“A Mind Spread Out on the Ground:” Urban Indigenous Experiences of Grief and Bereavement.

by

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ABSTRACT

Of the 1.8 million Indigenous Peoples residing on the lands known as Canada, nearly half live in urban areas. Urban spaces themselves are built on traditional Indigenous territory. In some cases, Indigenous Peoples are born and raised in cities that exist on their territories, in other cases, Indigenous Peoples may have migrated to cities or were born there, away from their own ancestral lands. Being an urban Indigenous Person often means that our ties to cultural connection have been disrupted to some degree (Barker 2019). Studies have shown that Indigenous People are overrepresented in several key mortality related measures, such as violent death and premature death. Given this information, this study examines urban Indigenous experiences of colonization, culture, and grief to determine what impacts colonization and culture have had on meaningful and culturally relevant healing experiences. The study collaboratively works with 15 self-identified urban Indigenous Peoples from age 21-84, located in or near *amiskwaciwâskahikan* (Edmonton). It uses qualitative and Indigenous methodologies to answer the following primary questions: how do urban Indigenous Peoples experience grief and what support systems exist for them, if any? Sub-questions that we addressed were: do people have access to culturally relevant grief support? If yes, what does that look like and if no, how can we enable it? Findings indicate that urban Indigenous experiences of grief are influenced in complex ways by colonization, unresolved trauma, and culture. Within the psychological and sociological literature on grief, the study shows how urban Indigenous experiences of grief can be understood as 'disenfranchised,' using Kenneth Doka's concept of disenfranchised grief.

Preface:

This thesis is an original work by Audrey Medwayosh. It adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Research Ethics Board, University of Alberta. It received ethics approval on June 28th, 2023, Pro00131558. The research in this thesis was supported by a Canadian Graduate Scholarship – Master's from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Dedication:

For Barry, who taught me to believe in myself. For all my ancestors who sacrificed so much for me to be here. For my beautiful little support animal, who kept me company during this degree and then passed while I was finishing up my thesis. Your unconditional love got me through some of the most challenging times in this work. For the future generations. For *Indinawemaaganidog*.

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Prologue: The Seven Grandfather Teachings:

Each chapter of this thesis has been named after one of the Seven Grandfather teachings from Anishinaabe epistemology. The Seven Grandfather teachings are a set of teachings that have been passed down through generations of Anishinaabeg, since time immemorial. They are meant to serve as a set of guiding principles for how we Anishinaabeg should act in this world. The teachings are used to remind us that we all carry these responsibilities, that these principles are interconnected with one another and cannot be used in isolation, and that we as humans are not separate or above anything else that has a living spirit (Verbos and Humphries, 2014). These responsibilities extend beyond humans and animals to consider all our relations, rocks, trees, fires and bodies of water, among many other things. When we keep these principles in mind, we act in a good way with our fellow humans, all spirited beings, and with future generations in mind. The teachings have been passed down for generations upon generations, and have undoubtedly undergone some minor changes since they were first gifted to us by the Grandfathers, or Grandmothers, as some people put it (Simpson, 2017). Currently, they are most taught like this:

1. Love - you are meant to love and be loved unconditionally. Love yourself and love those around you equally. Love the work that you do and what you build with your hands and your mind. This will impact those who you connect with.
2. Respect - this causes one to act relationally, with the understanding that your words, actions and intentions will impact others in this world, and in future generations. Act with respect towards all things, animal and non-animal.

3. Humility - as human creatures, we must remember that we are no better or worse than all living things we exist alongside. This reminds us to be humble in our actions, and in the pursuit of knowledge.
4. Bravery - this teaching reminds us to stand up for what is right, even in difficult times or when we know the outcome will be unpleasant. It reminds us to have a courageous heart, even in the face of adversity.
5. Truth - be truthful with yourself first and then be truthful with others. If you act and think in truth, you will treat others in a good way. Truth can be thought of as having a ripple effect. Those touched by your truth will experience truthfulness and act accordingly with themselves and others.
6. Wisdom - wisdom is something that we are continuously accumulating as we move through life. We must remember to see wisdom with humility, and acknowledge that it can come in many different forms, regardless of age, race, or social standing.
7. Honesty - honesty is to be living in a good way, always. It requires that you act and think with integrity (Munroe and Hernandez, 2022; Nottawaseppi, n.d.; Seven Generations Education Institute, 2021).

Because the Grandfather Teachings are seen as interconnected and mutually constitutive, they are not always shared in a particular order.

In this thesis the Seven Grandfather Teachings are found in the following order: honesty, truth, respect, wisdom, bravery, humility, and love. Each chapter heading will use the Anishinaabe word for the corresponding teaching with the English translation in brackets. As mentioned above, these teachings can be used as a guide for how one should live their life. Here, they informed the approach I took when writing each chapter. The reader can use these teachings

as a guiding framework for engaging with the work within each chapter. There is a deeper explanation of each teaching at the beginning of each chapter and how the teaching has guided the work in that chapter.

Chapter 1: *Gwekwaadziwin* (Honesty)

The first Grandfather teaching is honesty. Honesty is self-reflexive but also outwards to all beings in creation. It is represented by the Raven. I approach this body of work with honesty. I begin with a positionality statement, acknowledging where I come from and the unique gifts that I bring to this research. Following this, I turn to the honesty found in presenting the colonial foundations that shape Indigenous lives and experiences in the land now known as Canada.

Positionality Statement:

My name is Audrey Medwayosh and I am a Potawatomi individual, with no preference to any particular gendered pronoun. I am the child of Alvin Medwayosh, a 60s Scoop Survivor. We are members of the Wasauksing Nation in Parry Sound, Ontario, and we come from a long line of Medwayoshes, spanning several generations. Medwayosh comes from the Anishinaabe language, and it means the sound the waves make when hitting the shore, and it can also mean the sound of the winds blowing in the pines depending on dialect. My grandparents were institutionalized at the Spanish Residential School, a Jesuit school in Spanish, Ontario. My father and his five siblings were taken as babies and small children, and sent to live in white foster homes. Here they faced unspeakable horrors. Their trauma, and the traumas of their relations, have woven roots through generations. It has also impacted my own life. I am an urban Indigenous Person, like the people in this study. I grew up away from my land and language, engaging in pan-Indian practices at cultural centers in cities across so-called Canada. I have also seen first-hand how instrumental cultural connection has been to my process of healing, an important concept that has come forth from the research in this thesis. I would like to stress that despite intergenerational traumas being a heavy theme in my life, I was fortunate to grow up with many

of the intergenerational joys of being a Medwayosh, and Potawatomi, and this thesis will be informed by both the impacts of colonization on Indigenous Peoples, and the beauty and joys of being Indigenous and the healing influences that culture has for many of us.

Introduction:

This thesis explores two main research questions, and three sub-questions. The first questions are: 1) How do urban Indigenous Peoples experience grief? 2) What support systems exist for them, if any? The sub-questions involve the potential responses to the main questions: a) What are the traditional and contemporary cultural practices of grief among urban Indigenous Peoples living in Treaty 6 territory? b) Do community and health services facilitate culturally relevant grieving process for urban Indigenous Peoples? and c) If so, how? And if not, are there ways to enable them to do so?

My study employed Indigenous methodologies, building on Cora Weber-Pillwax and Shawn Wilson's work on Indigenous relationality, and is framed by Wilson's Indigenous research paradigm. The Indigenous research paradigm has four interconnected points: ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. At the heart of each of these points is the concept of relationality, showing how relationality is embedded in many Indigenous ways of being, doing, and thinking. Relationality means we behave with the understanding that our actions and words impact each other, past generations, and future generations. This reminds us to act in a good way, just as the Seven Grandfather Teachings do. If I, as an Anishinaabe researcher, act in accordance with these Anishinaabe teachings, I will act relationally in my research process.

Fifteen self-identifying Indigenous collaborators[1] between the ages of 21 and 84 were invited to discuss what grief looks like to them, and how their experiences of separation from land and culture have impacted their grieving experiences. They were invited via social media recruitment poster and snowball sampling. I had two to three meetings with each collaborator. The first meeting was a rapport building session, where we discussed our life experiences and aims for this study. Here, I shared the conversation guide for the second, recorded, session and we workshopped it to ensure that we would capture their experiences accurately and meaningfully. The second conversation was a one-on-one story sharing circle, where we mutually examined their experiences of grief, using the conversation guide that they had approved. The third and final conversation was an elective check-in to inquire if people were needing further emotional support after discussing grief, or if they had any questions about the research process. Three people declined this meeting.

The objectives of this thesis are to use these conversations to advance Indigenous understandings of grief as shared and experienced by the research collaborators, bring to light existing culturally relevant practices for coping with grief, and help non-Indigenous people understand how these practices can be brought into the urban setting by interested parties.

Interested parties may be hospices, counselors, Indigenous non-profit organizations like Bent Arrow here in Edmonton, Indigenous Friendship Centers, health service providers, and members of the urban Indigenous community. To my knowledge, this study is the first sociological study to investigate urban Indigenous Peoples' experiences of grief and bereavement. What follows is a brief account of the ways that many Indigenous Peoples have

[1] In keeping with the Indigenous framework and methodologies used in this research, and with participatory action research, 'research collaborators' is used instead of research participants. This will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3, the methodologies section.

experienced the adverse effects of colonization. It is important to contextualize the intergenerational trauma that I will be referring to over the course of this thesis, because it is the social and historical context that shapes the experience of grief as well as grief-related practices among my research collaborators. Further, it is important to me as an Indigenous scholar, to consistently speak of the impacts of colonization in a meaningful and in-depth way, particularly for readers who are non-Indigenous, to avoid historical erasure and promote accountability for settlers living on stolen land. Situating this work historically supports the first Grandfather teaching, *gwekwaadziwin* (honesty).

This thesis weaves Eve Tuck's concept of desire-centered research throughout, attempting to address the inequities that are perpetuated by doing damage-centered research. According to Tuck, damage-centered research portrays Indigenous Peoples and their geographies as deficient, pathologically reducing our communities to "historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy" (Tuck 2009, p. 413). Instead, Tuck offers desire-centered research as an alternative, which depathologizes Indigenous communities by intentionally showing the "complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (Tuck 2009, p. 416). While I will be discussing the impacts of colonialism on the lives of Indigenous Peoples because processes of colonization have undeniably played a significant role for Indigenous Peoples, my work avoids reducing us to one-dimensional tropes of colonial-induced deficit. My work showcases the complex nature of Indigenous Peoples' life choices, experiences of grief, and the elaborate way culture has played positive roles in their lives. This is particularly evident in the Indigenous grief art show that I facilitated in conjunction with this thesis work, which I will discuss in Chapter 3: Methodologies. First, I will provide a background on how colonization has impacted Indigenous

lives because a thorough understanding of the way that colonial actions have adversely impacted us remains important.

Background:

Indigenous Peoples whose territories are occupied by Canada experience higher rates of premature and violent death than non-Indigenous people and their average life expectancy is 15 years shorter than that of non-Indigenous Canadians (Reidpath and Allotley 2003; Roy and Marcellus 2019; Tjepkema, Bushnik and Bougie 2019; Urquijo and Milan 2011). We often experience higher rates of poor health and wellbeing when compared to the non-Indigenous population, and we are overrepresented in the statistics on homicide, suicide, and incarceration (Adelson, 2005; Health Canada, 2015). These inequities exist because of both historical and ongoing violent genocidal assimilation tactics on behalf of the Canadian state (Anderson, 2018; Auger, Howell, and Gomes 2016).

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the Canadian government criminalized some Indigenous cultural practices. If we went to a Sweat Lodge or held a Potlach, we faced steep fines or imprisonment, up until 1951 when the laws were changed. Genocide was built into the mandatory Residential School system, beginning in 1884. These institutions were places where Indigenous children were taken from their families—sometimes at a very young age and subjected to violent practices, such as beatings, sexual assault, and experimentation, which sometimes resulted in death. This system persisted for more than 150 years; the last Residential Schools, which were located in Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories, did not close until 1996. Yet colonial policies in Canada are ongoing, under different names and forms.

In the 1950s, Canada shifted its Indigenous child removal priorities and started to place Indigenous children into white foster homes, where they faced countless abuses at the hands of their guardians. This point in time is known as the Sixties Scoop, which I, and many others, believe to be a misnomer (Vowel, 2012). Situating this process as a moment in time historicizes it, which diminishes the fact that this process continues today (Vowel, 2012). Indigenous children are still taken from their families at birth and placed into white foster homes at a disproportionate rate to non-Indigenous children (Sinclair, 2016). Other assimilation procedures include birth alerts, where hospital staff will alert social workers when an Indigenous mother gives birth. Birth alerts are allegedly in the interest of the baby's safety; however, they are a discriminatory practice which results in Indigenous women being racially profiled and Indigenous children being overrepresented in the child welfare system (Sistovaris, Sansone, Fallon and Miller, 2022). Birth alerts were made illegal in most provinces starting in 2020, however, Quebec remains a practicing province. Regardless of the new legal status of birth alerts, their legacy continues to have a lasting impact on Indigenous families.

As a result of Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, the ongoing practice of birth alerts, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system, many Indigenous Peoples are living far from their traditional lands and have been adversely impacted by intergenerational traumas. The title of my thesis is the name of a collection of essays by Haudenosaunee author Alicia Elliott, and refers to the fact that many Indigenous languages did not have a word for depression, prior to colonization. For Elliot in her Mohawk language, *Wake'nikonhra'kwenhtara:'on* is the closest, which roughly translates to "a mind spread out on the ground." According to Elliott, this concept is also an appropriate metaphor for the ongoing effects of colonization in Canada.

Genocide in Canada is ongoing; it is not of the past. We have been taken, fractured, and scattered around the country. Many people grow up outside of their cultures, which means they can sometimes miss out on the positive aspects of being Indigenous, like love, community, and spirituality while simultaneously experiencing the intergenerational hardships. Indigenous Peoples can and do continue to experience barriers to accessing cultures. This is important, because we know that culture is healing (Anderson, 2018; Auger, Howell, and Gomes, 2016; Gone, 2011).

More than half of the Indigenous population lives in Canadian cities, which often means living away from our communities, traditional support systems, and home territories that are particularly impactful during times of loss and mourning. Reserves themselves are a colonial institution[2]. We would not normally have been forced onto such small areas of land removed from our traditional hunting grounds, and lacking potable water, healthcare, and other essential services. These factors can prevent Indigenous Peoples from living in their communities with their extended families. Indigenous Peoples may choose to live in urban settings for many reasons. Reasons include a closer proximity to employment, education, and healthcare. Some move simply because they choose to, supporting their own Indigenous sovereignty and agency. Whatever the reasons may be for living in urban settings, the urban Indigenous population in Canada is large and rapidly growing. Edmonton has the largest concentration of Indigenous Peoples in the province of Alberta, with 83,750 Indigenous Peoples, 32.4% of the province's total Indigenous population (McMillan 2018). In addition to being overrepresented in mortality

[2] Stating reserves are a colonial institution could be contentious. I have left this statement in because the concept of reserve land was created and enforced by colonizers. In the instances where reserves do exist in some portions of traditional territories of the nation who reside there, the idea is that reserves as a sort of institution are ones that often cause harm to Indigenous Peoples. This is what is meant when stating that reserves are a colonial institution.

in Canada, existing research indicates that there are very few culturally appropriate resources available for friends and family members of those who experience loss in urban settings. (Anderson, 2018; Hotson, Macdonald and Martin, 2004).

I would like to make a note on urban Indigenous identity before proceeding. The government defines urban Indigenous Peoples as "First Nation, Inuit, and Metis individuals currently residing in urban areas" (Statistics Canada, 2016, Urban Indigenous Peoples Infographic). This census definition helps produce data, which is then used to inform policy on Indigenous Peoples, which is paternalistic and colonial. It also implies that cities and urban spaces are not traditional Indigenous territories. In contrast, when I use the term 'urban Indigenous Peoples' to describe an identity in this thesis, I do so with Stuart Hall in mind. Stuart Hall states that: "cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people,' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (Hall 1993, p. 223). Urban Indigenous identity, in this sense, allows us to refer to a collectively understood identity, which conveys information about historical and contemporary space and place that is often tied up in colonial experience. Similarly, Chris Andersen argues that identity understood from an Indigenous perspective "offers a sense of community and a point of solidarity, while offering the dignity of historical grounding" (Peters, E.J. and Chris Andersen 2013, p. 49). In short, urban Indigenous identity, within this thesis, refers to a historically grounded, Indigenous identity that conveys the complexities of urban spaces.

Unresolved intergenerational trauma, due to the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism and Residential Schools, is an important factor shaping Indigenous experiences of grief today (Barker 2019). It is vital that we consider the underlying factors of intergenerational

trauma listed above. Indigenous grief and mourning are multifarious, complex, and multilayered. It is not merely a matter of understanding that people have lost their loved ones, but that these losses are compounded by losses over the course of several hundred years, including life, family, traditions and land. These losses and resultant grief can be described as both 'ambiguous loss' and 'disenfranchised grief'. Ambiguous loss, which may or may not be related to loss of life, is loss that remains unresolved (Boss, 1999). Compounding, intergenerational loss can be classified as ambiguous loss. Disenfranchised grief, according to scholar Kenneth Doka, is grief that "is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported" (Doka, 199, p.37). He goes on to say that this grief "can be much more difficult to mourn and reactions are often complicated" (Doka, 1999, p.37). Within a colonial nation state that has only recently begun to acknowledge the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples, the complexity of Indigenous grief is often overlooked or misunderstood by the public. Our grief has, in Doka's meaning of the term, become disenfranchised.

In a move to address this intergenerational trauma and impacts of colonialism, this thesis will also consider the positive impacts that Indigenous cultures can have on healing with grief, while providing safe Indigenous spaces to discuss this often-taboo subject, which aligns with Tuck's call for desire-based research that shows the complexities of Indigenous Peoples.

Outline of Chapters:

Chapter 2: *Debwewin* (Truth) is a literature review that examines three areas: the sociology of grief, Indigenous approaches to end-of-life care, and the impact of culture on healing. Following this, Chapter 3: *Mnaadendimowin* (Respect) discusses my research questions, objectives, methodologies, and Indigenous frameworks that guided this research. Chapter 4: *Nbwaakaawin*

(Wisdom) is a presentation of the findings from the 15 one-on-one conversations that I undertook, and the emerging four main themes from these conversations. Chapter 5: *Aakwa'ode'ewin* (Bravery) discusses these themes and shows how the research findings resist the pathologization of grief, situating grief as a social process. It then engages with existing sociological theory on disenfranchised grief and trauma. Chapter 6: *Dbaadendiziwin* (Humility) discusses the limitations of this study, and suggests two new potential areas of further research and one recommendation. Chapter 7: *Zaagidwin* (Love) is the conclusion. As everything in Anishinaabe ways of being begin and end in love, this chapter is meant to be a hopeful overview of the contents of the thesis, and a reminder that conclusion sections are never the end.

Chapter 2: *Debwewin* (Truth)

This Grandfather teaching is represented by the Turtle. We are meant to be as slow and conscientious as the turtle when making our way through life. There is sincerity in truth. This sincerity, conscientiousness, and meticulous way of being is enacted in the literature review below. I truthfully honour this thesis research, and the conceptual foundations that it is building on. This literature review will give proper acknowledgement to the scholars who have contributed to the sociological study of death and grief, Indigenous grief and end-of-life care, the impacts of culture on healing.

Literature Review:

Death and grief scholarship:

Grief is commonly seen as the emotion that follows from death or loss. Loss may include losses unrelated to death. For example, people may grieve during major life transitions, such as moving homes or changing professions. Grief has long been studied by disciplines such as psychology and psychiatry, but are now emerging in sociology. Grief is a process that has often been pathologized, regarded as something to be cured from. To better situate Indigenous grief, I provide a literature review of the sociology of grief with a focus on Indigenous experiences. I begin by exploring the concept of disenfranchised grief before discussing a complimentary form of grief called suffocated grief. I end by briefly looking at how grief is pathologized in the psychology, with a paper that rejects this pathologization by bridging societal approaches to grief and cultural practices. The goal in using disenfranchised grief and suffocated grief to explain Indigenous experiences of grief is to highlight its complexities and how it often exists outside of standard conceptions of grief.

The notion of 'disenfranchised grief,' first coined by Doka in the 1980s, is quite relevant to the Indigenous experience of grief. Thompson and Doka (2017) define disenfranchised grief as: "grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned or publicly mourned" (Thompson and Doka 2017, p. 177). While this term has been used in education and psychology, the authors argue that, at its root, disenfranchised grief is a social process and should be understood accordingly. Grief becomes disenfranchised when: the loss of relationship is not recognized or acknowledged by others; the griever is excluded from grieving because others think they do not have the right to grieve; the circumstances around the death make it ungrievable or too difficult to allow for open grief; someone is not grieving in the 'right' or socially accepted way (Thompson and Doka, 2017). The authors stress that the above classification is "not intended to be fixed or rigid" but are "useful conceptual tools that can be used and developed to help us increase our understanding of some of the complex issues involved in death, grief, and bereavement" (Thompson and Doka, 2017, p. 181).

While much of the above was already developed by Doka in the 1980s, the newer text, co-authored with Thompson in 2017, adds the notion of 'disenfranchised trauma'. "This type of trauma, involving a cumulative effect of ongoing distressing and challenging events over a period of time, is generally not recognized, with the 'devastating event' type of trauma taking the lion's share of attention" (Thompson and Doka, 2017, p. 183). This is important for a sociological understanding of disenfranchised grief for Indigenous Peoples. Disenfranchised trauma makes room in the existing literature for Indigenous Peoples and the intergenerational trauma that many of us experience. Intergenerational trauma is becoming more widely

understood and accepted in the literature on Indigenous health and well-being (Bombay, Matheson and Anisman, 2009) and it is important to incorporate it into existing theories on grief.

Tashel C. Bordere has introduced the concept of 'suffocated grief' as something that follows from, and is complementary to, disenfranchised grief. Bordere (2019) argues that there has been a long history of dehumanizing racialized people in Western society and that racialized bodies exist within the margins of contemporary society as a result (Bordere, 2019). Existing within the margins "is to have your experiences with loss, your identity, your worth and values, your achievements, your grief, your trauma, your intentions and behaviours regularly interrogated and delegitimized" (Bordere 2019, p. 190). Based on my experience, this experience is familiar to Indigenous communities. Historically, Indigenous Peoples and our experiences of intergenerational grief, and grief that is not related to death, are regularly, yet inaccurately, 'interrogated' and 'delegitimized,' separated from its root causes of colonialism, by wider society. Grieving in this milieu can deepen the sense of grief and loss for Indigenous People. When grief is historically disconnected and perceived as illegitimate, it results in suffocated grief. Suffocated grief occurs when "discriminatory penalties [are] disproportionally imposed on marginalized individuals and families" (Bordere 2019, p. 189) by power holders who overlook the wider historical and racialized circumstances around grief. Power holders may be police, government, or, in the instance of urban Indigenous grief, I would argue professionals such as grief counselors or members of educational institutions. Bordere's work on suffocated grief is important for considering urban Indigenous grief, given the historical processes it requires us to be aware of, and the power structures implicated in policing BIPOC grief (Bordere 2019, p. 189).

Leeat Granek (2017) questions the move to pathologize grief in recent years. She argues that grief has been characterized as a pathological condition that can be cured with medicines

and psychiatry. Grief, according to her, is not a pathological condition requiring medical treatment, but is a social condition. According to Granek, modern understandings of grief "are rooted in an individualistic approach to the problems of human suffering, and, as such, tend to individualize, pathologize, and privatize what used to be considered a normal and accepted human reaction to the death of a loved one" (Granek, 2017, p.267). Granek uses the examples of public memorialization to challenge the pathologization of grief by the psy-disciplines[3]. Referring to Philip Ariès work on grief, she notes that "historically death and mourning have always been community affairs" (Granek, 2017, p. 268) and the presence of spontaneous shrines in contemporary society is evidence of support for communal grieving. Spontaneous communal shrines "can be interpreted as new forms of rituals that have arisen in engagement with a culture that does not tolerate public grieving, and has no protocol on how to mourn one's losses" (Granek, 2017, p. 268).

Granek's paper is an example of a work that considers the implications of understanding grief as a social process, and provides an example of cultural practices that support grief being a social process. For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to consider both the cultural and social aspects of grief, especially in Indigenous communities, who would not have been individualistic prior to colonization. Further, seeing grief as a social process allows for consideration of historical and contemporary social factors that influence Indigenous grief and trauma today. This will be further discussed in the final section of the literature review, which looks at the impacts of cultures on healing for Indigenous Peoples. Next, I examine literature that focuses on Indigenous grief and end-of-life care, to establish what considerations of Indigenous

[3] Psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapy.

grief exist in the current literature and to show what gaps exist in this body of literature for the urban Indigenous demographic.

Indigenous approaches to end-of-life care:

This section looks at articles that focus on death care and end-of-life processes for Indigenous Peoples. While none of the literature on death and dying for Indigenous Peoples focuses on bereavement and grief experiences for urban Indigenous Peoples, a common theme across all papers is the emphasis on the role that Indigenous cultures play in the end-of-life processes. This connection between culture and end-of-life care is transferable to the impacts of culture on grief support and supports the idea that culture can facilitate meaningful healing processes for urban Indigenous Peoples.

Michael Anderson and Gemma Woticky reported a "near absence" of literature on death and dying among urban Indigenous Peoples whose territories are now occupied by Canada. Their paper, "The End of Life is an Auspicious Opportunity for Healing: Decolonizing Death and Dying for Urban Indigenous People" (Anderson and Woticky, 2018) focuses on end-of-life care and Indigenous cultural knowledge and ceremonies for urban Indigenous Peoples. They use the medicine wheel and the two-row wampum teachings to "offer an Indigenous theoretical framework to consider the complex space created by the interconnection of death, Indigeneity, and urbanity" (Anderson and Woticky, 2018, p. 49) with the goal of improving end-of-life experiences for urban Indigenous Peoples. "Based upon the Haudenosaunee principles of peace, respect, and friendship, the Two Row Wampum documents the relationship between Turtle Island's *Onkwehonweh* (original people) and the first European explorers" (Anderson and Woticky, 2018, p. 53). Using these two frameworks generates a space to examine the

"interconnection of death, Indigeneity, and urbanity" in (Anderson and Woticky, 2018, p. 49) while working to improve the end-of-life care given to Indigenous Peoples in urban settings. Anderson and Woticky's work is like mine, in that they examine the use of cultures in processing death, however the difference is that their work focuses on dying Indigenous Peoples who have the opportunity to engage with end-of-life processes. The focus in my research is on grieving experiences of those who are left on turtle island, after their loved ones have passed on to spirit and the grieving experiences of those who are bereaved from something other than loss of life.

Urban Indigenous identity in this article refers to two things. First, Michael Anderson positions himself as an urban Indigenous Person, as a Mohwak Person from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory who was born and raised in the Greater Toronto Area who has had to reclaim his culture (Anderson and Woticky, 2018). He is bringing his own experiences to his research. Second, he uses Peters and Andersen's work, "Indigenous in the city: contemporary identities and cultural innovation" (2013) to position urban Indigenous Peoples as those who are second and third generation city dwellers, and whose Indigenous identity may not be directly tied to their traditional land (Anderson and Woticky, 2018). Further he shows that urban Indigenous communities may center around pan-Indigenous activities at cultural and health-care organizations (Anderson and Woticky, 2018). This is relevant to my thesis because the collaborators are not just second and third generation city dwellers, but sometimes first-generation city dwellers, whose Indigenous identity has been impacted by their status as urban Indigenous Peoples, some of whom have never lived on their traditional lands, and some of whom are experiencing a distancing or separation for the first time.

Kelly et. al conducted a phenomenological study in 2009 on end-of-life care for Indigenous Peoples in northern Ontario, from the perspective of 10 bereaved family members

(Kelly et. al, 2009). The study focuses on bereaved family members' experiences of death of loved ones that occur in medical settings. The authors discovered that bereaved family members expressed a desire for culturally informed palliative care treatment, and culturally-informed medical settings. This might include larger rooms that can accommodate an entire Indigenous family, rather than the usual one to two visitors that are allowed in hospice or palliative care rooms (Kelly et. al, 2009). Other findings indicated a desire for facility staff to understand and reflect Indigenous styles of communication, including non-verbal communication and increased listening skills (Kelly et. al, 2009). Ultimately, findings suggest that engagement with culture and cultural sensitivity on behalf of professionals can play a mitigating role in Indigenous bereavement practices at the end-of-life.

In 2012 Johnston, Vukic and Parker published a paper on supportive palliative care for Indigenous Peoples in Nova Scotia. They consulted five non-Indigenous informants and two Mi'kmaw consultants, and conducted a literature review. Their paper highlights the relevance of culture for Indigenous Peoples in palliative care, and for family members who have a loved one in palliative care. An important step they take in understanding Mi'kmaw approaches to death and dying is that they contextualize Mi'kmaw culture, historically, highlighting the way that colonialism has disrupted traditional processes. The authors suggest that future research can focus on how medical professionals can better understand Mi'kmaw culture both now and historically, to best facilitate end-of-life care. Like the previous article, these authors focus on end-of-life care for Indigenous Peoples, and for bereaved family members rather than bereavement practices for urban Indigenous Peoples, or people who face sudden death of a loved one. One important aspect of their work, which I aim to do in my research, is that they situate Indigenous grief today as it relates to the long historical, colonial, processes that have shaped it.

Schill and Cajax' 2019 paper "Cultural safety strategies for rural Indigenous palliative care: a scoping review" (Schill and Cajax, 2019) analyses 22 articles on Indigenous palliative care in rural areas in Canada, the US, New Zealand and Australia, to determine to what degree culturally competent and culturally safe practices occur for this demographic. Through their review, the authors find that culturally safe care "invites decolonization of care through awareness of colonialism, racism, and discrimination" (Schill and Cajax, 2019, p. 1) while culturally competent care, such as engaging in collective decision making about the palliative care patient or anticipating potential barriers to accessing culturally appropriate health care, can "improve Indigenous palliative care services" (Schill and Cajax, 2019, p. 1). Overall, culturally informed care is needed and can benefit Indigenous communities who may be accessing medical care or support for end-of-life processes.

In a 2010 study, "Completing the Circle: Elders speak about end-of-life care with Aboriginal families in Canada," Hampton et. al recruited five Indigenous Elders from five different communities across southern Saskatchewan, for the purpose of answering the research question: "What would you like non-Aboriginal health care providers to know when providing end-of-life care for Aboriginal families?" (Hampton et. al, 2010). The authors of this paper acknowledge that "recent theoretical work in the areas of death and dying suggests that cultural beliefs and practices are particularly influential at the end of life" (Hampton et. al, 2010). Further, culturally relevant death and bereavement processes for Indigenous Peoples are largely unstudied and unknown for many researchers and healthcare professionals. This article presents racist treatment that Elders have received from healthcare professionals, and this is another important theme to consider when discussing support for end-of-life care; a theme that seems to be overlooked in many studies. Not only is it important to understand culturally relevant support

for Indigenous Peoples to help them heal from the death of a loved one, it is doubly important because a better understanding of these processes on behalf of medical professionals is required to change racism and bias in the medical system. Based on recorded interviews and narrative analysis, the authors identified eight main aspects of end-of-life processes for Indigenous Peoples that the Elders felt were most important during this time: "realization, gathering of community, care and comfort/transition, moments after death, grief, wake, funeral, and messages to health care providers" (Hampton et .al, 2010, p. 6). The authors end their paper by discussing the implications of their findings for end-of-life care professionals. Cross-cultural understanding and amendments to existing policies can engender fulsome bereavement processes for both patients and family members involved in palliative care.

Jeffery Ansloos has written one paper that focuses on Indigenous perspectives in death and dying. Thus far, in my literature review, his work is the most pertinent because it focuses on culture as a mitigating factor for sudden loss, while showing how to appropriately apply and engage with cultural concepts. The paper, written in 2018 is called "Rethinking Indigenous Suicide" (Ansloos, 2018), Ansloos challenges standard scholarly ways of thinking about and engaging with suicide, to prompt others to "rethink the ideological foundations of research on Indigenous suicide" (Ansloos, 2018, p. 9). This is important because Indigenous suicide is three times higher than that of the national average, occurring at a rate that has remained constant since the 1990s (Ansloos 2018). Ansloos offers two alternate approaches to understanding and studying Indigenous suicidology: culturally grounded research and decolonizing research. Culturally grounded suicide research centers Indigenous epistemologies. "Decolonial Indigenous research requires linking our political consciousness with accountable social actions" (Ansloos, 2018, p. 22), while simultaneously acknowledging the role of settler colonialism and colonial

violence as factors for suicide among Indigenous Peoples.

The impact of culture on healing:

A question asked during the research process was: what role does culture play in the lives of urban Indigenous Peoples who are experiencing grief, and how does this inform their grieving process? Therefore, the articles in this section focus on culturally supported healing in instances of poor mental and physical health, addictions and suicide prevention. None of the work directly addresses grief, but still bears relevance to understanding and supporting Indigenous grief in culturally appropriate ways. It is possible that the emerging evidence base for culture as healing extends beyond health and suicidality into end-of-life processes and grief.

Auger, Howell and Gomes' 2016 study on holistic wellness and empowerment for Indigenous Peoples, is a qualitative study conducted in Vancouver, BC with 35 First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals (Auger, Howell and Gomes, 2016). The goal of this study was to understand what roles, if any, traditional Indigenous healthcare practices played in Indigenous self-determination and if there were improved healthcare outcomes for urban Indigenous Peoples as a result. The researchers used seven Elder-led focus groups and a qualitative survey to answer this question. It was determined that "increased access to traditional health care practices may lead to higher levels of individual self-determination in health care, and ultimately contribute toward improved health outcomes for Indigenous people" (Auger, Howell and Gomes 2016, p. e397). The authors caution against homogenizing approaches to traditional Indigenous healthcare, an important point to note when doing research with any Indigenous population (Auger, Howell and Gomes, 2016). Overall, their findings support the concept that culturally appropriate care can be healing for Indigenous Peoples.

Similarly, Barker, Goodman, and DeBeck (2017) “Reclaiming Indigenous identities: Culture as a strength against suicide among Indigenous youth in Canada” (Barker, Goodman and DeBeck, 2017) argue that there is an emerging evidence base to support the idea that culture can act as treatment for healing from trauma. The authors identify Indigenous youth suicide “as a community crisis requiring social change through cultural reclamation” (Barker, Goodman, and DeBeck 2017, p. e209) rather than a mental disorder to be treated exclusively by medical doctors or psychologists. Several examples are used to illustrate what kinds of cultural programming have been shown to be successful in Indigenous communities. For communities that have higher rates of traditional language speakers, self-governance, traditional education, health care, and cultural programming or facilities, there are “significantly lower suicide rates than those without” (Barker, Goodman and DeBeck 2017, p. e209). Like the Auger, Howell and Gomes article, the authors note that cultural forms of treatment for mental health challenges cannot be standardized for all Indigenous communities, and work must be done to support the various cultural practices that are unique to each nation. Barker, Goodman, and DeBeck argue that Indigenous youth suicide is not merely a mental disorder but also a social one, much like those who argue against that pathologization of grief. This is important for urban Indigenous grief, which is shown to be caused by several social, contemporary, and historical factors. If culture can be healing or even preventative in the case of suicide for Indigenous youth, then perhaps this can be the case for Indigenous grief.

In 2015, Duggleby et. al (2015), published a “Indigenous people’s experiences at the end of life” (2015) which was a multidisciplinary, cross-national analysis of qualitative research that examines Indigenous experiences at the end-of-life. Through a review of 2255 studies, they found 18 studies which met their inclusion criteria. These were studies that were exclusively

conducted among Indigenous Peoples, above the age of 18, and were published in English between 1993 and 2013. The authors found that the connecting theme across all 18 articles was "preparing the spirit" for transition to their next stage of life. Preparing the spirit means that the individual is prepared to die in a good way, in accordance with their Indigenous epistemologies and values. While this article focuses on the impact of culturally relevant end-of-life care, there is a section on healing that is relevant to this literature review. The authors share findings that show how culturally relevant end-of-life care extends to surviving family members as they support their dying loved one, and as they experience grief both before and after death. "Through spiritual healing, participants were able to come to a sense of peace" (Duggleby et. al, 2015, p. 1728). Spiritual healing, in this context, refers to balancing heart and spirit, and seeing death as part of a cyclical, cultural and spiritual journey, both of which are concordant with the value systems of many Indigenous groups. Their work primarily focuses on end-of-life care for Indigenous Peoples, but also shows the connection between culture and how this extends to bereaved family members. Their findings support culture as healing for Indigenous Peoples who experience grief. While this applies, in this instance, to singular instances of death, it is possible this may apply to other forms of loss and grief brought on by intergenerational trauma and compounding grief.

Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo directly connect colonialism, disruptions to culture, and poor mental health for Indigenous Peoples (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo, 2003). They begin by providing a background to colonialism in Canada, outlining the major colonial policies and procedures that divided Indigenous Peoples from their cultural practices, from the Bagot Commission Report (1844) that promoted Indigenous assimilation into European culture and society, to the implementation of Residential Schools, and the *Indian Act* and its many

amendments. They suggest that poor mental health for Indigenous Peoples has been shaped by social and cultural factors stemming from disruptions to Indigenous lifeways. In particular, the traditional cultural practice of communal living and the way it can support collective identity has been disrupted. According to the authors, "Individual identity and self-esteem, which are central to health and wellbeing, may draw strength and depth from collective identity" (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo 2003, p. s21). As a result, the authors advocate for mental health support by and for Indigenous populations that engages and empowers communities in culturally meaningful ways (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo, 2003). Their work supports the idea that cultural connection can promote healing by supporting mental health for Indigenous Peoples, particularly when we are adversely impacted by colonialism, as all collaborators in this study indicated they were.

A more recent study on the healing impacts of culture was conducted by Gone (2013) who examines a "culture as treatment" approach to treating people with addictions, which is increasingly adopted in psychology. It recommends the offering of culturally appropriate treatment, or empowering local Indigenous groups to offer this treatment. Gone argues that mental health issues stem from disruptions to culture because of colonization. Therefore, culture can be a treatment for addictions, which are often linked to poor mental health for Indigenous Peoples. The reason that culture works as a mechanism for healing, according to Gone, is that it "reaffirms the value and vitality of Native life (with salutary psychosocial benefits potentially accruing to those who engage in such practices)" (Gone 2013, p. 697). I explore a similar idea in this thesis, which is that access or separation from culture may influence grief and healing processes for urban Indigenous Peoples.

Lastly, a 2010 study by Archibald and Dewar (2010) specifically shows the importance of art as a healing cultural practice. The researchers used a qualitative survey to ask organizers of 98 different Indigenous healing programs across Canada what the outcomes of incorporating Indigenous practices into healing services have been. Indigenous healing programs in this instance were Indigenous-run programs based out of Indigenous organizations at both the non-profit and governmental levels. "Cultural activities and interventions included Elders' teaching; storytelling and traditional knowledge; language programs; land-based activities; feasts and pow wows; learning traditional art forms; harvesting medicine; and drumming, singing, and dancing" (Archibald and Dewar 2010, p. 2). They found that there was additional benefit to healing programs that included traditional arts. Incorporating these arts deepened healing from trauma, including intergenerational trauma, and their connection to their Indigenous identity. Overall, people reported a decrease in depression, increased self-esteem, "revitalization for the role of community Elders" (Archibald and Dewar 2010, p. 16), and a reconnection to their cultural identity. This article has built on the emerging evidence base for the healing impacts of culturally appropriate support and care for Indigenous Peoples. This study is particularly significant for my thesis because I include questions about practicing culture during meetings with collaborators. In the pages that follow, I explore the connections between people who have a cultural practice and cultural knowledge, and use of these practices as grief support.

There were three main goals in this literature review. The first was to examine the sociological understandings of grief, namely disenfranchised grief, and suffocated grief. These theories of grief are most relevant to experiences of grief for members of the urban Indigenous community because they support the idea that an understanding of Indigenous grief needs to include the impacts of colonialism. Disenfranchised and suffocated grief also asks that we

consider the way Indigenous grief has become marginalized within wider society because of on-going colonial processes and racialized experiences of Indigenous grievers. This has implications for how Indigenous grief is understood and supported by professionals, policing forces, and policy makers.

The second purpose of the literature review was to better understand how Indigenous grief end-of-life care is approached for Indigenous Peoples. Given the absence of culturally informed Indigenous grief care in the literature, I focused on studies that looked at cultural support for dying people during end-of-life processes. Little attention has been paid to the bereaved in this area of study, highlighting a gap in the literature that my work addresses. The third and final purpose of the literature review was to examine where culture is successful in supporting Indigenous wellness. My research questions, and the interview questions asked during the conversations with collaborators sought to understand potential remedies or existing forms of support for urban Indigenous Peoples experiencing grief. The healing power of culture is known as an emerging field of study for treatment for mental and physical health and addictions. In my work, I want to explore how culture may or may not be implicated in healing, or being supported, from grief.

Chapter 3: Mnaadendimowin (Respect)

This Grandfather teaching is represented by the Buffalo. It is meant to remind us of the buffalo who gives every part of himself for our survival. In the way that the buffalo respects the balance of life, and gives himself to us, we honour and respect this sacrifice by treating him and his gifts with respect, wasting no part of him. Respect requires balance. We must act relationally with all things around us to achieve this balance. This relationality can be found in the Indigenous frameworks and methodologies that have guided this thesis. Below, I outline my research questions, which is then followed by my methodologies and how relationality has informed them.

Research Questions:

This thesis explores two main research questions, and three sub-questions. The first is the empirical problem: 1) How do urban Indigenous Peoples experience grief? 2) What support systems exist for them, if any? The sub-questions involve the potential responses to the empirical problem: a) What are the traditional and contemporary cultural practices of grief among urban Indigenous Peoples living in Treaty 6 territory? b) Do community and health services facilitate culturally relevant grieving process for urban Indigenous Peoples? and c) If so, how? And if not, are there ways to enable them to do so?

Objective:

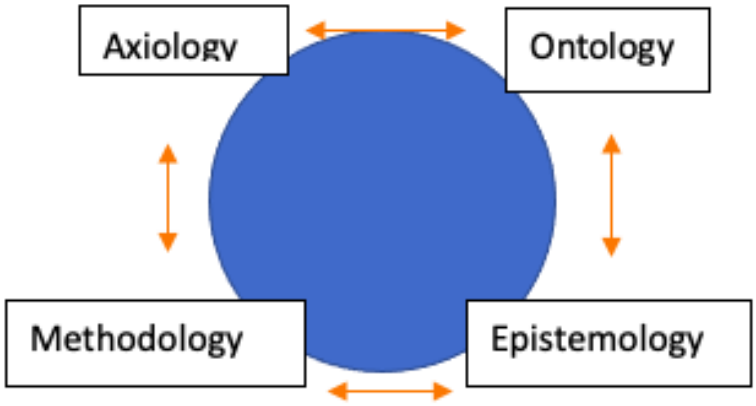
The existing body of scholarship on my proposed research is narrow, with most publications focusing on end-of-life care for Indigenous Peoples dying in hospice or in medical care (Anderson and Woticky, 2018; Hotsin, Macdonald, and Martin, 2004; St Pierre-Hansen et. al

2010). This thesis expands this area and offers an understanding of urban Indigenous experiences of grief and bereavement, provides a culturally appropriate framework for bereavement support, and adds to the narrow body of scholarship on Indigenous experiences of grief and loss. Urban Indigenous experiences in this thesis refers to the experiences of urban Indigenous Peoples who are separated or distanced geographically from their traditional land or cultures, which may be for myriad reasons, while also living racialized lives and experiencing the intergenerational trauma that is specific to Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Further studies will be required to determine what culturally appropriate frameworks for bereavement, and how they can be applied. However, given the minimal cultural support in this area and the growing urban Indigenous population, combined with the knowledge that culture is healing, these are foundational steps that need to be taken if we are to address intergenerational trauma and grief, and achieve equity in Canada.

Methodologies and Indigenous Frameworks:

My research methodologies were multiple, including Indigenous research methods and participatory action research (PAR). Overall, the research process was substantially informed by Indigenous perspectives, particularly those of Shawn Wilson (2008), Margaret Kovach (2021), and Cora Weber-Pillwax (2009). Kovach's Indigenous conceptual framework ties together Indigenous epistemologies, community, Indigenous ethics, and experiencing self in relationship to the research (Kovach 2021). Wilson's approach is similar, and he created and put forth the cyclical Indigenous research paradigm which he builds from Weber-Pillwax's work.

The Indigenous research paradigm according to Wilson looks like this:



Ontology here is defined as the 'what' of existence. For example, where some might say God made the world, I might say that my world exists on the back of a turtle. Both are realities in the worlds of those who believe them. Epistemology refers to how knowledge is created and how we develop our understanding of our existence within that ontology. These ontologies, those ideas that I am on the back of a turtle right now, or perhaps that as humans we came from the stars, shape how I see the world, and my relation to the things in it. Indigenous axiology "is built upon the concept of relational accountability" (Wilson, 2008, p.77). It involves respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. These three r's, according to Wilson, and Weber-Pillwax, constitute an Indigenous methodology.

Conducting research with an Indigenous methodology requires the researcher to ask things like: "how do my methods help to build respectful relationships between the topic that I am studying and myself as researcher? (Wilson, 2008, p. 77) "How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between myself and the other research participants?" (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). What am I contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal?" (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). By engaging in reciprocal action

with respect for all living and non-living things, in a responsible way, and incorporating Indigenous epistemological understanding of our ancestral and temporal interconnectedness, all four points on the circle of the Indigenous research paradigm are interconnected. The Indigenous research paradigm and questions of relationality outlined here were asked at the start of my research, and carefully carried through over its course, and beyond.

In keeping with Indigenous axiology, which is one of the four points on Shawn Wilson's Indigenous research paradigm, I refer to myself as the Project Keeper. This is language I borrow from my Anishinaabe language and culture's concept of the Fire Keeper, the one who holds and maintains the ceremonial space for all, as well as from my Potawatomi heritage, as the Potawatomi were known as the Fire Keepers of the Council of the Three Fires. Conversations were conducted in a good way, with cultural supports available, and traditional ceremonial protocol being followed when appropriate[4].

Participatory Action Research

This research project used participatory action research (PAR) in conjunction with Indigenous methodologies, because, as Wilson points out, PAR aligns with Indigenous axiological beliefs. Kovach connects the two as well. She states that PAR is used in Indigenous communities because it values the relational, a central approach in Indigenous methodologies. Further, Kovach points out that Indigenous methodologies can "coexist with qualitative research" (Kovach 2021, p. 25). PAR is collaborative in nature and that is why it is important for Indigenous research. Weber-Pillwax defines PAR as "a research methodology that is a means of

[4] Making a ceremonial research space was person and context dependent. In some instances, people expressed that they would like to start with smudging, others shared that their people did not traditionally smudge, or offer tobacco. Others shared that they did not know how or would not be comfortable doing so.

support for the intellectual and spiritual revolution of Indigenous Peoples in Canada" (Weber-Pillwax, 2009, p. 48). PAR is collaborative, and iterative in both its collaboration and mutual generation of knowledge. It is a robust research methodology that makes shared space with the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual aspects of Indigenous research (Weber-Pillwax, 2009).

I would like to discuss here in greater depth what PAR is, and how it was used in the research process and in the process of knowledge mobilization. PAR is interdisciplinary and can vary according to practitioner, but it has some central tenets. PAR involves: addressing power dynamics and potential imbalances by situating research participants as co-researchers; reciprocal benefits; trust, deep engagement and an outcome aimed at social change (Fine and Torre, 2019; Hagey, 1997; Linette, 2022; Raynor, 2019). The first steps in addressing the potential power dynamic during the research process was finding an alternate word for participants. I chose the word 'collaborators' to indicate the spirit I hoped we would approach this project with. Selecting the word collaborator was also meant to establish my "social, ethical and moral commitment not to treat people as objects of research but, rather, to recognize and value the differing and diverse experiences and knowledge of those involved" (Lenette et al., 2019, p. 161-162) which is central to PAR. The use of collaborators instead of participants subverts traditional researcher-participant hierarchies that perpetuate power imbalances between academia and Indigenous communities. In addition to using this inclusive language, I asserted and then reasserted during the entirety of the research process that this was their research too, and that their lived, Indigenous knowledge and experience were as valuable to me and the research process as traditional academic forms of knowledge and knowledge production.

The emphasis on co-research, or collaboration, is important because PAR "is a research

approach that privileges the active involvement of people with lived experiences of the topic…to generate new knowledge and act on findings to improve their lives" (Lenette, 2022, p. 1). This brings us to another important aspect of PAR: knowledge generation and change that is beneficial to the community doing the co-research (Hagey, 1997; Raynor, 2019; Lenette, 2022). Collaborators were involved in knowledge production at each step, including the format of the meetings and recorded conversations, the locations chosen, the editing of the conversation guide, the transcript finalization, and approval of their words in the findings section. How PAR was used in specific points in the methodology are indicated through the rest of this chapter.

Integral to the knowledge production aspect of the thesis, and the use of PAR as a methodology, was the creation of the art show: *Blood Memories: creative expressions of urban Indigenous grief*[5]. This show was hosted in the Intermedia Research Studio in the Sociology Department from March 5th - March 28th, 2024. It featured 13 different Indigenous artists, approximately half of whom also collaborated in the thesis research. The idea for this art show was presented by me, as the Project Keeper, to all the collaborators. The goal was twofold: first, the art show provided a venue to make Indigenous experiences of grief more accessible to a wider audience, particularly those members of the urban Indigenous community who are not in academia. This goal aligns with PARs aims of equalizing the power imbalances that could exist between academia and non-academic members of the Indigenous community, creating meaningful impact and actions, and producing new forms of knowledge, in this instance, around grief (Hagey 1997; Cahill 2013). Second, keeping Tuck's desire-centered research in mind, the art show illustrates the complex nature of Indigenous experiences of grief, and the meaningful

[5] Please note, as the art show did not constitute a research activity per se, it will not be further analyzed within the context of this thesis. It is here as an example of how relational research can impact the wider Indigenous community as well as serve as a bridge between those who collaborated in the study and other Indigenous Peoples.

connections to cultural joy and healing that exploring grief through art can provide. Below are two examples of art from the show, which explored grief in different ways. Figure 1 is an acrylic painting entitled “Grief Warrior” and explores the maker’s experience with finding learning and joy through the loss of their brother. Figure 2 shows an untitled mixed-media piece which represents the maker’s experience healing from grief caused by colonialism.

Figure 1- “The Grief Warrior.” Artist: Dream.

Figure 2 – “Untitled.” Artist: Magnolia

Dream shared that she was amazed by the creativity, depth and power of Indigenous Peoples and our abilities to transform and survive darkness. Magnolia said that collaborating with many other Indigenous Peoples in the show changed her perspective on her own cultural loss and helped them heal. Dream and Magnolia’s experiences resonate with the aims of Tuck’s desire-centered

research because they explore the complexity of Indigenous experiences of grief and healing by using art and community connection as the medium.[6]

Those collaborators who wished to participate in the art show were provided with identical budgets, and asked to reflect on the conversations and understandings of grief that we generated together during our conversations. Following this, they explored what it means to be an urban Indigenous Person experiencing grief. When desired by respective collaborators, we met for work sessions in our creative endeavors and discuss grief further, beyond the initial conversation guide and outside of the parameters of a recorded conversation. This resulted in 13 different artists producing works of art ranging from traditional and contemporary beadwork, mixed media collages, sculptures, works of photography, poems and paintings. Please see Appendix 2 for a poster of the art show. This art show is an example of how PAR "works with communities to co-create research and findings with the goal of unsettling the power relationships that traditionally structure research" (Raynor, 2019, p. 130) by disseminating research experiences outside of a traditional structure in the form of art.

Further, by providing equitable access via funding, and removing any inclusion or exclusion criteria, aside from the focus on grief as a theme, this gallery show supplanted the exclusionary practices of vetting and rejection found in the art world. When the show came to fruition, I generated a CV-appropriate citation for all the art show contributors, that they may use to support their art practices in a professional capacity. In some instances, prior experience is a requirement when applying for grants, so including a citation for the show may work towards facilitating successful grant applications. Generating a citation for use on a CV was done to act

[6] Please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the talk on the art show that I gave in the Intermedia Research Studio on March 23rd, 2024, for the Earthbound Thought Symposium. It speaks more directly and in-depth to the processes of collaboration and healing through grief with cultural practice. The talk was designed with Tuck's work in mind, and meant to be accessible to academics and non-academics alike. This is reflected in the writing style.

on the parts of PAR that aim to improve the lives of the collaborators (Lenette, 2022). Finally, given that the show was a mix of collaborators and non-collaborators, the show itself, inspired by the exploration of experiences of grief and cultural connection, connected other members of the urban Indigenous community with the ones that collaborated in the study. In this way, the action aspect of PAR is supported by the art show and its impacts on the wider Indigenous community. It is my hope that the non-Indigenous viewers of the show were able to witness urban Indigenous grief for the complex experience that it is, while simultaneously seeing us as multi-dimensional beings who are capable of the sorts of beauty wrought by artistic practice, and not exclusively through a deficit lens (Tuck, 2009).

Overall, using both an Indigenous framework of relationality and PAR was fruitful because it allowed me, as an Indigenous researcher, to honour myself and my Indigenous community by using the Indigenous methodologies and approaches to qualitative research that have been outlined here. I also aimed to strengthen my work within the academy, by using a familiar qualitative approach such as participatory action research, which respectfully honours Indigenous ways of being. Finally, the discipline of sociology is strengthened by use of these Indigenous methodologies, and the centering of Indigenous epistemologies and values found in this thesis.

Inviting People to the Study[7]

Collaborators were 18 and older, and ranged in age from 21 to 83 years of age. There were two men, twelve women, and one gender neutral person. Nearly half of the collaborators were undergraduate students, making up seven of the fifteen participants. There were two graduate

[7] In the spirit of Participatory Action Research, which aims to balance any potential unequal power dynamics, I refer to the recruitment process as 'inviting people to the study' instead of recruitment.

students, two people working in Indigenous programming streams within their work institutions, and three people working in other careers. One person was retired. Pseudonyms are used for all collaborators. Parameters around age and gender were kept broad for this study because it is the first of its kind. Collaborators were invited via a social media post, followed by snowball sampling of social networking groups. Social networking groups are defined as the network of Indigenous Peoples that I am regularly in contact with, through the art community, at cultural events, and through merely being Indigenous and knowing other Indigenous Peoples in the city. In colloquial Indigenous terms, social networking groups are referred to as "Indian Country." Snowball sampling involved those same people asking their network within Indian Country if anyone was interested in collaborating on this project with me.

Indigenous Peoples here were self-identified. This was important because of the restrictions the government has historically, and continues to, place on our identities. The process of self-identification supports PARs aims of addressing power dynamics, not just between the researcher and collaborators, but between the imposed parameters around Indigenous identity that have been enforced by governments and policy makers. Self-identification also supports Indigenous sovereignty. Fourteen out of fifteen collaborators were living in the Edmonton area. One collaborator was living outside of the city, but was included because they had an immediate family member with ties to Edmonton who had recently passed.

Knowledge Production Processes

Once collaborators were identified, I ensured that everyone was open to having up to three conversations with me. The purpose of multiple conversations was to improve the quality of the relationship between the collaborators and myself, and improve the quality of the information

that was being generated during this project (Read, 2018). These multi-staged conversations allowed me to capture a greater depth of information while working with the complex topic of intertwined experiences of grief and colonization (Read, 2018).

I opened the project by establishing rapport with each of the collaborators. According to Linette, "relationships of trust are essential to honor co-researchers' lived experiences, knowledge and perspectives" (2022, p. 6) therefore these rapport building steps and conversations were vital to ensuring collaborator safety, comfort, and appropriate use of PAR as a methodology. I had initial conversations either in-person or via Zoom videoconferencing platform to get to know one another. We shared our respective backgrounds, and discussed how they would like to be represented in this study and what they would like to contribute. Because PAR "radically challenges who is an expert, what counts as knowledge and, therefore, by whom research questions and designs should be crafted" (Fine and Torre, 2019, p. 435), our introductory discussions around collaborator expectations and desired level of involvement were crucial. We discussed their interests for one-on-one conversation circles, and what they would like from me in return. Collaborators had the final approval of the conversation guide that I had prepared in advance. I then worked with each collaborator to add or subtract questions that they felt might best capture what they would like to share about their grieving experience. For example, one collaborator adjusted some of the questions to better suit her situation, which focused on the grief she feels from loss of culture, rather than loss of life. In her words, "some of these questions sound like we are writing an obituary". We took measures to address this concern.

Following the rapport building and question guide overview, I guided one-on-one story-telling-based conversations with 15 different Indigenous individuals who are away from their

traditional cultural support networks and/or their traditional territories, and who have experienced grief in an urban setting. These conversations occurred in a location of their choosing with most of them occurring in my office on campus because it was a quiet and private location. There was a third and final follow-up conversation. This served as a check-in with collaborators, to understand how they felt about our potentially difficult conversations, and if there was anything more that they wished to discuss. Three collaborators declined a final follow-up conversation. Completing this study without building rapport and conducting follow-up interviews would have been emotionally and ethically irresponsible, and would be contrary to Indigenous ways of relationality. I had the guidance of an Elder to oversee my actions and ensure that I was conducting my work in a good way, minimizing harm to myself and others.

To start the conversation, I intended to offer smudging, should the collaborator desire it. Smudging is an important Indigenous practice that many, but not all, nations across Turtle Island use to cleanse themselves spiritually and connect to Manidoo[8]. By incorporating the practice of smudging we could spiritually prepare ourselves to talk about difficult things, like grief. However, because the University of Alberta is an inherently colonial institution that minimally supports Indigenous sovereignty, I was informed that we would be unable to smudge inside the building where my office is located[9]. Many people did not desire to smudge outside amongst the general student population. I did bring some smokeless smudge spray with me to each conversation, and we often shared food together at the start of our meetings. In instances where we could smudge, we smudged both ourselves and my recording equipment. In this way, I was

[8] Manidoo in Anishinaabemowin translates to Creator. In Anishinaabe epistemology, Manidoo is the Great Spirit who has created all that we know. The word for Manidoo changes depending on what nation a given Indigenous Person is from, however, here I felt it appropriate to use the word that my people would use.
[9] This has changed as of February of 2024, which was too late for my research process.

able to make the recorded conversations and the sharing of experiences, an Indigenous ceremony.

All conversations took place from September 21st, 2023, to November 10th, 2023. Conversations ranged in time from 45 minutes to an hour and twenty minutes, with the average conversation taking 1 hour. Appendix 3 holds a sample guide that was used when hosting these conversations, when guidance was desired. With collaborators permission, conversations were recorded, and stored on a password protected computer.

There was potential for these interviews to be triggering. Conducting interviews in a location of their choosing was one step towards conducting supportive research. As the Project Keeper, I came to the introductory meetings with a self-care and grief guidebook and a list of self-care and self-help resources (Appendix 4). Because PAR is meant to involve reciprocal benefits for researchers and collaborators (Linette, 2022) and Indigenous methodologies are informed by relationality and reciprocity, I covered all project costs incurred by the collaborators. In this way I was reciprocating by compensating them for their time and knowledge. This included paying for parking and providing food of their choice during the meetings, with no parameters around budget. This felt particularly important to me because some collaborators expressed that they were actively experiencing financial challenges and I did not want to create further challenges for them by enforcing a budget on what they could order to eat or drink when we met. Further, as part of PAR and its connection to the Indigenous research paradigm's emphasis on reciprocity, "when the principle of reciprocity guides research with Indigenous co-researchers, they are equal partners in and benefit from projects, and they are not disadvantaged and further marginalized" (Linette 2022, p. 9).

Consent

Consent was informed and ongoing. Consent forms were distributed a minimum of two weeks prior, and all consent forms were signed and collected by the Project Keeper before the first introductory conversation. Collaborators were given up to two weeks post interview to withdraw from the study. Check-ins, either in-person or via email, were conducted within two weeks of the recorded conversation. Check-ins were done to see if people had any concerns, questions, or wished to withdraw. Collaborators were provided with a copy of their transcript within one week of the recorded conversation, and I worked with anyone who requested changes or wished to have certain statements redacted. Chapter 4, the findings chapter, was emailed to each collaborator before the finalization of the thesis. Collaborators were supported in determining if they felt their words were adequately and accurately represented in the chapter, and given two weeks to make any changes they felt necessary. Upon completion of the thesis, all collaborators will be offered a copy, either digitally or in print-form, depending on their preference. These processes of ongoing and informed consent, enforced through the duration of the research project by myself, as the Project Keeper, relate to PAR's aims of "identifying and unsettling power dynamics" (Raynor 2019, p. 134).

Fieldnotes

Analytical field notes were written immediately after conversations had finished, and recorded conversations were transcribed verbatim within one week of their occurrence. These field notes were primarily used to help me build rapport with the collaborators. I was able to access these notes prior to any subsequent meetings to remember key things that they shared with me, so I could begin our conversations with friendly, informal questions about their life, with the aim of

putting people at ease. The field notes were also used to remember important information that the collaborators had shared with me during our introductory meeting, so that I could bring it up in the recorded conversation. Finally, this information was used to help choose what to include in their compensatory gift baskets. For example, if at the first meeting we spoke about reading Indigenous horror stories, I noted this in the field notes and then used this information to make this genre of book a part of their gift basket.

Storytelling:

Indigenous approaches to Oral Tradition informed the conversational aspect of the research, both the informal introductory meetings and the grief-focused recorded conversations. Indigenous Peoples' histories were traditionally conveyed orally, and continues to be a way of transmitting and creating knowledge within a given community. "Within Indigenous societies, story and knowing have been tightly bound together as a legitimate form of understanding, since time immemorial" (Kovach, 2021, p. 157). Indigenous Storytelling, from a personal perspective, is rooted in memory, epistemology, and "reflect(s) knowledge gained from individual experience, while simultaneously signifying relationships" (Kovach, 2021, p. 158). Indigenous Storytelling encompasses many ways of understanding the world for Indigenous Peoples.

For example, the Anishinaabe approach to Storytelling can be grouped into either *dibaajimowinan* or *aadizokaanag*. While Noodin notes that English is inadequate for translating these concepts fully (Noodin 2014), *dibaajimowinan* can be understood to be "the art of collecting or redistributing the truth you've heard" (Noodin, 2014, p. 175). This can be seen throughout the three conversations I had with collaborators, where collaborators conveyed to me their experiences with grief. In turn, I share these experiences in the findings section of the

thesis. *Aadizokaanag* can be understood as "self knowing, the core means of communicating the complexities of life" (Noodin, 2014, p. 175). This approach to Storytelling and knowledge conveyance is seen at the core of each person who shares their experiences of grief. In this way, *aadizokaanag* was at the heart of story collection and the one-on-one story-sharing conversations. Following the *aadizokaanag* story gathering process I communicate the knowledge we had generated together as co-collaborators in the findings section. This findings section is *dibaajimowinan* because I have collected and redistributed the truths that I have heard.

It is important to me to honour the conversational nature of Indigenous information sharing. Indigenous Oral Tradition and Storytelling are legitimate forms of conveying what one knows about the world, their place in it, their experiences, and the use of Indigenous Storytelling contributes to Indigenous ways of knowledge production. These approaches to Storytelling, mentioned above, and used during the research process "honour the distinct knowledge base" of the collaborators (Caxaj 2015, p. 9) while using culturally appropriate forms of conveying and disseminating research. This positions these Indigenous Storytelling methods as equally important as traditional Western forms of gathering knowledge during research processes, adding to the robustness of using PAR as a methodology and means of achieving equity for Indigenous collaborators and researchers (Caxaj 2015).

Ethics and Relationality

This research project followed the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS2) guidelines for research conducted with Indigenous communities. Three core principles of the TCPS2 can be applied to Indigenous research: Respect for Persons, Concern for welfare, and Justice. Respect for Persons "is expressed principally through the securing of free, informed and ongoing consent

of participants" (TCPS2 2022, p. 151). In the TCPS2, under Indigenous research, the respect for persons also extends to "the interconnection between humans and the natural world, and include obligations to maintain, and pass on to future generations, knowledge received from ancestors as well as innovations devised in the present generation" (TCPS2 2022, p. 151). This can be followed through on by incorporation Indigenous axiology, as laid out by Shawn Wilson.

The second principle is concern for welfare. This includes the rights, interests and responsibilities that also serve the welfare of individuals. Beyond this, "Indigenous Peoples are particularly concerned that research should enhance their capacity to maintain their cultures, languages and identities as First Nations, Inuit or Métis Peoples, and to support their full participation in, and contributions to, Canadian society" (TCPS2 2022, p. 152) and I believe that my concern with Indigenous cultures and relief from the adverse impacts of intergenerational trauma is in line with this principle.

The third and final principle is justice. According to the TCPS2, justice "may be compromised when a serious imbalance of power prevails between the researcher and participants" (TCPS2 2022, p. 152). Once again, Indigenous axiology and relationality can possibly safeguard against injustice during research. If I act relationally, with the wellbeing of all my relations in mind, I must be perpetually cognizant of the power imbalances that exist between researcher and participant. Further, by using participatory action research my work becomes collaborative, and I am less likely to misappropriate any information, or violate any community norms if I am actively working alongside my co-researchers.

Indigenous-based ethics were used in this thesis in conjunction with tri-council ethics. Anishinaabekwe scholar Kathleen Absalon says that Indigenous approach to ethics involves "articulating your ethics and principles to guide your search matters in terms of retaining

relational accountability within your search" (Absalon 2022, p. 108). Further, Absalon's work puts forth the idea that ethically done Indigenous research holds the searcher "accountable to those you are gathering knowledge from: Spirit, ancestors, land, non-human relatives, humans, communities and so on" (Absalon 2022, p. 108). To do this, the searcher, as she calls it, must bring important Indigenous epistemologies to the fore. These are respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationality (Absalon 2022). What follows is an explanation of how I approached relational accountability and Indigenous ethics in the research process.

While Indigenous Peoples and their varied cultures are not monolithic, and I seek to avoid perpetuating pan-Indigeneity, yet there are some shared cultural practices that facilitated the ceremonial protocol aspect of this work. For example, smudging, and use of the four sacred medicines (tobacco, sage, sweetgrass, and cedar) is found in many Indigenous cultures on Turtle Island and, with collaborator consent, was a practice used to establish a ceremonial research space. Establishing the ceremonial protocol that each collaborator wished to engage in, or not, was discussed at the beginning of the research project, and tailored to everyone. Acting with the concept of Indigenous ethics and relationality became important when I considered the goals of this study in conjunction with PAR. I aimed to work collaboratively with other Indigenous Peoples, in a relational way, to both support the examination of their grief and empower them to take ownership of that process and this research project, while simultaneously encouraging their healing journey through empowerment and by providing culturally meaningful support during this project. Empowerment of marginalized communities is an integral part of PAR (Kesby, Kindon and Pain 2007; Raynor 2019).

In thinking and acting relationally, I will now situate myself and the life experiences that I brought to this project. This is done with the goal of making explicit how I see myself in

relation to others and how I prepared myself in a relational way, to do this work. As an urban Potawatomi researcher who has experienced intergenerational trauma, cultural losses, and cultural reconnections, I came to this research with the required self-care skills for a project of this nature. I have worked through these traumas for years, with the help of the Indigenous community members that I have always surrounded myself with, be that here in Edmonton, or in Vancouver. This includes people who identify as Métis, Anishinaabe, Cree, Nisga'a, Gitxaala, Okanagan, and Lakota and more. I have engaged in therapeutic practices with the support of a licensed therapist for years. I regularly attend a sweat lodge that is easy for me to access. I have the guidance of the lodge Elders and the community support of urban Indigenous Peoples I have encountered there. I work to incorporate the teachings of the medicine wheel into my daily routine, ensuring that my mind, body, spirit, and emotions are in balance. I have access to the healing aspects of the land and spend as much time on it as possible, away from the distractions of modern life and technology. I offer tobacco and smudge regularly. In these ways I engaged in self-care and brought this balance to my work, for myself and for those I worked with. Finally, in preparation to conduct research on the sensitive topic of grief, I took the Indigenous Death Doula course from Blackbird Medicines so that I would be a better support for the collaborators during this research process.

I acknowledged that talking about unresolved trauma, grief, and bereavement has the potential to be triggering for people. However, the Elder that I work with pointed out that work of this nature can be triggering while simultaneously avoiding re-traumatization. As an Indigenous Elder and counselor, she read through my prepared question guide, and helped me consider the potential impact of asking these questions with the collaborators. She noted that grief is often present in people's lives, and that any manner of daily thing may trigger it.

However, it is up to me as the person guiding the conversation to know when to steer the conversation in a different direction should collaborators become too emotionally activated.

I hoped that by collaborating in this study, other Indigenous Peoples and I could explore culturally relevant means of healing together. As discussed, this included ceremony, using Indigenous humour, and the art show to explore grief in a creative and therapeutic way. Several collaborators have since confirmed that our time together has provided them with safe spaces to discuss their grief with an Indigenous peer. This was something that many of them said was missing from their lives. These processes of cultural exploration, ceremony, sharing food and humour, and exploring creative expressions of grief, and the positive impacts these processes have had on the lives of the collaborators who shared about their experiences are all forms of a change and action. This connects to PAR as an action focused methodology with an emphasis on change for the community involved in the study (Tuck 2009; Linette 2019; Linette 2022).

Transcription and Analysis

All conversation transcripts are stored on a password encrypted computer, with only me as the Project Keeper having access to it. There were no limits placed on data retention for this project because I wanted to encourage Indigenous data sovereignty, and provide access to the data created in this research for the research collaborators who may wish to use or access their information in the future. This approach to data sovereignty aligns with the First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession, known as OCAP[10] which promotes the right to control our own information, as Indigenous People. All collaborators were offered the opportunity to approve their words used in this thesis when they were provided with a copy of

[10] OCAP is a registered trademark of the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/

their conversation transcript. Their words in the thesis were only included if they felt they had been accurately and adequately represented. Working together with the collaborators to ensure that they were fairly and accurately represented, and adjusting their words when necessary, supported the aspects of PAR concerned with power imbalances. Power imbalances are addressed by ensuring that all collaborators were "active agents in the co-production of new knowledge" (Lenette, 2022, p. 2).

Once all collaborators were satisfied with their transcript, the transcripts were analyzed using concept driven thematic coding, outlined in Gibbs' "Thematic Coding and Categorizing" (Gibbs, 2007). Concept driven coding means that coding was approached with the predetermined research questions in mind, looking to draw out data that specifically pertained to these questions. In the first round of coding, codes were generated for each recorded conversation via paragraph-by-paragraph analysis, and kept in a separate colour-coded code book. These codes were identified because they exemplified "the same theoretical or descriptive idea" (Gibbs 2007, 2) as one another. Each code in the code book included a definition of what the code means and a series of memos that connected the codes to one another analytically. In the second round of coding, codes were then organized into a coded hierarchy, to produce thematic codes. Please see Appendix 5 for a copy of the thematic, hierarchical, code list. Sub-themes were then generated from these codes and arranged hierarchically, in accordance with Gibbs' work on hierarchical coding (Gibbs, 2007). Hierarchical codes are "codes that are similar kinds of things or that are about the same thing are gathered together under the same branch of the hierarchy, as siblings of the same parent" (Gibbs 2007, p. 2). These thematic codes were generated within each interview and then across all interviews, which allowed me to see where there were similarities and differences in the data, and what may have caused these differences (upbringing, relationship

with colonialism, etc). Doing coding in this way allowed me to "understand the relationship factors, phenomena, [and] settings" so that I was be able to identify "causes, strategies, intervening conditions, actions and consequences" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 14) related to urban Indigenous experiences of grief and bereavement.

This chapter has shown the myriad teachings I have gained as a first-time researcher, looking to conduct my research in a good way. I began with a framework of Indigenous relationality, which is inherent in both Indigenous epistemologies and in Shawn Wilson's Indigenous Research Paradigm. The concept of relationality informed the second methodology I selected for this project, which was participatory action research. These methodologies mutually informed and constituted each step of the collaborative research process, from inviting people to the study, the art show which connected the work in this project to other members of the urban Indigenous community, the multi-staged mutual dialogue sessions between myself and the other collaborators, the story-telling approach to sharing information that honoured Indigenous oral traditions, and the inclusion of Indigenous ethics alongside formal, institutional ethics. This process has been invaluable to me as a new researcher as I learned to weave my Anishinaabe ways of knowing and seeing alongside qualitative sociological ones to produce, what I believe, was a robust and fruitful methodological approach to the research process.

Chapter 4: Nbwaakaawin (Wisdom)

This Grandfather teaching is meant to guide us so that we interact with all beings with stillness, respect, and clarity. It is represented by the Beaver. It guides us to respect our differences and our own limitations. We should listen more than we talk in our observations of the world. We say that there is a reason Creator gave us two ears, two eyes, and only one mouth. With this in mind, I turn to the findings chapter of the thesis. In this chapter I respectfully share the stories and 'findings' of my collaborators, who have taught me so much about Indigenous resilience, grief, and joy.

Findings:

The following chapter will present the themes and subthemes that were generated from the 15 recorded conversations that focused on urban Indigenous experiences of grief. This is a focused report representing the 80 pages of coding and preliminary analysis that were generated from these conversations. Coding took a concept-driven approach, meaning the research questions and objectives were considered when generating codes, themes, and subthemes. The remainder of this chapter will be broken into the following themes: backgrounds and impacts of colonization, relationship to culture, experiences of grief, and cultural supports that have been present or absent. The exploration of each theme takes the *dibaajimowinan* approach to storying the collaborators' experiences, as I gather and distribute the knowledge that was shared during the conversations. The chapter is informed by Tuck's idea of desire-based research, showing a "present that is enriched by both the past and the future" (Tuck 2009, p. 417) as it presents the many ways that collaborators experience their grief and cultural backgrounds.

Backgrounds and impact of colonization:

This section is important because it will provide the background for understanding how the Indigenous Peoples in this study came to live in urban settings, and came to experience a separation from their cultural supports and geographies in many ways. As mentioned in the introduction, Indigenous People may move to cities to acquire institutional forms of education, so that they may be closer to hospitals and doctor's offices, for employment purposes, due to foster care or adoption, or simply because they want to. Moves to urban spaces can result in cultural and kinship-related disconnects for many reasons, most of which have to do with colonialism. Collaborators in this study further report being separated or removed from their cultural ties due to the impacts of their parents or grandparents' choices. This section will take a closer look at how these influences have shaped each collaborator's life before illustrating the connection between background and their relationship to culture.

Seven of the collaborators in this study did not grow up on or near their traditional territories. Each of these circumstances is related to colonization. For some, like Dream[11] (29), living away from her traditional territory was because of adoption. She explains, "*I was adopted as an infant. And when I was about three, my brother was also adopted into the family. My first memory was picking him up at his foster home….Yeah, but neither of us grew up with any connection to culture at all.*" Likewise for Michelle (50) who identifies herself as a "*60s Scoop Survivor*." She was taken from her birth mother and placed in a white foster home, with a family who eventually adopted her as their daughter by the age of six. She says that as an adult she learned that she was taken from the hospital by social services immediately after her mother birthed her. In both stories, Dream and Michelle have indicated that these processes are directly

[11] Pseudonyms are used for all collaborators.

related to colonization and have created barriers or detrimental effects in their lives. Michelle says:

> "*When I grew up, I was very much in between. And you probably hear this from a lot of adoptive kids or 60s Scoop kids…You're in between, you're not white, and you're not native. So, it's really hard…for me to just jump into that side of it and, and want to go and feel like I'm included*."

While some grew up away from their lands, others may have grown up on their lands but still experienced some sort of distancing or separation from the territory that was self-initiated. White Bear (26) argued that the environment on her reserve has made it difficult for her to live there or even return there: "*There's nothing up there. There's nothing out there and everyone is miserable and desperate. And they want you to be miserable and desperate, just like them. That's why I'm down here.*" Adelyn (33) expressed that she did not feel like she her community was home for her after her mother passed:

> "*for so long, I never felt like I belonged…I had that mentality, like a very negative mentality…The more I just pushed myself away, the easier it was because it* [her community] *had ties to my mom and even North Alberta had ties to my mom and I was like, I don't want to be here…I just did not want to be there."*

Several collaborators remarked that when they were growing up, their parents or even grandparents discouraged connections with Indigenous community, culture, or language, leading to a feeling of disconnect. Jimmie (35), indicated that growing up on his reserve, for him and his father, was not necessarily a positive thing: "*The reserve in our mind was never a good thing. Like, the community of the reserve is never… it was a bad thing. Going on reserve was not a good thing*." This is something that Jimmie attributes to his father, who wanted to keep his

children away from the reserve: "*my dad also, because he rejected a lot of it*[12] *too, because he didn't…like, he didn't want us to grow up on the reserve.*" He would rather have his children grow up in a suburb near Edmonton so that they could "*put their best foot forward*" as Jimmie put it.

Like Jimmie, Magnolia's (27) father put distance between his children and their culture and traditions. Magnolia suspects that he wanted to shelter them from being Indigenous because of all the hardships that he has witnessed Indigenous Peoples endure. Mabel (83) indicated that her mother would stop her father from speaking their language, because of the fear that was put into her by receiving beatings at Residential School. When it came time for Mabel to attend Residential School, her parents moved her and her siblings off reserve and became forcibly enfranchised, with the promise that doing so would mean that the children would not have to attend Residential School. These are examples of external influences that have resulted in a separation or distancing from culture and land.

Three collaborators indicated that they did grow up on their traditional territory, or spent some time there during their formative years, however, they moved to Edmonton for educational and health-related purposes. Nuphar (35), who grew up in northern Alberta, moved to Edmonton a decade ago to pursue a trades program. Rose (21), came to Edmonton as a child, so that she could be closer to medical care. Jane has been living here off and on for four years, attending post-secondary. Each of these collaborators' experiences with moving to the city speaks to the tensions that arise from being separated from their homelands. On the one hand, they each expressed the opportunities that have been presented to themselves by being here and accessing healthcare and education. On the other hand, they experience grief from living away from their

[12] 'It' here refers to being Indigenous.

homelands, they state that they feel the absence of their support network, or that they find themselves having a liminal existence at times, growing up unsure of where they fit in. In a poignant example of the sort of impactful culture shock that can occur when moving from a northern community into the city, Rose (21), said, "*Yeah, and I went from eating traditional foods every day, you know? Bringing dried fish as a snack to school instead of like, Goldfish* [crackers] *or something.*"

Some people expressed that being separated from their traditional land can present a unique set of challenges. Nuphar (35), says that while she loves her home, remaining there permanently was not a healthy option for her and her daughter.

> "*I don't know…it's that shitty feeling where…I love my home, I love my community, I love…being there. But I don't want my daughter to be there because it's so toxic….It messed me up. I don't want that for her. So to be here and to give her a better life requires me not to go back home, not be able to fight for her like I want to.*"

The experiences of Julie (42) corroborate the idea that for some, returning to their on-reserve communities can be difficult.

> "*I would love to move back there. But there is so much gang and drug and violence, that if I have the option, I don't want to raise my son there. Like I would rather take him to, to cultural experiences and, and try to do that within the city, then, then go there and have him not subjected is not the right word. But you know, there's a lot of people that are doing a lot of healing*."

These examples show the tensions between the joy of living on one's traditional territories, and the challenges that can be presented by living there at the same time.

A consideration of background and impacts from colonization is relevant because Indigenous Peoples often have experiences in their upbringing that are shared with many other urban Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, yet are unique to them as well. Given that this thesis aims to uncover Indigenous experiences with grief in urban settings, and given that separation from land and culture is a significant context within which grief is experienced, the complexities and nuances of this separation were presented here.

Relationship with culture:

Many Indigenous Peoples have a complex relationship with their cultural practices. The previous section used collaborators' stories as examples for the myriad ways that people may experience a separation or distancing from their lands and traditional lifeways. This next section will build on this concept, addressing what impacts this geographic distance may have had on the cultural practices of some, and how it has shaped the ways that Indigenous Peoples in this study have engaged with their cultures, overall. This section is foundational in understanding what impacts cultural support can have on the grieving process of urban Indigenous Peoples.

The most widely reported theme, when examining each collaborator's relationship to culture, was that they were separated[13] from their cultures and cultural supports they may find in their community. On some level, nearly every collaborator has had to work to maintain or re-establish their cultural connection, if that was their desire. For those like Dream (29) or Michelle (50) who were physically removed from their families because of adoption and the 60s Scoop,

[13] This is a simplification of an otherwise complex and often nuanced topic. In some instances, people have made deliberate decisions to leave their traditional territories, and some may have moved away in accordance with their parents or grandparents wishes. In some cases, these wishes were motivated by government-imposed enfranchisement or because of other colonial harms like Residential School or the Sixties Scoop. Others moved for health or education reasons, while others still never grew up on their traditional lands whatsoever. This list is not comprehensive, but meant to give a fuller picture of how and why cultural separation occurs.

respectively, they both report growing up know that they are Indigenous, but feeling like they could not "*connect with or identify as Indigenous or Metis for a long time*" in the case of Dream, or that they did not belong firmly within their Indigenous cultures as someone who had been separated. Michelle corroborates this when she states that she felt both "in-between" when she was growing up. Now that she is in adulthood and has been reconnecting to her family and culture, Dream reports that she is comfortable identifying as Métis and engaging in cultural practices. Michelle, however, remains unsure if she is comfortable doing so. When asked if she had any interest in attending Indigenous-specific counseling sessions she said it may be helpful, however, she also says: "*the other part, I think that I'm daunted with is like, all of a sudden, if you start talking about…the Medicine Wheel of healing or something, and I'm going to be like, ummmm....*" In both instances, there has been a disconnection between them and their culture during their formative years that continues to impact them to this day.

Rose (21), Jimmie (35), Mabel (83), Magnolia (27), and Old Lady Bear (36), each experienced a cultural and/or geographical separation that was the result of exogenous forces. Rose moved to Edmonton as a child so that she could be closer to medical centers because of her heart murmur and epilepsy. Before the move she says she was "*practicing my language. I was practicing my cultural stuff. But then I got sick*" and once in Edmonton she says: "*I grew up neglecting my culture for a long time until about ninth grade. I was always like, well, I know I'm Indigenous, but…I don't practice it.*"

Jimmie, Magnolia, Mabel, and Old Lady Bear all reported that their parents separated them from their homelands and did not continue any form of cultural engagement afterwards. Jimmie's father wanted to keep him away from what he felt were the harmful aspects of growing up on reserve. As an adult, Jimmie now finds it difficult to begin engaging in cultural practices.

He feels that the people where he is traditionally from are "*making up their own local traditions now, because they don't really have any semblance of what that really means and used to be.*" Further, he feels that learning his language would be difficult and time consuming, and in the end he asks: "*who would I be able to talk to?...Time and effort versus…okay, now I know this language. But if I have no one to talk to…the number of people I'm going to run into that speak it are going to be so little and…we'll all just speak English anyway. There isn't really a point.*"

Magnolia (27) and Mabel (83) did not begin consistently engaging in cultural practices until adulthood. By the time Mabel reached school age, and it was time for her to attend Residential School, her father made a deal with the local school, electing to move away from the Reserve into the city, enfranchising themselves and their children in the process. This geographical distance prevented Mabel from engaging in cultural practices until adulthood. Magnolia, similarly, has a parent who chooses not to share their knowledge of their *nēhiyawēwin* language. Further to this point, both of her grandparents who were fluent *nēhiyawēwin* speakers have passed, and with it, their knowledge of their language. This separation from her culture has impacted her sense of identity and brought grief with it. "*When you lose your identity and who you are. It's more powerful when it's that grief where you don't know how to really heal yourself because it's an ongoing journey*." This is something that she laments, and works to rectify through cultural practice.

Like the others, Old Lady Bear (36) says that her parents were instrumental in moving her away from her community as a child:

> "*Both my parents made the decision to raise myself and my younger brother in a small town away from both of their communities. And so, I never really knew who I*

was or where I came from, until I was privileged to come to university and, and even while in university, I was still trying to figure myself out."

It wasn't until she became an adult that she found out that she is considered 'Bill C-31,' meaning that she did not have Indian Status due to forced enfranchisement of her family members[14]. Now she is left to build her bundle[15] from the "*crumbs of her culture*," in her words.

Some have elected to move to the city for education, and this has created a distance between themselves and their families and lifeways. Nuphar (35) and Jane came to Edmonton for school. In doing so, each one of them expressed that they feel disconnected from their cultures and their culturally relevant supports. Jane expressed several times over the course of our conversations that she feels grief from being separated from the land, and the community members that live on their land. She misses the cold, the way it snows up north, and engaging in practices that allow them to live off the land like hunting and trapping. She also grieves for the loss of culture that her children are experiencing by living with her in Edmonton as she obtains her degree: "*my son's been crying every week. Says he wants to go back home…wants to learn our language, wants to go to culture camps and do more community-based stuff. And then that's how I'm grieving more, is for my kids.*" Nuphar, who is currently working on her master's degree, expressed very similar feelings. She shared that it costs upwards of $1200 for a single visit home for her and her daughter. This means that during times of loss, she is often unable to make the journey home and participate in their communal ways of grieving and ceremony around death.

[14] Bill C-31 was an amendment to the Indian Act which had previously stripped away Indigenous Womens' Indian Status if they married a non-Indigenous person, or if their husband died. Because of this, many Indigenous Peoples who would have qualified for Indian Status under the Indian Act were no longer eligible. This was amended in 1985 but many people remain unsuccessful in obtaining Indian Status, for many reasons.

[15] A 'bundle' refers to the physical or sometimes metaphorical bundle that people will build for themselves, with the help of knowledge keepers. These bundles contain what we need to survive and thrive in the world, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. They can contain physical objects, medicines, or teachings.

For many Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island, and even world-wide, some form of cultural reconnection has or is occurring. As Eve Tuck says, we are contradictory, self-determined and complex beings who are not reducible to people without agency, damaged by colonization (Tuck 2009). The multifarious experiences of the collaborators, including the differing ways colonization has impacted them and how they engage in cultural reconnection and practices is evidence of this. It is a beautiful thing to reconnect with your culture when you are an Indigenous Person. It does not mean, however, that this process is a straightforward or easy path to take. Magnolia (27) shared how, because of her father's distance from his culture, and the colonial forces that separated her Indigenous mother from her lands and traditions, being the family's cultural knowledge keeper is now entirely up to her. This is a huge responsibility, she says. "*Whereas when it's now narrowed down to one person, it gets too heavy at times. And I think that's where that grief comes because it's knowing that…if I don't do it, then it truly is lost to my family*." Challenges to reconnection may also come from external forces. Louie (27) expressed that he went back home recently for his grandmother's funeral despite how challenging it was to take time away from school, especially during exams when the funeral was being held. While back home, he experienced a form of lateral violence, when an older member of his nation gave his speech at the funeral in all *nēhiyawēwin.* Louie says that upon finishing the speech, this community member shamed those in the crowd who did not understand him, asking them: "*how can you call yourselves Indigenous if you don't know your own language?*" This is something that has stuck with Louie, and impacted how he attempts to learn his language.

This section was meant to illustrate the varied and complex ways that Indigenous Peoples hold a relationship to their cultures, including their lands, languages, and ceremonies. Most have experienced some sort of involuntary disconnect from their cultures, whether it be because of

adoption, parents or grandparents moving them away, to obtain an education, or for health reasons. These same individuals, importantly, describe how they have chosen to connect or reconnect with their cultural practices, showing their multifaceted urban Indigenous experiences. Many of the collaborators identified colonization as the exogenous force that caused these disruptions. The reasons for disconnection are as numerous as the sorts of things we grieve and how we grieve them. The following section looks at how these disruptions, disconnections, and reconnections have been intertwined with the collaborators' experiences of grief.

Experiences of grief:

Grief can be caused by many things and present itself in many ways for Indigenous Peoples. This section examines how grief is compounding, complex, related to trauma, it can be intergenerational, paradoxical, and not necessarily related to death. It is important to note the complex ways grief can show up because Indigenous Peoples often face multiple, concurrent forms of grief compared to the non-Indigenous population. Further, it aligns with Tuck's work on desire-centered research, showing how the experiences of grief in this study account for "the loss and despair, but also the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities" (Tuck 2009, p. 417), as people find hope and healing through their grieving processes. Finally, this section will highlight the complexities in our grief so that appropriate solutions to alleviating the pain of grief may be offered to urban Indigenous Peoples by professionals and institutions.

Grief in this study is shown to have depth and complexity beyond what much of the dominant literature suggests. While this will be elaborated on further in the discussion section, I wanted to illustrate precisely how complex this can be and all the ways grief can occur for urban Indigenous Peoples. The conversations I shared with the collaborators showed sources of grief to

fall into one of three categories. The first is grief related to loss of kinship and culture, the second relates to grief from death and the third relates to the compounding and traumatic nature of their grief.

Grief related to kinship can look like: adoption due to colonialism; loss of kinship because of separations from land and people; experiencing grief and trauma with no form of community to rely on for support because they are geographically separated; grief from feeling that they have no community to return to, or are unable to return to; grief related to identity because of colonial disruptions; the experience of intergenerational trauma[16].

The second source of grief is grief from death has been categorized as: grief from loss of life specifically. Grief from death is not limited to loved ones or immediate family. The third and final source of grief is grief which comes from compounding and traumatic loss: this can be related to grief-inducing loss that is not related to physical death. For example, several collaborators in this study expressed that their grief comes from both loss of life and loss of culture. Compounding grief and traumatic loss occur can look like: not having the space and time to grieve before another grief-inducing tragedy occurs because of the above-average occurrences of traumatic death amongst this study population; not having adequate time off to grieve because of institutional policy especially when there are multiple deaths. When grief is compounding and traumatic, with minimal healing time and space available, it is often called unresolved grief (Field, 2006).

Each collaborator experienced one or more of these forms of grief, with many

[16] Intergenerational trauma was more commonly understood and phrased as blood memories by the collaborators. Blood memories is an important concept, particularly when incorporating desire and joy into processes of grief and cultural connection. Blood memories includes intergenerational joy trauma, rather than positioning us as a one-dimensional, traumatized, community.

experiencing several forms at once. They are intrinsically intertwined and cannot be examined or addressed in isolation of each other, or without a consideration of background and colonialism.

Grief related to loss of kinship and culture

Grief related to kinship is a broad category and it comes from immediate disruptions to kinship, like being a 60s Scoop or Residential School Survivor, or adoptee separated from Indigenous family. Or it can pertain to loss of cultures, including access to land, and language because of colonial disruptions to kinship systems. These losses can be a primary source of grief for some. For others, it can add to the compounding grief that they experience. Either way, these experiences of grief are important, because they do not refer to grief that comes from physical death, yet are no less important for the collaborators. All the people in this study have experienced disruptions to their kinship system and lifeways, in some capacity. Eight of the 15 people directly stated that one source of grief for them was this cultural and familial disconnect.

Louie (27), referring to the lack of Indigenous languages being taught in schools, states that realizing that this gap exists, and how great it was

> "[It] *just made me sad, because, like, I'm one of those Indigenous People that have been cut off from their...I don't know if it's related…but I don't speak my own language, I don't speak Cree. And my mom did, but that was…because of reasons…she couldn't teach it to me*."

His mother, who attended Indian Day School, was unable to teach him *nēhiyawēwin* before she died, which is a source of grief for him. Not knowing his language has been connected to his sense of identity as well, as indicated by the earlier example of him experiencing lateral violence when shamed about not speaking his own language while attending his grandmother's funeral.

Lacking these cultural knowledges can also impact people's identity, contributing to another form of grief. Magnolia (27) states:

> "*I guess you can expect for the loss of, a death in a family or community…That's the circle of life. But when you lose your identity and who you are … it's more powerful when it's that grief where you don't know how to really heal yourself because it's an ongoing journey.*"

Magnolia engages with culture as a form of reconnection and healing, but paradoxically experiences grief from doing so, knowing she is the only one in her immediate family working to preserve this knowledge, and the teachings she receives are not being passed to her from her family knowledge, but through friends and Elders she has met along the way.

> "*You hear, like, families who have floral plants that were within their family that they can bead or represent, and that they had those healers within their family and all that. Whereas I don't have that knowledge to know what life was before. So knowing that and feeling that it's that disconnect. It's…a heavy grief for me.*"

This is an example of both identity and culture-related grief, and it illuminates Magnolia's complex personhood, showing how culture can be both healing and grief inducing at the same time (Tuck 2009).

Dream (29) reports a similar feeling, saying that, as an adoptee, *"even reconnection…[is] a lot of like, grief, and pain and, like, trauma."* Julie (42) who grew up not knowing precisely where she was from because it became a family secret, reports similar impacts on identity and its interconnection with grief.

> "*I feel robbed, because I can't say [where I am from]...I don't have…a connection. All I can say is I know it's Treaty Six. It's all I know, somewhere in Saskatchewan*

> *Treaty Six…And so then that, that loss of I will say identity, but that loss of connection just makes it feel maybe not real…I have a strong connection to the land, like many of us do. And so to not have that specific connection to that area of land bothers me.*"

Nuphar (35), like the others, explains that her separation from the community she grew up in, so she could go to school here in Edmonton, has contributed to grief around her identity. "*I grieve for… loss of self. And I find that…with school that has brought it up. It's like, I don't know. I don't know who I am. And I don't know where I belong.*" By sharing their experiences of grief, the collaborators illustrate that grief stemming from cultural separation, rather than death, impacts their sense of identity.

Grief from death

While certainly not the most prevalent subtheme, grief from death remains an important factor when considering Indigenous experiences of grief. Not every collaborator expressed that their grief came from loss of life. However, when a death had occurred, it was often in a traumatic way, or interconnected to one of the other themes of grief presented in this study. Grief occurred traumatically and prematurely in the lives of 11 of the 15 collaborators. These were deaths from medical racism, preventable health issues, accidents, or drug overdose. Drug overdose was the most common cause behind traumatic and premature death. Sometimes people mourned for the loss of coworkers or distant cousins, or even the trees around us that one collaborator identified as her relations, as all living, non-animate things are.

Given the wide variety of answers to "how do you grieve," asked during our collaborative conversations it is apparent that there is no "one-size fits all" model of grieving

within this study sample. There are many sources of grief for Indigenous Peoples, from loss of cultures and land, community, or death. Oftentimes these things occur in tandem with one another, rendering the experience of Indigenous grief complex. This can inform what sorts of support for, and approaches to, grieving that professional, such as counselors, offer.

Grief is compounding and traumatic.

Grief-inducing incidents can occur repeatedly over short or even long periods of time. People may die in short succession of each other, or there may be an unusually high number of tragedies during one's lifetime, leaving people bereaved. Traumatic death contributes to the overall compounding nature of urban Indigenous experiences of grief and often co-occur.

Several collaborators noted that the losses they experienced were numerous, and have been ongoing. Dream (29) listed the losses she has experienced in a short amount of time:

> "*There's...you know, yeah, there's been a few…I had an aunt and uncle also pass…and my grandfather. [My] biological grandfather as well, just a few weeks ago. So it's been yeah, pretty compounding grief, multiple deaths. But the main one, really? My brother."*

Dream's story is an example of compounding and traumatic death, with multiple family members dying, including her brother who was also her best friend. He died of a drug overdose. Similarly, Michelle (50) describes her losses as being multiple, traumatic, and ongoing. Her son overdosed twice in her garage, and she was the one to find him both times. The last overdose was the one that ended his life. At the same time, her oldest son has stopped communicating with her. She has physically lost one son while the other feels lost to her even though he is alive.

Grief can be compounding for urban Indigenous Peoples who grew up in their home communities and now live in the city. For example, Nuphar (33) has experienced multiple deaths that have happened in quick succession of one another, where she has been unable to return home for the wakes. She says:

> "*Whenever somebody dies, it's 10 times worse, being away from people. It's 10 times worse, not being able to go and pay your respects and say goodbye and have those times where when somebody dies in the community, everybody comes together, and they do the wake….I can't ever say goodbye to the person, that moment is gone, that time that would have been able to process [is gone].*"

For some, grief and trauma go hand in hand. Julie (43) shared her perspective on this:

> "*I think when you have that trauma and you don't properly grieve, then you hold on to that anger. And that anger just builds and builds and builds and builds and then manifests…in not good ways…within your body. Within your mindset. Within…how you present yourself to the world.*"

Louie (27) also identifies how grief and trauma, and healing from grief, are interconnected. He shared how difficult it was to be in his first year of a university transition year, when his mother suddenly died:

> "*I still haven't fully healed from it. But…I feel like now I'm at a point in my life where I'm managing it better. Controlling my feelings, my thoughts a lot better. But it's still a lot of work …Dealing with...I mean, I didn't get diagnosed or anything, but I'm pretty sure I'm dealing with PTSD, intergenerational trauma.*"

Grief shows up many times without room for pause, without space for processing. This has a significant impact on how Indigenous Peoples can heal from grief and trauma and the trauma of

grief.

The role of cultural and institutional supports:

As noted in the literature review, there is an emerging evidence base that suggests that culturally relevant support for Indigenous Peoples is beneficial during times of healing mental health challenges (Barker, Goodman and DeBeck, 2017; Duggleby, 2015; Gone 2013). This section will examine what forms of culturally relevant grief support the collaborators have either been able to access, or have noted as being absent for them. It will take a look at what happens when culture and the institution work together to foster a supportive environment or programming that Indigenous Peoples in workplaces and education can access. Examining culturally relevant grief support that is found within institutions such as universities, workplaces, or mental health services[17] is important so that we can learn, firsthand, which methods of support are being identified as helpful by and for Indigenous Peoples. The following section will first examine the sorts of culturally relevant grief support that are available to people, while describing what this looks like and where it is found. Then it will address institutional or formalized aspects of grief support, including institutional forms of support that are simultaneously culturally appropriate. It will finish with what supports the collaborators felt were missing.

Culturally relevant or appropriate forms of grief support can look like many things. It can involve prayer, smudging, art, attending ceremonies, or access to land or community[18]. The

[17] Please note, the people working within these spaces may be Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. If non-Indigenous people are supporting Indigenous Peoples in their experiences of grief, a solid understanding of its underpinnings is crucial to ensure supportive work is being done. Indigenous People will likely have a different perspective on the complexities of Indigenous experiences of grief. Ideally it would be Indigenous People leading the charge on culturally relevant grief support, asserting, and supporting our own sovereignty.

[18] What is described here are some ways that Indigenous Peoples engage with cultural practices, and are examples that were specifically noted during the research process. Each person and their respective Nations may have differing approaches to practicing their cultural traditions, and grief-related cultural practices more specifically. It is important to note that a closer examination of specific grief-related cultural practices may be a sensitive topic for

biggest source of support that was reported in this study was community support. This can be having a community of other Indigenous Peoples around you wherever you are, or more specific community support from certain people such as Elders. It can include working in Indigenous spaces alongside Indigenous Peoples, such as Indigenous programs in government or academia that have their own physical space within the institution. Further, community spaces created and supported by and for Indigenous Peoples promotes Indigenous governance. Within this context, Indigenous governance around grief, healing and community is being supported. For Indigenous Peoples, community is an important part of our way of living and being. It is relational, as traditionally, we would have lived in communities and behaved in community-minded ways, understanding that our actions impact those around us, and not just ourselves.

For collaborators Dream (29) and Maria (39) they both indicated that spending time in community by attending sweat lodges has been impactful in their healing journey. Others say that finding an Indigenous community at their school or workplace has been a form of support for them. Kim and Nuphar (35) have shared their experiences accessing Indigenous programming and spaces at their respective educational institutions. Kim says that while she is away from family and her homelands, having this space means she has a supportive space to be herself, where she fits in. Likewise, Nuphar (35) found an Indigenous students' center at her former place of education, and it has been helpful for her during times of grief or feelings of disconnect. "*I try to have a community. I try to be around other Indigenous People because yeah, it's the...the freedom to talk about stuff, freedom to just kind of have someone who understands that you don't need to explain to*" The representation and connection found in Indigenous community, formed in urban spaces, has been shown to be a meaningful source of support, especially for people who are experiencing cultural, and community disconnect.

People state that they find meaningful cultural connection through art. Most of the collaborators in this study engage in some sort of art practice, with the dominant practice being beading. Other paint, or sew. Either way, art is an important cultural practice for Indigenous Peoples. Collaborators like Julie (42), Dream (29), and Adelyn (33) all share that they find healing and meditation in their art practice. Julie says "*I don't like to create when I'm not in a good mindset, but I also find it very healing. And so, I find that that combination of smudging and creating is huge.*" Julie uses art and smudging in her approach to healing. Dream also shared a similar outlook on the healing aspect of creation. She says "*art should be…centered in healing grief, and…also in a…broad capacity and lens. I mean…just creating in general. Creation is life. And grief is death. And so we need to be able to create in order to grieve.*" For someone like Adelyn, who is an artist and small business owner, shared that creation and art are not just linked to healing, but also help her feel connected to her community back home. These examples further promote Indigenous governance around wellness, showing how the collaborators chose to use art as a form of culturally relevant healing.

People indicate that accessing land and language is a form of emotional and grief support. For example, Jane shared how she has always been able to rely on land-based teachings, a constant that has been disrupted now that she has moved to the city: "*in spite of all that trauma…My dad went hunting and then I know how to harvest. I know, like, growing up on the land and stuff. I think that's what my calm was.*" Others, like White Bear (26) and Dream (29), share how they find being on the land a source of spiritual peace. Dream says that her connection to Creator is strong on the land when she is surrounded by nature. Being on the land is where she finds peace. White Bear shared that when she is on the land, especially nearest her traditional territories she feels significantly more spiritually connected than she does when in the city.

Several collaborators said they find support through blood memory, and dreams, two concepts that are deeply rooted in Indigenous beliefs. Mabel (83) describes her journey to cultural reconnection being introduced to her via dream-based ancestral messaging. The same goes for White Bear (26), who says that many of her people's cultural practices have been lost over time, and now she must rely on dreams for that same information. Rose (21) shared that her ancestors were the ones who brought her current chosen family into her life. Dream (29) said that part of her healing journey has been because of ancestral knowledge: "*during my grief…there was ways that sort of naturally came up that helped me to get through that I believe were ancestral spiritual aspects of myself.*" Knowing how to help herself through her grief is Knowing with a capital K, she says. This is how blood memory has helped her through her grief. Julie says that sometimes when she feels unsure, she gains confidence from her blood memories: "*with those blood traumas come those blood joys and those confidence where it's like…I just know that I can do it.*" These conversations centering around blood memory point to the Indigenous ways of being and relationality. Many of us believe that we are influenced by the preceding seven generations, and in turn, influence the next seven. Legitimizing blood memories as a culturally relevant means of engaging in connection and healing frames the healing process from an Indigenous epistemological viewpoint. Further, blood memories reach beyond the concept of intergenerational trauma to include both joys and traumas, showing us to be complex beings, whose desires comes from the past, present, and even future as Tuck suggests.

Collaborators also expressed that on occasion they can access institutional forms of grief support. This was most identified as professional counseling services. Indigenous counselors are seen by Old Lady Bear (36), Nuphar (35), and Jane. Having access to an Indigenous counselor who truly 'gets it' makes a huge difference for the collaborators. In comparison, White Bear (26)

also sees a counselor regularly, and while she says it does help, she is also aware that because he is a settler, there are certain things that may not be easy for him to understand. She says: "*I have a counselor, but like he's a mooniyaw*[19]*. He doesn't really get it…. I even asked him too, like it's not normal to know people that have been murdered, right? He's like, 'No, it's not typical.'*"

Sometimes grief support groups were mentioned by collaborators. However, while many people shared that they were aware of grief support groups, each person also indicated that they weren't comfortable in these groups, often as the only Indigenous Person, or because of the traumatic nature of the loss they experienced. This points to the importance of promoting Indigenous sovereignty in our healing processes, and the need for Indigenous-led grief support groups.

The most shared form of grief support that the collaborators reported experiencing was culturally appropriate grief support from within a larger institution. These institutions could be their place of work, or through their school. A formalized form of grief support had the greatest impact on healing. This occurred when people were able to access counseling services provided by an Indigenous counselor, when people worked in an Indigenous company with Indigenous business models and ideas, or when Indigenous spaces were available and easily accessible within educational institutions and work environments. While many collaborators felt separated from their communities or traditions, engaging with Indigenous spaces and Indigenous Peoples in their daily lives seems to have provided them with a safe space to simply exist in, a community they can rely on for support in times of need and a sense of belonging.

Many collaborators were able to identify what forms of grief support were missing. Several people shared that they personally experienced financial barriers to both accessing the land and for professional counseling services. This could be a lack of funds to return to their

[19] White person

traditional land, or even merely get out of the city into nature. Others shared that they found it difficult to find and pay for a counselor, and that even though they are aware that there are Indigenous-specific mental health supports out there, they are unaware of how to access them. People like Nuphar (35), Rose (21) and Louie (27) said that they experienced institutionally imposed barriers to healing from grief because of Eurocentric bereavement policies around time off and the lack of spaces to practice smudging on campus. Above all else, however, the absence of community was the most acutely noted. People continuously shared the pain they felt from not having a community around them, or other Indigenous People to commiserate with as they navigate a colonial world.

This section showed what areas of grief support collaborators identified as being present or absent in their lives. The importance of institutional based culturally relevant support was an unexpected finding in this study. This is important because many urban Indigenous Peoples must interact with institutions to access education, health care, or employment, if this is their desire and within their ability. Sharing the positive impact of culturally supportive environments within Eurocentric institutions can support increased funding and attention in these areas.

Chapter 5 - Aakwa'ode'ewin (Bravery)

This Grandfather Teaching teaches us to live with conviction and to make positive choices that will benefit both yourself and those around you. It is represented by the Bear. Chapter 5 was written with the spirit and intention of carefully thought-out engagement with the contents of the finding section so that I may honour the work of the collaborators. In this chapter, I build on the findings with the aim of benefiting the urban Indigenous community while contributing to sociological understanding of grief among marginalized communities.

Discussion:

The first part of the discussion section looks at the pathologization of grief, showing how the findings resist treating grief as a mental illness, and instead, root grief in social, cultural, and historical processes. Following this, I use Doka's work on disenfranchised grief (1989) to discuss the wider scholarly and practical implications of the findings and further show how the grief of collaborators does not fit into ideas around grieving that situate grieving as an individual experience that is related solely to loss from death. Urban Indigenous grief, within this thesis, is shown to be complexly interconnected with historical processes of colonization and marginalization, rendering our grief unseen and unknown to outside observers. Sue Thompson's concept of disenfranchised trauma is used to better explain the social processes that result in disenfranchised grief.

Resisting a Pathologization of Grief

Most of the literature on grief is produced within psychology and other psy-disciplines. In recent years, grief has become pathologized to the extent that prolonged grief disorder (PGD) is one of

the newest additions to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - 5 (DSM-5). Prolonged Grief Disorder was added to the manual in 2022 and is characterized by: identity disruption including the feeling that a part of oneself has died, avoiding reminders of the deceased person, experiencing anger, bitterness or sorrow in relation to death, feeling emotionally numb, and experiencing feelings of intense loneliness (Szuhany, Malgaroli, Miron, and Simon 2021). With these characteristics, grief becomes a mental disorder that requires medical intervention with trained specialists such as psychologists and psychiatrists. According to the American Psychiatric Association, no pharmaceutical treatment for grief is available, and cognitive behavioral therapy is currently the only suggested form of potentially effective treatment (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

The findings resist the pathologization of grief, including prolonged grief disorder, situating grief as a social process instead. Nina Jakoby builds on the works of several other social science scholars who argue against a pathologization of grief (Charmaz, 1980; Horwitz and Wakefield, 2007) to show how grief is, from a sociological perspective, social in nature. Grief, according to Jakoby, is "a social emotion and interpersonal process because it emerges from relationships, attachments, expectations, and obligations" (Jakoby 2012, p. 680). The collaborators shared how their experiences with grief are socially rooted, as people who have been, sometimes involuntarily, separated from their cultural geographies and cultural support networks. Grief for many of these collaborators emerges from severed relationships and attachments to people and cultures. The collaborators shared that many of them were denied the opportunity to heal in a meaningful way because of the disruption to their cultural and community-based practices which are processes wrought by colonization. Other collaborators shared that they experience on-going loss, spanning large portions of their lives, directly

stemming from their experiences of cultural disconnect. These losses have left them with long-term feelings of grief that impact their sense of identity, instill anger, and promote a feeling of loneliness. A pathologized understanding of grief could categorize this as PGD. However, the feelings of grief that these various losses brought on were connected to structurally and institutionally imposed processes of colonization, resulting in social isolation. The suggested remedy for grief, in many collaborator experiences, was the social process of engaging with Indigenous communities. Grief and bereavement for the collaborators remains linked to social processes, not pathological ones. Eschewing grief as individualistic and pathological supports desire-based research outcomes that avoid pathologically reducing Indigenous People and their experiences (Tuck 2009).

The argument that grief is a social process is further enriched by considering the grieving experiences of disenfranchised groups of people in settler dominant societies, like those of the collaborators. Disenfranchised groups are groups where social processes have directly impacted their ability to grieve. For example, some of the findings from this research show how collaborators who are denied the ability to grieve within their home communities, or through meaningful ceremony, feel that their grieving, and thus their healing, process is incomplete. The discipline of psychology corroborates the idea that grief is inherently social with their own work.

There is a substantial body of work in the psy-disciplines that diminishes the argument that grief is individual, pathological, and treatable as a disorder. For example, intangible loss, symbolic loss, and ambiguous loss are all discussed by psychologists to show how loss and grief are complex and intertwined social processes. Intangible loss refers to losses such as loss of cultural practice, loss of social cohesion, and loss of dignity (Johnson, Parsons and Fisher, 2021). Within the context of this study, intangible loss can be seen in Magnolia's story, where she

directly connects her source of grief to the loss of her cultural practices. Symbolic loss comes from loss of relationships, such as when an interpersonal relationship ends, but those in the relationship remain living (Umberson and Torlin, 1997). An example of symbolic loss among the collaborators is the collaborator who identified as a 60s Scoop Survivor, wherein their relationships with the living were severed because of colonial forces. Ambiguous loss refers to loss that has no closure to it, such as soldiers who have gone missing during war (Boss, 1999) or collaborators in this project who express that they were unable to gain closure by grieving the death of a loved one in community because they felt they were unable to return home. Each of these are examples of how grief from loss has social origins.

For the urban Indigenous Peoples in this study, grief has been shown to be a complex, socially and culturally rooted process that spans several generations. The root causes of our grief can be traced back through cultural and physical loss that was imposed by colonization. These processes continue to impact the collaborators, and how they experience their grief to this day. This grief can be classified as disenfranchised grief, according to Doka's concept of disenfranchised grief, which will be discussed next. I argued here that the lengthy, imposed, historical and social processes that contribute to the disenfranchisement of our grief refute the idea that urban Indigenous grief, even in its prolonged form, is pathological. I noted in the literature review that the culture-as-healing paradigm has been in development for over a decade. It is most used by social workers and medical professionals when addressing challenges in mental wellness and substance abuse problems, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous professionals. (Archibald and Dewar 2010; Gone 2013). The findings in this study can continue to benefit social workers and mental health care workers such as Indigenous and non-Indigenous

counselors[20] by clearly illustrating how Indigenous cultures impact the grieving process. An understanding of these sociocultural processes also broadens the understanding of how grief continues to affect urban Indigenous Peoples today. This understanding can support a shift in the dehumanizing narrative that Indigenous Peoples are somehow always on the verge of perishing; a narrative that helps normalize and disenfranchise their grief (Razack 2015).

Disenfranchised urban Indigenous grief:

The collaborators' grief is complex in cause, expression, and what is used as forms of grief support. Grief studies are an expanding field in the psy-disciplines and the social sciences. Disenfranchised grief is a concept that provides a framework for understanding some of the findings from this thesis. I will begin with a discussion of Doka's theory of disenfranchised grief before showing how this theory supports my findings.

Professor and psychologist Kenneth Doka originally defined disenfranchised grief as "grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned or publicly mourned" (Doka, 1989, p. 4). Since the conception of disenfranchised grief in 1989, it has become an accepted theory of grief across many disciplines. Doka has more recently worked to ground the concept sociologically, arguing that doing engenders a deeper understanding of the social processes that underpin the theory (Thompson and Doka, 2017). When considered sociologically, disenfranchised grief is grief where: 1. The relationship lost is not recognized 2. the loss is not acknowledged or visible to observers 3. the griever is excluded from mourning processes 4. the circumstances around the

[20] Non-Indigenous counselors are specified here because the number of non-Indigenous counselors is greater than the number of Indigenous counselors, and there is an assumption that non-Indigenous counselors will be less educated in complex Indigenous historical and social processes.

death are socially labeled as 'ungrievable;' and 5. the way that the griever grieves is not regarded as legitimate (Thompson and Doka, 2017). These categories are all social categories. While much of the grief described by collaborators fits into one, or several, of these five categories, I am going to focus primarily on the second subcategory of disenfranchised grief because of its prominence in the findings and the broader implications it has on understanding how grief is disenfranchised for the collaborators. There will be a short discussion of the first subcategory of disenfranchised grief following this, to further illustrate the impacts that disenfranchised grief can have on both Indigenous Peoples who experience it and the society they are situated within.

The findings section includes several experiences of grief that fit into Doka's second subcategory of disenfranchised grief, where the loss is not acknowledged or visible. The collaborators' grief was shown to be brought on by situations and circumstances that are not directly stemming from death. For example, many collaborators have shown that the grief they experience can be directly from the loss of their culture. Loss of culture can mean loss of land, language, familial traditions, familial symbols, traditional ecological knowledge and livelihood practices like trapping and fishing, ceremonial knowledge, and the practice of arts and crafts. While some of this knowledge and practice loss may be related to death, in that knowledge holders in the family have died, taking the knowledge with them, this is not always the case. For example, some collaborators have shared that they experience grief from not knowing or learning the traditional language, a process that, according to them, colonization is directly responsible for. The collaborators' experiences of disenfranchised grief have also impacted the identity of different collaborators in this study, showing the deep, complex effects of this form of disenfranchised grief.

I argue that when grief is not acknowledged or visible, particularly when it is erased because of historical processes of colonization, it becomes difficult for urban Indigenous experiences of grief to be understood and accepted by wider society. In the case of the collaborators, grief has been shown to be triggered by loss that is not directly connected to physical death, and, in turn, loss that is not readily apparent to outside observers. The impacts of loss of land, language, and culture can be difficult to perceive without a substantial working knowledge of Indigenous experiences and histories and how colonialism has impacted these experiences.

The experience of disenfranchised grief for the collaborators is also represented by the first subcategory of disenfranchised grief, where the relationship lost is not recognized. In this instance, the source of grief has been obscured by lengthy colonial processes aimed at assimilating Indigenous lives into the Canadian body politic, and by the fact that what is being grieved are non-death related losses which are often regarded as ungrievable. Given these colonial processes, it is unsurprising that so many collaborators identified trauma as having informed many of their experiences as members of the urban Indigenous community.

Connecting trauma to disenfranchised grief helps illuminate the underlying social and historical processes that have led to grief's disenfranchisement. Sue Thompson's work on disenfranchised trauma explores this connection (Thompson, 2017). Thompson suggests the need for the expansion of the definition of trauma to include disenfranchised trauma. This is because the concept of trauma, and how it is defined, is based in psychology and is often too individualistic in the way we understand and treat it. (Thompson, 2017). A psychological understanding of trauma places the experience, and subsequent treatment, of trauma on the individual while minimizing the larger contemporary and historical context that the trauma has

occurred within. Instead, Thompson says that an understanding of trauma that is rooted in sociological insights can reveal the social nature of trauma (Thompson, 2017). She argues that trauma within psychology is typically regarded as originating within a singular incident. In contrast, disenfranchised trauma is trauma "from continuing, prolonged and repeated experiences, rather than as, necessarily, a single devastating event" (Thompson 2017, p. 91). Thompson uses her work on aging as an example, showing how "ageist assumptions and practices can invisibilize the suffering of older people who experience a traumatic reaction" (Thompson, 2017, p. 103). When elderly people in a nursing home lose several friends to death in a short period of time, their loss is unlikely to be seen as traumatic and is regarded as processes of old age. In turn, these traumatic instances, and the dismissal of the trauma that these elderly people incur results in their grief being disenfranchised.

When Indigenous trauma is understood as the cumulative effect of ongoing events, in this case impacts of colonization that are both historical and on-going, we can better understand the complex nature of our disenfranchised trauma and the social processes that render our grief overlooked by others. This cumulative trauma remains "largely unrecognized and neglected, and therefore a disenfranchised experience for the people so affected" (Thompson and Doka, 2017, p. 183). Further, understanding Indigenous experiences of grief and trauma as a collective or shared experience, rather than a singular and individual event, promotes an Indigenous understanding of the issue, given how important community is to many of the collaborators.

The work of Doka and Thompson (2017) and Thompson (2017) support the idea that urban Indigenous experiences of trauma and grief are disenfranchised. The examples of Indigenous grief shared in the findings section challenge commonly held ideas of what is 'grievable' and has broader implications for how professionals such as counselors and

institutions like universities and workplaces can support urban Indigenous Peoples. If the disenfranchisement of grief can prevent people from accessing different forms of grief support (Thompson and Doka 2017) then perhaps a wider understanding of it can bring new potential in the depth and breadth of services provided. For example, when educational institutions are aware of the need for Indigenous-led spaces and the impacts these spaces can have, and they make the efforts to create and uphold them alongside the efforts of Indigenous Peoples, there are opportunities for Indigenous communities to be formed. These communities act as an important hub for disconnected or separated Indigenous students, as indicated by the many stories the collaborators shared.

Urban-dwelling Indigenous Peoples, as mentioned in the introduction, are a rapidly growing demographic. Movement into urban spaces is often connected to disenfranchisement from land and cultures. More than half of the Indigenous population whose lands are occupied by Canada reside in cities. We have succeeded in resisting the total assimilationist tactics by the colonial nation state. Non-Indigenous power holders can act as allies and use their power to support us as we facilitate our happy and healthy existence within educational institutes, workplaces, and in our search for mental and physical health supports.

Chapter 6: Dbaadendiziwin (Humility):

This Grandfather Teaching reminds us to live selflessly, not selfishly. It reminds us that we are all part of creation, and not above it. This Grandfather Teaching is represented by the Wolf. It reminds me that I do not have all the answers, nor should I. When I was young, an Elder told me a long descriptive story with the following message embedded within it: the day that a tribe member ran out of new things to learn is the day that the tribe would facilitate that tribe member's death. While this is a hyperbolic story with a didactic message, it has remained a good reminder to me that we are to remain humble and that there is always new knowledge to search for. This section will share what new knowledge future studies could search for, building on what was presented in this thesis.

Directions for future research:

In Chapter 6, I present two new directions for future research followed by one recommendation for colonial institutions. Given that this was one of the first studies to focus on urban Indigenous grief, there remains great potential for new findings in the future. First, I discuss decisions made around recruitment, and how this can be improved upon in future studies. Then I explore the implications of this study on cross-cultural understandings of grief for marginalized communities. This chapter ends with a recommendation on how and why the formation of Indigenous friendly spaces and communities is important for urban Indigenous Peoples' wellbeing.

My first suggestion for potential future directions simultaneously highlights a limitation of this study: the eligibility requirements for collaboration in the study were quite broad. I included all self-identified Indigenous People, above the age of 18. The reason was that this is

(and possibly still is) the only sociological study on urban Indigenous experiences of grief. Given the exploratory nature of this study, I felt it best to keep eligibility requirements broad. This decision allowed me to attain a wide-lensed understanding of the grieving experiences of urban Indigenous Peoples so that future studies can begin to narrow down where further study is needed. For example, comparative analysis between urban Indigenous Peoples who did and did not attend Indian Residential School or Indian Day School can be done to better understand the effects of intergenerational trauma on grief. An analysis of urban Indigenous grief that focuses on gender and sexuality may support different methods of grief support for hospice workers or counselors, for example (Doka and Martin, 2011). More specifically, I recommend focusing on people who identify as men because there were only two male-identifying people collaborating in this study. Male experiences of cultural loss and grief would likely look different than female or gender diverse experiences of grief, and this may be particularly important given cultural mores around male expression of emotions (Clearly, 2012).

Finally, comparative studies could be done, to see what differences in grieving and healing exist for Indigenous Peoples who have experienced cultural disconnection and those who have remained connected to their cultural practices. This can improve the understanding of the role that cultures can play in healing from grief (Klass and Chow, 2021; Silverman, Baroiller and Hemer, 2021). Overall, narrowing down demographic information to focus on gender, sexuality, social positioning, age, cultural background[21], or a combination of some of these categories together is needed to determine what the specific needs of each group may be.

A second area for future study could look at what the implications of the findings here on disenfranchised grief and grief obscured by historical processes, can have for other non-white

[21] Cultural specificity is important because Indigenous cultures are not monolithic and individual cultural approaches should be taken when applicable and available.

groups. Indigenous Peoples are not the only marginalized groups living within a settler colonial state. Since the advent of colonization, colonial forces, such as the Canadian government have had a long, fraught history of disenfranchising the lives and experiences of various non-white groups of people. There is a largely ignored history of slavery and anti-Asian racist policy at Canada's foundations. Despite attempts at multicultural policy, racism stemming from nascent Canadian policy and law is now inherent in Canadian society (Medina, 2021). It is then crucial to explore grief for community members who exist within the margins of so-called Canadian society. This is particularly meaningful if we consider that the long-term effects of intergenerational, disenfranchised grief can go unseen by settler society when viewed against the backdrop of the ongoing settler colonial project that aims for assimilation and eradication of racialized bodies (Harris, 2010; Harris and Bordere, 2016; Leath, Butler-Barnes, and Haynes-Thorby, 2022). As Bordere's study of suffocated grief among African American families shows, the grief of racialized people in a settler-colonial society has its origins obscured and it exists within the margins, dehumanizing it (Bordere, 2019). Future work should explore the way that historical processes have become obscured over time, impacting, and contributing to, the disenfranchised grief of marginalized communities.

Recommendation:

The presence or absence of cultural practices was an important part of the findings in this thesis. Of these cultural practices, access to Indigenous communities of some kind has been a common theme. 'Indigenous communities of some kind' refers to the communities formed by different Indigenous Peoples accessing Indigenous-specific programming and spaces within institutions. Institutions are either workplaces or places of Western education like high schools, technical

institutes, universities, and hospices or hospitals. It was here that their biggest forms of support or (re)connection to culture were fostered. Through sharing their stories on their grief journey, collaborators showed how Indigenous spaces and organizations, such as the First Peoples' House at the University of Alberta, or Nîsôhkamâtotân Centre at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) have been a source of support as they grieve the loss of life and loss of culture. Others shared that they worked in the Indigenous stream of their department, alongside Elders, and this has been a source of support for them in grief and reconnection. Overall, these formal spaces have supported their sense of belonging, while away from home or after experiencing disconnection. Indigenous spaces within institutions should, firstly, be created and led by Indigenous Peoples. Support for these spaces should come from everyone who benefits from being within the institution and benefits from the presence of Indigenous Peoples.

Educational and professional institutions can support Indigenous healing by creating and funding Indigenous-specific spaces and programs. These spaces allow Indigenous Peoples to form a community, which is a meaningful aspect of Indigenous cultures, and engage in cultural practices. Access to these spaces becomes even more important when we consider that urban Indigenous Peoples often do experience some sort of separation or disconnect from their traditional lands and practices. Studies have shown that the availability of culturally appropriate services for the growing urban Indigenous population does not match the pace of population growth (Sookraj, Hutchinson, Evans and Murphy, 2012). Therefore, indigenized spaces are vital in supporting urban Indigenous Peoples as they navigate colonial worlds and ways of being. These spaces are one step towards supporting Indigenous community and healing, including in times of grief.

Chapter 7: Zaagidwin (Love)

The seventh and final Grandfather Teaching is love. It is represented by the eagle. All things are meant to begin and end with love. This research project has been encompassed and motivated by love. It is not possible to separate grief from love, nor is it possible to live in a good way without acting towards yourself and then others, with love. We are meant to love all things, ourselves included, in honour of the gift of life that has been given to us. This project began out of a love for my people, the hardships they have endured, and the amazing, inspiring people that we are. My loving actions and words are meant to have a ripple effect to the benefit of those around me and beyond. It is my hope that this work will have a similar effect by benefiting the urban Indigenous community.

Conclusion:

I began this work by asking how urban Indigenous Peoples experience grief, what support systems exist for them and how cultural practices may be related to their experiences of grieving. Given the existing body of literature on culture as a mode of healing for Indigenous populations during times of mental and physical health challenges, emphasis was placed on understanding the role that cultures played during times of grief. The answers to these questions were explored using participatory action research and Indigenous methodologies that were rooted within the concept of Indigenous relationality. From my perspective, relationality was the most important facet of my work because using these methodologies, which were often second nature to me as an Anishinaabe Person and researcher, supported my ways of understanding the world, ensured I

was conducting myself in a 'good way' in the Indigenous sense of the term, and strengthened the existence of Indigenous knowledges and experiences within the academy.

At the beginning of the thesis, I provided an overview of the historical and continued impacts of colonization on Indigenous Peoples, showing how colonization disrupted/disrupts meaningful, traditional lifeways. These lifeways include, but are not limited to, learning land-based teachings, speaking their language, engaging in ceremony, hunting, fishing and harvesting, and engaging in traditional artistic or creative practices. Traditional and cultural practices have been shown to be meaningful during times of loss and experiences of grief, which supports the culture-as-healing paradigm used by mental and physical health professionals. The art show that I facilitated provided a venue for exploring experiences of grief creatively, which is a meaningful practice for many Indigenous Peoples, while simultaneously connecting the collaborators from this project to the wider urban Indigenous community. The existence of this show and the works therein support the culture-as-healing paradigm and is an example of action that resulted from this research. It also served as a mode of conveying experiences of grief to the non-Indigenous community who viewed the show. The art show supported Tuck's call for desire-centered research over deficit-centered research. It platformed the complexities of Indigenous experiences of grief intertwined with cultural practices, visually showcasing how grief can be simple and complex, light and dark, old and new, intergenerational, beautiful and sad all in one small space. Further, it offered people the opportunity for healing and community connection in a relevant way.

In the discussion section I made the connections between unseen historical processes by the wider public and the disenfranchisement of the collaborators' grief. For the collaborators, grief is multifaceted. It is complex, intergenerational, compounding, and for some, it is

inherently connected to cultures in some form or another. The collaborators reported that a notable source of grief for them is their disconnect from their varied cultures. In some instances, some people listed this as their primary source of grief, which is contrary to much of the literature on grief. The experiences of grief within this thesis are shown to resist pathologization and be wrapped up in social processes, including processes of colonization.

In the spirit of Indigenous relationality, and in my desire to honour the efforts and hard work of the collaborators, I would like to end this thesis with a story and a quote that has stuck with me through the entire research process. My hope is that it will prompt the reader to continue considering the impacts of colonization on our traditional ways, our positions as urban Indigenous Peoples, and how our experiences of grief are informed by these processes:

I had been looking forward to this recorded conversation all day. The person I was speaking to, Rose, was such a vibrant young person and a strong example of Indigenous brilliance and resilience. At this particular moment in the conversation, she was explaining how she came to live in the city of Edmonton. Her relocation from the north occurred when she was a very small child, and was motivated by health reasons. She had a condition that required access to the sorts of medical facilities offered here in the city. However, with this relocation came the loss of her cultural practices for several years, until she experienced reconnection during high school. I asked her what it was like to move from her traditional lands to the city. She responded: "I went from eating traditional foods every day, you know? Bringing dried fish as a snack to school instead of like, Goldfish."

She explained that her mother was concerned that she may be bullied at school for bringing fish or moose to eat for lunch and had the foresight to pack her items she believed other students may have in their lunch. Her mother has since passed, but remains an important person

whose memory is full of love and joy for Rose. The move from dried fish to Goldfish is a powerful example of the shifts that occur and the social processes that underlie them as Indigenous Peoples navigate their experiences amidst cultural practices, grief, and colonization.

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Appendix 1

This is the text of a public talk I gave in the sociology department's Intermedia Research Studio, on March 23rd, 2024, for the Earthbound Thought Symposium, organized by Dr. Sourayan Mookerjea. It was written for both an academic and non-academic audience, and written with the knowledge that I would be speaking it. The writing style reflects that.

Blood Memories: Urban Indigenous Experiences of Grief Art Show:

I would like to begin this talk by thanking each artist who worked with me to make this art gallery show come together. The topic of grief can be challenging to work closely with, at the best of times. When that topic is intertwined with intergenerational grief and trauma, colonial violence, and held within an institution that historically has caused more harm than good to Indigenous communities, there was a delicate balance to be struck during this project. While I did my best to work in trauma-informed ways, using Indigenous ways of being and knowing to conduct this work in a good way, the contributors to the show supported this approach simply by being themselves. It would be really easy to view Indigenous grief through a deficit lens, like most of our social situatedness is. However, each contributor approached this with the Indigenous brilliance that I know to be at the core of our beings. This gallery and the processes that lead us here were full of resilience, ingenuity, bravery, laughter, and the blood memories of our ancestors that brought us all to this point in time. Thank you for this. And a huge thank you to Sourayan who was immediately on board with this idea when I first approached him about research creation nearly a year ago. He has been warm and welcoming as I slowly took over the space in the Intermedia Research Studio.

This show is composed of 13 different Indigenous artists' work. Thirteen is a significant number for many Indigenous People, and the use of 13 in this show allows us to honour the 13 moons and 13 menstrual cycles of life givers in a year. Indigenous time is often viewed as cyclical instead of linear, and we aim to have balance in our daily lives and practices. We honour cyclical time and life and death cycles by incorporating the number 13, while balancing the topic of death with a framework of life. Ultimately, the use of 13 is Indigenous praxis. I would like to make it clear that the approach to the art show was informed by the Indigenous epistemologies that I have brought to the project, as one Anishinaabe Person whose connection to my culture has ebbed and flowed throughout my life. Indigenous People are not a monolith and a project facilitated by a different Indigenous Person would look differently.

This show was inspired by the core question asked in my thesis work: what does it mean to you, as an urban Indigenous Person, to experience grief? There is a lot to unpack here, so I would like to take a moment to clarify a few things. First, what do I mean when I say 'urban Indigenous'? The term urban Indigenous within the context of both my research and this art show stems first from my own positionality as a member of the urban Indigenous community. It is a signpost to indicate that I am a second-generation city dweller who grew up separated from my traditional land, and have experienced cultural disconnection and reconnection. This is directly, and without exception, because of processes of colonization. Under this term 'urban Indigenous' is a whole world of violent colonial assimilation attempts and the Indigenous joy and strength that combats it. I have learned that this experience is one that resonates with many people who say they are urban Indigenous. This approach to defining urban Indigenous identity builds upon the work of Stuart Hall and Chris Andersen, by reflecting historical processes and

fostering control over our own frames of reference and the meaning-making process in our ever shifting identities (Hall, 1993; Peters, E.J. and Chris Andersen, 2013). This stands in contrast to the Canadian government's definition of urban Indigenous People which obscures the historical processes that led to our status of urbanity or the fact that urban centers are also Indigenous land.

What do I mean when I say 'grief'? I think we all have an idea of what grief looks like, or what emotions are called forth when I say 'grief.' Typically, in the literature from the psy-disciplines, such as psychology or psychiatry, and within the narrow body of sociological literature on grief, grief is commonly seen as the resultant emotional state from a singular inciting event. It looks like the loss of a loved one, perhaps a spouse from illness or at the end of a natural life course. Sometimes grief extends to child loss, or more rarely, from life events. Particularly amongst psychology, grief is shown to be individually experienced and treated as a curable mental disorder.

I have spent the last six months exploring what grief means to members of the urban Indigenous community. Over many talks with people here in *amiskwacîwâskahikan* (or Edmonton), the online Indigenous community, and Indigenous People living in urban centers around the world, our grief has been shown to have many sources and present itself in myriad ways. Grief has been shown to be compounding, complex, traumatic, intergenerational, paradoxical, and not necessarily related to death in all circumstances. This is important to note because Indigenous People often face multiple, concurrent forms of grief. (5)

Grief-inducing incidents can occur repeatedly over short periods of time. Statistically, Indigenous People are overrepresented in homicide, suicide, other violent death, infant mortality rates, and preventable health-related illnesses. What this means for us, as a people who are not just a demographic represented by Statistics Canada, is that we experience a significant amount of persistent, traumatic loss that can impact our well-being. Those we know and love may die in short succession of each other, or there may be an unusually high number of tragedies during the course of one's lifetime, leaving people bereaved with little room to heal before the next traumatic event occurs. When discussing these experiences people shared that traumatic death came from overdose, medical racism, accidents, homicides and suicides. Grief may also come from multiple deaths that occur in our home communities where we are unable to, or do not feel comfortable, returning to. These occurrences contribute to the overall compounding and traumatic nature of the grief represented in this show.

Grief related to cultural loss, community, and kinship was a prominent theme for most of the people involved. It is a very broad category and it can come from immediate disruptions to kinship, like being a 60s Scoop or Residential School Survivor, or adoptee separated from Indigenous family. Or, it can pertain to loss of culture, including access to land, language and community because of colonial disruptions. These losses were a primary source of grief for some. For others, the loss of kinship and culture added to the compounding grief from traumatic loss that they were already experiencing. Either way, understanding these experiences of grief are important, because they do not refer to grief that comes from physical death, yet are no less impactful for those experiencing it.

Another theme that was brought up alongside grief was blood-memories. Western language commonly refers to this as epigenetics, meaning the way that our ancestors' environments shaped their DNA impacts their descendants. Epigenetics supports the idea that trauma can be transmitted intergenerationally. For example, many Indigenous People I know have a reticence to work, learn and seek medical treatment within colonial institutions, which they often attribute to an inherent feeling of mistrust. Institutional mistrust may be connected to

their ancestors' histories with forced institutionalization, be it Residential Schools, asylums, sanitariums, or involuntary sterilization in the case of many Indigenous women. These environments that our ancestors were forced into shaped who they were, and this was passed down to their future generations.

What is often not spoken about when epigenetics is being discussed is the intergenerational wisdom, knowledge, resilience and joy that our ancestors passed down to us against all the violent colonial assimilation tactics. When people were talking about their grief, they did speak about intergenerational trauma, but they spoke about intergenerational knowledge and healing in equal measure. Unprompted, and across different conversations with different people, the term blood-memories was used to describe that which informed their cultural practices and processes. Further, blood-memories were said to be a salient form of cultural connection that provided support during times of grief, and cultural knowledge during times of disconnect. The term blood-memories encapsulates so much more about Indigenous life than the term 'epigenetics' can.

When our experiences of grief are laid out like this it is important to remember that we are so much more than trauma and deficit. I borrow from both Eve Tuck and Robin Greene when I say Indigenous People, and the work we put out into the world, is framed by *zaagiidiwin*, love in my language. We "resist our one-dimensional narratives of damage" (Tuck 2009, p. 417) and turn to love-centered frameworks instead. Within academia, a love-centered framework and the work this framework produces are offered as an "antidote" to damage-centered research that is often at the heart of Indigenous-focused projects. This gallery show was built in the spirit of *zaagiidiwin,* aimed at providing a space to use our ancestral knowledge and skills to examine our experiences of the emotionally challenging subject of grief.

After numerous conversations with many people, I saw the interwoven complexities of grief, trauma, blood memory, love, and Indigenous resilience and I asked myself: how do we work with this grief in meaningful, accessible ways? Given the rich tradition of art for Indigenous People, I felt that exploring this question through creative practice was the appropriate avenue. It was important to me, as the Project Keeper, to ensure that meaningful engagement and accessibility was possible for everyone who wished to contribute to this show. This was important for several reasons. First, I wanted to create a bridge between Indigenous People within academia, Indigenous People outside of academia, and non-Indigenous witnesses in both worlds. Art can accomplish this. Art can provide explanations when words cannot and can be created by anyone, anywhere. You need not be an academic to make art. Academia itself has historically been inaccessible to many Indigenous People and the cost of making art can be prohibitive. By using the sociology department's Indigenous Initiatives Award I was able to provide the same amount of funding to each person, and anyone who wished to participate was encouraged to do so, regardless of perceived skill level. There was no vetting of pieces, and no prior experience required, all of which are sometimes exclusionary practices that create barriers to participating in art shows.

It was important to encourage artistic practice as a meaningful cultural connection without imposing any preconceived notions about what Indigenous art must be. When I say Indigenous art, the woodland florals of Norval Morrisseau, or the formline art of Northwest Coastal Indigenous People may come to mind. Some may argue with me, but I have always believed that Indigenous art is art that is made by Indigenous People, regardless of if they are producing something synonymous with the viewer's conceptions of Indigenous art or not. For us, art is a cultural practice and traditions change and shift over time. As a people we have learned to

grow, share, and borrow from many artistic traditions and the art in this show stands as an example of this. The show holds art from people who have never touched a paint brush in their life, all the way to people who create art regularly and professionally. What mattered most during the creation of this project was that people were exploring their grief creatively, in the medium and process that they felt was best. Connections to cultural practice are particularly salient during times of grief, because it has been shown that culture is effective as a tool for healing.

For several decades now, mental and even physical health practitioners have been working with the idea that culture is healing. Using culture as a framework for healing occurs in cases of substance abuse challenges, mental health issues, and even as a form of support for physical health needs, like supporting good health through a traditional diet. These approaches have been shown to be effective for Indigenous People across Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Within this art show culture as healing has been the paradigm offered to explore grief through a culturally appropriate lens and practice. Engaging in our traditional practices of art can provide meaningful ways to explore our healing during times of grief.

I believe another aspect of healing is witnessing. Goodman and Meyers's work on witnessing points to the importance of creating and sharing space to "reveal, confront, and symbolize" our pain as a meaningful mode of healing and fostering an understanding of the life-altering experiences of others. I mentioned earlier that this show was meant to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to bear witness to urban Indigenous grief and hopefully strengthen an understanding of the complexities of it. I have been fortunate enough to be sitting in the Intermedia Research Studio 3-4 days a week this month, welcoming people into the space. The feedback that I am receiving from non-Indigenous people in particular corroborates my hope: people are bearing witness to and understanding the multifaceted nature of the Indigenous grief represented in this show.

So, to answer the original question: what does the experience of grief look like for members of the urban Indigenous community, I would like the artists to have the last word, and for the pieces to speak for themselves. With this I invite you to explore the gallery, and witness the stories each piece tells around complex historical processes, Indigenous resilience, and our blood memories.

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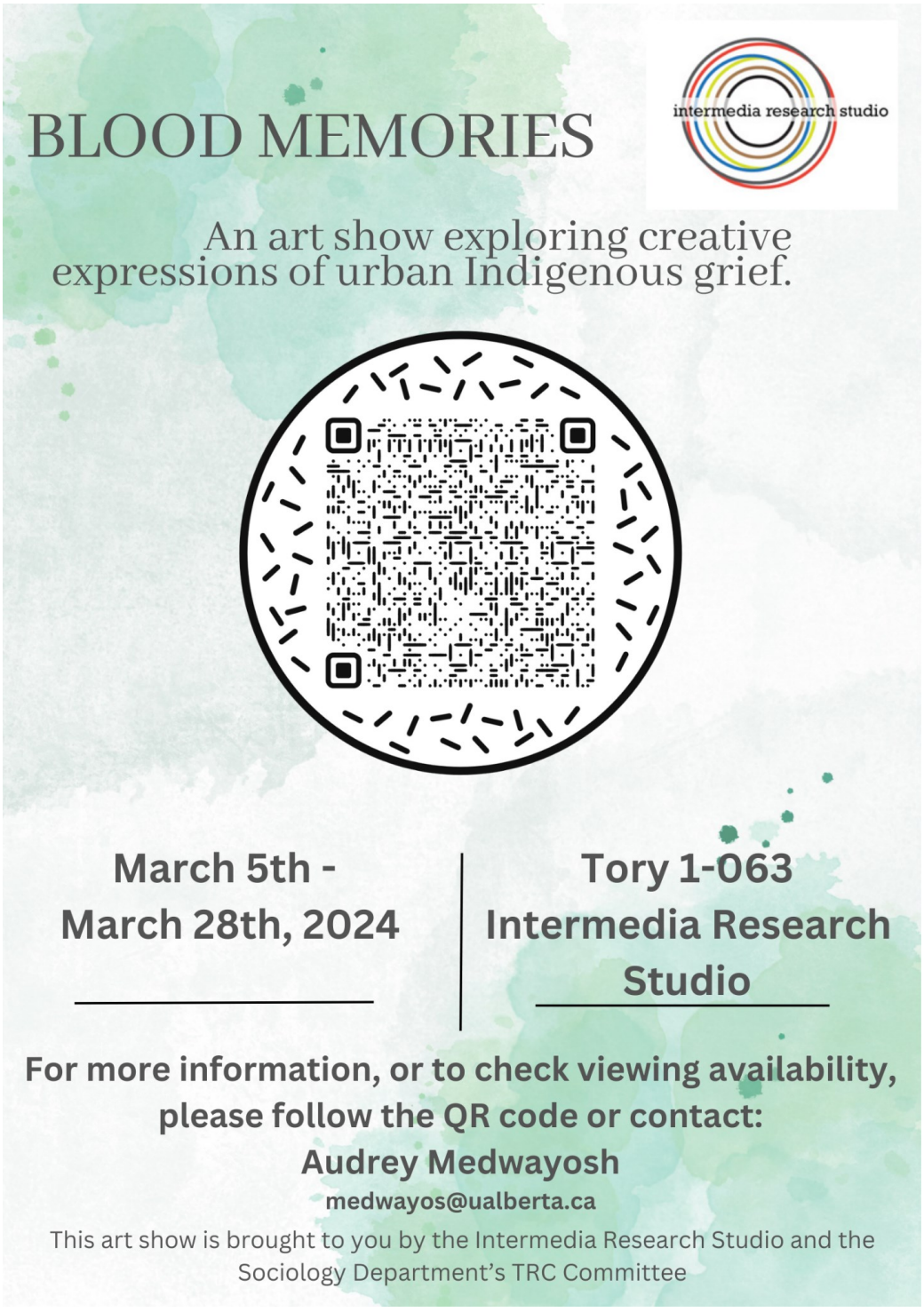
Appendix 2

Art Show Poster:



Appendix 3

Conversation Guide:

1. Would you tell me about a death that has affected you while living in the city? (what are the circumstances that lead to you living in the city?)

2. What has that felt like for you?

3. What does it mean to you, to be ‘grieving?

4. Can you tell me about being in your culture and what that has or has not looked like for you?

5. Is there anything that you do, like a practice that you engage in, when you are grieving?

6. Can I share with you what it felt like when I’ve had the opportunity to connect with our culture, as someone who grew up in an urban space outside of my home community? In turn, I invite you to do the same and tell me what your experience as an ‘urban Indigenous’ person has felt like for you.

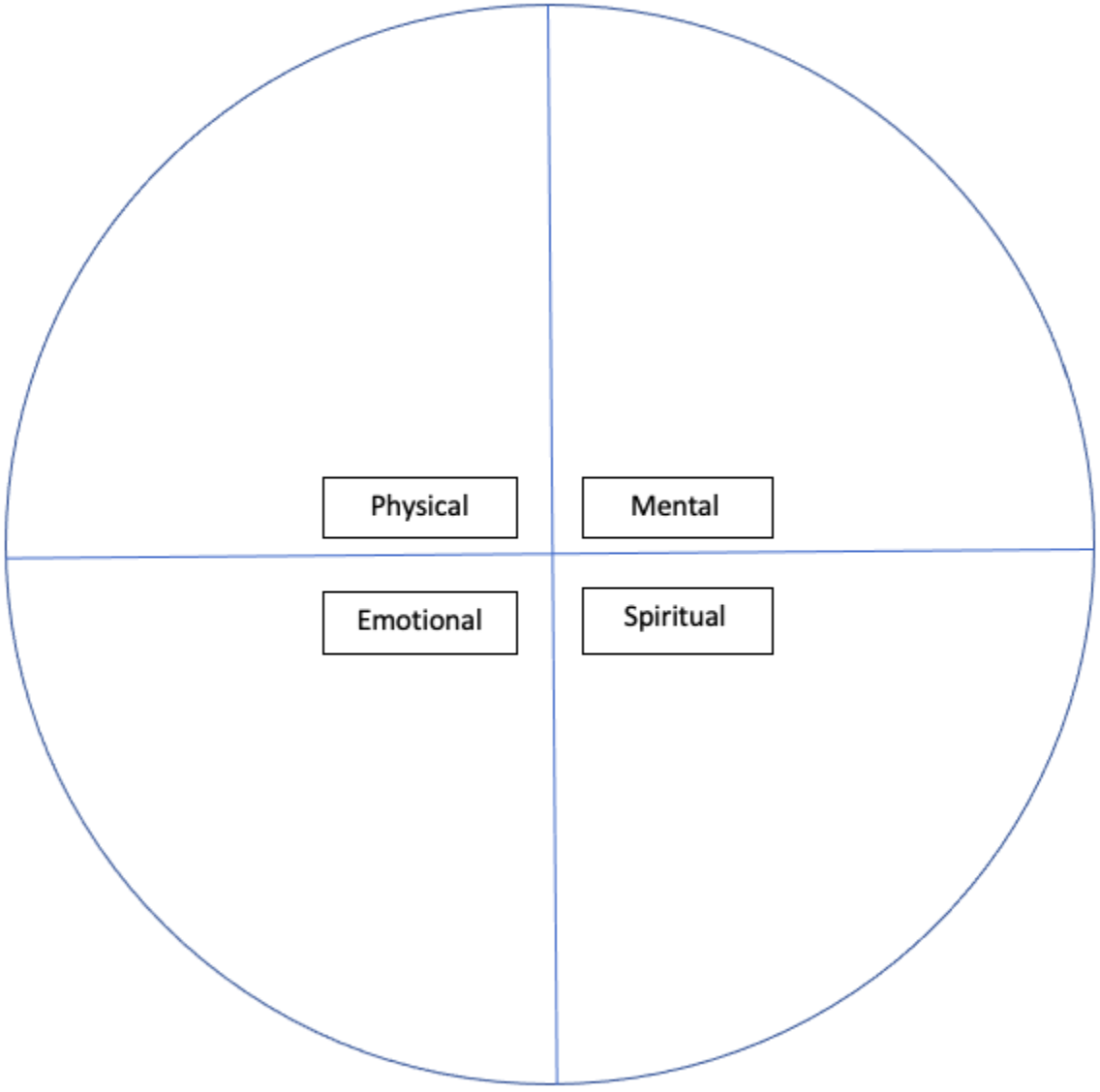
7. What do you want me to know about someone that you know who has died? I would like to open space for you to talk about them as you see fit, to honour them and their memory and your connection to them.

Appendix 4

Indigenous wellness and resource booklet

In my grief, I can use the medicine wheel to ground myself. The medicine wheel shows us how we can live our life in balance, and how our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health informs each other. When one part of our medicine wheel is out of balance, all parts may become out of balance. You may use the medicine wheel exercise below to help support yourself and figure out what you need.

Fill in the medicine wheel using the prompts below, or create your own:



Fill in the wheel prompts:
Physical:
Move your body for 30 minutes, go for a walk, do some yoga, give yourself a hug and say “I love you” out loud, drink some water or make a cup of tea, rest your body, avoid screen time for 30 minutes, go and listen to some bird calls, get on the land.

Mental:
Read a book, meditate, try a meditative art practice like beading or sewing, set some goals (and write them down), journal for 30 minutes, talk to a mental health support.

Spiritual:
Smudge, offer tobacco to the land or an Elder, drum, bead, engage in ceremony.

Emotional:

Evoke positive emotions, listen to or watch something that will make you laugh really hard (laughter is medicine), limit screen time, tell yourself, “I love you.”

GRIEF CAN LOOK LIKE...

crying	feelings of rage	depression	isolation
shock/denial/ disbelief	numbness	relief	**AND SO MUCH MORE...** these are some commons feelings that people can experience when grieving, but there is no 'right' way to grieve. You may feel many things outside of what is listed here and that is okay too.
GRIEF MAY ALSO OCCUR WHEN... Grief may occur for many different reasons, outside of loss from death. This is completely normal.	ending relationships	losing your community or being disconnected from your community	establishing boundaries and caring for yourself

My support system is:

Resource Directory:

Hope for Wellness Hotline
The Hope for Wellness Helpline is available to all Indigenous people across Canada. Experienced and culturally competent counsellors are reachable by telephone and online 'chat' 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
https://www.hopeforwellness.ca
1-855-242-3310

Alberta Virtual Indigenous Care Clinic
Comprehensive health care (mental and physical health) for self-identifying Indigenous People and their immediate family members.
1-888-342-4822
https://aivcc.ca

Indian Residential Schools Survivor Society (IRSSS)
Provides supports to Indian Residential School Survivors and their intergenerational survivors.
24-hour crisis line: 1-800-721-0066
https://www.irsss.ca

MMIWG Crisis Line
24-hour crisis line: 1-844-413-6649

Creating Hope Society
Our mission is to build on our strengths to create hope for the future for Aboriginal people impacted by the Child Welfare system, through healing processes, support, reconciliation and sharing what we have learned with each other. Located in Edmonton.
https://www.creatinghopesociety.ca

The Red Road Healing Society
A non-profit Child and Family Resource Centre which offers the blend of a number of unique community-based services, to assist in supporting and creating change for our children, youth, adults and their families. The focus is always on the development of new skills to achieve some success in the future.
https://redroadjourney.ca/index.php/programs/

Appendix 5

Hierarchical Thematic Code Book

Theme	Subtheme	Definition/Notes	Summary
Grief	Culture, loss of culture, and reconnection can be a source of grief	Either access to culture, or recognizing the loss of culture itself has been the source of grief for these collaborators.	All of the people in this study have experienced disconnection from the traditional land and culture in some capacity. 8 of the 15 people directly stated that one source of grief for them was this disconnect. This ranges from being physically separated from land because of moving or colonial imposition, being adopted, residential school, and the pain of not knowing their language. Lacking these things also impacts their identity.
	Grief is compounding and/or traumatic	This occurs when a collaborator gives an example (usually storied) about times when grief comes from multiple instances in co-occurrence, or they indicate they have not been able to heal from their grief because of these compounding issues. This is important because Indigenous People often face multiple, concurrent	Sources of compounding grief: - adoption - loss of kinship (mentioned by 4 different collaborators) - experiencing immediate and intergenerational trauma . - not having the time and space to resolve one trauma before another occurs. This is often linked to institutional policy.

		traumas compared to the non-Indigenous population.	- blood trauma - being physically separated from community is a large source of grief for those without the means to return as tragedy occurs. There is one instance of climate change that is linked to grief and return home and this would be an excellent "further study". - disconnect from community that people feel they aren't readily able to return to
	Grief is painful and physical	Many collaborators have indicated that grief manifests in a physical or visceral way	Grief (especially when compounded with trauma) can manifest as crying, shaking, panic attacks, nausea, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, "unhinged", headaches
	Numbing the pain		Some people indicated that they numb by not allowing themselves to feel the emotions (S1, Mabel, Adelyn) and some indicated that they either drank alcohol or used other drugs to numb the pain (Rose, Jane, Maria). Many stated that they were unable to begin the healing process until they stopped numbing themselves.

	Grief is anger		People state that they are mad at the deceased for dying, that their grief has manifested in anger that they turn towards themselves or others, that it is connected to blame.
	Grief Triggers	Many collaborators indicated that there were common every day occurrences that triggered their grief. This indicates that grief is a cyclical event not a linear one, and not necessarily a cureable pathology.	Major life events, finding a forgotten item, the favourite chewing gum of the deceased person, being asked about your identity (as an Indigenous Person, this can be triggering because some of us do not know these answers because of colonization), being a 60s scoop survivor, songs, returning to the deceased's territory. Something important here is how institutions themselves can be triggering. Two people in particular found this to be the case. They feel that they are not safe spaces. How can we make more spaces Indigenous-safe within the institution and how can it be used to support Indigenous People (in school and in the work place)
	Grief is cyclical/not	Once again showing	People said that grief

	linear	the multiplicity of grief, outside of the dominant discourse	is a lifelong process that changes and expands. That they learn ways to incorporate it in to their lives and carry on with it along side them. That they expand to encompass grief. And that sometimes because of the compounding and traumatic nature of grief, that it would not be possible for them to completely get rid of their grief. It is an ebb and flow.
	Grief should be honoured	This can look like acknowledging it, not numbing it or masking it with other emotions, or using it as motivation.	For some the only way is through the grief. That they don't numb it. Other collaborators state that grief has motivated them (Louie and OLB). Some state that the only way they could make it through their pain was by honouring their grief.
	Grief is a paradox	This could be a subtheme of the above "grief should be honoured"	This came from only one collaborator but they spoke substantially enough about it that I feel it bears analysis. "So like, with grief, when I, I know that if I'm allowing myself to experience grief, or when I'm going through grief, there will also be really

			meaningful moments of connection, that bring like joy, and peace and other really deep things that maybe I wouldn't have access to, if I wasn't letting this paradox exist in my life”
	Acceptance (or lack thereof)		Some people state that the only way to move through grief is acceptance, yet others state that they’ll never be able to accept the things that caused their grief, and that now they use it as motivation
	Blame		This subtheme did not come up nearly as frequently as the “stages of grief” might lead you to believe it would. In both instances that it did, the collaborator indicated that they blamed themselves.
	Grief as a motivator		This was a substantial theme among one collaborator whose mother died from medical racism. He stated that he uses this to motivate him to stay in school and try to get into Law. He wants to prevent this from happening to others and to his future generations.

Theme	Subtheme	Definition/Notes	Summary
What is their relationship to their culture? (this can look like: community, land, medicine, language, art, ceremony, and existing	They were involuntarily separated from their culture/cultural supports	By far the biggest category when looking at relationship to culture	This had a wide range of responses. Some people were separated because they moved to the city for either health or educational reasons. Some were involuntarily separated because of the 60s scoop or adoption. Some people state that their reserve is not a good place to be so they keep themselves or their children separated. Some were separated because their parents and/or grandparents attended residential school or day school and they had their culture beaten out of them, and they refused to share their cultural knowledge as a result. Some expressed that their families felt shame around their Indigenous knowledge and identity. Some also state that government policy (Bill C-31) separated them at some point along the way.
	What practicing their culture has looked like	I wanted to show the multitude of ways that Indigenous People engage in their	The biggest takeaway from this subtheme is what I had called epigenetics, but what

		culture and how this connects to the other themes of disconnect/reconnection and show the difference that it may make in those who say that they have unhealed grief that impedes them, and those who can use culture to support themselves in healing.	most people, independent of myself or each other, called blood-trauma or blood-memory. This refers to the knowledges and traumas of our ancestors that they inherently carry within their own DNA, that they use as support, or as a form of cultural knowledge.
	Reconnecting to their culture was or is occurring	There has been a great deal of talk about the reconnecting journeys for Indigenous People. Colonization has been a huge disrupter so most of us do engage in some form of reconnection. This can look like finding out where you come from if you were adopted or a 60s scooper, or learning more of your language and familial history, even if you grew up on your traditional lands or reservation. People grow up without knowledge of their histories and traditions for many reasons.	Reconnection comes for many reasons and through many avenues. Some people stated that they reconnected first in the work place (Adelyn, Dream). Some state that they did so through their Educational institution (Kim, OLB, Louie). I think that the importance of culturally relevant institutional support for people who are disconnected and/or aren't able to easily return home is huge. People are report having a person or persons that they connect to that support them, only showing the importance of community connection even more (for some this is an

			Elder, a co-worker, a boss, a teacher, an administrator). Relationality. Both blood-memory and community connection are relation ways of being and knowing.
	How culture and grief are intertwined	When people do have a cultural practice to engage in, they are found to access it during times of need.	Some people report cutting their hair, or smudging and praying when grieving. One very interesting revelation was from Magnolia, where she found that she had grief from not growing up on her lands and with her cultural practices, but simultaneously reported grief from accessing her culture because she is the only one in her family trying to walk the red road and it saddens her. She is also concerned that if she doesn't learn all of it, it dies with her.
	What the disconnect from their culture has looked like	This relates to what the disconnect looks like and how it manifests in the collaborators lives.	Some people state that they lose their spirituality when they're not home, that they don't feel like they can access culturally relevant support for grief because they were disconnected, and that their grief comes from not being able to

			access their land (which further shows how grief is interconnected with colonization).

Theme	Subtheme	Definitions/Notes	Summary
Lacking Cultural Supports	Lack of community is a lack of culturally relevant support	I would say that the lack of community appears to be one of the most fundamental, important things that collaborators stated was missing from their lives. In my experience, we are a collective, not individual-based culture. When we don't have other Indigenous People to be around, and act as community, however that may look, we struggle with loneliness and healing can be challenging.	The opportunity to grieve in community is missing, for many people in this study. Again, this connects back to colonization and cultural disconnect, in nearly every instance. Some (Jimmie) feel that their traditional ways of life and engaging in community and cultural practices have been irrevocably damaged. Some are engaging with cultural practices on their own, as no one else in their families are doing so. Some people wish they had more institutional forms of cultural support, such as in instances when they transferred schools and lost their community of Indigenous People they had built around them at other institutions. NAIT has a really good program.
	Access to land is missing	Land is an important part of many	People feel that city spaces and land

		Indigenous cultures. Many of us take our teachings, language, sustenance and even livelihoods from the land. This is a problem for urban Indigenous People who do not have access to their lands.	access for urban Indigenous People is at odds. However, people are here for good reason and deserve to thrive here too!
	Elders are missing from their lives	Elders are important members of the Indigenous community. They are knowledge holders and emotional support and guidance for many people.	Some people feel that they don't have Elders in their lives because of colonization. Jimmie mentions that he has no Elders once his grandmother passes, and just because someone ages in, doesn't make them an Elder. Others mention that toxic colonial practices that some Elders have absorbed make it difficult for them to feel safe accessing Elders for support. One person stated they tried to find an Elder through formal channels, like counselling or institutions, when they experienced grief, to no avail.
	Indigenous specific institutional support is missing	This occurred at both institutional levels, where people were unable to access relevant, easy to access, safe, affordable care during their grief, and this	People report not knowing how or where to access support, or that the institution that they are within does not offer it (Even when they state that they

		also refers to those who were unable to access community or land-based forms of support as well.	do). Rose speaks to this and not being able to smudge in buildings, and also about how she feels that Institutions have abandoned the reconciliation part of TRC. Also, Louie. He talks about institutional policies around bereavement and trauma. Nuphar states that while there are institutional supports available, they are often too difficult to access, they are not culturally relevant, and the stigma in the Indigenous community, around mental health, is too high.
	They are unable to engage in culture due to personal reasons		This only came up once, but it still deserves to be included. White Bear is unable to engage in fasting because they are in eating disorder recovery.
	Lateral violence prevents them from engaging culturally		Louie, White Bear, and Adelyn have all reported lateral violence as being harmful to their ways of being, and accessing their communities and other cultural spaces (Sweats)

	Societal failings		Due to compounding experiences of racism (see: compounding forms of grief) Louie feels that he is unable to safely access grief support.
	People are unable to access culturally relevant support due to finances or other colonial strains		People reported being unable to return to their traditional territories easily, and especially for wakes or funerals, as this is an unexpected expense and travel home can be prohibitively expensive.

Theme	**Subtheme**	**Definitions/Notes**	**Summary**
Institutional Forms of Grief Support	Formal grief support groups	This category is designed to show the breadth of formal grief support that the collaborators identified	People cited grief support groups, but most people did not feel comfortable sharing their grief in a group setting. It seems like peer-led grief support groups are the easiest to access. One person mentioned they attend weekly counselling sessions with an Indigenous counsellor (Jane).
	Culturally relevant support coming from education institutions	This, while not grief specific, is incurring some significant overlap with culturally relevant forms of grief support and is noted here because of it	Some forms of institutional support that have been meaningful/impactful : - Braided Journeys in high school - Having Indigenous

			houses in universities (NAIT, First People's House) - having Indigenous coordinators/administrators that support students accessing forms of education that will improve their lives (ATEP advisors, Administrators)
	Institutional support that has been available and/or adequate		Nuphar acknlowedged that there is a great deal of counselling support available for Indigenous People and that she keeps a list of who can be accessed and how. However, this was followed up with her saying she had to compile this list on her own and that most people don't know how to access it. Kim says she sees an Indigenous counsellor every week and that she found this helpful.
	Institutional support is inadequate		Some people (Nuphar, White Bear) expressed that even when support is available to them, it's not culturally relevant or Indigenous-led and this can make it feel ineffective to them.
	Institutional support		Adelyn and Dream

	that has led to cultural connection		reported that their reconnection journey was introduced and fostered by their Indigenous workplaces. Kim said that she began smudging more after regularly visiting the Indigenous centre at NAIT.

Theme	**Subtheme**	**Definitions/Notes**	**Summary**
Cultural aspects of grief support	Community connection is emotional and culturally relevant support (*note when it is a combination of institutional support and community support combined. Like associations or clubs or even Indigenous spaces within schools)	The biggest source of support that was reported in this study was community support. This can look like having a community of other Indigenous People around you wherever you are, or more specific community support from certain people and Elders on your own land, or working in Indigenous spaces.	People cite institutions, like educational ones, or ones that they work at, as a soure of community support. Community support is important because it is in our Indigenous nature to rely on others in community, and also for those in community to rely on us. We are not an individualistic society. We are only individuals through colonial separation. There is significant overlap with this category and colonization/upbringing. Those who are separated lack community and therefore lack meaningful healing.
	People find connection to support through blood memory		Some people state that they hold Indigenous knowledge,

			sometimes gotten through dream form, that has helped support them in their grief. Dreaming and interpreting dreams for guidance could be considered a culturally relevant way of making sense of the world. Some people state that the blood memory knowledge they hold comes from DNA, and some say it comes directly to them from their ancestors.
	Art is cultural connection and grief support	With these cultural aspects, I am noticing that people either work alone, but with cultural items or practices, or they tap into community as an important cultural support. Because community = culture. We are not an individual society. But people are most commonly citing a cultural habit or practice as their biggest source of support.	Dream states that grief support can be found by accessing art. Some people (White Bear, S1, Adelyn) say that accessing art, even when they are separated from their community, provides meaningful connection to their culture. Art is beading, painting, or sewing, in each of these cases.
	ceremony is healing		Ceremony can take on many forms, from sweats, to cutting your hair in grief, to being given special roles (breath of fire, or traditional bundle),

			dancing in pow wow, to even engaging in Catholic ceremony for the finality to life-death cycles that it can offer
	Dreaming is a form of grief support and cultural connection		This is something that Dream, Mabel, and White Bear all cited as a form of grief support. They access ancestral knowledge and make peace with the deceased in dream form, and they all report healing from this experience.
	The support of an Elder is important	In Indigenous culture, Elders play an important role for support and knowledge.	White Bear, Magnolia and Kim all acknowledge that Elders can be a form of support, however, not all have access to them.
	Indigenous humor		Nuphar, Kim, and Mabel all share that Indigenous humor, and being able to laugh at the difficult stuff together, is a form of support and healing.
	Institutional Indigenous Support (school, counsellor, etc)	This is another example of enmeshing institution and culture to generate results	This can come in the form of Indigenous specific counsellors accessed through schools, or even inclusive bereavement policy. This also overlaps with institutional or formal forms of

			support (see yellow code). Some spaces even have Elders in institutions available for people.
	Connection to language is cultural support		Adelyn reported that learning her language has given her a strong sense of support, and pride.
	Access to land is healing (this can include their traditional territory, or just spaces of nature)		As urban Indigenous People, many feel that their connection to the healing aspect of the land has been disrupted or severed. Even for those who do access the land around here, if they aren't from here it isn't as meaningful.

Theme	**Subtheme**	**Definitions/Notes**	**Summary**
Background (This is relevant because Indigenous People often have experiences in their upbringing that are shared within this population, yet unique to it as well. For example, being adopted, raised in foster care, or having a parent(s) who attended residential school. This can impact/add to their grief.)	People grew up disconnected from their community and culture (adoption, 60s scoop, millennial scoop, foster care, health reasons, education reasons)		Disconnection takes multiple forms within this study. It can look like, but is not limited to: adoption, 60s scoop, moving for health reasons, moving for education, parental shame around identity and of their reservation
	impacts of community/familial		Larger impacts of disconnection:

	disconnection		imposter syndrome, intergenerational trauma, being in survival mode, culture shock, not having solid roots, not knowing where one comes from, being disenfranchised legally, experiencing lateral violence when they do return/go to community.
	Colonization as the disrupter to community and cultural connection	This is meant to show the continuing, far reaching, interwoven impacts of colonization on Indigenous People and our healing from compounding, intergenerational grief.	People identify colonization as: - being responsible for all of the disconnect that they feel. - as being unsuccessfully in fully eradicating them and their culture. - being responsible for the violence in their home/parents home - being responsible for making their lands inaccessible (turning their trapline into a campground) - money and trying to succeed or survive in a colonial world increases barriers to cultural and land-based connection. - moving to larger urban centre to get a colonial education, which, it could be argued, some people feel is necessary for their success, even

			back home.
	history of substance dependency (often related to grief or trauma)	This overlaps with numbing the pain, and impacts of colonization	People report either themselves, or their immediate family (parents, children, grandparents, siblings) as having challenges with substance dependency. (okay but how is this relevant to grief?)
	Unstable home life growing up	This is relevant because it commonly ties into intergenerational trauma, which in the case of Indigenous People, relates to colonization, and then has adverse impact on grief and healing from it.	One direct connection between grief and trauma was in Maria's story. Her mother stabbed herself "for a man" and Maria was deeply impacted by witnessing the happenings around this stabbing (hospital visits). When she became an adult she did the same thing to herself, while acknowledging she had grief from her mother putting men first so severely that she would stab herself for a man. - People also report that they faced a lot of anger from their parents when they were growing up, anger that they themselves attributed to residential school (Kim, Nuphar, Jane)
	Family/community		Both Rose and

	support was available to them during their upbringing		Adelyn cite the loving relationship that they had with their mothers (both of whom passed) as a source of strength and resilience for them.
	racism experienced growing up		In some cases, like with Louie who lost his mother to medical racism, racism is directly linked to grief. Others, such as Adelyn, reported that they were hesitant to identify as Indigenous when they were younger for fear or racism. Mabel described being put down every day for being Indigenous, after her family became disenfranchised when leaving their reservation.
	lateral violence experienced growing up		Those, such as Adelyn or White Bear, feel that lateral violence has/had prevented them from returning home more often. This lateral violence (I would argue it is a symptom of colonialism) perpetuated disconnects for them.

Theme	**Subtheme**	**Definitions/Notes**	**Summary**
Colonization	People state that colonialism has	These are examples of ways that	The following is overlap from

	negatively impacted their life and ability to grieve	colonialism (medical racism, residential school, day school, the university as an institution, institutional policies, etc) has impacted their lives. It is important to look at what occurs in conjunction with this code. Often times you will find that "colonialism" may be connected to times when grief support is lacking, or to compounding grief, for example. What are the connections and are they plentiful enough that meaningful patterns are emerging?	background: People identify colonization as: - being responsible for all of the disconnect that they feel. - as being unsuccessfully in fully eradicating them and their culture. - being responsible for the violence in their home/parents home - being responsible for making their lands inaccessible (turning their trapline into a campground) - money and trying to succeed or survive in a colonial world increases barriers to cultural and land-based connection. - moving to larger urban centre to get a colonial education, which, it could be argued, some people feel is necessary for their success, even back home. Other things: People cite disruption from colonization being responsible for what they feel like is the total loss of their cultural knowledge. Jimmie, for example, feels that such a complete job has been done that there is

			nothing to return to but bastardized versions of culture. - People such as S1 feel that colonization robbed them of the culture and they grieve this. Same with Magnolia. People like S1 also feel disenfranchised for not having their status cards. - people share that their relations had/have shame for their identity and did not or refused to pass culture down.
	Lateral violence from colonialism		Louie and Adelyn found it difficult to return to their communities because of the lateral violence they experienced there, in Louie's case, or Adelyn felt that people were being unkind called her a gypsy when she felt lost and was wandering after her mother died. She identified this as lateral violence.

Theme	**Subtheme**	**Definitions/Notes**	**Summary**
Remedies	Sometimes people outright stated what they felt was the answer to the lack of grief support, and sometimes people indicated what it is		- Art should be front and centre - tangible reconciliation at the institutional level - access to culturally appropriate mental

	that they might want based off of what cultural supports were lacking to them. I began to ask this question more as the study progressed, and I should have included it in the original question guide. This was an oversight.		health professionals. - easily accessible mental health care. - access to land in meaningful ways (ceremonial space, medicine picking, land-based teachings) - traditional parenting spaces and workshops. - other Indigenous People. - the opportunity to talk with a trained peer in a one-on-one environment. - financial support - culturally relevant bereavement support in institutions - community connection