Deadly Dads: Supports for Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak (Cree men) throughout fatherhood to promote wellbeing—Impacts and understandings from a community-university partnership

by

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Abstract

Mosoms and Kokoms (grandfathers and grandmothers) from the Cree communities of Maskwacis, Treaty 6 Territory identified an opportunity to welcome Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak (Cree men) back to ceremony. New interests within the field of maternal health, focusing on the Developmental Origins of Health and Disease and involving fathers align with existing understandings of wellbeing in Maskwacis. Through a long-standing community-university partnership, we explored the impacts on wellbeing of a culturally-centered, community-led support strategy.

A community-based participatory research approach was shaped, honouring Nêhiyaw ways of knowing. A Community Advisory Committee including Mosoms, community members, and researchers led the research. Weekly group-led/developed support activities for men occurred from August 2021 to January 2023. This was a community-driven study through which our methods were iteratively determined. Two Wisdom Circles with participants were recorded, along with meeting minutes, journals, photos, implementation notes, community reports, and emails. Knowledge was analyzed non-linearly through relationships. Rigour was established through nurturing relationships, reflection and prayer, and offering tobacco to Mosoms for guidance and to participants sharing knowledge.

Strong relationships prompted re-understandings of the roles of researchers and strengthened kinship networks. Participants associated healthy gatherings, reassurance/motivation, intergenerational knowledge sharing, responsibility, shared positive memories, uplifted spirits, and connection to culture and identity with the group-led supports. Impacts occurred during what was often referred to as ‘breaks’ from agendas, cycles of intergenerational trauma, the busyness of work, and fears of expressing love or healing.

Breaks from the coloniality of knowing and being create opportunities to connect with community, culture, ceremony, and identity, which is the source of wellbeing for Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak and families in Maskwacis.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Reuel Adam Purificati-Fuñe. The research project, of which this thesis is part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Supporting Cree fathers-to-be using a culturally-appropriate, community led, and strengths-based approach", Pro00092188, April 21, 2023.

This research is part of a partnership and collaboration with the community of Maskwacis through the Maskwacis Maternal, Child, and Family Wellbeing Research Group, Maskwacis Health Services, and the Deadly Dads Men's Supports Society which emerged from this collaboration. Dr. Richard Oster was the principal investigator, and my supervisor Dr. Rhonda Bell and Dr. Sue Ross were co-investigators. The Advisory Committee for the Maskwacis Maternal, Child, and Family Wellbeing Research Group included contributions from Kokom Muriel Lee, Kokom Sophie Bruno, Kokom Lena Cutknife, Kokom Margaret Montour, Mosom Rick Lightning, Dr. Richard Oster, Dr. Rhonda Bell, Denise Young, Carmella Cutknife, Jaden Krause, Charlene Rattlesnake, Tyrelle Yellowbird, Luwana Listener, Deneika Dennehy, Bonny Graham, Winnie Chow-Horn, Fernanda Torrez Ruiz, Tyra Lightning, and myself.

I was involved with all aspects of the research relating to the Deadly Dads from July 7th, 2021 until June 2023 and began organizing and leading Deadly Dads Advisory Committee meetings beginning in August 2021. The methodologies and support group described in this thesis were developed collaboratively overtime with guidance and effort contributed by the Deadly Dads Men's Advisory Committee, now Supports Society, which had included Mosom Rick Lightning, Mosom Cliff Potts, Mosom Don Johnson, Late Mosom Arrol Crier, Late Mosom Dennis Okeymow, Dr. Richard Oster, Grant Bruno, Sonny Lightning, Jerry Young, Dylan Lightning, Josh Littlechild, Robbie Potts, Delaney Eagle Sr., Bryce Eagle, Kenneth Cutarm, Tyrone Lightning, Ryan (Pun) Lightning, Kirby Strongman, Kacey Yellowbird, and myself.

Acknowledgements

The list of people who have supported me throughout this thesis would be too long to include in a few pages. I will begin with the Deadly Mosoms I had the honour of meeting, including my traditional pops Mosom Rick Lightning, Late Mosom Arrol Crier, Mosom Cliff Potts, Mosom Don Johnson, Mosom Pat Buffalo, Mosom Kirby Strongman, Mosom Delaney Eagle Sr., and Mosom Kenneth Cutarm. Ay-hay for your patience, generosity with your time, love, guidance, and knowledge you shared with me.

Ay-hay to the Deadly Dads themselves including Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Jerry Young, Bryce Eagle, Robbie Potts, Josh Littlechild, Grant Bruno, Delaney Eagle Jr., Tyrone Lightning, Ryan (Pun) Lightning, and many others who showed up to support one another, shared their experience, and made the Deadly Dads the success that it was. I'd also like to acknowledge Clarence (*Little Mustache)* Soosay and Chadwick Buffalo who I learned a lot about humility from.

Ay-hay to all the families behind these dads as well who support them and their work, especially Inez Lightning the rest of the family for the love and support and for sharing your kitchen table for many of our meetings.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Rhonda Bell and Dr. Richard Oster for all the freedom and support you've given me to spend time learning in community. Ay-hay Mosom Rick again for welcoming this learning, for all your traditional showings, and for the spontaneous road trips to grocery stores, conferences, restaurants, or to haul rocks. It is impossible to describe how much I learned on these trips.

Ay-hay to the Elders Mentoring Program, the I-HeLTI Advisory Committee, and all the rest of the Maskwacis Maternal, Child, and Family Wellbeing Research Group, especially Kokom Muriel Lee, Kokom Sophie Bruno, and Kokom Lena Cutknife who I had the honour of listening to. Special thanks to Winnie Chow-Horn for proposing the idea of defending this thesis in Maskwacis and to Manisha Khetarpal and the Maskwacis Cultural College for providing the space to do so. I have a lot of respect and appreciation for all the research assistants and Advisory Committee members, past and present, who share invaluable insights and continue to push for community priorities in tough spaces as well, including: Denise Young, Luwana Listener, Carmella Cutknife, Jaden Krause, Charlene Rattlesnake, Tyrelle Yellowbird, Deneika Dennehy, Fernanda Torrez Ruiz, Tyra Lightning, many others.

I would like to also thank all the funders who supported this project and me as a student, including the MSI Foundation, Women and Children's Health Research Institute, and the Canadian Institute of Health Research. Many thanks as well to Dr. Bethan Kingsley and the Patient and Community Engagement Training community of practice for supporting my learning about community-based research.

Salamat po Lola Maming, Tito Benji, at Tita Risa for the zoom calls supporting me in learning about my Filipino history and for helping me learn to pray in Tagalog. Maraming salamat po to Lolo Reuel and Lola Chit for supporting me every day and making me eat and laugh when I was stressed and overwhelmed. Salamat ng marami to Cynthia and Marco from Migrante for welcoming me and also helping me learn about the history of the Philippines. And to Denilo, Vangie, and many others at Migrante for showing me courage.

Thank you to my mom and dad, Bev and Andy, for supporting me in all my life decisions and encouraging/tolerating my curiosity. Thank you also to my sisters Ari and Attiya for always being there for me and helping me think through our unique place in the world.

Finally, thank you to my partner Ella for always helping stop me and Rick from ordering too much dim sim. Thank you for introducing me to your cool family and being part of mine. Thank you for loving me, coming with me on my adventures, and taking me on yours. I can't imagine this experience without you.

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List of Acronyms

CAC: Community Advisory Committee

MCFW: Maskwacis Maternal, Child, and Family Wellbeing

CBPR: Community-Based Participatory Research

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

DOHaD: Developmental Origins of Health and Disease

I-HeLTI: Indigenous Healthy Life Trajectory Initiatives

Glossary of Terms

Deadly: colloquial term used in community to describe something good or awesome, something father's who have joined the Deadly Dads aspire to be. Example, "they said they want me to connect with Deadly Dads and I just remember going 'oos'. I just thought that's a deadly name! I like this already. Looks deadly. Cool. Cool" (Nov 17, 2022, Second Wisdom Circle).

Deadly Dads: the name given to the Community Advisory Committee as it transitioned into an open-door support group.

Words shared in nêhiyawêwin (Cree):

Nôhtâwiy: my father

Mosom: grandfather

Namosom: my grandfather

Kokom: grandmother

Nokom: my grandmother

Câpân: great grandparent, great grandchild

Ospwâkan: the pipe

Ohpikihawanek*: grandchild brought up by grandparents. *this was used in the context of our Wisdom Circle, could not confirm spelling

Nêhiyawak: Cree people

Nêhiyaw: Cree. Mosom Pat Buffalo shared at horse therapy that this means more than just Cree, but refers to whole, four part, beings.

Nêhiyawêwin: the Cree language

Nâpêw: man, singular

Nâpêwak: men, plural

Kehekin*: word Mosom Rick shared with meaning it can be, or it is possible. *I was unable to confirm spelling

Words shared in Filipino:

Lolo: grandfather

Lolo ko: my grandfather

Lola: grandmother

Lola ko: my grandmother

Salamat po: thank you

Palabok: Filipino rice noodle dish

Tito: uncle

Tita: auntie

Chapter 1: Introduction

While out supporting a Round Dance put on by the new Nipishkopahk Nâpêwak Advisory (Samson Men's Advisory), on March 24th, 2023, Namosom[1] Rick Lightning turned to me and said, "See, we aren't colonized. We still speak our language, we still have our songs, and we still have our ceremonies." We were watching one of his sons and two of his grandsons sing. His question to me was, when researchers say they are 'decolonizing', what does that mean? Namosom Rick Lightning has been central to my learning as a master's student, and as a human being, during this project. He's been helping me learn through what he calls traditional *showings* rather than *teachings*. That is, learning through experiencing, participating, putting in effort, and showing up for the lessons. I introduce him here, at the beginning of this first chapter, because he's been my biggest mentor for understanding the knowledge shared in this thesis.

The question he posed me, "when researchers say they are 'decolonizing', what does that mean?" is central to reflecting on the purpose of this thesis, to understanding the narratives being presented, and to understanding the researcher's role in society, and our individual roles as human beings. When communicating to our stakeholders, there is a lot of emphasis on how research benefits the community. But, what Namosom, and many others have pointed out throughout this project is true: the power and wellbeing come from the culture and the ceremonies; the answers exist in community. Research does not give community their culture. Culture is already there, pathways to wellbeing are already there. So, from my understanding of that, researchers do not decolonize. In the context of our relations in this project, it is the Nêhiyawak[2] who are decolonizing the research for their community. It is the communities who are maintaining their culture and are lending their time, generosity, and patience that will, if it can be done, decolonize the university. It is our responsibility as researchers, and as human beings, to look at ourselves, understand ourselves, and heal ourselves, rather than imposing our knowledge onto others, so we can be better partners in the pursuit of a good future for the generations coming after us.

[1] Namosom: my grandfather
[2] Nêhiyawak: Cree people

Maskwacis

I don't know much about the true history of Maskwacis, that which is passed down orally by the people who have that gift and right. Geo-politically, Maskwacis is a Nêhiyaw community located approximately 85km south of Edmonton, Alberta on Treaty 6 Territory. Mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, people of Maskwacis, the Bear Hills People, are Nêhiyawak. This means they are the Four-Body people often referred to as Plains Cree or Cree (Johnson, 2017). Nêhiyawêwin is the language of the Four-Body people, which is also sometimes referred to as the Plains Cree or Cree language (Johnson, 2017). The community consists of four Nations including *Neyaskeweyak* (Ermineskin Cree Nation), *Nipisihkopahk* (Samson Cree Nation), *Kisehpatinow* (Louis Bull Tribe), and *Ahkamihk* (Montana First Nation) (Johnson, 2017). Pigeon Lake is community comprised of members from all Four Nations and is located approximately 50km from Maskwacis (Listener, et al., 2023). Maskwacis is where the Deadly Dads supports program began to serve fathers, men and families from all Nations.

There is a much richer and deeper history to Maskwacis, that is passed down through traditional showings and ceremony. This history is tied to wellbeing and is embodied by those living this knowledge. As someone who is not from Maskwacis, this is not my history to share or culture to summarize.

However, what I can share is that Maskwacis has been a place where I have been encouraged to be a more whole person and encouraged to learn about my roots, even as a mixed-ethnicity Filipino-Canadian young man. From my relations in Maskwacis, I have been able to learn from people who live according to their values, who are generous, welcoming, inclusive, and who show up for those who came before them, their families and communities in the present, and the generations to come after them. Maskwacis is a community I am grateful to and that I recognize as generously helping transform dominant forms of research, and dominant understandings of wellbeing in Western society, in solidarity with communities all over the world.

1.1 A brief history of research in relation to this project

Nêhiyaw[3] knowledge, language, and culture that supports healthy families continues to be passed down in Maskwacis. These ways of knowing and being have existed longer than the

[3] **Nêhiyaw**: Cree. Mosom Pat Buffalo shared at horse therapy that this means more than just Cree, but refers to whole, four part, beings.

Canadian health care system, the establishment of Canadian education system, and the formation of the Canadian government. Despite century-long efforts by colonial agents to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands, languages, and cultures, resistance to assimilation has "never died away" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010; Indian Chiefs of Alberta, 1970; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Indigenous peoples all over the world, including over 18,000 members of the Four Nations of Maskwacis, have continued to pass down their knowledge. This resilience has required the Canadian government, as well as other global colonial institutions such as the Catholic Church (CTVNews.ca, 2022), to apologize and admit to the lies, underlying Eurocentric ideas of Western superiority, used to justify colonization. These lies are foundational to the global inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples including (Wynter, 2004), specific to this project, maternal health disparities. These 'inequities', a term which some have described as a euphemism for ongoing oppression (James, 2022, p. 25), continue to materialize in how Indigenous women are treated within the Canadian healthcare system (Bruno, 2019; Bruno, et al., 2022). Despite fluctuating political, academic, professional, and corporate support, the spirit of care and the power coming from Nêhiyaw culture inspires hope for the wellbeing of future generations and families in Maskwacis.

Part of the effort to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands, languages, and cultures included rationalizations for brutality that were fabricated within Western academia. These racial and hierarchical rationalizations, with their origins linked to the origins of European civilization, have been transmitted throughout the paradigmatic shifts of the Western world from medieval times to the current global capitalist social structures of Western society (Robinson, Sojoyner, & Willoughby-Herard, 1983; Wynter, 2004). According to Sylvia Wynter (2004), the invention of race as a scientific classification to divert attention from, pass blame, or even rationalize domination by colonial agents and governments has been present in Western orders of knowledge since the age of Enlightenment. Katherine McKittrick expands on this insight stating "race is socially produced yet differentially lived vis-à-vis structural inequalities… the application of science can, and in some cases has, condemned particular communities to racial and sexual subjugation" (2015, p. 148).

An example of this within the Canadian context is displayed through studies of race and nutrition as the origins of disease in Indigenous communities. This was the focus of the

exploitative and neglectful research conducted by Canada's leading nutrition experts in the 40s and 50s on residential schools and Indigenous communities (Mosby, 2013). More recently the invention of the thrifty gene, which has since been debunked within Western academia, was used to offer a genetic explanation for the higher prevalence of diabetes amongst Indigenous peoples. This research was instrumental in shifting the blame for health inequities away from the dispossession of traditional food systems caused by settler colonial state violence (Hay, 2021). Knowing this history, which is emblematic of larger systems of settler colonialism but specific to the disciplines of nutrition and health research, is important for maintaining an honest narrative throughout this research project which will be published within the academy. There are many other examples of the malpractices and inadequacies of Western research, which stem from the colonial logics of the doctrine of discovery, and which are embedded in Western society. The focus of the examples above is to briefly introduce the importance of thinking deeply about narratives in a context specific to the discipline of nutrition and addressing health inequities in Indigenous communities.

More recently, Western research has undergone a "fundamental shift in thinking about the way in which early life processes affect later health and disease in humans" (Gluckman & Hanson, 2009). This shift in thinking is marked by the concept of 'Developmental Origins of Health and Disease' (DOHaD) which emerged in the literature in late 80s and aligns more with understandings that already exist in Maskwacis about the intergenerational impacts on wellbeing. New approaches to research, such as community-based participatory research (CBPR), have also gained respectability and attention in the health disciplines of Western academia in the past 20 years (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). This marked another shift in research, which involved many people both academic and non-academic. Paulo Freire, in the 1970s, articulated this shift wherein the research relationship could change from one in which "communities were objects of study to one in which community members were participating in the inquiry" (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). Globally, Indigenous, marginalized, and allied scholars such as Paulo Freire, Linda Tuhiwei Smith, Cora Weber-Pillwax, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Shawn Wilson, Margaret Kovach, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Walter Mignolo & Catherine E. Walsh, and many others have paved the way for better research approaches with and by Indigenous communities and for multiple ways of knowing to be honoured inside and outside the institutions of academia (Freire, Macedo, & Shor, 1970; Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 1999; de Sousa Santos, Beyond

Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges, 2007; Wilson S. , 2008; Kovach M. , 2009; Simpson, 2017; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). With diverse knowledges and contexts these scholars, and many others, have found ways to leverage Western forms of research counter-hegemonically to resist against Western institutions and to uphold the narratives which already exist in, and best serve, their communities.

1.2 Topic and Academic Discipline

Our research proposal aligns with the topics of recent academic literature exploring the impact of paternal contributions to offspring health (Soubry, 2018). DOHaD research has ties to nutritional, epidemiological, and experimental studies on the impacts of under and over nutrition of the fetus during pregnancy and adult health outcomes (Gluckman & Hanson, 2009). More recently, there has been calls for interdisciplinary research approaches to also examine paternal lifestyles and influences on offspring health (Mayes, Lawson-Boyd, & Meloni, 2022). Furthermore, there is growing literature on the intergenerational transmission of fathering, recognition of the disruptions in identity and culture caused by colonialism, and awareness within community programs about the need to hear from Indigenous fathers themselves (Ball, 2009). A growing number of studies have begun to listen to the voices of Indigenous fathers, identify program strategies centering culture to support men throughout fatherhood, use participatory methodologies, and have aimed to build research capacities in Indigenous communities (Manahan & Ball, 2007; Ball, 2010; Oster, et al., 2018; Getty, 2013; Reilly, 2021).

The premise of this thesis is that answers to understanding intergenerational impacts on wellbeing as it relates to the support and involvement of fathers in Maskwacis already exist in community and have long been passed down through Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being. These answers connect wellbeing to many different aspects of life and death, to those who came before us, and those that will come after us. Attempts to institutionalize, discipline, or silo this knowledge would at best be futile and, in many cases, could be considered appropriation. Western institutions, however, can be leveraged for the opposite purpose. The discipline of nutrition is at the intersection of many aspects of health ranging from how food comes from the earth, to who has access to certain foods in our society. As a point of intersection, nutrition provides opportunities for Western academia to be leveraged by communities in ways that push boundaries, go beyond disciplines, and support the power and narratives that exist in Maskwacis. Western concepts, such as DOHaD, can be leveraged in similar ways. By aligning with existing

knowledge in community, such as the traditional knowledge referenced in our proposal that "what happens in the womb will carry on for that baby", these concepts provide opportunities for research funding which often excludes Indigenous ways of knowing to be mobilized by Mosoms, Kokoms, and experts in community who are not considered "academics".

Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Final Report, few studies focusing on men and fathers have embraced Call to Action 22 to "recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Studies on topics such as social work, supports for families with cancer, or student-implemented allied health services that recognize the value and attempt to implement "Aboriginal healing practices" and community-led supports, have struggled with measuring and evaluating impacts (Lethborg, et al., 2022; Whiteside, et al., 2022; Barker, et al., 2022). The methodological difficulties highlighted in these studies, of measuring impact through a local community lens, demonstrates ongoing issues within health research environments. Indigenous, marginalized, and allied scholars have analyzed these methodological difficulties and have identified an ongoing project of epistemicide and unaddressed abyssal thinking that persists in academia (de Sousa Santos, 2007; Sockbeson, 2017; Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011). These concepts will be unpacked further in the methodology chapter. Prompted by ongoing discussion and feedback within community, this thesis embeds an examination of these methodological difficulties, narratives, and conceptualizations of the role of the researcher, all of which underplay the continuity of colonial practices within Canadian health and academic institutions.

1.3 Maskwacis Maternal, Child, and Family Wellbeing Research Group and Previous Work

The inception of our partnership began with a community voiced desire to collaborate. Through initial relationship development, Mosoms [4] and Kokoms [5] (grandfathers and grandmothers), and community members in Maskwacis created an opportunity through a research partnership to influence health care systems, programming, and policy that would

[4] Mosom: grandfather
[5] Kokom: grandmother

benefit future generations. Our partnership functions through the guidance and direction from Mosoms and Kokoms and community members, community control over the research process, and co-ownership over data. Richard Oster from Edmonton, who views himself as an equal partner and family member, helped facilitate this partnership. He was working at the University of Alberta circa 2013, was lucky to collaborate with and develop family relationships with a key mentor for this project, Mosom Rick Lightning, and many others in the community to help develop culturally appropriate supports for mothers and families. Eventually this partnership coalesced into the Maskwacis Maternal, Child & Family Wellbeing (MCFW) Research Group, which intentionally concentrates efforts on highlighting and building upon the strengths within the community, rather than focusing on deficits.

A community-derived Elders Mentoring Program was developed with several Kokums, including Margaret Montour, Muriel Lee, Sophie Bruno and Lena Cutknife, and Mosoms, including Rick Lightning and Don Johnson, to provide nuanced support for mothers from Maskwacis within the perinatal clinical setting. Kokom Margaret Montour, Mosom Rick Lightning, and many others in community, noticed a lack of Mosoms and men supporting their partners and participating in ceremony. Mosoms Rick Lightning, Dennis Okeymow, and Don Johnson, with support from their families and sons, would begin to take the lead in this partnership to begin addressing a lack of supports for men.

Marking a 'formal' research partnership, a research agreement between Margaret Montour, Rick Lightning, Matilda Roasting, Les Roasting (as Mosoms and Kokoms representing Maskwacis), Randy Littlechild (representing Maskwacis Health Services), and Richard Oster (representing the University of Alberta) was collaboratively developed in 2015. A more recent, revised research agreement between Maskwacis Health Services (represented by Randy Littlechild), the University of Alberta (represented by Richard Oster and Rhonda Bell), Mosom Rick Lightning on behalf of the *Nôhtâwiy*[6] *Community Advisory Committee* (CAC; later the Deadly Dads[7,8]), Kokom Margaret Montour on behalf of the *Acimostakewin* (sharing stories;

[6] Nôhtâwiy: my father

[7] Deadly: colloquial term used in community to describe something good or awesome, something father's who have joined the Deadly Dads aspire to be. Example, "they said they want me to connect with Deadly Dads and I just remember going 'oos'. I just thought that's a deadly name! I like this already. Looks deadly. Cool. Cool" (Nov 17, 2022, Second Wisdom Circle).

[8] Deadly Dads: the name given to the Community Advisory Committee as it transitioned into a open-door support group.

Elders Mentoring Program) *CAC*, and Kokom Muriel Lee on behalf of the *Indigenous component of the Healthy Life Trajectories Initiative* (I-HELTI) *CAC* was signed in July 2020. As I write this, a newer revised version is being developed, as our partnership continues to evolve, adapt, and improve how all involved are honoured. All projects focus on supporting optimal health during preconception, pregnancy, and postpartum through community-led and -specific strategies.

Specifically, the Nôhtâwiy CAC focused on the role of men in supporting their partners during pregnancy and is the origins of what eventually became the Deadly Dads Men's Supports Society. The research, focusing on men and fathers, began with work led by Richard Oster and Grant Bruno on the needs of supportive fathers in Maskwacis (Oster, et al., 2018). Following this, the Advisory Committee at one point let by Sonny Lightning and at another by Jerry Young, submitted a proposal to the MSI Foundation which would provide the funding for the work talked about in this thesis. This was all put on hold at the time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I joined on after restrictions were lifted at the request of the CAC who were looking for a master's student to help with the project.

Since it's earliest stages, several others from the community, including late Mosom Dennis Okeymow, late Mosom Arrol Crier, and Mosom Cliff Potts, with their own knowledge in passing down their culture have contributed their efforts to the Deadly Dads. Many men putting in the effort to be strong and healthy fathers for their community and future generations also became involved including Sonny Lightning, Jerry Young, Dylan Lightning, Josh Littlechild, Robbie Potts, Delaney Eagle Sr., Bryce Eagle, Kenneth Cutarm, Tyrone Lightning, Ryan (Pun) Lightning, and Kacey Yellowbird.

My involvement

My involvement came much later in this process when I applied for graduate studies in 2021. Rhonda Bell, my former professor and now supervisor, introduced me to Richard Oster. I had previously discussed my interests in learning about community-based work and was seeking a program that would help develop my understanding of how communities mobilize to create supports. Rhonda introduced me to Richard, who subsequently invited me to the men's group CAC meetings in April of 2021.

My first in person meeting with the CAC, as an official graduate student was on July 7th, 2021, at a sweatlodge ceremony at Namosom Rick Lightning's residence. Richard and I drove

down together, where I met Namosoms Arrol Crier and Rick Lightning, and Josh Littlechild for the first time in person. From this point, my role as a master's student, relationships, and understandings would continue to transform. As Richard transitioned to his job at Alberta Health Services as Scientific Director of the Indigenous Wellness core in September, 2021, I took the lead on organizing and planning CAC meetings.

My roles and understandings have also been shaped through my attendance at meetings with other MCFW Research Group CACs. Early on, I was lucky to attend meetings with the Elders Mentoring Program with Kokoms Muriel Lee, Sophie Bruno, and Lena Cutknife and Research Assistants Tyra Lightning and Fernanda Torres Ruiz. I was able to attend an Elder's Gathering at River Cree, in the summer of 2021, for the I-HELTI project in partnership with Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre. I have since been part of ongoing I-HELTI CAC meetings with the MCFW Research team, where I've learned from others part of the team including Dennis Young, Luwana Listener, Barbara Jackson, Tyrelle Yellowbird, and many others. The Patient and Community Engagement Training (PACET) program, through the Women and Children's Health Research Institute, have also provided me connections to other community-based researchers at the University of Alberta.

Mostly, however, my understandings have been shaped by almost weekly visits to Maskwacis to meet with the Deadly Dads. Many of these guys have become my friends, my family, and in many ways my mentors. Both planned and unplanned experiences have helped me better understand my role in these supports. This thesis is largely a presentation of this development in my understanding.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to better understand the development and implementation of culturally-centered, community-led supports with and for Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak (Cree men) and the impacts of these supports on the wellbeing of these men, their families and hopes for impacts on future generations of Maskwacis. The uniting purpose that is shared by community members and partners is to come together to support maternal health and the wellbeing of future generations. An emerging purpose of this research is to re-understand the role of researchers in these projects in supporting a better future for generations to come.

1.5 Research Question

In the context of a community-university research partnership in Maskwacis, how can culturally-centered, community-led supports with and for Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak (Cree men) be developed and what are the impacts on wellbeing of participants in these supports, their partners and children, the community overall, and on future generations?

Questions posed to me along the journey

In addition to this overall research question, I have embedded reflections on questions I've been asked from Namosoms and community members. Namely, "what have you learned from us?", "what are you getting from this?", "how will you use this knowledge in your own life", and nearing the end of this project, "what have you learned about yourself; who are you now?"

1.6 Objectives

To answer the overarching research question, our project had the following objectives:

1) To develop supports with and for Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak in Maskwacis for the wellbeing of participants, their families, communities, and future generations, based on the knowledge shared from strong and trusting relationships.
2) To understand the context in community and how Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak come together in healthy ways to support one another, their families, community, and future generations.
3) To understand the impacts of these supports on the wellbeing of Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak, their families, and future generations.
4) To re-understand the roles of the partners in supporting culturally-centered, community-led initiatives for the wellbeing of families and future generations.

1.7 Positionality

I am of mixed Filipino and European ancestry. My father and his mother (Lola ko[9]) were born in Manila, Phillipines and his father (Lolo ko[10]) in Zambales, Philippines. They immigrated here in 1974, first landing in Montreal. My mother was born in rural Treaty 6 Territory and grew up on a farm near a town called St. Lina. Her grandparents came here from France, Italy, and England. I was born in Camrose, Alberta, in Treaty 6 Territory, but grew up mostly in Medicine Hat, Treaty 7 Territory. Before we moved to Medicine Hat, when I was starting Grade 1, Lolo at

[9] **Lola ko:** my grandmother
[10] **Lolo ko:** my grandfather

Lola ko[11] helped raise me and my two sisters when my parents were teaching. I moved back in with Lolo at Lola ko while attending school at the University of Alberta, and now reside with them in the city of St. Albert.

I have a BSc in Nutrition and Food Science and academically most of my training prior to embarking upon this thesis has been, in Western traditional sciences. My parents are both teachers and I was brought up with the understanding that education and academic excellence creates opportunities for you to support yourself, your families, and your communities. My interests have always been in search of community and I seek out critical literature and learning opportunities that contextualize our relations to one another. My sisters and I were not raised with much connection to our Filipino identity, and as mixed ethnicity kids we did not grow up fully belonging to the Filipino community or white society. When Lolo at Lola ko first came to Canada, they were told that fitting into Canadian society, even at the cost of sacrificing your identity and history, made life easier and would bring you closer to your dreams of a better life. Aside from a vague message that the opportunities are better here, making sure my father went to school and found a good job took priority over passing on our history, language, and culture.

Perhaps a similar abandonment of where we came from is true for my mother's side, although I know less about my European ancestors. European settlers must have had a similar narrative of coming here in hopes of having better lives. However, from my view and understanding, Canada was built for Europeans. A nation complicit in the global colonial project of nation building through the expropriation of Indigenous lands, genocide of Indigenous peoples and cultures, and the exploited labour of Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and migrants.

Growing up in southern Alberta as mixed Filipino-European Canadians, me and my siblings have been told to go back to where we came from, but it's never been in reference to Europe. Similarly, while we sometimes tried to pass as Italians to fit in at school, we'd never fit in pretending to be fully Filipino. Coming home from Grandma and Grandpa's house we'd wash our clothes because it smelt like cigarette smoke, but we'd bring her leftovers for lunch at school. Coming home from Lolo at Lola's house we'd wash our clothes because it smelt like Lola's cooking and leave the leftover palabok [12] for home. To me, my mother's family history and

[11] **Lolo at Lola ko:** my grandparents
[12] **Palabok**: Filipino rice noodle dish

culture seemed acceptable or already a part of Canadian society. My father's family history and culture, on the other hand, has always felt neglected. My search for community may relate to my search for understanding my mixed identity and neglected family history.

Over the past two years, I have spent a significant amount of time trying to understand my position and role in this project as well. My understanding and learning have been nuanced by several experiences including, living with my Lola and Lola throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, being welcomed into Rick and Inez Lightning's family, learning through ceremony, learning to pray in Filipino over zoom with my Lola Maming, Tito[13] Benji and Tita[14] Risa in Manila, and learning our immigration stories, and Filipino family history. During this personal development and growth, further reflections on my role within, and complicity with an academic institution have been marked by several socio-political-historical events. This includes the uncovering of mass burials at residential schools across Canada (Dickson & Watson, 2021), the Scientific Director of the CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health stepping down for misrepresenting her identity (Macyshon & Vasquez-Peddie, 2021; Strong, 2021), the pope's visit to Maskwacis to apologize for the Catholic Church committing genocide (CTVNews.ca, 2022), and most recently the rescinding of the Doctrine of Discovery (The Canadian Press, 2023). Namosom Rick has always encouraged me to think about the implications of these things on a global scale, to think about how we are all connected. I take these prompted reflections to be lessons in solidarity.

While these events made me consider what I did not want to inherent, pass down, or support, there were also several experiences that gave me inspiration. These included many events such as setting up a booth at the Children's Day Walkthrough with Late Mosom Arrol Crier organized at the Howard Buffalo Memorial Center, spontaneously being brought along to help Mosom Rick and Dylan Lightning at feast ceremonies, the encouragement from my supervisors and research team if I missed meetings after being invited to ceremonies, talking with Clarence (*Little Mustache)* Soosay about how we are showing up for our families when we help out as sweat ceremonies, the appreciation of Lolo and Lola hearing I was praying for them, and going to the Indigenous DOHaD conference with Jerry Young, Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, and

[13] **Tito:** uncle in Filipino
[14] **Tita**: auntie in Filipino

Mosom Rick, and the rest of the Maskwacis MCFW Research group to share our work with other communities and research groups. Seeing the generosity, humility, and commitment of everyone I got to work with over the past two years gave me insight into the aspects of my life I want to develop and pass down and the work of other's I want to support.

One of the first of many conversations I had with Mosom Rick Lightning was about how everyone who comes to these lands has a history older than Canada and about our responsibilities: to the lands we come from and arrive at, our ancestors, each other, and everyone who comes after us. He cautioned me *not to become what my ancestors were fleeing*. At my first sweat, he validated something that I had been wanting to pursue: a deeper understanding of a neglected part of my identity. He told me "pray in your language, to your ancestors". I never learned to speak Filipino, so that night I went home, sat down with my Lolo and Lola, facetimed my Lola Maming, Tita Risa, and Tito Benji in Manila and began learning to pray in our language. I'm not fluent yet in Filipino, or Ilocano, or any of the other dialects my Lolo knew growing up. But, working to understand my identity through language and prayer has opened conversations about our culture, gifted me stories that I might not have heard, and renewed relationships that I may not otherwise be nurturing. My understanding of who my ancestors are, why my Lolo and Lola came to Canada, how my father grew up, and who I am are all blessings.

Now, I am beginning to understand the complexities of culture and identity and the intricacies of interdependence. I am aware of the American imperialist project of pacification in the Philippines and the Americanization of the dreams of my ancestors. I am still learning about what it means to be Filipino and a European settler. To grapple with both colonial amnesia and white entitlement. I am learning what it means to be human, what it means to be in solidarity, and what my role is. During this learning I am committed to my responsibilities to all my relations. I include the reflections above, as part of my positionality, because they give insight into the lens through which I view the world and the part of my life's journey that I am on as I write this thesis.

Journal Reflection, January 11th, 2023

Right now, when I think of careers, I think of a self-destructive process of fitting into a role imagined through colonialism. I want to know who I am, and I want to be on a good path. I think of the stories my Lolo and Lola have

shared with me, I think of the self-discovery Ella and I have shared, and I think of how my own kinship network has grown. That's a lifestyle though not a career. That was one of the first things my brother Sonny shared with me that I am just starting to understand. Life is an ongoing process of figuring out how to protect and provide for your family without losing who you are, and all the while discovering who you are.

In the context of this thesis, I am honoured to have the guidance of Mosom Rick Lightning, Late Mosom Arrol Crier, Mosom Cliff Potts and several of the Deadly Dads who continue to contribute and support their communities. Part of my responsibilities is to be accountable to those who have shared their knowledge and effort with me including Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Jerry Young, Delaney Eagle Sr. and Jr., Bryce Eagle, Kenneth Cutarm, Grant Bruno, Josh Littlechild, Robbie Potts, Jacob Lightning, Kane Lightning, Tyrone Lightning, Pun (Ryan) Lightning, Kacey Yellowbird, and many others. These Deadly Dads have shown me what it means to be deadly, to be dedicated to their roles as fathers, men, and people working for the benefit of their communities. As I've also learned from helping Clarence (*Little Mustache*) Soosay and Chadwick Buffalo at Mosom Rick's sweats, I have a responsibility to be humble and to think and show up for my family and loved ones during whatever I am doing.

Having the privilege to work in parallel with other projects in Maskwacis, I've also learned from Nokom Muriel Lee, Nokom Sophie Bruno, Nokom Lena Cutknife, Denise Young, Luwana Listener, Fernanda Torres Ruiz, Tyra Lightning, Barbara Jackson, Winnie Chow-Horn, Carmella Cutknife, Barbara Jackson, Charlene Rattlesnake, Jaden Krause and many others who have collaborated with the MCFW Research Group. I've had the privilege of sitting in on and learning at many CAC meetings and each time went away with something new to reflect on. Listening to the many ways these people are working to support future generations has been hopeful and insightful.

As I write this, I am reflecting on some of the lessons I've learned from Mosom Rick Lighting, from Mosom Pat Buffalo at horse therapy about the role of the researcher. On a trip up from Calgary, Mosom Rick and I talked about the challenges of being genuine in different settings (in professional settings, at home, with different families, in ceremony, and so on). I told him I have trouble sometimes understanding my roles and knowing who I am in different contexts. He shared with me something his dad told him: *the hat that you put on in the morning*

should be the same hat that you take off at night, you never switch hats[15]. So, beyond the details of my different roles as a student, the hat I try to keep on my head is one that keeps me humble and allows me to be a whole person without compromising the spiritual or emotional parts of my being; complete without neglecting any parts of my identity or my belonging in any of the communities I am part of. Instead of being a researcher sometimes, a student other times, a helper some places, I strive to always be human, a good relation.

When speaking to Mosom Pat Buffalo about the researcher's role in supporting others, he shared with me that *we can only ever heal ourselves. Researchers can be like herbs. Herbs can trigger things in the body, but the body must heal itself.* As part of the Deadly Dads support group, my role has been to learn about myself and work on myself as everyone else involved has been doing.

At our Deadly Dads 2023 New Year's sweat, Mosom Rick also shared our relational responsibilities as Deadly Dads. *Everything we do affects everyone else, everyone part of our group, and everyone in our families. How we act out in the world reflects on our families and people we love.* This encompasses the responsibility I feel within this project. To represent all my relations in a good light to reciprocate the welcoming, openness, and support they've given me.

In the same way I reflect on my positionality above, who I've connected with, and the ways I am on a journey of discovering who I am and my place in the world, I similarly approach this thesis and the understandings I've developed. I was gifted with knowledge from several different places, at many different moments, and by many different people. I do my best to honour who shared the knowledge, direct opportunities in towards them, and advocate for shifting control to community. I maintain throughout this thesis that the knowledge to support healthy families already exists in Maskwacis and that the power comes from Nêhiyaw culture. However, I take responsibility over the words I am writing and the understandings and perhaps misunderstandings that I am sharing. I look at myself and my complicity in the critiques I am making in hopes of finding and remaining on a good path. This thesis is an expression of my own lens and my insights of complex efforts of navigating society to support healthy families

[15] The italicized font denotes my memory of what was told to me. I credit who shared this knowledge, but take responsibility for remembering (or misremembering) and understanding (or misunderstanding) these lessons.

and future generations. It is through the love I want to reciprocate to all my relations throughout this project that I attempt to tell the truth and shed light on opportunities to move forward in a better direction.

1.9 Literature Review

Situating this literature review

This project arose from the decade of prior partnership and collaborative work within the MCFW research group which has published several articles (Bruno, 2019; Oster, et al., 2018). Countless people were involved with this work to imagine, negotiate, transform, and create the flexible working and intellectual environment through which the research in this thesis became possible. As someone who joined very late in this process, the first guidance that I received was from Namosom Rick Lightning, back in April of 2021. He told me, *you can't do research from a square box, or from books, you're going to have to come meet us*. Trusting and learning this to be true, welcomed into his home, and encouraged by my supervisors, I pursued knowledge throughout this thesis through the mentorship of him and many others in Maskwacis; most of my learning was done in community. Similarly, I had been made aware of the limitations of academic literature in capturing the reality of what's going on in people's lives. I have also been uncomfortable with some approaches historically used in research such as the idea of researchers as covert, but bold liars, or relationships embedded in community having been framed as "going native" (Fine, 1993; Ceglowski, 2000; Richardson, 1991). There were many moments throughout this project where I avoided the literature in favour of spending time in community. At other times, however, the literature helped me contextualize the narratives around how knowledge was being used to propose solutions to health inequities. These powerful narratives shape our health systems, our academic institutions, and realities, and can either challenge or reproduce colonial lies (Starblanket & Hunt, 2020; Starblanket, 2019; Johnson, 2017; Joseph, Cuerrier, & Mathews, 2022; Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019).

I also turned to counter-hegemonic literature to learn about my position as a colonized intellectual, my complicity in the systems of oppression, and my agency to work against these systems. This approach to reviewing the literature, as well as writing this thesis overall, aligns with the principles of what Walter E. Mignolo calls "border crossing" which is used to navigate multiple epistemologies within an "ecology of knowledge" (Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011). This approach will be further expanded on in Chapter 2.1 (Ontology, Epistemology or Onto-epistemology, p. 31). As a master's student it can feel at times like you have no agency, wedged in between the university and community. I see this as a consequence of the structure of the university and the narratives that reproduce it. However, Namosom Rick Lightning told me

early on, *you chose your own role.* So in my search for defining my role, I was introduced to scholars around the world who challenged their roles as "colonized intellectuals" (Fanon, Pilcox, Bhabha, & Sartre, 1963), or 'illustrados' in the Philippines (Constantino, 1975). These were people who had gained access to the resources of the university but who maintained or renewed their love, (re)connection, and accountability to their communities. From the literature, I was introduced to Franz Fanon, Paulo Friere, Jose Rizal, Epifanio San Juan Jr., Cedric Robinson, Carlos Bulosan, Leanne Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Sylvia Wynter, Dylan Rodriguez, and Joshua Myers to name a few. Many of these authors, not often cited in the health or science disciplines of academia, and people around the world have long struggled with the orders of knowledge within Western civilization. Reading their work have helped me better understand the lens that I was being helped to look through by Namosom Rick Lightning and Late Arrol Crier.

Purpose of the literature review

It is with this guidance and through these lenses, that I approach this critical literature review. The purpose is to understand the narratives shared through the peer-reviewed literature around culture and supporting the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and future generations. Due to the limited number of published reports on the impacts of culturally appropriate supports specifically for Indigenous fathers, I included literature on several interventions related to culture and wellbeing. Topics of the research ranged from cultural activities existing in communities, such as men's groups, to the integration of culturally safe practices in health service programs. Likewise, participants in these studies ranged from men to school-based youth, to mental health patients, to cancer patients. This was not an all-encompassing literature review but is useful for engaging with the narratives around culture and wellbeing as it relates to supports developed with and for Indigenous peoples. These narratives also impact proposed solutions within our healthcare and academic systems to support Nêhiyaw nâpêwak and their families. Although there is much diversity between and within Indigenous cultures, Indigenous peoples have some shared experiences of facing dispossession and expropriation by settler colonial states including Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia (Tremblay, et al., 2023). This is not a homogenization of Indigenous cultures or experiences around the world, but rather draws on

some wisdom shared with me by Marco Luciano[16], that *if capital, colonial, and imperial powers can organize and consolidate from around the world, why can't those facing their oppression do the same?* As such, studies and insights from all these countries were included in this review.

Narrative of this literature review

Before analysing the narratives presented in the literature, I will be transparent about my understanding of the narrative underlying this review. Firstly, this literature review exists within a thesis that is possible due to the ongoing effort of Nêhiyaw people in Maskwacis to support their community and future generations. The priorities identified in Maskwacis for this research, and the opportunities made possible by the effort of those involved, extends beyond Western ways of knowing. It is beyond the scope of this review to explore the origins of these priorities but suffice to say Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being existed long before the arrival of Europeans to the continent. From what I've learned and witnessed, these ways of knowing and being continue to sustain the wellbeing of Nêhiyaw peoples.

Since the arrival of Europeans to the continent, however, these ways of knowing and being have been threatened by colonial agents, powers, and policies. Based on the logics of the doctrine of discovery, these threats included the expropriation of land and the establishment of 'reserves' in 1637, ongoing settler mis-characterizations and understandings of the treaties signed in the 1870s, the Indian Acts beginning in 1876, the transition of the plains in the west to an agricultural economy in the 1880s, the subsequent decimation of the buffalo by the end of the 1880s, the outlawing of ceremonies, the creation of a pass system to control movement of Indigenous peoples off of reserves, and the network of residential schools spanning from 1849 to 1996 to force the ways of dominant society onto Indigenous children, to name a few historical examples (Starblanket, 2019; Carter & Lightning, 2021; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010). The logics of these colonial policies meant, but failed, to eliminate Indigenous ways of being and knowing. These logics persist today and are reproduced through violent settler narratives that permeate the Canadian judicial system, child welfare system, social work

[16] Marco is the husband of Cynthia Palmaria who are both co-founders of Migrante Alberta. A non-profit organization that advocates for migrant, undocumented, and precarious workers. This wisdom is additionally fitting here in this thesis because I met Cynthia at a sweatlodge ceremony at Mosom Rick's house. Cynthia and her family have been helping connect and learn about my Filipino identity. This is an otherwise unnoticed impact that this project and these relationships have had on me.

profession, and our academic institutions (Starblanket & Hunt, 2020; Hay, 2021; Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019; Johnson, 2017).

Of particular interest to this review are the ways narratives are constructed around the literature examining culture and wellbeing in supports for Indigenous communities. Elsewhere, there is comprehensive literature on the ways colonial policies have impacted Indigenous men and masculinities (Ball, 2009; Innes & Anderson, 2015). Likewise, Cedric Robinson and Sylvia Wynter have thoroughly explored the ways Western civilization has transmitted racial hierarchies from the medieval periods of Europe all the way to current capitalist and "biocentric" social structures. Wynter (2004) refers to "biocentric" models of man as the current overrepresentation of man in Western orders of knowledge. This Western, biocentric model of man looks at humans as only biological organisms and rationalizes inequities across race, gender, and class hierarchies through biological explanations. I invoke Sylvia Wynter here for two reasons.

First, the overrepresentation of the biocentric model of man is part of a constructed narrative around the inequities and the use of culture. This applies to the Canadian context, in which the thrifty gene model beginning in the 1960s, which has since been debunked, was used to explain the prevalence of diabetes amongst Indigenous peoples and to "obscure the operation of settler colonial power on Indigenous bodies" and food systems (Hay, 2021). Second, Namosoms and Nokoms present other models of being human from a Nêhiyaw lens: that humans are not only mental and physical beings, but also spiritual and emotional, four-part beings (Rick Lightning, Patrick Buffalo, Muriel Lee, Cliff Potts, Arrol Crier, personal communications). This aligns with what Namosom Rick Lightning explains as the importance of moving from ritual based thinking, which lacks spirit and emotion, to ceremonial based thinking which has spirit and emotion. In honouring Nêhiyaw understandings of being, it is possible to go beyond what Wynter calls the overrepresentation of the biocentric model of man. This model of being human constructs a different narrative around health inequities and the importance of culture but is underrepresented in the literature and decision-making spaces. As a result, proposed solutions to health inequities in the Canadian healthcare system continue to be limited by the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

I include counter-hegemonic literature and lessons from Nêhiyaw knowledge systems in this literature review to frame how I am looking at the health literature. This also builds on my

understanding of the role of the researcher and our work together within this project as human beings learning from each other (Mosom Rick Lightning, personal communication). We exist beyond our roles defined by the narratives reproduced in Canadian institutions. Similarly, it challenges the notions of what science, research, and validity are, and the status quo of who and what knowledge is permitted to influence society. I will end this introduction with a quote from Sivanandan & Waters shared in Joshua Myers' (2023) book 'Of Black Study':

> *"History, philosophy, rhetoric are claimed to be the very foundations of western scholarship: from them we construct knowledge of the world, our understanding of that knowledge and our power of conveying that understanding; they are the root of all social conceptualization. Yet what if history, philosophy, rhetoric,* ***have themselves been stunted at birth****, diminished in their capacities, crammed into spaces too small to contain them? What would that mean for the ways in which we conceive and bring about the transformation of our societies?... It is a question forbidden by the habits of thought, the presumptions, the assumptions that render us quiescent to power" (p. 160; my emphasis)*

Narratives in the literature of colonialism and continuity from the past

To further explore these narratives, I examined 24 peer-reviewed studies and assessed the narratives around the impacts of colonization on the health and wellbeing. I searched the University of Alberta Library for studies from Canada, the United States, New Zealand, or Australia about the impacts and relationships between culture and wellbeing that focused on supports for Indigenous communities. I also included relevant articles I came across throughout my program. There were only a few articles on the specific topic of Indigenous fathers supporting the wellbeing of themselves and their families through cultural revitalization. This was not an extensive, systematic review of the literature, but rather an engagement with emerging literature that referenced community-based approaches to supporting wellbeing through culture or aspects of culture in Indigenous communities.

Only four of these studies did not mention colonization as the source of health inequities or negative impacts on Indigenous peoples in settler colonial states (Webster, et al., 2022; Lethborg, et al., 2022; Crooks, et al., 2017; Wisener, Shapka, & Jarvis-Selinger, 2017). One of those that

did not initially mention the impacts of colonization did reveal this in the results, through the interviews with community, and the subsequent discussion (Webster, et al., 2022).

Two of these studies identified a "social disadvantage" of Indigenous peoples with no context (Lethborg et al., 2022; Crooks et al., 2017) although one stated the importance of moving towards strengths-based research (Crooks et al., 2017). Failing to contextualise the "social disadvantage" and health inequities of Indigenous peoples disconnects the role of health services and programs from history. Inequities, as James (2022) also identifies, become euphemisms for ongoing oppression. Rather than addressing the complicity of these services and programs in the ongoing oppression leading to inequities, they can be presented as benevolent strategies to alleviate them. They become presented as if no solutions had previously existed. This leads the narrative of this research towards a focus on the importance of 'capacity building' in community, rather than on the importance of dismantling power structures that suppress existing capacities within community. In the case of Webster et al. (2022), collaboration and trusting relationships allowed for shifts in the narrative back onto the need for transformation within health organizations. This was evident in the results and conclusion of this study on the impacts of a '8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning Curriculum' on cultural responsiveness in a health organisation which called for a deconstruction of mainstream approaches to healthcare.

That being said, many recent studies identified colonialism as the source of health inequities, harm, illness, or racism and followed this with an opportunity to develop interventions to address these issues (Bernards, et al., 2019; Reilly, 2021; Farah Nasir, et al., 2021; Oster, et al., 2018; Onnis, et al., 2020; Manahan & Ball, 2007; Carter, Lapum, Lavallée, Schindel Martin, & Restoule, 2017; Munns & Walker, 2018; Ball, Fathering in the Shadows: Indigenous Fathers and Canada's Colonial Legacies, 2009; Cavanagh, Pariona-Cabrera, & Bartram, 2022). While some studies were strategic in their efforts to identify specific policy changes or funding supports for capacities that exist within communities (Reilly, 2021; Oster, et al., 2018; Cavanagh, Pariona-Cabrera, & Bartram, 2022), others generically stated the importance of further research which was not necessarily community-led or community-based (Bernards et al., 2019). Many studies also explained the need to support further research due to a lack of scientific evidence on culturally appropriate or community-led supports to address health inequities rooted in colonialism (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021; Onnis, et al., 2020; Manahan & Ball, 2007; Carter, Lapum, Lavallée, Schindel Martin, & Restoule, 2017; Ball, 2009). In the context of multiple

ways of knowing interacting, a consciousness of different narratives leads to the question of whether a lack of scientific evidence is justification for further research, as it is currently defined, or whether "science" is leaving out certain peoples that know. Awareness of narratives within community, prompts a call to confront the marginalization of other bodies of evidence, ways of doing research, knowing, and being.

Contrasting Narratives

To better understand how the narratives of current research play into settler colonial agendas, it is worth contrasting the study conducted by Bernards et al. (2019), with the historical analysis of social work of Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019). Bernards et al. (2019) conducted a secondary analysis of survey data in two First Nations communities in Ontario, Canada to examine whether perceived social supports buffered the effects of historical trauma rooted in colonization. They found that in females, depression/anxiety arising from historical trauma is buffered by perceived social supports, characterized as having supportive friends and families. They concluded that further research is needed that is inclusive of all gender identities.

In contrast, Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019) conducted a historical review of the origins of social work and its professionalization in Canada. They found that the history of social work told in Canada is often an incomplete history. It is important to note that Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019) were looking at *the profession* of social support work, not *the perceived* social supports like Bernards et al., (2019). However, they identify one of the core responsibilities of the social work profession in the reproduction of the settler colonial process as: "acting as a buffer zone to contain and pacify Indigenous communities that are either engaged in direct confrontation with the settler state or are facing crises due to state and corporate practices of resource extraction and dispossession" (p. 442). In identifying the complicity of the profession in settler colonialism, they conclude with a proposal for re-imagining "the structure and foundations of the discipline" of social work (p. 451). Worth noting is that the conclusion of this narrative, which connects its analysis to history, is markedly different from the conclusion of a generic need for additional research. The solutions being proposed are not limited to the boundaries of the discipline. Instead, they can arise from community, grounded in culture, and ceremonies that have been excluded from these disciplines, through the dissolution of these boundaries.

Wynter (2004) argues "the structure and foundations of the discipline" (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019, p. 451) are reproduced through the narratives told within the discipline, by the very

practice of the discipline. Thus, re-imaginings of these structures would occur through breaks from the discipline (Myers, 2023). Breaks and shifts from colonial narratives are more possible as we think more deeply about the narratives we are engaging. This was the difference between the study by Bernards et al., (2019) and the one by Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019).

The conclusions of Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019) segue into an examination of studies which both identified colonialism as a source of harm and health inequities and expressed limitations of Western approaches to addressing these harms thus beginning to imagine a broader range of solutions (Adams, 2006; Crouch, Skan, David, Lopez, & Prochaska, 2021; George, Morton Ninomiya, Graham, Bernards, & Wells, 2019; Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson, 2013; Barker, et al., 2022; Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021). Amongst these studies, there was variation in their recommendations. Some focused more on "indigenizing" measurement tools or using a local community lens for analysis of supports (Crouch, Skan, David, Lopez, & Prochaska, 2021; Barker, et al., 2022). Others used their results strategically to advocate supports for community funding and policy changes that would direct more control to communities (Adams, 2006; George, Morton Ninomiya, Graham, Bernards, & Wells, 2019). Others recommended revitalization beyond the disciplines of academia or Western institutions, calling for cultural resurgence (Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson, 2013), divesting from colonial power, and investing in Indigenous communities (Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021). Amongst these studies, which recognize that knowledge which exists in community, solutions were liberated from the boundaries of their disciplines.

Narratives around culture and wellbeing

Of the studies examined in this review, only 13 commented on the impacts of culture on wellbeing. All of these studies highlighted positive impacts of connecting to culture, many of which identified specific aspects of culture that participants related to wellbeing. These included: connection to kinship, connection to identity, sobriety, raised self-esteem, space to be vulnerable, self-confidence, and improved skills for resolving conflict (Reilly, 2021; Crouch, Skan, David, Lopez, & Prochaska, 2021; Manahan & Ball, 2007; Lethborg, et al., 2022; Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021; Cavanagh, Pariona-Cabrera, & Bartram, 2022; Crooks, et al., 2017; Oster, et al., 2018). Some studies elucidated strategies from the impacts of culture that could be applied to programming such as intergenerational mentoring, peer-support networks,

and improving accessibility of supports through the integration of cultural material into existing health services (Manahan & Ball, 2007; Lethborg, et al., 2022; Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021; Cavanagh, Pariona-Cabrera, & Bartram, 2022; Crooks, et al., 2017). While some studies framed culture as an opportunity to improve access to existing health supports or as a strategy to improve trust between facilitators and participants (Cavanagh, Pariona-Cabrera, & Bartram, 2022; Crooks, et al., 2017), others unpacked the impacts of culture to advocate support for existing community initiatives or capacities (Reilly, 2021; Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021; Oster, et al., 2018).

There were at least five studies that began from a perspective that recognized the positive impacts of the culture (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021; Webster, et al., 2022; Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson, 2013; Munns & Walker, 2018; Ball, 2009). Some of these studies also used this advanced starting point to understand the implementation of cultural programming, curriculum, or professional roles within existing health systems or organizations (Ball, 2009; Webster, et al., 2022; Munns & Walker, 2018). Some of these studies acknowledged the difficulties of "walking in both worlds" (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021) and identified dominant society overall as an obstacle to practicing culture, despite culture being considered a source of wellbeing. These studies which identified social challenges to practicing culture, suggested solutions that pointed to increased support and control of Indigenous communities over their wellbeing and health services (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021; Munns & Walker, 2018; Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson, 2013).

Narratives on the source of the impacts on wellbeing

Of the articles reviewed here, 17 were peer-reviewed articles that commented on the source of the impacts identified in their studies. One article which spoke on the source of impacts was a statement paper (Adams, 2006). This was included because it adds to the diversity of narratives in the literature. Articles that did not examine impacts on community wellbeing were not included in this section of the review.

A few studies identified specific aspects of culture that were implemented to improve programming or services. These studies identified the success of a curriculum derived from Indigenous cultures or co-designed models that integrated culture on improving culturally safe care of healthcare professionals (Webster, et al., 2022; Joseph, Cuerrier, & Mathews, 2022). Other studies identified success within community healthcare workers who understood or

experienced the importance of culture on improving access or facilitation of health services (Munns & Walker, 2018; Crooks, et al., 2017).

In many studies it was evident from the results that the positive impacts, sought through the implementation of various culturally-appropriate health strategies, arose from a holistic connection to culture (Reilly, 2021; Adams, 2006; Farah Nasir, et al., 2021; Crouch, Skan, David, Lopez, & Prochaska, 2021; Oster, et al., 2018; Manahan & Ball, 2007; Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson, 2013; Barker, et al., 2022; Ball, 2009; Cavanagh, Pariona-Cabrera, & Bartram, 2022). The voices of Elders and community members that come through in these studies exemplify this:

"health for our people, and especially our younger generation, is the education and knowledge of our past" (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021).

"I think the way to overcome our mental health, is we've got to educate our younger ones, this medicine is here [spiritual and cultural connection and practice] and it's still there and it is the strongest one we can have" (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021) .

"I'm in a really good place, I've got my culture to thank for that" (Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021).

Participants in one study also contrasted the source of wellbeing in community to gaps in clinical settings:

"Access or talk to an Elder, that would be nice. To get an interpretation of what a pregnancy is and what the cycle is through an Indigenous perspective . . . I mean that's how the community works to support each other. You build community by support systems, and having an Elder to teach a young man about being a father that's what you want in a community because that's what we are missing in the clinics." (Oster, et al., 2018).

It is important to note that despite this knowledge coming through in the voices of participants shared in these studies, these recommendations for cultural resurgence, connection to land, need for spirituality, and autonomy over funding decisions are not always echoed in the discussions or conclusions of these papers. Recommendations, rather, are made to continue research to evaluate reforms to health services, to integrate culture into existing programs, to develop more appropriate measurements of quality of life, or to test Western hypotheses (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021; Crouch, Skan, David, Lopez, & Prochaska, 2021; Oster, et al., 2018; Manahan & Ball, 2007; Ball, 2009).

On the one hand this may represent limitations placed on the imagination of solutions by Western epistemologies. On the other hand, recommending further research from within the confines of Western academia could also be a strategy to provide additional resources and time for working towards solutions beyond Western epistemologies or for the inclusion of non-Western epistemologies into funding streams. Other narratives also present reasons for continuing further research, such as the commitment to the ongoing improvement of healthcare practices, and for developing research capacities within community.

However, the point here is that the knowledge and imagination shared in research literature largely remains contained within the boundaries of the disciplines which continue to be produced outside of community. If the knowledge and the imaginative potential for the wellbeing of future generations already exists in community through culture, it is reasonable for more resources and research efforts to flow through other mediums of knowledge sharing which could include land-based connection, ceremony and other engagements that are often not considered academic research.

Understanding the role of these narratives

Narratives are important because they guide our attention and shape our solutions. In the literature, narratives may go unquestioned as the focus is often on meeting Western standards of validity and rigour. Namosom Rick Lightning, challenges researchers to question their narratives by constantly asking "what lens are you looking through?" Elsewhere, and while speaking on Black studies, Joshua Myers (2023) presents a similar challenge to the Western academy by writing, "there are lies and there are intellectual traditions founded on lies. There is dishonesty and there is a whole philosophy of life premised on particular assumptions of who we are. There is bad faith and then there is a panoply of interests served by the lie for those who require them." In other words, even in pursuit of knowledge and telling the truth, our narratives can become disconnected from history and our imagination of solutions can be stunted and confined to the foundational lies, restrictions, and inadequacies of our institutions.

This literature review demonstrates the variety of narratives presented in the recent literature on culture and wellbeing in supports for Indigenous communities. While few studies leave out acknowledgements of colonialism as a source of health inequities, few connect these acknowledgements to their current research or disciplines. As a result, colonialism is acknowledged as an event with harmful consequences rather than the structure (Tuck & Yang,

2012), ever-present, of our institutions that needs to be addressed with more than aesthetic changes and adjustments to the ways we collect data. Many of these studies advocate for more funding and support directed to community and may be making what Margaret Kovach (2009) calls "strategic concessions" to get their research published. However, to date, few studies center community ways of being and knowing to imagine possibilities rooted in community and cultural resurgence beyond the colonial institutions of health and research.

When locating the source of the impacts on wellbeing, the voices of participants across several studies came through to identify culture and community. Despite this, much of the literature's recommendations were bounded to suggestions of future research and the continuation of programming albeit with reformed methodologies and leadership structures. This may be a result of the reproductive, self-justifying nature of academic disciplines (Wynter, 2004; Myers, 2023; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As such, it is worth noting that the few studies that recommend support for Indigenous ways of knowing and being from *beyond* colonial institutions, rather than from integrated within these institutions, by divesting from colonial powers were led by Indigenous scholars and used Indigenous Research Methodologies (Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson, 2013; Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021).

Transitioning to the thesis

The narratives we construct throughout our research are important for shaping the solutions we recommend and have implications on the future research, policy, and society that is influenced by our current projects. The claims we make around the intentions of our work should match our narrative. Since we claim through our research partnership to be led by community and to honour Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being as equal to those of Western approaches to research, it is reasonable to hesitate before recommending further research. Especially after acknowledging that academic disciplines are rooted in colonial violence and the dispossession of land and cultures from Indigenous peoples globally. It is in the awareness of the link between the origins of academia, as an institution built on dominance over knowledge and resources, and the ongoing health disparities faced by Indigenous peoples that these narratives become clear. It is thus reasonable to reach beyond the disciplines of academia to search for answers to the question of how we support future generations and how we can support each other as human beings. It is reasonable to drop the pen or close the laptop to *participate* in the search for answers in

community, in cooperation, and in ceremony. It is reasonable to maintain, however paradoxically, that **this departure from research still be considered research**. It is through these collective imaginings embedded in culture, that arise from this departure, that solutions can be directed at the root cause of the issue.

Chapter 2: Methodologies

Guide Quotes

"…it is not really important to go to the university. A college degree does not mean that you are educated… Education comes after school, from your relations with your fellow man, from your understanding of yourself… Education is actually the application of this discovery: ***that you are a human being with a heart, and a mind, and a soul.*** *Intelligence is another thing, of course… [Maxim Gorki] wrote books about the poor people in his country that showed that* ***we poor people in all lands are the real rulers of the world because we work and make things****. We make chairs, we plow the land,* ***we create children;*** *that is what Gorki means. But those who do not work at all, those rich bastards who kick the poor peasants around: they contribute nothing to life because they do not work. In other words, Fred, we can still have a nice country without money and politicians. We just need workers. Everything we see and use came from the hands of workers…" Carlos Bulosan, 1948 (San Juan Jr., 2018, p. 60; my emphasis)*

"Today we are witnessing a stasis of Europe. Comrades, let us flee this stagnation where dialectics has gradually turned into a logic of the status quo… No, we do not want to catch up with anyone. But what we want is to walk in the company of man, every man, night and day, for all times… The Third World must start over a new history of man which takes account of not only the occasional prodigious theses maintained by Europe but also its crimes, the most heinous of which have been committed at the very heart of man, the pathological dismembering of his functions and the erosion of his unity, and in the context of the community, the fracture, the stratification and the bloody tensions fed by class, and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, the racial hatred, slavery, exploitation and, above all, the bloodless genocide whereby one and a half billion men have been written off. So comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies that

draw their inspiration from it. Humanity expects other things from us than this grotesque and generally obscene emulation. – Franz Fanon, 1963, pg. 239

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption. The pedagogy of the oppressed, animated by authentic, humanist (not humanitarian) generosity, presents itself as a pedagogy of humankind. Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanization. This is why, as we affirmed earlier, the pedagogy of the oppressed cannot be developed or practiced by the oppressors. It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education. –Paulo Freire (Freire, Macedo, & Shor, 1970, p. 54)

In the twentieth century, when Black radical thinkers had acquired new habits of thought in keeping, some of them supposed, with the new conditions of their people, their task eventually became the revelation of the older tradition. Not surprisingly, they would discover it first in their history, and finally all around them. The Black radical tradition that they were to rediscover from a Black historical experience nearly grounded under the intellectual weight and authority of the official European version of the past, was to be the foundation upon which they stood. From this vantage point they could survey the theoretical, ideological, and political instrumentation with which Western radicalism approached the problem of revolutionary social change. – Cedric J. Robinson (Robinson, Sojoyner, & Willoughby-Herard, 1983, p. 170)

"Foresaking chameleonic role playing and the masks of the savvy trickster who can signify anything the master wants, we begin to engage in recovering our long and durable history of revolt against colonial oppression. Identity, I contend, is born from our responsibility to the past, no longer a nightmare but a resource of hope, and from our accountability to the present. Self-identification in freedom, then, is a future always in the process of ceaseless renegotiation, from the destruction of one permanence and the construction of a new one." – E. San Juan, Jr. (2018, p. 7)

After they live each stage of life through the story, they then can communicate their lived wisdom through six or seven decades of lived experience and shifting meaning. This is how our old people teach. They are our geniuses because they know that wisdom is generated from the ground up, that meaning is for everyone, and that we're all better when we're able to derive meaning out of our lives and be our best selves. Stories direct, inspire, and affirm an ancient code of ethics. If you do not know what it means to be intelligent within Nishnaabeg realities, then you can't see the epistemology, the pedagogy, the conceptual meaning, or the metaphor, or how this story has references to other parts of our oral tradition, or how this story is fundamentally, like all of our stories, communicating different interpretations and realizations of an Nishnaabeg worldview. – Leanne Simpson (2017, p. 152)

2.1 Research Paradigm

According to Shawn Wilson, "any research represents the paradigm used by the researcher, whether the researcher is conscious of their choice of paradigm or not" (2008, p. 33). I was drawn to this project due to its CBPR approach. I saw this as an opportunity to learn about community-led organizing, solidarity, and how I could help leverage my skills and access to resources to support the mobilization of community knowledge. Although CBPR, as an institutionalized methodology carries over some power inequities from the university, the ways Indigenous scholars, Elders, and community members have leveraged this methodology to

transform academia and benefit their communities is hopeful and inspiring. My understanding of this research paradigm has transformed slowly throughout my many conversations with Mosom Rick Lightning about research, ethics, and methodologies. While he, along with other Mosoms and Kokoms involved in research, leverage CBPR partnerships to bring hope and support to their community, they maintain that the knowledge needed to support the wellbeing of future generations in Maskwacis begins from Nêhiyaw language, culture, and ceremony.

Over the past couple years, learning through these relationships shaped my pursuit of knowledge, my research paradigm, and methodological approach in this project as a non-Indigenous researcher. I am also encouraged by Mosom Rick, late Mosom Arrol, Mosom Cliff Potts who asks everytime he sees me "Kamusta?[17]", and other Deadly Dads by example, to learn about my own identity and history. It is in this spirit of solidarity, through engagement not only with Mosoms and Kokoms in Maskwacis but with my Lolo and Lola, through this anti-colonial love of community and diversity that my research paradigm is based.

When you are writing your report, you need to use the binoculars I gave you. – Namosom Rick Lightning

Throughout this project I have been working to understand my role and how to remain accountable to all my relations. This has pushed me to look beyond the courses offered in my discipline, and beyond learning offered at the university. Many conversations with members of the Deadly Dads have shifted my understandings of how we should pursue knowledge, and what methods we should use for this project.

In search of ways to articulate this into a thesis paper and to honour my relationships while completing this master's program, I took a course on Indigenous research methodologies called Education Policy Studies 535 taught by Dr. Rebecca Sockbeson. I draw on some of the vocabulary and concepts I learned in this class to articulate how my research paradigm has been shaped. In his book, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods,* Shawn Wilson (2008) engages with Western categories of the research paradigm to translate the Indigenous research paradigm he uses into the literature. These categories include: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. I will do the same to describe my approach to research.

[17] "Kamusta?" Means "How are you in?" Filipino. Namosom Cliff would always correct me and say, "you are supposed to say 'Mabuti'!" if I answered in English. Mabuti means "good".

Ontology, epistemology or onto-epistemology

At my first Community Advisory Committee meeting, Mosom Rick Lightning told me that I could not do research from a square box on zoom, that I would have to come out and be with the group. An article by Manulani Meyer (2008) helped me to understand this to be one of many epistemological lessons I'd receive from Namosom Rick. He continued to explain that what he does is not traditional *teachings*, you learn by observing and by doing. What he does to pass on his knowledge is traditional *showings*. To learn through this way, you must put in the effort to learn. My brother Dylan Lightning, a Deadly Dad, shared with me a similar lesson that he learned from working with children at schools as a student councillor. From my memory, he told me that *when you work with people, they can tell if you are real and speaking from a place of knowing or if you are speaking about things you learned, but never experienced*. *Outsiders come into the reserve with ideas but if they haven't lived it, their knowledge is useless here*. This was also an epistemological lesson. Coming to know is about experiencing and living.

During my first dinner with Namosoms Rick Lightning and Arrol Crier, they explained (or at least tried) to me the differences between animate and inanimate thinking and the difference between Nêhiyaw science and university science. Namosom Rick taught me the word *kehekin*[18], meaning "it can be" or "it is possible". They explained that in Nêhiyaw science you come to know by what you experience and that these experiences are spiritual, personal, true, and possible. They told me, it's not up to others to determine what is true for you. They contrasted this with Western science which they viewed *as a way of knowing that requires everyone to know the same thing and to prove that what is true for you must be true for others*. I understand this now, as both a lesson on expanding knowledge paradigms and, while not necessarily a question or dismissal of the validity or value of Western methods, a confrontation to the hegemony and dominance of Western thought.

Dr. Robecca Sockbeson (2017) quoting Dr. Dwayne Donald, explains that delinking ontology and epistemology serves to privilege Eurowestern ways of knowing by disconnecting living and being from knowledge and knowing. On the other hand, in many Indigenous paradigms being *is* knowing and vice versa. Sockbeson (2017) uses the term onto-epistemology to describe this linkage of being and knowing. This emerges later in the results of this thesis

[18] I have only ever heard the word been said, I haven't seen it written.

through new understandings of the role of the researcher and the role of the participant (Rethinking knowledge sharing, involvement, role of researchers, p. 61).

Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper (2011) acknowledge the problematics of imposing western categorizations or research paradigms, such as splitting ontology, epistemology, and axiology when speaking about Indigenous research methodologies. They go on to describe epistemicide wherein the quest for a "homogenous future", that is a future that operates through a single way of knowing, is used to justify violence and appropriation. This results in Western civilization sacrificing one part of humanity to affirm the universality of another part (2011, p. 42). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) calls this "abyssal thinking", where an abyss is drawn between knowledge systems and on the other side of the abyss it is assumed or argued that "there is no real knowledge; there are beliefs, opinions, intuitive or subjective understandings, which, ***at the most, may become objects or raw materials for scientific enquiry***" (p. 2; my emphasis).

As a result of this thinking, Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper (2011) identify a paradox wherein Western thought, when recognizing cultural but not epistemological diversity, either interprets Indigenous ways of knowing as

1) too different from the dominant ways of knowing and thus not making sense and having no value; or
2) being interpreted as too similar, thus "subsumed under a Western way of knowing" (Kovach M. , 2009, p. 35), and therefore yet again having no value.

To address abyssal thinking, Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper (2011) via de Sousa Santos suggest renouncing general epistemologies in favour of a "general epistemology of the impossibility of a general epistemology". In other words, advocating for an "ecology of knowledge" where scientific and Western knowledge "is not discredited, but used in counter hegemonic ways" (Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011, p. 42). This is exemplified by the Mosoms and Kokoms on our research team who have been leveraging CBPR to open space for Nêhiyaw ways of knowing in maternal health. Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper (2001) go on to explain that the most important question in an "ecology of knowledge" is how to conceptualize epistemological pluralism *based on a principle of solidarity*. Learning to navigate multiple epistemologies is a useful strategy here but involves life-long learning and development of negotiation skills that Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper (2011) via Walter E. Mignolo call "boarder crossing". These skills include:

- understanding the social and historical process of knowledge construction;
- understanding the socio-historical relations to power that permeates knowledge production in Western society; and
- being able to reference, combine, and apply an appropriate frame of reference to an appropriate context (2011, p. 47).

I attempt this "boarder crossing" throughout this thesis, as previously mentioned in my review of the literature (1.9 Literature Review, p. 15).

Epistemological pluralism, although this has not been the term used by Namosoms Rick, Late Arrol, or Cliff Potts, has been a big part of my mentorship and learning in community and in ceremony. Learning and showings about gift giving, gift receiving, and gratitude for the blessings that come with preparing for ceremony and being connected to others have been constant throughout my participation in this research project. One of the biggest gifts and lessons in solidarity has been my deepening conversations with my Lolo and Lola about our family history. As I mentioned in the section on my positionality (1.7 Positionality, p. 8), this has led to a re-connection with a neglected part of my identity. As echoed by Kuokkanen (2008), these traditional *showings* (Namosom Rick Lightning, personal communications) have been preparing me to receive epistemological gifts shared throughout this research project and to help me address my own epistemological ignorance and blind spots.

Methodologies

Even as I review these methodologies, I am still unsure if the approach I used falls neatly into either of the approaches described below. I don't feel attached to gathering or analyzing data in the ways traditionally called for by CBPR, and I am neither Indigenous nor experienced enough to fully embrace an Indigenist approach to research. Nonetheless, I have been influenced by both methodologies described below and the several intellectuals I've had the honour of working with throughout this project. It is worth acknowledging again here the mentorship I've received specifically about our research from Namosom Rick Lightning, Namosom Late Arrol Crier, Namosom Cliff Potts, Dylan Lightning, Sonny Lightning, Jerry Young, Delaney Eagle Sr., Josh Littlechild, Grant Bruno, Robbie Potts, and many other Deadly Dads I've met along the way.

Community-based participatory research

According to Wallerstein and Duran (2008), CBPR involves three goals including: research, action, and education. In the "Northern tradition" the focus is on system improvement, and in the

"Southern tradition", the focus is "openly emancipatory research that challenges the historical colonizing practices of research and political domination of knowledge by the elites" (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008, p. 27). Namosom Pat Buffalo shared with us at Horse Therapy that neither researchers nor anyone else, can heal other people and that you can only heal yourself. He compared the role of the researcher to that of an herb that can only trigger the body to heal. This aligns with the historical development of CBPR wherein academic participatory research intellectuals challenged their own roles in community and began to note that "intellectuals were to be catalysts and supports… not the vanguard of social change" (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008, p. 28).

Although this accounts for diversity in methodologies within the CBPR category, as evidenced by the scale Wallerstein & Duran (2008) construct with "Northern" and "Southern" traditions at the poles, both stem from constructivist-leaning epistemologies that challenge positivist epistemologies from *within* Western institutions. Furthermore, while their work may check the boxes of CBPR and strategically leverage Western methodologies to serve their cause, the anti-colonial thinkers quoted at the beginning of this chapter would argue that liberatory ontologies and epistemologies are rooted within the people rather than any Western framework of thought (see Guide Quotes for this chapter, p. 27). Wallerstein & Duran (2008), also note that researchers and community members "have needs and agendas, which may sometimes be shared and at other times divergent or conflicting, especially if professional researchers pursue their career advancement at the expense of the community" (p. 31).

Despite these converging and diverging agendas, CBPR is strategically leveraged in our research team with the aim of making way for Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being to influence funding and policy decisions. Nêhiyaw scholar, Deadly Dad, and PhD student Grant Bruno (2019) wrote in his master's thesis: "As a community member, I was aware of these principles intuitively, and reading them reinforced my own knowledge", demonstrating how this methodological approach fits strategically in the uniting purpose of this project which is: to come together to support the wellbeing of future generations by honouring Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being. As I understand, the foundations of our Maskwacis MCFW Research team, in the more than 10 years of working together prior to my joining, has been built to leverage research in this way for the benefit of community. The principles of CBPR used in this project, according to

our Memorandum of Understanding between Maskwacis Health Services, three CACs including the Deadly Dads, and the University of Alberta signed in 2020 include:

1. Trust: takes time to build trust
2. Relationship Building: good relationships are crucial
3. Equitable Partnership: CBPR is about rectifying power imbalances in research
4. Mutual Benefit: the research must benefit the community
5. Shared Knowledge: community members are experts
6. Capacity Building: the community must be left in a better position moving forward (although I reflect on this final principle, with the work of Margerat Kovach (2014), later on).

On top of this, our research takes a strengths-based approach, and acknowledges "Cree research approaches" where "the research collaborations will be respectful to the cultures, languages, knowledge, values, and rights to self-determination among the people of Maskwacis" (Memorandum of Understanding, 2020). This provided the framework through which our research paradigm could move beyond Western epistemologies and to embrace the epistemological gifts of Nêhiyaw culture as guided by Namosoms Rick Lightning, late Arrol Crier, Cliff Potts, and the Deadly Dads on the Deadly Dads CAC. This framework was developed over a decade of partnership and learning and it is recognized within the MCFW research group by everyone involved that this partnership is fluid and continues to adapt in hopes of pushing disciplinary boundaries for the purpose of creating a better future for the next generations.

Indigenist Research Methodologies

As elaborated on above, it is now well documented in the literature by several Indigenous scholars that, when working with Indigenous communities, strict adherence to Western ways of knowing leads to the wasting of a "vast array of cognitive experiences", the rejection of epistemological gifts, epistemological dominance, and epistemicide (Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011; Kovach M. , 2009; Kuokkanen, 2008; Sockbeson, 2017). Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson (2013) quote Polly Walker (2001) further stating that, "research processes that fail to voice the sacred aspects of Indigenous experiences result in data which is incomplete and inaccurate." Although these lessons often hit me days, weeks, months, or even years later, I notice that this guidance has been shared from the very beginnings of this

project. Paulina Johnson (2017) referencing Margerat Kovach (2009), describes this experience as part of Nêhiyaw research and philosophy:

> *"there is no ruling Nêhiyaw philosophy because knowing is a process of being (Kovach 2009), and the research that is conducted within the Nêhiyaw culture is a learning journey that reflects the writer's experiences. Understanding Nêhiyaw custom and tradition is only the beginning of the whole experience a researcher will undergo, and often we fail to realize that though we may write a dissertation, a novel, or an article, we may not be leading that project, and the universe has decided what we should or should not know. That is an important aspect of Indigenous and Nation research that is never accounted for in conventional… research" (Johnson, 2017, p. 86).*

Johnson (2017) goes on to state that academics and new learners, in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, must leverage and step outside their privilege to "challenge research that conforms to the guidelines of the colonial power structure" (p. 80). Learning this is also important because as Bruno (2019) puts it, "knowing that the community already knows the solutions allows the researcher to approach research in an inclusive way" (p. 25). This additionally prompts me to reflect on the role of the researcher overall, which I get to in the discussion. For me, it has not only been a gift to engage cross-culturally while learning to work in an "ecology of knowledge", but a lesson in learning my responsibility to all of the relationships I've grown into throughout this project. I will elaborate on this in the next section.

While there is no model for an Indigenist research methodology (Weber-Pillwax, 1999), there are common principles that tend to arise in these methodologies. According to Wilson (2007) an Indigenist research paradigm is one that can be used by anyone, including non-Indigenous research scholars who follows its tenets. Wilson (2007) draws on Indigenous scholars including Cora Weber-Pillwax, Judy Atkinson, Karen Martin, Fyre Jean Graveline, Stan and Peggy Wilson, Peter Hanohano and himself to outline the following principles that might apply to this paradigm. These are the principles Wilson (2007) outlines:

- Respect for all forms of life as being related and interconnected
- Conduct all actions and interactions in a spirit of kindness, honesty, and compassion

- The reason for doing the research must be to benefit Indigenous communities
- The research question must lie within the reality of the Indigenous experience
- Theories developed or proposed must be grounded in an Indigenous epistemology and supported by the Elders and community that live our/this epistemology
- The methods used must be process-oriented, and the researcher will be cognizant of their role as one part of the group in process
- It will be recognized that transformation within every living entity participating in the research will be one of the outcomes of every project
- The researcher must assume a certain responsibility for the transformations and outcomes of the research which is brought to the community
- The researcher should work as part of a team of Indigenous thinkers with the guidance of Elders
- The integrity of any Indigenous people or community could never be undermined by the research because it is grounded in that integrity
- It is recognized that the languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples are living processes and that research and the discovery of knowledge is an ongoing function for the thinkers and scholars of every Indigenous group.

Axiology

Relationship building means a lot more than just developing trust for better access to data or getting participants to agree to complete surveys. Relationship building has been the process through which I am coming to understand how things are connected and my role in supporting wellbeing. As such, my actions even outside of Advisory Committee meetings, when I come to the university or present at a conference, or how I act in society, must be guided by the utmost dignity and respect for those who have been sharing their knowledge, time, and effort with me. This is a lesson I will return to briefly in chapter 3, on the knowledge that was shared.

On relational accountability, Shawn Wilson (2008) states “Right or wrong; validity; statistically significant; worthy or unworthy: value judgements lose their meaning. What is more important and meaningful is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship—that is, being accountable to your relations. The researcher is therefore a part of [their] research and

inseparable from the subject of that research (J. Wilson, 2000)" (pg. 77). These principles, however, were not the standard of the university as evidenced by the Memorandums of Understanding I signed when becoming a graduate students. They state, "As the research is normally funded by third parties through the University of Alberta, all of the original data are the property of the University of Alberta and/or the funding agency." ("Offer of Graduate Student Funding and Memorandum of Understanding on Research Guidelines", 2021).

Luckily, however, the default tendencies of the university were overwritten with alternative understandings that were developed throughout the formation of the MCFW research partnership. Our research team maintains that the knowledge accessed, introduced, and interacted with throughout this thesis already exists in community and cannot be dispossessed from the people, the lands, or their culture. This knowledge cannot be institutionalized, professionalized, nor appropriated without it becoming invalid and uncredible and must remain rooted in community. Furthermore, as an early step towards full control by community, the Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) of our research partnership explicitly states that data will be co-owned between researchers and community.

Nonetheless, in practice, relational accountability impacts how I present the knowledge shared from this research. As will be shown later, no strategy, program, or curriculum is developed from this knowledge. Instead, an emphasis is placed on relationships and the importance of re-imaging research and health services to strengthen relations, mobilize resources in community, and understanding that wellbeing comes from Nêhiyaw culture, language, and ceremonies.

Furthermore, I recognize that all the knowledge I am understanding and re-sharing is held by others including members of the Deadly Dads like Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Jerry Young, Grant Bruno, Robbie Potts, Bryce Eagle, Delaney Eagle Sr., Josh Littlechild, Namosom Cliff Potts and Namosom Rick Lightning, who have shared their experiences, were brought up in and pass down Nêhiyaw culture, and who live as Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak. In sharing this knowledge, I uphold the utmost respect and recognize the expertise of all those involved. Furthermore, I've begun to learn and grow into my own identity as a mixed-Filipino young man, as they've continued to demonstrate as Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak.

My axiology is shaped by my understanding that everyone is equal and has knowledge they embody that should be celebrated, honoured, and loved. By situating myself in this research I

take responsibility for what I write and commit to an ongoing and humble learning journey. Therefore, the validity and credibility of the knowledge I speak of in this thesis, that comes from community, cannot itself be undermined by readings of this thesis. What is presented here is my own analysis and interpretation at this point in my journey. I will unpack this further in the section on rigour and validity.

Reflection: February 7th, 2023

> *As I'm reflecting on how my understanding of my research paradigm has changed over the past couple years I am reminded of the lessons late Mosom Arrol Crier showed me. They are lessons of generosity and humility. Early in the development of the Deadly Dads, while we were struggling with recruitment and getting things rolling, Arrol would attend every meeting. Often these meetings would be before his dialysis appointments. Even still, he was generous with his time and never made it seem like a big deal. A week before he passed on, he surprised me by showing up to HBMC's Children's Day Walk Through to help hand out posters and hot chocolate at our upcoming Deadly Dads activity. He brought with him braided sweetgrass to hand out to children and young families as they passed our booth. Arrol travelled to Red Deer to pick the sweetgrass up that day. He once told me that you might not understand a lesson the first time you see it or hear it, but that when you need it, it will come to you. Moments like these have shifted how I would experience and approach research, and life more broadly. I try to live and work with the humility and generosity that Arrol showed me.*

2.2 Methods

Knowledge was shared in many ways throughout this project. In addition to answering our overall research question, this knowledge helped frame this thesis and adapt our methodological approach. The learning was non-linear, following a more circular, and iterative path. There were also multiple streams of knowledge and experiences at play given the number of people, and backgrounds, contributing to these relationships.

Following the description of ethics, a table highlights key moments of knowledge sharing which included ceremony, community events, activities, Wisdom Circles (two of which were transcribed), workshops, and public knowledge sharing (Table 1). However, this does not encompass all the effort and time put into developing these understandings, much of which happened through unplanned connections and visits. In the next section, I describe how the knowledge shared is synthesized in relation to the development of the supports, the impacts on wellbeing, and insights into sustainability.

Ethics

Ethics for this project were established on essentially three levels. Firstly, this research was conducted inline with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans guidelines and first approved on 9/18/2019 by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board under the project name "Supporting Cree fathers-to-be using culturally-appropriate, community led, and strength-based approach", Pro00092188. Secondly, a Memorandum of Understanding between Maskwacis Health Services, The University of Alberta, and Mosoms and Kokoms from the communities of Maskwacis was signed on July 24, 2020 formalizing the Community Advisory Committees that would guide the entire research process. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, there is an ongoing effort on behalf of researchers to remain accountable to all the relationships formed throughout this project.

This deeper ethics, of what Shawn Wilson (2009) calls "relational accountability" creates an enduring commitment to care and awareness of how our actions throughout research has wide-ranging implications and impacts on everyone involved, both past, present, and future. On top of this, our efforts are connected to many others we are not directly connected to. It is not enough to follow ethics policies or guidelines. An understanding of reciprocity and real relationships are needed to ensure this accountability. Real relationships were formed throughout this project through our extended time together both within and without what would traditionally qualify as research activities. As a result, we know one another, our families know each other, and our relationships will last beyond this research project.

Towards the end of project, we began discussions about treating the stories, insights, and experiences shared through our relationships as *knowledge* rather than *data.* To honour the knowledge that was shared with me, I credit people by name for their contributions to my own understandings shared throughout this thesis. Everyone who I referenced and cited was aware

that this was part of a research project and that I would be writing a Master's thesis. These lessons shared with me were part of the guidance I received to write this thesis.

In addition to this, as we discussed as a circle before the second Wisdom Circle, I have included the names of knowledge sharers at our second Wisdom Circle. I sent an unpublished version of this thesis to everyone cited and listed where they appeared to confirm their ongoing consent. Everyone had the option to withdraw or anonymize their contributions. However, not all contributors, only my thesis committee comprised of my supervisors and external reviewer, provided feedback for the revisions of this thesis. Therefore, this is not a collectively authored publication and all that I share in this thesis are my own understandings that I am responsible for.

Brief description of each activity

The following descriptions outline each formally organized activities which were planned by the Deadly Dads from the summer of 2021 to the winter of 2023. Some of these activities were proposed prior to my introduction to the group during a previous study (Oster, et al., 2018) and through the formation of a men's advisory group including Mosom Rick Lightning, Late Mosom Dennis Okeymow, Mosom Don Johnson, Grant Bruno, Jerry Young, Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Josh Littlechild, and Richard Oster. There were some other activities piloted and ceremonies held for this project during this time. These highlights also do not include my near weekly visits in Maskwacîs, beginning in person on July 7th, 2021, nor the zoom meetings that took place of in-person meetings during COVID-19 restrictions. What is highlighted here are some key points of knowledge sharing and experience that are presented in chapter 3.

July 2021 Sweat Ceremony and Mosom Rick Lightning's

This was my first time in Maskwacis. Richard Oster invited me to the ceremony and we drove down together. There we met Josh Littlechild, Dylan Lightning, Mosom Rick Lightning, and Mosom Arrol Crier in person for the first time as a group. This grounded the effort and intentions we would be putting into these supports.

Aug 2021 Warrior-Oskapewis Cultural Camp

An opportunity was created for young men and fathers to receive cultural showings from Mosom Arrol Crier with help from Leonard Nepoose. A total of five men attended at least one part of the camp, connecting with knowledge holders, other men, and Mosoms in the community.

Nov/Dec 2021 Hockey and Hamper Giveaway Event

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our Deadly Dads group decided that it was important to find ways to lift spirits and help men care for their families. Using COVID-19 precautions and despite icy roads, a group of eleven men and boys showed up for a game of floor hockey, a draw to two Oilers vs Hurricanes tickets, or to pick up a food hamper for their families. In raising awareness for this event, and Deadly Dads supports overall, late Mosom Arrol Crier and I attended a community walkthrough event to hand out sweet grass, welcome men to the group, and hand out hot chocolate to children. River Minde won the two tickets to the Oilers vs Hurricanes game a year later, he would help us book the Jim Rattlesnake Rec Center for our floor hockey nights.

Jan 2022 New Years Sweat Ceremony

A New Years sweat was held to pray for men in the community and to invite them back into ceremony. One dad showed up and a few Kokoms joined to help pray for fathers and future generations. Despite low attendance this was an important ceremony as we joined in prayer for the intentions of the Deadly Dads support group and those who couldn't be there. These intentions and commitment would continue to carry us forward.

March 2022 Round Dance

This was organized by our Deadly Dads Advisory Committee. Over 300 people attended this Round Dance in honour of Elders from Maskwacis who helped start this and other work at the University of Alberta. The families of the Mosoms and Kokoms who passed were honoured with feast coolers and a thank you message embroidered on them; helpers were honoured with blankets and cooler bags, families who attended were honoured with various food and care items, and children were honoured with toy giveaways. Singers were also given honourarium. This ceremony brought people from all over together. Researchers volunteered their time to help clean and set up and people from community were hired as security and other jobs.

This had a positive impact on our university-community partnership and helped re-affirm reciprocal, gift giving relationships. It remains a very strong example of coming together in a way that centers community knowledge for healing and being humble and supportive as partners. It is also important to note that the Emergency Management Department entrusted our group to follow COVID-19 safety protocols and hold the first Round Dance in Maskwacis in two years. It was also the only Round Dance in Maskwacis that year. Some future Deadly Dads (who were

not yet involved with the group) were there singing that day. Now, as part of Deadly Dads, they sometimes share their songs with other men eager to learn.

May 2022 Sweat Ceremony

The Deadly Dads sponsored another sweat ceremony for men, this time nine men, including fathers and their sons, showed up to the sweat. Several lessons on fatherhood and traditional male roles around parenting were shared.

June 2022 Wisdom Circle

A Wisdom Circle was held to better understand the context in community and share how men come together in healthy ways in Maskwacis. This was a vulnerable Wisdom Circle and many people in the group mentioned it was uncommon, but good to open up. This Wisdom Circle served as our first recorded transcript, but the openness and vulnerability from this ceremony carried forward in our efforts.

July 2022 Horse Therapy

We asked Mosom Pat Buffalo to do Horse Therapy and a wagon ride with our group. Thirteen men showed up to this and there were several lessons about healing. Mosom Pat has shared our Deadly Dads group with others in the community and we recommend his Horse Therapy to the connections we make as well. This was also significant because the wagon ride was our first activity after the Round Dance in 2022. At this point we felt it was time to start putting our words into action and start doing activities. In some ways this could be considered the beginning of our 'implementation' phase, although development, implementation, and knowledge sharing have since become very interwoven, as described below.

Weekly or Monthly Activities beginning at the end of June 2022 Bowling, Golf, Pool, Paintball

From this point on, the Deadly Dads affirmed the importance of doing activities as a group that are informal and allow us to relax and have fun, in addition to the important sharing circles and ceremonies. Often these are experiences that many group members have never done or rarely get the chance to do. Planning happened on an ongoing basis, usually at the meeting before or in between activities. These activities also act as an opportunity to share updates, knowledge, and support with each other in ways that are not planned. By sharing these experiences our relationships grow and our ability to support one another strengthens.

Jul 2022 Jasper Family Camp

This was an opportunity for fathers to bring their families outside of Maskwacis to create positive memories around parenting. Many families had first time experiences on this trip. Planning for this trip also displayed our commitment to the input and leadership that comes from the group. Adjustments were made to accommodate fathers without transportation and who could not take time away from their families. Originally, the plan was to have a men's camp. But many dads could not find supervision for their children, so we decided to change it to a family camp where they could bring them along. We also received support from community organizations, including Samson Community Wellness communicated through Tyrone Lightning, who donated gift cards for food supplies.

Aug 2022 Indigenous DOHaD Gathering

Mosom Rick Lightning, Jerry Young, Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, and I presented at the Indigenous DOHaD Gathering in Vancouver. The Maskwacis MCFW group, including Rhonda Bell, Fernanda Torrez Ruiz, and Winnie Chow-Horn, worked hard to organize our attendance at this conference. We brought pictures from our previous spring and summer of activities and exchanged knowledge with other communities. Many communities from all over the world were interested in the knowledge Jerry, Sonny, and Dylan were sharing about supporting young men and fathers. We were one of the only groups that focused on supports to include men. We also learned about other work going on around the world to support maternal health.

Sept 2022 Firearm Safety Training

Many fathers in our support group discussed their desire to learn how to hunt, and the possibilities of sharing that experience within our group. As a first step, we provided the opportunity for our group to get their Possession and Acquisition Licenses to help contribute to a safe hunting season. Jennifer Cardinal from Cardinal Firearm Safety Training facilitated this training and was introduced to us by Fran and Kirby Strongman who came to the Jasper Family Camp.

Oct 2022 Tea Dance Ceremony

We got together for a Tea Dance ceremony at Mosom Rick Lightning's because our group decided it was important to start learning Tea Dance songs. Delaney Eagle Sr. and his sons

shared songs. Our hope is for learning songs to become a regular part of our group as we welcome more men to the circle interested in learning.

Nov 2022 Second Wisdom Circle

We hosted a second Wisdom Circle after we had made good use of all the MSI Foundation grant funding. This was the second transcription used in this research. At this Wisdom Circle we talked about acknowledging everyone as knowledge sharers to help explain the impacts of the Deadly Dads group. This conversation also built on plans we were making in collaboration with the MCFW Research group to continue these supports by applying to become a non-profit society and applying for program grants. Although we agreed to operate as equals, to meet the Alberta Society Act requirements we nominated Mosom Rick Lightning, Delaney Eagle Sr., Kenneth Cutarm, and Dylan Lightning as directors. Sonny Lightning and I agreed to be secretary-treasurers to help with keeping track of the paperwork.

Jan 2023 New Years Sweat Ceremony

The Deadly Dads sponsored another sweat ceremony for the group. There was a lot of grief and several men were going through tough times. We prayed together for those who were struggling to make it out to the group. We also had a lesson on the responsibility we have to each other, as representatives of Deadly Dads, and as a family. Our first Deadly Dad T-shirts were handed out at this sweat.

Table 1

Highlights of gatherings planned within the Deadly Dads Support Group showing the different ways knowledge was shared throughout the research project.

Date	Description of Gathering	Knowledge Sharing					
		Ceremony	Community	Relationships Experiences	Transcribed	Workshops	Public
July 7, 2021	Sweat w/ Mosom Rick						
August 26 to 29, 2021	Cultural Camp w/ Mosom Arrol						
November 19, 2021	Childre''s Day w/ Mosom Arrol						
December 8, 2021	Floor Hockey and Hamper Delivery						
January 2, 2022	Sweat w/ Mosom Rick						
February 1, 2022	Weekly Meetings Begin						
April 9, 2022	First Annual Round Dance						
May 11, 2022	Sweat w/ Mosom Rick						
June 1, 2022	First Wisdom Circle w/ Grant Bruno						
June 5, 2022	Horse Therapy w/ Mosom Pat Buffalo						
June 30, 2022	Deadly Dads Bowling						
July 7, 2022	Deadly Dads Golf						
July 22 to 24, 2022	Deadly Dads Jasper Family Camp						
August 11, 2022	Deadly Dads Pool						
August 18, 2022	Deadly Dads Paintball						
August 20, 2022	Sweat w/ Mosom Rick						
August 24 to 26, 2022	Indigenous DOHaD Gathering w/ Mosom Rick, Sonny, Jerry, Dylan, and Adam						
September 3 to 4, 2022	Firearm Safety Training						
October 6, 2022	Tea Dance w/ Delaney Eagle Sr.						
November 17, 2022	Second Wisdom Circle						

On top of the gatherings listed above there were near weekly CAC meetings since February 1st, 2022 and several unplanned gatherings that facilitated knowledge sharing.

Traditional Showings: Better understandings through our time together

The knowledge shared for this research happened through relationships and spending time together. As explained to me by Richard Oster, after the initial formation of the CACand several pilot activities with men from the community (e.g. golfing, sweatlodge ceremonies, a cultural camp, and a pizza night), the project was postponed in 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the intimate, relationship-based premise for knowledge sharing, the CAC felt the project could not proceed until in-person and face-to-face meetings could safely take place.

Monthly CAC meetings resumed in April 2021, when I slowly became involved. These continued until December 2021, until they were switched to bi-weekly meetings. Beginning in February 2021, the CAC decided that it would be best, in preparation for the Round Dance we were planning, to do weekly meetings and convert these CAC meetings into open Deadly Dads support group meetings. During the initial planning stage of the supports which spanned from April 2021 to April 2022, a total of 20 CAC meetings were held with varying attendance. I recorded meeting minutes and prepared the meeting agendas until April 2022 when development began to be documented in monthly reports. During this time, CAC members were given $50 gift cards for their time and from April 2021 to October 2022 Elders were given $150. Elders honourarium was increased to $250 in October 2022.

Throughout this project, I have also been participating in ceremony, attending community events, volunteering, going to dinners with Namosoms Rick, late Arrol and Cliff Potts, and getting to know the CAC members. Early on I also attended Elders Mentoring Program (another project supported by the Maskwacis MCFW Research team) meetings with Nokoms Muriel Lee, Sophie Bruno, and Lena Cutknife. I kept a journal which I periodically filled with reflections on the lessons I received from spending time in community and preparing for ceremony. In addition to helping at Namosom Rick's sweats I was learning to pray in Filipino with my Lolo, Lolas, Tita, and Tito. A lot of this was new to me, such as the ceremonies and community events, but was familiar to CAC members.

The development and implementation phases have been overlapping throughout this project. However, when implementation and getting together for activities became the dominant focus, a Wisdom Circle was held in July 2022. The purpose of this Wisdom Circle was to better understand how Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak come together in healthy ways and to provide a starting point for reflection on the impacts of implementing the supports. Grant Bruno, a Deadly Dad who has

experience leading Wisdom Circles and led the previous Maskwacis men's photovoice project, facilitated and I was the helper. This Wisdom Circle was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Men who participated received a $50 gift card and Mosons received $250 honourarium. The impacts of these supports became the topic of a future Wisdom Circle. While we had spent close to a year getting to know each other at this point, we were still early in discussions on how research would be shared. So, everyone participating in the Wisdom Circle signed a consent form indicating that they would remain anonymous. This differs from our second Wisdom Circle, wherein everyone involved was recognized as a knowledge sharer.

During the implementation of supports (Table 1) from April 2022 until December 2022, descriptions and reflections of each event were recorded through photographs, in community documents, and in monthly reports I wrote and shared with the Deadly Dads support group. During this time, I took on responsibilities for recruitment, activity planning (based on ideas shared in the CAC meetings), transportation, distribution of petty cash and honorarium, financial expenditures, creating flyers, updating monthly reports, and helping with the implementation of activities and scheduling meetings. Notes on development were spread across various documents including monthly reports, emails, and journal entries. Attendance was recorded in monthly reports going out to community. Evaluation and development of supports was largely done in real time at meetings through informal group discussions. Funding for honorarium for the CAC had run out by the end of April 2022 and the Deadly Dads continued to volunteer to help plan, organize, and facilitate supports. We continued to operate and make decisions in a group-led way. However, given that everyone but myself was a volunteer, it was difficult to delegate work. In hindsight, although this was a big part of my learning, this work structure does not translate well to the sustainability of these supports.

Together, these various documents, recordings of decisions made, and knowledge shared are used to articulate the process and lessons learned throughout the project. Early on, our research team, including Tyra Lightning and Fernanda Torrez Ruiz consulted with Maira Quintanilha to help us with evaluation throughout the development stage of this project. Maira drew on elements of Micheal Quinn Patton's (2016) developmental evaluation to help guide our discussions. This informed the early stages of gathering information and included developing a theory of change, paying attention to why people were joining the group, and searching for the essence of the supports we were developing.

Maira's guidance, Quinn Patton's work, and my learning with Tyra and Fernanda helped me to reflect on the essence of the Deadly Dads, the reasons people were joining, and why it continues. I used this to help write community reports that I shared and received feedback on from the CAC (see appendix). This, however, was not an approach introduced by the Deadly Dads and was not directly engaged with in a group-led way, as compared to Wisdom Circles we later decided to use.

In hindsight, I think in community there was already an effective use of storytelling and knowledge sharing that built on itself at each activity, with each introduction, and every time a member of the group shared their experiences. Ongoing discussions about peoples' experiences and ideas for next meeting, in themselves, provided an effective living 'developmental evaluation'. This living evaluation, which occurs through our relationships, also led to learning between activities, events, and ceremonies, and knowledge sharing about the key aspects of developing the supports in real time. This helped ensure that the evaluation engaged with realities experienced by the group.

Nonetheless, Quinn Patton's approach remains useful for writing this thesis, applying for future funding, and sharing this knowledge with stakeholders. However, the approach that emerged on its own through ongoing conversation in the group, or perhaps that already existed, seemed more engaging on the community level.

First Wisdom Circle: Appreciating the context

The initial proposal developed by the pre-COVID-19 lockdown CAC for the evaluation of supports was to use mixed-methods including one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, pre- and post- surveys, and other data volunteered by participants. The proposed methods did not resonate with the current Deadly Dads group; therefore, we used our collaborative relationship within the group to select and mold evaluation strategies that aligned with the current group members' wishes. Some foresight of this collaboration flexibility was embedded within the proposal. General agreement was that the purpose the project should remain unchanged but, after lockdowns there was a marked opposition to collecting information using surveys. Because of the encouragement of all members of our research partnership to employ a relationship-based approach, including by Namosoms and my supervisors, adaptations were expected and possible. After considering the lessons learned through the process described in the results (Rethinking data generation, p. 62) we began to look for alternatives. Margaret Kovach notes that resistance

to epistemological disruptions within the academia has resulted in "an attempt to weld Indigenous methods to existing bodies of Western knowledge, resulting in confused efforts and methodological floundering… an attempt to recognize the history of Western research within Indigenous communities and make reparations" (2009, p. 36). Through the guidance of Namosoms and the adaptability of our methodological approaches encouraged by the CAC, my supervisors, and highlighted in our MOU described previously, opportunities arose to embrace, epistemological disruptions from within our partnership. Hopefully, future research can begin past these adaptations and progress even further through Nêhiyaw leadership and community control.

Nonetheless, through this embrace of disruptions came the realization that the group's originally planned methods no longer fit with how the group had changed through relationships over time. They did not align with the balance our group had achieved by getting to know each other, through our time together and through ceremony. Nor did these proposed methods stem from the ontologies or epistemologies which already existed in community. On top of the difficulties of interpreting and administering surveys to an inconsistent and small sample of participants, knowledge was already being gifted in many ways that was going unrecognized. So as an alternative to conducting a mixed-methods approach to research, Namosom Rick recommended early on I fully participate in the supports and Grant Bruno proposed a bit later on to do Wisdom Circles[19] to share knowledge. Jerry Young, Mosom Cliff Potts, and I, in separate conversations, also discussed honouring the balance of our group by treating what was being shared as knowledge instead of just data. We leveraged the initial participatory strengths of the CBPR methodology and adapted our methods to better honour Nêhiyaw onto-epistemologies that were increasingly being acknowledged by partners.

Second Wisdom Circle: Growing understandings of impacts

To evaluate the impacts of these supports we held a Wisdom Circle on November 17th, 2022, which was recorded and transcribed. This Wisdom Circle is used to highlight the impacts of the Deadly Dads as people shared their own knowledge, journeys throughout fatherhood, and the support they received from being part of Deadly Dads. Everyone who had participated over the

[19] Wisdom Circles are sharing circles done through ceremony where everyone in the circle participates to share their knowledge about a certain topic or what is on their hearts. Transcribing one of these circles was one of the methods of recording knowledge that we arrived at as an Advisory Committee.

years was welcome to join, and it was held in Namosom Rick Lightning's dining room. Since we had been meeting nearly weekly since February of 2021, we've had several informal and spontaneous sharing circles about the impacts of Deadly Dads and our hopes for the future, all of which contribute to the understandings I share in chapter 3 and 4.

I synthesized the results as I reflected on my experiences with the Deadly Dads from the start, drawing on the transcripts of the Wisdom Circles, photos, reflections, memories, and prayers. I reconstructed our 2-hour long Wisdom Circle to fit within the confines of this thesis and embed photos and my own commentary. Throughout this writing time, I received spontaneous phone calls and text messages from Namosoms Rick and Cliff, and other Deadly Dads to talk and sometimes to ask when the next meeting would be. This would remind me of the spirit of the group and the reasons for doing this research. But also make me question the pace of research during transition periods and our abilities to keep promises, as I will discuss later. Upon completion, this thesis will also be defended in Maskwacis at the Maskwacis Cultural College, and there are plans to incorporate this work into a manuscript for publication with the Deadly Dads as co-authors.

Importantly, this knowledge has also been shared in several other settings by the Deadly Dads themselves. Such as through word of mouth, interagency meetings held in community, at an International Indigenous DOHaD Gathering in Vancouver, and at a national Webinar for Engaging Young Men and Boys hosted by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. More group-led knowledge sharing will likely be conducted as the Deadly Dads have transitioned into a self-governed non-profit society.

Reflections: Deeper understandings of sustainability

Since this was a pilot research project, there were no original plans to evaluate long-term impacts or sustainability. However, the Deadly Dads have exceeded expectations in terms of mobilizing knowledge and establishing supports by and for Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak. In the final section of chapter 3, I reflect on steps that have been taken from the completion of the second recorded Wisdom Circle. The closing remarks of the November 17th Wisdom Circles included action steps towards incorporating as a non-profit society. There is much to reflect on as we figure out how to carry on the momentum and hope that has been propelling the Deadly Dads.

2.3 Re-Understanding Validity and Rigour

The following criteria of Western standards of research are significant to the divergence of university and community agendas in this project. As we will see in the results, this arose within the tensions and miscommunications around the value of research. Several times throughout this research the value of our work was understood differently.

I try to understand this through the metaphor shared by Late Namosom Arrol Crier *of knowing how to live with the red hand and the white hand*. *On the red hand* the value of this work comes from the relationships being built, the network of supports grown to (re)include men, and foundational to all of it the transmission of Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being. In other words, the power comes from the culture (Nokom Muriel Lee, personal communications). *On the white hand*, the value of the research was coming from the gathering of the data, from the defensibility of what was being planned under the gaze of people in the roles of accountants, funders, and future policymakers, in hopes of the continuation of the supports being developed. Late Mosom Arrol would share that you need to learn when to use both to live in today's society without losing who you are.

Validity and rigour, in many ways, are at the center of this because the criterion used to determine whether research fulfills these standards stem from a Western lens. Despite all the diverse methods proposed in this project to make measurements and data collection more acceptable in community, it is argued that validation within the academy contributes to the narratives that reproduce what many scholars have termed to be the failing project of "epistemicide" (Sockbeson, 2017; de Sousa Santos, Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges, 2007). Despite our research team supporting a move beyond this (Oster & Lightning, 2022), it remains relevant to this project because these standards of validation appeared in our grant and ethics applications.

Furthermore, as a student arriving from outside community, who's Western education was required to become a Master's student, and who's upbringing was, in many ways, based on a survival philosophy which accepted forgetting our family's language, culture, and history, I had many walls within my own mind to break down and address. Walls that Namosom Rick and Arrol agreed to help me see past. Part of my learning in this research has thus been to unlearn what lingers from my own (mis)education.

However, I would argue that future proposals, in similar contexts, should begin from Nêhiyaw standards of rigour as led and controlled by community. Furthermore, for graduate students who have the privilege of working in community, defenses should not just be done in community, but through procedures developed by community rather than simply following those which exist in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

In the meantime, we work by practicing "relational accountability" (Wilson, 2009), which takes precedence in our research partnership. That is, the validation of this knowledge comes from all those who have put in the effort to connect and form these relationships for the benefit of their community. Furthermore, the validity of this knowledge is inseparably linked to the people, their cultures, and its usefulness in reciprocating their generosity and efforts. The following section describe how validity and rigour was achieved in the synthesis of our results based on the work of Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) and Milne & Oberle (2005) as referenced in our research proposal. I will outline our approaches to credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity.

Credibility

According to Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle (2001) credibility refers to the "conscious effort to establish confidence in an accurate interpretation of the meaning of the data". Milne & Oberle (2005) continue that the "credibility of any study must be directly related to its purpose; that is, what the study was intended to accomplish". This is accomplished by asking whether the results "reflect the experiences of participants or the context in a believable way" whether the explanation "fits the description" and whether the interpretation "reveals some truth external to the investigators' experience" (p. 530).

We achieved credibility by creating spaces of vulnerability and trusting relationships wherein everyone involved could share their experiences openly and honestly. What was being shared was directly linked to the purpose of our gatherings. This purpose, originating from our initial intentions of the research, which was to support future fathers, was continuously shaped by the members of the group to fit their realities and to make the group more inclusive to the diverse realities of men caring for future generations. The basis of our work together was reflective and responsive to the context of the dads in the community. Understandings of these experiences were developed iteratively, not necessarily through interview or analysis techniques, but through ongoing relationships. Tobacco was also offered to participants before our Wisdom Circles and

to Namosoms when I asked them for guidance. There are responsibilities tied to the offering of tobacco that ensure the knowledge being shared is credible from a Nêhiyaw lens. Rights to knowledge were also respected and the sharers of the knowledge throughout this thesis are credited. Lastly, it is through my own participation and relationships that I came to understand this knowledge and so I take responsibility for any misunderstandings shared throughout my analysis.

Authenticity

Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle (2001) drawing from Sandelowski define authenticity as "closely linked to credibility in validity and involves the portrayal of research that reflects the meanings and experiences that are lived and perceived by participants". Accordingly, authenticity is achieved by having a "high awareness of subtle differences in the voices of others" (p. 530) and "cautioned that the involvement of the inquirer can influence the ability to speak authentically for the experience of others" (p. 530).

Our approach to sharing knowledge through Wisdom Circles, as well as our approach to building trust and responsibility to one another, addresses authenticity. By allowing people to speak for themselves and recognizing the gifts everyone brings to the table, the nuance and differences in voices are honoured. What also comes through in the Wisdom Circles is that, although certain patterns emerge, everyone brought something different home with them and is on their own journeys of understanding and throughout fatherhood.

Namosom Rick Lightning, early on, mentioned to me the importance of participating as a researcher in the supports to be able to speak about them and understand their impacts. Awareness and development of my own perspective has also been encouraged through learning about my family history and identity. These have been ongoing lessons in authenticity.

Criticality

Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle (2001) refer to criticality as the reflexivity, open inquiry, and critical analysis of all aspects of inquiry contributing to the validity of qualitative research. The first time I sat down with Rick and late Arrol we talked about the walls that the Western education system puts up around the mind and I asked if there was a way to break those walls down. Since then, Namosom Rick regularly asks me what I have learned after any experience. After a conference, after a drive, after a ceremony, or planning an activity. These moments of reflection and criticality have been embedded in my learning. There has been lots of

encouragement to reflect on my assumptions, my knowledge, and the lens I am looking through. This is a practice in criticality.

Integrity

According to Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle (2001) "integrity and criticality are represented through recursive and repetitive checks of interpretations as well as a humble presentation of findings." The integrity here is possible through relationships built and nurtured, ongoing discussions, and accountability to these relationships. Continuing to nurture relationships, being transparent about findings and open to feedback all contribute to integrity.

Integrity is inherent to humility, understanding rights to knowledge, and being accountable to your relationships. It is an ongoing process of learning how to remain accountable to these relationships in different spaces and recognizing the responsibilities we have while representing these relationships. Not making promises you can't keep is another lesson in personal integrity that has been shared throughout the project. Integrity in the institution as a criterion of valid research, however from my view, prioritizes *moments* of interactions leading to outputs over the *continuity* of these relationships beyond the research. Integrity as an aspect of humility and reciprocity showed in community extends beyond the data being collected and the timeline of the research project.

2.4 Summary and Reflection of Methodologies

The research paradigm used in this project grew from an ongoing CBPR partnership that continuously evolves. This research paradigm was shaped by more than one ontology/epistemology throughout my mentorship, participation, and learning in the spirit of anti-colonial solidarity. The knowledge shared in this thesis comes from the many relationships I was part of with those contributing to these supports led by Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak in Maskwacis.

These relationships, however, are not the only relationships that were formed, impacts that were experienced, or knowledge that was shared throughout this collaboration. Outside of what is traditionally considered research, unnoticed impacts have also been mentioned to us, such as from playing floor hockey and eating pizza with the youth after school, or those outside of our group enjoying songs during their yoga sessions at the Jim Rattlesnake Recreation Building. There are also many others in Maskwacis doing good work to pass down knowledge and support their community, and other healthy and supportive fathers who were not part of this project.

This research paradigm and the Maskwacis MCFW Research Group recognizes that knowledge already exists in community through Nêhiyaw language, culture, and ceremony. The methodology serves to honour this knowledge and effort gifted by community to support future generations through the inclusion of Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak in supports provided by health services. In doing so, Eurowestern narratives that reproduce dominance, and the tensions between community and the hierarchies imposed by the university are confronted.

Overall, a conscious effort throughout this project has been made to reference Nêhiyaw knowledge as a legitimate knowledge system and those sharing that knowledge. Furthermore, this relationship-based approach to research is valid and rigorous according to the criteria outlined by Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001), Milne & Oberle (2005), and through our relational, community-guided approach to research. Finally, my own limitations in understanding, presenting, or synthesizing information cannot undermine the legitimacy of Nêhiyaw knowledge systems. My prayer is that the effort I put into this research has and will benefit all my relations and that I continue to learn, grow, and understand my role in supporting future generations.

Chapter 3: Knowledge Shared

This chapter introduces the knowledge shared throughout our project to answer our overarching research questions:

1) How can culturally-centered, community-led supports with and for Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak (Cree men) be developed? and
2) What are the impacts on wellbeing of participants in these supports, their partners and children, the community overall, and on future generations?

To answer these questions, this chapter is divided into each of our objectives for the project. The first section, *Better understandings through our time together*, outlines what we learned from completing our first objective to develop supports based on the knowledge shared from our relationships. The second section, *Knowledge of context and getting together in healthy ways*, portrays the knowledge shared in our first Wisdom Circle that contributed to our second objective to understand the context in community, and how Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak get together in healthy ways. The third section, *Growing understandings of impacts*, portrays the knowledge shared in our second Wisdom Circle about our third objective to understand the impacts of the supports we developed together. Finally, the fourth section, *Deeper understandings of sustainability,* outlines some reflections on sustainability and insights shared about how we should work together in the future which led. This addresses our emerging objective to re-understand the roles of partners in supporting culturally-centered, community-led initiatives in the context of the Deadly Dads.

3.1 Better understandings through our time together

This section reports on the lessons we learned from completing our first objective to develop supports based on the knowledge shared from strong and trusting relationships. Through collaborative efforts and trusting relationships, as outlined in our meeting minutes, and expressed in conversation, our understandings in several areas grew. These areas will be presented as follows:

1) Defining the nature of the supports and how research is done;
2) The importance of consistent meetings, adaptability, and restrictions;
3) Rethinking recruitment, target population, and role of participants;
4) Cherishing time with Namosoms and Nokoms;
5) Rethinking knowledge sharing, involvement, and role of researchers;

6) Rethinking data generation; and finally
7) Areas that were brought up but remain unaddressed.

Defining the nature of supports and how research is done

The "multipronged strategy for fathers to be" (research proposal, 2019) defined early on in our CAC meetings went through many iterations. More details of this can be found in the appendix. Initially, the CAC's idea was to develop an 8-week program that could be piloted in the summer/fall of 2021, then again in the spring of 2022 (May 5, 2021, meeting minutes). The proposal also included the idea of developing prenatal classes that involved fathers-to-be, which men in Maskwacis had previously mentioned would be helpful to them being the best fathers they could be (Oster, et al., 2018). These plans were changed in part due to ongoing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, difficulties finding meeting times, and prioritization of the implementation over the planning process. Although this was still a need identified in community, there was less enthusiasm by the CAC after COVID-19 lockdowns ended, especially when we had the opportunity to do things outside of the clinic, to develop prenatal classes more inclusive of fathers. This work was instead taken up by Jaden Krause, a nurse at Maskwacis Health Services. Jaden has also been very supportive in connecting the Deadly Dads to partners she connects with at prenatal visits.

Guidance from the CAC changed the approach to supports in the following ways:

- On the topic of on developing recorded resources for fathers to watch, Namosom Rick Lightning shared with me that learning about fatherhood isn't something that can be recorded and put into a video, or scripted, it requires ongoing relationships and learning through "showings" not "teachings" (September 8th, 2021, personal communication). I understand this to be part of intergenerational learning which is a lived process and the need to prioritize in person activities and relationships for our approach.
- Dylan Lightning mentioned several times that the group shouldn't move away from 'hanging out'. The more we do that and focus on planning, without action, the less interest and positive impact we'll have on community (personal communication).
- Namosom Arrol Crier would often mention the importance of building connections so men can learn from each other, saying *we can't give them money, but we can give them advice and support that way* (personal communication).

- Josh Littlechild shared that two things Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak like to do when they get together is talk in Cree and talk about how they are related (February 1st, 2022, meeting minutes). Focusing on ensuring those important aspects are included instead of the details of program planning would allow supports to be adaptable and help us move into action rather than discussion.

This wisdom helped the supports to come into being despite the obstacles related to COVID-19, busy schedules, and being stuck in the planning phase. At the same time, however, there were still misunderstandings and incongruencies between the agendas of CAC members looking to support their community and the agendas of the research. Some of these tensions were highlighted in meeting minutes:

- The sentiment that *if we are going to ask questions, we are going to need to back it up with solutions* was often expressed. In addition, the sentiment that *people are tired of being asked questions* for long-term planning, instead of action, was expressed several times in response to piloting surveys before implementing supports (September 23, 2021, meeting minutes).
- There were discomforts expressed with regard to the potential of using a cultural connectedness survey, which was not developed in community. “Are you measuring how much more [native] we are getting?” (October 19th, 2021, meeting minutes).
- Namosom Rick Lightning pointed out that there is a lot of focus on legitimizing research by detailing all that researchers are giving to community, they often forget to acknowledge what they are getting back (November 3rd, 2021, personal communication).
- After hesitating in meetings to talk about surveys and research, I was given reminders that this is a research project, and that data needs to be generated in some way, shape, or form. This prompted further discussions about research in a meeting (January 11th, 2022, meeting minutes).
- A push to begin focusing more on research occurred on March 28th, 2022 in a CAC meeting. Grant Bruno mentioned that “it is important to understand the power of research and that this project and its funding is an extension of previous work. Each study can build off each other and can have an impact in different institutions if it

keeps up to academic standards of research. We are also showing that community-led interventions work."

The adjustments we made to the research approach are described in the section on 'Rethinking data generation'. As a result of this openness and guidance shared in our CAC meetings, this project became much more about relationships and the effort put in by everyone involved (including researchers) to support fathers, their families, and future generations. This came through in the effort we put into coming together and is evident by the timeline of activities we were able to plan. In contrast to the rigidity CAC members pointed out in other programs that followed more strict agendas, the supports became adaptable, consistent, reliable, and focused on belonging, connection to identity, and participation in ceremony.

The importance consistent meetings, adaptability, and restrictions

Guidance from the CAC pointed to the importance of having consistent and reliable supports. This was mentioned at Namosom Arrol Crier's Warrior-Oskapewis Cultural Camp as a proposed answer to low attendance (August 26, 2021, personal communication). When I first met Sonny Lightning to ask about what the Deadly Dads project was about he also articulated how the process of bringing men together in the community to support one another would be slow and would require long-term commitment (July 2021, personal communication). Finally, in February 2022, regular, open, weekly meetings were scheduled for the 'Deadly Dads support group'.

I understand the delays to acting on this wisdom, which was shared very early on, to be caused by several factors. A significant obstacle was the inability to meet in person due to COVID-19. On top of this, the structure of the research project and lack of control and view of the budget by the CAC was a significant impediment to communication. Due to the budget being held at the university, with little transparency around the availability of funds to the CAC, there were misunderstandings around what was available for honourarium, cultural gifts, and programming. Vague answers around our budget made it seem like we had limitless funding for programming or honourarium for surveys and interviews, but cheap for when it came to cultural gifts for ceremony or the contributions of the CAC. On top of this, my inability to delegate work, lack of knowledge about the work done before I joined, and understanding of how things function at the university made me an ineffective communicator between the CAC and my supervisors and research team. Some improvements to this were made through increased transparency and we were able to move forward with better understandings of what was possible

for these supports. This also led me to further investigate my role in communicating between the university and community, which I return to in the discussion.

Rethinking recruitment, target population, and role of participants

As with the importance of consistency, the central philosophy of the group was to allow it to be open to whoever was interested. This came through in discussions around surveys and allowing those who did not want to take part in the research to be part of the group. As predicted by many CAC members, group members would have no problem with being involved with the research once they understood the intentions and had a relationship with the group.

The importance of openness also came through at community events, such as the Children's Day Walk Through at the Howard Buffalo Memorial Center in Maskwacis where a dad asked Late Mosom Arrol if he would be able to join even though he's not from Maskwacis. Late Arrol responded with a yes, emphasising the importance of not turning anyone away (Nov 19 2021, personal communication). I now understand this also to be an important aspect of the supports that has facilitated knowledge sharing. This additionally comes through later in our second Wisdom Circle.

This openness applies to ages as well. There were men of all ages and life stages welcomed to the group. However, there was important nuance and balance to note about these conversations. Some group members mentioned the importance of balancing intergenerational knowledge sharing with opportunities to get out with younger men who were able to participate in more physically demanding activities such as sports and hunting. From this view, while it was central, and important, to involve Mosoms it was also important not to rely on them to be there every time the group got together (Dylan Lightning, personal communication). For example, it would be unfair to ask them to participate every time we went paintballing or played floor hockey games.

Cherishing time with Namosoms and Nokoms

The generosity of Namosoms and Nokoms in the development of these supports cannot be understated. Their commitment to supporting their community and passing down their knowledge is a key reason these supports came into existence. Mosom Dennis Okeymow and Mosom Arrol Crier were both heavily involved in this project when they passed on. I did not have the honour of meeting Dennis, but Mosom Arrol Crier showed me how to be generous by example.

The reciprocation of this generosity by the university[20] in these partnerships, as I will expand on in the discussion, is still unresolved. These issues surface when cancelling CAC meetings where Mosoms and Kokoms are invited, which in turns cancels honorarium they may have anticipated. Although, missing honourarium is just a symptom of deeper structural and systemic issues. The degree to which Mosoms and Kokoms are treated as equal to principal investigators, grant holders, and graduate students outside of our circles is also debatable. The importance of equal partnerships that transform institutions is something Namosom Rick Lightning and Richard Oster have written about elsewhere (Oster & Lightning, 2022). However, this dynamic remains evident through the juxtaposition of the environment created within our CAC and support group meetings, in Maskwacis, as compared to the environment of the university where funding protocols are determined and decisions are approved (Sep 23 2021; Oct 19 2021; Dec 2021, meeting minutes and personal conversations).

Rethinking knowledge sharing, involvement, role of researchers

When it came time to talk more seriously about knowledge sharing, my understanding of my own role in this project had shifted. I learned that 'participants' in the group were more experienced and knowledgeable than me, and I acknowledged myself as an equal participant in these supports and in ceremony. Researchers were participants and participants were researchers. Certain realities remained that distinguished our roles, I was not from Maskwacis, I was not a father, I had responsibilities to the university, I was receiving a stipend to conduct research, and the effort participants were contributing often went uncredited and unpaid. While ironically my introduction to the group was brought about through these distinctions or in other words credentials, these credentials have in many ways lost their meaning. In other words, why was I leading the project when I was the least experienced member of the group?

The important distortion of these roles was further brought about by the ways knowledge was shared throughout this project. Mosom Rick Lightning and Cliff Potts championed the group in

[20] When I critique "the university" and "funders" I am referring to the institutions of research and academia perpetuating hierarchies, inequities, and the marginalization of non-Western knowledge systems and ways of being. It is my position throughout this thesis that partnerships, including our own, involving "the university" and "funders" will have lingering hierarchies that need to be identified and addressed. I see our purpose as human beings in solidarity to challenge and leverage these institutions and our roles within them to better serve community. I do my best to acknowledge the tireless effort and good intentions of everyone involved in our partnership, and to honour everyone as human beings, but I refrain from crediting progress to Western institutions and from providing justification for the hierarchies and inequities that still linger.

the community to gain support for the activities we planned. Members such as Tyrone Lightning and Kacey Yellowbird also helped spread awareness of these supports to Chief and Council that led to additional funding available for our Jasper Family Camp and Round Dance in 2022. Jerry Young, Sonny Lightning, and Dylan Lighting led a knowledge sharing booth at an International Indigenous DOHaD Gathering in Vancouver in August of 2022, guided by Mosom Rick Lightning. I helped present as well and was learning from watching them share knowledge in these spaces. Dylan and I also presented at an interagency meeting in Wetaskiwin put on by a community organization called Early Years to share about the supports that were developed for the Deadly Dads in September 2022. In October 2022, Mosom Rick Lightning, Sonny Lightning, and Dylan Lightning also presented on a National Webinar for engaging young men and boys put on by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. What further, was the role of the outside researcher if the group was also leading the knowledge sharing?

Rethinking data generation

Data was generated in many ways including meeting minutes, journal entries, and photos. Previously after the hesitance around collecting surveys, Grant Bruno suggested and subsequently led a Wisdom Circle for our group to gather data (June 1 2022, meeting minutes). However, upon searching for ways to wrap up the data generation for this project I spoke with Jerry Young and Namosom Cliff Potts about our approach. In separate conversations Jerry and Mosom Cliff helped me understand a more balanced framing for how knowledge was being handled in this project. Namosom Cliff Potts mentioned how what we are doing in our Wisdom Circles was more akin to sharing knowledge rather than data generation.

To further see this progression, as you read the next sections notice the differences between how the knowledge from the Wisdom Circles are shared. In the first one it was anonymous, and responses were used indirectly to answer our larger research question. In the second circle, we introduced ourselves as knowledge sharers and everyone was “in on” answering the research question.

I, perhaps over ambitiously, proposed the idea of treating everyone as co-authors to Jerry and he described it as a more balanced approach and agreed we should try. Regretfully, at the time of writing, this has not yet come to fruition as there has been many obstacles around my own time in getting this process started and my ability to balance writing with my commitments to planning/showing up for weekly meetings, and aiding in the transition of these supports to

something sustainable. Because research is no longer the focus of our gatherings, it is also difficult and time consuming to get enough input from everyone to co-author a publication. Nonetheless, as I find time to write and present this work as part of my master's thesis, I do my best to acknowledge and honour that the Deadly Dads themselves are capable and exemplary in sharing the knowledge of the supports they developed. Upon completion of this thesis, I will also offer my time to help facilitate this proposed co-authored publication if there is still interest. I remain committed to supporting the group as well outside of research.

Still unaddressed

Despite all the knowledge shared and the adaptations made to this research project, there were still many aspects that needed attention or remain unaddressed. This includes the need for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, or workshops and education for the support group to learn ASL that would enhance access and connection to hearing-impaired fathers and families. This was indicated several times, including at Horse Therapy (June 5, 2022), and at the Jasper Family Camp (July 22, 2022).

The process of the research cycle including the application process for grant funding and how funds are held, accessed, and accounted for requires further attention and transparency to communities. There are several academics and researchers in Maskwacis and existing Nêhiyaw knowledge systems that support rigorous research. Workshops to support funding applications have been informally identified as useful and would require further action around holding funding in community. Lastly, discussions around long-term sustainability of these supports remain unresolved. This will be elaborated on in the final section of the results.

Summary

As demonstrated in this section, deeper understandings of our work together were necessarily developed through our extensive time together. We relied on the generosity of everyone involved, both community members and outside researchers, to highlight, confront, and further describe institutional inequities. Although we were unable to address everything, engaging with this knowledge allows us to move forward in a better way. Furthermore, as our relationships grew, so did our adaptability in developing these supports.

3.2 First Wisdom Circle: Knowledge of context and getting together in healthy ways

This section represents the knowledge shared in our first Wisdom Circle that contributed to our second objective to understanding the context in community and how Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak can

get together in healthy ways. I have re-organized and condensed the transcript to highlight the powerful messages shared. It is impossible to summarize all the knowledge shared in this nearly two-hour conversation, but my hope is that my representation of this circle honours all the speakers.

Wisdom Circle: June 1st, 2022

After a year of meetings and getting to know each other, having just hosted a Round Dance for the community, and with COVID-19 restrictions recently being lifted, this was a good time to share our understandings of the purpose of this group and how this could support the wellbeing of men, their families, the community, and future generations. Much of the knowledge had already been shared, informally. However, this was our first recorded and transcribed Wisdom Circle. When everyone was ready, we gathered in a circle on Mosom Rick's porch. Grant Bruno started a smudge. Since I was the helper, I smudged myself first, then walked around to share with everyone in the circle.

The purpose of this Wisdom Circle was to understand the context in community, what brought people to the group, what made them Deadly Dads, and to share knowledge about how Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak can gather in healthy ways that promote wellbeing. There were nine people part of the Wisdom Circle, including myself as both a participant in the Deadly Dads and a student researcher, Grant Bruno as a participant and facilitator, and Mosoms Cliff Potts and Rick Lightning as both participants and guiding Mosoms. At this time, we had not yet discussed the idea of everyone being knowledge sharers and the research framework was in ongoing development. Therefore, everyone remains anonymous.

The information shared in the first round was very vulnerable. There was sharing about trauma from childhood, difficulties with addictions, and how becoming a father was a significant part of changing the trajectory of peoples' lives and the challenges that come with this. One person shared,

"For me, it was like, I always knew I wanted to be a really good father. So once my son came, I like stopped drinking. But the problem with that was like, I sobered up, but I didn't know how to. I didn't know how to like function, or like, function like socially, emotionally, like without the alcohol in my life. And it's been an ongoing process even now, even now that we have our second baby. And I'm in school finally and my wife's gonna be finishing school. Yeah, and that's kind of where I'm at. And… I feel like I'm

behind sometimes when it comes to like education. Because like my brother… has his master's, my sister has a degree. But… I do find that, I spent a lot of my 30s like learning how to hunt. And I got really, really good at it. And one of these last meetings I went to [with another group], I kind of like thought, hola, like, I looked at all these guys, they're all like, they all had their education… Every single one of them but, but none of them… none of them knew like how to hunt, or, like anything like that. And I kind of understand now why, like, why my life went like that... Like had my child you know, we spent our time… just finding jobs and you know, just barely getting by. And I realized now that you know… there's a certain path that I needed to take."

A Deadly Mosom reaffirmed the sentiment that everyone is on their own journey when it comes to being a father. We can support one another, but there are no plans that can be provided because everyone's life is different. What's important is going about it in a good way.

"So sometimes there's so many things in our lives we can't control when we're on this, on this boat ride... with no paddles (laughter). And so, we just got to ride that river of life. With our children, there's no book that tells you how to be a dad. There's no book that tells you how to be a mosom [grandfather], or a câpân [great grandfather], you got to figure it out as you go along. So that's what I learned about being a dad is there's no right answers. You just got to figure it out. But you got to do it… if you do it, do it from your heart. So whatever happens to you, it's from your heart."

This understanding has shaped the group-centred nature of how we operate and ongoing adaptations to meetings have been integral to how we plan our supports. This aligns with the nature of being a father and needing to adapt to whatever happens way that keep you connected to culture and operating from the heart. Another Deadly Dad elaborated on the importance of family and how even when unexpected things can happen in life, time doesn't stop.

"Like I did things right, you know, all these things were working out perfect. And that's one of the things where I say, life can rock you pretty quick, and you know, if you're not stable, and most of the times, nobody really is stable when it happens. But

when that happened, and my marriage ended, you know, there's a lot more details to it. But when it happened, I didn't know what to do. Because, you know, I only based my life on what was going on at that moment. So, I had my sons, had a family, I had a wife, I had a good life. I was teaching… I was running youth groups, you know, I was playing sports, I hung out with all my friends in the city. And then I kept in touch with my family. So life was good… then within a couple years, I had to get used to the new life I had, which was I was on my own. And I had my boys. So, we came here [back to Maskwacis]. And that's when we moved in. And I took care of my sons. You know, my family was there to help me raise my boys as well. But I had to get used to that. Because at that moment, there was a lot of emotions that were coming into play. Like, you know, I wanted my family back, I wanted that life I had back. But just in that split second, that life I had was no longer. It wasn't there anymore."

The context here, that not every person who is taking care of children or in a father role is "the father", or that sometimes fathers are without their kids and need support, demonstrates the importance of having an open door and welcoming everyone. Being able to come together and share with other fathers, through a variety of activities and settings, about looking ahead and doing things for your children's future is important. This Deadly Dad continued sharing,

"So this year, my biggest thing that I had to work through is living a life without my boys. Because our lives get complicated, you know, a life doesn't stop. Even if you want it to stop, it doesn't stop. So for me, I had to keep living my life. And so this year, like, I was living with my brother in Edmonton, I was, we were doing construction jobs. You know, this past winter, I was a foreman on a company, but I was, I don't know, I was a fucked up foreman, like, I was good at my job. But my mentality was fucked up, because I drank every day I could, I didn't want to function. And live life sober. I wanted to just drown everything out… But at the same time… I wanted to deal with these problems. Because … if my sons ever ended up in those situations, I could help them out and say like, you know, this is what I did when this happened. Like, even if it meant that I was stuck in these addictions, at least I didn't lose myself… There's times where being a

Deadly Dad, you kind of that's kind of really the only thing that saves you in your life. So for me, I'm thankful that I have my family. I'm thankful that I have my boys."

Identifying with being a 'Deadly Dad' or wanting to be a 'Deadly Dad' was something shared amongst the group as a reason for coming together. This is an identity that is a source of motivation. Another Deadly Dad shared,

"And I became a part of this group mainly because I want to be a Deadly Dad… So, I went to AA … Alcoholics Anonymous. And after the first session, I said, this is not for me. I'm not coming back. So the next session I went, I was going specifically to tell them I'm not going back. Anyways, at that time, I don't know if AA is still the same, but at that time, you had to get up in front of a group of people. And you have to introduce yourself. And you have to say, I'm an alcoholic. On the second day that I went back to them, I got up and I said that I wasn't… going to be part of this group, not coming back again. Because I said, you know, when I have to get up in front of all these people here and say my name is [name], I'm an alcoholic. I said that does not do me any good. I said, all you're doing when you're doing that is you're reinforcing your mind that you're an alcoholic."

This resonated with other discussions we had about being a group that people wanted to show up to. Elsewhere, Dylan Lightning also referred to it as 'breaking the cool barrier'. Another important reason expressed for joining the group was the desire to be a better example for your children. Many dads are dealing with things from their pasts that they don't want to pass on to their children. Dylan also explained that what we are doing in this group is helping fathers break cycles, that's the responsibility all of us have to our children. Having opportunities to learn your cultural roots is an important part of breaking these cycles. Trying to cope in unhealthy ways does not allow you to be who you really are. One Deadly Dad elaborated on the importance of supporting one another in being who they truly are in healthy ways,

"What made me want to be a dad was my late brother… had two kids and ugh one day he was playing with them and I seen how happy he was. And I wanted to be that

happy. I wanted that experience. And I was 19 when I had my kid. But, before that ugh let's see, I buried a lot of people in my life when I was 16 [my late friend] passed away, that was my best friend and I took it kind of hard I did try to commit suicide and I was hanging, you know, I died for a bit, I think. They did revive me. But that being said, I didn't want to do it. I wouldn't do it if I was sober hey. So, I think that a lot of people would… say that, but they can't, you know, cause they actually done it when they were drinking. So, I could say for a fact that they never wanted to kill themselves if they were sober… I tried my best to be a good person, but I'm not you know, perfect. I'm still learning. My kids don't drink, they don't smoke weed, they probably use me as an example (laughter). But I'm really grateful [that] they have an option to do whatever but they're making the correct choices. And they work, so I'm really thankful for everything. And like I said, I've buried a lot of people but what keeps me going is. When I buried my brother I read in the Bible that you'll see him again, so. That's what keeps me going when I think of... people that I miss. And I'm just, I don't know. I'm just grateful for life, I just want to keep learning my cultural roots. And make my kids proud. And like I said, I can say more, but like I said, we always have the future."

Namosoms and Nokoms often express the importance of having a belief system, no matter which way you pray. This is important and many men don't have anywhere to go while trying to break these cycles and going through challenging transitions in their lives. Especially during the major transition of becoming a father. One Deadly Dad hoped that, by being part of this group, he could help provide this space to other men going through similar struggles,

"But, and that's the other thing is going through these transitions through your life, and dealing with those things. Had there have been more supports [like] this kind of support we're offering, you know... Those are the things that would be nice for fathers-to-be or fathers-that-are, a place to come to, right? So, coming into this program I was really into it. I'm still very involved, I still want to remain involved as well. And I want to continue the cultural aspect of everything. It's always been a part of my life. Like it's never been an on and off switch. It's always a part of me every day. And uh, that's what our family is about. Having that connection, keeping that connection, and even just

being around family. That's that connection. I always come back here to the mothership, as I like to say, and I just like to get reconnected every once in a while. You know like, I live in the city. There's times where I'll be in the city and it's just I'll get lost a little bit and once I come back home. That's it. Even just being home. Feeling connected... It centers me again."

Despite the challenges and cycles that need to be broken, there's a lot of hope that comes from culture, intergenerational knowledge sharing, language, and ceremony. One Deadly Dad expressed the ability of coming together in this way, through a support group, helps nurture and foster this hope. He notes that having a specific group for men is important, and also having connections and ways for men to find answers for their daughters is important too. He shares about the impacts this group can have on the children and families of those involved,

"It feels good. Because there's an avenue there now where [my children are] freely asking questions… More than anything else about culture, they want to learn about culture, they both want to learn the language. And none of that would have happened had I stayed on the other side of the road. I might not even still have kids. But the healing part. It's… you hear it all the time. You know. It's amazing what children see. What kids see when they're growing up, even when they're tiny little just starting to walk around the things that they pick up from you. From your parents, from their parents. And I'm happy where I'm at right now with my relationship… with my children. Because I've told them both. It doesn't matter what it is that you want to learn. If I can't give you the answer, I will get you to somebody that will give you an answer. And that goes more… more I guess because I have a daughter. And you can't there's no way you can raise a son and daughter the same in our culture. It just it doesn'... that, it can't happen. There's ceremonies for young women and there's ceremonies, passages of rites for young men as well. But I'm happy. They're both tickled I guess I'll say when they heard I was becoming a part of this group because I told them what this group does."

Another dad continued, elaborating on how he has witnessed intergenerational cycles being broken.

"I think one of the things that makes me really proud as a dad is that like when you grow up in Maskwacis... Like, it's something that we like grew up with here to make us feel like we're not deserving… Something inside of us that makes us feel like we don't deserve it and we sabotage, hey? So when you grow up here, it's like, you have a hard time picturing… Well, I find I have a hard time picturing even now as a grown man, I have a hard time picturing myself like winning pool tournaments or enjoying things. But one of the things that I'm really proud of is my son, he like I get to see the product of him growing up, like good. Like growing up without like alcohol in the house or you know, predators, sexual predators, and just all those things… that affected us when we were young. And… I'll start with like a little, just a little story about him. This one time we went to Vegas and he got this cool little water bottle and it was glass. And he was showing it off at school, hey, and this kid after school like kicked it in and it broke and it really got him angry. And I told him, son, you know like, watch we'll get you another one. But… I could see that like, intergenerational stuff. Because he didn't believe me. He didn't believe me when I told him that. And you can only get them in Vegas. Later on that year, we went to Disneyland and we stopped right outside of Vegas at that Casino. And we just went there in the morning grabbing a coffee and he's like, 'Hey, Dad, can I get this'? And it was the same water bottle and I told him 'Yeah', and I was like, 'see son I told you… you can get it. You like have a chance to buy it again.' And I saw it, I saw his head like work like his mind like he paused and I could see his mind working and it's cool to see that. It's cool to see that in our kids man. Because later on like about a year later my son was saying stuff like, he's like, 'dad I think I want to live in Los Angeles for a few years' and he's like 'I think I'll check out New Zealand like my cousin' and shit man like when I was his age I was trying to like survive to the next day man. Like it was so cool to hear him already thinking real far away outside of Maskwacis…That's what I'm really proud of."

Having Mosoms and Câpân as part of the group also helps us to reflect on the long-term commitment of being a father, and the transition to being a Mosom, and then a Câpân. These traditional ways of bringing up children are shared by coming together.

“One thing that's interesting when you become a dad, but then you also become a grandfather and then you have ohpikihawanek (grandchild you bring up) when you start bringing up your grandkids, you guys are all still young… Like my ohpikihawanek, he's been with me since he was little... He knows he's safe.”

One aspect of being a dad that is shared is the responsibilities to protect and provide for your families. Late Mosom Arrol Crier spoke of *knowing how to live with your red hand and your white hand*. This is a lesson that has also shaped the development of our supports. We've discussed informally how a lot of supports don't continue due to underfunding, even though the knowledge is there, the will is there, and the hope is there, it doesn't always translate to having the means to support families. A Deadly Mosom here shares of the reality of work and the reality of money and needing money to provide for your family,

“And so our kids are a reflection of us. As young parents you guys are all young. Your kids reflect you… whatever you do they reflect. Good or bad and but as parents, like you gotta, these guys are finally realizing since they were babies we've been taking them to Ontario every year for two months. It was 10 months I worked my ass off. So I could have holidays to go take them there. And so I had the money to take them there and bring them home. It costs money to have kids. But it also costs money. It's gonna cost you money to have kids but it's going to be the either positive or negative. You're going to be paying for lawyers, or you're going to be paying for them to be good at whatever they do. There's no other way about it. It's down the middle, one or the other. And that's something I learned as a parent. I'm proud of my boys. They're… I'm proud of all my girls, my kids. They all had struggles, but the thing is, one of the things we've tried to maintain was to let them lead, let them to walk on their own feet.”

This leads to another aspect that would frame these supports. They are not meant to create dependence, everyone goes home with new knowledge that they then apply in their own lives. Although we do our best to create opportunities for certain experiences some dads might not be

able to afford, there are lessons of the individual responsibilities that come with being a father. A Deadly Mosom continues here,

"But one thing the last thing I'll leave with you guys is no expectations. If you have expectations, you're gonna have disappointments. Just go with the flow and work hard don't depend on nobody but yourself. That's what I meant by expectations. If you do it by yourself, you fail because of yourself or you succeed because of yourself. There's just no other way around it."

Another Deadly Dad elaborates on this point, explaining that breaking these cycles can be the toughest responsibility of Nêhiyaw fathers, but that colonial institutions cannot be depended on for this to happen,

"… you know like that intergenerational stuff, you know… It's really hard like with our generation because of that stuff that really messed up our people. And it's like, with some of us it has to end with us, and we take it to our graves and we try to do our best not to pass it along to our kids. It's freaking hard man, super hard. That's what I tell people because we don't have like the money, we don't have like the oil money, you know, everything's hard, everything's harder now. Holy smokes, even just having one extra kid man, everything is just- need a bigger vehicle, more food. Sucks man. Pretty soon, because you know what, like, like, things aren't always gonna be like this man. Like, they're going to try and take everything from us our rights, everything. So, it's going to come a day when we're not going to be able to depend on the reserves. And we've got to, we got to figure our stuff out. That's what I tell people. It's the hardest thing man is ending like that intergenerational trauma, and having it die with us in the grave and not letting it live on. It's like, it's like the toughest thing about our generation."

Despite these huge responsibilities, there is a lot of hope that comes from being fathers and from the community. To end the Wisdom Circle, we went around sharing the gift of being a father and everyone's favourite part of being a dad. One Deadly Dad shared the feeling of being loved by their children,

“It's when the kid can look at you with love in their eyes and smile, and say I love you. That is the gift of being a true father. Like that, that right there. You know, I'm just so moved, every time that happens. I always show my love for my kids. I'm not afraid to, even my son. I don't care. They're only gonna be so small for so long. And I'm really happy to have them in my life and to still see them.”

Another dad explains the positive role models he’s had and how they’ve helped confront Western or “TV” concepts of being a man, of patriarchy, and of homophobia. The complexities and spectrum of masculinity and sexuality were not further discussed. However, moving past stigmas of men expressing love, stemming from Western ways of thinking, made space for the expression of love between men, fathers, and their kids.

“But one thing that was a gift, and we talk about trauma, from the past and everything, but I had an uncle who, you know, is a big part of my life. But he passed on four or five years ago. But every time I'd see him, when I was a young buck, I was like, 21, 20, he'd always picked me up and I’d be his helper, and we'd go cut grass all summer. But every time I hung out with him, he'd always give me a hug. And he said, I love you. And I remember the first couple of times, I was like ooh, you're gay. I'd always say shit like that. Because, you know, at the time when people say stuff, like in your mind, you're like, ‘he’s just being gay’. But then I didn't realize that, at that time, what he was actually saying. So, when my boys are born, it wasn't like a mission, or something that I wanted to make happen. But every day, I would always say, I love you. I love you. I'd say like, I'd probably say it to them like 30 times a day. And I'd always give hugs, kisses. I reassured my sons that, you know, they're safe, they're loved. So they- it paid off, because in this house you'd hear, they'd say it to everybody, I love you mosom, I love you kokom. Love you, uncle. So that was one of the things when all the craziness happened. I always think about that, you know, like, I tell them that every day I love them, I love them. I love them.”

Another dad echoed this sentiment,

“I really truly just enjoy hanging out with my children. They’re like my best friends. The things we talked about you know like you said like learning how to say I love you something I've had to learn how to do because you kind of you're scared right because you're like you know am I gonna get judged you know, the bros gonna say that I'm girly or whatever else and now I've just learned like I don't care what other people think I need to do what's best for me and my family. What's best for me and family includes saying I love you and hugging and showing affection.”

Getting together to talk about love opens up these experiences to others. These are lessons that come from fatherhood and can be shared by fathers. This spirit forms the basis of how our supports came to be. These discussions can happen spontaneously and are not always recorded. They can happen in preparation for ceremony, while playing sports, while having dinners, and while on road trips.

Having men at different stages in their lives and seeing other fathers interact with their children is another important aspect of these supports. This planted a seed for how we would go about planning our activities. Listening to these experiences is both uplifting and creates a sense of belonging. Each story shared in our group, whether in a circle or informally during activities, feeds off each other. This is how learning happens in these supports. We relied on this knowledge, experiences, and spirit brought to the group by each person involved in our approach to fulfill the Deadly Dads purpose of fostering belonging, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and growing the inner spirit of Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak to support families and future generations. The following stories show some of the many strengths and spirit brought to the group by each father with their families behind them.

“So far I feel like my favorite thing, about being a dad is like seeing when my son’s real happy. And my other son’s just a baby right now. So just easy to play with and he's happy all the time. Well most of the time he’s happy. Just not when he’s tired or hungry. But I think like one of the best things was sharing Marvel, sharing Marvel with my son’s pretty cool man. Since the beginning, like Ironman all the way to Avengers endgame, sharing all the superhero stuff with them. And sharing hunting. He shot like probably like

about three or four bucks and two moose so far. And he just does it like no problem. Like, when I first started, I was like flinching when I'd shoot. But with him it's just like, straight up, like, watching where the bullet goes. Like he just, freaks me out (laughter). But yeah, just seeing him real happy."

"They're both the best, but they just have their different qualities. But my oldest one, he's insane. You know, just, the things he does. It's, it just surprises you. And he teaches his brother, he teaches me, you know, that's the best thing that I'm thankful for. And they gave me strength. You know, that's one of the things that when I see them succeed in life, like, you know, they're doing well in school right now they're playing sports, they're, you know, they just love life. You know, that's one of the things that brings joy to me and gives me that strength…You know, and that's- for me, that's one of the things that I think is amazing."

"You know, just like they said. What makes you proud is seeing them graduate kindergarten, joining school grade 1, graduating- that was probably one of my proudest moments to see them achieve things. And knowing that I'm going to see them achieve more makes me proud to and just know that I'm going to be there with them for as long as I breath, you know? I think that makes me proud. Just being there."

"I, so, becoming sober was the… one of the driving factors for me doing that was my children. And so my daughter she kind of unfortunately, I feel really bad but she saw quite a bit of- well not like too, too much. But I mean, I just didn't like the fact that I put myself in a position where … I was drinking and stuff like that. But, a lot of it was I wanted her to see that I could get over that. And then um, become a stable parent to become someone that you can depend on and that was one of the benefits with that. And I'm truly grateful for that. Seeing her grow up and you know into the woman she is now like it's crazy they grew up so fast, like in a blink of an eye like it's um… she was literally just two years old you know, like a little Dora haircut and wearing her swim goggles little backpack, you know, and now she's in grade seven finishing grade seven this year. And it's eye opening and I'm glad I can do that for her and my son all he's

seen now is like just the positive side of me, you know, that's my daughter she's seen the negative and now she's seen the positive and I'm glad I can provide that for them and be there for them."

Summary

In reading the previous section, readers will pull different insights and have different thoughts, as each of us who participated in the circle had. These thoughts are additionally shaped by my effort to condense this wisdom to highlight key aspects of the context, knowledge, and spirit going into the development of the Deadly Dads supports. What I was attempting to highlight, while honouring the contributions of everyone who shared, included:

- The vulnerability gifted to the group by everyone involved;
- The reality that everyone is on their own journey and there are several different contexts to being a father or in that role;
- How including people at different stages of life has facilitated deep learning and intergenerational knowledge sharing within our group;
- Dads experiencing a sense of responsibility for breaking cycles and ending intergenerational trauma for the benefit of the next generation;
- Challenges of navigating work and society;
- The stigmas around expressing love being broken;
- The value of having healthy ways of coping and connecting to cultural roots; and
- The strengths, spirit, and hope that many men in Maskwacis bring to their families.

By having fathers-that-are, and fathers-to-be, or uncles, and mosoms, all together talking about these experiences, in various settings, these supports thrive. We acknowledge that everyone has gifts they bring to our group. This is how the Deadly Dads came to function, by recognizing each person's gift and working together to create opportunities to connect people and create positive memories. While we recognize the reality of needing to work and adapt to society, the truth remains that knowledge for these supports come from the fathers themselves, connection to language, culture, and ceremonies being passed down.

3.3 Second Wisdom Circle: Growing understandings of impacts

This section represents the knowledge shared in our second Wisdom Circle about our third objective to understand the impacts of the supports we developed together. Before this Wisdom

Circle, we talked about the idea of being co-researchers, and co-knowledge sharers, and I asked everyone if I could include their names and introductions. Here the knowledge sharers are introduced along with their knowledge.

Wisdom Circle: November 17th, 2022

To evaluate the impacts of our support group, we gathered to do a second Wisdom Circle on November 17th, 2022. By this time, we had experienced four seasons of being able to fully implement supports without COVID-19 restrictions, and with better understandings of our work together. Our funding had been spent, and we were in an awkward transition phase where a lot of momentum from the supports was created, but lots of uncertainty as to how they would be continued. Although 'sustainability' had been a recurring topic in our meetings and purpose of the research, nothing guaranteed had yet been lined up. There were potential partnerships available, both from a community organization based in Ermineksin and with the MCFW group who has just received part of a 6 year I-HELTI grant which promotes a new way of doing research (Betkowski, 2023). However, there was uncertainty within the group about whether these partnerships would maintain the dynamic and momentum that was established over the past spring and fall.

It was difficult to move forward because the Deadly Dads emerged from a space where the group-led decisions became the norm. However, this existed in the bubble of our research partnership. The group itself was not its own entity able to receive funding and began discussing its reliance on partnerships. There were options to continue under a research partnership, but there was uncertainty around what could be considered 'research' and how much of the supports could be funded under this understanding of 'research'. Likewise, the research partnership supported our efforts to diversify these avenues of support.

After our Tea Dance on October 6th, 2022, despite not having funding, we decided to continue to gather to learn songs and play floor hockey whenever we could book gym time at the Jim Rattlesnake Recreation Building. Otherwise, we would gather at Mosom Rick's house for a meal and check-ins. The Lightning family donated their dining room space, the Eagle boys shared songs, and other members donated their time, knowledge, and effort to coming together. This was the context through which we entered this second Wisdom Circle.

The knowledge sharers

Many of the knowledge sharers in this Wisdom Circle have become the organizers and directors of the Deadly Dads moving forward. Most of them had heard about the program through word of mouth and were excited to get involved. We started by introducing ourselves. Everyone there had already met and was aware of the research project, which had been ongoing throughout our implementation of the supports. Here I've reorganized the transcript and embedded my analysis to allow the Wisdom Circle to flow in a more readable order, while trying to maintain the words through which the knowledge was shared. We began with introductions.

"I'm Adam. I can start. Because maybe some of you don't know, but I'm from St. Albert. I was born in Camrose. I grew up in Medicine Hat. I was introduced to everyone here as a researcher at first back in July last year. So I'm a student at the U of A that's why [I'm here] doing this research project. And I've been spending time out here for the last year. Yeah, so that's how I joined Deadly Dads."

"Well, I'm Delaney Eagle, senior. I heard [about] this program through word of mouth back in the summer… spring and summertime and my sons took this program and they let me know a little bit about it. So I had to come see what it was all about."

"My name is Bryce Eagle. How I first found out about this program is me and my brother. We joined like in July, and ever since then just been coming to this program, I like it."

"My name is Sonny Lightning, I've been with the Deadly Dad's program for the last couple of years now. It's been interesting seeing it go from the ground up and having a support system that we had, where we are currently, as well as in my life."

"Hi, I'm Rick lightning, I'm a deadly Mosom (laughter). And hopefully down the road we'll get more Deadly Mosoms. When I first seen this start, it started from the kokum and mosom program. In Wetaskiwin, our mosoms weren't showing up to support and I seen our men disappear from ceremonies and everywhere, I never knew where they

were. So we wanted to create this program to have a place for men, and young men, and single parents, and dads with wives and without wives."

"[Name]. This group has been better than what I expected when I first joined back in late June, early July, I believe it was… Yeah, really, really glad that my dad brought this up to me I probably wouldn't have heard about it if he didn't say anything."

"Kenneth Cutarm, but a lot of people know me as Jason… Anyways, come to think of it it'd be my sister, my oldest sister. She told me about this group… she works with the newsletter in Ermineskin so she knows about a lot of events. She told me about this. Came to a meeting and I didn't even know that they were going to the mountains right away (laughter) so I told my son to come along I know he needed some time to think too, pretty sure you enjoyed it and because I know you said you never really been to the mountains. For sure I'll cliff jump this time [(in Jasper we all went cliff jumping at Horse Shoe Lake)]. Head first. (laughter)."

"So my name is Taylor Bull. My introductions to the Deadly Dads was I work with Samson Community Wellness I'm an outreach worker. And when I got in that morning, I had a piece of paper given to me and they said, 'Hey, we want you to connect with this group'. And they said they want me to connect with Deadly Dads and I just remember going 'oos'. I just thought that's a deadly name! I like this already. Looks deadly. Cool. Cool. So, you know, I called the number I got a hold of Adam, he kind of pointed me in direction of the sweat we had here."

It's clear from our introductions that people join the Deadly Dads for various reasons. Some were searching for supports to learn about culture. Others were recommended these supports by family to help find a good environment to think and find belonging. Mosoms invite their sons and fathers invite their fathers. Other community programs recognize the Deadly Dads as existing supports in the community now as well, to collaborate or even for supports for their workers.

Impacts

As a group, we wanted to look at impacts on a deeper level than traditional qualitative methods. We attempt here, to capture the spirit of the impacts everyone has felt, shared with the group, brought home with them, and shared with their families. We've also been discussing these impacts informally throughout our time together. We recognize that these impacts are felt by everyone involved in these supports, in many different ways depending on our involvement and experiences, no matter how we were introduced to the group. Everyone can bring home these impacts in different ways.

***Adam**: "…what I'm getting out of it is I've learned a lot. Like I learned a lot from all you guys. I bring home a lot of questions to my Lolo and Lola (grandparents) [about myself]. That's because—I live with my grandparents… to learn about myself. And it's really cool to have like a group of guys who support each other and, and learn from each other about life and are open to talking about things."*

***Delaney Sr.**: "Having the guys like sort of going through the same thing, we can all talk about it and be open [and] support each other. Because right now we're going through a difficult time in our community. Really tough. Sometimes it's really tough and I find myself crying every now and then. But when I do that I just go and pray and try and meditate a bit helps…"*

***[Name][21]:** "I only went to the camping trip but that was actually a really good time for me because as you are all saying… a lot of people are suffering from something that is, I guess holding them back… or pretty well, just getting them in a dark place and it was really nice to go actually reflecting…and I guess evaluate way things are going. And pretty well just know that I guess it's not the end of the world because I'm not the only one going through it you know? Everybody else goes through it. Just having this group*

[21] Unfortunately, I was unable to contact this person in time for them to give consent for the ethics addendum which allowed people to have their names appear in the published version of this thesis. As per ethics, I was required to remove their names and follow their originally signed consent forms.

as well really helps to get those things out because I was able to relate to a lot of other people too at the camp there."

Figure 1 Deadly Dads Jasper Family Camp, 2022. (Right to left) Kenneth Cutarm and his sons. This photo was taken at the camp [Name] referred to above.

Coming together as a group through a variety of activities are moments that members of the group can reflect on as positive in their lives. These positive moments can carry over into other aspects of their lives and allow them to find success in supporting themselves and their families. Often when reflecting on positive moments we shared as a group, other positive things happening in our lives are also shared.

Bryce: *"And I missed out on the cultural camp. But I got to go paintballing and whatever, bowling… play pool, and we had a tea dance, and I really liked that too. And we played floor hockey. I like that too. And it's like I got a job last week and started*

working again. I'm happy about that. And like, doing this program makes me want to do stuff more like trying to find a job and whatever. And now I just found a job at the schools and like I was working and helping, like being a cook and prep food for breakfast and lunch. And for other students and teachers and everybody in school. I like that. Probably like the best job that I had…

Yeah because we were making a lot of dogs earlier. Really, like putting all the dogs in their buns. And I was passing them to my coworkers earlier and was like here bag em up (laughter). And they were dropping a hotdog every now and then and I was like. That's coming out of your paycheck. (laughter)."

Figure 2 Deadly Dads Hamper and Floor Hockey Event, November 2021. (Right to left) Wynter Lightning, Tyrone Lightning, Sonny Lightning, Warren Redcrow, Mosom Rick Lightning. As promotion for the supports, we had a draw and River Minde won the two tickets to the Oilers vs Hurricanes game.

Figure 3 Deadly Dads Paintball, August 2022. (Left to right) Adam Purificati-Fune, Sonny Lightning, Bryce Eagle, and Delaney Eagle Jr.

Amidst the humour, another insight was shared about the value of redundancy in community supports. It's about creating more opportunities for existing supports that are working well in community. Having supports open to those supporting others in community can help support workers and helpers continue the important work they are doing elsewhere. The same applies to fathers who are supporting their families.

Taylor: *"And you know, for me… I've been trying to do what I do in the community and kind of help you know, oskâpêwis, and I'm finding lately that it's my support, I feel like the support, hey? For the people around me and the people I help and everything... I'm the support, and I will sometimes… I think well who supports me? I have my parents, but I limit those hey? Like my mom, I try not to bother them... And I maybe I let myself suffer more than I should. And, some of the training I'm taking with counseling, having that group, like [Name] said, having that realization that hey, it's not just me, it's not just me, that this is happening to… And I think for me, I think that's what I'm most excited about is having these sharing circles where… I'm not the one who's trying to run it… I can come here and I could just be me and I can share with you guys and we can*

you know, even keel… like we're on the same level. You know we're equal and I think that that's something that I'm missing in my life"

Treating everyone as equal also means recognizing everyone's diversity. That everyone brings different gifts to the table. Whether they are sharing, showing, or listening. Listening too is a gift. We see that the strengths of our supports come from the group itself and growing relationships, not any specific program plans or leadership.

Mosom Rick: *"And that's the word you said that's important, you said, all of us that are here are equal. There's no boss. We all decide equally, we all make decisions together. And that's the cool part. I really liked that. Like, it's not the Rick group, it's your group. It's the Deadly Dads. And that's the cool part. And I think that's really neat. Even Adam came in as the help. He's part of our circle cause he's learning. He's not a dad yet either, he's a dad in the making (laughter)."*

Figure 4 Deadly Dads at Horse Therapy with Mosom Pat and Mason Buffalo, June 2022. (Right to left) Mosom Cliff Potts, Mosom Rick Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Adam Purificati-Fuñe, Grant Bruno, Chad Wolfe, Sonny Lightning, Josh Littlechild, Mason Buffalo.

Mosom Rick *continues: "Everyone here has their own gifts they bring to the table. And we all are equal, but we all have gifts. Everyone brings their gifts to the table. At the camp we all did different things. There's not one person that did it alone… [We didn't*

have a cook then] somebody jumped up. I want to cook! Lucky my grandson wanted to cook. (laughter)"

These impacts extend to those who attend any meeting. This was an important understanding the Deadly Dads had early on while developing these supports, which led to the open-door policy. These impacts can occur through moments of reflection that can have ripple effects throughout your life.

***Mosom Rick**: "And one of the things about Deadly Dads is we're a solution based group of men that come up with… we figure out how to do it. But we don't just say oh, man, we can't do it. Like with [for hunting], we said, 'okay, we need licenses, okay, let's bring the [instructor] in'. Everybody can come in. And … we had a woman come and apply which is good... It's not closed to woman. If we do things and a woman wants to come, we're open. But we know who we are. And… it's not exclusive. You know… it's Four Bands. It's Maskwacis, but it's also other men that live [off] the reserve. It's open to them too. We don't shut it down to this. So, it's a wide-open door policy we have here."*

Advice on how to cope in healthy ways with difficult times are also shared. This is another gift of welcoming everyone to the group, specifically across age groups. Older dads and mosoms can share their experiences with younger men, and younger men can share how this is fitting into their reality today.

***Sonny**: "I went through quite a lot of changes in the last couple of years. At first I wasn't, you know, in the right headspace, but over the years, last couple of years, I just kind of, it helped me kind of center myself as well, and having this as you know, to go to, it helped. So now I'm kind of like, when we first started, I didn't have a job, I was living here, with my parents and then didn't really have no motivation. And then over the years, I just kind of like picked that back up again. Now I've gone to school graduated, and now I have a diploma. And I'm working in the community. And it's been good. And I hope to keep being a part of this program as well and help support others that have*

gone through those transitions, as I have, and it's tough being a father and you know there are those times where it can be difficult."

At the same time as helping people get through tough times, these supports provide a way for men to connect with ceremonies, and get skills they can bring home with them and use in their own lives. This isn't done through strict programming, but through the spirit of coming together which includes laughter and adapting to the priorities of the group. In a separate conversation, Namosom Rick shared with me that the point of these supports are to build relationships that lead to knowledge sharing, that can then be taken home and used in our everyday lives. Not to create dependence on a program. Instead of joining into a program that has pre-made plans, men have the opportunity to make decisions together, and support each others individual development, and growth that is then shared with our families, communities, and passed down to future generations.

***Kenneth**: "I had been looking for this kind of a men's group to do culturally based stuff, learn more. I always need to be retaught, I'm very forgetful (laughter). I always enjoyed our ceremonies and try my best to memorize the songs... And with that I'm just looking forward to more events. The one thing that you guys were talking about Tea dance and singing. I always want to try to learn more cultural stuff. Always prayed that I memorize this stuff, but I know it's an ongoing, never stop, learning…But yeah I'm glad I found this group, its good to relax with the boys. Chat and joke around with each other, which should always be looked at laughter."*

***Mosom Rick**: "Laughter is our key here. Like you said, we just like the laughing tease each other. We never, we never go harsh on anybody we don't talk about anybody. We don't gossip about anybody, we just stay with it. We stay in the present tense, constantly. And that's what's important here. Like if someone's and when we share everybody, if somebody's feeling this, doors-open sharing, you know. It's not like we do circles every time we meet. We try to have fun and if someone needs to talk we're there. We share while we're playing. You know, like when we're bowling, somebody needed to talk to me. And that was cool. And so it's like it's a constant.*

There's a lot of things that'll say, "Thursday night sharing circle". And then all sudden, "next Thursday night sharing" we don't do that. We do that when it's needed… We'll come together [and say] 'does anybody need to'. If we need to do that we can do that. But at the same time we're either bowling or shooting pool or you know, we're having fun. It's that time out for dads. And that's the cool part about this group… it just moves. We don't we're not strict like programs even in the mountains we didn't have an agenda."

Delaney Sr.: *"And I really didn't think anything of it. Then we took a [PAL] course. And me and my son, we joined we got picked and we graduated… We just got to come up with the funds to pay for it, send away for it, still having financial difficulty right now."*

Figure 5 Deadly Dads Delaney Eagle Sr. and Bryce Eagle at Firearm Safety Training, September 2022.

Knowledge sharing is central to everything that we do as a group. Mosom Rick further explains that this time together building, connections and kinship, is important for knowledge

being passed down across generations. Furthermore, its recognized that the positive impacts of these supports come from connecting to identity and culture through ceremony.

***Mosom Rick**: "Everything we do is always… there's a learning part of it. From who we are. Finding ourselves as Nêhiyawak and that's important. Cause a lot of people don't know who they are, they say I'm an Indian or I'm Nêhiyew or Maskwacis, well, what does that really mean? We're finding that out now, like today, I shared the story of the Tea dance and how the history of how it started. And like his, the Eagle boys, their dad carried those songs. And these things this, this comes from [a long time ago], that how long that ceremony's been here. And to carry it on. When their dad died, they carried it on. And then when I die, my sons will carry on our songs and ceremonies. And so it's, it's about moving forward, creating cultural education, awareness, and all this… Nêhiyewin forward for the future for your kids, your kids will learn. Because if we don't start teaching you guys now who's gonna carry it on? And a prime example, with the Eagle boys, their dad taught them and then when he left, they carried on. All of these things that we learn carry on, and you're going to need it in the future. Because that's what the prediction was that it's gonna get hard for Indian people. And the only thing that will save us is our pipe, ospwâkan, our belief in the creator and our ceremonies will carry us through the hard times. Just like how the Tea dance came to…And it saved hundreds of 1000s of lives…*

And like, you know, we we've done sweats… we've done a lot of things, it's pretty amazing things that we have access to and were able to utilize. And we're gonna get to do even more things, we're gonna talk about, like the mountain camp was a huge success. And then and the singing and we're learning how to do tea dance songs, which we know a lot of people didn't know about, we did the ceremony to be able to have the right to learn those. And that's cool. And, you know, eventually I want to see us move to Sundance songs. Everybody learning how to sing Sundance songs. We need that. But then at the same time, I want to see us do other things like we were talking about going to do trail riding in the mountains, that'll be cool, it'll be fun. At the same time, it will be a learning experience."

Figure 6 Wagon ride at Deadly Dads Horse Therapy with Mosom Pat and Mason Buffalo, June 2022. Dylan Lightning, Grant Bruno, and Josh Littlechild in wagon steered by Mosom Cliff Potts.

This way of learning, through experiences and having new experiences, has also been an important feature of our supports. Although sometimes difficult to plan, this spontaneity leads to fond memories and stories that can be shared with others and the younger generations. In a separate conversation, Namosom Rick and Inez Lightning explained to me that creating these opportunities for people to go on adventures works to confront the fear created by the Canadian reservation system. This imposed fear keeps works to keep people stuck and makes it more difficult to imagine and hope for brighter futures. This feeling was referred to by another participant in our first Wisdom Circle. While discussing future plans, Sonny humorously shared a spontaneous trip from his childhood.

***Sonny**: "My dad sent me on a trip when I was twelve. Woke me up one morning said you're going on a trip. What kind of trip? you just… go let's go. Turns out to horseback riding and trail ride seven days in the mountains."*

***Taylor**: "Had to squat in the bush?"*

***Sonny**: "No it wasn't squatting in the bush, they had a toilet. And it overlooked this cliff and the whole valley is there. They said that was the best poop you'll ever have. No door. Literally just a wooden stool with a toilet seat on it. (laughter)"*

As we've learned from experience, other programs in the community, and at conferences attendance is a common challenge. Those who are showing up, however understand the importance of remaining consistent. They also share the knowledge that it will take time and patience for more to show up, but that it is important to continue. This is coupled with a sense of responsibility and reciprocity to the group that extends to those who are not able to show up.

***[Name]**: "I'm not disappointed but sad that [another dad] didn't show up [today]. One of the guys that I really got to know while being at camp. And for, I guess, what I'm… wanting from the group is pretty well like the goal of it to find the men who are supposed to be here. I guess Nêhiyew men in healthy ways not only for myself, but for my own little family and everyone that I care about."*

***Delaney Sr.:** "I'm just trying to get this program out there too. I've been talking to a lot of young men, middle aged men, and older older men telling them about this program and they really like the feedback what I've been trying to get out there what this program is about… Some of them said they're gonna show up but they haven't showed up yet. So, I'll leave it there."*

***Bryce**: "I want to help support you guys too and stuff like that because you guys help and support me… And like my dad was saying.. telling young guys about this program, stuff like that. And hopefully like they try and start to show up."*

***[Name]**: "I have been trying to, as well, let my cousins know about the program… They aren't dads themselves but now that you guys said that you just want anybody to come along, I could pass along that message… Because one of my closest cousins anyways said he was deeply interested in attending. Ya, I'm really glad to be a part of this group."*

***Sonny**: "Having this program will definitely provide that outlet for others to come to. And I just believe in time that we keep doing what we're doing. There will be others who will finally decide to come check us out. And when that happens, we'll be here and we'll be here to you know, welcome them in and you know, be accepting and non-judgmental and we're just gonna keep doing what we're doing and keep moving forward. You know, and nice thing is that we're kind of going over into our own thing now and that's, that's the beauty of it. So moving forward, it's gonna be interesting, but its gonna be a good new light, that's for sure."*

***Mosom Rick:** "And it's okay, there's no shaming. It's like, if you can make it great if you can, it's alright, we're here. We'll be here next Thursday, as long as the consistency that we have created is still there. We know it's Thursdays we know it's gonna be there. And then you know, whether you're having a tough day, we know Thursday's coming… It's a dad's night, to be able to do something instead of sitting around a bar table, drinking beers and complaining about life we're sitting around here talkin about positive things and promoting healthy living, healthy families, mental health all these things that are in there. And people don't see that. And cultural awareness, rights to songs, rights to ceremonies, learning about all these things that are unfortunately lost because of residential school, child welfare, and all of that. Now we're bringing that back."*

Often times, after reflecting on what we've done so far and the positive impacts it's had on our lives, the conversation shifts to how this will be continued, and what we hope for the future. Not only have these supports as the Deadly Dads been going on for years, but they emulate knowledge and practices that have long existed in community, which provides the foundation for

moving forward. Although the university and researchers have played a role in supported this process, the supports themselves come from community.

***Sonny**: "Really I think this could go quite a long time and we're going to need it to go long term in order for like a lot of guys to finally want to come. That's just it, we're facing an uphill battle so to speak, because of this… this mentality that a lot of these guys on this reserve are faced with every day and you know, they're not used to anything like this. This is something new that's totally new to most people right. So, I think we keep doing what we're doing. More and more will be interesting."*

***Mosom Rick**: "And like, you know, what other program has a program in their house? It's like, we talk about land-based teachings, and everything always put in some boardroom or board something. We all know this place. We've been meeting here for a long time. I offered my home, because that's how it was done years ago, people visited in homes, and had meetings in homes. And we didn't have to go somewhere else it was all family oriented…*

We do it on our own. And I really liked that because we don't, we don't make promises we can't keep and I really liked that. And whereas with these other organizations, they make promises and they break them. And that's been going on forever… with different groups. This group, we make a promise we keep it…The mountain trip was tough to get to, but we did it. You know, those are the cool things like the Round Dance, a super success because it was the first Round Dance in this community. After three years of COVID. Everybody, there was all kinds of obstacles but we hung in there, and we waited and we got it. And we did, it was fun…Because we did a sweat, we did ceremony, we did all the things that needed to be done. And then we did it and we had had a lot of drummers come to support us…

Figure 7 Photo from early during the Deadly Dads Round Dance on April 9th, 2022.

Mosom Rick: *Late Arrol and Dennis Okeymow they were part of this. They supported this and that was another important part. We lost Elders that were here that supported this and that's pretty cool. So, we have people that believed in this and gave their last… their last life they had to this organization so that shows you how deep and spiritual this place is. They're still with us…"*

Figure 8 Tipi put up at Late Mosom Arrol Crier's Warrior-Oskapewis Cultural Camp our first planned support for the project, August 2021.

At the end of this knowledge sharing circle, the group decided to incorporate as a non-profit society. Discussions to do this had been happening over the weeks prior to meeting and continued for weeks after. To finish the circle, we elected five directors to list on the application and continued the next steps to figuring out how to continue these supports. The potential of the group, from the gifts and support it received from community, even the significance of the name of the group was highlighted and the meeting ended on a note of hope and direction for the future.

Summary

When speaking about the impacts of the Deadly Dads supports, we shared how we were introduced to the project, and became part of these relationships. It was clear that everyone had experienced impacts in different ways, and likely that those who were not part of this Wisdom Circle would have other experiences to share. As with the previous Wisdom Circle, I attempted to represent the transcript above within this space while honouring all the knowledge that was shared, but recognizing that not everything would fit. By representing and organizing the transcript I attempted to show key lessons that I found important to demonstrating the impacts of the Deadly Dads have had over the past few years. Some of these key lessons included:

- There was an abundance of knowledge and diversity of experiences shared within the group;
- A sense of belonging was fostered, and relationships were built as our understandings of how we were connected grew;
- Connections and relationships within the group were created that had impacts on motivation, inspiration we each brought home in different ways. These relationships also exist and are sustained in many ways beyond the Deadly Dads;
- It was not mandatory, nor expected, that everyone attend every meeting or activity, our open-door policy and consistency had positive impacts on people's feelings of belonging and feeling supported despite obstacles they were facing;
- Humour was important not only as an aspect of the supports, but also while sharing knowledge, and lifted spirits and brought us together.

- Fostering belonging and connections with existing supports in community supported an interdependence that benefits community. There was value expressed in a redundancy of community supports;
- Being group-led highlighted the many different gifts people brought to the group and a sense of everyone being equal. This fostered a sense of ownership, responsibility, and reciprocity towards the supports and the group effort;
- The creativity, commitment, and spirit gifted to the group by everyone involved created a sense of being able to make promises that could be kept and to follow through on plans;
- Connecting to culture by becoming connected to others in community seeking similar answers, or who have rights to certain knowledge and ceremonies, was central and minimized dependence on program plans. Focusing on relationships that could foster connection to culture, rather than the details of our activities, facilitated adaptability; and
- Understanding the effort others have put into these supports, including late Mosoms who passed and prayed for the group and the community, fostered a sense of commitment and hope for supports and efforts like these to continue.

3.4 Deeper look at sustainability: Re-understanding our roles

"Real in the Eyes of the Great White Father"

This section outlines some reflections on sustainability and insights shared about how we should work together in the future. This is an attempt to re-share some of the knowledge that went beyond our main research question, and touches on imaginations of the future that were shared throughout our time together. This also led to an emerging objective to re-understand the roles of partners in supporting culturally-centered, community-led initiatives in the context of the Deadly Dads.

Reflections

As evidenced by our meeting minutes, there was an understanding that research funding was finite from the beginning of the project and not an ongoing solution to program sustainability, but the hope was that research would help find additional avenues to continuing these supports (March 28th, 2022, meeting minutes). Early in October 2022, with support from our partnership, we began seriously thinking of ways of moving forward. There was a limited amount of cash leftover, and some "bridge" funding from other grants held by the MCFW group, that would be used for food at meetings and to put on a Tea Dance.

At an unrecorded meeting we talked about how the transition period felt as if in some ways we were starting over, due to the loss of momentum and limitations in no longer having funding to support this initiative. This was not a reflection of anyone's lack of commitment, but because the success of the group comes from the people who show up. The less we are able to organize and do together, the fewer people show up to the group. Those opportunities to gather are the source of the impacts, not the documentation or certification of accomplishments.

Nonetheless, the Deadly Dads mentioned that fluctuating support for programs was nothing new to the community and that we should remain patient and build off the knowledge, experience, and relationships gained during this time. At these meetings we discussed ways of fundraising, such as using raffles, bingo nights, and asking for donations. During this time the Maskwacis MCFW Research Group was able to provide additional 'bridge funding' from other grants to help sustain some of our activities. We also drafted bylaws to move forward as an unincorporated organization which are shared in the appendix.

Other community organizations, after hearing that our funding was coming to an end also offered their support. Deadly Dads Grant Bruno, and Josh Littlechild proposed partnering with Kanawemahwasowin Kamik, a community organization that provides services to children and families in Ermineskin. These talks are ongoing. However, there was uncertainty around how we could maintain our original purpose and intent of the group. Although we had made steps in the right direction, we weren't fully prepared to move beyond how we were operating under a research grant. After exploring options, and having a series of discussions with a research associate member of the Maskwacis MCFW Research Group who has experience in developing and working as part of non-profits, Winnie Chow-Horn, we decided to pursue incorporating as a non-profit organization. In the closing discussion of our second Wisdom Circle, we decided to set up the Deadly Dads in a way we hope will open up several different avenues to continue the purpose of the supports and support the Deadly Dads to get to a place that the Maskwacis MCFW Research Group collectively envisioned: for complete community ownership and control.

After converting our proposed bylaws to the language of the Alberta Societies Act, on November 18th, 2022, we submitted our application to form an Alberta society. These forms were received on November 25th, and we received minor feedback on January 19th, 2023 about specifying how long before meetings we should notify members and how many members "constituted a quorum". During this process, we heard from Ermineskin Councilor Jason Makinaw, who had spoken with Dylan and I at the Brighter Futures' Interagency meeting. Ermineskin had approved $30,000 of funding for the Deadly Dads starting in April. Then on January 31st, we were officially certified as a non-profit society. Our directors include Rick Lightning, Sonny Lightning, Delaney Eagle Sr., Dylan Lightning, and Kenneth Cutarm. However, our bylaws state that all our members have equal voting and decision-making power and that all decisions are guided through ceremony

We put this infrastructure to use in March 2023. Teaming up with the Moonias family to celebrate Cecilia Moonias' 90th birthday the Deadly Dads Supports Society was able to bring together several partners/sponsors to help support a sweat, feast, and Round Dance. We also had support from other relationships including Videa through Jacob Lightning, the MMCFW and I-HeLTI Research Group through Drs. Rhonda Bell and Richard Oster, and the Indigenous Teens Transition Study through Dr. Andrew Mackie, all of whom helped sponsor the Round Dance.

The Moonias family's Round Dance was attended by over 400 people and centered the intentions of the family to honour their Kokom.

On May 17th, 2023, we also received a $30,000 grant from the Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund. This was a grant we were encouraged to apply for by research associate member of the Maskwacis MCFW Research Group, Winnie Chow-Horn, and will help sustain ongoing meetings over the next year. This was budgeted to help implement hopes of having another family camp, and trail riding in the mountains as expressed in the second Wisdom Circle.

The many reasons for the tumultuous times of this post-grant period are worth reflecting on, and while incorporating and establishing a bank account opens avenues for funding and support, from my view, this is not what will make the Deadly Dads sustainable. After calling Namosom Rick Lightning to talk about the news that we became incorporated he jokingly responded, *we are finally real in the eyes of the great white father*. In reflecting on this, I understand that it's the relationships built throughout our time together that are real and sustainable, not what we call it on a certificate. It is the effort that each member of the Deadly Dads puts into coming together that keeps the group going, and it is the knowledge passed down through ceremony, and guided by Namosoms that will continue these supports and have positive impacts on the wellbeing of future generations.

Chapter 4: Discussion

"Who are you now and what did you learn from us?"

- Reflection prompt from Namosom Rick Lightning

4.1 Shifted Narrative

The narratives around the decade-long journey of relationships that led to this thesis are shared differently in community and academic spaces. I identify the structure of academia, not necessarily our intentions, as the source of this divergence in narratives. As Namosom Rick would put it, it is a structure based in *ritual not ceremony*. Furthermore, the challenge of remaining connected to a community effort while writing as an individual has been identified previously in the literature by Boaventure de Sousa Santos (2014) who calls it the "impossibility of collective authorship". He goes on to describe it as an impossibility of fully representing collective efforts in spaces where careers, credentials, and accomplishments are recognized individually and needed for access.

Connections to DOHAD and Nutrition

As described in the introduction, one of the main premises of this thesis is that understandings of the impacts on wellbeing across lifespans and intergenerationally, as it relates to the support and involvement of men and fathers, exist in Maskwacis and have long been passed down. This was demonstrated in our Wisdom Circles through discussions of the roles of fathers in raising their children and transitions in life from fatherhood to becoming a Mosom, or a Câpan (great grandfather). The supports in this project were developed based on these understandings. As I will elaborate on later in this discussion, this calls for support of Nêhiyaw approaches to researching health across lifespans as valid and equal to Western forms of research.

Positive collaborations between Western researchers and Nêhiyaw communities are now becoming increasingly possible as Western research has begun to catch up with Nêhiyaw knowledge that wellbeing is passed down intergenerationally. These developments in understanding emerged with the concept of the fetal origins of adult disease which helped reveal to Western academia that chronic diseases were not only a result of genetic predispositions and adult lifestyles, but also from early life events (Gluckman & Hanson, 2009). These understandings have since expanded in many directions through the contributions of many

different academic scholars including in areas such as epigenetics, or how environments can influence gene expression and how this can be passed down across generations (Gluckman & Hanson, 2009). The focus of this thesis is not to connect knowledge shared in this project to Western concepts, however, these shifts in thinking within Western academia have opened doors for research to be leveraged by communities whose ways of knowing and being have historically been and continue to be marginalized in academic spaces.

On a similar note, nutritional research has been both integral to DOHAD research and at the intersection of many different aspects of health. From the environment that food comes from, to a nutrient's affects in the body, to the ways societies distributes food, the field of nutrition has become increasingly interdisciplinary and is a discipline that can look at wellbeing across different life stages and lifespans. As result, the field of nutrition is well-positioned to support holistic and intergenerational views of wellbeing, such as those are passed down in Maskwacis.

However, as I understand it, the impacts positive impacts on wellbeing experienced throughout this project came from the shifts in narratives towards those that exist in community and from the approaches we used that challenged disciplinary boundaries. While the origins of this work as an academic research proposal began with a long-standing partnership leveraging the concept of DOHAD and the discipline of nutrition, the origins of community efforts to support healthy families in Maskwacis are much deeper. Community efforts to leverage these connections counter-hegemonically provide hope for future generations and solidarity with communities marginalized from academic spaces.

Narratives in academia

In academic spaces such as conferences and presentations, whether it is our intention or not, the connections to Western theories, such as DOHaD, data generation, numbers, quotes, and the image of the relationship between the university and community are prioritized. These narratives are abstract and detached from the people experiencing the impacts, producing them, and living the knowledge.

Through the lens of the proposal co-designed with the community, this project began to explore the roles of fathers and men in addressing Indigenous maternal health inequities, using a DOHaD perspective. This opportunity grew from previous research collaborations that identified the strengths of role model fathers in Maskwacis, as well as a gap in supports specifically for some fathers-to-be (Oster et al., 2018). Aligning with the TRC's Calls to Actions (Truth and

Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) and institutional efforts toward reconciliation, the purpose of this research was to improve wellbeing, specifically to improve supports for Nêhiyaw fathers, through a culturally appropriate strategy designed with and for the community. This research has focused on developing and nurturing real relationships and working together to build from existing strength and abundance within community.

Narratives in community

In community spaces, it is the effort, spirit, emotion, and actions following up on the plans and promises that take priority. The narratives shared in community come from the heart and are deeply connected to what everyone has experienced in our relationships. Words are used to create action and connections that directly serve the community.

Through a lens in community, this project began from the foresight of Namosoms and Nokoms who saw the potentials of leveraging research. This opportunity is possible because of the generations of Nêhiyaw knowledge that continues to be passed down. It aligns with the prints we prayed on and tobacco we put down in ceremony for mothers, fathers, families, and future generations. We were all brought together for a reason and benefit from the effort put into these relationships.

Thinking deeply about these narratives

Both narratives, one which conforms and reproduces the structures of academia and one which draws from the power that exists in community, overlap and are present within our efforts as a partnership. Being conscious of these different narratives has become increasingly important throughout this project. As a result of this increased awareness, our methodologies were able to adapt in counter-hegemonic ways, and finding solutions beyond Western institutions have emerged as important.

This approach to thinking deeply about the narratives projected from this project follows an attempt to address what Starblanket (2019) calls "colonial unknowing" which "functions to sustain settler claims to sovereignty by disavowing the current and constitutive nature of colonialism" (Starblanket, 2019, p. 455). Starblanket (2019) goes on to describe "colonial unknowing" as "the failure to think relationally about the interconnected and co-constitutive nature of various dimensions of colonialism… this process involves not only selective inclusion and exclusion of differing narratives… but also a dissociation of the past from the present." To address this, Starblanket (2019) proposes a "relational mode of analysis" (p. 455) which can

highlight how institutional mythologies serve to maintain colonial relationships that evolve overtime. While Starblanket's (2019) work focused specifically on how the numbered treaties have been taken up by Canadian legal and political institutions, other scholars have recognized and demonstrated the importance of narratives in academic and health institutions.

Johnson (2017) of Nipisihkopahk (known as Samson Cree Nation) warns that "using terms such as reconciliation, revitalization, and collaboration does not mean anything if they do not actively assist Nations in liberating their narratives" (p. 58). As reiterated in the *Methodologies* chapter of this thesis, Johnson (2017) goes on to state that "to challenge the constraints of colonialism, academics and new learners who are allies to Indigenous peoples in the protection of our knowledge must step outside their privileged positions and challenge research that conforms to the guidelines of the colonial power structure" (p. 80). Like Johnson (2017), Leigh Joseph from skwxwú7mesh First Nation, while discussing anti-oppressive and decolonial approaches to research, describes the importance of "understanding how to be critically self-aware and subsequently ensure you are not causing harm or upholding oppressive behaviours or narratives" (Joseph, Cuerrier, & Mathews, 2022, p. 69). Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019), demonstrate this approach in their examination of the history of social work, stating that "unfortunately, while there are times when the social work profession has considered its own settler colonial history, it is often done in a decontextualized fashion with little continuation or contemporary resonance. That is, while the social work profession may acknowledge colonialism, it is seen as a historical wrong with little relevance to the present" (p. 448). By being conscious of these narratives, as we have increasingly been throughout this project, we are able to connect this historical context of research and academia to the present and work to identify and confront structural inequities of, or ongoing oppression by (James, 2022), these institutions as we answer our research question.

Through the guidance of the Community Advisory Committee, especially Namosoms, the narrative of this project has been gifted with the awareness of context and understanding of how we are connected to our histories. While it is often more comfortable to distance our work and institutional affiliations from the ongoing project of neo-colonialism and oppression, it has become important to the transparency, trust, and growth of our relationships to identify and address how we remain complicit in these systems.

There are contradictions and paradoxes, especially in our reliance on and gratitude for funding. That is, gratitude for funding and resources which are accumulated through the ongoing dispossession of land and exploitation of labour, which affects the Nêhiyaw community of Maskwacis, Indigenous communities, and peoples globally. New imaginations and solutions for future generations, that do not rely on these oppressive systems and structures, are possible through these shifts away from narratives of "colonial unknowing" towards those liberated in and from community described by Johnson (2017).

4.2 Better understandings through our time together

Relationships formed the basis of developing these supports and adapting from the initial outline from the research proposal. The key aspects embedded in our partnership which allowed for these adaptations included:

1) Over 10 years of relationships and a partnership journey together that began long before I joined the team. This partnership included contributions from Mosoms, Kokoms, community members, University of Alberta researchers, and health professionals from Maskwacis Health Services.
2) Previous work by a men's research group led by Grant Bruno led to a research proposal that received funding from the MSI Foundation which valued this community-based approach to work.
3) The Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2022) which outlines research conduct with Indigenous peoples in Canada;
4) Growing support for CBPR approaches to health research (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008) in addition to the work of Indigenous scholars such as Cora-Weber Pillwax, Linda Tuhiwei Smith, Shawn Wilson, Leanne Simpson, Grant Bruno, and many more;
5) Our Memorandum of Understanding which emphasized guidance from Mosoms and Kokoms, Cree approaches to research, and community-derived and owned research; and
6) What Shawn Wilson (2008) calls relational accountability, which goes deeper and beyond any formalized agreements.

These aspects were put in place through ongoing collaboration with Mosoms, Kokoms, and other community partners who pass down research practices that have existed amongst Nêhiyawak for thousands of years. The foundations of this partnership allowed us to grapple with negative aspects of Western research and allowed connections and resources to be leveraged counter-hegemonically with and by community. Early on in my involvement with this project Namosom Arrol Crier and Rick Lightning would share about their knowledge and experience of Nêhiyaw science and Western science.

There is reasonable distrust in community around Western forms of research, which is well-documented in Indigenous communities around the world (Smith, 1999). While this distrust is warranted, academic research has increasingly become a way to mobilize knowledge and resources in community. While attempting to address the many flaws in the institutions of research, the Maskwacis MCFW research group staunchly opposes researching Indigenous peoples and is in favour of finding entirely different ways of doing research that moves at the pace of trust (Oster & Lightning, 2022).

While the journey of trust and learning is an ongoing one that requires long-term commitment to working through challenges, it seems we are now well positioned to support bolder moves towards health sovereignty for the community of Maskwacis. Our growing understanding as a partnership that the knowledge comes from community, and the power from the culture, requires action towards Nêhiyaw leadership and full community control over these research projects. From my view, we are additionally well-positioned to act on this with the 6-year I-HELTI grant which was awarded through several community efforts with support from partners (Betkowski, 2023).

The journeys of community-university partnerships have recently begun to be documented in the literature. Matson et al. (2021), who describe their partnership around understanding Manoomin (the Ojibwe word for wild rice) within its socio-environmental context near the Great Lakes region of North America, note the challenges of these partnerships are "are not isolated from the complicated relationships between settler colonial institutions and tribes that have shaped the landscape of North America since European contact" (p.110). Similar to our partnership, they noted how their "collaboration has grown through a commitment to addressing ongoing harms, respecting Manoomin and other tribal interests, and understanding each others'

perspectives" (p. 112). They identified similar aspects of their partnership which have allowed for this growth including:

1) Honouring Indigneous sovereingty and rights;
2) Being on a path together with researchers and Indigenous partners;
3) Recognizing, respecting, and valuing Indigenous participation and intellectual labor;
4) Addressing past and present harms as an essential part of building accountable relationships;
5) Encouraging the robust exchange of ideas for stronger collaborative research;
6) Recognizing that documents formalizing a relationship are not the whole relationship;
7) Being prepared to navigate institutional obstacles, such as expectations of conventional publications under tight time;
8) Having a plan for identifying and protecting sensitive Indigenous data; and
9) Actively listening and being open to different ways of engaging with the world (Matson et al., 2021).

Our journey in the Deadly Dads, contributes additional perspectives to university-community partnerships about who and how knowledge is shared as well. Speaking to other communities at the International Indigenous DOHaD Gathering in Vancouver, 2022, Dylan Lightning shared how every project and collaboration in each community will look different because communities have different knowledges, lands, and people involved. Nonetheless, how we nurtured our relationships and established our partnership to address challenges and promote adaptability may be useful to other community-university partnerships, and ours moving forward, especially those focused on developing group-led supports for Indigenous men.

By approaching research as connecting with knowledge through relationships, rather than as generating and analyzing data, we contribute a perspective that recognizes our relationships and each interaction as a valuable part of the process. A perspective that brings in the effort put in by participants in research partnerships as knowledge sharers is not often shared in the literature beyond as impacts of the research, or as uptake by end-users. Every introduction made, where Deadly Dads were introduced to the group, was an important part of the knowledge translation. So was when dads went home to their families and shared their experiences, or sometimes brought their families along. In some cases, participants of the Deadly Dads shared their experiences with friends and families from other Nations. To this end, knowledge translation

came with the strong relationships being built and involved everyone who was part of these supports.

4.3 First Wisdom Circle: Knowledge of context and getting together in healthy ways

Lots of wisdom exists already through the experiences and Nêhiyaw knowledge systems shared amongst Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak in Maskwacis and has existed for thousands of years. Our first Wisdom Circle exemplifies this alongside the efforts Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak are not only putting in to supporting their own families, but in creating spaces of support for other men in the community. This, along with other efforts in Maskwacis, including by the Nipishkopahk Nâpêwak Advisory (Samson Men's Advisory) of which Pun (Ryan) Lightning was involved, and the work of Taylor Bull with Samson Community Wellness and his own endeavours, furthermore, demonstrates that these efforts have long been and continue to be sustained in Maskwacis. The existence of these efforts and this knowledge also adds nuance to the narratives around supporting fathers in Maskwacis. Previous work with the community by Oster et al. (2018), showed that, while there is a lack of programming and supports delivered for fathers and reality of the absence of fathers at ceremonies and social events, there are ways through which men have been and can continue be supported by their families and can support each other. In this follow-up project, we've demonstrated that health services can better serve community by supporting what already exists in community.

Our work supports the concepts previously articulated in the literature that state "parenting programs need to be led by men, preferably Indigenous, who understand the conditions affecting their involvement in family life" (Ball, 2009, p. 42). Bonding on this understanding of the conditions affecting families in Maskwacis was the topic of our first Wisdom Circle. We've added insight into how Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak in Maskwacis address this in their lives, and the different contexts experienced.

The socio-economic challenges linked to the dispossession of land, resources, and cultures of Indigenous peoples have also been previously documented: "access to land and jobs in industries depending on natural resources have diminished, few Indigenous fathers have the means to take their children out on trap lines, fishing boats, or hunting grounds" (Ball, 2009, p. 43). Hunting was a highly anticipated, and desired skill that many members brought up, but few had the knowledge or time to share with the group. Furthermore, providing the materials to hunt to everyone interested would have been beyond our budget. Within our means and timeline, we

were able to offer firearm safety training and connect some men interested in learning with hunters from the community. However, there are broader issues that need to be addressed for widespread sustainable access to traditional skills and practices like these that support wellbeing.

Early on, and apparent from our first Wisdom Circle, it was recognized that these supports could not address all the challenges faced by fathers but could help to create strong connections to build off. While fatherhood was a “boat ride… with no paddles” and there is “no book that tells you how to be a dad”, finding healthy ways to gather was recognized as essential to learning and intergenerational knowledge sharing. Cavanagh et al. (2022) similarly argued, in a study on the social determinants of health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander men, that "men’s groups can serve as a central intervention to support men to build their confidence to learn about health and wellbeing and how to thrive through activities in community life" (p. 1). They recommended that future research “engage with action research around interventions and continuous improvements and could possibly focus on the health promotion of a particular community” (p. 9). Similarly, George et al. (2019), in their rationale and recommendations for developing services by and for Indigenous men in Kettle & Stony Point First Nation, advocated for supporting knowledge sharing between men with lived experiences, Elders and role models. Our work supports their rationale and advocacy for men’s groups and community-based knowledge sharing and demonstrates some ways it can be approached. However, in many ways our work shows also how socio-economic barriers and fluctuating institutional support can make this more difficult than it should be.

This calls into question larger systems at play creating obstacles that block the wellbeing arising from these existing support networks. Many of these were regularly brought up at meetings throughout this project. They include the colonial logics inherited from the recently rescinded doctrine of discovery (The Canadian Press, 2023), which was used to rationalize the genocide and expropriation of land and resources of Indigenous peoples around the world. The consequences of these logics surfaced throughout this project in several contextualizing moments including: the uncovering of mass burials of children at residential schools (Dickson & Watson, 2021), Carrie Bourassa being removed from her position at CIHR for misrepresenting her identity (Strong, 2021), the Pope’s apology for genocide committed by the Catholic church (CTVNews.ca, 2022), resistance and support for educating law professionals on cultural competency (Paradis, 2023), as well as the doctrine of discovery being rescinded. Ongoing

struggles with the child welfare system (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019) and judicial system (Starblanket & Hunt, 2020) are also documented in the literature. Tuck & Yang (2012) explain how "settler violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation" (p. 5) in describing why settler colonialism is a structure and not an event. Taking this into consideration, these events, which are symptomatic of the structure of settler colonialism on which Canadian society is built (Tuck & Yang, 2012), contextualize the challenges surfaced throughout this project and brought up in our first Wisdom Circle.

Interactions with these structures of settler colonialism and reproduction of its systems of oppression were identified as the "intergenerational stuff", "the mentality… on the reserve", and the "cycles" that need to be broken. However, the solutions were also identified as already existing in the community, through cultural resurgence. These solutions are enacted in collaboration of Mosoms and Kokoms through the efforts of younger generations learning and working to contextualize the intergenerational knowledge that is passed down. This has previously been documented in the literature through the work of Manahan & Ball (2009) who found "many fathers suggested that the use of traditional practices has allowed them to escape the generational cycle of trauma caused by colonialism and assimilation processes, and has been key in their preparation for fatherhood" (p. 46). In our first Wisdom Circle, many group members also expressed the responsibility they feel they have to end these cycles for the benefit of their children and future generations.

What surfaced despite these systemic issues, however, was the love that continues to be expressed and shared by and between Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak for each other, their children, families, community, and future generations. This is love and wisdom that existed before the Deadly Dads support group, but that propelled this group over the past two years. Our supports focused on leveraging this spirit through group-led decision making, engaging the context brought about by involving those experiencing fatherhood in community, guidance from Namosoms, and honouring culture and ceremonies.

4.4 Second Wisdom Circle: Growing understandings of impacts

Our second Wisdom Circle transcript was reconstructed in the results in attempt to highlight key impacts of the Deadly Dads supports without disconnecting or decontextualizing the knowledge being shared from the knowledge sharers. Although not everyone who participated in the supports was able to join the circle, the widespread and interconnected impacts, that can

easily go unnoticed, of coming together as Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak were highlighted. There were several sharing circles that occurred organically throughout our time together on the terms of the group, when people became comfortable enough with one another, and an environment of vulnerability was created.

The power of circles in not only sharing knowledge and information, but also creating spaces of trust and vulnerability, is well documented in the literature. Although not always pre-planned, and many times without a designated facilitator, our circles embodied "the healing method" of the approach described by Lavallée (2009), a Métis researcher who worked in collaboration with members of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. In this method, "all participants (including the facilitator) are viewed as equal and information, spirituality, and emotionality are shared". As described by Tachine, Yellow Bird, & Cabrera (2016), who employed sharing circles to understand the experiences of Native American students accessing and transitioning into college, circles allow space for the fluidity of story telling which helps create trust, and vulnerability. Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams (2021), similarly describe the Yarning method used in Narrm, Australia, which involves a similar form of story sharing that fosters a connection to culture, Elders, and creates space to be vulnerable about personal issues, shared experiences, and family and community relationships. There are also examples in the literature of sharing circles being used for the multiple purposes of healing, connecting to community-members, and knowledge sharing specifically with regards to Indigenous men (Waddell, et al., 2020). The approach used by Waddel, et al. (2020), took place in Brandon, Manitoba on Treaty 2 Lands. Our work demonstrates how sharing circles were similarly useful by Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak and fathers in Maskwacis for sharing knowledge, fostering belonging, and supporting wellbeing.

Several patterns emerged throughout these sharing circles, and during each of the activities and ceremonies that we held, as highlighted in the results. There is connection to identity, as Namosoms often begin by introducing everyone or figuring out who their parents or grandparents are. There is venting, and sharing of difficult things people are going through which generate a sense of belonging and acceptance of each other and the shared struggles many are facing. Interspersed amongst this is laughter, fun, and sometimes explicit expressions of love shared in reflection of peoples' children, families, or appreciation for those showing up to the group to support one another. Traditional parenting roles and skills are *shown* rather than

taught[22] through ongoing and diverse interactions. This builds on the previous study by Oster et al. (2018) in Maskwacis which highlighted the needs of supportive fathers during pregnancy. By coming together as Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak, men feel included in supports around wellbeing and parenting. Access to these needs, identified in the previous study related to connecting to Mosoms and Kokoms, community, culture, and ceremony, were increased (Oster et al., 2018). These findings also echo existing literature on the topic of supports for Indigenous men and fathers through support groups, sharing circles, and diverse ways of coming together (Cavanagh, Pariona-Cabrera, & Bartram, 2022; Manahan & Ball, 2007).

Foundational to all these impacts continues to be the guidance of Namosoms and the passing down of cultural knowledge, language, and a belief system. Our work connects the findings of some of the literature that highlights culture as a source of social and emotional wellbeing for Indigenous youth which is uniquely provided by Elders and connection to land (Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021), to the experiences of fathers. In addition to the generosity of Namosoms, the effort put in by Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak to learn while working to support their families, also comes through in our results. The responsibility taken by the current generation of Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak to contextualize these traditional *showings* in their own lives by spending time with their families and being involved also came through in this circle. By ensuring that the direction of discussions was group-led, supports adjusted to the realities and lives of Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak in Maskwacis and drew from knowledge that has long been passed down. It is the effort put in by these Deadly Dads that made these supports effective and impactful and that continues to lead to positive impacts on families and future generations. It is this effort that created the momentum for this health initiative and research project.

The knowledge shared in this project show that group-led initiatives have impacts that lie beyond what is possible from within clinics or inflexible programs. Many of the experiences of belonging, opportunities to connect, laugh, express love, and intergenerational learning occurred during very loosely planned activities. What was most important was the emphasis on discovering how each member was related to one another and connecting to culture. This was knowledge shared early on by Josh Littlechild, noted in chapter 3, and the Deadly Dads

[22] This is in reference to a lesson from Namosom Rick Lightning previously shared about the difference between traditional teachings and traditional showings.

demonstrated how this could occur in a variety of settings. Although the involvement of more nêhiyawêwin[23] speakers would likely better facilitate the language learning aspect of what Josh shared. The impacts on wellbeing are embedded in community connection, Nêhiyaw culture, and ceremony. This additionally honours TRC call to action #22 "to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders were requested by Aboriginal patients" (2015).

Codes, categories, and themes

While there are other approaches to Wisdom Circles which facilitate theming through a collective approach, for examples ones where themes are constructed during the circle and participants are actively involved in the process (Listener, et al., 2023), I chose not to present themes in this thesis. Firstly, we did not use a process where themes emerged, were presented, and were actively revised by participants. Secondly, since it was not my approach to search for themes in these transcripts from the very beginning, I am hesitant to do this post hoc. Especially as someone who is not from community, at risk of missing certain nuances and connections in the stories being shared.

Instead, my approach in presenting these circles, albeit still limited to the order I present them in and what I chose to exclude, has been to include larger sections of dialogue that demonstrate the contexts, experiences, and impacts shared by the Deadly Dads support group. As with the experiences of everyone involved with these supports, this allows for more flexibility in understandings and lessons to be pulled from reading these excerpts. In some presentations, I do more to theme and summarize these concepts for brevity and to convey understanding in a limited amount of space and time. However, in a thesis where there is time to read and re-read these results and more space to include them, I offer them instead alongside lessons shared with me and my analysis of narratives throughout this project.

Although I am not an expert on circles as methodology, there is some precedence set for refraining from coding and theming in the literature. Specifically, by scholars such as Fyre Graveline who struggle against Western approaches to coding, categorizing, and theming. There is a quote from an article that I was recently discussing with Jacob Lightning and Courtney

[23] Nêhiyawêwin: the Cree language

Gariepy at Mosom Rick's dinner table that has stuck with me and urged me to reflect on this topic:

Rule Three : BREVITY

I am told: ''This quote is too long

has too much text to it.

Break it up.

Comment on the content.

Theorize : What do You think They mean?'' Create Bridges

it is called.

I am stunned.

In Circle Talk

when a speaker has the Stone

She or he talks as long as they want.

Making their Own connections

between Self and others in Circle

Self and topic

Self and Communities.

My task is to Shrink stories.

Cut huge chunks of now named '' extraneous'' material.

As I struggle to Insert my own comments

Intruding into Other's stories

I become self-consciously Aware.

Editing: a polite code word

for Actions viewed Disrespectful

Unacceptable

in Traditional Circles. (Graveline, 2000, pp. 367-368)

Knowledge shared on generosity in conflict with the institution

From here on out, I bridge our work which answered our overall research question of how our supports were developed and what their impacts were to the emerging questions around the

role of the researcher, and next steps from this project. This process of group-led development of supports, centered in ceremony, generates a lot of hope amongst participants. Beyond this hope is a commitment by participants, which includes research partners[24], not to make promises to their community they can't keep and to continue to find ways to adapt and maintain this effort for the wellbeing of future generations. In the second Wisdom Circle, and throughout our CAC meetings, there was an expressed uncertainty around whether this commitment born in community can be matched from within institutions run by outsiders. This is where, at times, our narratives diverge. From my vantage point, many of the relationships and commitments made as friends, family, and community throughout this work will continue with or without funding or institutional affiliations. This is the nature of the enduring reciprocity that is shared in ceremony, brought into our partnership by Namosoms and Nokoms, and felt by everyone involved.

In contrast, from my view, the university as an institution cannot match this enduring reciprocity because it is based on transactional commitments and an impersonal, competitive approach to distributing resources. There is a hierarchy and procedures to follow, but no face to meet or relate to when it comes to funding. There are sometimes representatives of the university, of the funding organizations, but these are human beings in an institutional role. These institutions give us multiple hats[25] that make our roles distorted and confusing. The gifts we bring as representatives are either not our own, technically not even gifts, or they are not from the institutions we represent but from ourselves as humans.

I will examine this further in the discussion around sustainability, but this awareness of reciprocity and generosity has also been an impact that altered my understanding of my role as a researcher. Kuokkanen (2008), in her book on reshaping the university with the logic of the gift, states "when we ignore the ways in which we are implicated in academic structures, and when we assume that we can remain uncontaminated by outside influences despite our daily interactions with the academy, we are only contributing to our own marginalization [or the marginalization of those we are partnered with] and to the construction of a monolithic understanding of our project… we must recognize that even as marginal participants in the

[24] Recalling that early on we began to reconceptualize researchers as participants, and participants as researchers.

[25] This is in reference to the knowledge shared to me by Namosom Rick Lightning: *the hat that you put on in the morning should be the same hat that you take off at night, you never switch hats*. See section in introduction on my positionality.

academy [or those allies of the boundary pushing efforts of marginal participants]… we cannot avoid negotiating with the structures of cultural and economic imperialism" (p. xv, [my comments]).

Nonetheless, an opportunity here emerged from a long-standing and trusting relationship, to come together as real human beings with the opportunity to collectively mobilize resources brought in from our MSI grant. However, as the research grant came to an end, it became unsustainable to maintain the frequency and variety of ways we had been gathering with funding. My own realities, as a researcher employed to do this work, began to surface as my university hat started falling off. Without the support of funding, I could not afford to bring food to every meeting, or help drive people to every meeting, and certainly not alleviate barriers to access to by paying for people's admissions to certain activities. I still go to hang out when I can. I still have those relationships. But, as mentioned in the first Wisdom Circle, having money to do things is a key aspect of organizing the Deadly Dads. Without funding the Deadly Dads is its relationships, and these relationships cannot be claimed by any institution. This is relevant to this discussion because it challenges the narratives in academia.

On the surface, momentum is building. We established a non-profit, we have support and awareness from other community organizations, and potential future partnerships. But, the question is who are those accomplishments real to? Which hat are we wearing when we think about those accomplishments? While waiting for funding the image of the Deadly Dads only exists in thought and reporting, not in reality. We are "real in the eyes of the great white father", but this is different from realness of being able to get together. Gatherings we have without funding, albeit with the relationships we were introduced to during our time as Deadly Dads, are simply what was already possible and what has existed in community already in other forms.

Sentiments that, it was as if we were "starting over", were expressed during this transition period. It is worth noting that these sentiments do not negate all the relationships and impacts described in our Wisdom Circles. However, these Wisdom Circles occurred when there was more momentum, ongoing funding, or the anticipation of funding. The sentiments shared during the transition phase, however, point to truths about the socio-economic obstacles that remain despite short-term and conditional supports from funders. They hold words and plans, when they become separated from ongoing action, up to the light of reality.

This, again, is an important differentiation between narratives in community, and narratives in academia. From my view, institutions, funders, and universities, should not use transcripts, reports, or other snapshots of community efforts, to bolster their image. As partners in these roles, I feel we must do more to consider how we are upholding and reproducing these institutions. Is our work creating ongoing opportunities in community, or is it upholding an image that is lagging compared to reality?

So, then, what are our roles as researchers, especially during these transition phases? If these impacts come from the effort of participants, the community, culture, and ceremonies, what real impacts will writing a thesis or publishing articles have? And as an outside researcher, does going through these motions give validation to the aspects of the university we are trying to challenge? I think my role all along was to learn and to better understand myself. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that I was never really needed as an outside researcher but appreciated as a young person and a family member willing to listen.

Perhaps as Johnson (2017), through Kovach (2009), explains about Nêhiyaw methodologies, the universe, not me, was leading the project. This does not diminish the efforts our research team puts into supporting this work, nor does it question whether we should come together. Namosoms and Nokoms always say, *we are all here for a reason*. However, it underlines the need to constantly reflect and rethink our roles, what we are inheriting by taking on these, and whose spot we may be taking. I will return to these reflections in the section on *Structural limitations on equity.*

Solutions to supporting the efforts demonstrated by the Deadly Dads are needed beyond simply restarting momentum with another research question which follows existing standards and expectations. There are deeper questions which must be addressed about establishing sustainability that is located beyond research funding, beyond program funding, and beyond a reliance on approval outside of community. That is not, however, to absolve institutions from their responsibilities in these inequities and ongoing oppression. Opportunities to further understand sustainability, by supporting community control and cultural resurgence, will be possible in the next phase of the I-HeLTI grant which will support some of these initiatives over the next 6 years (Betkowski, 2023). However, consciousness of which narratives we are promoting, reflections on which hats we should be wearing, and who should be in these roles will also be important.

4.5 Deeper look at sustainability: Re-understanding our roles

Upon reflecting on the many lessons I've learned throughout this project, I've begun to see the ways we conceptualize sustainability as linked to our understandings of our roles. It has been evident to me, despite the tensions we face, that everyone involved in the project does so with good intentions and strong commitments. However, it is also evident that the institutions we engage with maintain narratives and hierarchies based on Western values of competition, academic achievement, and credentials embedded within university procedures to accessing, holding, and sharing resources. In this section I unpack some of the challenges we've faced while imagining sustainability. Following this, I unpack some tensions we experienced throughout this project to begin addressing what I see as structural limitations to equity that continue to exist, permeate from the university, and impact our partnership.

Challenges with sustainability

Our challenges with sustainability, despite this being a pilot project, builds on some of the literature that exists around the transition from a university-community partnership to full ownership by community. We've encountered the challenges described by Wisener, Shapka, & Jarvis-Selinger (2017), namely the lack of infrastructure to hold funding in community, or to seek external funding. These challenges and the knowledge shared while grappling and imagining the future of the Deadly Dads demonstrates the complexity of sustainability. Many studies identify the importance of sustainability and long-term commitments of partners (Reilly, 2021; Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams, 2021; Lethborg, et al., 2022; Webster, et al., 2022; Adams, 2006), and identify community control as an important aspect of sustainability (Farah Nasir, et al., 2021). Few have articulated how this is achieved in practice, perhaps due to the relative novelty of action research through community-university partnerships and short-term funding cycles. Wisener, Shapka, & Jarvis-Selinger (2017) and Onnis et al. (2020) name some strategies including: having champions in community to promote and lead the supports; building infrastructure to support implementation and hold funding; building stakeholder awareness; and collaboration with other programs. Much of the literature centers sustainability around strategies to secure funding. In the context of the Deadly Dads this resonates, as funding has been a catalyst for bringing people together, especially given the socio-economic constraints often preventing this from happening. The Deadly Dads also continues to be successful at building stakeholder awareness, collaborating with other programs, and has 'champions', including the

Lightning family, in Maskwacis who will continue to support this work. However, it was also recognized several times in our group that money and how we value it is an impediment to our work and the spirit of coming together.

Given the abundance of the earth and the knowledge that has long been passed down through Nêhiyaw culture to sustainably support the wellbeing of families and future generations, funding and Western institutional approval is not inherently necessary to these efforts. Funding structures, however, have been rendered necessary due to the violent dispossession of Indigenous peoples all over the world from their lands, languages, and cultures by colonial agents, governments, and society's cyclical reproduction of these structures (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019; Starblanket & Hunt, 2020; INCITE!, 2007). This continues today through many mechanisms including the ongoing extraction of resources which accumulates and renders the abundance of the earth exclusive (Kuokkanen, 2008, p. 30; INCITE!, 2007; Wong, 2023); the child welfare system which interrupts intergenerational knowledge sharing (Ball, 2009); and the Canadian judicial system which reproduces colonial narratives of violence (Starblanket & Hunt, 2020).

Western institutional knowledge, and its terms of validation, have similarly been rendered necessary to *access* funding. Western knowledge is used to decide and rationalize the distribution of these funds based on the 'best' evidence available (Ciliska, 2012). Research grants from the billions of dollars spent annually on health-related research (Ciliska, 2012), which allow people to influence this evidence base, typically require a Principal Investigator with a long list of publications and credentials within the institution. To achieve this, academics are pressured to sacrifice time away from their families, communities, and cultures to embrace the culture of academia (Windchief, 2018). It is worth acknowledging that the Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund has made some steps to addressing this by allowing for flexibility in applying and reporting on grants which center Indigenous ways of knowing. However, this is not research funding, nor a long-term solution.

Even if the communication between research and policy that directs funding was perfect, which it is documented not to be due in part to the lack of uptake and dissemination of knowledge by end users (Tilbury, Hughes, Bigby, & Fisher, 2021; Wisener, Shapka, & Jarvis-Selinger, 2017; Ciliska, 2012), the entire system of resource accumulation and the knowledge base used to influence its distribution marginalizes Indigenous peoples and their ways of

knowing and being. On top of this, global neo-colonial, neo-imperial systems of the north have proven to be unsustainable themselves given current health inequities, growing poverty rates, and climate crises (World Health Organization, 2022). Herein lies the necessity to frame the sustainability of these supports and proposed solutions beyond simply long-term funding and culturally acceptable research methodologies, and instead from within cultural resurgence, solidarity, and organizing for social change.

The system described above needs to be addressed on several fronts, many of which are beyond the scope of this research. Having a narrative that is based on the real experiences and knowledge in community, however, is important for maintaining honesty in the usefulness of this research and for proposing strong solutions. This research does not provide solutions to the crises of neo-colonialism. However, it can help confront some of the terms of validation Western institutions use to discipline knowledge and may allow for a greater contemplation of the narratives we subscribe to. In turn, this could improve community influence, access, and control over research, funding, and health services and could help lead to sustainable solutions that support the wellbeing of Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak, their families, and future generations.

The Deadly Dads have made some steps towards this. The purpose of becoming incorporated was to facilitate the continuation of these group-led supports on the terms of the community and ongoing imagination of strong solutions. The intent is to open avenues of support and fundraising on top of those available and at times limited through research, as articulated by Wisener, Shapka, & Jarvis-Selinger (2017) and Onnis et al. (2020). The reality is that funding, whether it is public or private, from a research grant or a charity, is only a temporary solution to much broader systemic issues of resource distribution arising from Western value systems based on accumulation, ownership, and control.

Structural limitations to equity

Many of the early stages of this project occurred during COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, preventing us from moving beyond CAC meetings and discussions of supports. This also led us to adapt plans described in the grant proposal and was encouraged through the way the Maskwacis MCFW Research Group works. This was a frustrating time and it highlighted inequities, otherwise understood as structures of ongoing oppression (James, 2022), within our partnership. For example, many support group members were unemployed due to lockdowns when I first joined the group. This highlights one of the limitations of a university-community

research partnership, the university cannot employ everybody and imposes a hierarchy in selecting who is employed.

As a master's student[26] I received a stipend, throughout lockdowns and restrictions, whereas the Deadly Dads only received honorarium when we had meetings, and due to rapidly changing circumstances these meetings were susceptible to cancellations. Since October, after attempting to work through some tensions around honourarium, we did our best not to cancel CAC meetings. However, the dynamics of being employed to conduct group-led research, in which everyone is recognized as a knowledge holder and co-researcher, remains confusing and unsettling to me as someone not from the community.

I was the only non-community member receiving compensation from the MSI grant funding the project. No money was allocated to others at the university from this grant, aside from travel expenses. Likewise, by working through our partnership, adjusting Mosom honouriums, avoiding meeting cancellations, and transparently sharing the budget we were able to arrive temporarily at better understandings of what is fair compensation for everyone's contributions.

Previously, in the methods chapter, I also mentioned the difficulties around delegating and sharing work given this dynamic, and my experiences with being overwhelmed. I believe that solutions to restructuring how grants are allocated and the protocols we follow should be generated in open and collective collaborations in community, rather than from my own decisions. However, I suspect it will begin with complete transparency and as Johnson (2017) puts it, supporting the liberation of narratives within the Nations.

Until we address this, however, I would argue that despite our best efforts we cannot claim that our research partnership and the outputs produced benefit everyone involved equally or that we are all equals in these partnerships. For example, I can pursue a career in research, with the experience I gained from this project, that most of the Deadly Dads could not, despite their contributions.

We strive to push boundaries and advocate change, in many ways including by bringing this thesis defense into community, by involving community members in knowledge sharing at

[26] Prior to the project being put on hold due to COVID-19, Jerry Young was hired as the RA for almost a year and Sonny Lightning was hired as the RA. The CAC decided it would be appropriate to recruit a master's student that could lead the project, which ended up being me although the effort of the Deadly Dads remained collective and increasingly group led.

conferences, by co-producing grant proposals, and by making decisions with everyone at CAC meetings. But there are still hierarchies that we operate through:

1) in the process of knowledge validation, for example, those enforced by Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through which I am submitting this thesis, and those enforced by journals during publication;
2) in the process of accessing funding, of which the University of Alberta's accounting processes require us to follow burdensome protocols with signers determined by existing hierarchies at the university; and
3) in the process of applying for research funding, through which certain credentials, and partnership with recognized academics, albeit even if the application is co-produced, are necessary.

As a result of continuing to operate community efforts within these institutional hierarchies, it seems much of our efforts are being drawn into administrative tasks rather than the actual pursuit of knowledge or action with community. This also seems to be creating an unsustainable workload even for those who are in the privileged position of being employed. A consequence of this is the disheartening, but very fair, criticisms expressed in community that: our commitments are limited, we are influenced by outside agendas, and all we do is talk, but nothing ever gets done. Operating within these hierarchies leads these criticisms to be true, despite good intentions and even tireless efforts. From my knowledge, this is not our intentions as partners, but this is what ends up happening. This needs to be addressed beyond just stating that we are equal, this deserves further structural analysis and imagination beyond our institutions. Perhaps in other words, a move *from ritual to ceremony*. Consciousness of these hierarchies and the narratives that produce them, although it does not provide all the answers, gives us the agency to act.

Re-understanding the role of the researcher

My original role was contemplated early on as documented in meeting minutes on April 2022: "Adam will be very much involved in our meetings, helping to facilitate the activities, collecting/analyzing the data, sustainability of our efforts, etc. It will be good for Adam to come to the community once COVID restrictions allow". I had read the proposal and was eager to help with interviews, learn transcript coding techniques, and use my programming skills to analyze surveys. My interests were in how communities mobilized for change, and I thought these were the skills I could bring to the table. I believed that knowledge existed in community, I

had previously reflected on my privilege, and understood the importance of giving back. I remember speaking about the importance of this when I first met Richard.

What I had not yet thoroughly contemplated, though, was how I might be enabling systems of marginalization despite good intentions. I had also not thought of all that I would receive from community and from these relationships. These were lessons I learned from Namosom Rick and Arrol early on, as well as from Namosom Cliff, Nokom Muriel and many others who work deeply connected to their community. I quickly learned that I was not actually needed as a researcher, but that I was *appreciated* as a young person willing to learn.

When I first began thinking about the contradictions described in the previous sections, I will be honest that I contemplated stepping away from this master's program to contribute instead as a volunteer. Namosom Rick Lightning has used the metaphor of "being in a vehicle you don't like" to help me understand how to engage these contradictions and inequities. On the topic of being a master's student on this research project, he told me, *this vehicle is going to get us from A to B, you might not like everything about it, but you can't jump out in the middle of the highway*.

Later on, I connected this lesson to what is called 'critical engagement', as opposed to 'uncritical engagement' or (what I was contemplating) 'critical disengagement', which has been written about by Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper (2011). This is a necessary aspect of communicating "across the abyss" to embrace an "ecology of knowledge" (de Sousa Santos, 2007). Critical engagement allows us, as we have done throughout this project, to operate in solidarity across knowledge systems. However, now that we've arrived at point B, it's worth considering who the driver should be, to reflect on the agency that we have, and how we should continue this journey.

Contemplating my role as a researcher, trained primarily in Western methods, in a context where Nêhiyaw approaches are and should be central to the pursuit of knowledge has prompted me to search more deeply for my role in these supports. As I mentioned earlier, Namosom Rick Lightning encouraged me to use 'binoculars' throughout my analysis of this research. However, I still don't feel that I can claim to have used a Nêhiyaw approach. There are rights to knowledge, and three years ago, I did not even know where Maskwacis was. It is, however, evident that the knowledge which came to light throughout this project is a result of trusting and learning from Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being. A conversation with Sonny Lightning helped me further

understand this. He told me, *the more perspectives you have to pull from in life the better you'll be at making decisions and choosing the right path, you have new perspectives from your work with us, but you also have your own*. This is also the approach used within the Deadly Dads as members learn from each other. There is no book to follow, but there are lessons to learn.

Thinking back to the concept of the "buffer zone" that Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2018) describe as one of the core responsibilities in the settler colonial process, which is to "contain and pacify Indigenous communities that are either engaged in direct confrontation with the settler state or are facing crises due to state and corporate practices of resource extraction and dispossession" (p. 442), I think, when searching for my role, it has been important to contemplate the location of our work, as researchers, in proximity to the settler colonial project of Canada and to find the human aspects of being in the role of a researcher. To do this, I put into conversation what I learned from and about our methodological approaches guided by Namosoms and Nokoms and the work of several scholars who examine these institutional boundaries and complicity of academia in a global Western colonial project. This contributes to understanding the emerging research objective of this thesis around the roles of partners in the community-university partnerships.

Central to our methodologies and approach to research, is the encouragement by Namosom's for each person who is a part of this research partnership to understand and be fully who they are. While this is shared in many ways, through showings, through stories, and through ceremony, this approach to working together carries with it profound understandings of our diversity, power, and agency as people. This approach, of accepting people as fully who they are, unsettles the colonial logics on which Canadian institutions were built and of which our universities and publicly or privately funded institutions are complicit. Sylvia Wynter's body of work is useful to this conversation because she examines "overrepresentations of man" that Western science and knowledge systems have inherited from European imperial logics (Mignolo, 2015). She describes how current, biocentric models of man in Western society evolved and were built on the lies of the doctrine of discovery and the subsequently formed logics about who is considered human (Wynter, 2004). Her work is not to dismiss biological models as invalid or unvaluable, but to demonstrate how they have been imposed hegemonically to suppress and marginalize non-Western ways of knowing and being.

More profoundly, she writes about how humans are not bound to the narratives and myths created by these logics of colonialism, nor to the definitions described by Western science, nor to Western approaches to living. She describes humans as *both* biological and sociogenic beings that are not destined to the often deficit-based descriptions of Western science, that our research partnership aims to confront, or to the economic forces of a capitalist society that we rely on for funding. Instead, she proposes a counterview of being human she terms as *homo narrans,* suggesting that people are not inevitably guided by economic, logical, or biological predeterminations but rather become the stories we know of ourselves (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015).

Wynter's work supports similar counterviews of being human that we've operationalized in this project. These counterviews have allowed us to act, learn, and build on the narratives that already exist in Maskwacis and that are shared by Namosoms and Nokoms. These counterviews we've been gifted include the holistic, Nêhiyaw lens of looking at being and wellbeing as physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional. It reframes how we are connected as human beings and our roles in supporting each other. These imaginings give us agency beyond our roles defined within the institutions. This opens possibilities that exist beyond the narratives and boundaries of Western thought.

Within the Deadly Dads this has been demonstrated multiple times. The narrative, which I admittedly had, of our first Round Dance was originally of logistical skepticism around whether we could organize in time after restrictions were lifted. Namosom Rick Lightning and Sonny Lightning provided a counternarrative that the spirit of our purpose would carry us through. Eventually it would happen. The ceremonies and prints we prayed for would allow us to carry forward in a good way. These views center relationships and ceremony and counter those that center logistics and Western thinking. As shown in our second Wisdom Circle, Namosom Rick continuously centers our efforts around our relationships, ceremony, and those who came before us, "We lost Elders that were here that supported this… So, we have people that believed in this and gave their last… their last life they had to this organization. So that shows you how deep and spiritual this place is. They're still with us…"

The current overrepresentation of the Western view of what it means to do research places limitations on the agency of the master's student, the research assistant, even the principal investigator. No matter how high up the hierarchy we are positioned, the persistence of these

narratives limits us to the boundaries of Western academia. In some ways, I think, the higher up the hierarchies you explore, the more potent these narratives become. Kuokkanen (2008) describes the nature of the these boundaries stating "while one can always speak the truth in a void (i.e., remain unrecognized and unlegitimated by one's peers and discipline), one is considered to be "within the true" only if one obeys the rules of a certain discourse. Disciplines, therefore, "constitute a system of control in the production of discourse"" (p. 14). As human beings, however, we have agency. We make creative decisions to break these boundaries, we find ways to flatten these hierarchies, and we grow in our relationships.

Within the Deadly Dads, the gift of agency has been abundant. There is emphasis on recognizing everyone's gifts and supporting each other in being fully who we are. People are always welcomed back and welcome to change the group because we listen to each other's truths. A lot of pressure is placed on research agendas which, as we've seen, often lead to breaks. These breaks have been the source of many new possibilities and understandings.

Beyond attempting to integrate these counterviews into the institutions complicit in their marginalization, Wynter thinks through how these counterviews become and continue to be underrepresented and marginalized. Wynter points to the self-producing narratives which go unquestioned, a dynamic she calls the "autopoesis of being hybridly human" (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 26). In other words, it is because we continue to go through the procedures of the institution, that these procedures which, were not created to serve community, continue to be produced. This is profound insight into our agency as human beings, that is shared by the many authors previously referred to in the section titled *Shifted narratives*.

More importantly, this is an insight into our agency that Namosoms, Nokoms, and community partners have been gifting us throughout this partnership. It highlights the magnitude of this gift shared by everyone who enacts this agency. I am thinking of the many meetings with the Deadly Dads where jokes were told, or personal stories were shared that carried us away from our meeting agendas, that delayed our plans to generate data, or otherwise completely shifted our conversation away from research. It is these momentary breaks from the narratives and linearity of Western research, that allow us to create new narratives or return to those that have long been spoken over.

This insight, however, also reveals the contradictory nature of being a researcher seeking to graduate, publish, submit funding reports, and apply for grants. Just by nature of assuming this

role, we seek validation from the institutions which reproduce these hierarchies, boundaries, and barriers we strive to work against. We make efforts to keep our circles equal and recognize non-Western knowledge credentials but, despite rejecting the titles, continue to play the games, pursue the degrees, credentials, and publications because it is necessary to the continue the work to support community. In acknowledging colonialism, we recognize the land and resources as stolen but continue to advocate and express gratitude for funding. In turn our humanity, good intentions, and efforts are co-opted to maintain the institutions at the source of the marginalization we are working to confront.

Prompted by the challenges and tensions surfaced in our CAC, and the many authors highlighting the importance of narrative consciousness (Starblanket, 2019; Johnson, 2017; Joseph, Cuerrier, & Mathews, 2022; Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019), I am contemplating this project's location within the settler colonial project of Canada. I am cautious when identifying and crediting the success of the progress I've witnessed in our work. Our humanity and effort in these roles should not be coopted to "buffer" the systemic issues, inadequacies, and the oppressive nature of the university as a colonial institution (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019).

In summary, the goodness of the people in our partnership is shared despite the inherited logics and narratives that continue to be reproduced within the university, as described above. This goodness exists despite meals with Namosoms being flagged for being too expensive, despite all the signatures required to give 'gifts' on behalf of the university, despite the burnout from all the administrative tasks, despite all the meetings that happen around budgets, and despite expenditures needing to be legitimized and approved through university procedures. The momentum of the Deadly Dads comes from everyone participating by being fully who we are, which transcends institutional roles. This full participation and effort moves us from "ritual to ceremony" (Namosom Rick Lightning) and counters the "chilly" (Kuokkanen, 2008, p. 18), and impersonal nature of the university. Counternarratives gifted by the community challenge our roles as researchers and create new possibilities to support what goes beyond university boundaries.

4.6 Recommendations

There is still lots of knowledge to be pursued around the topic of the paternal role in the wellbeing of future generations, especially with regards to what is shared and shown by Mosoms and Kokoms and what is learned and contextualized by fathers, mothers, youth, and future

generations. The initial CBPR approach to this research created avenues of understanding which have opened opportunities to honour Nêhiyaw ways of knowing to improve health services for young families in Maskwacis. Since the initial proposal for this research project, several more doors have opened not just from the work within our partnership, but from the ongoing efforts of Indigenous activists and scholars around the world who continue to create space for Indigenous ways of being and knowing. The Deadly Dads have demonstrated, in their own context, the importance of Nêhiyaw leadership and community control over the development of supports and this should be continued in future research projects. There remains plenty of work to be done to understand and establish sustainable approaches to wellbeing through social transformation that will better support the transmission of Nêhiyaw knowledge to future generations.

Future collaborations that engage with research, or perhaps more importantly, expand imaginations of what research is, could continue to benefit the community of Maskwacis. On top of supporting Nêhiyaw ways of knowing, research partners could also support community-directed knowledge sharing which may include ceremony or conferences held in community as accepted forms of knowledge translation. This would require partners to give up powers and control without disengaging and neglecting responsibilities to share resources and promote community-led endeavours within their networks.

Research around the topic of supporting wellbeing of future generations through culturally centered approaches focused on parenthood would benefit significantly from starting from Nêhiyaw theory. This would require Nêhiyaw intellectuals, academic or not, in positions of leadership. Supporting research conducted from a Nêhiyaw approach, based in Nêhiyaw theory, and led by Nêhiyaw researchers would generate solutions that address the root causes of health inequities that exist beyond Western patterns and restrictions of thought.

This understanding of the power of Nêhiyaw culture and knowledge that was shared throughout this project again supports the recommendations and insights that Kovach (2009) and Johnson (2017) share around Nêhiyaw methodologies.

> *"Nêhiyawak methodologies offer new insights and cultural experiences for researchers, and are valuable to [the] growth of Indigenous literature and study. This specific research framework puts the needs of the Nêhiyawak in the forefront of the research and allows for them to express how they understand*

and interact with the world around them. A Nation-specific methodology extends out of Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies but at the same time has distinct goals it aims to achieve. The tensions that exist are those that the Nêhiyaw people must forward since it is their way of life being researched, their experiences within the constructs of colonialism, and they know what ideologies and traditions are important for their own resurgence and well-being. Nation methodologies are based on the foundations of creation and incorporate the ontological knowledge linked to philosophies that make each Indigenous Nation distinct" (Johnson, 2017, p. 86).

This also shifts the narrative around "building capacity" which is highlighted in our MOU, and which is a principle of CBPR. As Kovach (2014) points out "Indigenous peoples endure so-called 'capacity building' policy that is largely born of outsider imaginings built upon specious theoretical suppositions of what is and isn't good for Indigenous people" (p. 93). What occurred throughout our research process, through other principles of our CBPR framework including humility and mutual learning, was the improved capacity of university partners to embrace and understand the gifts received from Nêhiyaw ways of knowing and being and the responsibilities to reciprocate these gifts. This is evidenced by our re-conceptualization of data generation/analysis and our modified approaches to recording knowledge.

Recommendations for the development of future supports

For partners working with Indigenous communities to develop supports for fathers, recommendations from our research builds on the knowledge available in the literature. The recommendations provided by Manahan & Ball (2007) remained relevant in our work:

1) recognize diversity between and within family systems,
2) support leadership within community,
3) ensure the supports are at a consistent and reliable time regardless of the number of attendees,
4) allow the supports to be group-led,
5) educate and involve everyone, including staff, in the supports and ceremonies,
6) and promote spirituality and traditional practices.

Our work, however, expands on these to emphasize the importance of the network of support which comes from nurturing relationships, from Nêhiyaw culture, and ceremony. It is important to note that, supporting Nêhiyaw culture includes the necessary input of younger generations on top of, and in dialogue with, Mosoms and Kokoms. Maintaining these supports requires the vulnerability and humility of everyone involved, to make decisions and mistakes transparently. This is a lesson demonstrated by Mosoms and Kokoms who state plainly when they do not know something, speak openly of mistakes they've made, or share how their thinking has changed. Having this humility, being able to say we do not know, or we made a mistake, allows us to face each other and grow together. It also opens up the support network to anyone sharing the intentions to support healthy families and future generations and willing to learn together.

What was also emphasized was the desire for these supports to exist independently from outside institutions or health clinics. This provides nuance to findings from the study leading up to this project which identified support systems as missing from clinics (Oster et al., 2018). Perhaps they are not just missing from clinics, but meant to exist beyond these spaces. Calls for independence from, or autonomy over, health institutions also resonate with findings in the literature and ongoing work in Maskwacis with regards midwives, birth workers, and developing a birthing center. A study by Farah Nasir et al. (2021) investigated an Indigenous community-led design for mental health care in Queensland Australia. In this study, Elders advocated for autonomy over funding decisions and supports. This similarly echoes recommendations by Murrup-Stewart, Whyman, Jobson, & Adams (2021), in a study in Narrm, Australia exploring the impacts of culture on social and emotional wellbeing, to divest from "colonial power" to allow more time and resources into fostering connections for young people.

The humility and support for autonomy displayed by the Deadly Dads provides further insight into the expectations of what can come from this approach to developing supports. Development for the Deadly Dads moves at the pace of the group, based on the knowledge within the group, and decisions made in the open. There is no program plan, curriculum, or end-product to report on because we operate on knowledge that grows from these ongoing and dynamic relationships.

Another key part of developing and implementing these supports has been the Lightning family who 'championed', the Deadly Dads and provided space for meetings in their home. Healthy families willing to volunteer their time and space to facilitate initiatives like these should

be supported as they can extend to other families. One example of this was the Jasper Family camp. Following several planning meetings hosted at the Lightnings' house, multiple families were then able to travel together to create and share positive memories at the family mountain camp. Welcoming, and collaborating with other families and initiatives in Maskwacis, sharing what we've done, and how we've done it helps contribute to an interdependence that can support the community more broadly.

By using a Nêhiyaw, community lens, we recognize that others in community are also doing important work and that there are many ***unnoticed impacts***. Interdependence is a key feature of support networks in community. Our work de-emphasizes singular aspects of programming or culture and embraces the complexity of working with community and through an interdependent network of families, organizations, relationships, and knowledges.

Reflections for future research

What lies beyond nurturing a support network within community, however, is the need to reimagine these supports in a way that is not inevitably led to validation through a Western lens. Whether that be in the short term, dealing with accounting and administrative obstacles, or in the longer-term, when funding and policy decisions are made. Pushing the conceptualization of research can support the validation of knowledge on community terms. Based on the lessons from our work, there are several aspects of research that deserve further reflection, including:

1) Consciously choosing a narrative. Moving forward, it is important for all partners to be on the same page. We must answer the question of what narrative we are trying to build. Is our narrative around cultural resurgence and supporting community ways of being and knowing? Is maintaining the institutional role of the university in this partnership a part of this and to what extent? Do some of us believe we need to move away from the university? Do others believe the university can be transformed? Are these differences commensurable?
2) Re-examining the role of the researcher and the expectations we have within our partnerships. What would it look like to honour everyone's involvement in the knowledge sharing, rather than distinguishing individuals to speak on a group's behalf? Everyone will have different roles, but how do we eliminate hierarchies and ensure everyone is taken care of when they go home from our gatherings?

3) Re-imagining how knowledge is shared and influences decisions within academic, health care, and policy spaces. As we move away from validating impacts and ranking knowledge with Western measuring sticks, how will decision-making change?
4) Re-focusing resources onto community-centered, group-led efforts. How can we divest from increasing administrative and professionalized tasks that direct funding and efforts away from group-led decisions? How do we ensure that the gifts we all bring to the table are not being wasted on these administrative tasks?
5) Reciprocating the generosity of Mosoms and Kokoms sharing their time and knowledge within our partnerships and matching the efforts of mothers and fathers to pass this knowledge and wellbeing onto their children. What is the role of the researcher when we begin to recognize ourselves as relations with responsibilities defined outside our institutional roles? What is our role when we recognize everyone as a co-researcher?
6) Re-committing to long term efforts to supporting the wellbeing of future generations. Can we leverage the ideas that exist in academia such as 'longitudinal cohort study' to re-imagine research as a long-term commitment to our relationships? How can research be re-understood by funders to be a more collective process of coming to know? How can the need for funding disappear?

Namosom Rick Lightning often speaks of the difference between ritual and ceremony. Fully embracing the interdependence and emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental aspects of ceremony at all levels of the research will require institutional transformations or replacements. Until we enact these transformations or imagine something entirely different by consciously supporting the narratives being liberated in community (Johnson, 2017), tensions will arise within community-university research partnerships. This further invokes the "impossibility of collective authorship" (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 7) which describes the nature of communicating collective, community efforts, through the individual authorship medium, as individual (or even partnered) academics. This reaffirms what was identified in our collaboration as the need to reimagine what research is, how it is done, how knowledge is shared, and how we all participate.

Proposed benchmarks for representing a community effort

"An intelligent person can't be intelligent on their own." -Namosom Rick Lightning, April 13th, 2023

I brought some of these reflections to Namosom Rick Lightning, explaining that I was struggling to represent a community effort as an individual. So many people contributed the knowledge of these supports, not even just the Deadly Dads who are at the center the discussion of this research, but everyone in community working to support future generations. The knowledge exists and flows through the community, through all our interactions with each other. How can an individual master's student, especially one from outside the community, represent this process in a good and humble way? He proposed some benchmarks of whether this work was being done properly:

1) Has the person (re)presenting the effort been changed? Have their families been changed?
2) Has their involvement and relationships with community changed their process of learning, the lenses they look through, their approach to the research?
3) Do they now have a forever and in-depth relationship with the people they have been working with and are representing in their writing? He explained, *an in-depth relationship is a healthy one that involves both sides putting each other first. We can't look at one side as the giver and the other the receiver.*

I believe that I met these benchmarks while writing this thesis and throughout my efforts in this project. I still question, however, the degree to which this medium is useful to community. This was a time-consuming process, during a tumultuous transition phase in which I received many phone calls asking when the next Deadly Dads meeting would be. Nonetheless, I hope that if this thesis is of use it supports a narrative that leads to a better, liberated future for the next generation of researchers in Maskwacis.

Chapter 5: Closing reflection

On March 6th, 2023 over dinner at Huckleberry's, I offered tobacco to Namosom Rick Lightning to ask about how to frame this thesis. I told him that I was wondering about how to locate the impacts of the Deadly Dads and thinking deeply about what he, Late Namosom Arrol Crier, Nokom Muriel Lee, and Namosom Cliff Potts had been showing me throughout our time together. Where were the impacts shared in our Wisdom Circle coming from and how should I think/speak about this? As I was trying to think of our research question, "what are the impacts of our supports?", it had been difficult to pin down a specific program plan or strategy that would clearly show the impacts and their source. On top of the COVID-19 pandemic, and circumstances in community, we have always needed to be adaptable throughout the development of these supports. What had remained clear and constant, however, was the effort of Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak supporting their families and the commitment of Namosoms and Nokoms passing down their language, culture, and ceremonies.

This understanding that power comes from the culture, and that ceremonies and the pipe is what will get people through tough times is what I am trying to honour as I write. This understanding allows the depths and wholeness of the impacts of this work to be noticed. While it has been useful to reflect on the knowledge of how these supports were developed and their impacts, this is largely known in community and is being mobilized in many ways. I believe that our important contribution to the literature lies in presenting a deeper understanding of where the knowledge and power comes from. It is this understanding that connects this work to narratives that have long existed in Maskwacis, rather than upholding the oppressive narratives that are reproduced in the university. Breaks from these dominant narratives are at the center of supporting Nêhiyaw Nâpêwak, their families and future generations, not from any particular details of the strategies we have been developing.

As my understanding of this has grown, as a non-Indigenous researcher, an ally, accomplice, and as a human being in solidarity, my conceptualization of my role has changed. My relationship and knowledge of my own history, my ancestors, and understanding of my identity as a mixed Filipino person, have grown. I've become not just a researcher; my responsibilities have shifted from those defined in the institution, to those defined by my growing understanding of my relationships. In a long conversation, these were my thoughts when I asked Namosom Rick about how to frame this thesis.

In response he pointed me to reflect on how he's treated me, as his son and his family and how the friends I've made in Maskwacis have treated me. When I came to his sweat in July 2021 a couple years ago, he told me to pray in my language, challenged me to learn about my own identity and who I was as a person. There were more parts to me than those that I had been encouraged to honour growing up. He sent me home with questions for my Lolo and Lola, sends gifts to them, and encourages me to learn about my family's history. He told me that when I came to his house, and into his family the point was never to, in his words, 'turn me [native]'. He wanted to support me in becoming fully who I am because I was putting in the effort. This is what I was learning from the love Namosoms, Nokoms, and my relations in Maskwacis have for themselves, their community, their culture, their ancestors, and the generations that will follow them.

After explaining this, he asked a critical question about our research. Is our research making people more colonized? Or is our research helping people be even more who they are? Within our partnership we've been patiently gifted, through the ongoing effort of Mosoms, Kokoms, and community members with the knowledge that the power to support the wellbeing of future generations in Maskwacis comes from Nêhiyaw culture, language, and ceremonies. Our responsibility now, to reciprocate this gift, is to continue to support narratives which already exist in community that have been marginalized by Canadian institutions with the lies evolving from the now rescinded doctrine of discovery. To support the breaks and agency, demonstrated by the Deadly Dads, that came through getting together to create a better future for the next generations.

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Appendix

Timeline

	Long-standing work to support men in community exists, Richard Oster has been working with the community of Maskwacis for over 8 years. Grant Bruno, Richard, Ellen Toth and Rhonda Bell were embraced by the community to embark on a research journey on community wellbeing (including the needs of supportive fathers through the ENRICH grant).
	Lots of work during this time occurred with the Maskwacis CAC to develop the MSI grant. Ceremony was an foundation aspect of the work at this time. The MSI Foundation saw value in these efforts and approved a grant.
15-Jul-19	Richard Oster works with the Maskwacis CAC to co-design and submit an adaptable study to U of A Research Ethics Board
	During this time, Jerry Young was hired as a Research assistant and began engaging the community along with the CAC to develop an adaptable support program. Sonny Lightning was also hired as a Research assistant and there were ongoing CAC meetings during this time. Some activities were also piloted including golf, pizza night, sweats, and a cultural camp. This was all prior to my involvement and so I was unable to include knowledge from these experiences in this thesis. However, these relationships and efforts formed the foundations and adaptability for the work moving forward.
12-Mar-20	COVID-19 lockdowns start in Alberta
24-Jul-20	A revised Memorandum of Understanding between Maskwacis Health Services, Elders representing iterations of existing CACs, and university partners, signed
02-Apr-21	First post-COVID CAC meeting to regain momentum; Passing of Late Dennis Okeymow over the winter; Rick Lightning, Jerry Young, Robbie Potts, Grant Bruno, Dylan Lightning, Josh Littlechild, Sonny Lightning, Don Johnson and Richard Oster form the committee.

05-May-21	Adam introduced as Master's Student at CAC Meeting. Earlier the CAC decided it was important to find a student to help carry out the work. Choosing a logo and name for the research project was on the agenda in this meeting. We did not get to this item in full, but Josh Littlechild and Grant Bruno joke about calling it the "Deadly Dads". Richard scheduled next zoom call as, "Deadly Dads meeting", but at this time the tentative name for the project remained: "Nohtâwiy *(my father): Maskwacis Future Fathers Support Program".*
02-Jun-21	Mosom Arrol Crier introduced at CAC Meeting
07-Jul-21	Sweat for the project at Mosom Rick Lightning's
28-Jul-21	Kacey Yellowbird introduced at CAC meeting
25-Aug-21	Richard's new job announced at AHS, Adam starts leading CAC meetings
26 to 29-Aug-21	Warrior Oskapewis Cultural Camp at Arrol Criers.
23-Sep-21	Group tries bi-weekly meetings and multiple times to accommodate CAC schedules
04-Oct-21	Since our zoom meetings were called "Deadly Dads meetings", Mosom Rick and Arrol had started calling the group the Deadly Dads. There is no clear date documented in our meeting minutes of when we official began using this name, but by this time it had stuck. From this point on it would be used on our flyers, reports, etc. Decision to start making Deadly Dads report, planning hamper basket; Arrol resigns from group; decision to open meetings up for anyone to join
19-Oct-21	Tyrone Lightning introduced to CAC
03-Nov-21	No meeting notes
17-Nov-21	Arrol rejoins CAC meetings, no meeting notes, just preparation for floor hockey and hamper delivery
19-Nov-12	Children's Day Walk Through at HBMC, Mosom Arrol brings sweatgrass to hand out and helps promote hamper delivery.

24-Nov-21	Mosom Arrol Crier passes on and starts his journey
01-Dec-21	Request for ASL interpreter by potential member of the support group
08-Dec-21	Deadly Dads Floor Hockey and Hamper Delivery Event; River Minde wins two tickets to Oilers vs Avalanchers
15-Dec-21	Tyrone Lightning and Kacey Yellowbird helped get a sponsorship for Round Dance $1000
02-Jan-22	New Years Sweat for the Deadly Dads
11-Jan-22	Decision to start meeting weekly starting February in preparation for Round Dance
25-Jan	Continue planning for Round Dance despite COVID-19 shutdowns, limited in what we can do, further discussion on research; Grant Bruno proposes Wisdom Circle as research method
01-Feb-22	Introduction of Mosom Cliff Potts to the group at CAC meeting; secondary plans for traditional powwow in spring if COVID restrictions not lifted in time for Round Dance
08-Feb	Round Dance Planning
15-Feb-22	Round Dance Planning; decision to move it to mid-april
22-Feb-22	Just check-ins, nothing to plan due to restrictions
05-Apr-22	Restrictions lifted; Sonny Lightning encourages patience when it comes to attendance
09-Apr-22	Deadly Dads First Annual Round Dance
04-May-22	Pizza night at Rick Lightning's house, first official weekly meeting as Deadly Dads Support Group; Planning becomes part of support group, no longer considered CAC
11-May-22	Deadly Dads Sweat Ceremony with Mosom Rick Lightning
17-May-22	Rick and Adam go for site visit for Cultural Camp in Jasper
19-May-22	Jasper Cultural Camp area booked for Deadly Dads
29-May-22	Horse Therapy with Patrick Buffalo, but rescheduled only Adam and Cliff show up
01-Jun-22	Wisdom Circle with Grant Bruno; nine men participate

05-Jun-22	Horse Therapy with Patrick Buffalo rescheduled, 14 men attend
27-Jun-22	Deadly Dads members volunteer and donate to Samson Emergency Management Homeless shelter BBQ; Mosom Cliff shared this event with the group
30-Jun-22	Deadly Dads Bowling, 7 people attended
07-Jul-22	Deadly Dads Golfing, 6 people attended
22 to 24-Jul-22	Deadly Dads Jasper Family Camp, 31 people attended "But you know, his mother, this grandmother of this young boy he was struggling with his identity and he was able to come to the camp. And his uncle looked after. And I see them. I watched him and he had fun. He needed that time. And that's the cool part about this program, we provide time out for men to do things. And, and I don't think we've got it in our paper, but it's a timeout for men to be able to have fun, be men and have fun." –Rick Lightning
11-Aug-22	Deadly Dads Pool night at Slicks, 9 people attended
18-Aug-22	Deadly Dads Paintball, 6 people attended
20-Aug-22	Deadly Dads Sweat
24 to 26-Aug-22	Deadly Dads Jerry Young, Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Rick Lightning, and Adam Purificati-Fune attend International DOHaD Conference
3 to 4-Sep-22	Firearm Safety Training with Jennifer Cardinal, 11 people participated
13-Sep-22	Dylan and Adam present about Deadly Dads at Early Years Interagency Meeting
05-Oct	Rick, Sonny, Dylan, and Adam present at Engaging Young Men and Boys National Conference put on by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
06-Oct-22	Tea Dance Ceremony to start learning songs from Delaney Sr. and Bryce Eagle

12-Oct-22	Last of the MSI funds for support group spent on food for weekly meeting. Group decides to continue to meet on a weekly basis, find other ways to fundraise
22-Nov-22	Wisdom Circle on Impacts of the Deadly Dads; decision to incorporate as a non-profit society, open bank account, and start applying for grants
09-Dec-22	Deadly Dads purchase four drums from pawn shop to lend out to those who don't have any
05-Jan-23	Deadly Dads Sweat Ceremony with Mosom Rick Lightning; break from meetings
31-Jan-23	Certificate of Incorporation as a Non-Profit Society Received
09-Feb-23	Deadly Dads floor hockey returns due to popular demand; food is donated, Mosom Rick Lightning donates a drum to the group; youth join drum circle; Deadly Dad vs Deadly Youth game follows; River Minde and Waylin Littlechild book Deadly Dads for every Thursday at the Jim Rattlesnake; first official members of Deadly Dads Men's Supports Society sign up.
17-May-23	Indigenous Peoples Resiliency Fund grants the Deadly Dads Non-Profit Society $30,000. This is the final entry into this timeline as I complete this thesis…

Highlights of evolutions from meeting minutes

Proposal	Trials	Now
Original CAC conceived their 'best guess' approach designed to be adaptable based on community needs and realities: To work in close partnership with the community of Maskwacîs to develop, pilot, and implement a multipronged strategy for fathers-to-be, to include strengthening traditional relationship skills, parenting skills and roles as men, to help them support their partners during pregnancy. The focus is on supporting men with pregnant partners, and hope that their wellbeing improves as well as their support of their partner. (from proposal and April 2 2021 minutes)	Men from Maskwacis expressed a real desire to feel more included in prental classes, to have them more based on culture, and to have Elders present in prenatal classes. Prenatal courses were proposed where Elders and other men from the community, could share words of encouragement, simple lessons or advice, and congratulations to share with new fathers (August 25th, 2021). On September 8th Rick shared with me that after thinking it over with Arrol, talking about fatherhood in this way isn't something that can be done briefly on video, or scripted, and that endeavours like this would require more care around intellectual property and ownership. This lesson would shift how we went about our research partnership and the role of the researcher in the supports.	The Deadly Dads is an incorporated society where members make decisions based on they and their communities priorities on an ongoing basis. This process of working together is considered central to learning, passing on traditional knowledge, and supporting the wellbeing of fathers, families, and future generations. Partnerships with the University of Alberta, Maskwacis Health Services, and other community organizations continue as equals in the pursuit of knowledge and supporting future generations. Everyone is recognized as having a role in supporting each other. The knowledge, spirit, and healing at the center of these supports come from Nêhiyaw

	On November 3rd, 2021 Rick shared with me a lesson that there is a lot of focus on legitimizing research by detailing what researchers are giving to community that they forget to acknowledge what they are getting back. This would shift how we look at impact, where knowledge comes from, and what everyone's role is.	culture, language, community, and ceremony.
Monthly CAC Meetings, hiring of local men as research assistants, regular ceremony, regular nurturing of relationships through meeting outside of CAC meetings.	The need for regular meetings was brought up in August 25th meeting. Only Rick and Arrol were able to show up. October 19th and 20th: began trying out multiple meeting times December 1st, 2021: Restating our purpose: We are promoting feelings of belonging for men We are learning about fatherhood, traditional laws, culture Providing healthy alternatives to the men in Maskwacis for activities.	We meet on a weekly basis. In addition to weekly activities, and ongoing support planning, we have quarterly directors meetings, and an annual general meeting.

	This CAC: People on the CAC will help progress the activities. Honourarium is for Elders and guest speakers, no need for people who attend, they should want to be there. CAC can bring people they know to these events and people will end up sticking around, new connections will be made, new events will be planned. Wisdom from Josh Littlechild shared on February 1st, 2022: Two things Cree men like to do when they get together is talk in Cree and talk about how they are related. These should be incorporated in all our activities. Also meetings switched to every week. Note: Meeting notes became redundant, and in hinsight overwhelming when meetings happened	

	every week. Switched to updating a monthly report for the group.	
Recruitment: approach fathers-to-be within the first trimester of their pregnancy and invite to join the study and provide written consent. **But we will not turn away anyone that wants to take part**.	"Incentives are crucial as people need to feel appreciated for coming. We run the risk of losing them otherwise. Incentives should include a mixture of gift cards, healthy food, and gifts that can apply what the men have learned (e.g. sweet grass, sage, smudge pans, medicines [rat root, etc], tea/mint) and so on. The men should receive a different gift at each session. Great if funding (e.g. gift card stays local)." (June 2, 2021) Started planning a hamper delivery and floor hockey game during October 19th meeting. Difficult conversation about honourariums on February 1st, 2022.	Building on the knowledge from the Deadly Dads, recruitment is done through patience and the maintenance of consistent supports. Community ownership over these supports facilitate word-of-mouth recruitment. We also work with partners, organize, and attend community events to share awareness of these supports.
Activities facilitated by male Elders mentor and role model fathers from community	Need for ASL interpreter expressed in December 1st meeting.	There is still a need for ASL services and other services for differently abled people who are interested in joining. At our cultural camp, and horse therapy we

		adapted using different tools such as live-transcription and contracting family members to help translate. Activities are being run by the group. We had a Tea dance ceremony so that Delaney Eagle Sr. could share Tea dance songs with the community. Activities evolve and facilitators emerge on an ongoing basis as part of our recognition that everyone has gifts to share.
Focus on moving beyond the challenges that Indigenous men encounter due to ongoing colonization and historical trauma, by building off existing resilience and cultural strengths	Many people from I-HELTI conferences are express interest in the Deadly Dads. This is identified as a possible funding source for the future. Idea of attending DOHaD Gathering in Vancouver introduced. (February 1st) Jerry Young, Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Adam Purificati-Fune, and Mosom	The Deadly Dads function through the gifts each member brings to the table. Members of the Deadly Dads planned, organized, and implemented supports for themselves and their community. The group leveraged research partnerships to facilitate these supports and share knowledge about these supports.

	Rick Lightning shared these supports at the DOHaD Conference. (August 26 to 29th) Dylan Lightning and Adam Purificati-Fune shared about the Deadly Dads at an interagency meeting with other programs, organized by Brighter Futures, in Maskwacis. (September 13th, 2022) National Webinar on Engaging Young Men and Boys, put on by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada attended by Sonny Lightning, Dylan Lightning, Adam Purificati-Fune, and Mosom Rick Lightning	
Qualitative interviews will be conducted to understand their experiences in taking part, sense of social support, involvement, wellbeing, which aspects were impactful	Consider capturing the impact of the process and being involved in the activities from the perspective of facilitators/those on the committee (May 5) September 23, 2021: If we are going to ask questions we are going to need to back it up with solutions. People are tired of being asked	Wisdom Circles were used as a method evaluating the supports and of sharing knowledge around their impacts.

	questions. *We need to acknowledge immediate concerns, not just long-term planning.* January 11th: Adam given reminders that this is a research project and data needs to be collected. Here meetings start to take on diverging energies. One of excitement when talking about next plans, and then awkwardness when talking about research. Maintained that no one should be pressured to do research that wants the supports. January 25th: Grant brings up the idea of doing Wisdom Circles. Still questions of how this will be used to analyze supports. Discussion of Developmental Evaluation as an option for researching begins in separate meeting with research team (February 1st, 2021) March 28th 2022: "It's important to understand the power of research and that this project and its funding is and	

	extension of previous work. Each study can build off each other and can have an impact in different institutions if it keeps up to academic standards of research. We are also showing that community-led interventions work." Ideas about research as a way to get funding are shared. Mentioned that next year it won't be feasible for Adam to run weekly meetings.	
Standardized questionnaires before and after participation were to be considered (as decided by the CAC) but not made mandatory	Focus since Warrior Oskapewis cultural camp shifted away from research, Adam reintroduces evaluation methods and questions on October 19th. Feedback: need to focus on individuals, people are tired of surveys. With regards to the cultural connectedness survey, what are we measuring? Are we really measuring how much more "native" people got from joining the program? Who is this information useful for? Who is the actual research part for? The interviews, surveys, and publications? Is it for the community?	Standardized questionnaires remain an option to the Deadly Dads in the future should they become a good fit for the priorities of the group.

	On February 1st, pre-post surveys planned for April 2nd and May 14th. Followed by a Wisdom Circle led by Grant Bruno.	
Context: Everything tentative due to COVID-19 restrictions (April 2, 2021). MCFW research partnership works to go at the pace of trust, relationships, and community. Timelines are always meant to be flexible.	"Conversation emerged about the remains of 215 Indigenous children that were recently discovered at the Kamloops residential school site. Many people are walking with very heavy hearts as a result. A silver lignin is the overwhelmingly positive support from Canadians and the tremendous amount of healing that has happened already. Kamloops news is bringing residential schools front and center in the public which is good news (although calls to address this are not new)" (June 2021) September 23rd, 2021: Difficult right now because of social distancing, people are tiered of being online and are mentally exhausted. We need to adapt and consider people don't have access to computers.	Fifty lawyers introduced a motion to eliminate mandatory Indigenous cultural awareness training for lawyers. (Paradis, 2023) The Deadly Dads supports are adaptive and emerged from the need to adapt to various circumstances in community as well as fluctuating political support. Part of this ability to adapt is having multiple avenues to continuing these supports while maintaining the original purpose and intent of the group through ceremony. "We don't depend on politics. Here we are non political organization or group of people and we do it on our own. And I really liked that because we don't, we don't

	At December 21st meeting, Rick shared his work on another committee trying to bring children who are in the foster system back home. People are making money off fostering children and are resisting these efforts. More context added January 25th meeting: more people pretending they are Indigenous, making a lot of money from it. Government will go along with it if you "act good". February 1st meeting, still waiting for COVID restrictions to be lifted. If no venue for Round Dance by February 28th, we will switch to a powwow later on.	make promises we can't keep" – Mosom Rick Lightning, November 17th, 2022
Adam will be involved in meetings, helping to facilitate the activities, collecting/analyzing the data, **sustainability of our efforts**	Richard becomes Scientific Director of Indigenous Wellness Core at AHS, announced at August 25th meeting, Adam began leading CAC meetings from this point on.	I benefited form this support group and continue to learn and adapt to my role within the group. I was the signing authority for the Deadly Dads in applying to incorporate as a non-profit society. I will continue to be the secretary-treasurer for the Deadly Dads as things get started, but

		we are working to building redundancy in this role.
Original ideas for activities, developed by Jerry Young and CAC: Rites of passage Workshops on proper treatment from spouse Men's sharing circle Song teachings Land-based teachings Sweat ceremony Ceremonies for babies Roles for Cree men Cultural Camp	Using the term "traditional showings" rather than "traditional teachings" (May 5 2021)	Supports are developed on an ongoing basis and the originally planned topics are shared through a variety of ways. Our funding proposals include activities such as: Weekly Meetings, an Annual Round Dance, Jasper Family Camps, Workshops on specific topics, Trail Riding in the Mountains, Men's Health Conference, Sports and Fun Activities, Hunting, and Land-based Showings and Crafts.
The generosity of Mosoms and Kokoms has been foundational to building these supports. For the Elders Mentoring Program, which Mosom Rick and Mosom Don Johnson were part of – to	September 23rd, 2021: Rick emphasizes the need to take care of Elders the same way we take care of researchers with PhDs, there's a lot of tokenism going on in research to justify itself. Also that $150 honourarium once a month was worth more before the pandemic when this budget was being planned (this was subsequently raised	Mosom Rick Lightning and Cliff Potts, and other Mosoms joining the program remain central to our guidance. Younger men have taken on responsibilities within this support group in recognition that they are receiving knowledge from these

support men in the clinic, Kokom Margaret Montour, Kokom Muriel Lee, and Mosom Rick Lightning decided that their phone numbers should be given out to moms and dads at the clinic. Mosom Rick said "the clinic shuts down at 4:30pm, but people need help after that. They usually need help at night. We should make ourselves available to them". These sentiments were shared in the Deadly Dads program from early on. Mosom Arrol Crier shared at his Warrior-Oskapewis cultural camp that, "we may not be able to support people with money, but we can make connections and be available to speak whenever they like."	in October following discussions and the lead of Mosoms). Arrol resigned before October 4th meeting. At our meeting we spoke of how much cultural knowledge is lost when Elders pass on October 19th, 20th Arrol rejoined to help with planning the hamper delivery event and to attend the HBMC Children's day walkthrough where he brought sweetgrass, and shared joy and laughter with the families we met there. No meeting notes were taken in November. Arrol passes on on November 24th, 2021. Mosom Cliff Potts introduced to the group on February 1st, 2022. Introduced to Adam by Muriel Lee.	supports and will have to continue this knowledge in the future.

8 week program could do it twice once in summer/fall 2021 and spring 2022 (May 5): 1. Sweat 2. Roles of Cree men Workshop 3. Land-based Showings 4. Proper Treatment of Spouse/Partners 5. Rites of Passage 6. Men's Sharing Circle 7. Song and ceremonies 8. Cultural camp	Started planning a Cultural Camp with Arrol from August 26th to 29th (July, 2021). Identification of community connections: Brighter futures; starting planning a hamper delivery event to address immediate concerns (September 23, 2021). Idea for a Round Dance introduced on December 1st meeting. March 28th, 2022: recognized it will be difficult to actually 8 weeks straight of programming. Especially if it is on the weekends. Richard clarifies that the initial thought would be to have it after work on weekdays, not full day events. $15,000 of the budget remaining was shared with the group.	This is a consistent and ongoing support group that happens every week and plans supports on an ongoing basis.

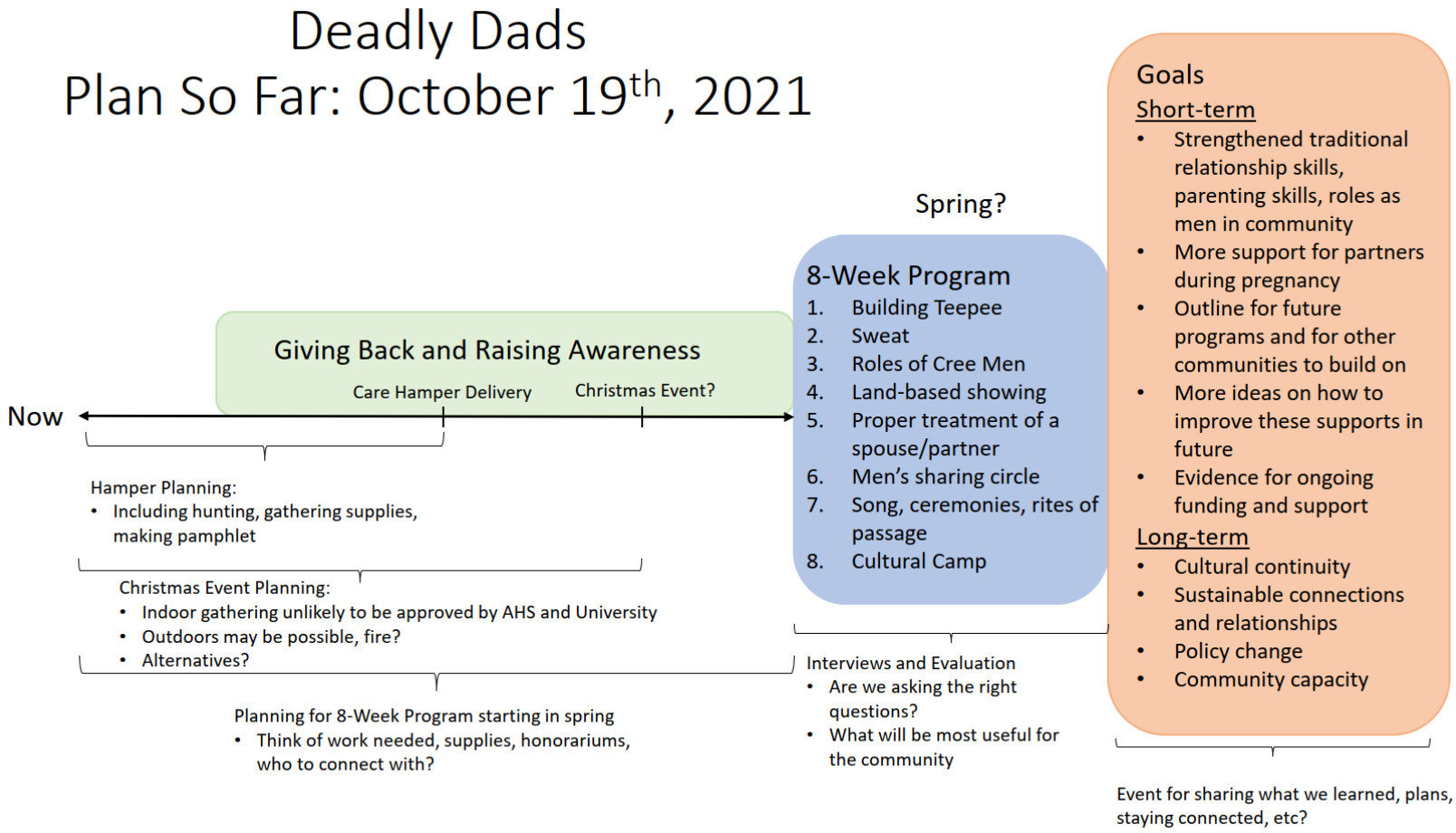
If we are going to start this, we must go long-term: sustainability (April, 2021)	Building a network will make the support group sustainable long-term (August 25th meeting)	Incorporated as the Deadly Dads Men's Supports Society on January 31st, 2022.

Snapshots of Reports, Flyers, Incorporation

Snapshot from May 5, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

- **Week 1: Sweat**. Building the sweat, taking part, learning about the processes. Prayers for this journey, for their partners/families. Describe the overall intent of the following weeks.
- **Week 2: Roles of Cree men**. Focus on teaching Cree laws (including love, patience, calm, etc.), as well as processing the world from a Cree way of thinking. Consider bringing in health professionals to explain more about the delivery process, post-partum depression, executive thinking skills/mental health, stress management, etc. Healthy men = healthy communities. Include the long-term view of being a father. Could have a focus on mental health here. Leaving one's children is not only irresponsible but not the cultural way, and causes irreparable harm.
- **Week 3: Land-based showings**. Could include activities such as hunting, hide work, meat drying, smudge/medicine picking. Include a focus on traditional foods. learning about hunting, living off the land, living holistically.
- **Week 4: Proper treatment of a spouse/partner**. There is a demographic that involves fathers/men being abused in various ways by the mothers. Focus on anti-violence, moving beyond non-violence. Will need to incorporate this into a teaching in case we encounter any fathers that need healing, and make a safe space to discuss such issues and consider supports for abused men. Could include a female grandmother coming in. Continued learning about the responsibility and accountability of being a father and partner.
- **Week 5: Rites of passage**. for expecting fathers that have not had an opportunity. There are no set procedures for a man's rites of passage in Cree culture but mostly it revolves around a first kill as a hunter, signifying his role as a provider. Some rites of passage ceremonies also include a **fasting**. Surviving through the early 20s for men.
- **Week 6: Men's sharing circle**. A very powerful tool in well-being for Cree peoples. As long as an individual that participates in a sharing circle feels safe exposing information about what troubles him, the sharing circle can help a man heal in many ways. Rapport between a facilitator and fellow participants will be important for this to work. May need to be done further into program when the men and elders feel comfortable with each other. Allow men to speak their emotional truths.
- **Week 7: Song and ceremonies**. Could possibly be sweat/Sundance songs. Ceremonies for babies. Connecting men to ceremonies, which will help heal and re-learn how to feel
- **Week 8: Cultural camp**. Will occur as the final activity and a culmination of the 'formal' intervention. This will likely be a mountain camp with possible activities such as fasting, rattle and drum making, hunting, possibly even just basic relaxation in a different environment.

Snapshot from Report October 19th, 2021



Snapshot from February 1st, 2022

Plans

Weekly meet up times for sport (floor hockey, etc.) will be arranged as soon as this becomes available. These meetups will allow the group to grow and more grassroots guidance is possible with input. We will need to be adaptable on a weekly basis, so frequent meetings throughout 8-week program will be important.

8-Week Program (Every Saturday with ongoing sports every Wednesday)

March 26th, 2022: Round Dance in memory of those who passed

April 2nd, 2022: Men's sharing circle (Can incorporate other self-care activities, horse therapy, painting, dancing, etc.)

- Pat Buffalo for self-care and horse therapy, local

April 9th, 2022: Sweat

April 16th, 2022: Roles of Cree men (Lunch and Learn w[redacted]Willie [redacted]ffalo)

April 23rd, 2022: Land Based Showing (Hunting? Shooting range? Medicine picking? Hide work?)

April 30th, 2022: Proper Treatment of Spouse/Partner (Another lunch and learn? Mossbag teach[redacted]Crier; Anti-violence, healing, etc.)

May 7th, 2022: Building a Teepee

May 14th, 2022: Song, Ceremonies, Rites of Passage (could do a door prize for drum)

May 20th to 23rd, 2022, 2022: Cultural Camp/Trip to Banff (mountain camp, possible collaboration)

End of 2022 8-week program:

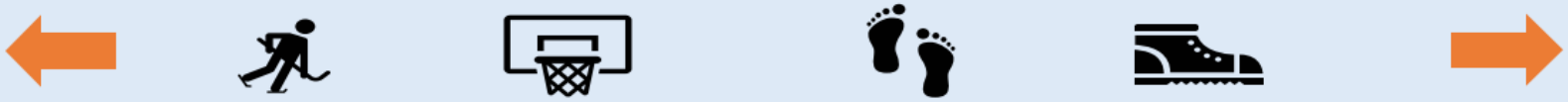
- To decide on when wisdom circles will be? Interviews?
- Weekly meet ups remain ongoing, other things may be planned through connections made

Contingency: Traditional Pow wow at end of 8-week program, if Round Dance is cancelled due to COVID

Snapshot from March 1st, 2022 Report

Example: Deadly Dads Program Plan

Weekly or every other week opportunities for fun and connection: Sports, Floor Hockey, Basketball, Walks, etc.



Tentative Dates:

Activity or Theme:

Round Dance	Sharing Circle	Sweat	Roles of Cree Men: Lunch and Learn	Land Based Showing	Building a Teepee	Songs, Ceremonies, Rites of Passage	Cultural Camp	Continue with meet-ups (sports), make more plans
Possible Facilitators:								
	Pat Buffalo (Horse therapy)	Rick Lightning	[redacted] lo, [redacted] on	Kacey, Robby, Jerry	?			Grant (Wisdom Circles)
Proposed Evaluation:								
	Pre-Survey for those willing to help with evaluation					Post-survey for those willing to help		Wisdom Circles, Interviews

Snapshot of Update on April 19th, 2022

Deadly Dads Update – Week of April 19th, 2022

Our Goals

By the end of the summer:

- We created inclusive opportunities to grow inner spirit as Nehiyew napew
- More men, fathers, uncles, and mosoms in the community had a chance to feel welcome and belonging
- Knowledge was shared and passed on about fatherhood, traditional laws, relationships, and land-based showings.
- The community knows what the results of the research were, and everything was planned transparently and inclusively

We did what we could with **what we had** to support men in the community throughout the spring and summer. We shared what we did, how we did it, and the impact it had with the community.

Our Plans:

What we have:

- Guidance and support from Elders and fathers in the community,
- Connections through our advisory committee,
- $15,000 budget, and
- **August 21st** Deadline to spend budget on supports

Can Schedule:
- Sweat
- Medicine Picking
- Wisdom Circles
- Bowling
- Driving Range
- Lunch and Learns

→

Scheduled:
- Workshop and Wagon Ride: Pat Buffalo; Budget: $100/person (Samson members can be covered)

→

Bigger Plans:
- Cultural Camp
- Cook out
- Ball Game

Research: Surveys (low interest based on registration), ***interviews, wisdom circles***

Question to Move Forward:

- How available is everyone over the next four months? (When and how much do you want to be involved?)
- What should our next step be to make the best of this opportunity?
- What should our time together look like? (eg. how frequent, what activities, hanging out vs planning vs research)

BY–LAW

LIVING DOCUMENT TO HELP GUIDE OUR DECISION MAKING. THE PIPE TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER ALL DECISIONS.

1. OUR PURPOSE

To foster belonging and grow the inner spirit within Nehiyew napewak.

To come together in ceremony to pass down traditional knowledge.

To create opportunities to share knowledge, healing, and understandings about topics related to healing and fatherhood.

To garner interest in coming together through fun activities.

To keep the community together and to care for future generations.

2. MEMBERSHIP

We believe this group and our work is sustained by our relationships.
Membership only requires an introduction and willingness to nurture these relationships.
Everyone is equal, but you get out of it what you put in.
We serve all Nations of Maskwacis, the Bear Hills people and welcome guests from all other Nations.
Anyone interested in the wellbeing of Nehiyew napewak, families, and the future generations of Maskwacis is welcome to gather and connect with us.
Those attending our meet-ups have a right to bring up whatever is on their hearts and a responsibility to listen openly to others.
If you don't attend meetings, you may miss out on decision-making, but you are always welcome back. We recognize that many things happen in life. Don't feel discouraged if you miss a meeting. You are always welcome the next time.
You can end your membership at any time.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

Partners should understand that ceremony is the center of this support group and our decisions.
Partnerships with other organizations should be based on a good relationships and alignment of purpose in supporting Nehiyew napewak and future generations.
Publications or outputs from these partnerships should create opportunities for the 'Deadly Dads' support group, members, and families of Maskwacis.
We serve all Nations of Maskwacis, the Bear Hills people and we can partner with all other Nations.

3

4. DECISION MAKING

Ceremony and protocol take precedence in our decisions, we've prayed and put down prints for this group and our purpose in coming together.
This group is led by its members, not by any institution. We put in effort to decide together on what we want to learn as a group, which activities we want to plan, and how funds should be spent.
Proposals can be made by whoever attends weekly meetings, and/or whoever shares their input with the group outside of meetings (word of mouth, email, phone call, etc.).
Decisions will be made with those in attendance at weekly meetings. Discussion will happen until there is an agreement on a decision. Anyone is welcome to propose alternatives, voice concerns.
Weekly meetings times should remain consistent, and meetings should go on with whoever shows up. We value each person's time and effort showing up over the attendance number. However, in the case of dangerous conditions, such as freezing rains, meetings should be re-scheduled for people's safety.
We try to avoid changing meeting times (Thursday 5:00pm), but if a large majority of the group consistently can't make it, we should consider changes.
If you are unable to attend a meeting, you can contact group members outside of the meeting to share your ideas.
We must be transparent about all decisions, but we also must be adaptable to changing circumstances. Likewise, not all activities require a plan.
In the case of an urgent decision that needs to be made before a meeting can be scheduled, an email will be sent out to all members on the email list with a deadline. Reasonable efforts to contact people committed to the plan (eg. facilitators, volunteers, participants who signed up) should be made. A call will also be made to the Mosoms providing guidance to the group.
Funding decisions and expenditures will be traced with receipts and an outline of the intended purpose of the funds (see attached).

5. FUNDING AND SUPPLIES

We must remain accountable to each other and the community.
All funding will be transparent to members, donors, sponsors, and partners upon request.
Supplies purchased with funds after use with the support group can be shared, re-used, and held at members houses. For example, hunting packs, when not in use for the group
Funding decisions will be made through the process described above.
If the Deadly Dads account is closed, all funds and supplies will go towards an agreed upon ceremony.

6. ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

Should be approved at meetings and may include:
Food (catering, takeout, restaurant, etc.)
Supplies for activities
Facility/equipment rental costs
Transportation costs (when possible, and prioritizing those driving multiple group members)
Gifts and incentives to encourage men to come together, or to bring home to families
Honorarium for Elders, Oskapewis, guest speakers, facilitators (and set by group based on available funds)

THIS IS A LIVING DOCUMENT THAT CAN AND SHOULD BE CHANGE WITH THE GROUP

What should not change is that the pipe and ceremony guide all decisions.

Certificate of Incorporation January 31st, 2023

CORPORATE ACCESS NUMBER: 5024902651

Government of Alberta

SOCIETIES ACT

CERTIFICATE

OF

INCORPORATION

DEADLY DADS MEN'S SUPPORTS SOCIETY
WAS INCORPORATED IN ALBERTA ON 2023/01/31.