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Indigenous Knowledge and the Battle River Cree Warrior

by

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Abstract

This study is a remembering and a regeneration of a specific segment of Cree Indigenous knowledge within Cree communities located along the Battle River in Saskatchewan and Alberta. This asks the question: “*What is the Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree warrior?*” and is based on personal experiences of the researcher and interviews with Cree traditional knowledge teachers from Battle River Cree communities. The research processes were carried out with adherence to traditional Cree ways of obtaining knowledge. Through discussions and analyses of available data, and supported by two Indigenous knowledge holders, the researcher develops the work to demonstrate the connections between ancient Cree knowledge and the formation of a warrior identity. This works and then expands this to include a brief discussion of the traditional ways that warriors were and continue to be perceived within the context of battle River Cree communities.

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Introduction to Study

The topic of this study is to validate, remember, and regenerate Indigenous Knowledge (IK), specifically Cree, regarding the Cree warrior. Indigenous knowledge is acquired through thousands of years of lived experience by Indigenous communities within a certain geographical location and is therefore unique to a specific culture, land and people. The scope of Indigenous knowledge is vast as it speaks to a people's ways of knowing and being in relation to their environment. IK also plays an important role in defining the identity of the community. It represents all the skills and innovations of a people and embodies the collective wisdom and resourcefulness of the community (UNEP, 2012). The Indigenous Cree knowledge remembered within this study is specific to the Battle River Cree communities located along the Battle River in Saskatchewan and Alberta. These communities and their Indigenous Cree knowledge are part of the larger collective of Cree people on this continent..

This study asks: What is the Indigenous Knowledge of the Cree warrior? The importance of remembering and regenerating the IK of the Battle River Cree warrior is integral to the enrichment of Indigenous education and Indigenous realities. This study examines how the IK of the Cree warrior has contributed to the survival of the Cree and also unpacks how colonialism has been detrimental to Cree people and IK. The knowledge specific to the warrior and the teachings found within the IK relevant to the warrior have been essential to a warrior identity.

Prior to colonization BRC communities were intact. All the sectors of the communities' institutions, such as the warriors' lodge and the roles of the warrior, were defined and respected. However, much of the IK and the warrior teachings have been disconnected from many warriors, communities and individuals alike as a result of colonization and assimilation. This continues to have devastating effects on Indigenous youth. There is a great need to re-member our own history and ways of being. Tengan (2008) describes re-membering as a deliberate action to remember and regenerate Indigenous ways of knowing and being that were so violently dis-membered through colonization (p.77). Recovering our own stories of the past will greatly contribute to the success of our future. "It is through knowing our past, that we can come to know ourselves; if a man understands himself, his heart is strong to meet the difficulties of life" (Ahenakew, p. 71, 1995). The present research study aims to incorporate and validate IK into the academy and society, as well as to re-member IK regarding the River Cree Warrior.

Indigenous Knowledge has been marginalized within educational institutions and society; however, Indigenous intellectuals and researchers have been calling for the need to make space for IK as a legitimate and authentic form of knowledge. Kovach (2009) has identified the homogenous nature of the academy. "The infusion of Indigenous knowledge systems and research frameworks informed by the distinctness of cultural epistemologies transforms homogeneity. It not only provides another environment where Indigenous knowledge systems can live, but changes the nature of the academy itself." (p.

12). Making space for IK as a valid and legitimate form of knowledge within educational institutions is a vital task because there is more than one way of knowing and being. Indigenous knowledge counters the homogeneity found within the academy.

Furthermore, making space for IK within the academy as a legitimate form of knowledge is also a form of resistance. Colonialism privileges western knowledge, and therefore attempts to eradicate IK. Research within the academy plays an integral role in the colonization process because it defines what is accepted as legitimate knowledge. Research is identified as a battle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of Indigenous people (Smith, 1999). Research that is centered on IK carves space within the academy, while also denaturalizing dominant narratives on what is considered a legitimate form of research. Centering this study on Indigenous knowledge contributes to the work needed to carve space for Indigenous knowledge within the academy.

Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to honor and re-member the IK of the Cree warrior. In honoring the wisdom based upon thousands of years of lived experience within this territory, the people are also honored. Embarking on this research and throughout all the processes that have led up to this project/study, I have relied upon the teachings and IK held within my family. The Cree word, *Ahkamaymo*, translated loosely, means to never give up. This word has carried me through many struggles and has helped me to not only sustain, but also to strive. The hope and direction found within the meaning of *Ahkamaymo* is based on a teaching of the warrior, which teaches to look within, to dig deep, and to ask for help from the Creator, and most of all, to never give up because there is always a way and a solution. This is just one teaching found within IK; it holds power and strength, is applicable in contemporary society, and speaks to my identity as a Cree woman. It is a profound teaching that is able to speak to our spirits. This is the importance of IK; it has power to speak to the spirit and identity of the people. Honoring and re-membering IK of the warrior is the purpose of this study.

My Research Paradigm

This section describes certain parameters that loosely constrain the content of the work, and at the same time can be useful in guiding the reader through the study. A brief discussion of the research paradigm underlying this work could begin with a definition by Wilson (2001) who describes a research paradigm as “a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that goes together to

guide people's actions as to how they are going to go about doing research” (p.175). This particular research is guided by my Cree way of *how I know what I know*, my Cree way of *being*, and my Cree way of *doing*. This research paradigm is admittedly then a paradigm of my knowledge as a Cree woman. I am not an expert in traditional knowledge, nor am I an Elder. I am limited by my lived experiences and I am young in my own Indigenous education; however, *how I know, how I am, and how I do* is reflected strongly in this research.

My Cree way of *how I know what I know*, or Cree *theory of knowledge*, or Cree *epistemology* is grounded in and guided by how I understand and live out my spirituality and spiritual relationships (J. Starr, personal communication, May 2012), (B. Weenie, personal communication, May 2012). The spiritual component of knowledge involves the processes of ceremony and prayer. Spiritual relationships are developed through ceremony and prayer. In my experience, I have developed a relationship with the Creator (or Great Spirit) and my spiritual grandfather (or spiritual guardian) through ceremony and prayer. Spirituality and spiritual relationships are intrinsic to a Cree identity and have been inherent to my own understandings of who I am as a Cree woman. Because I have these relationships and have lived through experiences based on those relationships, the Cree knowledge system as grounded in spirituality is embedded within me as more than a belief system. It is what I refer to as the Cree epistemology; this is in alignment with the description provided by Cree Scholar Willie Ermine (1995) who writes:

Aboriginal epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be

grounded in the spirit. Knowledge must be sought through the stream of the inner space in unison with all instruments of knowing and condition that make individuals receptive to knowledge. Ultimately it was in the self that Aboriginal people discovered great resources for coming to grips with life's mysteries. It was in the self that the richest source of information could be found by delving into the metaphysical and the nature and origin of knowledge. Aboriginal epistemology speaks of pondering great mysteries that lie no further than the self. (p.108)

This Cree Indigenous knowledge system, built upon spirituality, guides *how I know* what I know and provides the epistemological base for this work.

A requirement of this Cree knowledge system or way of knowing requires me to know *how I am related*. Karen Martin (2008) describes “knowing who you are” and “where you come from” as core conditions of a way of knowing. She says “that is to know your stories of relatedness, the individual and communal stories and through this, your identities unfold” (p.72). My research topic was chosen because of who I am and where I come from. The stories I grew up with are based on my own peoples’ experiences and understandings of what makes a Cree warrior. My family comes from persons who have identified themselves as warriors, and who have been identified as warriors by others in the community. The participants within this research are my father and my grandfather. I chose them, or rather they chose and trusted me with their knowledge and stories because they know me, and they know where I come from. These stories that were told to me have contributed to my identity in ways that are as strong as the ways that my relatives have contributed. Warriors, as I have been taught to think and understand,, are the protectors of our communities and people; they take care of us, and they ensure our survival as Cree people. I know who I am and where I

come from based on the stories that have been told to me and the experiences I have lived as a member of my community. The stories that have been passed on within my family are the reasons that I chose to carry out this research; I am seeking to understand more deeply and to share the knowledge that I have been given about Cree Indigenous knowledge and warrior identities.

Epistemology is always inter-connected with ontology. In this research, I can ask myself, *how am I being* in this research? Part of my *being* in this research is believing in a Cree belief system. This belief in who I am, where I come from, the teachings held within my belief system, and the principals of my belief system heavily influence my understandings of what exists in the world (Hart, 2010).

An aspect of my *being* in this research helped to determine what I chose to include within this research and why. The most obvious choice was to speak only about male warriors, and not about female warriors. The context of this decision is the knowledge I have acquired through reviews of Indigenous peoples histories on this continent. Indigenous peoples have experienced over 500 years of colonization and during these years, survived attempts of cultural, linguistic, epistemologic and physical genocide (Wright, 1992). These colonization processes also broke down Indigenous communities through destruction and attacks on communal roles and how these were understood, structured, and lived out within Indigenous communities. Specific to destruction of male and female aspects of Indigenous communal roles, Moreton-Robinson (2000), Sockbeson (2011), and Smith (2005) have discussed how patriarchy has been a tool of colonization. Within the constructs of patriarchy, Indigenous families and

communities have been dismantled through physical and sexual violence.

Women have had to endure much of the physical and sexual abuse bestowed upon them through the colonial tool of patriarchy(Smith, 2005).

Discussion and analysis of how Indigenous men have also suffered from this same colonial tool has been carried out to a much lesser degree. Although the scholars listed above did discuss briefly how patriarchy has affected Indigenous men, my review of the literature on this topic indicates a gap that requires formal address. The focus of my study on the identity of a Cree warrior and its links with Cree Indigenous knowledge is an attempt to contribute to this gap in knowledge about Indigenous men and the impacts of colonization on their lives. Indigenous scholars such as Anderson, Innes, and Swift (2012) are some of few who have begun to address this problem:

As Indigenous scholars committed to the healing of our peoples, we...explore Indigenous masculinities in the spirit of what Mousseau described as relearning what it means to be an Indigenous man. This is a process of thinking about how and why patriarchy was introduced to our communities, of considering how it has contributed to violence and social dysfunction among our peoples, and of looking to our traditional cultures to dig up what we can about healthy Indigenous masculinities.....

“What roles and responsibilities did Indigenous men have in the past?; What happened to our men’s identities and masculinities as a result of colonization?; Where are we at today?; and “What do our men need to move forward in terms of being healthy Indigenous males?”. p. 2

Patriarchy has gravely affected all aspects of Indigenous communities and families.

Within the scope of my research, a second reason that I have chosen to speak to the experiences of men is because I have often witnessed the effects of colonization on Indigenous males, and I have observed through formal studies that little attention has been paid in terms of research, and other forms of direct and indirect support to Indigenous males. On a personal level, as a single mother, I have been supported in many ways as a Cree woman; I see the father of my children, and other Indigenous single fathers without a similar kind of support. I look at my son, and I wonder how I can teach him to be a man. There are minimal or no linkages in place to make connections or to support Indigenous fathers (or Indigenous mothers, for that matter) to make connections with Indigenous masculinities. In analyzing the impacts of colonization on Indigenous men, I have noted that much more knowledge and understanding is required before sufficient space –intellectual as well as other types – is provided to support Indigenous men in remembering and re-learning the Indigenous knowledge that is critical to their identities. This is the basis for my choice of research topic and the reason for establishing parameters to focus primarily on the male aspect of a warrior identity. This is a topic that is close to my heart because *how I write*, and *who I write for* are the men in my life: the father of my children, my brothers, my son, my family and my nation.

In connection to *how I know* and *how I am* is *how I do* this research. *How I do* this research is linked to my morals and ethics (Wilson, 2001). These are embedded within my epistemology and ontology. As an Indigenous researcher, I am also the researched and therefore subjected and experienced within this

research (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). The emotional and intellectual challenges to this position are immense since I as indigenous researcher cannot simply engage as an external observer of phenomenon outside of myself. Therefore, and because this position greatly affects *how I do* this research, I rely upon and follow the traditional Indigenous teachings of my own people in order to be protected and supported as I carry out my research program, including asking for and receiving knowledge. For protection and to ensure good understanding, accuracy and reliable knowledge, I adhere to the protocols and the ceremonies that are necessary and conducive to learning in a traditional Cree way. I have been taught by Elders and Indigenous knowledge teachers that there is a process to learning, and if the results are to benefit our people, then I must follow our traditional ways. Although I use the stories of my father and grandfather in this research, the work is not intended to be about them; it is intended for the betterment of Cree families and communities. The work of other Indigenous scholars continued to provide guidance that re-directed me back to my own people as the most reliable source of knowledge for carrying out and validating the outcomes of my own study (Ermine, 1998; Sockbeson, 2011; Wilson, 2001; Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

In offering this Cree research paradigm as a means of describing the parameters I established for this research journey, I have explained *how I know* what I know, based upon the spiritual teachings I have; I have also discussed *how I am* within this research, and *how I do* the research. *How I know, how I am and how I do* are connected and deeply related with each other, and work together in this research paradigm.

Context

In order to understand the necessity of Indigenous knowledge to the Cree warrior, the history around colonization, resistance, and Identity must be explained.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans both the warrior society and their communities were equipped and balanced as a nation, secure in their traditions and identity. The warrior role was defined and respected, and the warriors and their community had the spiritual component and IK teachings intact. In traditional times those who were warriors were considered noble and honorable because of their willingness to protect their nation at all costs. However, the arrival of Europeans brought much change and devastation to Indigenous communities. Land theft, warfare, disease and starvation contributed to more than 90% of Indigenous population depletion throughout North America (Wright, 1992).

Although there were many different means used by European expansionists to ensure the success of colonization, residential schools proved to be most effective. The first residential school in Canada opened in the mid 1800's. The last residential school, located at Gordon's reserve in Saskatchewan, closed in 1996 (Health Canada, 2010). The reign of the residential school system in Canada was a system that indoctrinated First Nation children, against the will of the families and communities, with an assimilative European worldview (Fletcher, 2008). Children were abused for speaking their Indigenous language and were forced to learn English (Thomas, 2000) . Their ceremonies and ways of worship

were banned and replaced with a foreign religion, the role of their home community was removed and relationships with family were disengaged; children were forced to live with strangers (Thomas, 2008). In the attempt to 'kill the Indian and save the man', residential schools performed cultural and linguistic genocide (TCIGC, 2001).

The residential schools and the continuance of colonization have disconnected the links that supported the warriors. Education policies affecting Indian people undermined Indian cultures in a fundamental manner that military conquest, fraudulent land transactions, and poverty could not (Fletcher, 2008). The severed connection between Indigenous people and Indigenous knowledge continues to disrupt the lives of Indigenous people. James Youngblood Henderson (2008) describes the current situation as such:

Four hundred years of colonialism around the earth was a process of conscious choice supported by manipulated facts on the part of the colonizers. These 400 years have had tragic consequences for Indigenous peoples. The consequences are more than mere conquest or the exercise of tyrannical power, slavery, and genocide; they go to the forced cognitive extinction. After the British treaties, the colonizers created a systemic colonialism and racism that estranged Indigenous peoples from their beliefs, languages, families, and identities; that deprived Indigenous peoples of their dignity, their confidence, their souls, and even their shadows. (p.29)

Colonial ideologies systemically disconnect instrumental Indigenous traditional teachings from those who possess the Indigenous warrior spirit; without the traditional Indigenous teachings, those who possess the warrior spirit have been robbed of vital components of their identity.

Emma Laroque (2010), an Indigenous scholar, asks an intriguing question in her text, “What happens to a people whose very essence has been soaked in stereotypes for half a millennium?” (p.121). This question needs to be applied to the lives of many Indigenous youth who, unfortunately, have carried the stereotype of being both “great warriors and vicious savages” (Sheffield, 2007) as a result of being drenched in negative stereotypes and denied the IK needed to speak to their identity.

Statistics concerning Indigenous youth illustrate that there is a major problem. It could be argued this is a result of Indigenous youth being engrossed in negative stereotypes, and also lacking IK. Indigenous children are more likely to go to prison than to finish high school (NPFN, 2011). Indigenous people in the Prairie Provinces make up 60% of offenders (OCI, 2010). Indigenous youth, where males are more likely to join a gang than females, are also over represented within gangs. The percentage ranges from 58% in Manitoba and Alberta to 96% in Saskatchewan (RCMP, 2002). These statistics suggest that Indigenous youth are not armed with the knowledge necessary, IK, to make choices that enhance and enrich their lives. The current state of Indigenous men, according to statistics, warrants research attention. Puxley defines the experiences of negative stereotypes that many Indigenous youth endure, and that can result in Indigenous youth entering the prison system and / or gangs as “A lengthy colonial experience (which) not only deprives people of their right to define their experience authentically, but even deprives them of consciousness of such a right” (as cited in Larocque, 2010, p.121).

Puxley's notion of depriving Indigenous consciousness of the opportunity to define its own experience (as cited in Laroque, 2010) is similar to Youngblood Henderson's *cognitive extinction* (2008). It could be argued both Puxley's and Youngblood Henderson's concepts result from an absence of Indigenous knowledge. The absence of IK is equated to the estrangement of beliefs, languages, families and identities. Colonialism has chiseled away at Indigenous belief systems, languages, families and identities and has attempted to replace them with foreign belief systems, languages, families and identities. These colonial attempts have had devastating effects on the Indigenous consciousness. Indigenous knowledge is the medicine necessary to survive the deprivation of the consciousness or the cognitive extinction (Alfred, 2005). Indigenous knowledge is knowledge that has been passed on through hundreds of generations, and has been specifically tailored for Indigenous people. IK offers the knowledge to survive physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. IK provides the knowledge to survive off the land, and the teachings embedded within are teachings that strengthen and guide. IK is necessary for Indigenous survival.

Throughout the changes Indigenous peoples have been forced to face through the process of colonialism, the battles fought by warrior societies have also changed. Indigenous nations have altered from warring and raiding with other Indigenous nations, to warring with an ideological beast. In traditional times, the enemy of the Cree was the Blackfoot. However, today the common enemy of a bigger beast has calmed the war between these two communities. Alfred and Lowe (2005) describes contemporary warriors as "a means by which

Indigenous peoples take direct action against colonization and the history of their dispossession” (pg. 3). The adjustment made by Indigenous warrior societies is one through which they are no longer evading and performing territorial attacks and raids on other Indigenous nations, but are rather fighting to protect their land and way of being from the settler society and its colonial ideologies. The face of the enemy has changed; it is no longer ‘who’ they are warring against, but ‘what’ they are warring against. The war is between IK and colonialism, with IK battling against cultural and spiritual genocide, assimilation, and identity crises as these are carried along through colonialism.

The historical as well as the contemporary context of the reality of on-going colonization illustrates the need for and also the power of Indigenous knowledge. IK is integral to both Indigenous people and the Cree warrior alike.

Educational Significance and Justification of Study

This study has the potential to benefit policy that informs Indigenous education. Currently, there is a high dropout rate for Indigenous students. St. Denis (2007) has indicated that Indigenous youth are not quitting school; they are being forced out because of racism. Racism embedded in a curriculum that privileges western knowledge and marginalizes IK and history from Indigenous perspectives has proved to be a major factor in forcing Indigenous youth out of school. Informing policy that effects Indigenous education with Indigenous knowledge would ensure Indigenous education is more relevant to Indigenous youth.

Giving Indigenous youth and communities the opportunity to learn the IK that has become disconnected from them through colonization, also allows Indigenous peoples to reconnect with the teachings that help them to understand their world. The strength and power of IK in regards to Indigenous identity, healing, mobilizing, and decolonizing has been discussed in depth (Kovach, 2009), (Makokis, 2009), (Smith, 1999), (Sockbeson-Cardinal, 2011), (Tengan, 2008), (Thomas, 2000), & (Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

Chapter 1: Methodology

An Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) theoretical framework is the framework used throughout this research project. There are many reasons why I chose this particular methodology. IRM as a framework is guided by Cree ways of knowing and being, it allows for an unpacking of colonialism, and it includes my location as the researcher within the research. The most integral reason as to why I choose IRM as a theoretical framework is mainly because it is guided by an Indigenous, specifically a Cree, Epistemology. Positioning a Battle River Cree epistemology as an integral beam of the framework calls for a voice from the perspective of the Cree; it legitimizes that voice, history and truth.

At the same time, using IRM as a theoretical framework also allows for an unpacking of colonialism; I can analyze how colonialism affects the everyday reality of Indigenous peoples, of my community and also myself. Of equal importance and in connection to the unpacking of colonialism that is required as part of this framework, IRM as theoretical framework pushed me with great intensity to unpack and analyze who I am in this research project because it acknowledges me as the researcher and requires me to examine and be aware of how my beliefs and values impact my research. IRM as a theoretical framework provides answers and guidance specific and intrinsic to Indigenous ways of knowing and being; it enables Indigenous people to deconstruct and understand their contemporary realities, and it addresses researchers as integral part of the research.

IRM as a Theoretical Framework Guided by an Indigenous Epistemology

IRM as a theoretical framework is one that is centered on an Indigenous epistemology (Kovach, 2009). The epistemological methodology of research profoundly shapes a project, beginning with what is deemed worthy of researching, what questions are asked, how they are asked, and how the data is analyzed (Smith, 2002). This research is shaped by a Cree epistemology. Held in high regard within Cree ways of knowing and being is the Warrior. The warriors were honored, respected and vital to our communities, and this topic is deemed worthy of research because of the importance of the warrior to Cree communities.

All knowledge included within this study was privileged based upon the importance and relevance to the epistemology. Participants who shared their knowledge of the warrior were chosen based upon community members' high regard of those who held such information. Secondary sources of information were gathered based upon a direct connection to the Cree.

The questions asked within this study are also in alignment with a Cree epistemology. The leading question asked of the Indigenous knowledge holders was, "what would you like your community and other communities to know about the warrior?" This question re-directs the power of the research. "The term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism", and to many Indigenous communities, the word research is a dirty word (Smith, p.1, 1999). Research has disempowered Indigenous people by shifting the power of who holds the knowledge, who represents the knowledge, and how the knowledge

is interpreted. Many Indigenous communities have suffered from policies derived from research that held imperialist intents. However, asking the research participants / IK holders what knowledge they feel is important, and what knowledge they are willing to share, gives the power back to the knowledge holder. In this research, the researcher is the learner, and the participants are the teachers, the knowledge holders, the honored, the valued, and the respected. The goal of an Indigenous research methodological framework is to position the power and the benefit in the direction of the Indigenous.

With the goal of benefiting the Indigenous, this research was analyzed through a Cree epistemology. It is a belief that we are a spiritual people, and in everything we do, we should ask for help and guidance from the Creator, our spiritual grandfathers, and our ancestors. Ceremony and prayer were linked to every step of the writing process and guided the analysis.

IRM Framework Themes and Accountability

Within this IRM framework, there are four major themes: decolonization, mobilization, healing, and transformation (Smith, 1999). Decolonization as a theme in this project is not as much of a goal as it is a result of knowing, validating, and legitimizing the Cree warrior's way of knowing and being. This research and its framework address the ways in which the state has systematically disrupted every aspect of Indigenous peoples' lives. Through various avenues, the colonization of Indigenous peoples has resulted in a disconnection between Indigenous people and our culture and ways of knowing and being. As an Indigenous researcher, it is my goal to disrupt the various forms of colonization.

This is done through a critical unpacking of colonialism, which examines how the state perpetrated colonization. Through colonization Indigenous institutions have been severely compromised, our knowledge has been delegitimized, our families fractured, our communities shattered, our history and stories mocked, and our languages endangered.

Through my research and writing I strive to re-member. Tengan (2008) explains that re-membering involves the reunification of elements of Indigenous culture and society that has have been dis-membered. Attempting to validate and legitimize Indigenous knowledge and institutions, bring forward the stories and ways of our ancestors, and apply this knowledge and wisdom in our contemporary realities, is the central goal of this project. This goal includes the process/act of decolonization.

Another theme found within this IRM framework is mobilization. Mobilization in an Indigenous context is knowledge of oppression, and knowledge of identity, culture, ways of knowing and being that bring healing and transformation (Sockbeson, 2011). An Indigenous knowledge of oppression is knowledge acquired by an Indigenous person of the colonialism and subjugation they have experienced. This knowledge of oppression is essential to empowerment because it unpacks colonialism. It addresses how and why colonialism happens. Indigenous people who have the knowledge needed to unpack how racism, colonization, and imperialism work have more tools to battle oppression. Therefore oppression has less power over an Indigenous mind (Sockbeson, 2011). Indigenous knowledge of an Indigenous identity, which

includes their history, their truth, their stories, and their epistemological framework, is the knowledge needed to provide strength and sustenance. This also provides the substance and energy needed to mobilize.

The last themes found within this IRM framework are healing and transformation. Healing and transformation occur out of the process as they flow from decolonization and mobilization. Healing and transformation are part of the accountability of the research. This research is held accountable to such principles as a) the interconnectedness of all living things, b) the impact of motives and intentions on persons and communities, c) the foundation of research as a lived Indigenous experience, d) the groundedness of theories in Indigenous epistemologies, e) the transformative nature of research, f) the sacredness and responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity, g) the recognition of languages and culture as living processes (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). Each principle listed is to ensure this research meets the standards of IRM. Healing and transformation are the tangible results felt and seen by Indigenous communities.

A Battle River Cree epistemology encapsulated in an Indigenous research methodological framework guides this study. This framework was accountable to such principles listed by Weber-Pillwax (1999) and heavily influenced how I analyzed this research, which directly informed the outcomes of this research. The deconstruction of both the secondary and primary sources was done in a way that forefronted the larger picture. The larger picture of this study is that Indigenous knowledge is threatened, and therefore so are the ways of knowing and being of the Plains Cree. As an Indigenous researcher, it is my goal and

passion to elevate Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing and being. All analysis undertaken within this study sought to critically question the power of dominant and hegemonic ideologies present and promoted within Western intellectual institutions of schooling and higher learning, and, and to counter those ideologies with evidence of the presence and sustainability of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

This goal changed my intended outcome of this study. Before this research was completed, I believed that I would be learning sacred knowledge that would influence Indigenous identities and help to inform policies that effect Indigenous education. Although, this is still an outcome of this study, I have also concluded that as an Indigenous researcher, I must live to what I have been taught through this sacred knowledge. What I have learned through this study is that the process of gaining Indigenous knowledge is extremely important and necessary. I regard my traditions with the highest respect and value, and therefore I cannot seek the easy route to knowledge and learning. The process of gaining Indigenous knowledge requires a commitment of personal time and energy; however, I know that I would not be able to fully benefit from the meanings within the Indigenous knowledge without having undergone the process. Constant reflection of the self along with checking the heart to ensure that my motives and actions are in alignment with the teachings I received also ensured that my research will benefit my community, and will not hinder or detract, or mistakenly contribute to community disintegration. . This is one important way that the principles of Indigenous research methodology guided this work.

Grounding the Researcher

In order to ground my research, it is imperative that readers understand what my motivations are personally, and academically, and how my Battle River Cree epistemology has greatly affected my research. Knowing my motives as a researcher is intrinsic to my particular research as this study is guided by an agenda and is accountable to certain principals that derive from an Indigenous epistemology. My agenda is encapsulated in the themes of an IRM framework, healing, decolonization, transformation, and mobilization (Smith, 1999).

As an Indigenous person who has experienced many of the realities that Indigenous people have been forced to endure, and as an Indigenous mother, this agenda is the future for my loved ones. I have felt what it feels like to be disconnected from my culture and language. I have felt what it feels like to have a father, and a partner, and brothers locked up in the penitentiary system for many years. I have felt what it feels like when someone inflicts terrible violence on my loved ones. I have felt what it feels like to have a broken home. I have felt what it feels like to struggle for the basic necessities of life. I have felt what it feels like to have no hope. I also know what it feels like to be strong. I know what it feels like to be connected. I know what it feels like to overcome. I know what it feels like to have hope. I know what it feels like to know who I am. I know that I come from ancestors that were strong and whole. I know that I can, that my family can, that my community can, and that my nation can be strong and whole again. This is my agenda.

My agenda, as well as the principles listed by Cree/Metis intellectual, Dr. Weber-Pillwax, are fundamental to my River Cree epistemology, as well as the integrity of this project.

Self Location

In this section, I am sharing who I am, where I come from, and why I did this research, both to benefit the research itself and my own experience as an Indigenous researcher. I am also sharing a story I wrote about my family and upbringing. This story is integral in locating myself as it illustrates why I am doing this research. Absolon and Willett (2009) proclaim, “Self location anchors knowledge within experience and these experiences greatly influence interpretation” (as cited in Kovach, p. 111). Locating myself in this research is in alignment with an IRM theoretical framework, and illustrates how my worldview affects this research.

Tansi, my name is Rochelle Starr. I am from Little Pine First Nation, located in Northwestern Saskatchewan. I am the Daughter of Rhenda Braun of German decent, and John Starr, a Battle River Cree from Little Pine First Nation. My late grandparents, Thomas Paul and Ruth Starr, are also from Little Pine First Nation. My children, Chris, Heavenly and Shylah Starr-Horse are from Thunderchild First Nation, SK, where their father is from.

My family background is the reason why I chose this research. I have always been told that I come from a long line of warriors. Not beginning with, but most notable, is Big Bear. My late grandmother, Ruth, is a direct descendant of his. Big Bear is notable because in our territory he is considered a great warrior

and leader. His wisdom and knowledge stretched beyond his years. Although there has been much research done on the legacy of Big Bear and his resistance to the Treaty, some of the oral history that exists in my family has not been uncovered. Research has depicted him as a fallen warrior who had lost much of the respect of his tribe (Dempsey, 2006). The oral history that I have heard tells a different narrative.

The narrative that is alive and well in my family, explains that Big Bear was willing to die for his people. This type of thinking and, more specifically, these ways of being, are embedded in the warrior epistemology of the Battle River Cree. As I have heard my father and Elders speak about many of the ceremonies, where we learn about struggle, they always remind us that we have to be prepared to die. This way of being doesn't mean that we have a disregard for life; rather it is a courageous love for the Creator, our people, and our land.

When thinking about the Creator and the land we are from, sometimes it's difficult to convey the relationship. It was once explained to me that the relationship that we have with the Creator, our spiritual grandfathers and our land is just like the relationship that we have with our loved ones. The relationship requires time, energy, love, giving, and receiving. This is the role of ceremonies. This is where we give our time and energy, and receive knowledge, healing, and love. This is where we build a relationship with the Creator, our spiritual grandfather, and the land.

Our relationship with the Creator, our people, and the willingness to put comforts on hold in order to grow and become a stronger people, is to ensure our

future generations will be taken care of. It's a way of living without fear, it's a way of living that is entwined with knowing who we are, knowing what our roles are on this land, and having a belief so strong that we are willing to die for it. The willingness to die so our future generations can live, the freedom that my moosoom Big Bear fought for, is still a way of being that continues to exist in my family and community.

My late moosoom, Thomas Paul Starr was also a warrior. Although, he wasn't able to fight the same way as his ancestors did, he fought for the same reason. My moosoom fought in WW2 and stayed for the duration of six years. He chose to fight, not because he had to but because he was willing to fight for this land and for freedom. Many of the stories that he shared regarding his time in WW2 included the same mentality that our warriors had before him. One of the things he used to say to his comrades was "today is a good day to die". He explained to my father, John, that in keeping this type of mentality, or traditional teaching about life and the way of a warrior, is a way to get over the fear of dying. He believed his road was already paved for him, he was supposed to be exactly where he was, and he knew he was taken care of by the Creator and his spiritual grandfathers. This was his way of living his teachings of a warrior.

My father, John Starr was raised by warriors and grew up with many of the traditional teachings. However, the opportunity to live a warriors' way has changed. The legitimacy of the warrior society, the spiritual teachings, and the respect from contemporary society has diminished. Even before my moosoom, Thomas Starr's, generation the legitimacy of the warrior society, the spiritual

teachings and the respect had already begun to dissipate. However, WW2 provided a short-term venue for warriors to live out their roles. Although my dad did grow up with many of the teachings of the warrior from my moosoom, he also had to grow up dealing with the effects of residential school, post-traumatic stress, and racism. He had to deal with the continued colonization of our people, which resulted in a disconnection with traditional family and community values, spiritual teachings, and ultimately a disconnection with his identity. The role and legitimacy of the warrior society needs to be examined.

Below is a story I wrote titled *The Pine*. It deals with these issues and how my family has tried to push forward and reconnect and it invokes the Indigenous method of story telling for teaching and learning. Story telling is a way to honor our oral traditions while at the same time allows for an analysis (Fletcher, 2008). The story is followed by an analysis, which is also in alignment with the principles of IRM as listed by Weber-Pillwax in her comments on research or knowledge-seeking within an Indigenous epistemology: research as lived Indigenous experiences (1999).

THE PINE - 1969

This counter-narrative takes place in a reserve in northwestern Saskatchewan, called the Pine. The characters and places are fictional but are based on real events....

“Geez why does mom always ditch us?” JR said to his brother Bernie.

“I don’t know, she’s probably out drinking again. She’s been gone for two weeks already. I wish we could just stay home instead of staying with this lady. She’s so mean. I’m so hungry,” Bernie said as his teeth chattered.

“I know brother, my feet feel like they’re going to fall off soon. Let’s go for a walk around town site and try find mom. Maybe we will find some food too,” JR said as he led the way.

JR and Bernie are brothers, they also have two sisters and one brother but they are grown up and live in the city. Their mom and dad, Geraldine and Paul, have a house in the reserve but sometimes leave for weeks to go drinking. JR and Bernie get left with anybody that will take them. This time they were left with a lady who won’t share her food and makes them spend the freezing cold winter days outside. The year is 1971, JR is 9 years old and Bernie is 8 years old. JR and Bernie have been left with strangers on and off throughout their childhood before they were forced to go to residential school. Geraldine and Paul often go on drinking binges. The binges last for as long as they need to in order to forget the pain of their pasts.

Geraldine finally returns for her boys...

“Mom!!!!” JR yelled with both excitement and resentment. “Where were you? Can we leave now? Where’s dad?”

Geraldine replied, “Let’s go, get your brother, hurry. Dad is at the house.”

After walking through the town site, led by the full moon and accompanied by the crisp sound of three pairs of foots steps on the snow path, JR, Bernie and Geraldine arrive home. JR and Bernie smelled the decaying scent of a

dead rabbit, and beer bottles as they entered their chilly house. Their dad, Paul, was sipping on the last bottle while skinning the rabbit, getting a meal ready for his boys. Paul looked up from the nearly fully skinned rabbit and warmly greeted the boys.

After Paul skinned the rabbit, Geraldine made rabbit stew and bannock. Paul, who was still half drunk, began telling the boys about his war stories while they enjoyed their rabbit stew. Paul always talked about his war stories, especially when he was drinking, and the boys loved to hear them.

“You know, we nearly starved out in Norway, but lucky us Cree boys knew how to snare rabbits. Those rabbits fed us for days until we got a shipment of food,” Paul told the boys as he enjoyed the rabbit head, the most coveted part of the rabbit.

“How come you went to fight in the war anyways? Did you have to?” Bernie asked.

“The white man’s laws didn’t force me to go. The army couldn’t understand why Indians would want to go and fight the white man’s battle. They could never understand our love for our land. Eventually, the army saw that we were natural warriors, and they needed the numbers. Under our laws, Indian laws, I had to go. We have the warrior blood running through our veins. My moosoom, his moosoom and my moosoom’s moosoom’s moosoom were all warriors. As a warrior, it is our duty to protect our nation. So I had to go. It was my honor. You, my sons, are warriors too.”

“Wow!! How long were you in the war for?”

“Where did you go?”

“Did you get shot?”

“Did you get any medals?”

Both JR and Bernie asked anxiously and simultaneously.

“Well my boys, I was in the war for six years, I went all over Europe. I got to meet all different kinds of people and see a lot of places. I liked being with all the men in my unit. There were a lot of rough parts too. I got shot, it went straight through the side here.” Paul lifted his shirt to show the boys his battle wound. The bullet left a scar on the side of his stomach, and another on the side of his back.

“Holy dad!! How did you survive?” JR asked in awe.

“Because I’m an Indian and we’re tough. My dad always told me ‘Ahkamaymo’-never give up. Anyway, after I recovered I fought in the war for three more years. It was rough, we slept in mud, many of my comrades died. It was lonely but I had your moosoom Ben with me in the same unit, so we stuck together. I seen so many of my friends die, and we had to kill a lot of men. It was hard, but as warriors we have to protect our nations. There was actually a lot of Warriors, Crees, Coast Salish Indians, Mohawks, Kiowas, Dakotas, lots of us, ” Paul explained.

“I did a lot of different things in the war. I was a front-line machine gunner for a while, then I was a code talker,” Paul said with honor.

“What’s a front line machine gunner and a code talker?” Bernie asked curiously.

“Front-line machine gunner’s are the men who lead their units as they step into unknown or hostile territory. Kind of like the warriors on horses. They would ride up first and begin the battle. Us front-liners would go first, and if the enemy was near we would begin the battle. Front-line machine gunner’s was one of the most dangerous duties. We didn’t know what we were walking into and we had nowhere to take cover. I saw a lot of my bro’s die while I was a front-line machine gunner, I just about died too, that was when I was shot. As a warrior, you gotta do what you gotta do. Being a front-line machine gunner was a big rush but I was glad when I had the opportunity to use my other skills.

In the war, we used walkie-talkies to communicate. The commanding officers would tell us where to go attack and where to go to rest. Sometimes the enemy army could listen in on us through the same walkie-talkie signal. There were a number of us Cree language speakers, along with numerous other Indigenous language speakers, like Dakota. We started talking in our language over the walkie-talkies, like a code, so the enemies wouldn’t be able to understand. The army noticed our innovative thinking and used us to transmit top-secret information. This was a great honor, and a great contribution us Indians gave to saving our land,” Paul explained to his boys.

As Paul took the last sips in his bottle he felt the pain of being forgotten and unsupported. He relived the six years he spent in bloody warfare. Paul also remembered the warrior teachings he was given by his Moosoom and was very honored to be able to be a warrior. Paul knew that it was getting harder and harder to live the warrior spirit. Western society didn’t respect the warrior tradition. The

Indigenous knowledge of his nation was continuously attacked by Christian indoctrination and western ideologies. Paul knew the warrior blood ran through both of his sons' veins and knew his boys would struggle in the future and wondered what he could do. He took the last sip left in his bottle.

THE PINE - 1983

JR, his girl friend Carey, their three-year-old daughter Marlene, Bernie, Geraldine, and Paul lived in the Pine, not too much has changed....

“JR, I like Carey, she can skin a beaver pretty good for a white girl,” Geraldine said teasingly, as they all sat around the table drinking.

“Ya. There's a lot of perks to going with a white girl. When we go shopping, she can get beer without being harassed.” Everyone laughed.

“Daddy, that rabbit is stinky, when is somebody gonna cook it? I'm hungry.” Marlene said as she sat on Carey's lap.

“OK, uncle Bernie snared it, Kokum will cook it,” Geraldine said as she got up to go make rabbit stew.

“Let's go for another beer run to Cutty. We'll hitch a quick ride to town,” JR said to Bernie.

JR kissed his daughter and Carey goodbye.

After JR and Bernie got their beer, they headed back to the highway. They had to walk most of the 20 kilometers back to the Pine, as they arrived they met trouble.

“Great, here come the Petite boys, how many of them do you think there are in that car?” Bernie asked JR.

“That’s a full ride, at least six of them. I’m getting my blade ready. These guys have a hate on for me. In residential school, the priest took a liking to them and used to rape Travis Petite and his brothers all the time. Now every time Travis sees anyone who knows what happened to him and his brothers, he automatically tries to beat ‘em up. We have a case of beer and they are definitely going to try jack us for it too,” JR warned his brother.

JR was right, six of the Petite brothers got out of the car and circled JR and Bernie. They all got into a rumble, ending with JR stabbing Travis. The Petite brothers stopped fighting immediately to take Travis to the hospital. Unfortunately, Travis died on the 45-minute drive to the nearest hospital.

The next day, JR and Bernie were arrested for the murder of Travis Petite.

“That was a quick trial,” Bernie said as he and JR ate supper in the Saskatoon correctional center.

“Ya, nobody cares about Indians killing Indians. We’re doing them a favor,” JR said bitterly.

“I can’t believe we’re gonna be locked up for 10 years!” Bernie said with shock and disgust.

“I know, we could have fought those charges but we would have had to talk to the police and dry snitch on those petite boys. We never help the cops. They locked up our people, look what they did to Big Bear. That’s what they do,” JR said as he threw down his fork in repulsion.

JR and Bernie finished their sentences in the Stoney Mountain Penitentiary, where their Moosoom Big Bear had also done time. Both of the

brothers returned to jail a few more times. Although JR went back to jail for various crimes, it was while he was in Stoney Mountain penitentiary that JR thought of his ancestor, Big Bear and the warrior teachings he held. For many nights sitting in his cell, JR thought of Big Bear and realized that his spirit lived in him. He sat where Big Bear sat in that penitentiary. Big Bear was with him, the spirits of his ancestors were with him, and the Indigenous knowledge lived in him. Bernie is still in jail and JR is living free in the Pine because of Indigenous knowledge, both Bernie and JR have survived because of the power of Indigenous knowledge.

The Pine - 2000

“My son, we are so happy you’re home,” The now widowed and elderly Geraldine said as she and Marlene hugged JR. JR had returned home from doing his last two-year bit at the Saskatoon Correctional center.

“Me too mom. I decided that life was no good for me now. Marlene is already 18, I have younger daughters that I want to take care of and show them a good way to live. That street life is too phony. I want to be real, and be how Dad wanted me to be - take care of our family and our nation,” JR told his mom with pride and conviction.

From that day on, JR dedicated his life to learning the Indigenous knowledge of his ancestors. Re-identifying JR’s authentic identity was an active responsibility on JR’s part to seek and find Indigenous knowledge and teachings. JR spends his time working with the Elders, putting in hard work, chopping wood, and making preparations for ceremonies. In return, JR receives traditional

teachings of how to be a Nehiyaw (Cree) person. Every teaching he learns from the Elders and through the ceremonies, brings him closer to his authentic self, where he knows who he is, where he comes from, and what his responsibilities are as a warrior.

After 10 years of actively seeking Indigenous knowledge and participating in ceremonies, JR has taken his family to a healthier and authentic place and space. There is identity, support, Indigenous knowledge and respect for the transmission of Indigenous knowledge.

“Moosoom, what does it mean to be a warrior?” JR’s grandson, George, asked as they sat around the fire pit outside of their house in the Pine.

“Well my boy let me tell you the story of your moosoom, your great moosoom, and your great-great moosoom. We have the warrior blood running through us. It is a great honor and responsibility. Have some rabbit stew and I will share some of the teachings I have received,” JR said proudly.

Analysis of The Pine

This analysis discusses Geraldine’s experience at residential school, Paul’s experience in WW2, and JR and Bernie’s experience with the Justice System, and how Indigenous knowledge has lived in all of them.

Geraldine was an orphan, her parents died when she was young. At the age of 7, residential school became Geraldine’s home for the next 9 years of her life. During that time she had very little contact with her family or her community, the Pine. Upon being abducted from her home, and brought to the Onion Lake Anglican residential school, the nuns cut off her braids and immediately put her to

work. Geraldine, who only spoke Cree, was beaten when she spoke her language. Her eardrum was busted because of such attempts. Little is known of Geraldine's residential school experience. Throughout her time on this earth Geraldine never liked to talk about it.

The physical, emotional, spiritual and mental pain Geraldine experienced through her time at residential school was a pain that many Indigenous peoples have endured (Thomas, 2000). Having endured 9 years of racism, abuse and degradation, and also living without love and essential teachings, there was not much hope Geraldine. Living in anguish for so long had detrimental effects on her parenting skills, and ability to live life in a good way. The pain of the memories and the apparent lack of self-worth were, at times, too much to live with.

Geraldine was not the only one in her community that endured the ruthless living conditions of residential schools. Nearly every child in the community was taken, although some lucky children were hidden from the Indian agents. After were returned to the Pine after they turned 16. Neither the Pine nor the children were the same. Some of the children were taken from the community for over 11 years and didn't know how to connect with the older generations. Many didn't speak their language or were too scared and ashamed to speak it. The children were forcibly exposed to a different lifestyle, one that did not fit into the lifestyle of the reserve. The roles of the children and the community members were changed and unclear.

Geraldine, living back in the Pine, became a mother. However, the abuse suffered in residential school, along with the essential teaching Geraldine was

disconnected from, left Geraldine with a lot of pain and confusion. She had little mothering skills and little ability to nurture her warriors.

In the times of Paul's ancestor's, the warriors had their communities' support and were well respected. After a battle, there would be a ceremony to honor the warriors and also to help heal the warriors from the traumatic stress the warriors had to deal with from the pain of both losing their warrior brothers and sisters, and also from taking lives. This was the reality of the warrior. However, the community was designed to support and nurture the warrior through love, ceremony, and constant teachings or Indigenous knowledge. The teachings that were given by Elder warriors were teachings handed down for thousands of years. These teachings were essential to the well being of the warrior.

The residential schools, the reserve system and the new Euro-western society broke the links that supported the warriors. The residential school had already indoctrinated Paul's parents, and Paul and Geraldine's generation. The effects of residential school disconnected generations from their parents, the teachings and the supportive roles of the community. This disconnection occurred not only in regard to supporting the warrior, but also in any supportive sense (Thomas, 2000). Some families escaped the epistemocide caused by residential schools and were able to continue the teachings to their children. The ideologies forced on most Indigenous children were in direct conflict with the epistemology that supports an Indigenous way of knowing and being. An Indigenous way of knowing and being focuses on the community; the new Western-European thought was and is individualistic. Thus, warriors were not supported when

returning home from war because of the disjuncture residential school and Western thought created within Indigenous communities.

JR and Bernie, already the third generation of their family to attend residential schools, were greatly affected by the experience and its role in disconnecting Indigenous knowledge between generations. Although they did possess IK, they didn't have the support and guidance to understand and live out relevant teachings, especially pertaining to the IK of the warrior. However, JR and Bernie did understand the reality of Indigenous peoples and the criminal justice system.

The criminalization of Indigenous peoples has been a continuum since the arrival of Europeans to Indigenous lands. Warriors entrusted with the responsibility of protecting their nations have been criminalized by the racist colonial Justice system for doing exactly that and fulfilling their responsibility. Warriors such as Big Bear, and many others, were imprisoned for fighting against Canadian and American police and army for both freedom and land (Dempsey, 2006). The original justice system was designed to protect the colonial empire from an Indigenous threat.

The justice system is, arguably, the most visible institution that continues to protect Canada's empire from Indigenous peoples. This accounts for why there is a high Indigenous representation in federal and provincial Jails. Wilson, Director General of Aboriginal Relations for Correctional Services Canada writes, "Aboriginal people are incarcerated at a rate of 35 times higher than the mainstream population. What is even more alarming, is that estimates forecast

that this population is growing” (Wilson, 2009). Although this statement could be interpreted to mean his concern is for the growing Aboriginal inmate population, however, this statement is still extremely perverse. The weight of the problem is placed on the growing Aboriginal population, not on the fact that Aboriginal people are incarcerated at a rate 35 times higher than non-Aboriginal people. This is where the problem lies; it is ignorance of the source of the problem that allows for such atrocities to continue. It is problematic that the inmate population is growing. However, such a statement does not speak to the root of the problem. The root of the problem is that Aboriginal people are incarcerated at a rate 35 times higher than the rest of the population. Wilson’s statement indicates that a good part of the problem lies with the negative mentality and racist attitudes held by those who govern the justice system.

Furthermore, the justice system has been unsuccessful in protecting Aboriginal people. According to Green (2006), Law enforcers in Saskatoon, SK have been accused of murder and has received little to no punishment. A more recent example is the 500 Indigenous women who are missing and / or murdered, which again has been paid very little attention by the justice system or Canadian government.

The federal government has yet to establish a national plan of action in keeping with the high rates and severity of violence faced by First Nations, Métis and Inuit women. Instead, the government continues to pursue piecemeal solutions that leave unacceptable gaps in the information and protection available to Aboriginal women and girls. (Amnesty International, 2011)

Amnesty Internal and Aboriginal organizations and individuals have been forced to take independent action to create awareness for the atrocious acts of savagery

perpetuated towards Indigenous women. Based on my observations and experiences within my family and community, I believe that if there were over 500 missing or murdered Caucasian women, there would be no rest for the police or the justice system until the killer (s) were found. All of this suggests that the justice system and the current colonial government is a system that disregards Aboriginal people.

The process and activities of colonization, including residential school and the justice system, have attempted to eradicate Indigenous knowledge and ways of being. Yet Indigenous knowledge has survived the genocide, oppression and racism, and is the reason Indigenous people have survived the genocide, oppression and racism. Indigenous knowledge and teachings of an Indigenous identity, spirituality, and relationship with this land and relationship with Creator is the reason why Indigenous people have survived.

This Indigenous knowledge contains the power and wisdom of the ancestors; our people understand that this knowledge has survived on this land. Their knowledge was entrusted to them by the Creator to survive on this land. Indigenous knowledge has seen Indigenous people through rough times and will see Indigenous people through oppressive, colonial racist times as well.

My father, John Starr, who was named 'JR' in the story, had the opportunity to return home and change from a life filled with self-destruction and self-hate that was rooted in the disconnection with his own warrior spirit and ability to live that warrior spirit in a good way. After returning home to Little Pine, John made the effort everyday to work with the Elders, and gain teachings

that helped him unpack his own identity. Because he has done this work, he has offered hope to future generations, and has made a path for others in my family to follow. Although the journey is long, my father now knows who he is and what his place is as a warrior in our community. My father's journey will be shared more in depth later in this project.

Methodology Conclusion

Using IRM as a theoretical framework has greatly informed my methods. Knowing that my epistemology is valid and integral to my research empowers me to do the research that is truly important to me and allows me to stay true to who I am, and to those whom I want my research to benefit. The IRM theoretical framework has informed every aspect of this research project, including how I develop the questions for this project, which knowledge I privilege, from whom I choose to gain knowledge from, and how I analyze and synthesize the knowledge shared in this project.

Chapter 2: Indigenous Research Methods

This chapter discusses Indigenous research methods, and identifies the techniques used to uncover the findings of this thesis.

Although Indigenous research methodology and Indigenous research methods are connected, they are also distinctive in that “research methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should process...and a research method is a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence” (Smith, p. 143, 1999). As such, research methods require its own chapter. Indigenous research methodology guided and provided the conceptual framework for this research. The techniques used to search out the findings of for this research were included within the framework of IRM. Furthermore, although Indigenous research methodology and methods are distinct, they are also similar. The principles that guide Indigenous research methodology, also guide Indigenous research methods. Weber-Pillwax’s (1999) principles informed how this research was gathered.

Data Collection

For clarity, and according to western terminology, I have termed this section as ‘data collection’. However, the techniques I used to receive the knowledge for this thesis did not arrive through a data collection process. The techniques used to gain knowledge represent an ancient tradition of knowledge dissemination. These techniques are included within the framework of IRM and

support how the research takes place, how the knowledge is themed, and how the trustworthiness of this research is measured. This section is told in first person, in a story format.

The process for this thesis began many years ago. As stated earlier, the topic for this research is based on who I am and from whom I come. This research derives from my familial roots, a long line of warriors from my own family, my upbringing and the oral narratives I've heard from within my family. The people who are Indigenous knowledge holders and who were willing to share their knowledge with me on the Battle River Cree warrior, are my family, and have supported and guided me both within this research and in my life.

As an integral aspect of Indigenous research methodology and methods, the relationships between the researcher and both the research and the research participants are critical. Undertaking research that comes from the heart drastically changes how the research is performed, and also affects the outcome of the research. My heart has been in this research throughout its duration. Having the connection with the research makes the research come alive; it makes the research matter. This research has not just been for the completion of my master's degree. Although it definitely motivated the timely completion, this research is for my family, my moosoom, my father, and my son, my community and my nation.

The research participants, my father, John Starr, who is from Little Pine First Nation and my Moosoom, Ben Weenie, who is from Sweetgrass First Nation, have greatly enriched the process, my learning, and of course have brought the substance to this research. The most elevating component of this

research process was spending time with my father and my moosoom. The time they spent with me is a great memory. The interview with my dad came about out of an unfortunate experience my son encountered. A couple days before my dad arrived in Edmonton, which was just supposed to be a visit and not the interview, my son broke his thumb playing lacrosse. He ended up having to get a cast and then a splint. The appointment for my son to get his splint made also landed on the day that his school was taking my son's class on a camping trip to Jasper. Not wanting to miss his camping trip, my son convinced my dad and me to drive him to Jasper. This unexpected road trip turned out to be the perfect environment to do the interview with my dad. Luckily, I was prepared, which doesn't necessarily happen often. But it happened that I had the tobacco, prints, and gifts ready to give to my dad.

On a side note, these gifts are given for two reasons. Firstly, the print and the tobacco are given to those who are pipe carriers / knowledge holders, and or, medicine men. The print and tobacco are presented as an offering to the Creator. The ceremonial men do the offering ceremony to involve the Creator and to ensure what you are asking for is done in a good way. Secondly, a gift is given to the pipe carrier / knowledge holder, and or, medicine man in reciprocity, as way to say thank you for what they have done for you or shared with you. This is how it is done in my community.

Getting back to the story, I had all of the gifts, and thanks to my son - the opportunity for the interview arose, and my dad was willing to share his knowledge. On the highway nearing Jasper, where it was somewhat secluded

from the highway and had a lot of trees, we found a spot for my dad to do the offering ceremony. That ceremony set the tone for not only my dad's interview, but also the rest of the research and writing process. After we dropped off my son in Jasper, my dad and I drove back to Edmonton and my dad spoke about his experiences of how he knows the Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree warrior. He shared with me how IK impacted his life, and how he learned to deal with the experiences of colonization, racism and assimilation, and how all of these experiences have affected his identity as a man and as a warrior. Listening to my dad within that context allowed me to understand him better than I did before. By the time we arrived in Edmonton I knew him in another way.

When it came time for me to sit and learn from my moosoom, Ben Weenie, the whole experience was different from when I interviewed my dad. I went to Ben's home in Sweetgrass First Nation and spent the day with him. Ben Weenie is a highly respected Elder within the Battle River Cree communities. He has grown up within the traditions and has learned many teachings, the traditional way, which is learning from his grandparents and many of the Elders in our community. Weenie has spent all of his life teaching the Cree ways of knowing and being to the younger generations, and is like a walking textbook. Sitting with him was like going back to the 1800's. His knowledge of the traditional ways is vast.

There were many teachings embedded within the stories. Some of the teachings and stories Weenie shared were meant for me only, and during those stories I was instructed to turn off the recorder. He explained that some of the

traditional teachings have to be earned. He and my dad said that I earned the right to have the teachings because I had sundanced, and I had followed the traditional way of asking for knowledge.

Earning knowledge and following the traditions as to how to gain knowledge caused great conflict, which I grappled with throughout this thesis. If some of the teachings have to be earned, then how can I, as a researcher, take those teachings that need to be earned and disseminate them for public use? I haven't reached a conclusion. I know IK is integral to our survival as a people. I also know that there are many barriers in giving and receiving that knowledge.

In the same line of thought, I was also conflicted with the oral tradition. The oral tradition of teaching and sharing knowledge is a tradition that ensures the survival of individual and social roles within the community. The elders hold the stories and teachings, the youth need those stories and teachings, and the adults come to the Elders for guidance and direction. The oral tradition safeguards the roles of the members; it inter-links the people by creating a community of inter-dependence. Elder Weenie spoke of inter-dependence as a foundational beam within our communities. We relied on the community, and were accountable to the community. This inter-dependence ensured that oral traditions and community traditions would live on.

However, a confliction within this research and myself had arisen; how can I attempt to obtain IK in a traditional way, and then disseminate it through a western academic venue? As an Indigenous researcher, I must tread carefully. It is crucial that I acknowledge I hold the power to potentially further erode

Indigenous traditions by disregarding the traditions and necessity to earn certain knowledge, or belittling the need for relationships with the Elders and others within the community. The intent of this research is to uplift and uphold IK and Indigenous traditions. Within this research I have followed my Cree ways of obtaining knowledge, through the guidance of ceremony and Elders. I understand the power of research and its ability to make change. I also understand how important IK, the teachings, and also the traditions are. It is imperative that I acknowledge that the knowledge uncovered within this thesis is not meant to eliminate the necessity for Elders, ceremony or relationships; this research is a guiding tool. My only solution is to explicitly state that this research is not a handbook for Indigenous knowledge. Rather, this research is geared towards identifying the validity of IK, and its power for Indigenous peoples within contemporary society.

After I returned home from Sweetgrass First Nation, I transcribed the interviews and started the writing process. Through the transcription of the interviews, themes from both interviews began to emerge. Analysis was drawn from the themes apparent within the interviews and the available literature. The Creator, ceremony and the guidance of Elder Ben Weenie and Knowledge holder, John Starr, guided the writing process.

This is also how the trustworthiness of this research is measured. The inclusion of the Creator, ceremonies, Elders and IRM uphold the integrity and truth of this research.

Before submission of the final report, participants were given a copy of the report.

Delimitations of Study

This study has the following delimitations:

1. The interviewee's / research participants of this study had to be members of a Battle River Cree community, and as a scale the study findings are not generalized to other Indigenous communities or Aboriginal peoples.
2. Two interviews and literature analysis were the primary basis of knowledge collection. Although relationships have been formed between the researcher and the participants over a long period of time, the interview process took place over one week. The interviews with two IK knowledge holders / teachers is a respectful method of conducting Indigenous research within the framework of Indigenous research methods as lived within Cree communities.
3. This research is specific to Battle River Cree, Plains Cree, and Cree communities, and therefore literature chosen was delimited based on its content specific to the Cree. The literature survey is designed to identify the necessity of this research. Hence, the survey requires three distinct aspects. Firstly, the survey identified the power of research in relation to colonization and resistance. Secondly, the survey identifies why IK needs to be validated within the academy and society, and

thirdly, the survey identifies the gap within the available literature that relates to this topic.

Limitations of Study

This study has the following limitations:

1. Indigenous knowledge holders of the Battle River Cree warrior are exceptional in that the amount of Indigenous knowledge holders who have knowledge of the warrior are few.

Guiding Questions for Research Participants

The questions asked of John Starr and Ben Weenie are in alignment with Indigenous research methods and methodology. The questions position the knowledge holders as teacher's, asking them what they would like us to know, and also positions the researcher as the learner. This position of knowledge holders as teachers, and researcher as learner recognizes that knowledge holders are the ones giving and the researcher is receiving; essentially, this re-positions the power dynamics between research and the researched. This re-positioning of power also allows the research to be guided by those who possess the knowledge. Research that is guided by those who hold the knowledge provides the knowledge holders with the venue to inform the research with what they value as important knowledge. The other three questions are merely there to provide a framework for the knowledge holders to reference. It was stated in the interviews that the

knowledge holders can share what they feel is important knowledge pertaining to the IK of the warrior.

1. What would you like our community, and other communities to know about the River Cree warrior?
2. Can you share your knowledge regarding the traditional teachings warriors would receive?
3. What is the significance of the warriors lodge?
4. How can warriors be warriors today?

Definitions

Ahkamaymo	● Cree word for never giving up (Starr, personal interview, 2012).
Assimilation	● The process by which one culture or group of people absorb another group into the larger whole (Laliberte, Settee, Waldram, Innes, Macdougall, McBain & Barron, 2000).
Colonization	● The act of setting up colonies while simultaneously devastating and disrupting the peoples who occupied the land in which the new Colonies are developed (Gilles, 2005).
Colonialism	● An ideology used to legitimize and/or promote a socio-political/economic system based on ethnocentrism in which the colonizing nation attempts to subjugate another (Laliberte, Settee, Waldram, Innes, Macdougall, McBain & Barron, 2000).
Epistemology	● The philosophy of knowledge or how we come to know (Trochim, 2000).
Indigenous People	● Refers to all inhabitants indigenous to North America before contact with Euro-Canadians and their descendants (Laliberte, Settee, Waldram, Innes, Macdougall, McBain & Barron, 2000).

Indigenous Knowledge

- Ancient knowledge that is based on lived experience within a certain territory that encapsulates the epistemology of the people (Unep, 2008).

Chapter 3: Literature Survey

This study seeks to uncover and regenerate the Indigenous knowledge regarding the Battle River Cree warrior. The literature survey provides a theoretical foundation that supports the purpose of this work and also proves, by identifying the gap in the literature related to this topic, the need for this research.

In consistency with how I understand Indigenous research methodology, I have chosen to privilege the Indigenous knowledge of the Cree warrior within this literature survey. Indigenous research methodology principle “*the impact of motives and intentions on persons and communities*” (Weber-Pillwax, 1999), is continuously at the forefront of my mind. In choosing the literature for this survey, it was important to me that I chose texts that firstly privileged Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and secondly that I only used sources that were rooted in the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. I didn’t want this to be a literature survey that posited dominant and hegemonic narratives over the Indigenous voice and perspective. I used the Dempsey (2006), and Mandelbaum, (1979) works because the oral narratives within their texts were related by Cree people. I attempted to use mostly or solely sources that were written by and for Indigenous peoples, primarily because I am promoting this thesis as a venue that privileges the Indigenous voice and perspective.

The first section of the literature survey identifies the power of research within the context of academia in regards to Indigenous peoples. The second

section, unpacking colonialism, discusses and asserts why Indigenous knowledge has not been recognized as a legitimate form of knowledge, and how the subjugation of Indigenous knowledge through various forms of continued colonization affects Indigenous knowledge holders / receivers. The third section reviews the literature on Indigenous knowledge and the Plains / Battle River Cree warrior, and identifies a gap found within the literature which further warrants the need for this research.

Section 1- The Power of Research

This section will demonstrate how research has been used to define legitimate knowledge; it will also show how Indigenous researchers have taken research to a space that no longer marginalizes Indigenous knowledge but rather is a tool to recover Indigenous knowledge from the margins. This section also discusses and analyzes some of the ideological struggles Indigenous researchers confront, such as decolonization and romanticizing the past versus remembering the past as a means of regaining an authentic source of knowledge. This section validates this research study because it legitimizes the role of Indigenous research methodologies in its ability to recover and regenerate Indigenous knowledge, which is central to the project.

Research has had a long tradition of validating legitimate forms of knowledge. Research holds the power to write history, inform policy, and educate society from the perspective of the researcher. In the context of Indigenous people and Euro-western academia, research has also been a powerful tool of colonization. “Research is an important part of the colonization process because it

is concerned with defining legitimate knowledge” (Smith, p. 173, 1999). Research is part of a selective tradition that defines what knowledge is. It is a product born out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people (Apple, 2000). Therefore, researchers hold the power to put forth and either support or invalidate a particular set of political, sociological and ideological paradigms (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). Memmi states (1965), “The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from the community” (p. 91). It has been well documented how research has marginalized Indigenous knowledge and privileged Western ways of knowing and being.

However, the power of research can also be used as a tool to further Indigenous agendas. Research conducted with the aim of validating Indigenous knowledge is a site within academia where research can benefit Indigenous communities, strengthen Indigenous peoples, and also push the boundaries of Western academia; this is accomplished through gaining Indigenous knowledge. An indigenous research methodology (IRM) is a relatively new framework for conducting research with Indigenous communities. IRM provides a framework and principles that ensure research, in an Indigenous context, is beneficial to Indigenous communities / individuals.

A theoretical framework enlightens the reader as to how the researcher views the world and provides insight into the researcher’s beliefs, and how those beliefs impact the research (Kovach, 2009). A distinct aspect of IRM is that “the values, attitudes, concepts and language embedded in beliefs about spirituality

represent, in many cases, the clearest contrast and mark of difference between Indigenous peoples and the West” (Smith, p. 74, 1999). These beliefs are found within an Indigenous epistemology. IRM as a framework connotes a knowledge system. The framework most often used within IRM is a framework guided by the researchers’ own culture and epistemology. Guided by an Indigenous way of knowing and being, IRM ensures and entrusts the researcher’s intent is accountable to their belief system and also to the community of the Indigenous researcher.

Positioning an Indigenous epistemology as an integral beam of the framework calls for a voice from that perspective derived from an Indigenous epistemology. IRM legitimizes that voice, history and truth. Adherent to the principles identified by Weber-Pillwax’s (1999) guide Indigenous researchers to maintain Indigenous epistemologies, thereby ensuring research integrity and accountability to Indigenous participants and communities. The principles are ways in which researcher check their processes to safeguard the participants and the intent of the research, as well as the knowledge shared within.

An integral component of IRM is that it includes the researcher as part of the research. Self-location serves two purposes. Firstly, in locating one’s self within the research, it acknowledges the influence the researcher has over the outcomes of the research. “The rationale for explicit representation of one’s conceptual framework is that it provides insight into a researcher’s beliefs about knowledge production, in general, and how those beliefs impact the research project” (Kovach, p. 41, 2009). Furthermore, from the point of view of Indigenous

researchers, research is a process in which the researcher has often been the researched. Many of the lived experiences of an Indigenous person have been researched, scoped, prodded, and made into statistics. As both an Indigenous person and an Indigenous researcher, I am well aware that my lived experiences weigh in on my research project. For an indigenous researcher, “each research project will be a research project layered over a research experience layered over a personal experience layered over a research project” (Weber-Pillwax, p. 39, 1999). As Indigenous researchers, it is imperative that we situate our research within the context of our own lived experiences, and in a context of critical reflexivity (Smith 1999), (Weber-Pillwax 1999). Integral to IRM, researchers must locate themselves, their beliefs and experiences within the research in order to acknowledge the weight of their perspective over their research.

Secondly, self-location is an avenue of accountability. Researcher’s experiences weigh heavily on their research, as do the motives of the researcher. Part of the agenda of an Indigenous researcher is self-determination. Regaining Indigenous knowledge is rooted in self-determination, as it is knowledge that offers freedom and truth.

The agenda is focused on the goal of self-determination of Indigenous peoples. Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal, it becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural, and economic terrains. (Smith, p. 116, 1999)

Foregrounding this position within an Indigenous research agenda is essential to IRM. The purpose of Indigenous research within the context of IRM is to bring forth Indigenous truths, histories, and knowledge. The purpose of bringing forth

Indigenous truths, histories, and knowledge is to validate Indigenous realities within all contexts of an Indigenous existence. The purpose of validating Indigenous realities is so that Indigenous peoples can readily draw on their truths, histories, and knowledge without an argument or explanation, without the need to justify their existence. Self-location and self-determination is the researcher's accountability to themselves, their community, their nation.

Decolonization – Too much Attention to Colonization

What is the relationship between freedom, self-determination, and Indigenous knowledge; do these concepts equate with decolonization? Decolonization seems to occur naturally during the work, time and energy expended in uncovering IK, finding individual identity, and locating a personal and social history. However, it is also necessary to have an understanding of the need to uncover IK, and its significance to personal identity and ancestry. A disconnection with IK, identity and home are a result of colonization. However, it seems that positioning oneself in relation to decolonization and / or colonization can create a cognitive quagmire. When personal and social experiences are understood only in relation to decolonization and / or colonization, these concepts remain at the forefront of one's mind, and a lot energy is needed for 'righting' and 'resisting'; it's like walking in muddy waters. In other words, focusing on decolonization would likely detract from the energy and time needed to seek IK, identity and culture.

However, scholars Linda Smith (1999), Taiaiake Alfred (2005), and Margaret Kovach (2010), call for decolonization. Their arguments are based in a

critical or resistance framework. A critical component of Indigenous research requires knowledge of colonization and its effects on Indigenous peoples.

A constant reworking of our understandings of the impact of imperialism and colonialism is an important aspect of Indigenous cultural politics and forms the basis of an Indigenous language of critique. Within this critique there have been two major strands. One draws upon a notion of authenticity, of a time before colonization in which we were intact as Indigenous peoples.... the second strand of the language of critique demands that we have an analysis of how we were colonized. Smith, p. 23-24, 1999

Sockbeson (2011) uses the term 'a knowledge of oppression'. A knowledge of oppression is knowledge held by an Indigenous person regarding the trauma Indigenous individuals, communities and nations have endured under colonialism and assimilation. This knowledge of oppression is critical in unpacking colonization and its effects.

Researchers and scholars alike must be aware of the balancing act required. While it is essential to have a knowledge of oppression, Indigenous researchers and scholars need to be aware of how much attention and energy they give to 'colonization' and 'decolonization'. Albert Memmi, Franz Fanon, and Brandon Hokowhitu have cautioned against this unbalance. Memmi (1965) states, "The colonized self-assertion, born out of protest, continues to define itself in relation to it" (p. 139). Fanon (1961) pushes for Indigenous values at the forefront,

The third world must not be content to define itself in relation to values which preceded it. On the contrary, the under developed countries must endeavor to focus on their very own values, as well as methods and style specific to them. Pg. 55

Hokowhitu (2010) speaks most currently,

Here then, I refer to occupation as the continued inhabitant of the Indigenous consciousness by a will to resist the colonizer, where imaginary or not. Such dialect is not a healthy state of mind; constant referral to the power another holds over oneself, in my view, only reproduces that power. Indigenous people locked in a decolonial mindset thus romanticize a pure pre-colonial past, remain anxiety-ridden in the present and resign themselves to a future where their identities will be forever tied to a 'struggle without end'. Pg. 222

All of the authors point out that it is imperative for Indigenous researchers to have knowledge of oppression. Smith (1999), Alfred (2005), Kovach (2009), and Sockbeson (2011) speak directly from their knowledge of oppression, and have situated their work within Indigenous methodologies derived from Indigenous values and beliefs of their own people. Memmi cautions of the danger in defining oneself in relation to the colonizer; Fanon urges for Indigenous values to be at the forefront of every endeavor; Hokowhitu illustrates the calamity of foregrounding an Indigenous consciousness in relation to colonial or decolonial mindsets. A critical unpacking of the effects of colonization and decolonization is utilized colonialism within Indigenous research is necessary (Smith, 1999), (Martin, 2008) (Sockbeson, 2011). Indigenous researchers who are aware of the danger of defining an Indigenous identity and Indigenous research solely within the context of colonization and decolonization will not find themselves outside the framework of IRM and its foundation of Indigenous values.

Romanticizing the Past and Remembering the Past

Hokowhitu highlights an important point, in parallel to the possible imbalance of defining an Indigenous consciousness in relation to colonialism,

which is that it is also imperative to be attentive to the peril that could arise from romanticizing an Indigenous past.

Romanticizing the past is problematic in that it is limiting. Negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples, along with Indigenous stories that lack the traditional teaching, have created a bastardized image of traditional roles. Indigenous people have either been portrayed as the vicious savage or the noble warrior (Sheffield, 2007). Even in the context of an Indigenous identity within an Indigenous environment, the brave warrior who fought for freedom, land and rights is noble and courageous; however, many of those stories and traditions linger without the traditional teachings that equipped the brave warrior. The negative stereotypes, the racism, and the labeling that was produced out of, in many cases, research on Indigenous peoples have undermined the role and image of the Indigenous warrior because they lack the Indigenous knowledge that supported the warrior role in traditional times. Romanticizing the past without the Indigenous knowledge is extremely limiting to an Indigenous identity.

Although it is hazardous to romanticize the past, we must remember the past and the teachings. This is an intersection where Indigenous research transforms research from a colonial tool into an Indigenous tool of regenerating healing knowledge. Indigenous research is about recovering our own stories of the past, uncovering sacred memory as our truth, and rooting our projects in that which is real (Smith 1999), (Alfred 2005), & (Tengan 2008). It is through a critical remembering of the past and the teachings that a healing nature is exhibited, because those memories, truths and teachings were designed

specifically for and spoke to Indigenous identities and ways of being since time immemorial. Romanticizing the past is a futile and perilous activity; Remembering the sacred memories, truths and teachings continues to hold power and speak to Indigenous identities and ways of being.

Is remembering the sacred memories, truths and teachings enough? Within the context of Cree ways of knowing and being, there is a process to remembering. If there is something we need to know, or clarify, Elders will guide us to the ceremonies. Within the ceremonies, we can ask questions of the Creator and the spiritual grandfathers. Although the answer might not come immediately, nevertheless, the answer will arise. Cam Willet (2009), from Little Pine First Nation, describes the role of ceremony for remembrance:

People are always talking about the language disappearing, cultures disappearing. I think that's a load of bull, because if you put your tobacco down and you go to ceremonies, I believe that all transcends time and space. You can't be lost or killed because all you have to do is sweat and ask, and the songs will come back to you. That's the power of them. Our knowledge and legacy can never be erased. (As cited in Kovach, p. 119)

The power of IK and remembering IK is also found in the process of remembering. The process of remembering invokes the Creator, the ceremonies, the Elders, the people, the community, the energy. This process in remembering is a requirement of remembering. This is where the power of IK is found and this is where the strength, the community, and the unity are held.

This section of the literature has illustrated how research has the power to define legitimate knowledge. Although research has been used to subjugate and marginalize Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous researchers have been able to

change the face of research. IRM has defined its own framework to guide Indigenous researchers in order to uncover and regenerate Indigenous knowledge. There have been many obstacles to the processes of an Indigenous researcher, including making space within the academy, privileging Indigenous knowledge, placing critical and resistance theory second to Indigenous values, and lastly, battling with the tension between romanticizing the past and remembering the past. These obstacles have contributed to defining Indigenous research and have also contributed to the strength and validity of Indigenous Research Methodologies.

Section 2 - Unpacking Colonialism

As discussed above, there is a necessity for Indigenous researchers to unpack colonialism. Deconstructing colonialism is accomplished by identifying why colonization happened, how it happened, and how it affected Indigenous people, Indigenous warriors, and Indigenous knowledge. A brief critical unpacking of colonialism is essential to this literature review as it exposes the need for Indigenous knowledge.

The Why of Colonialism

Memmi (1965) and Fanon (1963) presented colonialism as an ideology used to legitimize and/or promote a socio-political/economic system, in which the colonizing nation attempts to subjugate another. Colonization is the act of setting up colonies while simultaneously devastating and disrupting the peoples who occupied the land in which the new colonies are developed. The ideology of

colonialism and the process of colonization is founded upon notions of empire building and expansion at the expense of Indigenous lands, and ways of knowing and being. The process of colonization robbed Indigenous lands, and the ideology of colonialism sought to erode the culture and epistemology of Indigenous peoples. The processes of colonialism and colonization, which occurred simultaneously, elevated the privilege of the colonizers and therefore justified the processes.

The How of Colonialism

Colonization's counterpart is land theft and loss of freedom for Indigenous people. Essentially the loss of land for Indigenous people can be equated to the loss of freedom and dignity. "For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread, and naturally, dignity" (Fanon, p. 9, 1963). "No matter how briefly colonization many have lasted, all memory of freedom seems distant." (Memmi, p. 62, 1965) As Fanon and Memmi have illustrated, land theft equaled a loss of freedom and dignity for colonized Indigenous peoples. This loss of land, freedom and dignity left Indigenous people in a weary state of mind. The weary state of mind was vulnerable to the deceptive, narcissistic, and gluttonous ideology of colonialism. Land theft was a powerful tool of colonialism.

Colonialism brought about a breakdown of Indigenous societies and institutions by way of delegitimizing Indigenous peoples' values, knowledge, epistemologies, and communal and societal roles. Colonialism disregarded Indigenous epistemology (Dion 1979) and sought to rid the colonized of any

human characteristics, thus equating the Indigenous colonized with savagery and animalistic characteristics. Fanon (1963) argues, “the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil...The ‘native’ is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values” (p. 6). The breakdown of Indigenous societies and institutions, through dehumanizing their values, and knowledge, was crucial for colonialism.

An extension of labeling Indigenous people as impervious to ethics was also labeling them as lazy and criminal. The product of these labels delegitimized the roles played within Indigenous societies and institutions under the ideology of colonialism. Labeling Indigenous peoples, specifically Indigenous males as lazy and criminal, sought to emasculate men (Tengan, 2008), (Memmi, 1965).

Furthermore, the criminalization of Indigenous men became both a powerful tool for further land expansion, and also delegitimized Indigenous roles, such as the role of Indigenous warriors. Indigenous opposition for further land theft was viewed as criminal by the state (Dempsey, 2006). Smith (1999) states:

Concerns about the ‘Indigenous problem’ began as an explicitly militaristic or policing concern. The problem was articulated in terms of ‘putting down rebellions’ or ‘getting rid’ of recalcitrant rebels. Individual chiefs or leaders who resisted various attempts to control them were labeled as rebel and the ‘real problems’ and media accounts helped whip up a frenzied hatred of these individuals by white settlers. The level of hatred legitimized attempts to ‘hunt them down’ or to ‘protect the people’ from their own leadership. The systematic undermining of the legitimacy of Indigenous leaders was part of the wider strategy for colonization. (p. 91)

Prior to colonialism, warriors were “feared and respected, their authority never questioned” (Ahenakew, p. 100, 1995). However, colonizer’s disrupted the

warrior's role of protecting their land and territory by delegitimizing warrior roles within their own communities under the guise of 'protecting the people from their own leadership'. Warriors, such as Big Bear, were imprisoned for protecting their territory (Dempsey, 2006).

Assimilation was another tool used under the ideology of colonialism. Assimilation sought to disconnect children from their Indigenous language, culture, family, home, spirituality, and Indigenous teachings. This task was implemented in governmental policy, which made it legal to abduct Indigenous children from their communities, and force them to live within residential schools. Residential schools were ran by the church; the state made it legal for residential schools to perform cultural, linguistic, and epistemological genocide on Indigenous children (Fletcher, 2008), (Makokis, 2009), & (Thomas, 2000). Residential schools contributed immensely to the disconnection from Indigenous knowledge, which is essential knowledge for societal roles.

Colonialism sought to rid Indigenous people of freedom and dignity, and broke down the legitimacy of societal roles. "All he [colonized] has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity" (Fanon, p. 9, 1963).

Effects of Colonialism

The effects of colonialism have been extremely detrimental to Indigenous peoples and have, often times, resulted in a disconnection with Indigenous knowledge or traditional teachings that armed Indigenous people with thousands of years of lived experiences. This timely knowledge was handed down through

generations and offered the knowledge of survival, identity, and wisdom, while also providing answers and guidance. This knowledge was disconnected deliberately and systematically through colonialism.

The effects of colonialism on the Indigenous mind have resulted in a disconnection with Indigenous knowledge. This disconnection is a result of numerous attacks on Indigenous knowledge, which results in the knowledge being disconnected from both the knowledge holders and receivers. Sockbeson (2011) discusses how she lost her keys not her language. A tool of colonialism is to place blame on the colonized (Memmi, 1965). It is our fault that we are colonized, our fault that we have lost our language, our fault that we have lost our knowledge. Sockbeson has identified the undercurrents of oppression that operate from this type of language, blaming Indigenous people for 'losing' our language. Indigenous people have not lost their language, it was deliberately and systematically disconnected from them, and taken without permission. Sockbeson (2011) writes, "If I view something as taken from me, there is an implication that it is still there, that it can be retrieved. However, if I lost it, I am to blame for its disappearance (p.123). This argument can be extended to Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge has not been lost; it has been deliberately and systematically assaulted.

Alfred (2005) has discussed this assault on Indigenous knowledge as resulting in 'cultural blanks', the imperceptible way that European thought has polluted the minds of Native Americans (p. 11). Youngblood Henderson (2008) has termed it 'forced cognitive extinction':

Four hundred years of colonialism around the earth was a process of conscious choice supported by manipulated facts on the part of the colonizers. These 400 years have had tragic consequences for Indigenous peoples. The consequences are more than mere conquest or the exercise of tyrannical power, slavery, and genocide; they go to the forced cognitive extinction. (p.29)

Although there are different words used for the assault of Indigenous knowledge, all of these concepts speak to the assault on Indigenous knowledge. These losses are a direct effect of colonialism.

Alfred (2005) describes a perception of Indigenous people both rejecting the disempowerment and accepting the subjugation of Indigenous knowledge at the same time as ‘contradictory consciousness’. Ahenakew (1995) has described a similar attitude as follows:

Old Keyam means, what does it matter? Or, I don’t care! Old Keyam expresses the attitude of many Indians who stand bewildered in the maze of things, not knowing exactly what to do, and hiding their keen sense of defeat under the assumed demeanor of ‘keyam’, while in fact they do care greatly. p. 51

Alfred’s ‘contradictory consciousness’, and Ahenakew’s ‘Old Keyam’, exhibits a privation of direction, a result of an absence of Indigenous knowledge. The assault and dismemberment of Indigenous knowledge, along with the attitudes taken on by many Indigenous people as a way to both defend themselves and cope, are a testament to the need to ‘retrieve’ Indigenous knowledge.

Alfred’s term “cultural blanks”, and Youngblood Henderson’s term, “cognitive extinction” are accurate to a degree. Colonization has wounded many Indigenous minds and spirits. However, in my analysis, these terms are inadequate because they don’t take into account the power of IK. The process of colonization has certainly disconnected the transmission of IK between

generations; nonetheless, colonialism has not had the power to eradicate Indigenous knowledge. Describing Indigenous minds as ‘culturally blank’ or ‘cognitively extinct’ doesn’t describe the situation accurately. Describing Indigenous peoples as ‘culturally blank’ or ‘cognitively extinct’ would denote a state of hopelessness and mindlessness. The problem is not that the mind of Indigenous peoples might be cultural blank, or cognitively extinct; the problem is one of weariness of mind. A weary state of mind, as I described earlier, results from a loss of land, freedom and dignity. The minds and spirits of Indigenous people are wounded, and grieving as a result of the disconnection with Indigenous Knowledge. 200 years ago, Indigenous people lived within Indigenous knowledge, and today the process of remembering Indigenous knowledge is a prerequisite of survival and continuation of life; Indigenous people are not culturally blank or cognitively extinct.

Indigenous Knowledge – Re-membering

The effects of colonialism have segregated Indigenous peoples from IK, which is needed to strengthen, guide, and empower Indigenous people, and Indigenous warriors. Tengan (2008) describes re-membering as a deliberate action to remember and regenerate the Indigenous ways of knowing and being that were so violently dis-membered through colonization. Alfred (2005) calls for this knowledge.

Regaining freedom and becoming self-sufficient by confronting the disconnection and fear at the core of our existence under colonial dominion. We are separated from our goodness and power, from each other, from our culture, and our lands. This connection must be restored. (p. 20)

This Onkwehonwe spirit and consciousness that I am speaking of is sacred memory. It is our truth. The resurgence of this consciousness among our people is explosive in its potential to transform individuals and communities by altering conceptions of the self and the self in relation to other peoples in the world. Its elements are the regeneration of an identity created out of the stories this. (Alfred, p. 131, 2005)

Tengan (2008) mirrors Alfred, “the work of re-membering koa [warriorhood] truly was one of recapturing a practice and philosophy that had become a memory” (p. 77). Re-membering and retrieving Indigenous knowledge is essential to Indigenous identity, strength, and reconnection.

Section two of this literature survey has critically deconstructed colonialism as a means to understand why and how it happened; the effects of colonialism have also been illustrated. Unpacking colonialism is necessary to show how colonialism has disconnected Indigenous knowledge from Indigenous people. This section of the literature survey has demonstrated the necessity to regenerate Indigenous knowledge for the survival of Indigenous peoples.

Section 3 – Gaps and Research and the Battle River Cree Warrior

This section identifies the minimal sources available, and discusses what has been done within this topic area, Indigenous knowledge and the Battle River Cree warrior. A strategic position I’ve taken within this study is privileging Indigenous knowledge, even more specifically knowledge regarding the Battle River Cree. Research holds power in its ability to privilege knowledge. Within Indigenous research methodologies, theoretical frameworks are guided by the author’s Indigenous epistemology (Kovach 2010), (Weber-Pillwax 1999). Battle

River Cree epistemology guides this research; therefore, literature that focuses on the Battle River Cree is most appropriate to this work.

In doing the research for this study, it became obvious that there is a gap within the available literature regarding the Battle River Cree warrior. Although there are numerous studies completed regarding Indigenous warriors' from all over the globe, as well as warriors from other nations, very few spoke of the Battle River Cree warrior, or the Plains Cree warrior, the larger nation of which the Battle River Cree are members. The most significant pieces of literature found are: *The Plains Cree: An ethnographic, historical and comparative study* (Mandelbaum, 1979), *Big Bear: The end of freedom* (Dempsey, 2006), *My Tribe the Crees* (Dion, 1979), and *Voices of the Plains Cree* (Ahenakew, 1995). None of these works focus on the Battle River Cree warrior, however they do contain sections within their texts that discuss aspects specific to my topic of study.

The works listed above provide an account of Plains Cree history, and are based upon narratives and stories of Battle River Cree members. Mandelbaum, an anthropologist, delivers an ethnography of Plains Cree culture. Within his text, he provides details as to how men became warriors and describes their responsibilities. Through narratives from Battle River Cree historians, some Indigenous knowledge is shared. Stories of how the communities honored warriors, how warriors gained prestige, and also glimpses into the world-view of the Battle River Cree are documented (Mandelbaum, 1979). Dempsey's text also provides some insight into the worldview of the Battle River Cree, which is derived from the narratives of Battle River Cree historians. His work is based

upon the life of Big Bear and the signing of Treaty 6, neither of which the focus of my study. The experiences of Big Bear shared through the oral history found within Dempsey's text provide an account of his role as a warrior. Dion and Ahenakew's text also shares small glimpses into the life of the Battle River Cree warrior. The texts are similar in that both are accounts of Plains Cree and Battle River Cree history from the perspective of the members from that nation.

Another commonality of all the authors listed is that their research preserves the stories and the Indigenous knowledge found within those stories, which were provided by members of the Plains Cree. Mandelbaum (1979) states the purpose of his research is to meet a requirement for obtaining his doctoral degree. A secondary benefit of his research is that his research records Plains Cree, and Battle River Cree history. He writes, "the work I had done with the Plains Cree had given them and might well continue to provide for their descendants, some record of their forefathers and a way of life that many would increasingly want to know about" (preface). Dempsey (2006) didn't explicitly state the purpose for his research, however his research added to his prolific career as a historian on Aboriginal culture. He did write that Four Souls, a grandson of Big Bear who shared the narratives of Big Bear, is 'sort of cousins' with his Blackfoot wife. Dempsey, who is not Indigenous, uses this connection between Four Souls and his wife as a way of locating his right to publish this text. As noted with Dempsey's text, the historians of the Plains Cree and the Battle River Cree wanted to preserve the stories and the knowledge for future generations.

Dion and Ahenakew's main purpose for their works is to preserve the knowledge and history for their communities. Dion (1979), from Kehiwin First Nation, AB, provides historical accounts of the Plains Cree, which is based upon the narratives of many Cree Elders, from the time before the arrival of European settlers. He also illustrates the challenges the Cree faced because of the arrival of European settlers. Ahenakew (1995), a member of the Ahtahkakoop band, SK, also writes of Battle River Cree customs and history through the narratives he collected from Chief Thunderchild. These narratives increase Indigenous knowledge regarding the Battle River Cree, and also the Battle River Cree warrior. Both Dion and Ahenakew practiced Christian faith; Dion, a devout Catholic and Ahenakew, an ordained priest, both continued to value the importance of Cree knowledge and culture (preface).

Mandelbaum, Dempsey, Dion, and Ahenakew provide historical accounts of the Plains Cree, insights into Battle River Cree epistemology and culture, and a slight understanding of the Battle River Cree warrior. However, much more attention needs to be given to the importance of Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree warrior. The areas of this subject which need attention are improved methodology, an in-depth analysis of how Indigenous knowledge, or lack there-of, effects Indigenous warriors in contemporary society, and also how Indigenous education can be enriched with Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree warrior.

Indigenous Research methodology (IRM) is fundamental to an effective delivery of Indigenous knowledge. Research is heavily influenced by the values

and beliefs of the researcher (Kovach2009), (Smith, 1999), & (Weber-Pillwax 1999). IRM is built on a framework that is derived from the Indigenous researcher's world-view. This world-view affects each stage of the research and writing process, from why the researcher selected the topic of research, to how the questions of the research are framed. The worldview is also accountable to many principles, listed by Weber-Pillwax (1999). Dion and Ahenakew could be termed as pioneers of IRM. Their research and methods encapsulate IRM. Their work is guided by their Indigenous worldview, and time has illustrated that their work has lived up to the principles of IRM. In comparison to Mandelbaum and Dempsey, I found Dion's and Ahenakew's work to contain more substance, in terms of delivery.

Although Mandelbaum and Dempsey did include many narratives from Cree members, it had an aura similar to that of reading a textbook, or a novel. The authenticity of voice that is needed in order for the reader to relate, and for the knowledge to become alive, is lacking. I was able to relate to Dion and Ahenakew's text. The lived experience, the motives and intentions of the Dion and Ahenakew, and their ability to incorporate their epistemology within their writing, provided more substance for me to draw from within their texts. Dion and Ahenakew, and their methods and the ability to deliver are few and far between.

Much more research needs to be done by Indigenous researchers within the area of IRM and Indigenous knowledge, and the Battle River Cree warrior. Although all the authors did include differing levels of analysis within their work, no analysis is applied to the Indigenous knowledge (IK) and the Battle River Cree

warrior. Research attention needs to be paid to this topic, especially in contemporary society.

An analysis of Indigenous knowledge and its effects on Indigenous identity, and the Battle River Cree warrior identity are all facets of research that need attention. This topic of research is crucial. The current state of Indigenous peoples and knowledge, is one of being in constant battle. This battle is against the destruction of IK as the knowledge and way of being that supports Battle River Cree warriors, and against the continued colonization of Indigenous peoples in general, and specifically, of the Battle River Cree peoples. This battle has resulted in the degradation within Canadian society of our ways of knowing and being. The IK related to the teachings of the warrior spirit are essential to an Indigenous warrior identity.

Related to this topic of future study, is education. Indigenous knowledge needs to be incorporated into Indigenous education. Education as practiced today privileges the Western intellectual tradition of knowledge over the more ancient forms of traditional Indigenous knowledge, including that of the Battle River Cree. This denial of a learner's foundational knowledge system is highly detrimental to the development of Indigenous peoples' identity, whether individual or collective. Much research is needed to uncover the IK that serves as the foundation of the warrior, and to develop the discourse that will support this foundation in addressing the challenges of realizing that role in contemporary times and nurturing the survival of Indigenous people.

This particular research study will build on the research presented by authors such as Mandelbaum, Dion, Dempsey and Ahenakew. This study, Indigenous knowledge and the Battle River Cree warrior, focuses on Indigenous knowledge and teachings, and seeks to uncover and regenerate the Indigenous knowledge that warriors should receive. This study is guided by IRM, and therefore, is focused on Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

This study will depart from previous research, as it will include an analysis of the role Indigenous knowledge plays within the contemporary identity of Battle River Cree warriors. In studying the connections between IK and the warrior, this work offers possibilities for new approaches to education that derive from Indigenous social structures, including definitions of being. Applying the traditional IK that underpinned the teaching and training of warriors into the social contexts of contemporary society can be a significant way to inform educational policy and assist us all to identify and describe the root causes of many of the social issues currently oppressing Indigenous peoples.

This section has identified the gaps in the literature pertaining to this topic; it has also discussed what is available in terms of research. Although there are nominal sources that address this topic of study, the minimal body of literature has also highlighted the need for future research. This section of the literature review has also discussed where my research builds on and departs from the available research.

Conclusion

This literature review has identified and proved the need for this research topic, Indigenous knowledge and the Battle River Cree warrior, through three themes: the power of research, Indigenous Knowledge, and gaps in research regarding the Battle River Cree. Theme one, the power of research, identified how research has been used to define what does and does not count as knowledge. Indigenous knowledge has been discounted as knowledge through research, however Indigenous researchers are carving space which privileges Indigenous knowledge. This is critical within this study as it identifies the need for Indigenous research regarding Indigenous knowledge.

The second theme deconstructs colonialism; describing why colonialism occurred, how it occurred, and also described to some extent the effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge systems. Lastly, a research focus on theme three, the Battle River Cree, identified no sources or works that specifically addressed any aspects of the people known as the Battle River Cree.

Chapter 4: Research Participants

For this study, two research participants, Elder Ben Weenie and John Glen Starr, were selected based on membership within the Battle River Cree, and also their Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree.

Ben Weenie is an Elder from Sweetgrass First Nation in Saskatchewan. He is an Elder held in high esteem, and has dedicated his life to maintaining and regenerating Battle River Cree ceremonies, culture, language and knowledge. Elder Ben grew up with many traditional teachings; he learned the ancestral ways from his grandparents that used to visit him when he was a young boy. Elder Ben explained that he had grandparents from Sweetgrass First Nation, Little Pine First Nation, Poundmaker First Nation, and also Red Pheasant First Nation, that would come and teach him instrumental teachings; he is passing these teachings on to his family and community.

Elder Ben shared rich knowledge within this research study. His teachings and knowledge added depth and substance to this project; he began his talk with traditional knowledge regarding what a warrior was pre-European contact. His oratory ended with what warriors need today, what our communities need, and what our roles and responsibilities are as community members, family members, and parents (B. Weenie, personal communication, May 2012). Elder Ben's teachings were inspirational. They were inspirational because there is hope in knowing that there are answers, guidance, and direction for our lives if we seek it. The teachings and the stories are ancient. The teachings of our ancestors are full

of life, power, energy, love, direction, strength, and are essential tools to living a good life today. The teachings, the Indigenous knowledge never get old, and will never be invalid. I am honored to have had the opportunity to sit with my Moosoom Ben and connect with the teachings, all the times before this and hopefully, all of the times to come. Elder Ben is a relative of mine, and has also been training my father, John Starr, in the protocols and traditional ways of the Battle River Cree.

John Glen Starr, my father, is from Little Pine First Nation, SK and is part of the reason why I chose this research topic. Although my dad grew up with many of the statistical experiences that many First Nation communities and individuals endure, for example: residential school, racism, poverty, drugs, alcohol, young offenders, and the prison system, he also grew up with parents who loved him and did their best to pass on the teachings and knowledge that they had struggled and fought to hold onto.

Although my family encountered many of the effects of colonization, my grandparents did their best to pass on the teachings, Indigenous knowledge, to my father. My father grew up hearing the stories of warriors and how he had the warrior blood-line. Starr (2012) explained:

The Battle River Cree come from a long ancestral society of the Plains Cree. My blood-line comes from Chief Big Bear [from the maternal side, my dad's mother, my grandmother, Ruth (Kennedy) Starr]. My great, great grandfather [Big Bear] was a spiritual leader, a chief, also a warrior. My grandfather was also a warrior; his name was Norman Standinghorn. My dad [Thomas Paul Starr] was also in the Second World War, he was a very humble man. He was a machine gunner, code talker, Special Forces, rifle-man, and a decorated soldier. (personal communication)

These stories of the tradition of warriors within John's family impacted him on a fundamental level. He knew he was a part of an ancient tradition. However, he was confronted with conflict. Holding onto the Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree and the warrior, and having the ability to live that identity has been a battle.

The teachings that my dad received were constantly under attack by the effects of colonialism. Residential school tried to kill the teachings, and replace them with a Christian Euro-Western mentality. The racism and stereotypes segregated and isolated my dad and his Indigenous knowledge with the aim of placing him and his knowledge in an inferior state. The young offenders and prison system locked up my dad, a young warrior. My father did 8 ½ years in Stoney Mountain penitentiary, the same penitentiary that held our great-great grandfather, Big Bear. While doing his time in the Stoney Mountain Penitentiary, the Oka Crisis was happening in Mohawk territory, Kanesatake, QC. For my dad, it was an awakening experience. Starr, (2012) said:

I remember watching the Oka Crisis on the news, and seeing those warriors on TV fighting for their beliefs and their ancestors. And I started thinking about it when I was doing time, what I wanna do when I get out of Stoney Mountain, where my great-great grandfather, Big Bear, was locked up. I seen where he was, and I wondered what the heck is a warrior? And I thought back to my dad, he was a real warrior. And I thought back to my grandpa, he was a warrior. And I thought back to my great grandfather, He was a medicine man and a real warrior. I never seen them punch anybody out, tell people stuff, brag about what they've accomplished. But instead they were humble, and shameful of some of things they had done in the past. But then I started thinking, I used to see my dad pray and light sweetgrass and cry. I thought, wow, what's this great man doing crying?

From then on I had no choice, because of my blood-line. I had start a spiritual quest, and ask myself, what is a man? What is a warrior? (personal communication)

Big Bear went to jail because he broke the Queen's law; he defended his land, his people, and way of life. My dad went to jail because he broke the law, Canada's law. Regardless of his crime, my dad was going to end up in jail because he had been fighting all of his life, fighting for his life. Although my dad didn't have the opportunity to defend his people like Big Bear, my dad's imprisonment was a result of him defending his identity and his teachings; which he has been forced to fight for and defend since his conception.

It has always been a struggle to hold onto the teachings of the warrior, and to transcend those teachings. My dad shared his experiences within this study of how he has managed to keep and incorporate those teachings in his life.

I am very honored to be a part of this.

Chapter 5: Findings

This section will discuss the Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree Warrior shared by Elder Ben Weenie, and John Starr. It will then discuss the common themes introduced by the Indigenous knowledge holders: A belief system, Indigenous knowledge, rights of passage, power and gifts, and responsibility. Derived from the themes presented by Elder Ben Weenie and John Starr, an analysis of the misconception of a warrior and the current needs for warriors will be discussed. Lastly, the future of this research will be considered.

Elder Ben Weenie – Remembering the Battle River Cree Warrior

Elder Ben Weenie gave much insight as to the particular roles warriors carried out and how the whole community supported those roles. Weenie explained that there was strong loss within the community. There was always danger of being attacked by enemy tribes, animals, and there were struggles to attain basic living necessities, such as food. Therefore the community worked together, as an inter-dependent society. Each had their own identity, role, family commitments, however all contributed to the protection and well being of the whole community. Because of this strong loss, warriors were needed and valued.

The strong loss the Battle River Cree faced, forced the warriors to grow up with a knowledge of survival. From a young age, they were taught to be defenders, protectors, providers, hunters, gatherers of medicine and teachers. These teachings gave warriors the knowledge they needed to survive and carry

out their roles. Responsibility was also a teaching that warriors were very familiar with. The children were also taught this from a young age, through the laws of the community. Elder Weenie explained that the most important law was in regards to hunting. If the hunting protocols weren't followed, that could mean starvation for the community. The warriors enforced these laws, and it was part of the knowledge of survival. Although not all men became warriors, all were taught the knowledge of survival.

The knowledge of survival was taught early on in a child's life. The vision quest, sometimes referred to as a fast or a rite of passage, was the first step in accessing the warrior's role, or realizing different roles within the community. The vision quest entailed a number of days, usually four, without food or water. This, in turn would earn a vision, and or, spiritual grandfather. A spiritual grandfather, sometimes referred to as a guardian or moosoom, was significant to all. Once a moosoom saw the dedication of the young individual, the spiritual grandfather would have pity on them and take on the responsibility to care for them and would also give them a gift.

The gift or blessing given to the individual was also a guiding force as it helped the individual define their role within the community. Some were given gifts to heal, hunt, or survive in battles. The moosoom's and the gifts were considered a source of power, as they were tools for survival. The young people had to earn the moosoom's and the gifts through the vision quest.

Those who earned the moosoom's and gifts, which pertained to warriors, along with maintaining the laws, and following the protocols, became worthy

men. A worthy man is the stage prior to becoming a warrior. Worthy men had to prove their worth by participating in battle expeditions, scouting, or being good hunters. Once they accomplished many brave tasks such as stealing numerous horses from an enemy, or bringing down enemies, an Elder would notice their accomplishments, and would invite them into the warriors lodge. The warriors' lodge was a place of high honor, and also a place where meetings would take place to discuss strategies in terms of war and survival. Men who became warriors had to earn the privilege to be a warrior.

In traditional times, the Battle River Cree warriors protected the community, upheld the laws, provided for the community, and taught future generations their Indigenous knowledge.

Elder Ben Weenie shared much more regarding the warrior. It will be discussed within the thematic section of this chapter.

John Starr – His Teachings and Experiences as a Battle River Cree Warrior

As a child, John grew up with the teachings of a warrior that he had received from his father; however, he didn't have the opportunity to be raised in the environment that nurtured those teachings. As discussed in the introduction of John, his environment was a battle between Indigenous knowledge and colonial oppression. Although he believed in the teachings and the ceremonies, the environment and support needed to earn the right to be a warrior was not available. Residential schools, young offender institutions and the prison system

disconnected him from an environment that furthered the teachings and the ability to live out those teachings.

It wasn't until he was released from jail in 2000, and returned home to Little Pine First Nation, that he continued his Indigenous education and surrounded himself in an environment where he could continue learning the Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree and the warrior. This environment also provided the opportunity to earn the right of being a warrior. Starr (2012) explained:

I started working for Elders, hauling rocks, chopping wood for them. Helping out with their sweats and gradually moving on, I got a pipe lit and pointed to the Creator as a Creator's helper, the Cree word is Iskapeyo. Actually, we're warrior apprentices. How to take care of your community, how to take care of yourself, your family, how to have dignity, how to have humbleness, you know, all the good virtues.

Fortunately, for myself, I was given power, I didn't know at the time. When I found out my name, I found out through the sweat. The grandfather rock called me grandson, he said 'grandson, I've been with you since you were born and I'll always be with you'. So that was an eye opener for me...Then I started to really dig down deep, and started to admit that I am small and weak. I can't see the future, I cannot even heal anybody. But one thing I have is prayer.

So anyway, I got into really digging into what is a warrior. The more I found out what a warrior was, taking care of your community, being strong spiritually, trying to help out kids and teach them how to pray. Like at the beginning of this interview, I said a prayer and I acknowledged all of the spirits, but foremost, I acknowledged the Great Spirit and Mother Earth...For me it began with helping the Elders and then they would teach me, how and why.

With that I went and fasted in the mountains by myself. I didn't know that was what they called the great vision quest, or some people call it power. But I was given a few gifts up there. [later] This one old man told me, you cannot be an Iskapeyo just around

me, there's other things you have to learn. So I started helping out at other sweats and ceremonies. Then I got to the big house, what we call Gamak-me-gwa, the sundance lodge, the most sacred lodge there is. And I became a helper there for the last 10 years. The first 2 years I was a helper around the sweat; learning how to chop wood, learning the different types of wood, learning how to set up a sweat.

Now as I'm moving on, I've been doing this for 12 years, that's what I'm starting to learn. I'm spiritually aware of the good and evil. And that's what a warrior does; his role is to fight evil. Which is not a very easy task, it's always around. I've also found out my identity, who I am, what I am, my weaknesses, my strong points. I try to share that with my people, with kindness and love... I do my work because I gave my life to the Great Spirit. And us warriors, we say it's a good day to die because there is another dimension out there.... To pray for people who are sick, to help out people, that's what I understand to be warrior. To hold myself with good esteem, the best esteem as I can, and with dignity. That was one of the best things I ever did for myself. I fasted and told the Creator, you can have my life, I'm willing to die here. (Personal communication)

John shared his experience of how he came to know what a warrior is. The gift of traditional knowledge was first given to him when he was young. However, even though the circumstances and barriers of colonization and assimilation attempted to disconnect John from his teachings of the Battle River Cree warrior, the Indigenous knowledge had been rooted within him. Although he had many struggles, John never gave up. His teachings always called him; finally he made a choice to return home to search for more teachings, and the environment that would allow him to live the warrior's way.

Themes Introduced by the Indigenous Knowledge Holders, Ben Weenie & John Starr

This section will discuss the themes that appeared in both interviews with Ben Weenie, and John Starr. These themes include: Believing in the belief system, Indigenous knowledge, rites of passage, power and gifts, and responsibility. These themes are part of the knowledge system of the Battle River Cree warrior and represent the values that would have been taught to the warriors. It must be noted that this work does not include the whole value system of the Battle River Cree. The values highlighted above are the ones that Indigenous knowledge holders viewed as essential to the Battle River Cree warrior.

- **Believe in the Belief System**

The belief system of the Battle River Cree is the foundation of the warrior. This belief system encapsulates the epistemology of the Battle River Cree. The underpinning of the belief system is spirituality, or the relationship between the Battle River Cree and the Creator, the spiritual guardians and mother earth. This spiritual relationship guides the Battle River Cree, and gives purpose. From this relationship, all aspects of the roles of the warriors are formed. Warriors become warriors by seeking visions and blessings from the Creator, warriors attain power through the blessings from the Creator, warriors seek guidance and protection through fasting and prayer. Believing in the Battle River Cree belief system that is inherently built on a foundation of spirituality was the way of the warrior, and continues to be today.

- **Indigenous Knowledge**

Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree is a tool that is imperative to an Indigenous identity. This knowledge is based on thousands of years of lived experience for a people who come from the same belief system, and epistemology. Indigenous knowledge is based on the historic reality and holds the values, and the teachings, of the ancestors. The Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree warrior comprises the values of respect for the spiritual relationships, respect for the traditions, respect for the spiritual and traditional laws, respect for community and family, and respect for self. From this knowledge, warriors know who they are in relation to the community and the cosmos, and are equipped to carry out their duties.

- **Rite of Passage / Vision Quest**

The *rite of passage/ vision quest* is a ceremony, not only meant for warriors, but integral to the development of a warrior. The *rite of passage/ vision quest* ceremony is a fasting ceremony meant for anyone leaving the child stage of life and progressing to the young adult stage. In terms of the Battle River Cree warrior, the *rite of passage/ vision quest* ceremony is crucial to becoming a warrior. Part of the protocol of becoming a warrior is to participate in this ceremony. This ceremony is essential to becoming a warrior for two reasons. Firstly, it provides the opportunity for the upcoming warrior a chance to earn his spot as a warrior. Although, as stated

by Elder Ben, young boys have to become worthy men before they become warriors. This is done through the rite of passage ceremony, along with a number of brave acts, and helping out community members. An aspect of this ceremony is restraining from food and water for a number of days. The ability to survive harsh struggles as endured within this ceremony is a demonstration of earning their spot to later become warriors.

Secondly, the up-coming warriors participate in this ceremony to receive visions, and or gifts, and or spiritual names. These vision or gifts received are instrumental to the survival of the warrior. A vision can be a foretelling of the future, or a vision of purpose. Gifts can include abilities mentioned above, such as the ability to survive battles, ability to sense danger, ability to hunt, ability to track. These gifts are essential to both the survival of the warrior, and the warrior's ability to earn prestige within the community.

The *rite of passage / vision quest* is not the only ceremony that provides a spiritual grandfather. Receiving a spiritual grandfather and being named can also be done in other ceremonies such as the sundance lodge or the sweat lodge. Receiving a spiritual grandfather (also called guardian), who is appointed by both the Creator and the spiritual grandfather, is essential to the warrior. Having a spiritual grandfather is essential to the warrior because a spiritual grandfather protects, guides and takes care of the warrior. The naming ceremony is in conjunction to

receiving a guardian. Once the warrior is chosen a guardian, the guardian's name is shared with the warrior. The *rite of passage /vision quest / naming ceremony* is not only for warriors, it is meant for all who are leaving the child stage and progressing into the young adult stage. It's a ceremony that is meant to strengthen the individual, connect the individual with the Creator and its helpers, and equip the individual with tools that speak to their identity and their survival. This ceremony is integral to becoming a Battle River Cree Warrior.

- **Power and Gifts**

Power, held within a Battle River Cree epistemology, is the connection to the spiritual realm. Held within the epistemology is a belief that as humans, we are small and weak in comparison to the Creator and the cosmos. However, as Nehiyaw (Cree people), which translated means the people of earth, we gain power when we receive a spiritual grandfather. However, the process of receiving power and gifts requires an earning component. As described above, the spiritual grandfather offers gifts of survival in reciprocity of the effort and dedication put forward. These gifts are considered a source of power. Therefore power, from the traditional Battle River Cree perspective, derives from spirituality.

Understanding power from this perspective is also integral to Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree warrior. Battle River Cree warriors are not concerned with gaining material wealth as a source of

power, as they know that real power, authentic power, stems from the Creator. This Battle River Cree knowledge of power is critical as it is linked to the belief system, the epistemology, and therefore is foundational to the warrior.

- **Responsibility**

The value of responsibility to a Battle River Cree warrior is a value that is held in high regard. The responsibilities of a warrior are to ensure protection and survival through any means necessary, maintain traditional laws, respect the values, protocols, and teachings, and live the values, protocols and teachings. Responsibility as a value, and not a duty, is about believing in the Battle River Cree ways of knowing and being, ensuring those beliefs, traditions, and protocols are continued, and passing on these teachings to the next generation. Responsibility as a value is essential to the Battle River Cree warrior.

Elder Ben Weenie, and John Starr both contributed in identifying these values of the Battle River Cree warrior. Warriors earned their position through responsibility, belief, and love for the people. Although this work doesn't complete the value system of the Battle River Cree, it does provide insight into the conception of a Battle River Cree warrior.

Analysis of the Misconception of a Warrior

Another theme that became apparent from the knowledge Elder Ben Weenie and John Starr shared is the misconception of today's youth as to what a

warrior is. In the narrative of John, he identified that he carried fractions of Indigenous knowledge of the Battle River Cree warrior as a result of his experiences with colonialism. It wasn't until he returned home and dedicated his time to learning the traditional knowledge from Elders and participating in ceremonies that he was able to fill in the gaps of his already acquired knowledge of what a warrior is.

Even though John held some teachings of the warriors and heard stories of warriors throughout his upbringing, his teachings were incomplete, and tainted with stereotypes. Starr shared:

I thought, as a young man, a warrior robs, pillages, and creates havoc. And I did it all, everything that was done criminally. I was a criminal under the misconception of a warrior...In today's society we don't know who we are as kids. I can say that because I didn't know what or who I was. All I was told was that I didn't belong in my own land. They gave us the reservation, So you go to town, people look at you and call you names. (Starr, Personal Communication, 2012)

Starr's incomplete teachings, coupled with his experiences of racism and stereotypes manifested his destiny of becoming a vicious, criminal minded warrior. Starr's experiences answer Laroques's question, "What happens to a people whose very essence has been soaked in stereotypes for half a millennium?" (2010, p.121). The stereotypes Laroque speaks of are colonial tools that are used to undermine, delegitimize, and emasculate Indigenous values, beliefs and roles. John held onto the teachings of a warrior, teachings that brought pride and dignity to his identity, however, they were mixed in with perverted stereotypes derived out of Eurocentric ideologies and beliefs of what a warrior is - a vicious savage and a labeled criminal.

My grandfather, Big Bear fought for more than land, he was a warrior who fought to keep the Battle River Cree ways alive. He believed in our belief system, and he fought for that belief system. He was a real warrior. Although we are not living in a physical battle state at this point in time, we are still fighting the same war that Big Bear fought. The fight for the Battle River Cree belief system, and ways of knowing and being are constantly threatened by stereotypes (Laroque, 2010), threatened by an Ideological beast (Alfred, & Lowe, 2005). The need for our warriors to protect our belief system and to live our belief system is still present. Elder Ben affirms this, “If we believe our teachings, our principles, our foundations, who we are as human beings, then that’s what we need to do” (Weenie, personal communication, 2012). This is the contemporary situation for the Cree warrior. The contemporary warrior is necessary because the IK of the warrior lives within them. It will not disappear, but the access to Indigenous knowledge, the roles of all people in the community, and the need to believe in the Cree knowledge system is constantly threatened. Warriors need to ensure there is access to that knowledge, keep the community intact and continue to believe and teach the Cree knowledge system through their own lives.

John Starr’s narrative is an example that describes what we need to do. Fractured teachings mixed with the genocidal ways of colonialism battled within the processes that shaped Starr’s identity. However, returning home, working and earning the Indigenous knowledge he needed to strengthen and direct him, John was able to win the battle. He discovered and teaches that regaining the Cree

Indigenous knowledge, teachings, and foundations of the Battle River Cree makes enduring the personal struggles worthwhile.

The themes presented by Elder Ben Weenie and John Starr are based on the teaching held within the Indigenous knowledge of the Cree warrior.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This aim of this study is to validate IK and regenerate the need for Indigenous knowledge with regards to the Cree warrior. This thesis explores the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and the Battle River Cree warrior. This work deconstructs the disconnection between Indigenous people and their own Indigenous knowledge. Interviews with Indigenous knowledge holders, John Starr and Ben Weenie, provided the information on which my study of the Battle River Cree warrior is based. The methodology and literature survey section of this work discussed how colonialism has disrupted the transmission of Indigenous knowledge within Cree communities, and described the role that research has played in both the disconnection and regeneration of Indigenous knowledge in Cree communities.

Furthermore, this thesis has identified the struggles researchers encounter when embarking on Indigenous research. Some of the possible situations encountered by researchers within a context of Indigenous knowledge is romanticizing the past, and positioning IK or Indigenous identities in relation to colonization or decolonization, which can be problematic. It is integral to know the history, teachings and knowledge, which are integral to Indigenous identities. Researcher and others alike must be cautious when embarking on such research, as the dominant history is laden with stereotypes of Indigenous peoples. Self-location, examining the intent of the researcher, and creating and maintaining relationships with Indigenous knowledge holders, which are all aspects of IRM,

ensures that the research is held accountable. These aspects also ensure the sources are authentic and protect the research from romanticizing the past.

On the same note, seeking Indigenous knowledge and/or Indigenous identities must be sought with caution, as there is danger in defining an Indigenous existence in relation to decolonization or colonization. Indigenous peoples have authentic history, knowledge, and identities that are valid, and are equipped to stand on their own. Within an Indigenous research methodological framework, Indigenous researchers have the necessary theoretical foundation that is guided by an Indigenous epistemology needed to uncover Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous history, and Indigenous identity; IRM also provides the tools necessary to uncover Indigenous truths without the dominant narratives.

The final section of this thesis included interviews with Indigenous knowledge holders, John Starr and Ben Weenie who provided the substance and life to this research. Cree knowledge holder, John Starr from Little Pine First Nation, shared his experience of how he gained Cree Indigenous knowledge, battled with colonialism and found a way to be a warrior. Elder, Ben Weenie from Sweetgrass First Nation, shared many teachings of the warrior along with historical memory of the traditional teachings of the Cree.

Derived from both interviews, integral themes of the Cree warrior teachings emerged. However, within my own learning process, I came to understand the importance of earning knowledge, in relation to the process of learning and remembering Indigenous knowledge. The process of receiving IK, which includes being with the people who carry that knowledge, partaking in

ceremonies and spending the time and energy within that knowledge system, is a process integral to gaining Indigenous Knowledge of any Indigenous people. The process is necessary, it is a way of earning such knowledge, and in this particular case and study, it is a part of the Cree tradition.

My intent in this research, which is the validation and regeneration of Indigenous knowledge, has been consistent. Validation and regeneration is a vital task, as Indigenous peoples need to have access to our own knowledge systems. Indigenous education and Indigenous educational policies need to be informed by our ways of knowing and being. However, this research is not intended to be an Indigenous knowledge manual. This research is a process of validating and identifying the need for the Indigenous knowledge of the Cree warrior. This research has also identified the necessity to involve the Cree warrior within contemporary society. In our communities, warriors are needed to protect our Indigenous knowledge, and Cree ways of knowing and being.

Future Research

This research study has led me to new directions for future research. I have learned that the Indigenous knowledge I was seeking at the beginning of this project is not something that I can transcribe from a couple of interviews with traditional knowledge holders. Although there is value in recording the teachings and the stories, I also believe in the teachings that I have received through this study. In order to gain Indigenous knowledge, it has to be earned. I could continue in such research that transcribes Indigenous knowledge from Indigenous knowledge holders and hope that the readers will understand and learn and

incorporate the teachings in their lives. However, in a sense, that process goes against the teachings. There is value in the process of gaining knowledge, value in the tradition, the relationship, partaking in the ceremonies, in going to an environment where the transaction of earning and giving traditional knowledge is occurring.

With that, the future of my research will not be in uncovering Indigenous knowledge; my next research project will be focused on learning ways in which Battle River Cree warriors have regained the Indigenous knowledge needed for their identity. What was their journey home? This research will also focus on ways in which we can provide Indigenous youth with the access to Indigenous knowledge.

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APPENDIX A: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Indigenous Knowledge and the Battle River Cree Warrior

Researcher: Rochelle Starr

Name: _____ **Place:** _____ **Date:** _____

I understand and consent to be involved in this study carried out by Rochelle Starr as part of her Masters program. My participation is voluntary and I understand the researcher will honour the terms and conditions as listed below:

- You can choose whether or not you want to reveal your identity/name in the study.
- You can change your mind and withdraw your involvement in this study at any time.
- If you choose not to be named, the researcher will be the only person to know your identity.
- If you do not want some parts of the interview recorded, you can request that the recorder be turned off for those parts.
- If you prefer to speak Cree during your interview, please let the researcher know beforehand so that translation services can be arranged before the interview.
- You will receive a transcription of your interview for your review and input if changes are required.

- You will be given a copy of the study upon your request in writing to the researcher.

- The records for this study will be kept in a secured filing cabinet by the researcher for a minimum period of five years.
- Your words may be used/incorporated into the researcher's thesis; the researcher will hold copyright of the thesis.
- Your words will not be used for purposes other than those set out in this information letter and consent form.
- Data from this study may be used in future educational research with your written permission.

Please ✓ **the appropriate box/boxes**

1. I understand and consent to be interviewed for this study.
 - I agree that my interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

- I choose not to have my interviews tape-recorded.
 - I agree to allow my interviews to be video-recorded.
 - I choose not to have my interviews video-recorded.
 - I agree that my words may be used in the researcher's study
2. I understand that it is my choice whether or not I want to be named in the study.
- I agree that my name and identity will be used in this study.
 - I choose not to be named in this study.
 - I agree and grant permission that my photograph may be used in the study.
 - I choose not to have my photograph used in the study.

Signature of Participant _____ **Signature of Researcher** _____

Date: _____

For any concerns or questions about this research, please contact the following at any time during the research process:

Supervisor

Dr. Cora Weber Pillwax
 7-104 Education North
 University of Alberta
 Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
 (780)-492-7606
ckw@ualberta.ca

Researcher

Rochelle Starr
 7-104 Education North
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 780-420-1029
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The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

APPENDIX B: Participant's Letter of Information

Participants Letter of Information

Study Title: Indigenous Knowledge: Teachings of the River Cree Warrior

Research Investigator

Rochelle Starr
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Supervisor

Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax
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You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Rochelle Starr, from the Faculty of Education, Educational Policy Studies, and Indigenous Peoples Education at the University of Alberta. Results from this study will contribute to the final project, the thesis, for completion of a master's degree.

Background

You are being asked to participate in the research study, Indigenous Knowledge: Traditional Teachings of the Battle River Cree Warrior. The reason for this study is to elevate Indigenous knowledge within education for the purpose of making education more relevant to Indigenous, specifically Battle River Cree, students with the incorporation of Indigenous teachings around the Battle River Cree warrior. Within western education, western knowledge has been privileged over Indigenous knowledge and teachings. Privileging western knowledge over Indigenous knowledge has proven to be extremely detrimental to the development Indigenous peoples Identity, culture, and ways of knowing and being. This study seeks to remember, and regenerate Indigenous knowledge regarding the Battle River Cree warrior with the aim of validating Indigenous knowledge within the educational systems and within society alike.

This study may benefit Indigenous people by way of Incorporating Indigenous knowledge that speaks to their identity into their education. You have been selected as a participant because of the community's recognition of you Indigenous Knowledge around the warrior teachings.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

Location of Study

In your home environment, or a place of your convenience.

Interview Process

I will be asking a few short questions, which will be recorded with an audio device. The question will be in the context of Indigenous knowledge and traditional teachings regarding the Battle River Cree warrior.

Length of Interview

The length of time will be dependent upon your discretion, however long you feel comfortable with speaking and sharing your knowledge. We will meet in person one time to conduct the interviews.

After typing out the recorded interview, I will make a copy of the interview available to you to ensure your words and perspectives are correctly transcribed.

After all the work is completed, the research findings will be made available to you to ensure that I wrote and analyzed your teachings so that it is up to your satisfaction.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Intended Uses of the research:

- The findings from this study will be used to complete my thesis.
- The findings from this study may be used within my dissertation.
- The findings from this study may be used for publication in research journals, presentations, teaching, or web postings.
- Participants may be personally identified in any of the above publications.

Data

- Data will be kept confidential, only Rochelle Starr and Dr. Weber-Pillwax will have access to the data.
- Participants will be identified within publications unless you ask me to withhold your name. In this case I will provide you with a pseudonym.
- Data will be stored as a digital file on my computer. A CD of the audio recordings will be made and stored in Dr. Weber-Pillwax's office at the University of Alberta for a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 25 years following completion of the research project.
- Participants will receive a copy of a report of the research findings if you indicate an interest in receiving such materials.
- I may use the data I obtain from this study in future research, but this must first be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Payment

The participants will not receive payment for participating in this study.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.