitive cycle of identifying issues and priorities every time government has a new initiative, idea or employee. However, it seems minimal effort goes into developing and implementing these findings in collaboration with the community. I often wondered, why are we asking the same questions over and over again?

I hoped graduate studies would give me some time and space to clarify my own thinking on urban Indigenous issues, the role I want to play, and how to integrate my learnings into both my practice and career. Pursuing a Master of Arts in Community Engagement (MACE) appealed

to me because I was already working in the field. As well, I was interested in expanding my knowledge of engaging with community in ways that could lead to action or change. I would like to use my experience and skills in service to the urban Indigenous community. I see myself working with community in ways that support the fulfillment of their vision and aspirations which I share. Kovach (2015) argues that as Indigenous researchers, "[t]hose of us who have pursued academic study…have obligations to use our skills to improve the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous people" (p. 59). As one of only 2.5% of the self-identifying Indigenous graduate students at the University of Alberta (University of Alberta, 2019), I have come to see the privilege of the position I currently occupy.

As an Indigenous researcher focused on the urban Indigenous context, I can see myself as both an insider and outsider. Smith (2012) notes that "Indigenous research approaches problematize the insider model in different ways because there are multiple ways of being either an insider or an outsider in indigenous contexts. The critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity" (p. 138). There are both benefits and drawbacks in my position as an insider as an urban Indigenous person. I have existing relationships and knowledge of the community, I am invested in the wellbeing of the community, and I bring a community lens based on my personal and professional experiences. At the same time, it highlights the need to be reflexive and be aware of what I might be highlighting and what I might be leaving out, being open to the community as a whole, and having a willingness to hear other and alternative perspectives. I also see myself as an outsider from my position as a graduate student undertaking an academic research project.

Identifying the Problem

Scholars have noted that "Aboriginal peoples have been part of urban communities since

at least the 1950's" (Newhouse, 2014; Silver et al., 2006). According to Fitzmaurice (2012), there were two waves of urbanization, the first wave was between 1959 to 1971 and the second wave was from approximately 1987 to 2012 when his report was published (p. 7). Currently, Indigenous people living in urban settings constitute a significant portion of the overall Indigenous population. Nearly fifty-two percent of the total Indigenous population in Canada live in cities across the country (Statistics Canada, 2017b) and are relatively dispersed across urban areas (Peters, 2011a). However, the make-up of urban Indigenous communities varies from city to city across the country (Andersen, 2013).

Geographically, the city of Edmonton is located in central Alberta, within Treaty 6 territory, and is considered a gateway to the north and the largest service center for surrounding and northern communities. As a result, it attracts people from around the province, the western arctic, and across the country that includes several Indigenous identities and various cultural backgrounds. In Edmonton, Indigenous peoples make up 5.9% of the total population of the city (Statistics Canada, 2017a). The 2016 census reported 76,205 self-identified Indigenous people live in the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Edmonton, making it the second largest urban population in the country behind Winnipeg (Wakefield, 2017). Of those living in Edmonton who indicated a single Aboriginal identity – 51.8% identified as Métis, 44.5% identified as First Nation, and 1.5% identified as Inuk (Inuit) (Statistics Canada, 2017a).

Indigenous peoples have a unique relationship with government given their place within the development of the country and their distinct relationship with the lands that have become known as Canada. Over numerous decades, various levels of government and Indigenous communities themselves have been focused on addressing the challenges that Indigenous peoples face. Despite investment of resources, Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities continue

to experience socio-economic disparities as compared to other Canadians (Hanselmann, 2001, p. 2). There is also some debate whether these investments are adequate or focused in the appropriate direction.

There are calls for increased control and influence over those issues that affect or impact Indigenous peoples. This relates to a long history of colonialism marked by a sense of cultural superiority and paternalism that has undermined the authority and agency of Indigenous peoples in their pursuit of self-determination. Based on the misguided assumption that they were inferior, incapable of taking care of themselves and were in need of protection. This pattern of paternalism has informed the governments' relationship with Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2012, p. 152) for generations and has only recently been recognized and acknowledged as problematic. However, much work is left to undo the impacts of colonization in order to achieve parity or equity for Indigenous peoples in Canadian society.

One of the tools used by government to identify needs and priorities on various issues is public engagement which is a developing field of practice. Public engagement is part of a move towards increasing citizen participation in the governance and political process of liberal democratic societies (Chambers, 2003; Head, 2007). From an Indigenous perspective there are questions regarding the utility of public engagement in addressing their aspirations. While there seems to be an understanding on the part of the government of the necessity of engaging with Indigenous peoples on issues that affect them, it risks becoming an exercise in (repeatedly) gathering the same information. This raises the question, what are the benefits to the urban Indigenous community and what is their level of involvement or influence over defining the purpose, development or design of engagement processes?

As a current example, in 2014, the City of Edmonton created the Mayor's Taskforce to

Eliminate Poverty which resulted in the EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) strategy and a five-year community implementation plan stewarded by a newly formed community collective (City of Edmonton, n.d.). That was based on extensive public engagement including with the urban Indigenous population. The aim of EPE is to eliminate poverty within a generation using a collective impact approach. According to Kania and Kramer (2011), "[u]nlike most collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that led to a common agenda, shared membership, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants" (p. 36 & 38). EPE is the convening and coordinating entity which is made up of five community tables (EPE, 2016a) and a Secretariat that provides coordination, administrative and communications support to the initiative (EPE, 2016b). The Indigenous Circle (IC) is one of the five community tables within EPE's stewardship model (see Appendix A) whose key role is to "ground the work in Indigenous knowledge" (EPE, 2016a). The work of EPE is focused on 35 road map actions that are critical to the elimination of poverty and are categorized into six game changers: eliminate racism, livable incomes, affordable housing, accessible and affordable transit, affordable and quality childcare, and access to mental health services and addiction support (EPE, 2018). A significant investment of resources are earmarked towards EPE, understanding how EPE will address engaging with and incorporating the perspectives of urban Indigenous peoples into their work is an important question.

For several decades Indigenous people and organizations in urban centers have been working to address socio-economic inequality created by the enduring impacts of colonization. The elimination of poverty and broader socio-economic inequality is an important aspect of improving the overall wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. It is important to understand how public

processes ensure the inclusion of the diversity of Indigenous peoples, voices and perspectives as a counter to their marginalization. Research on the contemporary experience of urban Indigenous peoples and the way they experience engagement represents a gap in the literature.

This gap in the academic literature leaves room to explore various facets of the urban Indigenous experience. I have chosen to pursue the intersection between community engagement, the urban Indigenous population and decolonization. The research project will gather and document wise engagement practices that meet the needs of the urban Indigenous population; practices that promote community engagement principles and support the interests, priorities and aspirations of the various segments of urban Indigenous communities.

Research Goals and Objectives

The overall goal is to situate and privilege urban Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and experiences in the field of community engagement and inform the practice of urban Indigenous community engagement. The research project was guided by the following research questions: 1) what are urban Indigenous perspectives on and experiences with community engagement; and, 2) how might community engagement with the urban Indigenous community be informed by decolonized engagement practices? The objectives of the research project were to: i) examine urban Indigenous perspectives on and experiences with community engagement practices; and, ii) explore how the interactions between EndPovertyEdmonton and the urban Indigenous communities are informed by a decolonized lens.

The scope of the study is limited to undertaking interviews with Indigenous people who live in Edmonton, some who have experience with EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) and some who do not, in order to capture their perceptions of their experience participating in engagement processes. As well as, whether a decolonizing lens informs the way community engagement is

undertaken with the urban Indigenous population. The significance or potential impact of the study includes contextualizing the perspectives and experiences of urban Indigenous people; understanding ~~of~~ where Indigenous perspectives might converge and diverge in relation to mainstream approaches; and, recommending wise practices for engaging with urban Indigenous people.

Notes on Terminology

The following table contains a list of definitions that are useful to outline at the outset because of the frequency of their use and centrality to the thesis. Some terms, such as, urban Indigenous, self-determination and decolonization are explored further within the body of the thesis.

Table 1

List of Definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal	With the repatriation of the Canadian constitution in 1982, the addition of Section 35(2) recognized Aboriginal peoples as First Nation (Indian), Métis and Inuit. First Nation is now used in place of the legal term 'Indian' and in some contexts includes reference to non-status Indians. There are approximately 630 First Nations located across the country that represent more than 50 different Indigenous Nations (i.e. Dene, Cree, Blackfoot, etc.)[1]. The Métis emerged during the Fur Trade through the intermarriage of Indigenous people and European settlers, where those unions developed into a distinct culture and specific historical Métis communities. The Inuit are from the Arctic region, also known as Inuit Nunangat, which includes Nunavut, parts of Northwest Territories, and the northern parts of Quebec and Labrador[2].
Colonialism	Biermann (2011) describes "[c]olonialism as a 'structured relationship of domination and subordination' (Barrerra as cited in Biermann, 2011) [that] establishes and maintains racialised hierarchies of power/knowledge that legitimate, serve, and naturalize the interests of the dominant group" (p. 388).

[1] http://indigenousfoundations.art.ubc.ca/terminology
[2] http://www.itk.ca/about-Canadian-inuit/

Decolonization	In the simplest of terms, "[d]ecolonization is essentially the undoing of colonization" (MacKinnon, Klyne & Nowatski 2018, p. 55).
Indigenous	More recently the term Indigenous has largely replaced the term Aboriginal. The term comes from international discourse and is used to refer broadly to Indigenous peoples around the world. In some cases, Indigenous and First Nation are used interchangeably which can cause some confusion since it does not follow the broader use of the term.
Indigenous-led	Indigenous-led[3] refers to the degree to which Indigenous peoples are involved in the leadership, operation and delivery of programs and services to Indigenous peoples. As well as the degree to which Indigenous culture and worldviews are incorporated into their work. For Indigenous-led organizations, Indigenous culture and language is a core value of the organization both in how they organize themselves and how they operate. In terms of governance there is Indigenous leadership at all levels of the organization. The purpose and intention of the organization is to specifically address the needs and priorities of Indigenous peoples. The organization largely employs Indigenous peoples to deliver programs and services. Indigenous-led organizations tend to serve a high percentage of Indigenous peoples. As such, they are one of a number of avenues used to reach various segments of the urban Indigenous population in order to reflect the Indigenous voices of the people they serve.
Paternalism	According to Smith (2012), "[s]tates and governments have long made decisions hostile to the interests of indigenous communities, justifying these by offering the paternalistic view that indigenous people were like children who needed others to protect them and decide what as in their best interest. Paternalism is still present in many forms in the way governments, local bodies, and non-government agencies decide on issues which have an impact on indigenous communities" (p. 151-152).
Self-determination	Jobin (2015) describes Indigenous self-determination at the most basic level is "about Indigenous people having the right to determine their own futures based on their own ontologies and from within their own diverse societies. Self-determination is an empowering concept. It is about moving forward with determination and drawing on people's collective knowledge

[3] This definition was inspired by the work of The Circle of Philanthropy Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and expanded to include additional aspects of what Indigenous-led means. See The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal people in Canada, *Measuring the Circle: Emerging Trends in Philanthropy for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities in Canada: A Focus on Manitoba* (2017). pp. 21-22, 29, 48-49.

	and skills to create their own reality" (p. 95).
Urban Indigenous population	The scope of this project is focused on the urban Indigenous population in Edmonton, which is well documented, determining which Indigenous populations are considered urban is outside the scope of this study.
Wise Practices	Based on the work of Calliou and Wesley-Esquimaux (2010) wise practices are "locally appropriate action, tools, principles or decisions that contribute significantly to the development of sustainable and equitable conditions (p. 19). According to Calliou and Wesley-Esquimaux (2015), "the concept of wise practices, in contrast to the concept of best practices, provides a space for Indigenous knowledge and local experience in order to lay a foundation for a strengths-based approach to community economic development" (p. 49).

The subsequent chapters of the thesis are outlined as follows. The literature review in Chapter Two focuses on three key areas related to this research project that require some exploration which include: the field of community engagement, urban and Indigenous, and decolonization. Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach that uses Indigenous Research Methodologies to ground the study using qualitative methods. Chapter Four provides the research findings from the study in three sections: urban Indigenous identity and connection; the five central themes of representation, relational, meaningful involvement, action-orientated and self-determination; and, ends with examples from EPE that correspond with the five themes. Chapter Five takes a holistic view of the research findings through the discussion of community-based approaches to engagement and the urban Indigenous population taking time and space to engage with each other. Chapter Six offers wise practices regarding engagement with Indigenous people living in urban centers that align with the five themes from the research findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As mentioned in the introduction the research project is focused on the intersection between community engagement, the urban Indigenous population and decolonization. There is limited literature that brings all three topics together in a similar way, although there is sufficient literature in each of the three areas individually. Additionally, the urban Indigenous landscape remains largely invisible and there is limited awareness and understanding outside those studying in this area and urban Indigenous people themselves. As a result, it has been difficult to bring a sharp focus to a review of the literature that has contributed to the length. In the following three sections this chapter will point to relevant literature that covers the field of community engagement, contextualizes the urban Indigenous reality and creates understanding of the intent of decolonization.

Community Engagement

I came to the academic field of community engagement with a specific understanding of what engagement meant based on my experience. For me, engagement was a tool the government used to shape program and policy decisions. Within the literature, the term public engagement (or civic engagement) best describes my understanding of this type of engagement. What I did not anticipate was the level of focus on the scholarship of engagement as an academic practice that is also characterized as university-community engagement. Nevertheless, the field emphasized a commitment to incorporating community-based approaches to engagement and research that aligned with my perspectives.

In the following section, I will explore the nuances of the interdisciplinary field by defining aspects of community engagement including its links to scholarship, community orientation and terminology. I will also highlight some of the problems with the definition and

terminology used to describe the field. To round out the discussion, I point to some critiques and critical perspectives regarding community engagement. In order to place my research project within the literature on community engagement, I will end by focusing on the concept of public engagement, levels of engagement and community-based research put forward in the literature.

Defining the Field

The genesis of community engagement can be traced back to the development of participatory approaches and has only recently developed into a distinct field of study. King and Cruickshank (2012) suggest that community engagement dates back to the 1970's with a recognition of and movement towards participatory approaches to development (p. 6). A review of the literature points to three underlying concepts that inform an academic perspective of community engagement including: the purpose of scholarship; community-based orientation; and, the terminology. According to Butin (2010), the purpose of scholarship is knowledge creation and transmission (p. 26). Likewise, Boyer (1996) notes that the academy has "four essential, interlocking functions"—discovering, integrating, sharing and applying knowledge (p. 26-28). While the main role of higher education is the production of knowledge, the field of community engagement also aims to harness knowledge for the benefit of humanity or the public good (Boyer, 1996). The literature further suggests that community engagement is community centered and defined, recognizes and addresses power imbalances, and targets co-production of knowledge; characteristics shared with other community-based approaches. Through common principles, the literature demonstrates that community-based approaches are intended to increase the involvement and participation of the community in identifying and addressing their interests in ways that can help create change. Built on developing respectful relationships that acknowledge and recognize community strengths, knowledge and expertise, it prioritizes

working with the community to incorporate community perspectives and ensure results are relevant and meaningful to the community. Community engagement is an emerging field that aims to bring together knowledge creation and the common good through the use of community-based approaches.

To understand the field of community engagement it is useful to first look at the term community. Johnston (2010) points to a number of scholars who highlight community as a key aspect of understanding community engagement (p. 222). Community has been defined as:

> a distinct group of people who share connections, characteristics, or needs. These may include geographical space, social position, cultural beliefs, religion, occupation, or any other common set of values or interests that distinguishes their group from the larger society. (Kelly & Caputo, 2011, p. 5)

Further, Kelly & Caputo (2011) summarize four elements "associated with the word community" in the literature: 1) place based or geographical, such as neighbourhood; 2) common interests, values and beliefs that are influenced by networks of relationships and culture; 3) can be symbolic and virtual; or 4) can refer to the "connection between people and the moral attachments that bind them together" (p. 14-16). However, there is some debate among scholars regarding the liberal use of the word community. Scholars caution that the term community can be problematic because it is difficult to define and/or locate (Dempsey, 2010; Hacker, 2013; Kelly & Caputo, 2011; Young, 1986). In addition, common usage of the term often assumes homogeneity, ignores difference and downplays complexity and power relations (Dempsey, 2010). According to Head (2007),

> [t]he term 'community' is notoriously vague and value-laden. It is often a euphemistic term that glosses over the social, economic and cultural differentiation of localities or peoples. It often implies a (false and misleading) sense of identity, harmony, cooperation and inclusiveness. (p. 441)

Central to community engagement, the term community also raises questions about "who (and what) constitutes the community within community engagement" (Dempsey, 2010, p. 366) and

could be characterized as a contested term.

A clear definition of community engagement and consistent use of terminology in the field is lacking. A number of scholars point to the lack of definitional clarity (Bivens et al., 2015; Bourke, 2013; Johnston, 2010) as a challenge facing the emerging field of community engagement. Similarly, Kajner and Shultz (2013) note that "[a]ttempting to establish what constitutes community engagement is a central challenge in the field" (p. 1). More specifically, Johnston (2010) highlights that within the field the "[d]ifferentiation between meanings of the terms engagement, consultation, and participation remains one of the key challenges" (p. 230). Based on the literature, community engagement is an encompassing term that includes a broad range of activities undertaken both within and outside academic settings. There are a number of terms that are used synonymously with community engagement including: scholarship of engagement; university-community engagement; and, public engagement. The term community engagement and scholarship of engagement are often used interchangeably. Although both Bourke (2013) and Butin (2010) maintain community engagement falls under the scholarship of engagement. The scholarship of engagement entails applying the resources of higher education to the wicked problems facing society (Boyer, 1996, p. 32) and is focused on the production of knowledge about engagement activities (Heisler, Beckie & Markley, 2011). The concern, with what has been called 'definitional anarchy' (Sandman as cited in Bourke, 2013, p. 503), is that the variations in meaning and usage of the term community engagement (and related terms) causes confusion to those new to or outside of the academic field who may not use or understand these terms in the same way.

Critical Perspectives. In order to provide some balance to the conceptualization of community engagement it is important to explore the various critiques or critical perspectives

found in the literature. According to Bivens et al. (2015), the production of academic knowledge is colonial, noting that the "western canon" has largely excluded the diversity of human knowledge systems (p. 8) and argues that beyond academia lies 98% of human knowledge (p. 18). Both Bivens et al. (2015) and Johnston (2010) highlight concerns regarding the accessibility of the community (or stakeholders) to the academy to those who lie outside of these institutions. Specifically, Bivens et al. (2015) notes that "university systems are often not conducive to supporting work that involves a variety of different stakeholders and needs, especially those stakeholders who are not part of the university system" (p. 16). While Johnston (2010) cites another scholar regarding the need to "address barriers to participation", especially marginalized communities (p. 220).

Dempsey (2010) notes that "[a]lthough, promoted in terms of empowerment, community engagement can reproduce or accentuate problematic social relationships" (p. 360) such as inequality, power and privilege. Dempsey (2010) argues that the division between the academy and community that often defines this relationship puts the academy in the position of expert and knowledge transfer as directed outward (p. 384). Furthermore, it keeps "universities from acknowledging the way in which their actions have historically affected surrounding communities" (Dempsey, 2010, p. 364). In addition, Dempsey (2010) notes that the unequal access to resources can create power imbalances (p. 360).

In addition, I would argue that the literature regarding community engagement is focused on the academy's own understanding of itself in relation to community. Whereas the practice of community engagement outside of the academy rarely concerns itself with the scholarship of engagement. The use of public engagement outside the academy could benefit from including ethical considerations into their practices, especially as it relates to marginalized communities. I

worry that the commitment to community-based approaches expressed in the literature represents more of an aspirational statement than an expressed reality in practice, at least from my experience as an Indigenous person. Indeed, critical perspectives of the field of community engagement are focused on bringing attention to and addressing inequality expressed through power and privilege found within academic institutions.

Public Engagement

Public engagement has a distinct definition but is often used interchangeably with community engagement, civic engagement and citizen participation or some combination of these terms. Public engagement refers to engagement by government that allows for citizen involvement. Head (2007) states, "[c]ommunity engagement and citizen participation have long been important themes in liberal democratic theory…" and there is a renewed interest in "building institutional bridges between governmental leaders and citizenry" (p. 441). Roberts (2004) defines citizen participation "as the process by which members of a society…share power with public officials in making substantive decisions and in taking actions related to the community" (p. 320). Furthermore, "[d]irect citizen participation is a mechanism for those without power to challenge those who have it" (Roberts, 2004, p. 324).

However, Eversole (2011) highlights that processes, such as community engagement, initiated by government "is always on governments' terms" (p. 63). Similarly, Head (2007) notes that there are two reasons why government approaches to partnership and community engagement have not resulted in "substantial power-sharing".

> First, government tend to retain control of these processes through funding, service contracts and regulation. Government institutions find it difficult to devolve power and control. Second, the capacity and motivation of citizens to participate effectively, or to create alternative forums, remains a weakness in community engagement strategies. (Head, 2007, p. 452)

King and Cruickshank (2012) argue that community engagement has been used to pursue the

government's agenda "while giving communities a false sense of having been involved in the process" (p. 26). Similarly, other scholars refer to this as pseudo engagement and offer their definition. "Pseudo engagement is where an organization portrays a depth of community participation or consultation; however, in practice, these are propaganda attempts to influence 'a perception of' engagement or consultation" (Durey & Lockhart as cited in Johnston, 2010, p. 220). Public engagement is a tool used by governments to identify needs and priorities on various issues and is a developing field of practice.

Levels of Engagement

Another related concept that is important to my own line of inquiry is the idea that there are various levels to engagement and degrees of involvement. The classic work of Arnstein (1969) on the participation ladder describes various levels of participation from non-participation to token consultative exercises to more meaningful citizen participation, moving from passive forms of participation to more active forms of involvement. Therefore, rather than being a singular approach, citizen participation exists on a continuum. Likewise, Head (2007) notes "it is widely recognized that there is a continuum or spectrum of possible participatory forms" (p. 444). Still other scholars and organizations have developed similar spectrums to reflect similar reasoning as Arnstein (City of Edmonton, 2017; IAP2, 2018; Johnston, 2010). For example, Johnston (2010) outlines a typology of community engagement based on three levels: information, consultation and participation (p. 218) that align with Arnstein's work.

On the higher end of the spectrum, the community engagement literature encourages participatory approaches that actively involves community more directly in the co-production of all aspects of a project. Highlighting the potential benefits of participatory approaches to include building capacity, transferring knowledge and addressing power imbalances. At the lower end of

the spectrum communities are either not included at any stage or brought in to provide feedback on predetermined approaches/initiatives and have little influence over the final outcome. Giving the appearance of participation/involvement while those who are engaging maintain control over the process and agenda, which relates to the idea of pseudo engagement. Engagement lies on a spectrum that relates to the depth of involvement/participation of stakeholders or communities in setting the agenda and their contribution at various stages of the process.

Links with CBPR

The community orientation of the field overlaps with the principles found in the community-based research literature, most notably community-based participatory research (CBPR). As MacKinnon (2018) points out, community-based participatory research "includes the fundamental belief that research must be driven by and embedded in communities" (p. 250). The following paragraphs will speak to the emphasis on co-production and the role of communities and researchers in CBPR.

Many scholars underscore that the transformational nature of community-based research requires an understanding of the community in order to ensure that research results in relevant and meaningful change for the community (Amba et al., 2018; Ball, 2014; Boser, 2007; Dempsey, 2010; Jull et al., 2017; Kajner et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2011). Involving the community partners in the co-production of knowledge (Dempsey, 2010; Kajner et al., 2012; Kingsley & Chapman, 2013; Jull et al., 2017; Ross et al., 2010) ensures that research is more relevant (Dempsey, 2010; Jull et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2011) because the perspectives and knowledge of the community are incorporated into all aspects of the research. Time and effort (Hacker, 2013; Ross et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2011) are the key ingredients to the idea of co-production, building rapport with the community is a time intensive endeavor needed to reach a

common understanding of the purpose and intent of the research.

Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) highlight three main approaches that should inform the role of communities in participatory research: relationships based on respect; people as agents not objects; and participating on their own terms (p. 1674). According to Cornwall and Jewkes (1995), relationships based on respect (Becker et al., 2015) place the researcher as a participant and facilitator whose aim is to work with communities, not as experts privileging western knowledge, but as colleagues. Additionally, people as agents not objects (Jull et al., 2017) refers to communities as active participants (Becker et al, 2013; Boser, 2007; Dempsey, 2010; Gaudry, 2015; Hacker, 2013; Jull et al., 2017; Kajner et al., 2012; Kingsley & Chapman, 2013; Strega & Brown, 2015; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008), in that they can influence project decision making and are capable of taking action based on their own community and development priorities. Finally, as owners of their knowledge (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008) they can choose how and when to participate or share understandings of their current situation and possible solutions. Community-based participatory research is "knowledge for action" where the "emphasis is on a 'bottom up' approach with a focus on locally defined priorities and local perspectives" (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1667). MacKinnon (2018) notes in her experience, community partners "taught us to be open to innovative ideas and methods, and to concentrate more on what is useful to the community than our own personal interests and expectations" (p. 10).

In community-based and participatory research, the conventional role of the researcher as expert shifts. Community based participatory research attempts to create "a level playing field by removing researchers as 'the experts,' positioning them as possessing expertise that is valuable but no more or less than the expertise of others" (MacKinnon, 2018, p. 11). In addition, the role of the researcher is less about directing research or managing others and more about supporting

communities to explore "local knowledge and perceptions" (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1668). This requires that researchers move away from unilaterally defining the focus, process and outcomes and work with communities to develop a research project that contributes to change (Abma et al., 2019; Kajner et al., 2012; Jull et al., 2017). In addition, undertaking community-based and participatory research requires that researchers are open to turning the gaze on themselves in order to be mindful of their position and potential impact. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) note that "[p]articipatory methodologies are often characterized as being reflexive, flexible and iterative" (p. 1668). The ability of researcher to share power is influence by their ability to question and reflect on any power imbalances (Becker et al., 2013; Boser, 2007; Dempsey, 2010; Hacker, 2013; Jull et al., 2017; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008; Wright et al., 2011) between the researcher and the community partner.

In summary, as an emerging field community engagement attempts to bring together the practice of academic scholarship and community-based approaches to service, engagement and research. However, there is a certain level of uncertainty in the definition and terminology used to describe and outline community engagement, and related concepts, as a distinct field of study. Critical perspectives of the field highlight structural inequalities that exist within higher education and raise concerns regarding barriers to participation of marginalized communities. Public engagement is the most common tool used by governments to engage with its citizens. However, I question whether this approach adequately addresses the unique interests and position of Indigenous peoples. Engagement is on a continuum that corresponds with different levels based on the depth of participation/involvement of various stakeholders. Not all community engagement takes place within the academy and my research interest is in engagement outside of the academy, often taking place between governments/institutions and the

urban Indigenous population.

Urban & Indigenous

As the overall focus of my research, it is important to be able to articulate a clear understanding of the unique and various facets of the urban Indigenous experience. The following sections will provide context regarding urbanization, outline key characteristics of the urban Indigenous population found in the literature and note the complex legal and jurisdiction realities.

Contextualizing Urbanization

Many scholars note the importance of understanding the many impacts of colonization that have influenced the emergence of urban Indigenous communities. Both Peters (2011a, 2011b) and Silver et al. (2006) contend that Indigenous experiences need to be understood within a historical context.

Since at least the 1850s, through various policies, laws and discourses, the Canadian state has made a concerted effort to further the colonial project of assimilating Indigenous peoples into Canadian society (Andersen & Denis, 2003; Silver et al., 2006). As a result of the impacts of colonization, many Indigenous people dispersed from the homelands of their ancestors to cities, often for economic and social reasons (Lowman & Barker, 2015; Peters, 2011b; Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN), 2013). Many scholars have noted that discrimination and structural racism, based on stereotypes and assumptions, have made urban life challenging for Indigenous peoples and is both a common and ongoing experience (Peters, 2011a; Lowman & Barker, 2015; Lawrence, 2004; Newhouse, 2014; Silver et al., 2006). In particular, Andersen (2013) notes that “racism is also a daily reminder of the symbolic exclusion of urban Aboriginals from the cities in which they reside” (p. 53). Despite the various attempts to assimilate

Indigenous peoples through colonization, the contemporary expression of Indigenous peoples and their identities can be attributed to generations of resilience and resistance (Alfred, 2009; Lawrence, 2004; Lowman & Barker, 2015; Robson, 2014).

It has been thought that there is a fundamental contradiction between Indigenous peoples and urban life. Peters (1996) research on early perceptions of Indigenous peoples documented the notion of incompatibility within urban spaces that has also been referenced by a number of other scholars (Andersen, 2013; Belanger, 2013; Fitzmaurice, 2012; Newhouse, 2014; Silver et al., 2006; Wilson & Peters, 2005). Peters (1996) also notes the underlying sense of cultural superiority that flows from this perspective as well as questioning the authenticity of Indigenous identities outside of the reserve. "The image of 'aboriginality' in European thought requires distance or separations in both time and space as a prerequisite for the 'authenticity' of aboriginal culture" (Peters, 1996, p. 48). Furthermore,

> Authentic Aboriginal cultures were associated with the past, or with places distant from the metropolitan centres of society…Migration of First Nations people to cities during the mid-20th century challenged government to revisit the dichotomous construction of reserve and urban places. (Wilson & Peters, 2005, p. 398-399)

Essentially, authentic Indigenous people do not exist outside of history or the reserve as to not upset the foundations on which contemporary Settler society has been built. Peter's (2011a) further research highlights how urban spaces are thought to represent civilization and modernity, and are sites of 'white privilege' that work to naturalize Settler cultures (p. 82-85) over Indigenous cultures. However, scholars dispute the supposed incompatibility of Indigenous peoples and urban spaces (Newhouse, 2014, p. 10). The continued existence of contemporary urban Indigenous populations also counters these assumptions.

Characteristics. A review of the literature highlights a number of defining characteristics of an urban community and distinct approaches to community building. Urban Indigenous

communities have been shaped by the convergence of a number of factors that have contributed to the development of a unique community identity and contemporary expressions of indigeneity. Urban Indigenous communities are diverse (Anderson, 2013; Green, 2005; Hanselmann & Gibbins, 2005; Howard & Proulx, 2011; Lowman & Barker, 2015; Peters, 2011a) and Indigenous peoples often exist within multiple identities along various social, cultural and geographical lines. Many Indigenous peoples have experienced displacement or dispossession to a common land base as a result of colonization (Hanselmann & Gibbins, 2005; Lawrence, 2004). and as a result, are sometimes judged as not being authentic. Lowman and Barker (2015) note that "Indigenous people living off-reserve and especially in cities have frequently been constructed as 'not really Indian'" (p. 80). Many scholars confirm that urban Indigenous communities are a distinct and legitimate expression of the contemporary life of Indigenous peoples (Andersen & Denis, 2003; Belanger, 2013) that includes the development of extensive urban infrastructure and an emerging middle class (Andersen, 2013; Belanger, 2013; Fitzmaurice, 2012; Peters, 2011a; Silver et al., 2006).

A number of scholars note that a distinct form of urban Indigenous community development has emerged (Hill & Cooke, 2014; Robson, 2014; Silver et al., 2006). Within many urban Indigenous communities there exists a significant Indigenous-led organizational infrastructure that has developed over many decades (Andersen, 2013; Belanger, 2013; Fitzmaurice, 2012; Peters, 2011b; Silver et al., 2006). It is noted within the academic literature that Indigenous women have and continue to play a key role in community building efforts in the urban Indigenous community (Peters, 2011a; Silver et al., 2006). Several scholars emphasize the importance of culturally grounded community building efforts (Alfred, 2009; Fitzmaurice, 2012; Newhouse, 2014; Silver et al., 2006). Findings from the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal

Peoples highlighted that urban Indigenous peoples "see their cultural values, traditions, norms and identities as important to their lives" (as cited in Newhouse, 2014, p. 5). A review of the literature provides both context and key characteristics of the urban Indigenous experience.

Challenges of Representation. Representation is a key aspect of engagement and policy processes for the urban Indigenous population. Phadke et al. (2015) promote broad representation, stating that "[a]n inclusive deliberative process accounts for both demographic and social group representation" (p. 64). Indigenous identities are complex, and broad representation is important for a number of reasons: urban Indigenous peoples are diverse; are not fully represented by the various political or governance bodies; and, Indigenous identities have become highly politicized. Hill and Cooke (2014) point out that the diversity of Indigenous identity and connection in an urban setting can make it difficult to both come together and move forward in a collective way. "The lack of easily defined community membership and representation in urban communities makes identifying a community vision and ensuring the legitimacy of the development process more difficult than in other contexts" (p. 430).

Not all urban Indigenous people are represented by existing First Nation, Métis and Inuit political organizations or governance bodies "and as a result, they are denied a strong political voice in this arena" (Peters, 2011b, p. 17). As an example, not all Métis people are represented by provincial representative organizations like the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA). According to data from the 2016 census, there are approximately 114,375 self-identified Métis people living in Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Of those 8,000 (or 7%) are members of the Metis Settlements (Government of Canada, 2018a) and 32,891 (or 29%) are members of the MNA (McCargar v. MNA, 2018) which leaves a significant portion (64%) of self-identified Métis people in Alberta unrepresented. Those who are unrepresented may either fall outside of the membership criteria or

choose not to be affiliated with the organization. However, the MNA claims to represent all Métis people in Alberta by stating on their website that they are the representative voice for 96,000 Métis (MNA, 2019) based on a previous statistic from 2011 of the total number of Métis in the province. Issues of representation are not limited to the Métis, First Nations face challenges based on the urban/reserve divide. Court cases established that urban members of a First Nation could vote in elections and could run for council without being required to live on-reserve. However, issues unique to First Nation members living off reserve may still come behind the priorities of First Nation members living on-reserve. Belanger (2011) notes that "[t]he distinctive socio-economic nature of urban Aboriginal communities means… that First Nations rarely devote resources to urban development projects…" (p. 149) although as someone working in the field, I have noticed this is changing.

The exclusion of urban Indigenous voices and perspectives is further impacted by the lack of attention that provincial First Nation and Métis organizations pay to the "urban Aboriginal situation" (Peters, 2011b, p. 17), and the preference of governments to deal mostly with elected leadership. However, Walker et al. (2011) aptly note that "[m]any of the most well-respected community leaders are not in elected political positions, yet they have tremendous legitimacy in their communities and years of experience with urban Aboriginal policy issues" (p. 191). The issue of representation is also compounded by the complexity of outstanding issues of Indigenous identity stemming from the impacts of colonization. External actors, like government, have exacerbated the politicization of Indigenous identities by taking a narrow and legalistic view. For example, "[f]ederal policy established a reserve-urban binary by recognizing First Nations as political communities while making no provisions for urban Aboriginal people" (Belanger, 2013, p. 72). This has had the effect of creating a hierarchy of Indigenous identities

that privilege distinction and land-based identities as the most authentic, hence the most legitimate. Some scholars point out that "the land-based nation model – where a political community is delineated by drawing a territorial boundary around it – is the one that is privileged by settler governments in advancing Aboriginal political claims, even in urban areas" (Andersen & Denis as cited in Walker et al., 2011, p. 164). As a result, the ensuing identity politics impact how we see and relate to one another often creating divisions and hierarchies among Indigenous people(s) both at the individual and collective level.

The extent to which this has marginalized the Indigenous rights of urban Indigenous peoples is demonstrated by the criteria for participation in federal government engagement on self-determination. The current federal government is intent on creating certainty regarding Aboriginal and Treaty rights referenced in section 35 of the constitution, in what they refer to as "distinction based" recognition. Invitations to discussion tables on the "Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-determination" only included First Nation, Métis and Inuit political and representative bodies (GoC, 2019). The federal government furthers confirm their commitment to a distinction-based approach in the document titled *Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples*, which refers to "First Nations, the Métis Nation and Inuit as distinct, rights bearing communities with their own histories, including with the Crown" (GoC, 2018b). What they fail to mention is it is exactly that history with the Crown that has undermined Indigenous identities through the impact of colonization. They also leave out that the legal interpretation of those rights are frozen historically at the point in which Canadian sovereignty and effective control was established. The Supreme Court decision Van der Peet handed down in 1996 held that "Aboriginal rights only protect those practices, customs, and traditions that were 'integral to the distinctive culture' of particular

groups prior to European contact" (Borrows, 2017, p. 120). In effect excluding urban Indigenous identities and communities because they are contemporary expressions of Indigeneity and did not exist historically.

Indigenous-led organizations. Indigenous-led urban organizations are community-based entities that represent a decentered approach to delivering services to the urban Indigenous population in which government(s) have devolved some level of responsibility. According to Heritz (2018), leaders of various Indigenous organizations have represented urban Indigenous peoples in the policy process, advocating on their behalf (p. 14). However, there is some question about the ability or appropriateness of Indigenous-led service delivery organizations representing urban interests. Still, despite this debate, these organizations have community knowledge and technical expertise of their sectors and the people they serve. Likewise, they are considered an important aspect of the urban community. "A large majority of Indigenous Peoples believe it is very important to have Indigenous services" (Heritz, 2018, p. 12). Walker et al. (2011) argues that "[p]erhaps working with people selected from the community for their leadership or policy/program expertise is a promising practice…quite different from defaulting to representatives of political organizations" (p. 187). However, it is my position that both political organizations and Indigenous-led service providers have a role to play in the urban Indigenous policy arena, it is not a matter of either/or but both/and. Similarly, Peters (2011b) states that "co-production should involve Aboriginal community leaders and community-based policy and program-based expertise, as well as political organizations" (p. 25).

What also starts to become clear is that, like publics, there is no singular 'public' there are multiple 'publics' (Irwin & Horst, 2016), and the urban Indigenous population is made up of multiple Indigenous identities and communities. In an urban Indigenous context, it is often

voiced that there needs to be opportunities for those who are unrepresented or those who wish to represent themselves to be heard. While recognizing the importance of including the various Indigenous interests and voices in the policy development process, it is also important that governments ensure early and upstream involvement in the policy process rather than only including these Indigenous voices and perspectives at the implementation stage of the policy development process. According to IAP2 (as cited in Masuda, McGee and Garvin, 2008), "failure to address issues such as early involvement, two-way information flow, and broad-based citizen representation are widely cited as barriers to more effective and empowering public engagement" (p. 375).

Legal and Jurisdictional Context

Legal and jurisdictional distinctions by the Canadian state have determined a number of aspects (e.g. identity, funding, access to services) of the lives of Indigenous peoples and have also influenced and facilitated their experience of urbanization. The underpinnings of policies directed toward Indigenous peoples are based on paternalism and colonialism, and despite being in an era of reconciliation Indigenous policy has yet to move fully towards co-production, let alone self-determination. Indigenous policy is tied up in issues of jurisdiction, where there is an unwillingness to share power and decision-making authority, which is a prerequisite for the co-production of Aboriginal policy. There is also a lack of recognition of Indigenous jurisdiction that would make self-determination possible.

Issues of Jurisdiction. As urban migration began to increase in the 1950's, governments were forced to consider the implications of providing services and supports for the transition of Indigenous peoples to urban life. According to Peters (2001), the federal government took the position that the Department of Indian Affairs was solely responsible for First Nations living on-

reserve (p. 82). Consequently, it would be up to other federal departments and provincial governments to address issues related to 'urban migrants' (Peters, 2001, p. 81). As a result, Section 91(24) which outlines federal responsibility for Indians and lands reserved for Indians (Hanselmann, 2001; Proulx, 2011) has contributed to considerable jurisdictional wrangling among various levels of government for many decades (Anderson, 2013; Belanger, 2013; Hanselmann, 2001; Howard & Proulx, 2011; Peters, 2011b; UAKN, 2013) in their attempt to limit their responsibility, particularly for the urban Indigenous population. The treatment of Indigenous issues outside of the Indian Act as a jurisdictional hot potato has only begun to shift due to a recent court decision. The 2016 Daniels Decision declared that Métis and Non-Status were considered 'Indian' within the meaning of section 91(24). A similar decision was made regarding the Inuit in 1939. The decision attempts to clarify federal jurisdiction over all Indigenous peoples including First Nations, Non-Status Indians, Métis and Inuit. Still other scholars maintain that all levels of government have constitutional responsibilities concerning urban Indigenous peoples (Heritz, 2018; Peters, 2001; RCAP, 1996) which includes municipal governments. The continued increase of urbanization means that provinces and municipalities will need to have a clear sense about their role and responsibility with respect to the urban Indigenous population. Similarly, Peters (2011b) contends that "[t]he clarification of Aboriginal rights in urban areas is an important policy challenge for various levels of government" (p. 11).

Indigenous Jurisdiction. Self-determination is a recurring theme in the literature and is cited as key to current and future policy and planning interactions with Indigenous peoples, including in an urban context. Self-determination is the ability of Indigenous peoples to make decisions about all aspects of their lives in ways that align with their own worldview. Similarly, Jobin (2015) describes Indigenous self-determination at the most basic level is

> …about Indigenous people having the right to determine their own futures based on their own ontologies and from within their own diverse societies. Self-determination is an empowering concept. It is about moving forward with determination and drawing on people's collective knowledge and skills to create their own reality. (p. 95)

Furthermore, this is not a new practice, Walker (2008) notes that "Aboriginal societies were determining their own affairs prior to re-settlement and never alienated their right to continue doing so…" (p. 24). The basis for self-determination is found in the prior occupancy of Indigenous peoples before claims of Canadian sovereignty. Jobin (2015) notes that "Indigenous people argue that their self-determination pre-date and supercede the creation of the Canadian state" (p. 119). Such a position has the potential to counteract the impacts of colonization that "…disrupted the cohesion of Indigenous institutions, territories, languages and traditions…" (Schultz, 2015, p. 59) that were replaced with state defined and paternalistic legislation and policies aimed at assimilation.

Scholars note that it is important to differentiate between self-determination and self-government. From an Indigenous perspective the demand for nationhood is not analogous to self-government, Indigenous nations have the right to self-determination "unbounded by state law" (Alfred, 2009, p. 77). Likewise, Walker (2006) states there is a clear distinction between self-government and self-determination. Where self-determination is a broad concept that "refers to the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to continue governing their own affairs" (Walker, 2006, p. 2347). While self-government represents more of a negotiated delegation of authority from the nation state to Indigenous institutions (Ekstedt as cited in Walker, 2006, p. 2347). Similarly, Alfred (2009) asserts self-government amounts to delegated authority within state sovereignty (p. 78) which is what some would argue was being offered through the federal government's 'rights framework' in 2018. Alfred (2009) goes on to say that "without a fundamental questioning of the assumptions underpinning the state's approach to power, the counterfactual assumptions of

colonialism will continue to structure the relationship between the state and indigenous people" (Alfred, 2009, p. 81).

The articulation of Indigenous jurisdiction through self-determination may have the effect of creating competing authority between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples. Schultz (2015) considers "self-determination as a right of Indigenous peoples and as a means by which settler nations attempt to respond to Indigenous sovereignties" (p. 55). However, to date it seems clear from the actions and policies of the Canadian government there is resistance to relinquish any part of the supremacy of Canadian sovereignty to make space for Indigenous sovereignties that were usurped through colonization. According to Lowman and Barker (2015), "[t]his is in part a contest over sovereignty, and when Indigenous peoples contend for control of their own lands, it is seen as a threat to the very foundation of Canadian society" (p. 9). Alternatively, Schultz (2015) notes that the goal of integration couched within the concept of 'multiculturalism' is often a more acceptable (and less threatening) form of recognizing Indigenous rights (p. 55). As such, there is real resistance to thinking critically about the historical and political development of the Canadian state. However, some Indigenous people and scholars contend that the idea of Canadian sovereignty is based on problematic historical reasoning and actions. Indigenous peoples continue to question the supremacy of Canadian sovereignty in relation to their right to self-determination.

Walker and Belanger (2013) state that "[e]nsuring mechanisms exist for recognizing and implementing self-determination is considered a basis for constructive engagement between…municipal government and Aboriginal communities" (p. 200). They suggest those mechanisms include declarations and accords, protocol agreements, communication and joint governance, urban reserves, regional relationships, and ensuring Aboriginal citizen

participation/engagement (Walker & Belanger, 2013, p. 201-209). However, it seems these mechanisms are more focused on improving the government's interaction with the Indigenous community within existing systems and not endorsing or supporting self-determination or their capacity outside these systems. Eversole (2011) highlights that processes, such as community engagement, initiated by government "is nearly always on governments' terms" (p. 63). What Indigenous peoples "want is not primarily better representation in the central government but, rather, the transfer of power and legislative jurisdiction from the central government to their own communities" (Kymlicka & Norman as cited in Schultz, 2015, p. 58). As well as access to the necessary resources to operationalize self-determination.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Any discussion after 2007 about self-determination is inevitably connected to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which Canada ratified in 2010. The Indigenous Bar Association (2011) provides a summary of the 46 articles of the Declaration, which highlights the overall purpose of ensuring that fundamental human rights are applied equality to Indigenous peoples as they are to everyone else (IBA, 2011, p. 8), including the right to self-determination (IBA, 2011, p. 11). While it "does not create new or special rights just for Indigenous peoples", the Declaration was deemed necessary "to rectify the ongoing denial and violation of Indigenous peoples' existing and inherent human rights" (IBA, 2011, p. 8) and "provides protection…to ensure that Indigenous peoples and their cultures can continue to thrive" (IBA, 2011, p. 9). The full implementation of the UNDRIP would likely have far reaching implications for how governments interface with Indigenous peoples and would require dismantling of the status quo that has kept Indigenous people and issues in the margins. Similarly, Tomiak (2010) contends that "[m]aking more space for urban Aboriginal self-determination would require significant

long-term investments, as well as structural and processual changes, to enhance the capacities of local and regional First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Aboriginal organizations" (p. 46). Although, there is some debate of the applicability of self-determination in an urban Indigenous context. There are scholars who argue the discourse of "nation-to-nation" creates a hierarchy that marginalizes urban Indigenous communities while privileging Indigenous communities with a land base (Anderson & Denis, 2003; Walker, 2006). Consequently, First Nations reserves are often considered "the only legitimate vehicles for self-determination" (Walker, 2006, p. 2347). This is problematic because it does not allow for contemporary expressions of Indigenous experience and is a direct result of colonization.

Decolonization

Based on the literature a number of scholars agree that the concept of decolonization includes understanding and countering the impacts of colonization while using an Indigenous lens to understand and interpret the world. However, it is also important to put decolonization in context by first understanding colonialism and settler colonialism. Scholars in the field of Indigenous research argue it is important to understand the way that colonization has impacted Indigenous peoples (MacKinnon, Klyne & Nowatski, 2018; Smith, 2012) through its deconstruction in order to know what it looks like, how it is used and how it has affected those who have experienced it (Smith, 2012). In the defining of decolonization, it becomes apparent that it is messy and complicated because 'Indigenous sovereignty and futurity' are contested and unsettled. Furthermore, Sium et al. (2012) note that decolonization is not one thing, it is multiple and varied (p. II). There are at least three distinct but overlapping conceptualizations of decolonization in the literature that will be discussed. First, scholars describe decolonization as an opening for Indigenous peoples to reclaim space to represent themselves and challenge how

they have been (mis)represented that relies on centering their own perspectives and purposes. Critical Indigenous Pedagogy expands on the work of Freire and focuses on developing critical consciousness through critical reflection on the impacts of colonization to empower Indigenous peoples, transform power relations and center Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous resurgence takes a strong position to being confined within the limits of existing (colonial) systems and are focused on regenerating Indigenous culture and systems. The peeling back the layers of meaning to decolonization reveals an intense and unsettling vision of the future of Indigenous-Settler relations.

Colonization & Settler Colonialism

It is difficult to explore the meaning of decolonization without first exploring colonization. Biermann (2011) describes "[c]olonialism as a 'structured relationship of domination and subordination' (Barrerra as cited in Biermann, 2011) [that] establishes and maintains racialised hierarchies of power/knowledge that legitimate, serve, and naturalize the interests of the dominant group" (p. 388). Colonialism is built upon eurocentrism, paternalism and imperialism that aims to erase Indigenous peoples (Hunt & Holmes, 2015, p. 159) and their competing claims in order to justify and legitimize power or control over land and resources (Lowman & Barker, 2015). Similarly, Lawrence & Dua (2005) describe the intent of colonization in the following terms,

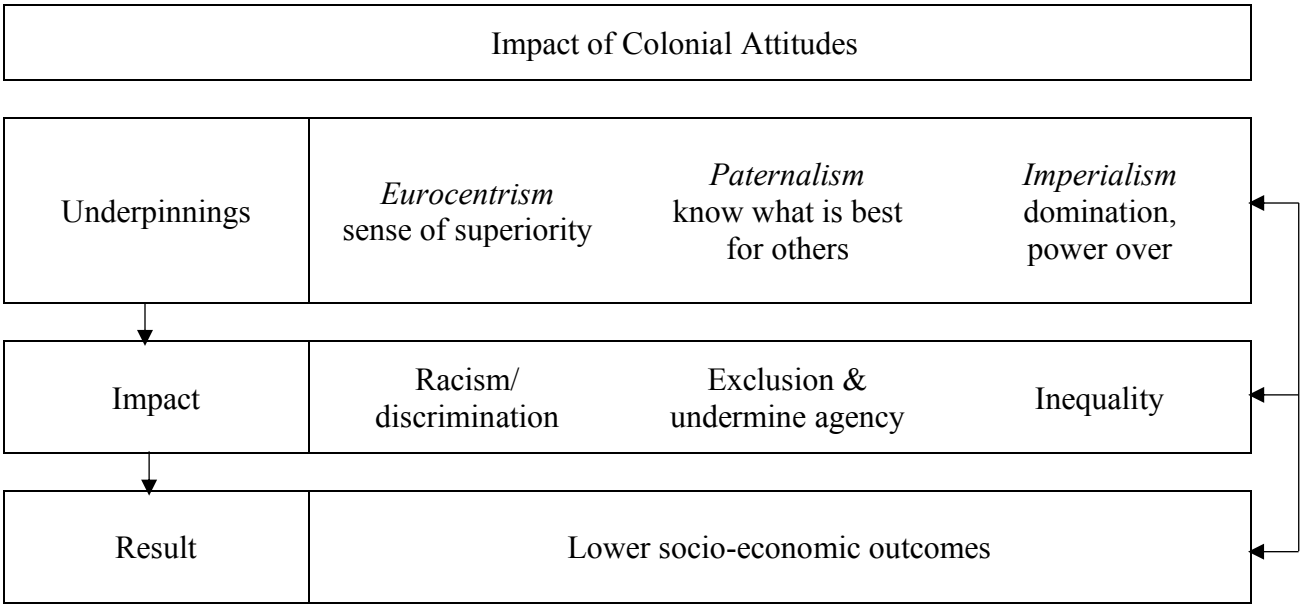
> Settler states in the Americas are founded on, and maintained through, policies of direct extermination, displacement, or assimilation. The premise of each is to ensure that Indigenous peoples ultimately disappear *as* peoples, so that settler nations can seamlessly take their place. (p. 123)

Colonization is not simply a page in history but continues to exist in the present. Smith (2012) points out that Indigenous societies were dismissed through "a series of negations: they were not fully human, they were not civilized enough to have systems, they were not literate,

their languages and modes of thought were inadequate" (p. 29). Such attitudes reflect eurocentrism, the belief that Western European society is superior and the basis for judging all other cultures (Lewis & Aikenhead as cited in Madden et al., 2013, p. 216) that informs paternalistic approaches with Indigenous peoples. To help illustrate the impact of colonial attitudes I created the following graphic representation. Figure 1 outlines the link between the underlying attitudes of colonialism, their impact on Indigenous peoples, and the result in different outcomes. In addition, the outcomes then reinforce the underpinnings and impacts ignoring its systematic nature and attribute outcomes to personal (and cultural) failings.

Figure 1

Understanding the Impacts of Colonialism



The existence of both the colonizer and colonized is a function of colonization in which one could not exist without the other and vice versa. Similarly, "Fanon argued…that the colonized were brought into existence by the settler and the two, settler and colonized, are mutual constructions of colonialism" (as cited in Smith, 2012, p. 27). Lowman and Barker (2015) state that Indigenous peoples and Settlers are defined by both "their relationship to each other and the

land" (p. 17).

Settler colonialism is a specific type of colonialism where the colonizer (Settler) comes to stay. "Political theorist Lorenzo Veracini explains that settler colonialism is distinct from other forms of colonialism in that settler colonialism, along with large profits at the expense of human life, also generates an entirely new people – a Settler society" (as cited in Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 24). The Settler society then has a stake in the appropriation of Indigenous lands under settler sovereignty that relies on the erasure of an Indigenous presence (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). As Biermann (2011) points out "nation-states are a case of colonists who never left and…colonialism that never ended" (p. 393). According to Lowman and Barker (2015), "Canada's present laws, politics, economic systems, cultures and social practices are all to some extent rooted in the ideologies, practices, and histories of settler colonization" (p. 47). Due to the underlying principles of colonization and settler colonization "when Indigenous peoples contend for control of their own lands, it is seen as a threat to the very foundation of Canadian society" (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 9). There is a long history of colonialism in Canada, as experienced by Indigenous peoples, understanding the context will help to further an examination of how decolonization is defined.

Defining Decolonization

Decolonization has become a widely used term although it is not clear that the depths of its meaning is fully understood. In the simplest of terms, "[d]ecolonization is essentially the undoing of colonization" (MacKinnon, Klyne & Nowatski 2018, p. 55). Sium et al. (2012) maintain that decolonization "centers and privileges Indigenous life, community, and epistemology. (p. II). For Regan (2010), decolonization requires a paradigm shift that creates space for the resurgence of Indigenous philosophies and knowledge that result in real changes to

perceptions and power relations (p. 189) between Indigenous peoples and Settler states. While Tuck and Yang (2012) contend that the fundamental aspect of decolonization is the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (p 1). Biermann (2011) makes similar points by stating that decolonization insists upon Indigenous sovereignty, recovering Indigenous knowledge and undoing the structures and practices of Settler states (p. 393).

Some scholars have raised questions about framing decolonization in terms of social justice to avoid reinscribing dominant narratives. For example, Tuck and Yang (2012) stipulate that the aims of decolonization are not equivalent to those of social justice. They point out that decolonization "is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of helping the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes" (p. 21). Hunt and Holmes (2015) also raise concern regarding "the way colonial narratives may be embedded within 'social justice,' 'intersectional,' or 'critical literacy' discourses and practices despite their claim to do the opposite" (p. 165). Tuck and Yang (2012) insist that ultimately, "[d]ecolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity" and not to "settlers, or settler futurity" (p. 35). Similarly, Sium et al. (2012) highlight that there is a focus on "what decolonization means for Indigenous peoples" (p. I).

Decolonization is messy, contested and unsettled (Sium et al., 2012) because it challenges the narrative of Settler colonialism. Sium et al. (2012) further state that, "[d]ecolonization is not interested in simply turning the colonial world upside-down but requires the courage and imagination to envision and construct a new future" (Sium et al., 2012, p. XI). The rebalancing of power relations is addressed by decolonization though the empowerment of Indigenous peoples and the "deflation of white power" (Biermann, 2011, p. 394). Smith (2012)

stresses that "[d]ecolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels" (p. 21). Sium et al. (2012) highlight a sense of uneasiness between our current understanding of decolonization and the possibility in our future understanding in the following quote. "[D]espite our certainty that decolonization centers Indigenous methods, peoples, and lands, the future is a 'tangible unknown', a constant (re)negotiating of power, place, identity and sovereignty" (p. I). Decolonization is a complicated matter focused on both the undoing of colonization and envisioning a future in which Indigenous peoples are able to determine their existence on their own terms.

Re-claim, Re-store, Re-cover & Re-vitalize. In order to counter the continued colonization of Indigenous peoples there is a desire and movement to re-claim, re-store, re-cover and re-vitalize Indigenous cultures, knowledges and identities (McGregor, 2018; Smith, 2012; Newhouse, 2008; Kovach, 2009; MacKinnon, Klyne & Nowatski, 2018). Absolon and Willett (2005) highlight the importance of "re" in "looking again to uncover, unlearn" that supports "respectful representation" of Indigenous peoples (p. 108). Likewise, McGregor (2018) cites Laenui stating that "[t]o decolonize is to resist these forces of ongoing colonization and 'remake' ourselves as Indigenous peoples" (p. 818). Smith (2012) describes "a need decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity" (p. 24) and to balance the past ('pre-colonized time') with the present ('colonized time') (p. 25). As Smith (2012) points out Indigenous peoples have the fundamental right to represent themselves (p. 151). For Newhouse (2008), "[d]ecolonization…starts with a single statement: I am a person, fully conscious, self-determining, and able to think and speak for myself. I am not you nor am I the image that you have created of me" (p. 187). Decolonization is about Indigenous peoples employing an Indigenous lens by "centering our concerns and worldviews" in order to

understand the world "from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (Smith, 2012, p. 41). The literature on decolonization reveals that an active part of undoing colonization is looking back to re-claim and center Indigenous knowledge as well as navigate the spaces in and between different worldviews.

Critical Indigenous Pedagogy. Based on the work of Paulo Freire (2000), critical pedagogy is an approach to education that aims to liberate the oppressed through a cyclical process of praxis, critical reflection and action, where the desired outcome is transformation. As an example, the Idle No More movement began by creating opportunities to engage through learning about upcoming legislative changes that then morphed into a show of solidarity of Indigenous peoples and the challenges they face. Smith (2012) states, "[c]ommunity action approaches assume that people know and can reflect on their own lives" (p. 130). This example is illustrative of Freire's concept of praxis which demonstrates the interaction of dialogue, reflection and action that goes into creating awareness that can lead to social change.

A number of Indigenous scholars have expanded on Freire's concept of critical pedagogy to create a distinct approach to the consideration of Indigenous experience(s) in education and the process of decolonization. In summarizing the work of a number of scholars, Garcia and Shirley (2012) point out that the aim of critical Indigenous pedagogy is "disrupting social injustices and transforming inequitable and oppressive power relations" (p. 80). According to Garcia and Shirley (2012), developing critical consciousness is the first step in a process of decolonization that challenges colonial narratives and privileges Indigenous knowledge (p. 81). Similarly, other scholars assert decolonization requires critical reflection on "the cause(s) of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonial ideas and practices (Wheeler as cited in Wilson as cited in Garcia &

Shirley, 2012, p. 81).

Through their research, Garcia and Shirley (2012) highlighted four aspects of decolonization: "examining history and power; engaging in a self-reflexive process and critical dialogues; becoming empowered to transform oppressive situations; taking action to reclaim and center Indigenous knowledge systems and values" that also contribute to critical Indigenous consciousness (p. 88). Engaging in a process of decolonization (and critical Indigenous consciousness) is essential prior to taking on current issues facing Indigenous communities (Garcia & Shirley, 2012, p. 88). In contrast, Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that critical consciousness alone will not result in decolonization and in fact may be a hinderance or diversion along the path to decolonization that ultimately "does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism" (p. 19). What is interesting about this particular approach to decolonization is that they centered Indigenous knowledge and experience within an existing theoretical model to better meet the unique circumstances and needs of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Resurgence. As a relatively more recent theory, resurgence is focused on regenerating Indigenous practices and systems towards co-existence that inevitably unsettles the current Indigenous-Settler relationship. For Alfred (2005), resurgence proposes an alternative approach to achieve decolonization by emphasizing a shift to "pursuing an organized and political battle for the cause of our freedom" (p. 22) and points out that "resurgence is acting beyond resistance" (p. 151). Coulthand (2014) asserts that resurgence is about using the critical understanding of the past to "transform the colonial power relations that have come to dominate our present" (p. 157). In terms of what this looks like, Simpson (2016) describes Indigenous resurgence in terms of centering "Indigenous practices and thoughts in our lives as everyday acts of resistance" (p. 24) and "regeneration of these social, political, spiritual, and legal systems

within our community" (p. 26). Similarly, Alfred (2005) highlights that the components of resurgence offer Indigenous people strength through connection to: others, culture and a spiritual dimension (p. 256).

Indigenous resurgence takes the position that decolonization or self-determination cannot be achieved within existing systems of colonial domination (Alfred, 2005; Elliot, 2018). As Elliot (2018) points out, the resurgence literature problematizes and contests prevailing normative-discursive perspectives and highlights some points of contention around: colonialism, sovereignty, land, capitalism and the significance of Indigenous languages (p. 74-78). Tuck and Yang (2012) note that decolonization will require the literal, not symbolic, return of lands to Indigenous peoples (p. 7). Similarly, Elliot (2018) highlights that decolonization will require "profound material changes to the Canadian landscape" (p. 80). This position is built on the understanding that restitution is part of reconciliation (Alfred, 2005, p. 151) and decolonization involves reinstituting Indigenous sovereignty and lands (Sium et al., 2012, p. V). As such, "the efficacy of Indigenous resurgence hinges on its ability to address the interrelated systems of dispossession that shape Indigenous peoples' experiences in both urban and land-based settings" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 176).

While resurgence might be considered a radical position, decolonization, or the undoing of colonialism, will necessarily require unsettling the dominant paradigm regarding the historical, social and political underpinnings of Canadian society. However, labeling something radical is a knee-jerk reaction to the challenging of colonial narratives and aims to deflect or shut down any serious conversation that seeks to discuss an alternative.

Decolonization is inevitably unsettling due to its emphasis on interrogating, undoing, and transforming the foundations of Indigenous-Settler relations.

> Decolonization is more than anti-colonialism. It is not simply opposition to colonial imposition, or even endless resistance. Decolonization as an ethic and guiding principle for collective struggle is both the ending of colonialism and also the act of *becoming something other than colonial*. (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 111)

Alfred (2005) paints a powerful and troubling picture of decolonization as a web of lies in which Indigenous people are faced with the challenge of discerning truth beyond their experiences with colonialism.

> Decolonization…is a process of discovering the truth in a world created out of lies. It is thinking through what we think we know to what is actually true but is obscured by knowledge derived from our experience as colonized people. (Alfred, 2005, p. 280)

While Freire (2000) reasons that maintaining oppression "…rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it" (p. 76). Thus, decolonization is a tool in which to question the colonial oppression of Indigenous peoples and reimagine alternatives that better align with Indigenous knowledge and worldview. Similarly, Sium et al. (2012) note that "Indigenous knowledges have sustained communities since the beginning, have been the anchor against the roaring storm of colonialism, and have restored power, spirit and humility" (p. XI).

The term decolonization is widely used although it is not clear there is a full appreciation of the depth of meaning and the significant implications it entails. As such, decolonization needs to be contextualized by understanding the roots and impacts of colonialism, as well as understanding the various conceptualizations of the term.

In summary, this chapter explored the literature on the three main topics areas of community engagement, the urban Indigenous population, and decolonization. The literature from the field of community engagement is heavily focused on an academic perspective of engagement. The challenge in defining the field coupled with the interdisciplinary nature of community engagement requires a certain level of comfort with ambiguity.

Assimilative policies and colonial attitudes have had serious consequences for Indigenous peoples and have influenced urbanization. The urban Indigenous population is both diverse and complex, contains multiple Indigenous identities and perspectives, and is far from homogenous. Issues around Indigenous identity, representation and jurisdiction can contribute to the creation of divisions and hierarchies amongst the various segments of the urban Indigenous population. The concept of self-determination is positioned within an international human rights lens.

Decolonization is multiple and varied. In some cases, it utilizes an Indigenous lens to understand and counter the impacts of colonization. It is also contested and unsettled because it challenges the status quo that informs existing Indigenous-Settler relations. From the literature there were at least three distinct concepts that help to demonstrate the complexity of the term including: reclaiming Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, Critical Indigenous Pedagogy and Indigenous resurgence.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter is focused on the methodology of the research project and will outline the theoretical position, ethical context and considerations, specific methods used and the limitations.

Description of Methodology

The use of an Indigenous Research Methodology attempts to both address problematic aspects of past academic research and center Indigenous perspectives in the research process. The following sections provide additional context of an Indigenous research paradigm which provides the underlying theoretical framework that informs Indigenous research methodologies, in addition, key principles of IRM will be described. It will also highlight the importance of Indigenous knowledge creation and the significance of ethical considerations in Indigenous research. In addition, the specific methods regarding selection of participants, data collection and analysis, observations of the research process and limitations round out the methodology chapter.

Indigenous Research

Many scholars note that Indigenous people have been over-researched (Castellano, 2004; Martin, 2003; Smith, 2012; Steinhauer, 2002). In addition, Indigenous peoples and communities have had unfavourable experience with extractive research practices (Gaudry, 2015; Jobin, 2015; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008) that largely ignore the interests of Indigenous communities and Indigenous perspectives. From an Indigenous perspective, one is often not only building trust through working together but also having to overcome bad experiences the community may have had with other researchers. MacKinnon (2018) acknowledges "[o]ur community partners, especially those who are Indigenous, remind us of the harm done by outside researchers" (p. 10). Earning the trust and respect of the community, even for Indigenous researchers, is a necessary

step in the relationship that takes time and commitment. However, there is also recognition of the essential need for research regarding the contemporary experience of Indigenous peoples (Deloria as cited in Kovach, 2015, 59). Casetellano (2004) quotes an Elder who asserts that despite being researched to death, Indigenous people can use research for their own benefit (p. 68). This highlights the need for new approaches to research that are informed by Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

Indigenous Research Paradigm. In *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Wilson (2008) outlines four components of an Indigenous research paradigm. First, Indigenous epistemology, or ways of knowing, maintains that knowledge is relational and represents entire systems of thinking. Epistemology from an Indigenous perspective is "[t]hinking of the world around us as a web of connections and relationships" (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). While Indigenous ontology, or ways of being, asserts that there can be multiple realities and that reality is defined through relationships. As such, reality gains meaning from one's relationship to an object rather than by the object itself. Further, Wilson (2008) states that reality exists within "the relationship that one has with the truth" (p. 73). The third component, Indigenous axiology or ethics, emphasizes relational accountability indicating that the research relationship is an integral part of the research process. "The researcher is therefore part of his or her research and inseparable from the subject of the research" (J. Wilson as cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 77). The last component of Wilson's (2008) Indigenous research paradigm is Indigenous methodology, or ways of doing, that is grounded in respect, reciprocity and responsibility and aligns with relational accountability. Where the researcher has a responsibility to ensure the research process is respectful and the research outcomes useful (reciprocity) to the Indigenous community.

Within an Indigenous research paradigm, reality and knowledge are contextual and subjective due to the emphasis on relationships and connections among subjects and objects. Wilson (2008) demonstrates these concepts through the way that the Cree language is constructed. Further he notes that an Indigenous research paradigm resists compartmentalization, taking a more holistic view that acknowledges that the various parts of the conceptual framework are inseparable. Wilson's (2008) Indigenous research paradigm incorporates aspects of an Indigenous worldview and Indigenous knowledge, particularly the centrality of relationships.

Indigenous Research Methodologies. Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) reinforce researcher accountability and a sense of responsibility to the community. Again, Wilson (2008) refers to this as relational accountability which "…means that the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)" (p. 99). As an Indigenous researcher, it is important for me to undertake research that will be meaningful and useful to the urban Indigenous community(ies). Similarly, Kovach (2015) notes that "[w]e need to take back control of research so that it is relevant and useful to us" (p. 59). Likewise, Weber-Pillwax (1999) contends that "[t]he researcher must be certain that the motives for doing the research will result in benefits to the indigenous community" (p. 42).

As a researcher, positioning myself within a community-based approach and Indigenous Research Methodology is an important aspect of my research approach. According to Absolon and Willett (2005), "[t]o locate is to make a claim about who you are and where you come from, your investment and your intent. To put yourself forward means to say who you are, give yourself voice, and claim your position" (p. 112). In addition, researchers need to employ ongoing reflexivity in order to identify and recognize perspectives that could influence their

research. Similarly, Wallerstein and Duran (2008) contend "[w]e need to understand how our personal biographies inform our ability to interpret the world, both in understanding the problems and in visioning community strengths" (p. 39).

Indigenous research methodology promotes a decolonizing agenda supported by critical theory that furthers social justice (Kovach, 2009). "The purpose of decolonization is to create space for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked, or dismissed" (Kovach, 2009, p. 85). Similarly, MacKinnon, Hill and Roussin (2018) states their approach to research "acknowledged the importance of understanding the harm caused by colonization and oppression and the centrality of cultural reclamation in the healing process as an essential step towards both individual and systemic transformation" (p. 43). Often in Indigenous research, creating space to examine Settler-Indigenous relations is part of the research process. In the book *"Research as resistance,"* Strega and Brown (2015) note that participation and critical reflexivity are two central features of socially just research. Similarly, IRM emphasize the participation of community members in the research process and promote reflexivity and positionality as key aspects of these methodologies.

Indigenous Knowledge. There is something to be learned from Indigenous knowledge "gained from centuries of experience" (Korkka, 2005, p. 362) and observation from lived experiences. A number of Indigenous scholars have highlighted the connection between Indigenous knowledge and empirical knowledge creation. Castellano (2004) states that Indigenous people have always been researchers whose collection and analysis of data lead to understanding and knowledge. "Aboriginal knowledge has always been informed by research, the purposeful gathering of information and the thoughtful distillation of meaning" (Castellano, 2004, p. 98). Steinhauer (2002) clearly makes the link between observation and empirical

knowledge. “Empirical knowledge is gained through watching and listening” (p. 74). While Weber-Pillwax (2004) situates Cree epistemology and ontology firmly within an empirical research paradigm.

> Empirical knowledge is what Cree culture is about, and while these statements about balance and harmony are often taken to be not empirically sound, they are certainly borne out of thousands of years of empirical research by traditional Indigenous researchers. (Weber-Pillwax, 2004, p. 89)

Castellano (2004) brings it together by making the connection between knowledge creation and self-determination. “Fundamental to the exercise of self-determination is the right of peoples to construct knowledge in accordance with self-determined definitions of what is real and what is valuable” (Castellano, 2004, p. 102). Indigenous scholars have articulated how Indigenous epistemology (ways of knowing) and ontology (ways of being) are: legitimate ways of seeing the world, an equally valuable perspective and central to Indigenous self-determination.

Ethics in Indigenous Research

Ethical considerations become important in research involving Indigenous peoples due to a history of extractive research practices that rarely provided any benefit to those who were the ’subjects’ and in many cases caused harm. The First Nations principles of OCAP®, Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) and Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) provide guidance on ethical considerations regarding research with Indigenous peoples and communities.

The First Nation principles of OCAP® provides guidance for working ethically with First Nation communities around data collection, ownership, and knowledge production that promotes the ‘data sovereignty’ and self-determination of First Nations. As referenced on their website, the First Nations Information Governance Centre[4] (FNIGC) submits that “OCAP® is an expression

[4] OCAP® is a registered trademark of FNIGC for further information see the organization’s website www.FNIGC.ca/OCAP

of First Nation jurisdiction over information about their communities and its community members. As such OCAP® operates as a set of specifically First Nations—not Indigenous—principles"[5]. Although recently trademarked and branded as specific to First Nations, the First Nations principles of OCAP® highlight the types of ethical considerations regarding data collection in terms of ownership, control, access and possession that is a useful starting point in other contexts. There is value in exploring if or how these types of ethical considerations regarding data collection might be relevant to working with urban Indigenous communities as well as considering what other principles and values might be specific to working within an urban Indigenous context.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement dedicates an entire chapter to "providing guidance to researchers on the ethical conduct of research involving Indigenous peoples" (GoC, 2018c). The policy statement endeavors to recognize and highlight the uniqueness of research with Indigenous peoples and communities. The policy recognizes the unique status and diversity of Indigenous peoples as well as the need for reciprocal relationships, balancing individual and collective interests and being attentive to the specific community context. In addition, the Tri-Council applies an Indigenous context to their existing framework by extending the scope of protections to communities, positing "collective welfare as complement to individual well-being", the importance of building relationships and addressing power imbalances. The Tri-Council also promotes engagement with communities that are collaborative, mutually beneficial and enhance research capacity. "[B]ased on the premise that engagement with community is an integral part of ethical research involving Indigenous people" (GoC, 2018c). It cautions researchers to be aware of the diverse interests among Indigenous peoples as represented by

[5] See https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/

governing authorities, organizations and communities of interest, and "individuals and subgroups who may not have a voice in formal leadership" (GoC, 2018c). While also cautioning researchers to be aware of and respectful of community protocols and the "role of Elders and Other Knowledge Holders". Overall, the Tri-Council Policy Statement has similarities to the principles reflected in community-based participatory research and Indigenous Research Methodologies.

In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report included guidelines, or best practices, for research sponsored as part of that study. These best practices were based on the principles that included: the distinct perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal peoples, the reassessment of past research that largely excluded these distinct perspectives, the value of traditional and oral knowledge in research, the multiplicity of viewpoints, respect for community protocols, observing ethical and professional standards, and fairness. In addition, the RCAP guidelines emphasized: respect for Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives, importance of informed consent, promoted collaborative research, consideration of community benefit(s), and the "open public access to final reports".

Ethical Considerations. The ethical considerations related to this project can be looked at through the lens of various subjects involved in the project, namely the community, participants and the researcher. The first two ethical concerns in the table below are related to aspects of the community and the lack of clear and appropriate protocols in an urban setting. The next two concerns are directly related to participants in the research project and their potential response to topics which could be seen in a negative light. The last two considerations are related to the researcher and the potential benefits and drawbacks related to my insider/outsider position in relation to the community.

The urban Indigenous community(ies) presents a unique challenge in comparison to other

Indigenous communities, in that, the urban population in Edmonton does not have a representative body that would include a singular leader and a process to ensure overall consent with a given research project or approach. What that means in practice is that there are several touch points that might be required, care must be taken in ensuring the inclusion of a broad range of voices in the community. The principles of OCAP®, TCPS and RCAP provide context in which to think about ethical considerations regarding urban Indigenous populations. A summary of some of the main ethical concerns and potential mitigations strategies for this research project are summarized in the table below.

Table 2

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Concerns	Mitigation Strategies
Research with Indigenous peoples	Use Indigenous Research Methodology and consider various documents that speak to ethical considerations in working with Indigenous peoples such as the First Nation principles of OCAP®, Tri-Council Statement, and RCAP
The Urban Indigenous communities does not have a formal body that represents their collective interests	Inclusive, broad representation, personal interactions, knowledge of and relationships with Indigenous people
Critique of government processes could have repercussions on participants/organizations	Identity of participants/organizations are anonymous
Exploring City Initiatives may rehash negative responses or feelings	Reframe as opportunity for lessons learned, use appreciative inquiry
Both an Insider as a member of the community and an outsider as a researcher	Positionality, reflexivity, transparency about past/current community involvement
Awareness of my own biases from previous involvement	Reflexivity, emphasis on Indigenous perspectives in data collection and analysis

Indigenous Research Methodologies provides a framework for undertaking research with Indigenous peoples and communities that allows for the centering of Indigenous perspectives, values, principles, and cultural knowledge. IRM can be used to both validate and affirm distinct understandings and specific Indigenous knowledge.

Methods

This section of the chapter will outline the methods that I used to undertake this research project. The description of the selection of participants includes details regarding sample size, selection criteria, characteristics of participants and use of cultural protocols. Next, the collection of data will cover the recruitment of participants, the interview questions and process, transcription and reflecting on my experience during the data collection process. The data analysis provides a summary of the key aspects of a reflexive thematic analysis approach and outlines how I used this method in this research project. In addition, information is provided on how the preliminary results of the analysis were shared with the EPE Indigenous Circle. The specifics of the methods used is followed by additional observations related my to own experiences during the research process and in using these methods. The section ends by outlining four specific limitations to the research project.

Selection of Participants. The sample size in qualitative research is small and participants are "selected purposefully" based on characteristics and context that will contribute to an in-depth understanding of the topic (Mayan, 2016, p. 61). I reached out to ten potential participants, by phone or email, of which six agreed to participate. Of those who chose not to participate one declined due to personal circumstances, one declined due to a miscommunication and two potential participants did not respond. The criterion for the selection of participants included: urban Indigenous person living in Edmonton who has experiences with engagement

activities and who may be participating in the work or EPE or the Indigenous Circle (IC). A review of past meeting notes provided a list of potential participants who either have been active or not in the work of EPE. Participants were chosen to ensure a broad representation of the diversity of the urban Indigenous population in Edmonton.

The sample included four women and two men, ranging in age between approximately 35-70 years, and one of the participants is considered an Elder. Participants included a number of Indigenous identities and various backgrounds. Unfortunately, I was not able to recruit an Inuit participant. All of the participants had experiences with engagement and four of the participants are currently involved with the work of EPE and have attended IC meetings. As an Indigenous person who has been involved in the work of EPE and with engagement initiatives with the urban Indigenous community(ies), I have an extensive network. As a result, I had a pre-existing working relationship with five of the participants. Cultural protocol, the offering of tobacco, was made to a knowledge keeper for a prayer prior to data collection and participants were asked if they wished to receive tobacco for their participation and what they were sharing.

Data Collection. Recruitment of participants was initiated through an introductory phone call or email that provided an introduction and outlined the purpose of the project and asked if they were interested in participating in a one-hour interview focused on their experience with engagement. Upon agreeing to participate, a mutually agreeable date and time was set for an interview and an electronic information and consent form was sent to the participant prior to their interview. For ethical reasons due to the outbreak of the pandemic all interviews were held through a secure on-line video-conferencing program. No in-person interaction with participants took place during this study.

On the day of the interview the information and consent form was reviewed with the

participant and their consent to both participate and record audio of the interview were confirmed verbally during the video call. Before starting the interview, the participants were made aware of the four main topic areas that would be covered during the interview. The interview questions were developed to understand various aspects of urban Indigenous people's experience with and perspective on engagement. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix B. The initial questions were introductory and aimed at exploring the participants perspectives on urban indigeneity through a discussion of identity and sense of community and reflecting on what it means to be urban and Indigenous. Next participants were asked about their awareness of and experience with EPE and to reflect on what was working or not from an Indigenous perspective. Participants were then asked about their perspectives and experiences with local engagement processes in general, including but not limited to EPE. The interview question was aimed at understanding what is unique or essential to engaging with the urban Indigenous population. Lastly, participants were asked questions about their perspectives and understanding of decolonization and self-determination and how these terms relate to their experiences specifically with the engagement practices of EPE or engagement in general in an urban Indigenous context.

From the audio recordings of the six semi-structured interviews, I created a clean verbatim transcript for each interview. I used otter.ai transcription software for the initial transcription from audio to text and then I reviewed each transcript in full for completeness and accuracy. Each research participant was given the opportunity to review their transcript to ensure their perspectives were accurately captured. I did not receive any request for changes to participants' interview transcript. In light of Indigenous peoples' and communities' experiences with data being used outside the intent in which it was originally collected and the potential for

misapplication or misinterpretation it was important for me to specify that secondary use of the data collected beyond the specific purposes of this research project would require informed consent of each participants.

The data collection process was the most fulfilling aspect of the research process, I really enjoyed spending time with the participants, hearing what they thought and what their experiences were. Although at times, I did get a sense that some participants worried they weren't answering the question(s). In those cases, I reflected that there was no right or wrong way to answer the questions, I was interested in their perspective based on their own experience and they were the only ones who could speak to that. For me, the questions were just a tool to bring their knowledge to light. Perhaps this observation speaks more to the weight typically given to academic research around what constitutes knowing and which knowledge is most valued. However, all of the participants brought a rich understanding to the topic and provided a number of insights. The data collection stage of the project also represented a shift in trajectory of the research project, after months of preparation, I was finally talking to other Indigenous people about what I had spent months reading and thinking about.

Data Analysis. Thematic analysis is described as "a method for capturing patterns ('themes') across qualitative datasets (Braun et al., 2018, p. 1). In discussing when to use thematic analysis, Caulfield (2020) notes that this method "is a good approach to research where you're trying to find out something about people's views, opinions, knowledge, experience or values from a set of qualitative data" (para. 2). More specifically, the process I used to analyze the data aligns with the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2018, p. 10). The six phases of reflexive thematic analysis are considered an iterative process that include the following interaction with the data: familiarization, generating coding, constructing themes,

revising themes, defining themes, and producing a report (Braun et al., 2018, p. 10-14). Braun et al. (2018) consider reflexive thematic analysis as a 'fully qualitative approach' and go on to define a qualitative orientation as one that "usually emphasizes meaning as contextual or situated, reality or realities as multiple, and researcher subjectivity as not just valid but a resource" (Braun & Clarke as cited in Braun et al. 2018, p. 6). Braun et al. (2018) differentiate their approach as reflexive to "emphasize the active role of the researcher in the knowledge production process" (p. 6).

The following is a summary of how I used this method in my own research. After transcribing the first three interviews I started the data analysis process by familiarizing myself with the data from these interviews. At this early point, I wanted to get a sense of how participants were responding to the questions to know if I needed to make any adjustments to the interview questions. I then went back to interviewing participants and continuing to collect data. Once I had all the interviews completed and transcribed, I began coding and compiling relevant excerpts from the data. Next, I went through several cycles of constructing and reviewing the themes and kept returning to the original transcripts to ensure I did not overlook or miss something in the data as the themes developed. While I was writing up the findings, I adjusted the topics, themes and sub-themes once more for clarity noting that all the findings fit within the five themes.

At different points during the process, the preliminary data analysis, themes and findings as well as wise practices were shared with the Indigenous Circle in order to see if the analysis and interpretations resonated with other urban Indigenous people. Research participants were made aware when these presentations were taking place if they were interested in attending. The feedback that I received was that the research and results were accessible, meaningful and

timely. One person asked how I was specifically defining the urban Indigenous population. However, since my research project was centered on Edmonton, I did not address specific criteria such as determining which municipalities are considered to have an urban Indigenous population.

Additional Observations. Upon reflection on the interview process, I noticed the way that I used the questions from the interview guide remained quite stable and attribute this to an uneasiness with questions of 'rigour' applied to qualitative methods; but also, that the questions helped to guide the interview process and the questions were eliciting relevant responses.

While I was reviewing the interview transcripts, it felt awkward that after asking participants to introduce (or position) themselves that I did not reciprocate by introducing and positioning myself. Although I did have existing relationships with many of the participants, I recognize that relationality and reciprocity are important aspects of the research relationship in Indigenous research. However, at the same time it also seemed inappropriate to take the focus off the participant by introducing and positioning myself. In hindsight, it would have been useful to position myself more fully at the beginning during the introduction of the project knowing that I would be asking the same of the participant at a later point during the interview.

Some participants agreed to having quotes directly attributed to them in their consent form, however, while writing up the finding I began to worry about confidentiality of all the participants. The combination of a small sample size with a small urban Indigenous population, I had concerns that even if I used a pseudonym a grouping of references attributed to one participant could potentially identify that particular participant. In the end, I decided not to attribute specific quotes to any of the participants to any of the interview quotes from interviews in the findings in order to maintain the confidentiality of those who did not wish to be identified.

It was very difficult to balance the wishes of all participants, with the principles of both confidentiality and transparency.

Limitations

There were at least four specific limitations to the research study that become apparent through the research process. First, due to small sample size the findings are not able to be generalizable outside of the specific context of this research project—to urban Indigenous peoples' experiences in Edmonton—limiting the applicability of the results without further research. Given the uniqueness of the urban Indigenous population in comparison to other communities, individual participants will be speaking only for themselves and based on their own experience rather than for a specific Indigenous group or community. Due to both technical and time limitations the map proposed in the interview guide was not used as a tool to facilitate the interview conversation. While it might have helped focus the discussion, it turned out it was not critical to enable participants to share their experience and perspectives. Finally, the pandemic impacted the research project and limited the type, frequency and level of interaction with participants. For example, in-person interviews would have been preferable, especially in an Indigenous context, but strict ethical guidelines limited interaction to secure on-line video-conferencing. Despite these limitations it was still worthwhile to pursue the research project.

In summary, although Indigenous peoples have been over researched and experienced extractive research practices there is value in research processes that are informed by Indigenous perspectives. An Indigenous research paradigm and Indigenous research methodologies provide those perspectives and center Indigenous values and principles into the research process. Such as, the importance of relationships, respect and reciprocity, responsibility to and inclusion of the communities that are the focus of the research, recognizing the subjectivity of research and the

importance of context. Indigenous scholars have noted that Indigenous knowledge is empirical and Indigenous knowledge creation is an act of self-determination. Indigenous experiences with extractive research highlight the importance of ethics in Indigenous research. The methods used in this research project were aimed at capturing and privileging urban Indigenous perspectives and experiences with engagement processes.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

As mentioned previously in the methodology chapter, this chapter will provide an overview of key findings based on a thematic analysis of what was shared by participants during the research interviews. The following three sections in this chapter will provide: context to urban Indigenous identity and community connections; outline five central themes related to engagement; and, offer examples that are specific to EPE and align with the five themes.

Participants shared their perspective about being urban and Indigenous in terms of how they defined their own Indigenous identity as well as through their connection(s) to the city of Edmonton. Based on the participants' responses there was no singular way of describing their Indigenous identity or community attachment.

Participants' responses regarding engagement reflected in the research findings can be summarized into the following five themes: representation, relationships, meaningful involvement, action and self-determination. The themes are not listed in any particular order and each will be discussed in turn. The data from the interviews illustrates a depth of meaning for each theme that provides a fuller picture of commonly used terminology from an Indigenous perspective. Together, these five themes represent important considerations when undertaking engagement with urban Indigenous populations.

In addition, the research interviews also elicited participants' assessment of both the successes and challenges related to the work of the EPE[6] from an Indigenous perspective. Specific examples related to the structure, processes and implementation of the EPE include the formation of community tables, ICWC environmental scan, procurement process, First Voice

[6] I am using the term EPE to refer to a number of interrelated processes and initiatives that have come together under the EPE banner as outlined in the case which includes work undertaken before and after the creation of the EPE Secretariat as an independent entity.

Protocol and the role of the Stewardship Round Table (SRT). The examples, presented at the conclusion of the five themes, highlight shifts and reveal tensions between western and Indigenous ways of working. These shifts and tensions demonstrate on one hand, the collaboration and balancing of different approaches at a process and policy level while on the other hand give rise to discussion of power and control at the structural or system level.

Urban Identity & Connection

In order to provide some context, this first section will share participants' perspectives on what it means to be both urban and Indigenous. Overall, participants' responses indicated that there is no one way to identify as an Indigenous person in an urban setting. In the context of this research project there were at least three distinct ways that participants spoke to their Indigenous identity. Some participants identified as Indigenous but not urban, others identified with an urban Indigenous identity and lastly there was resistance to a singular urban Indigenous identity or community. Nearly all of the participants recognized the presence of an urban Indigenous community(ies) and there was recognition of various ways one might be connected to community over time, as well as through place, space and kinship.

Participants responded to questions about an urban Indigenous identity in a variety of ways. While none of the participants contested the existence of an urban Indigenous community(ies), they did have different ways they related to their own Indigenous identity within an urban context. There were those who recognized there is an urban Indigenous community, but they didn't personally identify with the urban Indigenous label. For example, one participant stated:

> I don't think that way, I just identify myself as an Indigenous being, I don't really identify as being urban or rural. I just identify as being Metis from this land. I get why they're doing it, but I don't necessarily agree.

Similarly, another participant remarked that your Indigenous identity is more about how

you live than where you live. “I just think being Indigenous is Indigenous. I don't think it matters where you live or where you're raised…It's how you live”. While other participants also recognized there is an urban Indigenous community and they also identified as being part of the urban Indigenous community (but not necessarily to the exclusion of other identities or communities). One participant stated, “I define myself as [a member of] an urban Indigenous population…the majority of my life…I lived in the City of Edmonton”. From another participant’s perspective, there is no singular urban Indigenous identity but there are multiple identities or communities.

> I would say no, there isn't really an identified specific one…when you say an Indigenous identity, probably most people think of First Nations reserves and Metis settlements, they don't think of what one is in the city…most of the time when I think of a lot of urban Indigenous I think of homeless.

At the same time most of the participants referenced where they were from as part of their background which often including a place name and if they were First Nations or Métis [7]. In addition, most participants noted having some kind of connection to the urban Indigenous community in Edmonton through their history, place, family, job, community service, or as a community member or some combination. One participant saw their connection as a part of their long history that is tied to the place called Edmonton.

> I have a very close connection. I have a very deep understanding about the experiences and the challenges of being an urban Indigenous person. I've always considered the city more my town than even where I come from…My roots are definitely deep rooted into the City of Edmonton.

Another participant shared how their job at an Indigenous-led organization created a sense of community by noting that “I've been here 20 years and [it] is quite a family”. Another participant

[7] Unfortunately, I was unable to set up an interview with an Inuit participant although I did attempt to reach out within my network and within the time constraints of the research project.

expressed their connection through their commitment to the community by stating “I am a defender of developing strategies and opportunities for Indigenous people in urban centres”. In contrast, at least one participant spoke about feeling a sense of disconnection that they attribute to lack of an ongoing connection with their own culture, family and place of origin.

In reflecting on their personal perspective of urban Indigenous identity and connection participants noted that there are multiple identities and communities to be found within the urban Indigenous population. There is also no one way to relate to your connection of being urban and Indigenous. How participants responded seemed to be related to their own experience of being Indigenous and living in the city. The findings in this section both demonstrate and support the diversity of Indigenous identity and experience in an urban context.

Five Themes

The following section will outline key findings that have been organized into five themes: representation, relational, meaningful involvement, action-orientated and self-determination. In which participants spoke to the importance of representing the diversity of the urban Indigenous population, recognizing and understanding relationships, active participation throughout the process, creating change, and having control over determining their future.

Representation

Representation was the one theme that was consistently expressed by all of the interview participants. Representation is important because the urban Indigenous population is fluid and varied and there are different pockets of community around the city in Edmonton. It also speaks to the point that the urban Indigenous population is not homogenous and highlights the need to ensure the broadest representation of the diversity of the urban Indigenous population. One participant summarized it in the following way:

> I think about all the Indigenous people that work across the Edmonton sector in so many realms that…carry lots of knowledge and lots of lived experience and lots of know how, and opinions on the way things could change for people that live in Edmonton, especially Indigenous people. So, I don't know if they were getting a good cross section of our people.

Interview participants also spoke to the difference between representation—representing the various segments (or voices) found in the population and representative—those who claim to speak for or represent the voices of others. Two concerns were raised related to this perspective including the over emphasis on agencies or organizations speaking for others and the missing voices of the broader community and those directly affected. However, this tension is not an either/or scenario but rather both/and, the point is to capture the diversity of perspectives from the many voices and multiple communities that make up the urban Indigenous population. As one participant stated, "…I don't think we have all voices there and I don't think we're going to always have all voices there, but we should always make the effort to make sure we're having all the voices represented".

Some participants raised the concern that there isn't enough of an effort to broadly reach out during such initiatives and that opportunities to provide input are focused on a small number of actors. For example, one participant pointed out, "[t]hey rely on maybe one or two, Indigenous organizations…I don't think that their reach has extended more than it should… there has to be more Indigenous involvement not only leadership, but on a community level". While another participant noted that

> I don't think they're doing enough. I think what they're doing is engaging the…[existing] membership, especially for the Indigenous Circle. And then for EPE on its own, they're just referring to people in the Indigenous Circle rather than spanning out…[to] the actual population that are in the city that needs to be involved.

Participants highlighted the importance of representing the diversity of the urban Indigenous population and including the various demographic segments in order to capture multiple voices

and involve actors at various organizational levels.

Relational

Relational is a concept that is often cited as a key aspect of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Being in relationship with one another implies a deeper level of connection that involves knowing with our heart as well as our minds. Similarly, during their interview one of the participants stated

> we're driven by relationships and who we are as a people that guides us, our teachings… even though as urban Aboriginal people, sometimes we don't have all those teachings but it's instinctual. We usually put together our hearts and our heads, not just our heads.

In addition, while sharing their perspectives several of the participants hit on a number of terms that represent key aspects of building relationships including trust, respect, openness, vulnerability, honesty and commitment. Participants also highlighted the words relationship and true partnership that meant coming to know each other as people including our strengths, gifts and knowledge and recognizing that each of us has a unique role. As well as, creating shared understanding and safe spaces to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations. As one participant stated, "relational means to me that we have an understanding, a mutual understanding of who we are…We've made that time together to get each other and to respect each other…so we can move forward in a better way". In addition, another participant suggested taking a more active approach, rather than passive, to building relationships through outreach which requires some effort to seek out those who have something to contribute to the conversation. Specifically, they noted that

> they could have been a little bit more forthright. If I went to some of the Indigenous agencies and said, can we come and spend an afternoon with you and talk to you and have all your staff come and look at these things and kind of give us how you feel.

Similarly, another participant stated it this way,

> [u]nfortunately, a lot of organizations, not just EndPovertyEdmonton, don't do the physical work. Don't go out and say, hey, you know what you have great ideas…after chatting with them, why don't you come be a part of this. There's not that kind of person[al] engagement and that's lacking. And without that you're not getting honest inputs and full thorough input from people.

Utilizing a relational approach recognizes our interconnectedness and our connection to one another and encourages a kindness and caring that can be lacking when we are disconnected or see each other as simply individuals, strangers, or as 'the other'. As one participant shared, relational practice is like building a sweat lodge. Explaining that it is a collaborative effort that requires many hands in which everyone has a role, and those roles are interconnected. Each person shares their knowledge and gifts which in turn give the lodge its strength and creates feelings of accomplishment and a sense of shared ownership. The lodge is built in a good way with prayer and intention and with the values of inclusion, trust and respect. The participant stated,

> and we've all had a say, we all trusted each other to do what we're supposed to do. I trusted you to tie those willows just perfectly…you trusted the person to rip the strips of broadcloth the right size so that you can tie them right. I trusted the guys that went and got the willows, that they got good willows that are strong and bendable. I trusted that people put tobacco in those holes and said the right prayers to put the willows in those holes.

During the interviews participants spoke about what it means to be in relationship, know each other and build shared understanding, and recognize their interconnectedness.

Meaningful Involvement

The phrase "nothing about us, without us" characterizes the underlying intent of calls for more meaningful involvement and was referenced by a couple of participants during their interviews. Meaningful involvement speaks to the desire for opportunities to be involved throughout the process, from beginning to end, especially where those involved are directly impacted. Likewise, inclusion is an important aspect for meaningful involvement and as another

participant stated there is a “need for more Indigenous involvement” at all levels. One way that meaningful involvement becomes apparent is when those involved can see the influence of their involvement reflected in the process, decisions and the outcome. In contrast, as one participant noted, “I think what doesn’t work is that we know full well that they pretty much had a plan already before they even consulted us about it”. Ongoing dialogue was cited as another important aspect of meaningful involvement with the urban Indigenous population which includes follow up, follow through and constant engagement. As one participant noted,

> I think what we need to do is keep the conversation going, not just once that little study is done, or that little engagement session is done […] I think there needs to be more follow up and more, just constant engagement.

From an Indigenous perspective, meaningful involvement in community engagement requires adequate time to enable their full participation. As stated by a participant, “…give more time to, instead of rushing through everything, give more time to do it right. And doing it right means whatever the community, the actual community says is right”. This participant’s comments also convey the need to build both “community trust and support”.

Moreover, different types of venues and events that are informal are going to provide alternative access points to people who may not attend more formal engagement sessions. As an example, one participant noted that having a presence at social gatherings such as festivals and entertainment provides a way to reach people who might otherwise choose not to attend more formal sessions. “I think the more social an organization makes their setting they’re going to attract more people, especially Indigenous people, we don’t want to keep going to events that are just dry…”. Which leads to questions about how and why people choose to participate and what keeps them involved. One participant raised the question of how to draw people in or tap into various motivations to participating in engagement processes. “There's no draw for people to come and say I want to be a part of this and have my opinion expressed. There's no draw for

that". While another participant raises the subsequent question of how to create buy-in not only into the process but also the outcome of engagement. From this participants' perspective, "…there was no buy-in to be committed…people that are working in the field, if they don't see that there's anything in it for them. They don't come back".

In terms of meaningful involvement, the participants' responses reflected a desire for inclusion and active involvement throughout the process, influence over the process and outcome, making time to ensure full participation, build community trust and support and considers what motivates their participation.

Action-orientated

Participants spoke to the recurring theme of a disconnection between the words and actions. As one participant described it, "I think you can have all the good intentions in the world but without action, they mean nothing". In addition, there is a sense of frustration with the slow pace of progress or action or "not moving forward". Similarly, another participant expressed their frustration with how things are currently working — "the process is still slow. And there's still somewhat of a Western way of working. And I think that is slowing us down"— in reference to the delay between identifying problems and developing and implementing possible solutions.

As another participant pointed out, perhaps part of the challenge is the overwhelming focus on the 'problem(s)', or the impacts colonization has had on Indigenous peoples, with less attention given to finding community-based and Indigenous-led solutions to those problem(s).

> …as Indigenous people we're so used to saying what the problem is and trying to get our points heard and to be respected in a way. Then when it comes to someone saying okay then what do you want to do about it? We've never actually get to that question. No one ever actually, a system never actually says, what do you want to do about it?

Participants also expressed a sense of being "surveyed to death" and others stated they were not engaged enough. One participant spoke to a need to more actively engage in outreach and

described what that might look like:

> …need to go out and physically talk to people that are Indigenous, that are urban, and say, hey, we'd really appreciate having you come join us and be able to speak your voice and…change the way things are done.

While another participant expressed a sense of frustration that "[w]e have been researched to death and still nothing came out of it".

Another participant wondered; how do we move from focusing on the impacts of our experiences with colonization to creating tangible changes to our circumstances? Specifically, the participant asked,

> [h]ow can we do something to help us collectively lift the people or provide a service or provide a building, or whatever it is they need to enhance life of an Indigenous person experiencing homelessness and poverty in the city of Edmonton?

While at the same time also recognizing the need for space to share experiences and build solidarity, they posed the question of whether the IC was the most appropriate forum for these types of discussions. From this participants' perspective,

> there has to be a forum for people to be able to say, this is my experience, this is what I've been doing. This is how life in the city has affected me. And I mean, those are all valid things. And they do need a venue to be able to do that. I don't think it's there.

This particular line of inquiry highlights a tension between how to influence change on the various roadmap actions and providing space for personal and professional support and development which is more relational and requires time.

Within the theme of action-orientated, during the interview participants highlighted the slow pace of progress, a focus on problems, and balancing creating change and the various reasons Indigenous people choose to participate.

Self-determination

Overall, the term decolonization seems to cause more confusion than clarity and I noticed a sense of unease some participants had with the word. One participant even suggested finding a

different word that better captured the underlying meaning(s). “It's a confusing word. I wish we could, that’s a non-Indigenous word, I wish we could somehow Indigenized it to say what that really means”. In addition, it became clear that it is difficult to have a conversation about decolonization without talking about colonization and how Indigenous people have been impacted with participants sharing their experience with racism, discrimination and pressures to assimilate. For example, one participant described colonization as being asked to stop being true to who you are as an Indigenous person and become something else. While another participant wondered how life might have been different if colonization never happened. “If we had that culture in our everyday life, had those practices, had those traditions, were able to express them. If we’d had that, my family I think would be hugely different”.

One participant described their understanding of decolonization as being both true to ourselves and part of society in the following quote. Only when, “we are being true people, true to our identity, true to our culture, true to our traditions, true to our value system. And when we can do that, and still be part of society at large, we’ve become decolonized”. While another participant questioned the possibility of meshing two cultures together and suggested we “learn to live side by side”. In a similar vein, another participant spoke about decolonization in terms of positioning Indigenous peoples equally within the human family by “asking people to walk beside us”. A participant noted a sense of fear that may help to explain a resistance to decolonization. “They’re afraid if they dismantle what they’ve already constructed it [is] going to [lead to] mayhem and they’re going to lose somehow…but they’re not. They’re going to win and we’re going to have a better way of working together”. This participant went on to say, “decolonization benefits everyone”. Participants suggested that others can learn about the benefits of decolonization through hearing from “first-hand experience” or “walking in our

moccasins". Indigenous people express decolonization by maintaining their culture and way of life, living by example and sharing the richness of Indigenous cultures and knowledge.

Most of the participants clearly stated that the terms decolonization and self-determination were related concepts. The following quote clearly communicates this perspective, "the strength of self-determination of community is directly related to decolonization. It's going to be very difficult to understand what a true Indigenous perspective or movement is without having a decolonized mind". Not surprisingly then during conversations about decolonization, participants identified various aspects of self-determination, such as: "doing for ourselves"; "self-reliance" and "self-sufficiency"; and, independence. One participant stated, "we have our own way of being and when we're allowed to exercise our own way of working and understanding and developing our own ways, we are 100% more successful". Another way of articulating this same sentiment is the idea that Indigenous-led initiatives which center on Indigenous ways of knowing and being can better meet the needs and aspiration than those being imposed upon Indigenous people. While another participant pointed to the difficulties in pursuing our own approaches, "the way we want to resolve stuff is not the same way that society works. So, we're sort of always going against the grain and fighting against policies and systems and stuff about how we want to fix things". Another participant described self-determination in terms of the ability of people or a group of people to take care of themselves and have the things they need not just to survive but to thrive.

In summary, the five themes of representation, relational, meaningful involvement, action-orientated and self-determination found in the research findings highlight key considerations in the engagement of an urban Indigenous population while also conveying the depth and wisdom found through those themes. The majority of participants spoke to the

necessity of broad representation to account for the diversity of the urban Indigenous population and to ensure the many voices and multiple communities are captured and represented, while other participants explained how being in relationship is built on trust and respect that allows us to recognize our interconnection and each person's unique role. The theme of meaningful involvement captures the importance of ongoing dialogue and inclusion throughout the process that enables participants to influence the direction and outcome. As well as, recognizing both the expertise in the community and giving adequate time as to not rush the process. Some participants expressed frustration with the lack of progress and contended that words without action do not result in change. A portion of the participants agreed that the terms decolonization and self-determination are related. Ultimately, when Indigenous peoples are able to be part of society on their own terms, they are exercising self-determination. The following section will demonstrate successes and challenges within these themes using examples of engagement with urban Indigenous people through EPE.

Examples from EPE

Generally, the participants noted that EPE has done a good job in their engagement with the urban Indigenous population. More specifically, a couple of participants mentioned the process and intent of EPE were good, another referred to it as "not too bad" and "professional". One participant in particular appreciated that EPE: was "coming to the people and asking the questions" and "open to having the conversation"; used a consensus model to prioritize; and, created a dedicated position to coordinate the work of the Indigenous Circle. The following five examples, offered as a series of vignettes, mentioned by participants demonstrate both specific challenges and successes that align with the five themes from the last section. Many of these examples reflect multiple themes but were used where they provided the best illustration. In

these particular examples from EPE, the successes are in the realm of process and policy and the challenges tend to highlight structural issues.

Community Tables & Representation

Some participants expressed concerns regarding the gaps left by the absence of some of the community tables in the EPE structure. At least two participants raised concerns that not all of the community tables[8] outlined in the EPE strategy from 2016 had been operationalized as of 2020. As one participant stated, "I think the fact that they didn't have all four circles start off at once was a mistake". Which is related to the theme of representation, as one participant explained: "That's why right now I'm really pushing to have those other circles because I don't think we collectively have everybody's voice right now". The other community tables, namely the Stakeholder Forum, provides an avenue for those directly affected and those with lived experience to get involved and have their voice heard. While the *Count me In Network* is intended to mobilize interested individuals and groups to work together towards ending poverty. One of the participants suggested that the SRT in particular should not take on the roles of those community tables that are not yet active because "you can't speak for lived experience people [and] stakeholders have their own opinion". The example of missing community tables from the EPE structure demonstrates the importance of representation.

Procurement Process & Being in Relationship

The Indigenous Culture and Wellness Centre (ICWC) Steering Committee was created to guide the work on the ICWC, one of the 35 EPE road map actions. The ICWC Steering committee includes a balance of members of the Indigenous Circle (IC) and City of Edmonton staff. One of the tasks undertaken by the Steering Committee was the procurement process

[8] For reference to EPE structure see appendix A.

within the city structure for the ICWC E-Scan which involved soliciting, vetting and awarding a contract for the E-Scan. Through ongoing discussions, the committee was able to take a more relational approach to the evaluation and interview process by putting the emphasis on holding in-person interviews with all of the applicants. Rather than relying solely on a points-based system to evaluate the proposals, the committee set out to meet each team, get to know and understand them in order to determine the best fit for this particular project. Although a deviation from standard practice and more time consuming to complete, it gave the committee additional information in which to base their decision. As one participant reflected on their experience, they noted:

> what worked about that piece is that everybody was very open minded. We took a system and Indigenized it, every way we could…And everybody was willing to put in the work and everybody was willing to make themselves vulnerable to change.

The example of the procurement process highlights the significance of interpersonal relationships and connections from an Indigenous perspective even in a business environment.

ICWC Environmental Scan & Meaningful Involvement

In another example, the consultants[9] who were hired to undertake an e-scan for the ICWC used an advisory type committee made up of the ICWC Steering Committee, that included members of the IC, to provide advice and guidance to the engagement process with urban Indigenous population. During one of the research interviews a participant recalled that the consultants "started off going to all these systems to engage" when a member of the committee suggested they

> need to go to where the people are. So, they changed it. They start going to powwows and events and asking people directly, what it was they wanted…they made…more of an…effort to get the voices of people, not the voices that speak for the people.

[9] I was part of the consulting team that worked on the contract to complete the ICWC E-scan.

The participant saw this as a departure from other approaches and a move in the right direction that would better represent the many voices found in the community. As highlighted by the participant, this is an example of good practices that noted how Indigenous committee members were able to influence and be meaningfully involved in the work that resulted in better reaching the diversity of the urban Indigenous population.

First Voice Protocol & Taking Action

Early on the Indigenous Circle, one of the five community tables, established the First Voice Protocol[10] with the aim of promoting equitable participation. The *Indigenous Circle First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity Protocol* outlines the purpose, criteria and procedures to support the participation of essential voices. The First Voice Protocol uses gifting as a form of exchange to "those participating, guiding, and providing voices of experiences" to the Indigenous Circle as a way to incorporate the Indigenous values of reciprocity (EPE, 2018a, p. 2) and relationality. As one participant recounted, "[w]e've also encouraged honorariums, compensation for people's time, that was never a thing that happened before EPE's Indigenous Circle started providing that and saying this is something that needs to be practiced". While the acceptance of the First Voice Protocol within EPE is in itself a success the same participant shared that this practice has been taken up by various agencies and entities, especially when they engage those with lived experience. In the participants' own words this type of practice recognizes "that their time is actually valuable and worth something and their knowledge is worth something". Similarly, the document states that "Indigenous Gifting/Giving is about the sharing of resources to benefit and support others" (EPE, 2018a, p. 2). The example demonstrates how this action promoted change through integrating Indigenous values and

[10] It is important to recognize that this concept was brought to the IC by a previous (Indigenous) employee of EPE who had knowledge of and experience using the protocol.

principles into the way Indigenous people worked within dominant systems.

The Role of SRT & Self-determination

The role of the SRT and related instances are used to demonstrate systemic issues within the EPE structure as identified by the interview participants. In particular, a number of participants pointed to some of the tensions between western and Indigenous ways of working. For example, one participant stated:

> Do I think EPE is the right vehicle to move our cause forward? No, not really. Because in the end, they have their own format and their way of doing things. And they still don't get how we work together and how we want to work together. And we still haven't figured out how we need to work together.

While a different participant shared their perspective that "systems are not relational", noting that "they're policy driven, fast paced, they have systemic ways of doing things…a colonized way".

Another participant noted a sense that there is a power differential within the EPE structure. "I do think that EPE does subscribe to having a hierarchical type of system…there's the big circle as EPE and then they have the little offshoot circles". Similarly, a different participant also raised concern about the positioning of SRT as the governing body of EPE and raised questions about their authority to make decisions without consulting with the other community tables, including the Indigenous Circle.

> I like the SRT and the whole principle of the SRT but sometimes I feel like they feel [as] though [they are] the governing body of EndPovertyEdmonton when we've struggled with this in the Indigenous Circle about whose roles are what and I think because of that the SRT feels a lot of free rein to make decisions without actually consulting the circles. And that's not how it's supposed to work.

A number of participants also shared a sense of paternalism related to their involvement in EPE. One of the participants raised the concern of a sense of resistance to power sharing that maintains the status quo of who has authority over the direction of the initiative. For example, one participant noted,

> I've seen places where we've made incredible inroads with the city and End Poverty. And so, I wouldn't want that to stop, but they still want to control. They still want to guide and make this go the way they want it to go.

In addition, the concern regarding equitable access to resources was raised which also speaks to a difference of power.

> I appreciate that EndPoverty [Edmonton] has provided that vehicle to bring us together to look at that. But in the end, it's not going to be EndPoverty [Edmonton] that's going to make the change for our people. I know that, it's not, but they have the money to be able to pull us together to talk and we don't. And so, we take advantage of that to be able to sit and talk about what we need to do for our people. We don't have the money to ever pull ourselves together.

This example highlights the challenges and tension between existing systems and the pursuit of self-determination among Indigenous people(s) particularly in an urban context.

In this section, participants provided concrete examples of successes through the examples of the procurement process, ICWC environmental scan and the First Voice Protocol. Participants also had some thoughts about what works well such as incorporating Indigenous ways of working into specific structures and processes. As one participant said, "I think what is working is that we're all making a real great effort to be relational and try to Indigenize everything". While another participant pointed out that "we've been able to work together to bring Western ways of doing things and Indigenous ways of doing things and marry them and end up with a reasonably good process or product".

At the same time, participants asked questions about the structure and implementation of EPE regarding the formation of community tables, the role of the SRT and resulting power differential. Further, the thoughts and perspectives of the participants highlights the difficulty and complexity in creating system level changes when there are multiple worldviews and perspectives on the issues and potential solutions. While also bringing attention to the enduring paternalism embedded within existing systems.

What is most significant in these examples is how Indigenous people advocated for and guided the processes that led to success. Although, a couple of participants described how hard they had to advocate, by constantly and consistently pushing. In addition, these successes highlight what one of the participants called indigenization, or the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into dominant structures and processes.

In summary, this chapter outlined key findings of this research project through three sections which looked at urban Indigenous identity and connection, outlined the five main themes and explored specific examples related to those themes. The target of the first section was to contextualize the urban Indigenous experience through an understanding that there are multiple identities and communities within urban Indigenous populations and various ways they describe their connection in an urban context. In the second section, which is central to the research findings, the analysis of participant responses brought to light the five themes of representation, relationships, meaningful involvement, action and self-determination. The five themes represent important considerations in the engagement of Indigenous people in an urban context. The five themes were further explored in the last section through the description of specific examples from EPE that underscored both successes and challenges. More specifically, participants provided concrete examples of successes that highlight the incorporation of Indigenous ways of working into processes and policy. As well, participant responses pointed to challenges that emphasize the complexity of creating systemic change where there are multiple perspectives as well as a power differential. Overall, a notable aspect of the findings is the importance of capturing and articulating the nuance of terms and concepts commonly expressed by Indigenous people(s) and in this case within an urban Indigenous context. The implications from the findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The goal of this research project was to understand urban Indigenous experiences with engagement processes and whether a decolonizing lens informed those processes. Findings from the data collected during six semi-structured interviews with urban Indigenous participants provided context to urban Indigenous identity and community connections; outlined five central themes related to engagement; and, offered examples that are specific to EPE and align with the five themes. The five themes of representation, relational, meaningful involvement, action-orientated and self-determination reflected Indigenous experiences with and perspective on engagement.

The following chapter will further discuss the findings, with a focus on what I call 'community-based approaches' to engagement with the urban Indigenous population. One of the key implications from the findings is the need to put the community at the center when working in an urban Indigenous context. The orientation of centering community is reflected in CBPR which is widely referenced within the community engagement literature. There are additional examples of using community-based approaches to development that can also be found in the literature. In line with a more community-based approach is an emphasis on co-production which includes having an active role in decision-making. Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation highlights the extent to which participants have an active role. I would argue that current public engagement practices are rarely community-centered even though they will likely impact those who are being engaged. What also became apparent was the lack of ethical considerations in engagement outside of academic spaces. Another key implication is the need for time and space for urban Indigenous people to engage amongst ourselves, promote shared values and principles and advance a way forward together that contributes to a sense of community and solidarity.

Building on the recognition of the diversity and pluralism found in an urban Indigenous context which has also contributed to existing divisions and hierarchies.

Community-Based Approaches

The following section will discuss aspects of a community-based approach that were reflected in the research findings and are supported in the literature. Before getting to the key implication of community-based approaches, it is worthy to note that the language we use is important to the work of community engagement. Unfortunately, both within the literature and on the ground the use of various terms obscures the primary intent of engagement processes.

Community

Before starting my research, I used the phrase 'urban Indigenous community' to generally describe the many Indigenous people who lived in Edmonton who shared commonalities even though I understood that this did not fully capture the complexity of urban Indigenous people or their experience. However, early on in my coursework it became much harder to continue to use this reference given the critique of the term 'community' that exists in the literature. One of the critiques is that the use of community in broad terms has a homogenizing effect. Given the misunderstandings that currently exist regarding the diversity of urban Indigenous identities it became important that I make a conscious effort to find alternative terms that better reflect this reality. As a result, in my thesis I have moved away from referring to a generalized urban Indigenous community that might be misconstrued as homogenous to those who are unfamiliar with the nuance and multiplicity of urban Indigenous identities and communities.

In line with the literature, the use of terminology is not always clear or consistent with certain terms used interchangeably. A number of additional terms became problematic during

this process. Similarly, Johnston (2010) identifies the "[d]ifferentiation between meaning of the terms engagement, consultation, and participation remains one of the key challenges" (p. 230). Similarly, according to Onciul (2013), "[t]he term engagement has been used in academia and in practice to describe such a myriad of relationships that the label can often conceal more than it reveals about the realities of collaborative practice" (p. 81). I have noticed that these terms seemed to either lose their meaning, become catch all terms, or were used in misleading ways. The concept of pseudo engagement seems to capture at least one aspect of this phenomenon that Johnston (2010) describes as the attempt to portray a greater depth of engagement than was actually the case (p. 220). In addition, Johnston (2010) makes the connection between the challenge of these terms and ensuring the goals and intent of engagement are clear (p. 230). Understanding the intent of engagement also came up as part of the research findings regarding meaningful involvement.

Centering Community

Many of the research findings pointed towards a focus on community-based approaches that center the community. With some experience and knowledge of community development in an urban Indigenous context when I started studying the field of community engagement, I noticed some similarities or overlap between my experience and the literature. These similarities became even more pronounced while taking a course on community-based participatory research (CBPR). It occurred to me that there were common approaches when working with communities in the areas of research, development and engagement. The central aspect being placing community at the center which may also be described as community-based or community-driven. However, a note of caution, not every word proceeded by the word community takes a community-based approach in both intent and action. Kelly & Caputo (2011) note that "[m]uch

work done at the local level in this country is described as community-based even in cases where no actual community residents are involved" (p. 17).

Many of the ideas and principles underpinning CBPR reflect basic principles of community development. Such as, the researcher facilitates research that is collaborative, co-created, builds capacity and empowers communities, is participatory and recognizes the strengths and knowledge that currently exists within the community. Similarly, the three principles identified by Minkler & Hancock (2008) that support a community-driven approach include "starting where the people are, emphasizing and building on community strengths and assets, and using the power of dialogue" (p. 155-156). In discussing participatory research, Amba et al. (2019) emphasize participation and co-creation that is meaningful and results in positive change for those directly affected. In contrast, conventional research can seem more extractive, impersonal and externally focused on the outcome and researcher's interest rather than internally focused on benefits to the community.

In the literature there are a number of examples of community-based approaches to research and development including: community-based participatory research, asset-based community development and Indigenous community development. The following excerpts from the literature highlight shared principles between CBPR and ABCD that includes the direct and active involvement of participants, are community centered, recognize the value of participant knowledge and contribute to actions or change. MacKinnon (2018) shares various examples of CBPR noting that,

> the basic formula for conducting the CBPR…includes the fundamental belief that research must be driven by and embedded in communities; that though researchers have much to contribute, what others bring to the table is equally important; and that the work doesn't end when the final report is written. Transformative community-based participatory research requires shared vision and long-term commitment to the shaping of a more equitable world. (p. 250)

Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) summarize ABCD using three key principles to their approach to development: asset-based, internally focused, and relationship driven (p. 8). This approach contends that "communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing (but often unrecognized) assets" (Cunningham & Mathie, 2005, p. 176). The approach aims to move community members from passive recipients of services as clients to active participants as citizens (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) through promoting increased levels of participation and involvement in determining how to address the challenges they face.

The literature on Indigenous centered approaches to community development reflect many of the research findings, such as: focus on Indigenous values; by and for Indigenous people; historical impacts and identity; and, an internal development focus. Silver et al. (2006) identified a number of distinguishing markers of urban Indigenous community development practice in Winnipeg. Based on the work of Silver et al. (2006) these practices are rooted in the Aboriginal values of community and sharing; starts with individual healing including rebuilding identity; requires a strong sense of community; incorporates Aboriginal culture and knowledge; development of urban Aboriginal organizations, by and for Aboriginal peoples; decolonizing through understanding of historical effects; holistic; and takes back control (self-determination). Comparably, Black (1994) writes that development in Indigenous communities "builds on local resources, recognizes Native knowledge and culture, and supports development from within" and are "culturally appropriate, [and] value based" (p. 2). In addition, it is focused on the development of a people and points out that development "cannot be done to people, or for people, but must come from people" (Black, 1994, p. 14).

As a student, researcher, consultant and Indigenous person I am drawn to community-based approaches as they align better with my sense of fairness, equity and collectivist notions

and an argument could be made that they align, in a broad sense, with Indigenous values and principles. Taking a more community-based approach to engagement with the urban Indigenous population is desired and has long been advocated for as reflected in the research findings.

Role in Decision-Making. What became evident between the research findings and the literature is the importance of urban Indigenous people having an active role in decision-making. A common critique of engagement with urban Indigenous people(s) is that they were not meaningfully involved. This highlights two concerns, first they were not involved in the development or design of the engagement and secondly, their input often does not significantly impact the outcome. Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation offers some assistance to understand and articulate this particular point of contention identified among the urban Indigenous population regarding their experience with public engagement. Table 3 below is used to compare Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation which appears on the left side, with urban Indigenous experiences with engagement that are based on my own interpretation of the findings and literature, on the right side of the table.

Table 3

Comparing Indigenous experiences with the Ladder of Participation

Typology of the Ladder of Participation			Indigenous Experiences with Engagement		
Ladder of Citizen Participation Arnstein (1969)			Levels of Participation	Role in Decision Making	Level of Autonomy
CITIZEN POWER "increasing degrees of decision-making clout" (p. 3)	Citizen Control		Self-determination	Autonomous	Decolonized
	Delegated Power		Devolution	Hybrid	Colonial Lite (in between)
	Partnership		Co-production	Shared	
TOKENISM have voice "but lack power to [e]nsure… views are heeded" (p. 3)	Placation		Industry-Stakeholder Engagement	Excluded	Colonial
	Consultation		Public Engagement		
	Informing		Information Sharing		
NON-PARTICIPATION "substitute for genuine participation" (p. 2)	Therapy		Through 'groups' or 'committees'		
	Manipulation				
			Exclusion	Excluded	Colonial
			Disengagement	Self-exclusion	

While the description of participation in terms of a spectrum or continuum is useful, the key to understanding the frustration of Indigenous people(s) lies in the degree of decision making at each level. The most relevant differentiation between non-participation and tokenism with citizen participation in Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation is whether participants have an active role in decision-making. According to Arnstein (1969), "[t]here is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" (p. 2). Furthermore, Arnstein's (1969) reflection in the following quote articulates how demoralizing participation can be for those who are unable to influence the outcome and affect change, this sentiment is similar to those reflected in the findings.

> [P]articipation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo. (Arnstein, 1969, p. 2)

I put self-determination at the top of the ladder in reference to Indigenous experiences with engagement to reflect they have autonomy in decision-making that reflects the ideal of a decolonization. Anything below co-production lacks adequate participation in decision-making for Indigenous people(s) and can explain their frustration with the outcomes of current and past engagement processes. As such, it becomes clear that the non-participation and tokenism described by Arnstein does not align with a community-based approach and does not meet the needs and aspirations of urban Indigenous people(s) to be actively involved in those decisions that impact their lives.

Participants' experiences of engagement in an urban Indigenous context also highlights a gap in Arnstein's (1969) ladder. As, the non-participation level does not include the disengagement or intentional exclusion of participants. This is significant in relation to urban

Indigenous people(s) because there has been, and some would argue continues to be, a paternalistic approach to dealing with Indigenous issues.

> In a political sense colonialism specifically excluded indigenous peoples from any form of decision making. States and governments have long made decisions hostile to the interests of indigenous communities, justifying these by offering the paternalistic view that indigenous people were like children who needed others to protect them and decide what is in their best interest. Paternalism is still present in many forms in the way governments, local bodies, and non-government agencies decide on issues which have an impact on indigenous communities. (Smith, 2012, p. 151-152)

Over the years, governments have taken it upon themselves to propose and implement programs and policies without any consideration of and/or input from Indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, an additional rung at the very bottom of the ladder, that would represent exclusion or disengagement from participation, was not part of Arnstein's original conceptualization of the ladder of participation.

Co-production. The literature of community engagement and community-based participatory research highlights the participatory and collaborative nature and often refers to the concept of co-production. Within the citizen power level of Arnstein's (1969) ladder, co-production aligns with the partnerships rung in that it signals a redistribution of power based on shared planning and decision-making (p. 9). Similarly, Johnston (2010) highlights "[t]he active involvement by community members to jointly develop meanings and negotiate solutions to an issue through dialogic processes in interaction with organizational members differentiates community participation from consultation" (p. 220). Co-production that is community-based, meaning focused on the urban Indigenous population, can create space for urban Indigenous people to refocus their energies in order to explore and set their own agenda, discover solutions to their own questions, recognize their strengths and build on them. To incorporate cultural values and principles that better align with their worldview and can guide their work and develop relationships and partnerships that align with their specific needs and aspirations.

According to Chataway's (2004) research, the benefits of collective problem-solving and decision-making achieves greater buy-in and increased social cohesion (p. 69-70). This aligns with the emphasis on buy-in that was mentioned by at least two participants in the findings with the added insight that buy-in contributes to social cohesion. Similar to what one of the participations stated, scholars have noted that "[i]t is sufficiently well documented now that policy and programs co-produced with Aboriginal communities have better outcomes" (Walker et al., 2011, p. 164). The aim of co-production is compatible with the urban Indigenous community's desire for involvement in the development, design and implementation of that which directly affects their lives.

While the emphasis on co-production in the community engagement and CBPR literature is an improvement to the tokenism of participation described by Arnstein's work, I am conflicted in suggesting it as the way forward knowing that, ultimately Indigenous peoples seek more autonomy in decision-making based on self-determination. However, I also recognize that it is a tool that can be used to empower Indigenous people(s) on the road to self-determination.

Critique of Public Engagement. Public engagement tends to be more consultative in nature, while community-based approaches demand a high level of involvement and active participation of those affected based on a recognition of the community as an expert in their own right and community knowledge as a valid form of knowledge. In comparison, public engagement with urban Indigenous people more often than not falls within the tokenism category based on Arnstein's (1969) ladder. As it captures the sense of frustration Indigenous people have expressed of being excluded from having an impact on the policy and program decisions that directly affect them. What the focus on centering community, shared decision-making and co-production demonstrates is that current approaches to public engagement employed with urban

Indigenous populations do not go far enough. Furthermore, one of the challenges attributed to public engagement in the literature is governments' resistance to give up or share control over setting the agenda, decision-making and allocation of resources (Eversole, 2011; Head, 2007; Kelly & Caputo, 2011; King & Cruickshank, 2012). The government's position does not support the compromise of co-production or the pursuit of self-determination by Indigenous peoples.

The incompatibility of public engagement with the needs and aspirations of the urban Indigenous population made me curious about the idea of 'publics' and whether it applies to Indigenous people(s) in the same way it applies to other 'citizens'. In 2001, Alan Cairns revisited the concept of 'citizens plus' to explore the unique position of Indigenous people within Canada. While Cairns stance may be debatable, it at least highlights that there are unique aspects of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples that must be taken into account. Further, Walker (2008) states that "[s]elf-determination confers a different place in Canadian society for Aboriginal people…by virtue of prior occupancy, treaties and constitutional recognition" (p. 25). Hence, there is a unique historical, legal and constitutional relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, Canada's colonial history largely ignored the interests of Indigenous peoples and instead opted for assimilative policies aimed at doing away with this distinction or unique position. With the ultimate goal of making Indigenous peoples indistinguishable from other 'citizens' while also placing their way of life squarely in the past. Indigenous people(s) were not prepared to give up their link to their past or their Indigenous identities and cultures. However, colonization and the accompanying marginalization of Indigenous peoples' views left them in a minority position within their homelands where it has proven difficult to exert real influence over decisions that affect their lives.

Ethics of Engagement. Finally, there is an ethical piece to community-based approaches

that mirrors Indigenous experiences with extractive research. The research findings noted the impact of extractive research practices on Indigenous communities in which significant data has been gathered but provided little to no benefits back to them. Similarly, many scholars note that Indigenous peoples and communities have been over-researched (Castellano, 2004; Martin, 2003; Smith, 2012, Steinhauer, 2002) and have had unfavorable experience with unethical and extractive research practices (Gaudry, 2015; Jobin, 2015; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). As a result of past experience with conventional research there is a "need for marginalized communities to experience researchers as relationally accountable" which aligns with both CBPR (Strega & Brown, 2015, p. 3) and Indigenous research methods (Wilson, 2008). Conducting research with marginalized and oppressed groups/communities requires that well-meaning scholars take responsibility for their role in either contributing to the status quo or liberation for all. Similarly, Smith (2012) notes that "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (p. 5).

Despite all the ways that research has been harmful to Indigenous peoples, I have always believed that research and the re-claiming and creation of knowledge could be used to advance the specific interests of Indigenous peoples. Scholars within the IRM literature provide support for the idea that research can be a means to an end for Indigenous peoples to both inquire into and represent themselves. According to Hampton (1999), at its most basic level "…research is about learning and so is a way of finding things out" (p. 48). While, Castellano (2004) references a quote by an Elder who asserts that despite being researched to death, Indigenous people can use research for their own benefit (p. 98). I firmly believe that Indigenous peoples and communities hold the answers and have the ability to find solutions to the challenges they face. I

am in agreement with Smith (2012) that "[r]esearch can no longer be conducted with indigenous communities as if their views did not count or their lives did not matter" (p. 10). As an Indigenous researcher I want to ensure that the work I am involved with is collaborative, relevant and meaningful to the urban Indigenous community, and that it is both community-based and ethical.

One of the ways that extractive research practices were addressed in formal research is through the creation of specific policy statements that address data collection and ethical research relationships when doing research with specific Indigenous communities and Indigenous peoples as discussed in the methodology chapter. I believe there is comparison to be made between extractive research practices and government engagement processes that offer limited benefits to the 'subjects' involved; where information is gathered by external 'experts' and used to inform their own knowledge or practices and solutions created on the behalf of others. Unlike formal research, there is no requirement to consider the ethical implications of community engagement outside of academic research. Given the experiences of Indigenous peoples there is a need to incorporate relational accountability and safeguards through ethical standards when engaging with Indigenous people outside of the academy.

Engaging Amongst Ourselves

In addition to taking a community-based approach, there is also a case to be made for the urban Indigenous population to engage amongst ourselves and build unity and solidarity that is based on a recognition of the diversity of Indigenous identities and connections. As well, recognizing the pluralism of Indigenous cultures and experiences underscores the importance of building relationships amongst the urban Indigenous population and making efforts to recognize both our similarities and differences in order to find ways of working together. Finding unity and

solidarity that resist or counters divisions and hierarchies especially those that are based on external and colonial definitions of Indigenous identities or understandings based on binary logic. Creating a sense of community among the diverse urban Indigenous population that is built upon shared values and principles and making room for various customs and traditions to co-exist. As urban Indigenous people(s) we can find strength in both our diversity and solidarity through opportunities to engage amongst ourselves and build consensus around a way forward together.

Diversity

The diversity of the urban Indigenous population is well documented in the literature and the findings in this study also confirm that understanding. What was interesting about the results regarding both urban Indigenous identity and connection was the various ways that participants responded. There were at least 3 different ways that participants related to their Indigenous identity: Indigenous (or more specifically First Nation or Métis), urban Indigenous and those who resisted a singular label. It was not as simple as seeing yourself as urban or not, there was nuance to their responses that seemed to be linked to their own experiences as an Indigenous person and living in an urban center.

There is an emphasis in the literature regarding Indigenous peoples and a sense of connection to place or the land. Kovach (2009) writes, "[p]lace is what differentiates us from other tribal people, and what differentiates us from settler societies…Place gives us identity" (p. 61). The findings reflected a broader interpretation of how Indigenous people in an urban setting feel connected to the urban environment. In addition to a connection to place, participants also described their connection in terms of their family (kinship), personal history (time), or through their jobs and community service (space) or some combination of these. It is interesting that

participants had different understandings of what it meant to have a sense of connection in an urban setting. Perhaps for some of us who have experienced (dis)placement from our Indigenous community there is no 'place' to connect to or go back to. For others who do have a 'place' to connect to there is a strong pull to identify with their home communities, like reserves, settlements or historic communities. Possibly, these other connections—kinship, time and space—are extensions of a sense of 'place' or they provide a sense of belonging as a result of (dis)placement. There is certainly room for further inquiry into how Indigenous people in urban centers relate to the notion of place regarding both identity and sense connection or belonging but is outside the scope of this study.

Pluralism

The multiple realities or truths found within IRM's ontological perspective (ways of being) help to explain why pluralism is more congruent with an Indigenous worldview than binary logic. Pluralism creates space for multiple things to be true at the same time while also aligning with a holistic understanding of the world. There are numerous examples in the literature that are written by Indigenous scholars that demonstrate an openness to the co-existence of sameness and difference.

According to Alfred (2005), liberal ideology conflates unity with homogeneity based on the belief that sameness and plurality cannot co-exist (p. 112). Specifically, Alfred (2005) states

> simplistic liberal ideology that has as one of its core premises that unity requires homogeneity: we can all get along only if we are all made to be the same. Hence, the rejection of pluralistic notions of relationship. (p. 112)

Similarly, Little Bear (2000) notes that "[o]ne of the problems with colonialism is that it tries to maintain a singular social order by means of force and law, suppressing the diversity of human worldviews" (p. 78). Alfred (2005) goes on to point out the significance of the Two Row Wampum as an example of how our relationships can both recognize our connection and our

difference.

> The notion of a universal relation among autonomous elements of Creation is embedded throughout Indigenous cultures, for example, in the Tekani Teioha:te, known as the Two Row Wampum, or the widely used Four Directions Teaching. The idea of recognizing our universal connection and at the same time respecting our differences is the fundamental theme in those teaching. (p. 266)

Another example is the recognition of the co-existence of the individual within the collective that Ermine (2000) describes in the following quote.

> Yet within the Aboriginal community a paradox seemingly exists. In no other place did the individual have more integrity or receive more honour than in the Aboriginal community. The individual's ability as a unique entity in the group became what she or he is ultimately meant to be, was explicitly recognized. There was explicit recognition of the individual's right in the collective to experience his or her own life. No one could dictate the path that must be followed. There was the recognition that every individual had the capacity to make headway into knowledge through the inner world. (p. 108)

The co-existence of the individual within the collective can be further understood with Brant's (1990) explanation of the principle of non-interference.

> The ethic of non interference is a behavioural norm of North American Native tribes that promote positive interpersonal relations by discouraging coercion of any kind…A high degree of respect for every human being's independence leads…to view instructing, coercing or attempting to persuade another person as undesirable behaviour. Accordingly, group goals are arrived at by consensus and achieved by reliance on voluntary cooperation. (p. 535).

These examples make a link to underlying Indigenous values and principles to demonstrate why pluralism is more aligned with Indigenous ways of being. As well as, how the underlying paradigm influences our perspectives, how we see the world and what we believe is possible.

The use of binary logic or dichotomies can be employed to create hierarchy based on difference and emphasizing an either/or mentality. Kajner (2013) argues that binaries are reductive and based on structuralist (positivist) notions of truth. Furthermore, they contend that "[b]inary logic underpins neoliberal ideology, patriarchy, and colonialism; this insight is vital to resisting oppression, particularly at this point in history" (p. 17). Similarly, Hunt and Holmes

(2015) note that,

> Indigenous people, people of color and White settler allies working from decolonial and/or intersectional frameworks, have emphasized the importance of embracing a "both/and" conceptual and political stance for understanding contexts, spaces, identities, and multiple forms of interlocking oppressions and violence as a way of resisting the "either/or" dichotomous thinking of colonial Euro-Western paradigms. **(**p. 160)

Some common and underlying binary logic often attributed to Indigenous peoples in relation to Settler Canadians are superior/inferior, civilized/primitive, urban/reserve. This type of binary logic is directly related to the project of colonization of Indigenous peoples who were/are seen as inferior, primitive and in need of intervention by the more civilized, hence superior, Settler culture and society. As an example, residential schools

> contributed to ideas in Settler society that Indigenous peoples were weak, backward, and in need of civilizing…The result is that Canadians come to see their own systems as superior and therefore justified in displacing Indigenous ways of being on the land. (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 33)

In addition, it has also been a persistent attitude that Indigenous peoples and urban life are incompatible (Peters, 1996; Wilson & Peters, 2005).

> Authentic Aboriginal cultures were associated with the past, or with places distant from the metropolitan centres of society...Migration of First Nation people to cities during the mid-20th century challenged governments to revisit the dichotomous construction of reserve and urban places. (Wilson & Peters, 2005, p. 398-399)

Binary logic creates a scenario where in order for one thing to be true the other needs to be false and vice versa. However, one expression of Indigenous identity does not have to be false for a different expression of Indigenous identity to be true. The challenge with binary logic is that it does not allow for the full expression of human experience that more likely exists on a continuum rather than being represented by polar opposites. An either/or perspective does not allow for a binary to exist except in opposition. From a both/and perspective it is possible that both can exist at the same time, along with every variation in-between, that makes room for pluralism.

Cultural Revitalization and Essentialism

As we re-center Indigenous knowledge and cultures there is a need to be aware of a tension between cultural revitalization and cultural essentialism. Culture is not static, it evolves over time and outward expressions are modified and adapted but the underlying values and principles can remain. In light of this tension, in an urban Indigenous context I am suggesting putting the emphasis on common values and principles rather than specific cultural practices.

While I am not opposed to cultural revitalization, I am uncomfortable with the push towards a dominant set of cultural practices for everyone. The underlying message is that if you do not behave in a certain way then you are judged as not Indigenous enough.

> At the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. (Smith, 2012, p. 77)

On some level I know that this is less about my own Indigenous identity and more about how Indigenous identities have been externally defined and the resulting identity politics.

> In the mid-nineteenth century, the line between being "Indian" and Métis was fluid, with everyone intermarrying and working alongside one another in fur trade occupations. What legal identity people were granted by the Canadian state was finally determined by the signing, or not, of Treaty Six. (Mohammed et al., 2018, p 288)

Our differences do not have to be couched in values judgements about our current realities. The challenge in my mind is that colonization happened, its impacts are real and have resulted in the loss of culture, language and connections to community for many Indigenous people. As an example, the Métis side of my family was Roman Catholic, left their community for economic reasons and their language was not taught to my generation. Although, that does not mean that I didn't learn the values, principles and worldview, it only means I did not learn them in the same way. However,

> [t]raditions are only one aspect of the ever-changing dynamic within a culture. So to focus on traditional dress, food, music, ceremonies, and artifacts freezes a culture in time

> and perpetuates stereotypes. Artifacts are static. People and their values, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts are dynamic, and these define the culture. (Curwen Doige, 2003, p. 149)

For me it has become less about the outward expressions of culture, traditions and customs and more about relating to the underlying values and principles. Perhaps this is a function of growing up urban and being disconnected from my language and culture, however, at the same time this is a reflection of my current lived reality. Exposure to the writings of Indigenous scholars has helped me to bring those connections to light, not as a matter of re-learning but in remembering who I am and where I come from.

There is not a singular way to express indigeneity, there are multiple ways. The divisions and hierarchies of identity politics is a consequence of colonialism and has interfered with how we define ourselves and relate to each other. Finding common ground in shared values and principles offers space to relate, connect, share and that is inclusive. On a practical level community-based approaches (CBA) are a way forward in the short term, in the longer term there is room for engaging amongst ourselves to determine the basis for unity and solidarity within an urban Indigenous context. Deciding how we want to relate to each other in an urban context is an act of self-determination. Focusing on building unity based on our commonalities while also making room for recognizing our difference. Through our efforts to engage amongst ourselves we are better prepared to represent the diverse interests of the urban Indigenous population and engage with other societal interests.

Overall, the discussion highlighted two key implications which include engagement both with and within the urban Indigenous population. The discussion points out that while public engagement is focused on the engagement between government and urban Indigenous populations there is also an equally valid need for the diverse urban Indigenous population to engage amongst ourselves.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

With the research findings and their implications in mind, the conclusion focuses on recommending wise practices to working with the urban Indigenous population that are organized around the five themes: ensuring representation; utilizing a relational approach; providing for meaningful involvement; being action-orientated; and, promoting self-determination. Where, ensuring representation speaks to the diversity of the urban Indigenous population and recognizes multiple identities and communities. Utilizing a relational approach reflects a focus on relationships that aligns with an Indigenous worldview and the importance of understanding interconnectedness. It is important to provide for meaningful involvement at the outset based on co-production rather than later in the process after key decisions and direction have already been determined. With an aim to be action-orientated that can lead to change by building on previous work, taking a strength-based approach and recognizing the expertise among urban Indigenous people. Ultimately, it should promote self-determination with a focus on being Indigenous-led with allies in a supportive role. Wise practices are informed by Indigenous perspectives, experience and knowledge and take into account the local cultural and community context (Calliou & Wesley-Esquimaux, 2015). The wise practices put forward here are intended to provide guidance and highlight various considerations to engagement both with and within the urban Indigenous population.

Wise Practices

In order to capture the diverse perspectives of the multiple identities and communities found in the urban Indigenous populations ensure representation by taking a broad and balanced approach and be as inclusive as possible. Make an effort to reach out to and include various segments that reflect urban Indigenous demographics such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Elders,

seniors, men, women, youth, organizations, businesses, governance bodies, etc. In addition, use culturally relevant approaches that are specific to those who are being engaged, as they are best positioned to provide guidance on what is culturally appropriate. Representation is important because no one person or organization can represent the interests or concerns of all urban Indigenous people and communities.

Utilize a relational approach that is focused on being in relationship with the various groups, organizations and communities within the urban Indigenous population. Build relationships through ongoing dialogue and outreach where people get to know each other and work towards increasing understanding. Remember that dialogue involves two-way communication. Where trust and respect are earned through one's actions including whether their actions align with what they have said. A relational approach also promotes collaborative efforts that are relationship driven and not transactional. In addition, given the diversity of Indigenous people in an urban context we may also want or need time and space to build relationships and consensus amongst ourselves.

Provide for meaningful involvement as Indigenous people(s) want to be actively involved in defining, developing and addressing our own priorities, interests and concerns. This means that early and upstream involvement is essential, do not wait until you have fully developed a policy or strategy before starting a dialogue. Be upfront and clear about the purpose and intent of engagement in which the outcomes and gains are mutually beneficial in real terms. Consider asking those who are the focus of engagement what would be most relevant and useful to us. In addition, use multiple methods and access points to provide a range of opportunities to participate. As well, be open to alternatives and 'unconventional' options. At a bare minimum meaningful involvement involves co-production, however, Indigenous people(s) also seek to

determine for ourselves how to address our priorities, interests and concerns.

Indigenous people(s) are looking for action, progress and change related to the interests and concerns we have voiced over many years. So, be aware of existing data from previous urban Indigenous engagements and research. Validation processes can be used to acknowledge existing data and confirm if it is still relevant. To ensure the most effective use of available resources, build on previous work rather than repeating it. This may also require moving beyond problem identification and needs assessment and reframing from a focus on deficits to strengths. Both expertise and solutions can be found amongst the diverse urban Indigenous population. Trust that as Indigenous people(s) we know what our needs and priorities are and that we are more than capable to address our own interests and concerns.

Promote self-determination and stop imposing ‘solutions’ upon Indigenous people(s). Focus on Indigenous-led approaches that center on Indigenous ways of knowing and being that better meet our needs and aspirations. However, this will require adequate resources to expand capacity and take action. Non-Indigenous people can support urban Indigenous people(s) through allyship. As an ally, consider how you can influence, disrupt and dismantle dominant systems especially if you are working within them. Be careful not to recreate structures and processes that are colonial and be open to alternative ways of doing things. Demonstrate allyship and support for Indigenous solidarity by walking beside us, not in front or behind us (Silver et al., 2006).

The wise practices outlined here are not intended to be a checklist but are important considerations and will need to be tailored to the specific community and context. This requires an understanding of the communities one is working with, and not understanding the diversity can contribute to creating or compounding divisions among Indigenous people(s). The wise practices listed here are also not exhaustive but reflect what came out of the research findings,

literature and knowledge from personal experience. Community-based work is time intensive and requires the investment of a range of resources such as time, human resources, social capital and financial support. Without the knowledge or skills to undertake the considerations shared in these wise practices, it is advisable to find someone who does. As Indigenous people we are best positioned to do and guide this work. While co-production is good, self-determination is better, any other approach is insufficient when working with the urban Indigenous population.

Contributions and Future Research

This research points to the need for engagement scholars and practitioners to understand how self-determination informs engagement with urban Indigenous populations, both in terms of using community-based approaches during external engagement processes and supporting urban Indigenous populations to engage amongst ourselves. Engagement amongst ourselves relies on understanding the importance of the diversity of the urban Indigenous population, allowing them to maintain pluralism and promote solidarity at the same time, rather than taking a homogenizing approach to urban Indigenous issues.

Potential future research might focus on the relationships between the various segments of the urban Indigenous population and how those relationships have developed or changed over time. Exploring the life cycle of the *Wicihitowin: Circle of Shared Responsibility*, whose purpose was to provide space for the urban Indigenous population in Edmonton to engage amongst ourselves, may provide insight into the complexity of the coexistence of pluralism and unity. Future research regarding Wicihitowin may also explore lessons learned about creating mechanisms for internal engagement among the urban Indigenous populations and how those mechanisms then engage externally around funding, policy development and interacting with various levels of government.

Epilogue

As I come to the end of this process, I cannot help but feel unsettled, what started out as a practical exercise into the relationship between community engagement and the urban Indigenous population and how it could better serve them led to the understanding that it does not and likely cannot fully serve their interests. An understanding of urban Indigenous engagement does not fit neatly because it exists within a system that is created on different values and principles that do not align, that serve a different purpose than Indigenous people seek.

While I am inspired by the message of 'turning away' that comes from an Indigenous resurgence perspective, there are aspects of 'turning away' that I am less certain about and seem more difficult to integrate in an urban Indigenous context. Or more likely, that I haven't had the time to fully consider what 'turning away' looks like in an urban Indigenous context especially when there is not a clear alternative to 'turn' towards. Maybe the challenge is more about how to bring together understandings of Indigenous cultures and worldviews with contemporary experiences and realities in an urban Indigenous context that is often marked by (dis)placement.

On many occasions during the process of developing and writing my thesis I have struggled to figure out how to make things fit neatly together only to realize that the process is much messier and not everything fits. From my own perspective, I did not fit neatly into graduate school, the scope of my inquiry did not fit neatly into a master's level program, my interest in community did not fit neatly into an academic program, and recognizing the need to create understanding through contextualization does not fit neatly into the structure of a thesis. To write as though my whole experience was not an uncomfortable and agonizing process of trying to make things fit within a process and structure that did not always make sense to me. Left feeling

that what I really hoped to achieve and convey seems to have gotten lost in the mechanics of academic writing.

At the end of a very long and drawn-out process I have uncovered a thread that does not seem to fit neatly into the prescribed process or structure and I have run out of time to fully explore what it might mean or how it might fit. Part of me wonders if I asked the wrong question or took the wrong path except it seems there was no way to know without having gone through the process. So, in the end, I feel more unsettled than when I began, not about what I do know but about what I do not know, yet.

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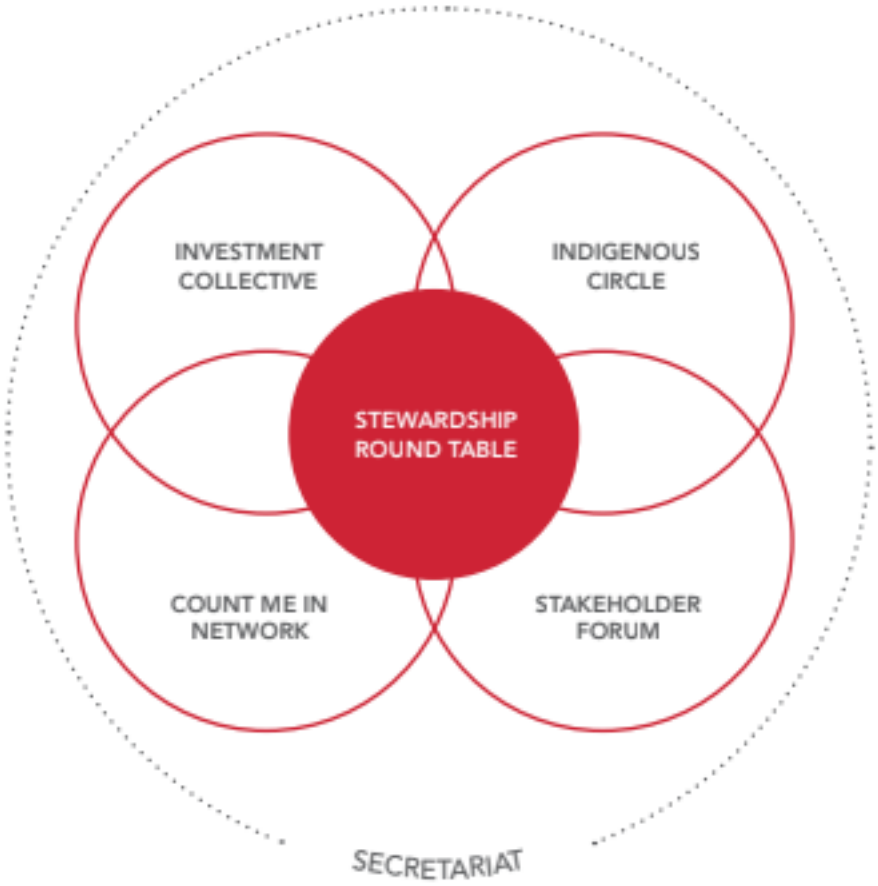
Appendices

Appendix A: EPE Structure including community tables (EPE, 2018, p. 47)



Appendix B: Interview Guide

This interview will be semi-structured to allow considerable freedom to the participants to shape the content and direction of the conversation. The themes and questions provided may be adapted to the conversation and context involved in the interview. Not all questions will be asked. The interview should last approximately one hour.

Pre-Interview Checklist:

- Introduction to the researcher.
- Brief introduction to the project (review information sheet).
- Walk through the consent form.
- If permission is given, begin recording.

Part One: Introduction

Participants will be asked to introduce themselves and the following questions will explore urban indigeneity through a discussion of identity and community attachment within Edmonton.

- Where are you from and what is your background?
- Do you believe an urban Indigenous community exists in Edmonton? If so, how would you define it and what are its characteristics? If no, why is that?
- Do you have a connection to the urban Indigenous community in Edmonton?
- How does your understanding of the urban Indigenous community relate, or not, to your identity as an Indigenous person?

Part Two: EndPovertyEdmonton

Participants will be asked to reflect on their awareness and experience with EndPovertyEdmonton. A map will be used to facilitate this conversation and to address the complexity of the overall strategy.

- Are you aware of the work of EPE or the IC?
- Have you been involved in any of the 35 EPE road map actions?
- Based on the map of the 35 road map actions:
    - What is your initial reaction?
    - Do you think it represents Indigenous involvement in EPE?
        - Who or what is missing?
- What do you think is working or not working for urban Indigenous people?

Part Three: Engagement

Participants will be asked about their perspectives and experiences regarding local engagement processes, including EPE. As well as, what is unique or essential to successfully engaging the urban indigenous community.

- Can you tell me about a time when you participated in engagement processes in Edmonton?
- Can you tell me about your participation in any EPE engagement processes?
- Why do you participate in engagement processes?
- How do you feel about these experiences and the outcome of the engagement?
    - If successful, what led to its success? If not, what could have been done differently?

Part Four: Decolonization

To conclude, a final series of questions will explore how decolonized approaches might be used in the engagement practices of EPE with the urban Indigenous community.

- Does the work of EPE support self-determination of Indigenous people living in Edmonton? If so, how?
- Do EPE's current engagement practices allow for different perspectives, worldviews or cultural understandings?
- How has engagement or the work of EPE prioritized Indigenous perspectives?