Creating Warm Places in Cold Cities:
A Relational Youth Work Practice with Indigenous Youth

by

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Abstract

This thesis is a comprehensive qualitative study of four youth-serving organizations, iHuman Youth Society (iHuman) and YOUCAN Youth Services (YOUCAN) in Edmonton, and Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad Youth Resource Centre (Ndinawe) and Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) in Winnipeg. I analyze the organizational responses to Indigenous youths' needs and youth work practices with this population through a "standing with" (TallBear 2014), analysis of qualitative data collected through a five-month critical ethnography from February to June 2015 that included a two-week participant observation at each organization and peacemaking circles and semi-structured interviews with 19 youth, 27 frontline staff, and four executive directors. This initial data collection was followed by two and a half years of data analysis and interpretation that led to the inclusion of Indigenous youth's rhythm and poetry (rap) and my own photography. The principle focus of this thesis is the complex and multifaceted needs of Indigenous youth living *on* and *off* the streets in Edmonton and Winnipeg and how, and to what extent, the *ethic of care* practices at these organizations do *or* do not address youth's Indigeneity as central to their needs.

In these cold cities, Indigenous youth at these organizations need care to improve their well-being and to alleviate suffering. This thesis argues that an *ethic of care* (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Smyer, 1999; Tronto, 2010, 1993), youth organization's relational response-ability to the needs of Indigenous youth, permeates the organizational philosophies, the daily realities of youth work practices and qualitative research with this population. A relational ethic of care in youth work practice means that some Indigenous youth can develop a sense of welcome and belonging to their identities, the organizational spaces and program responses, and frontline staff. This ethic transforms these

organizations into “warm places,” which are comprised of four interconnected elements: 1) understanding and attention to youths’ Indigeneity and youthfulness, 2) physical spaces that become meaningful places for Indigenous youth, 3) opportunities, programs, and resources to meet youth’s needs, and 4) respectful, optimistic, and trusting interpersonal relationships among Indigenous youth and frontline staff. “Warm places” provide temporary reprieve from the cold of the cities where some Indigenous youth feel welcome and a sense of belonging.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Daena Crosby. No part of this thesis has been previously published. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name: “Speak and Be Heard: Indigenous Young Peoples’ Voices in Two Prairie Cities”, No. Pro00053703, Jan 30, 2015

Dedication

To the Indigenous young people in this research and beyond it.

You are talented, strong, creative, smart, funny, and compassionate human beings.

Your greatness inspires me.

I hope this research mirrors back to you how valuable you are to the world.

You matter.

You are worthy of love and belonging.

Every single one of you will change the world.

You already have.

May your voices be heard for change and justice to come.

kinanâskomitin chi-miigwech

Acknowledgments

This is truly one of the best parts of this process. I did not start or finish this PhD alone. I have a strong community who support and love me. It is my honour and a gift to have every one of you in my life. I love you all, infinitely.

kinanâskomitin chi-miigwech first and always to the Indigenous young people in this research and beyond. You are brilliant and the reason why this research exists. kinanâskomitin to Matthew Cardinal, Albert Favel, Dylan McCarthy-Daniels, Adrian Shirt, and Donovan Waskahat for your artistic contributions to this research. I am honoured to know you. To the frontline workers and Executive Directors at iHuman Youth Society, Spence Neighbourhood Association, Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad Youth Resource Centre, and YOUCAN Youth Services, thank you for welcoming me into your lives, as you do with young people, with openness, respect, and love. You will never know the full extent of the meaning of your work. I hope this research gives you a glimpse into its importance. Take good care of yourselves and each other.

My grandfather, Wally Walcer, was the only person in my family to attend graduate school. He started his PhD at the University of Toronto in the late 1970s and never finished due to his familial obligations as a father of five. Before he passed away, he read my MA thesis. I found the copy he edited for me after he died. He wrote a long list of notes to improve it and a summary of the qualities of a good supervisor and committee. This PhD is also for him too. I did not end up at the University of Alberta and in this field coincidently. All the moments of my life culminated to this point. I remain in awe and grateful for the journey that brought me to Amiskwaciwâskahikan to learn with Indigenous youth and communities.

To my family, both blood and chosen, thank you for your unwavering support and love. You held me and pushed me when I needed you to. You taught me how to ask for help, celebrate

small victories, deal with my frustration, work with community, build on my passions, accept my creativity, and enjoy every moment, regardless of the pain of this process. You taught me to see in myself what you already knew. Big love to my parents Audrey and Fabian, my sisters Diandra, Preet, Becky, Maigan, Brianna, Rowan, Yimmie, Kelly, Shima, Jasmine, and my brothers Derrick, Amir, and Josh. Ruben, Praveen, Brett, Hedy and Steve, Amalha, and all of the Edmonton Hip Hop community – CypherwildYEG, Hip Hop in the Park, and Sampler Café – I love you.

Bryan Hogeveen aka. BH! My four-year plan turned into seven and a half but I am grateful for every minute of it, especially the hard parts. Thank you for understanding me on a fundamental level that is beyond words. Thank you for your support when I needed to go back into the community to find the meaning of this work (again and again), and for your trust that I would come back (again and again). You pushed me intellectually, helped teach me what it means to take good care of myself, and to focus on step 1 – instead of step 7! You have, by all accounts, drastically and positively changed my life. You helped me understand the value of my work, what it means to strive towards social justice, and gave me the space to figure out how to bridge the community *with* academia to that end. I am deeply proud and forever grateful to call you my supervisor and friend.

Last, but certainly not least — Thank you to my incredible supervisory committee Herb Northcott and Jana Grekul for your support and feedback on various editions of this work. Thank you to my external committee members Karen Fox and Ruth Mann for your support. I am grateful to the Sociology Department, the University of Alberta, and the City of Edmonton for the financial support and opportunities to develop as a scholar. I take full responsibility for the construction and analysis of this research and its findings and limits. All mistakes are my own.

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Introduction – Warm Places in Cold Cities: A Relational Youth Work Practice with Indigenous Youth

This thesis is a comprehensive qualitative study of four youth-serving organizations, iHuman Youth Society (iHuman) and YOUCAN Youth Services (YOUCAN) in Edmonton, and Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad Youth Resource Centre (Ndinawe) and Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) in Winnipeg. I analyze the organizational responses to Indigenous youths' needs and youth work practices with this population through a "standing with" (TallBear 2014), analysis of qualitative data collected through a five-month critical ethnography from February to June 2015 that included a two-week participant observation at each organization and peacemaking circles and semi-structured interviews with 19 youth, 27 frontline staff, and four executive directors. This initial data collection was followed by two and a half years of data analysis and interpretation that led to the inclusion of Indigenous youth's rhythm and poetry (rap) and my own photography.[1] The principle focus of this thesis is the complex and multifaceted needs of Indigenous youth living *on* and *off* the streets in Edmonton and Winnipeg and how, and to what extent, the *ethics of care* (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Smyer, 1999; Tronto, 2010, 1993) practices at these organizations do *or* do not address youth's Indigeneity as central to their needs. In these cold cities, Indigenous youth at these organizations need care to improve their well-being and to alleviate suffering. In an effort to understand the organizational responses to the needs of this population, my research addresses the following questions:

[1] The term "Indigenous" refers to the youth and their communities in this research. Indigenous people in Canada are a heterogeneous cultural group, which includes, but is not limited to: *nêhiyawak* (Cree), Blackfoot, Nakota, Saulteaux, Dene, Mi'kmaq, *Anishinaabeg*, Inuit, and Métis peoples. If young people, frontline workers, or scholars used the terms "Native" or "Aboriginal" to describe themselves or their communities, I left the descriptions in their original form.

1. How do four youth-serving organizations attend to young persons' Indigeneity, youthfulness, and urban settlement needs?

2. How, and to what extent, are Indigenous youths' voices included in physical spaces, relationships with frontline workers (and peers), and opportunities for meaningful engagement?

3. How do Indigenous youth and frontline workers understand and experience the physical spaces, opportunities for meaningful engagement, and interpersonal relationships with frontline staff?

This research comes at an important historical time of Indigenous cultural renewal. Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) and Canada's ratification of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) in 2016 (Fontaine, 2016, May 10) much political, public and institutional dialogue now centres on the reconciliation of Canada's colonial past. In cities like Edmonton and Winnipeg, however, many Indigenous youth continue to struggle as they are criminalized at alarming rates and continue to live in extreme poverty and homelessness (Here and Now, 2017; Hogeveen & Friestadt 2012; Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2016; Manitoba Child and Family Poverty Report Card, 2016; MacDonald & Wilson, 2016; Minaker & Hogeveen 2009; Skinner & Masuda, 2013).

Youth work practices at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN play an imperative part to the survival of Indigenous young people who lack access to resources in these cities. The chaotic nature of the day-to-day youth work with Indigenous youth, limited time and financial resources, and the overwhelming needs of this marginalized population, require youth organizations and staff to prioritize their responses to the severe crises and needs of hundreds of Indigenous youth.[2] These factors leave little time for the holistic development of their youth work practices. This thesis is a qualitative analysis of youth-serving organizations and the

[2] Marginalization is "the partial exclusion of certain groups from mainstream society and the social inequalities that contribute to a person's involvement in crime" and to their experiences living in homelessness (Minaker and Hogeveen, 2009, p. 296).

meanings and value of Indigenous youth and frontline staff experiences through data collected through a multi-pronged critical ethnography to contribute to this field in both scholarship *and* practice.

I have over ten years experience working with marginalized young people in Toronto and Edmonton. Six of those years were spent simultaneously working with Indigenous youth at iHuman and YOUCAN and completing this qualitative research. Like the staff at these organizations, I care about Indigenous young people. As a white researcher, I align myself with *Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate* scholar, Kim TallBear (2014), to "stand with" Indigenous youth and Indigenous communities. This methodological starting point requires researchers to be in relationships with communities, which aims to ethically blur lines between researcher/participant and challenge power relationships (TallBear, 2014). Following TallBear (2014), to stand with Indigenous youth requires researchers be open to being altered in the research process and to work in unconventional ways. To that end, I take full responsibility for the construction, interpretation and analysis of this research and its findings and limits.

This research results in a specific and contextualized understanding of ethic of care practices and their limits at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN with Indigenous youth. I argue this ethic transforms these organizations into "warm places," which are comprised of four interconnected elements: 1) an understanding and attention to youths' Indigeneity and youthfulness, 2) a physical space that becomes a meaningful place for Indigenous youth, 3) opportunities, programs, and resources for Indigenous youth to meet their needs, and 4) respectful, optimistic, and trusting interpersonal relationships among Indigenous youth and

frontline staff.[3] "Warm places" result in a sense of welcome and belonging, which can provide some Indigenous youth with temporary reprieve from the cold of the cities. This ethic of care, however, is not a panacea and should not be romanticized because of its significant structural and organizational limits that are revealed throughout this thesis such as a need for increased and sustainable government funding to ensure the continued support of Indigenous youth living in homelessness.

To date, youth homelessness research privileges shelters as the dominant response to youth homelessness and is relatively silent about Indigenous young people (Patrick, 2014). Academic scholarship often begins from a critical deficit-model and rarely points to possibilities for change or glimpses of a better world for the most marginalized. My research contributes new knowledge because of its *best practice* approach to this field by focusing on what these organizations do *well* based on data collected from Indigenous youth and frontline staff. My research methodology includes Indigenous young peoples' voices and those of frontline staff through a multi-pronged critical ethnography comprised of peacemaking circles, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, rhythm and poetry and my own photography. I focus on non-shelter based responses to the needs of Indigenous youth in Edmonton and Winnipeg, Canadian cities that boast the highest urban Indigenous populations (Durst, 2009; Environics Institute 2011, 2010; Statistics Canada 2016, 2016a). I analyze *and* critique the youth work practices at four organizations through qualitative research with the aim to contribute academic scholarship with potential to improve youth work practices through final suggestions at the end of this thesis for key stakeholders including staff, organizational management, and all levels of government to better meet the needs of Indigenous youth living in homelessness.

[3] I use the term "Indigeneity" to refer to a young person's identity as an Indigenous person. While the term is singular, it is imperative to note one's Indigeneity may comprise more than one Indigenous cultural group and each cultural group is heterogeneous. This research does not suggest there is *one* Indigeneity.

Statement of the Problem

Winnipeg and Edmonton are home to the country's first and second largest urban Indigenous populations (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), with 92,810 and 76, 205 people respectively (Statistics Canada 2016, 2016a).[4] Since the 1960s, Indigenous communities in these cities have steadily increased due to mobility between rural and urban areas, high birth rates, and an increasing number of people who self-identify as Indigenous (Howard & Proulx, 2011; Silver, 2006). Many Indigenous young people live in a "state of crisis" as they are among the youngest, most impoverished and criminalized, and fastest growing urban populations in the country (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009, p. 238; Hogeveen & Minaker, 2016). Social marginalization, extreme poverty, and systemic racism, disproportionately *lock* Indigenous youth *out* of accessing resources necessary for their survival (housing, food security, education, and health care) and *lock* them *into* government-run institutions such as prisons and the child welfare system (Barron, 2011; Baskin, 2015, 2013, 2007; Brown et al., 2005; Cardinal, 2006; Comack et al., 2013; Danchner & Tarasuck, 2013; Fast, 2014; Greenberg et al., 2012; Hogeveen 2006; Hogeveen & Friestadt, 2012; Hogeveen & Minaker, 2016; MacDonald & Wilson, 2016; Manitoba Child and Family Poverty Report Card, 2016; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Alberta, 2016; Ratner, 1996; Silver, 2006; Skinner & Masuda, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2011; White et al., 2011).

Since Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act (2003) was enacted, the overall youth incarceration rate has decreased by 35 percent. It has, however, only decreased Indigenous youth incarceration by 23 percent (Jackson, 2015, p. 928). Many scholars agree that the

[4] The total population is taken from the census metropolitan area.

overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the youth criminal justice system and living in homelessness is linked to experiences in the child welfare system (Baskin, 2015, 2013, 2007; Blackstock 2011, Blackstock, Trocmé & Bennett, 2004; Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; Gessler, Maes, & Skelton, 2011; Nichols, Schwan, Gaetz, Redman, French, Kidd, & O'Grady, 2017). While Indigenous youth are seven percent of Canada's total youth population, they comprise over half of those involved in child welfare (Nichols et al., 2017). Manitoba and Alberta have the highest number of Indigenous youth in government care: 90 percent and 69 percent respectively (Alberta Government, 2017; Milne, Kozlowski & Sinha, 2014; Morgan 2016, May 17; Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Alberta, 2016). Previous research suggests high apprehension rates of First Nations and Métis children continues a history of colonialism, the residential school system, the sixties scoop, and cycles of extreme poverty endured by Indigenous peoples in Canada (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015). Today, there are more Indigenous youth in the child welfare system than there were at the peak of the residential school system (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015). Nichols et al. (2017) suggest fewer than half of Indigenous youth in care are placed with Indigenous caregivers.

The problem with focusing on the numbers of Indigenous young peoples' in jails, committing suicide, and living in care or in poverty is that "by aggregating data across a whole country, or a whole province, [the numbers] fail to capture the lived experience of any of Canada's unique [I]ndigenous communities" (Chandler, 2014, p. 189). Moreover it contributes to a negative understanding of these communities by negating the ways in which these communities are trying to heal individuals, families, and communities. Chandler (2014) furthers this point in an analysis of Indigenous youth suicide rate as this phenomenon is often "mistakenly imagined to be a uniform or endemic feature, common to all contemporary [I]ndigenous communities. The

actual truth of the matter, however, is quite different" (p. 189). In order to better understand the contemporary realities and needs of Indigenous young people in urban settings, they must be asked directly (Brown et al., 2005; Silver, 2006).

Institutionalized government responses perpetually leave the needs of Indigenous youth and their families unmet. Systemic barriers to resource access often results in extreme poverty, low educational attainment, poor health, inadequate recreation, and a lack of social supports and positive role models. These barriers put Indigenous youth at risk of homelessness, suicide or death (Minaker and Hogeveen, 2009). In the last five years, more public attention has been paid to the underreported number of Indigenous youth deaths in the custody of the child welfare system. For example, between 2009 and 2013 the Alberta government reported 56 deaths of children and youth living in government foster, kinship, or group care (Kleiss & Henton, 2013, Nov 21). The Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald's investigation of sealed death records, however, reports 145 deaths, which did not include those who were 'at-risk' of apprehension or those who died after being returned to their families (Kleiss & Henton, 2013, Nov 21). Fifty-one percent of the deaths of children and youth in care during this period were First Nations or Métis (Kleiss & Henton, 2013, Nov 21).

There have been numerous public outcries for better government responses to the needs of Indigenous youth following the murders of Phoenix Sinclair and Tina Fontaine in Manitoba, the 2014 death of four-year old Serenity in Alberta, and the 2018 'not guilty' verdicts in criminal cases for the deaths of Tina Fontaine and Colten Boushie. The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) calls to action advances the need for adequate government resources to keep Indigenous families together and reduce the number of Indigenous children in care (p. 319). On the heels of these events, in 2017 the Manitoba government vowed to address

the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the child welfare system (Malone, 2017, Oct 12). In December 2017, the Manitoba Government selected a Child Welfare Review Committee, which includes many Indigenous leaders such as Michael Champagne (Aboriginal Youth Opportunities) and Diane Redsky (Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre) (Manitoba Government, 2017, Dec 21). Following the death of four-year-old Serenity in child welfare care in 2014, the Alberta government faced intense public scrutiny (Trynacity & Reibe, 2017, Feb 1). Since then, an all-Ministry panel was appointed to review the child welfare death review process, how to strengthen the child-intervention system and review the systemic issues that lead children into government care (Trynacity & Reibe, 2017, Feb 1). In January 2018, the committee approved a draft of 26 government recommendations set for release in June 2018 (Dubois, 2018, Jan 24).

As governments and lawmakers attempt to overhaul the child welfare system to better serve Indigenous youth, their needs for positive emotional, physical, mental and spiritual well-being continue to grow. To meet these needs, some Indigenous youth find their way to iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN. These organizations operate on the margins of the non-profit sector. Each agency uses relational youth work approaches focused primarily on drop-in programs, art, and employment and outreach services. All of the organizations work with a disproportionate number of Indigenous youth aged 12-24 who live in homelessness *on* and *off* the streets, struggle with substance abuse and mental health issues, and/or have criminal justice involvement. Before I delve into the details of my analytical framework, I would like to introduce my research recruitment, data collection, and analysis strategies as well as the participant demographics and some of the 19 Indigenous youth and 27 frontline staff.

Youth and Staff Recruitment, Data Collection and Analysis

This research was conducted in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* ethical guidelines for *Research involving First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples of Canada* (Government of Canada, 2018). Youth were recruited either through referrals from frontline staff or an invitation from the researcher based on the following criteria: between 15-24 years of age, self-identified Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit, or Métis), lived in poverty or homelessness, or had experiences with the criminal justice system or the child welfare system and currently participate/or have participated at YOUCAN, iHuman, Ndinawe, or SNA in the last six months.[5] While I originally created a handbill to share with youth and gain interest, these proved more effective for staff to recall the recruitment criteria (Appendix A: Youth Recruitment Handbill). Staff were recruited from an initial research overview presentation at a staff meeting upon my arrival at each organization. The staff criteria included: a term of employment at the organization for at least six months and direct work as a frontline worker with Indigenous young people between 15-24 years of age.[6] Throughout my fieldwork, I tried to obtain a range of staff participation across the various programs at each organization. All of the peacemaking circles and interviews were recorded using an electronic recording device, transcribed verbatim by a third party, and then checked by the researcher. All youth and staff who participated in the peacemaking circles and interviews signed an informed consent form and given pseudonyms, except for the executive directors, to maintain confidentiality (Appendix B: Youth – Assent/Consent Form, Appendix C: Staff – Informed

[5] Throughout the research process, I adjusted the age range to include two young people who were 25 years of age with significant experience at iHuman and a 13 year old at Spence Neighbourhood Association.
[6] I extended my original criteria for term of employment because of scheduling conflicts and the nature of non-profit work to always have new staff at the organizations.

Consent). The youth emcees included in this research verbally consented to the use of their rhythm and poetry (rap) as well as their real emcee, first, and last names.

I coded transcripts manually using a reflexive iterative process that requires researchers to continuously return to data, connect to insights and refine one's focus and understanding (Tracy, 2013, p. 133). Primary descriptive coding, interpretation, and analysis of data occurred from September 2015 to August 2016. All transcripts were organized according to their respective organization and primary themes developed using colour coded highlights and researcher notes in text. Many initial themes were developed based on previously identified in themes in youth literature that informed my peacemaking circle and interview questions (i.e. the role of inclusive spaces for youth, interpersonal relationships with staff in youth work, and meaningful engagement opportunities) (Appendix D: Interview Guide – Young People, Appendix E: Interview Guide – Frontline Staff). From those initial themes, I also coded aspects of youth and staff experiences in the data that were not part of my initial research such as staff self-care. During the secondary coding process from September 2016 to August 2017, I sought to explain, synthesize and refine my data (Tracy, 2013). I created new files for each codes to group data together and further examine emergent themes and their complexities in individual experiences as well as across organizations. Throughout my coding, interpretation, and analysis, I used artistic practices of mind mapping and cue cards to visually outline, develop, and rework my codes, interpretation, and analysis. I further refined my analysis and edited this thesis from September 2017 to March 2018.

Youth and Staff Demographics and Introductions

Nineteen Indigenous youth between the ages of 13-25 years participated in peacemaking circles and semi-structured interviews across all four organizations (Appendix F: Indigenous

Youth and Staff Research Participation). In total, there were nine young women and 10 young men, 11 self-identified as First Nations, and eight self-identified as Métis or mixed-race. The majority of Indigenous youth had experiences in the criminal justice and/or the child welfare system, living in homelessness and were either out of school or precariously employed at the time of this research. Some youth had previous or current gang-involvement and experiences of sexual exploitation and violence, and intergenerational trauma.

A total of 27 frontline staff and managers and four executive directors participated in the peacemaking circles and interviews. Twenty-one frontline staff and managers participated in circles. From that group, 10 were interviewed (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). I interviewed six additional staff that were not present in the circles because of scheduling conflicts or because I discovered they had meaningful relationships with Indigenous youth in the circles. In total, 11 staff self-identified as Indigenous. Fifteen were women and 12 were men. Two staff were registered social workers, four were frontline managers, and the remaining 21 were frontline staff working directly with Indigenous youth in programs. I interviewed all four executive directors separately. The majority of the frontline workers and executive directors worked at the organizations for at least six months. The educational backgrounds of youth workers' ranged from Bachelor of Arts degrees in criminology, social work, international development and child and youth care diplomas. Some staff had no formal education but had similar experiences to those of the Indigenous young people at the agencies.

As this research unfolds, you will meet many Indigenous youth and staff but I would like to introduce some of them now. I met Trey and Tyler at iHuman.[7] Trey is an 18-year-old

[7] The names of the Indigenous youth and frontline staff have been changed, unless otherwise noted, to protect their identity. Artistic contributions by Indigenous youth in this research bear their real names with their consent.

nêhiyawak who lives in Edmonton, and a talented artist, traditional drummer, and singer. Tyler is a 25-year-old *nêhiyawak*, leader, and artist. These young men figure prominently in this research because of their long-term participation at iHuman and thoughtful insights in the peacemaking circles and interviews. When Trey was a young teenager, he was taken into the child welfare system but quickly ran away from his foster home. With little resources, he ended up living on Edmonton's streets and found his way to iHuman at the age of fourteen. At the time of this research, Trey was not living on the streets but he remains precariously housed. In chapter 2 and four, I discuss how he credits his family, his involvement at iHuman and the relationships he developed with Indigenous frontline workers such as Jasmine and Will, with his reclamation of his *nêhiyawak* identity and culture.

At iHuman, I spent much time with Jasmine and Will. Jasmine is an *Anishinaabekwe* and frontline social worker whose lengthy career at the organization helps us understand the centrality of Indigenous identity and cultures in youth work practice with this population.[8] I am grateful to Jasmine for teaching me more about ceremony, proper tobacco protocol, and the lives of Indigenous youth at iHuman. Will, a Cree man and iHuman's first iSucceed program coordinator, described himself to me as *Oskâpêwis*, the *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree language) word that best translates to mean "helper, or Elder's helper at ceremonies" (Online Cree Dictionary, 2017). Shortly after my initial fieldwork at iHuman, Will passed away suddenly. In chapter 5 I discuss how his legacy and memory remains at the agency. Will and Jasmine made significant contributions to this research and to how iHuman continues to include Indigenous cultures in its everyday youth work practice.

Indigenous youth and staff names from public documents and videos appear as they are. The names of the executive directors and the organizations names are used with permission.

[8] *Anishinaabe kwe* best translates from the *Anishinaabe* language to English to literally mean, "Anishinaabe woman" (The Ojibwe People's Dictionary, 2017).

At SNA, I met Dakota and Rebecca, two 16 year-old Cree youth who were previously gang-involved. In chapter 1, I reveal that these two sat together in the youth peacemaking circle but they were once in rival gangs and fought each other multiple times. Both youth credit the sense of belonging they developed at SNA with their decisions to leave their respective gangs. Dakota is a soft-spoken, young father, and a passionate chef. During our interview, he spoke highly of Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker who inspired him to return to high school and reconnect with his culture. At Ndinawe, I met Brooklyn and Kiley, two 16-year-old Cree and Ojibwe youth who are leaders in their communities. Kiley stood out immediately when I entered Ndinawe for the first time. She was handing out food donations from Winnipeg Harvest, the local food bank, to the community. I mistook her for a frontline staff. Upon completion there was only bread left, instead of waiting for community members to come in, Kiley took to the streets to find a person in need. Both Kiley and Brooklyn were eager to participate in this research. They told me much about their lives in the North End of Winnipeg including gang and child welfare involvement and the positive outcomes they experienced because they feel connected to Ndinawe and its staff. In chapter 1 you I introduce Sierra, a strong *Anishinaabe* frontline staff at Ndinawe. Her brutal honesty questioned my intentions and research approach as a white researcher. She demanded that I, rightfully so, articulate my relational methodology with Indigenous communities unlike researchers before me and practice reciprocity in research. Sierra's contributions keep me questioning my relationships with Indigenous people in research and the community.

Lastly, I met Nicole and Ryan at YOUCAN. Nicole is a boisterous, 19-year-old *Mi'kmaq* and Ojibwe woman. She is confident, tenacious, and strong-willed. Nicole is a long-time participant at YOUCAN. She found the organization because of her child welfare involvement,

family conflict, and experiences of violence and abuse. At the time of this research, she was finishing high school. While she still struggles today, Nicole has successfully enrolled in a local university transitions program and now participates at iHuman. Similar to Sierra, Nicole's contributions significantly shifted this research. In my first youth circle, she asks, "Can we talk about being Aboriginal?" The youth discussion that followed made youths' Indigenous identity central to this research in order to understand the complexities of their experiences and consider how to best meet their needs at these organizations. Ryan is a 19-year-old man and a multidisciplinary artist. I do not introduce Ryan as Indigenous or First Nations here because as you will see in chapter 1, his familial history, intergenerational trauma, and experiences of racism in school contribute to his rejection of his Indigeneity. Dylan, whose rhythm and poetry (rap) starts the next section, gives us a glimpse into his life and familial history in Edmonton to begin to situate the broader experiences and barriers Indigenous youth face in these cold cities.

Living in "Cold Cities": Indigenous Youth Homelessness in Edmonton and Winnipeg

Can you listen now? Can you understand?
You ever wonder why you see my face in my hands?
There's little time for joy when you need to be a man,
I question God sometimes, I hardly see a plan.

For those that don't know, this is why I'm stone cold
For those that wonder why, this is why my soul's grown
So it's okay for me to ask how this will unfold
When I got two cousins who didn't live to be a month old
And an uncle who collapsed after popping pills
My little brother almost died in that hospital
Helping my uncle walk when he got stabbed and his lung collapsed
Or having to call my father and tell him that his brother passed
Working with a child whose mother died and he never had a dad
And my other brother who blamed himself for his not coming back
There's no shrugging that, and there's no forgetting
Like knowing I've dressed up for more funerals than I have weddings
I've had six first cousins up for foster care
This life is so unexpecting, if it's not unfair
I mean my Uncles' baby brother got killed by the cops,

so Lord how much more pain do I have to watch?
- Dylan McCarthy-Daniels, *nêhiyawak*, 21, NMS-1, Edmonton[9]

In his rhythm and poetry (rap) entitled, "Looking for Peace", Dylan (NMS-1), a 21-year-old *nêhiyawak* in Edmonton calls for you to listen and to understand in a world that does neither. His life, which he characterizes as an "unrelenting struggle," is marked by death, poverty, murder, suicide, addiction, child welfare involvement and family conflict. At age 10, these experiences were almost too much for Dylan. He contemplated suicide. With the support of his family, teachers, and frontline workers and opportunities at youth-serving organizations like iHuman and YOUCAN, Dylan began to recognize his immeasurable strength, intelligence, and creativity. Today, he is an undergraduate student and the President of the Indigenous Student Club at MacEwan University.

Indigenous youth, like Dylan, experience significant barriers to meet their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. For young people who disproportionately live in Edmonton and Winnipeg's inner cities and in homelessness, there are few services readily available and they are heavily policed in the downtown cores (Andersen 2013; Comack 2012, 2014; Comack et al. 2013; Freistadt 2014; Hogeveen and Freistadt 2012, 2014; Hogeveen & Minaker, 2016; Minaker and Hogeveen 2009; Silver 2008; White et al. 2011). Beyond the frigid winter temperatures, Edmonton and Winnipeg are "cold cities" in separate provinces with distinct political histories, access to resources and varying market-based economies. Alberta and Manitoba governments both have *moved away from* "conditions of care in urban environments" and *moved towards* less responsibility for the "concrete (as opposed to abstract and generalized) lives of others" (Hogeveen & Woolford, 2014, p. 19). Reduced contemporary provincial welfare

[9] Dylan's rap is not part of the youth who were recruited for the peacemaking circles or semi-structured interviews. The art productions were publically available and then made available to me by Dylan McCarthy-Daniels, Donovan Waskahat, and Adrian Shirt for the purpose of this research. See Appendix A: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation.

policy directives are influenced by increasing focus on individualism and "get tough" criminal justice responses, which contribute to the criminalization and marginalization of Indigenous youth (Chunn & Gavigan, 2004; Hogeveen & Woolford, 2014; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Ong, 2006; Wacquant, 2010; White et al., 2011). Tyler, a *nêhiyawak* man in Edmonton, describes how the police and other policing agents such as private security guards invoke racist stereotypes towards him which results in frequent "stops" because he matches the so-called description of their "usual suspect." The description, according to Tyler, is always the same: "a 5'10, Native, with a hat."

His experience in Edmonton confirms what Comack (2012, 2014) found in Winnipeg: that the police use repetitive and routine racism fuelled by racialized stock narratives to reproduce the social order and maintain the status quo.[10] The result is that many Indigenous men experience unlawful interrogation and harassment by the police because of their Indigeneity. City police often draw on racialized stereotypes that young Indigenous men are gang and/or drug-involved (Comack, 2012, 2014; Comack et al., 2013). Tyler recounts an example when he was stopped by two police officers and made him produce his ID:

> [The] one cop [was] like, "What's your street name?" I'm like, "I don't have one." He's like, "Bullshit." And then this other cop comes up, "Can I see your ID?" [I] give it to him…He goes and typed it in [to the computer system], nothing comes up. [He] comes and yells at the [other] cop, "Oh, There's nothing." He's like, "Oh." And the cop I was talking to, the 'good one' I guess, was like, "Oh, well, type it again, maybe you got something wrong." Yeah, so then he typed it again.

[10] In this research, I use the terms "racialization" or "racialized" to refer to "process by which people are formed into a racial category, and through which racism is justified by representations of these groups" (Cannon & Sunseri 2011, 277). According to Li (1990), many sociologists use the term "racialization" as the "process, whereby a heterogeneous, linguistically diverse population is singled out for different (and often unequal) treatment in Canada" (p. 7) (in Cannon & Sunseri, 2011, p. 277).

Tyler confesses that the police expect "you got to have something [on file] because you're Native and at this age, you have to have a criminal record." Indigenous youth are keenly aware of the racism cloaked in their negative treatment by police (Comack, 2012; White et al., 2011).

Winnipeg, dubbed "Canada's most racist city" by Maclean's Magazine in 2015 (Macdonald, 2015, Jan 22), is particularly dangerous for Indigenous women. They endure physical, emotional, and spiritual violence at the hands of strangers and the police (Dhillion, 2017; Razack, 2012; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). In the North End of Winnipeg, one of the inner cities and a neighbourhood in this research, gangs, sexual violence, poverty, loneliness, and suicide are part of the everyday realities of many residents (CCPA Manitoba, 2013, 2015). In order to survive, Brooklyn, a 16 year-old Cree woman at Ndinawe, developed personal safety strategies to navigate the inner city. She wears headphones to ward off unwanted sexual and negative sexualized attention from men, hate speech, and/or physical violence. She explained these strategies do not always work. One afternoon, after she waited unsuccessfully for a friend at a bus stop in the North End:

> I was walking home and this guy was asking me for a lighter. I didn't hear him because I always wear headphones…[He] kept asking me for a lighter. I finally heard him when he got closer…and then he says, "Hey, you got a lighter, you Indian?"
>
> I turned around and was like, "What?" He says, "You dirty neech, where's your lighter at?"…"All you dirty neechis got lighters."
>
> I was just like, 'I ain't lending you no lighter. I don't even have one." I pushed him away from me. He ended up punching me in the side of the head. I was trying to stop cars [to get help]…And [the] guy ended up coming after me again. He grabbed my head and then I was just swaying, trying to throw punches, trying to get him away from me. I couldn't do anything. He threw me in the middle of the street in a front of car and that car just took off. [It] went around me and took off…that's a lot of racism in that one moment.

Brooklyn's story of overt racism and violence at the hands of a man, and the refusal of interventions from passers-by, stress the danger and entrenched racism towards Indigenous

women in the city. Her story also reveals another popular safety strategy for women to travel in pairs or groups to help keep each other safe. Some Indigenous young people navigate the streets in both cities with hyper-vigilance to avoid such random and violent encounters with strangers and the police.

A disparate number of Indigenous people reside in inner city neighbourhoods such as Edmonton's downtown core and Winnipeg's North and West Ends. For example, Indigenous people comprise 10.2 percent of the total Winnipeg population and 31 percent of those living in Spence Neighbourhood (Spence Neighbourhood Association, 2017a). Silver's (2014) extensive research in Winnipeg's North End characterizes this inner city neighbourhood as a space of "complex racialized and spatially concentrated poverty" defined by:

> Bad housing, low educational outcomes and poor health, adverse effects of racism and colonialism, a higher than average level of neighbourhood-based street gang activity and associated violence, high levels of unemployment and detachment from the labour force, social exclusion and powerful psychological effects that are the result of people internalizing the complex poverty-related problems with which they must contend (Silver 2014, p. 80-1; Silver, 2016, 2015, 2006).

Complex racialized and spatially concentrated poverty is produced, and perpetuated, through a myriad of socio-economic forces including continued suburbanization, de-industrialization, in-migration and colonization (Silver, 2014). Similar forms of poverty exist in Edmonton's downtown core as well as Spence Neighbourhood. Poverty is not "natural" nor is it the result of individual personal failings (MacDonald & Wilson, 2016; Silver, 2016, 2014). Complex and multifaceted poverty in these cold cities "traps people in a cycle that reproduces their problems and makes escape extremely difficulty. There are no quick fixes or one-dimensional solutions" (Silver, 2015, p. 15; Silver, 2016, 2014, 2006). Extreme poverty and a lack of social supports for Indigenous youth results in a growing number who are left living *on* and *off* the streets in

extreme poverty and homelessness (Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2012; Hogeveen & Woolford, 2014; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Silver, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2006).

The definition and experience of youth homelessness are difficult to define. The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012) suggests youth homelessness exists on a spectrum, which includes young people who are: unsheltered (living on the street), emergency sheltered (staying in shelters), provisionally accommodated (temporary accommodation or lacks security), at risk of homelessness (current economic and/or housing situations are precarious or do not meet health and safety standards) (p. 1). Gaetz (2014) defines youth homelessness as young people who are:

> [Between the ages of] 13 to 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers and importantly lack many of the social supports that we typically deem necessary for the transition from childhood to adulthood. In such circumstances, young people do not have a stable or consistent source of income or place of residence, nor do they necessarily have adequate access to support networks to foster a safe and nurturing transition into the responsibilities of adulthood (p. 13).

Throughout this thesis, I use the term, "Indigenous youth living in poverty *on* and *off* the streets" as a means to call attention to the fluid nature of the realities of homelessness along the above-mentioned spectrum. I use the term "at-risk youth" sparingly as it relies on a deficit-model and youth reject the term to define themselves (Foster and Spencer, 2011).

Much research concludes Indigenous young people are statistically overrepresented in Canada's youth homeless populations in major cities (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2001; Gaetz, O'Grady, Buccieri, Karabanow, & Marsolais, 2013; Higgitt et al., 2003; Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Patrick, 2014). Little research exists on the specific experiences of Indigenous youth in homelessness generally and in Edmonton and Winnipeg specifically (Baskin, 2013, 2007; Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2012; Patrick, 2014; Wingert et al., 2005). The 2016 Preliminary Report of the Homeless Count in Edmonton estimates that

233 young people between 0-24 years of age are homeless (Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2016). Based on interviews with social service providers in Edmonton, Hogeveen and Freistadt (2012) estimate the number of Indigenous youth in Edmonton's homeless population may be over 70 percent. In Winnipeg, it is estimated that Indigenous youth may comprise over 80 percent of the youth homeless population (Here and Now, 2017).[11] Research with Indigenous youth tends to focus on their negative experiences on the streets and in the child welfare system (Baskin, 2016, 2015, 2013, 2011, 2007; Barron, 2011; Comack, 2012; Comack, et al., 2013; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Navia, 2015; White et al., 2011).

Exceedingly high numbers of homeless Indigenous youth and those who are 'at-risk' of homelessness is inextricably linked to intergenerational experiences of colonialism in Canada such as residential schools and the sixties scoop, intergenerational trauma, child welfare system involvement, which contributes to the breakdown of Indigenous families, high rates of criminalization, substance use and dependence, and mental health issues among Indigenous youth (Baskin, 2015, 2013, 2007; Blackstock 2011, Blackstock et al., 2004; Brittain and Blackstock, 2015; Brown et al., 2005; MacLaurin & Worthington, 2012; Minaker and Hogeveen 2009; Nichols et al., 2017; Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Alberta, 2016; Patrick, 2014; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013; Tistle, 2017; Worthington & MacLaurin, 2013). Youth homelessness research in Canada generally investigates pathways into homelessness, negative experiences of marginalization and victimization on the street, and shelter-based responses (Baskin, 2007, 2013; Berman et al., 2009; Brown et al., 2005; Courtney, Maes Nino, & Peters, 2014; Gaetz et al., 2013; Gaetz, 2004; Hogeveen & Friestadt, 2012; Hungler, 2010; Karabanow, 2004, 2004a; MacLaurin & Worthington, 2012; Miller et al., 2004; Minaker and Hogeveen, 2009; Nichols,

[11] Homeless counts provide a snapshot of homelessness in these cities but are not fully accurate numbers as the count typically takes place on one day a year and cannot account for those who are not on the street or in organizations on that day (Homeless Count 2014).

2008; Patrick, 2014; Ruttan et al., 2010; Wingert et al., 2005; Worthington & MacLaurin, 2013). Few studies focus on the experiences of homeless youth and service providers to improve access and quality of organizational responses. One exception is Stewart, Reutter, Letourneau, Makwarimba, and Hungler's (2010) qualitative study with Indigenous and non-Indigenous homeless youth to assess their perspectives on social supports, strategies, and interventions. The youth in this research identified the need for listening, emotional, and social support as well as housing, financial resources, and information about other supports and services (Stewart et al., 2010).

Indigenous youth require particular attention from scholars and service providers because of their distinct historical displacement and contemporary experiences of homelessness. Indigenous homelessness is not solely the result of a lack of access to safe housing. Métis scholar, Jesse Thistle (2017) defines Indigenous homelessness in Canada as:

> A human condition that describes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking or a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (p. 6)

Thistle (2017) describes 12 dimensions of Indigenous homelessness, which include but is not limited to: historic displacement, geographic separation, spiritual disconnection, mental disruption and imbalance, cultural disintegration, and escaping and evading harm. Indigenous homelessness is tied to the concept of "spiritual homelessness" (Christensen, 2016; Memmott & Chambers, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017). Limited research in Canada investigates spiritual homelessness and these distinct experiences of Indigenous youth

(Christensen, 2016; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017). "Spiritual homelessness" attends to the historical and contemporary displacement of Indigenous communities from their lands leaving many, especially Indigenous youth in urban centres, without a cultural conception of "home" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2011; Baskin, 2016, 2013, 2007; Christensen, 2016; Donald & Krahn, 2014; Lawrence, 2011, 2006; Menzies, 2008; Memmott & Chambers, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; Patrick, 2016; Thistle, 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Disconnection from cultural knowledges, identities, and spiritualties may be derived from:

> (a) separation from traditional land, (b) separation from family and kinship networks, or (c) a crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused or lost (Memmott et al. 2003, 15; Memmott & Chambers 2008; Thistle, 2017).

Spiritual homelessness is an individual and embodied experience of "'disbelonging' as a result of the settler colonial project" and leaves Indigenous peoples without secure shelter or a place to be (Christensen, 2016, 84-85; Thistle, 2017). Christensen's (2016) research with ninety-five Indigenous homeless people, the majority of whom were between 25-55 years, in Yellowknife and Inuvik, explains Indigenous homelessness goes beyond a lack of material resources and housing. Indigenous homelessness in Canada is rooted in individual and collective experiences shaped by residential schools and child welfare involvement, a sense of detachment from a cultural identity, and institutionalization, which leads to a loss of personal and community agency (Christensen, 2016, p. 822; Thistle, 2017). Based on previous research, all of these factors I consider how organizations attempt to meet the needs of Indigenous youth and the role of their Indigeneity at organizations in Edmonton and Winnipeg.

This thesis focuses specifically on how Indigenous youth described their experiences living in these marginalized conditions *on* and *off* the streets. It reveals how, and to what extent, their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs are met at the four youth-serving

organizations through non-shelter based responses to survive in these cold cities. Patrick (2014) and others suggests Indigenous youth living in homelessness need responses that extend beyond housing to include: better economic opportunities, education to secure well-paying jobs, cultural supports, mental health services, and health care (Brown et al., 2007; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009). There is a need for research focused on good practices and success stories to help move away from pathologizing Indigenous youth (Patrick, 2014). I attempt to answer Patrick's (2014) call to offer unique perspectives to more appropriately respond to the needs of Indigenous youth through qualitative research at youth organizations focused on the experiences of Indigenous youth and staff. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of each organization's youth work practices and programs.

Overviews of Four Youth-Serving Organizations

Since the 1970s, the responsibility for care of marginalized and vulnerable people, particularly young people, has been downloaded onto communities and non-profit organizations with little sustainable government resources (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Tronto, 2010). Over the last 10 years, an increased need for services and supports *and* reduced core government funding in the non-profit sector leaves the needs of many marginalized populations unmet (Anheier, 2009; Curtis, 2005; Hall & Banting, 2000; Hall & Reed, 1998; Lohmann, 1988; McBride, 2005; Scott, 2003; Shields & Evans, 1998; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). As social service funding declines, the dominant economic and social policy approaches in both provinces now privilege market-based economies and quantitative measurements of service provisions, client satisfaction and fiscal responsibility. These economic shifts and the difficulties associated with quantitative measurements in social services makes it challenging for non-profits to obtain and sustain funding (Baines, 2006; Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2012; Hogeveen &

Woolford, 2014; Tronto, 2010). During these difficult fiscal times, iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN have expanded their youth programming.

Each organization disproportionately serves street-involved Indigenous young people through drop-in programs, outreach services, arts-based development and programs, and employment and life skills programs. The staff at each organization estimate between 60 and 95 percent of the total youth populations would self-identify as Indigenous. These numbers highlight the greater need for resources, programs, and services for this population specifically. All of the organizations except Ndinawe are "non-Indigenous" agencies, which means that their official mandates do not specifically offer programs and services for Indigenous youth. Ndinawe is an Indigenous organization as it operates specifically from Cree and *Anishinaabe* worldviews and targets Indigenous youth. Regardless of their categorization above, all the organizations remain open to *any* youth in need. Importantly, other racialized and marginalized youth also attend these organizations but their experiences are distinct from those of Indigenous youth and therefore are outside of the scope of this research. Future research may investigate newcomer youth experiences and the relationships *with* and tensions *between* them and Indigenous youth at these organizations.

Figure 1: iHuman Youth Society, Edmonton, Alberta

iHuman Youth Society, Edmonton, Alberta

iHuman Youth Society is an arts-based, youth serving organization for marginalized and traumatized youth between 12-24 years of age (iHuman Youth Society,

2017) (Figure 1). It was initially founded in 1997 when Edmonton artists Sandra Bromley and Wallis Kendal were approached by Indigenous youth living in homelessness for arts access, development, and opportunities (iHuman Youth Society, 2017). "iHuman" is derived from an Inuit word, which identifies "the symbiotic relationship of the individual within the collective community and the community that resides in each individual; one for all and all for one" (iHuman Youth Society, 2013). Located in Boyle Street, an inner city neighbourhood in Edmonton's downtown core, iHuman serves over 500 youth a year. It is estimated that upwards of 80 percent of the youth population self-identify as Indigenous.

iHuman's youth work philosophy is grounded in values of respect, trust, honesty, listening, non-judgment, unconditional support, family, and mentorship, which are all practiced through relationship building between youth, their peers, staff. iHuman uses a harm reduction approach as the foundation to their youth work practice.[12] Its main programs were created in direct response to the needs and ideas of Indigenous youth living in homelessness. iHuman boasts three overlapping program categories: caring (outreach crisis intervention, family program, LiNKS Mental Health Clinic, Woven Journey), creativity (visual, fashion and textiles, and music studios), and authenticity (life-skills and leadership development through connections to education, work, and with Indigenous cultures) (iHuman Youth Society, 2017a).

Spence Neighbourhood Association, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Spence Neighbourhood Association was established in 1997 in one of Winnipeg's inner city neighbourhoods with the same name. SNA's overarching organizational mandate is to help make the neighbourhood a more liveable space through community economic development and

[12] Generally, the concept of "harm reduction" is understood as any policy, program, or intervention, which aims to reduce or minimize adverse health and social consequences of drug use. A more narrow definition of "harm reduction" does not require a person to discontinue drug use because some may be unable or unwilling to. To reduce personal, interpersonal, and community harm, harm reduction models can include programs such as needle exchanges and safe injection sites (Beirness et al. 2008; Smyth 2017).

by creating open community spaces, safe and affordable housing and engaging youth (Spence Neighbourhood Association, 2017). In 2002, Jamil Mahmood, now SNA's Executive Director, led the organizational development of its child and youth programs in response to youth violence in the community and their increasing needs for food, safety, sports and recreation, and positive engagement opportunities. Spence predominantly serves Indigenous and newcomer youth. It is estimated upwards of 70 percent of the youth at SNA are Indigenous.

SNA's child and youth programs operate in partnership with the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre (MERC), a City of Winnipeg recreation centre (Figure 2). SNA runs various child and youth programs including the Building Belonging program, an after school program for children 6 to 12 years of age. In direct response to youth violence, gangs and poverty in the neighbourhood, SNA operates a youth drop-in program for 12-18 year olds from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm on weeknights, the First Jobs for Youth Program (employment program), and the summer Green Team that manages the large community garden program in the neighbourhood. In 2015, Spence opened its 24-hour drop-in for youth between 12-24 years to fill a gap in services for young people over the age of 18 and meet youth's needs at times when they are most vulnerable to violence and lack safe spaces. During my fieldwork, SNA also had a youth

Figure 2: Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre, City of Winnipeg with Spence Neighbourhood Association, Winnipeg, Manitoba

outreach worker program focused on working one-on-one with young people to connect them with their cultures, community services, education, and work. SNA now runs *Wahkohtowin*, a strength-based skill-building program for youth aged 11-17 and their families.[13] Spence also runs a highly regarded barrier-free sports and recreation program for over 250 youth in partnership with the University of Winnipeg RecPlex (Spence Neighbourhood Association, 2017a). This thesis focuses primarily on programs and the experiences of Indigenous youth and staff at the MERC.

Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad is a youth-serving organization in the heart of Winnipeg's North End (Figure 3). *Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad*, in *Anishinaabemowin* best translated means: "Our relatives' home." Ndinawe is an Indigenous organization, which means it operates from both Cree and *Anishinaabeg* worldviews, primarily employs Indigenous staff, and serves the highest percentage of Indigenous young people of all the organizations. Staff estimate 95 percent of Ndinawe's youth population would identify as Indigenous. In the 1990s, Indigenous community leaders came together in direct response to the ongoing sexual assault of Indigenous young women in the

Figure 3: Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad, Youth Resource Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba

[13] Wahkohtowin is a Cree word. It is pronounced "Wah-KOH-toh-win." It is best translated to mean kinship, or the state of being connected (Spence Neighbourhood Association, 2017).

neighbourhood. Ndinawe initially began as a safe home for sexually exploited and homeless youth. Today, it is a fully integrated youth-serving organization with a shelter program (emergency shelter and transitional housing) and the Youth Resource Centre (drop-in centre for youth aged 13-24). It offers Indigenous cultural, recreation, education, and outreach supports. Ndinawe's Youth Resource Centre is the main focus of this thesis.

YOUCAN Youth Services, Edmonton, Alberta

YOUCAN Youth Services is a youth-serving organization located in the Westmount neighbourhood, approximately five kilometers from Edmonton's downtown core (Figure 4). Its organizational mandate is to connect and prepare young people between the ages of 12-24 years to return to school or to gain employment. In 1997, YOUCAN – Youth Organizing to Understand Conflict and Advocate Nonviolence – was founded as a "for youth, by youth" organization in Ottawa, Canada. YOUCAN's founder and CEO Dave Farthing established the national organization to train young people in nonviolent conflict resolution and mediation. Since 2002, YOUCAN Youth Services grew as distinct branch of the YOUCAN national office and it is now a stand-alone organization.[14] It serves approximately 600 youth yearly and staff estimate 60 percent would self-identify as Indigenous.

Figure 4: YOUCAN Youth Services, Edmonton, Alberta

YOUCAN's youth work model draws inspiration from restorative youth justice programs in Chicago's youth jails and from Roca Inc., which is a youth

organization in Boston that builds positive relationships and employment skills with marginalized youth to end the cycle of poverty and incarceration (Pranis, 2001). YOUCAN's youth work strategy includes four pillars: 1) intensive one-on-one relationship building, 2) peacemaking circles, 3) formal curriculum through facilitated workshops, and 4) relentless youth work to equip young people with the necessary skills to transition back into school or work (YOUCAN Youth Services, 2012). At the time of this research, YOUCAN's main programs included: the Verto project (an employment program), the Relentless Outreach Worker program, and Step Up and Step In (a two-stream community and school program).[15]

Analytic Framework: An Ethic of Care

My lengthy struggle with my analysis critiques how Indigenous youth and staff described their experiences at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN using terms such as "community", "family," and "home." The result of that critique is to frame their work as the practice of an ethic of care (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Smyer, 1999; Tronto, 2010, 1993), a relational response to the needs of Indigenous youth that allows some Indigenous youth to develop meaningful connections to their identities, the organizational spaces, the program responses, and the frontline staff at these organizations.

Indigenous youth and frontline staff used the language of "community" at SNA and YOUCAN, and "family" and "home" at iHuman and Ndinawe, to describe the nature and meaningfulness of their relationships and the youth work practice. Like those in this research, scholars such as Hirsh (2005) and Lemma (2010) contend the relationships youth build with staff help them develop a sense of belonging to a "community" or to a "family." Few scholars and practitioners critically investigate the meanings of these concepts to Indigenous youth in youth

[15] In 2017, the SUSI program funding ended and the program closed.

work practices. Alex, a frontline worker, explained beyond YOUCAN's formal program requirements, the agency creates a "community" with Indigenous young people:

> One thing that we do, bigger than provide employment skills in many ways, [is] we provide a sense of community. We provide a sense of you have a place of belonging…[that goes] right to the root of being human: What does it feel like to belong somewhere?

Alex put it plainly. To him, "community" is the feeling of belonging that youth experience *in* relationships where workers listen, encourage, accept, and understand Indigenous youth. At SNA, Rebecca, the 16 year-old Cree woman I introduced earlier, answers Alex's question above: "What does it feel like to belong somewhere?" For her, it is simple. She shared that " it feels amazing!" because in the relationships with SNA staff:

> You feel loved and you feel respect…They're [the staff] not always on your case but if you need someone to talk to then they're here…Spence is probably one of the bestest communities.

Rebecca had countless examples from her years at the organization when SNA staff made her feel cared for and valued. For example, the staff helped her obtain her first job through the First Jobs for Youth program and others planned her a surprise fourteenth birthday party.

iHuman and Ndinawe align with and operate respectively from Indigenous worldviews. Indigenous youth and staff push beyond the notion of "community" by describing their relationships as "family" and a "home." For example, Shai, a frontline worker at Ndinawe said, "It's a good environment. It's a family. The environment that we have here is like a family." At iHuman, Cory, a frontline worker explained, "It's a family environment here. A lot of kids that come here come from a broken home, or no home […]" (Csorba 2016, Oct 24). The concept of "family" here infers a closer bond between youth and staff. For some youth and staff, "family" actually refers to their blood relatives because they have siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews, and

godchildren at the organizations.

From a Western perspective, notions of the "family" and "home" conjure connections to blood relations, idealized versions of both terms, and a physical structure (Thistle, 2017). At iHuman and Ndinawe, however, these concepts seem to be derived from Indigenous worldviews. *Opaskwayak* Cree scholar, Wilson (2008) suggests, "family is seen as of utmost importance for many Indigenous people. Family is what holds us in relationship as individuals and bridges us as individuals into our communities and nations" (p. 86). Many Indigenous worldviews conceptualize "home" is a culturally-rooted experience, a "web of relationships and responsibilities involving connections to human kinship networks," and relationships with animals, plants, elements, earth, land, water, and to traditional songs, teachings, names, and ancestors (Thistle, 2017, p. 14). A limitation of this research is that it lacks an in-depth investigation of Indigenous worldviews and meanings of the family or home as well as the tensions between Indigenous and Western worldviews at the organizations. It does seem to me that these areas are worthy points of investigation and perhaps necessary to better address Indigenous homelessness.

Concepts of "community," "family" and "home" point to distinctly positive relational experiences of some Indigenous youth at the organizations. The use of these concepts run counter to Indigenous youth's experiences in cold cities and to a hierarchical social service approach, which often labels them as "clients" in zero-sum power relationship with "workers." Youth homelessness scholarship frequently calls for agencies to make a "home" for homeless young people "as a particular set of social relations often linked with notion of family and social support" (Watson, 1988, p. 134, in Klodawsky, 2006; Patrick 2014). "Home" implies social service responses need to go beyond "housing", which privileges a material need for shelter over

all other needs (Patrick 2014). However, Canadian homelessness literature does not attend to the specifics of what constitutes a "home." Robinson's (2002) research with 36 homeless youth in Sydney Australia's inner city notes that as they navigate city space they develop relationships to spaces that urge a definition of homelessness to include their belonging. The concept of "home" is not simply about shelter but is about "about micro-tactics of belonging—the ways in which we make space meaningful in moving between "being-at-home" and "yearning-for-home" (Dovey, 1985, p. 46, in Robinson, 2002, 37). Building a "home" as a place of welcome and belonging for Indigenous youth living *on* and *off* the streets seems to disperse attention to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of this population. By using an ethic of care as an analytic framework, this thesis begins to reveal these "micro-tactics of belonging" for Indigenous youth at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN.

Concepts of "family", "home", and "community" risk romanticizing youth work responses to Indigenous youth homelessness and the interpersonal relationships that can be developed with this population. These concepts may advance unrealistic expectations of staff and organizations as they conceal the organizational limitations inherent to nonprofit work such as the lack of resources. Tronto's (2010) research on institutionalized care suggests there is a tendency to rest on ideals of the family as "paradigmatic of all care relations" and does not address conflict, paternalism, and power within this set of social relationships (p. 161). In the context of youth work with Indigenous youth, this language seems to prevent organizations and staff from bridging the organizational context and its limits with their everyday practice. There are inherent contradictions in using the terms like "family" at organizations because, for example, the relationships between youth and staff are finite. When a youth turns 25 years of age, they can no longer access organizational services and staff. Using the concept of the

"family" may ignore the ongoing relationships some youth have with their families and threatens to further demonize Indigenous families in the process.

I draw on an ethic of care to better hone in and unpack *how* youth work practices produce environments where Indigenous youth feel a sense of welcome and belonging. Ethic of care literature is indebted to seminal feminist scholars such as Gilligan (1982). Tronto (2010) contends, "to provide good care in an institutional context requires that we make explicit certain elements of care that go unspoken and that we take for granted in the family setting" (p. 159). Ethic of care literature typically focuses on health care fields such as nursing and mothering (Abel & Nelson, 1990; Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Tronto, 2010, 1993). I develop the essential elements of a relational youth work practice with Indigenous youth. Ethic of care literature helps theorize youth work practice because most agree: to care for others is to attempt to meet their needs through interpersonal relationships (Barnes, 2012; Bergum & Dossetor, 2009; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Roach, 1992; Smyer, 1999; Tronto, 2010, 1993). This analytical framework brings to the forefront how Indigenous youth's needs are exacerbated in cold cities and compliments an understanding of youth work as a relationship-based practice.

Little research theorizes an ethic of care beyond interpersonal relationships or what it may entail for Indigenous youth at youth-serving organizations (Klodawsky, et al. 2006). Some youth scholars call for the need to care, love, and value Indigenous youth (Minaker and Hogeveen 2009). Others such as Klodawsky et al. (2006) highlights the socio-spatial importance of social services for homeless youth in Ottawa by theorizing an ethic of care as a missing component from the lives of homeless youth and government policy. Service organizations can become meaningful places if an ethic of care is evoked with homeless youth to meet their physical *and*

emotional needs (Klodawsky et al., 2006). An ethic of care is "not only about the object of care (as in the case of 'caring about') but also about the context and quality of care" in the lives of young people living in homelessness (Klodawsky et al., 2006, p. 431).

> Caring involves responding to particular, concrete, physical, spiritual, intellectual, psychic, and emotional needs of others…These types of care are unified by growing out of the fact that humans have physical and psychic needs (food, grooming, warmth, comfort, etc.) that require activity to satisfy them. These needs are also part socially determined; they are also met in different societies by different types of social practices (Klodawsky et al., 2006, p. 430-1).

According to Smyer (1999) an ethic of care "revolves around responsibility and relationships rather than rights and rules" (p. 244, in Elliott 2011, p. 119). An ethic of care addresses concrete circumstances through an active process (Smyer 1999; in Elliott 2011, p. 119). The concept of "care" allows us to think concretely about a young person's needs to evaluate how these needs are met, and to introduce questions about what we value as part of our everyday life (Tronto, 2010, 1993). Too often those entrusted with the responsibility to "care" for Indigenous youth, such as teachers, social workers, youth workers, parents, the government, foster families, priests, have hurt them in its name (Baskin, 2015; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Smyth, 2017; Navia, 2015). Typically, the concept of "care" is often associated with Indigenous youth "being in care" of the child welfare system (Symth, 2017). The ethic of care I propose urges youth organizations and staff to take good care of Indigenous youth in the community and, unlike Klodawsky et al. (2006), I analyze *how* an ethic of care operates as a *relational youth work practice* at these four youth organizations.

Interpersonal relationships between youth and staff are the defining feature of youth work, social work, and child and youth care.[16] Youth workers aim to educate and support young

[16] In Canada like in New Zealand, youth work is an unregistered profession unlike social work (Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2011). For more on interpersonal relationships, see: Andersen-Butcher et al., 2004; Beam et al., 2002; Bellefeuille et al., 2017; Blancet-Cohen & Salazar, 2009; Bilson, 2007; Chablani & Spinney, 2011; Davidson et al.,

people's development and to alter the social constraints imposed upon them (Edginton, Kowalski, & Randall, 2005; Nichols, 2012; Young 2006). To accomplish these goals, workers develop relationships with youth to connect them to services (food, shelter, education, medical care) and to create spaces of belonging with them (Rodd & Stewart, 2009; Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2011). Youth, practitioners and scholars uphold interpersonal relationships as the key to achieving program outcomes and meet young people's needs. However, funders generally do not adequately value these relationships. Instead, there are high demands from funders for fiscal responsibility and quantitative outcome measurements in social service work can hinder building relationships with youth (Baines, 2006; Rodd & Stewart, 2009; Tronto, 2010).[17] Quantifying these relationships would risk loosing the meaningfulness of these experiences for Indigenous youth and frontline staff. Using an ethic of care as the analytic framework to this thesis, I expand the understandings of key relationships in a relational youth work practice with this population beyond interpersonal relationships with staff.

I call these organizations "warm places." These are caring environments that encourage Indigenous youth to feel welcome and a sense of belonging. Warm places are comprised of four relational and interconnected elements: 1) an understanding of and attention to youth's identity as Indigenous people and their youthfulness, 2) a physical space transformed into meaningful places with Indigenous youth, 3) opportunities, programs, and resources to help them to meet their needs, and 4) respectful, optimistic, and trusting interpersonal relationships with staff. In

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2011; Edginton et al. 2005; Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Gharabaghi, 2008; Hirsch, 2005; Jones & Perkins, 2006; Laursen & Birmingham, 2003; Lee et al., 2009; Lemma, 2010; McLeod, 2010; Murphy, Duggan, & Josephy, 2013; Rodd & Stewart, 2009; Ruch et al., 2010; Smyth, 2017; Smyth & Eaton-Erikson, 2009; Spencer et al., 2004; Winter, 2009; Young, 2006.

[17] The funding sources and strategies at the organizations are outside of the scope of this research. Future research on the quantitative funding strategies, project-based funding, and its impacts on the ability of frontline staff to build relationships is worthy of attention in a Canadian context.

what follows, I provide chapter overviews. After chapter 1, each chapter addresses one of the four elements of "warm places."

Chapter Overviews

In chapter 1, I set out my qualitative research at the four organizations to privilege youth's voices to gain insight into their experiences at these organizations and highlight Indigenous youth's agency, strengths, and creativity through a visual art activity in the peacemaking circles and the inclusion of rhythm and poetry (rap) (Barone, 2012; Buffam, 2011, 2016; Conrad & Campbell, 2008; Conrad & Kendal, 2010; Conrad et al., 2014; de Roeper & Savelsberg, 2009; Gorlewski & Porfilio, 2012; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Lashua, 2006; Lashua & Fox, 2007; Lashua & Kelly, 2008; Snell & Söderman, 2014). Following TallBear (2014), I explain my position as a white researcher who "stands with" Indigenous youth in this research, my extensive community involvement, and my attention to reciprocity and accountability to these youth and communities. During my critical ethnography at the youth organizations, I facilitated eight peacemaking circles. Like traditional focus groups, peacemaking circles provided a way for me to effectively and efficiently gather data about youth and staff's experiences. Unlike focus groups, however, circles are culturally specific and meaningful to Indigenous communities such as the *nêhiyawak* and *Anishinaabe* people (among others). For Indigenous youth and all frontline staff, the circles created a platform for us to build relationships with each other.

I centralize youth's Indigeneity is an important component to their identities and experiences in and out of the youth organizations in both cities. As more Indigenous young people grow up in cities (Belanger et al., 2003), there is an increasing need to consider *how* urban Indigenous youth understand, navigate, reconcile or reject their Indigeneity. In chapter 2, I analyze how the 19 Indigenous youth navigate their Indigeneity and reveal the tensions between

their understandings of their racial and cultural identities. Drawing on Belanger et al. (2003), *Mi'kmaw* scholar Bonita Lawrence (2011, 2004), and other Indigenous scholars (Alfred & Corntassel, 2011; Donald & Krahn, 2014), I theorize and contextualize Indigenous youths' Indigeneity on a continuum. I begin with Ryan's refusal of his Indigeneity as a rejection of colonialism, residential schools and racism. Second, I document how the majority of the youth were in the process of relearning their cultural identities, family history and attend to some of the difficulties of doing so such as physical appearance and missing familial history knowledge.

Previous research with homeless youth suggests they need "homes" and places to feel welcome, safe, and respected (Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2012; Karabanow, 2004, 2004a; Klodawsky et al. 2006; Jennings et al., 2006; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Patrick 2014; Robinson, 2002; Watson, 1988). What is markedly missing from this literature, however, is *how* organizations create these spaces and the meaning of these places for Indigenous youth. Chapter 3 fills this gap by turning to Hirsch (2005) and some geography of care literature (Barnes, 2012; Conradson, 2003, 2003a; Cox, 2010; Milligan, 2000). Here, I theorize the importance of meaningful places, the spatial component of care, and the limits of care at the agencies. My spatial analysis defines the relational qualities of the organizational spaces. Spaces are transformed into as places of care through interpersonal connections and art. These components of the spaces help make some Indigenous youth feel welcome, and a sense of belonging to the organizations. I also discuss how the role of art highlights the lack of resources and organizational ownership of the physical spaces. In the latter half of this chapter, I discuss the excitement and trepidation of iHuman's move from a derelict space to a brand new, fully customized building that occurred during my fieldwork.

iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN meet many of Indigenous youth's developmental and physical needs through their formalized opportunities, programs, and resources. In chapter 4, I analyze the main programs and each organization's response to Indigenous youth's spiritual and cultural needs. This analysis contributes to the non-shelter based service provision literature for Indigenous youth living in homelessness (Baskin, 2007; Karabanow, 2004, 2004a; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Patrick, 2014). My analysis exposes the dominant program approaches and funding availability to meeting Indigenous youth's needs beyond housing such as: drop in programming, employment programs, outreach worker support, and art and artistic development. In the latter half of this chapter, I turn my attention to how organizations respond to Indigenous youth's "spiritual homelessness," if at all (Christensen, 2016; Memmott & Chambers, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017; Trudeau, 2008;). The organizational responses operate on a continuum: YOUCAN's approach understands Indigenous cultures as opportunities outside of the organization or through individual Indigenous staff; SNA is committed to providing opportunities for youth to access Indigenous cultural opportunities in and out of the organization by partnering with Indigenous organizations in Winnipeg; iHuman aligns with Indigenous worldviews through its *Indigenous Policy Framework* and the inclusion of daily Indigenous cultural opportunities; and Ndinawe operates specifically from Cree and *Anishinaabe* worldviews and teachings which embeds Indigenous cultures into the everyday practices at the organization. It seems to me, based on the results from this research, that the best responses to Indigenous youths' cultural and spiritual needs occur when the organization's structure supports the need for youth to have culturally meaningful services, programs and opportunities on site.

The Indigenous youth and frontline staff I interviewed agreed that the caring interpersonal, mutual and reciprocal relationship building is the most important aspect of their experience and youth work practice. This finding is not new. Youth work, social work, and child and youth care scholarship confirms ethical interpersonal relationships are the heart of youth work practice.[18] However, few studies have examined these relationships in depth with young people (Hirsch, 2005). Moreover, Indigenous youths' experiences in relationships with frontline staff at youth organizations have been almost entirely neglected. I draw on Schmidt's (2002) relationship characteristics of respect, optimism, and trust, to simplify these complex relationships and describe them experientially. In the final part of this chapter, I attend to the four major limits of these relationships which include: a lack of staff self care, high staff turnover, conflict and boundaries in relationships, and Indigenous youth "aging out" of organizations, moving away, or dying. Since my original fieldwork, 25 of the 27 frontline staff have left their positions. While Indigenous youth and frontline staff place much emphasis on starting and maintaining good relationships, these limitations highlight the need for organizational and staff attention to how to end these relationships positively and attend specifically to their temporary nature due to organizational mandates and fiscal constraints.

[18] Andersen-Butcher et al., 2004; Beam et al., 2002; Bellefeuille et al., 2017; Blancet-Cohen & Salazar, 2009; Bilson, 2007; Chablani & Spinney, 2011; Davidson et al., 2011; Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Gharabaghi, 2008; Hirsch, 2005; Jones & Perkins, 2006; Laursen & Birmingham, 2003; Lee et al., 2009; Lemma, 2010; McLeod, 2010; Murphy et al., 2013; Rodd & Stewart, 2009; Ruch et al., 2010; Smyth, 2017; Smyth & Eaton-Erikson, 2009; Spencer et al., 2004; Winter, 2009; Young, 2006

Chapter 1 – A Relational Research Methodology to "Stand with" Indigenous Youth

> [Once] you stop seeing [Indigenous] people as a studied people - it really opens your mind to who's doing what in the community…but if you look and open your eyes you'll see what kind of person [they are], how they carry themselves, [you] can see the connection amongst people, how people get when they sing, how people get when they dance, how they pray, [and] how they feel.
>
> – Trey, *nêhiyawak*, 20, iHuman Youth Society

Worldwide, Indigenous people are among the most studied population (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). But as Trey states above, Indigenous people are not passive objects of study. He says there is a need to "stop seeing [Indigenous] people as a studied people" and calls for researchers to "look and open your eyes" and "see" Indigenous people differently. Trey's critique echoes Indigenous scholarly criticism of historical and contemporary social and natural science research *on* Indigenous communities, which typically maintains a hierarchical binary relationship of "researcher/participants" and has historically given little back in return (Porsanger, 2004, p. 108; Smith, 2012; TallBear, 2014; Wilson, 2008). Too often, researchers (predominantly white) from outside Indigenous communities come to study Indigenous "problems" and then impose "outside solutions rather than appreciating and expanding upon the resources available within Indigenous communities" (Wilson, 2008, p. 16).

A growing number of Indigenous scholars respond to critiques of traditional research methods that employ a top-down approach with calls for, and examples of, research conducted *by* and *for* Indigenous peoples using "decolonizing methodologies" (Chilisa, 2012; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002; Kovach, 2010, 2009; Magnat, 2012; Porsanger, 2004; Smith, 2012; Smith & Wobst, 2005; Wilson, 2008). These methodologies broadly aim to decentre dominant research paradigms and centre the realities, knowledge and values that give meaning to people's lives (Chilisa, 2012). They seek to liberate the mind from Western thought, restore and develop cultural practices, values, and beliefs and create space in scholarship for marginalized peoples to

share their worldviews (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012; Smith & Wobst, 2005). For example, some Indigenous scholars have used talking and sharing circles as an innovative research method and pedagogical practice (Baskin, 2005; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002; Laramee, 2013; Lavallée, 2009; Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014; Rothe et al., 2009; Wilson, 2008). Throughout this research it became increasingly clear that my research methodology aligns with this approach by aiming to "stand with" Indigenous young people (TallBear, 2014). Through an "ethic of care" to respond to the needs of Indigenous youth in research and at non-profit organizations, I employed youthful, culturally meaningful and relational methods, including peacemaking circles, to gather qualitative data and attempt to make their experiences in research as meaningful as possible. By doing so, this research contextualizes how these four youth organizations respond to the ongoing reclamation and renewal of the Indigeneity of Indigenous youth.

My methodological approach dynamically captures the experiences of Indigenous youth because it created multiple ways for their voices to be heard through verbal expression in circles, interviews, through visual art and rhythm and poetry (rap) and by including participant observation in an effort to witness the realities at the organizations and highlight their realities in and out of the organizations and in their own words. I also included photos of the organizations to better represent the spaces for the reader (Berg, 2012; Bolton et al., 2001; Collier, 1967; Harper, 2003; Keegan, 2012). This research adds to the complexities of their experiences by also considering those of frontline workers and executive directors to provide a more complete analysis of the youth organizations' responses. Admittedly, a relational methodology that "stands with" (TallBear, 2014) Indigenous youth is no easy feat. At times, it felt overwhelming and it was by no means perfect or limitless. I attempted to meet the responsibilities to Indigenous youth

and the youth-serving organizations and to the academy through this qualitative inquiry using fieldwork, careful analysis, revisions, and reflections.

In this chapter, I situate myself as a researcher who "stands with" Indigenous young people by being in relationship with them (TallBear, 2014). My community work and the relationships I have forged with Indigenous youth, frontline workers, and youth organizations in Edmonton are embedded in the development of this research project and were essential to its completion. Drawing on the work of Indigenous scholars, TallBear (2014) and Wilson (2008), I attend to my positionality as a white researcher to expound understandings of researcher accountability and reciprocity in relationships with Indigenous youth and with youth organizations in urban centres.

My multi-pronged critical ethnography consisted of peacemaking circles, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, young people's rhythm and poetry, and my own photography. It is imperative at the onset of this chapter to note that my use of peacemaking circles is indebted to Indigenous communities and researchers and is derived from Indigenous talking or sharing circles (Baskin, 2005; Boyes-Watson and Pranis, 2014, 2011; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002; Laramee, 2013; Lavallée, 2009; Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014; Rothe et al., 2009; Wilson, 2008). I draw on the work of these scholars as well as the peacemaking circle practice outlined by Boyes-Watson (2006, 2005), Boyes-Watson and Pranis (2014, 2011), Pranis (2005, 2001), Pranis et al. (2010, 2003) as a more structured form of sharing circle to inform my circle practice as well as my analysis of its outcomes. In total, I conducted eight, two-hour peacemaking circles with 19 Indigenous youth and 21 frontline staff across the organizations (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). Youth work practice with marginalized youth in the US and Canada confirms peacemaking circles are a meaningful

practice to build a sense of belonging and encourage young people to share their voices (Boyes-Watson, 2006, 2005; Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, 2011; Pranis, 2005, 2001; Pranis et al., 2010; Pranis et al. 2003). To my knowledge this research did not include Indigenous youth. My research adds to this scholarship by conducting circles with this population. I developed a puzzle piece visual art activity for the youth circles to help build relationships with Indigenous youth and creatively engage them in a dialogue about their inclusion at the organizations (Barone, 2012; Conrad & Campbell, 2008; Conrad & Kendal, 2010; Conrad et al., 2014; de Roeper & Savelsberg, 2009; Hickey-Moody, 2013). Following the peacemaking circles, I conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with 12 Indigenous youth, 16 frontline staff, and four executive directors (Cloak, 2014; Dimitriadis, 2008) (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation).

Peacemaking circles attend to youth and staff Indigeneity and welcomed Indigenous youth and frontline staff into research through what many described as an explicitly relational method. These relationships made some of them feel a greater sense of belonging in the research and with each other in the process. My use of peacemaking circles opens sociological research to use sharing circles, if researchers are appropriately trained and have significant experience in the practice. Throughout all of the peacemaking circles I shared my knowledge and respect for Indigenous cultures and the circle history and practice. My approach to conducting circles also opened them up to be led by Indigenous staff who identify culturally to include smudging ceremonies and the use of an eagle feather as part of the circle, and brought the cultural and relational meaningfulness of circles for some Indigenous youth and staff to the forefront of this research. Importantly, as we will see in chapter 2, the majority of the Indigenous youth identify racially as Indigenous but are in the process of learning their cultural traditions. Therefore as a

researcher, I tried my best to explain give the knowledge and experience I had the histories of these practices. In future, I would work with Elders and Knowledge keepers to lead the process may be more relevant and culturally appropriate.

Standing with Indigenous Youth in Research

In this section I describe my position as a researcher who "stands with" Indigenous youth (TallBear, 2014). To that end, I take full responsibility for the construction, interpretation and analysis of this research and its findings and limits. My research methodology attempts to follow an ethic of care similar to that invoked at the organizations by attending to young people's needs for respectful places, relationships, and opportunities to share who they are as Indigenous people. This research topic, its methodology, and my access to Indigenous youth and frontline staff at these organizations are the direct culmination of seven and a half years of scholarly research and six years of community work with Indigenous young people in Edmonton at iHuman, YOUCAN, and as part of the Edmonton hip hop community. My ability to move in between community and academic worlds, build meaningful relationships with youth, and my reputation as researcher and community worker situates me in this research *and* in the community. As a researcher, my methodology strives to hear Indigenous young peoples' voices to produce scholarly research contributions that may also carry practical implications to better serve this population.

Researchers who are part of communities with whom they research often find themselves in an ambiguous and sometimes difficult position. Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) refer to this role as an "insider-outsider" researcher. The hyphen between the concepts of "insider" and "outsider" denotes a paradoxical "third space" for researchers who are neither fully inside or outside of their research (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I originally used Corbin Dwyer and

Buckle's (2009) conception to explain my position in the non-profit field because the hyphen acts as a bridge between two seemingly distinct worlds. As my fieldwork developed and unfolded, this concept no longer adequately captured the quality of my relationship to this research or the relationships I developed with Indigenous youth and staff at the organizations and others in the community. Therefore, I turn to the work of *Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate* scholar, Kim TallBear's (2014) and her notion of "standing with a community" to better explain myself as a white researcher in this field and my responsbility to those with whom I work. I do this to emphasize, following TallBear (2014) and Wilson (2008), relationships with communities and care as a starting point to this research and to better address issues of researcher accountability and reciprocity with Indigenous communities.

Research that "stands with" communities is indebted to feminist scholars such as standpoint feminist Donna Haraway and others who "analyze and critique in a manner that 'cares for the subject'" (Schuurman & Pratt 2002, in TallBear, 2014, p. 3). Feminist objectivity inquires, "not at a distance, but based on the lives and knowledge priorities of subjects" (TallBear, 2014, p. 7). This kind of research is not merely something done *with* participants but rather is one that stands with communities. From this entry point, researchers blur the dyadic labels often ascribed to "researchers" and "participants," challenge positions of power, and validate certain forms of knowledge over others (TallBear, 2014). In this process, researchers must be "willing to be altered" and continually "revise her stakes in the knowledge" produced (TallBear, 2014, p. 2). By standing with communities, researchers open up to "working in non-standard ways" and to being taken to "new and surprising places" (TallBear, 2014, p. 6). My research process was one inherently tied to the relationships I developed and still maintain with Indigenous youth and communities. In what follows, I consider my responsibilities as a white

researcher through an analysis of my reciprocity and accountability in these relationships.

Researcher Reciprocity and Accountability to Indigenous Youth and Youth Organizations

To stand with a community means a researcher considers their role and limits in the circle of relations. *Opaskwayak* Cree scholar, Shawn Wilson (2008), contends that when academics engage in research with Indigenous communities they become part of, accountable and connected to, the circle of relations. This circle of relations brings issues of researcher accountability and reciprocity to the forefront of this research methodology.

Reciprocity in the circle requires more than gift giving in exchange for participation *or* giving back as part of the research process (TallBear, 2014). It goes beyond a transactional encounter between objects. This form of reciprocity attends to one of the core problems of academic research itself: the dualistic relationship between the researcher and the researched (TallBear, 2014, p. 2). One way of softening this divide and writing into the tension of doing qualitative research with communities is to conceptualize research as a "relationship-building process, as a professional networking process with colleagues (not 'subjects'), as an opportunity for conversation and sharing knowledge, not simply data gathering" (TallBear, 2014, p. 2). My research highlights the tension specifically as I did consider aspects of reciprocity to include both a relationship building process as well as an essential transactional exchange of knowledge and monetary compensation.

I paid Indigenous youth and staff for their time and contributions in the peacemaking circles, interviews and for their art. Each young person in the peacemaking circles and interviews was given a pre-paid Mastercard valued at 20 dollars and a bus ticket for their participation. I arranged with the executive directors at each organization to ensure that staff were paid their regular hourly rate to attend the circles and interviews. At each circle, I also brought food and

beverages for youth and staff to ensure they were fed during that time. Throughout my fieldwork and in my work at iHuman and YOUCAN and in the Edmonton hip hop community, I met Adrian Shirt, Donovan Waskahat, and Dylan McCarthy-Daniels, the three emcees who contributed their rhythm and poetry (rap) to this research. I paid each of these young men 50 dollars for their artistic contributions to uphold the value of their art symbolically. While my ability to pay youth and staff was limited by funding constraints, financial compensation is imperative to communicate to young people that their time, knowledge, and art is valuable and paramount especially for those living on and off the streets.

This research emerged directly from my frontline work with Indigenous youth at YOUCAN from February 2012 to September 2015. It provided me with experience working with this population in Edmonton's non-profit field and alerted me to the challenges of this work. During my time at YOUCAN, I formed initial relationships with iHuman and SNA staff. This research and these relationships developed simultaneously. Throughout my fieldwork and other specific methods, dialogue and relationship building were central. Admittedly, relationship building was most difficult at Ndinawe as I arrived at the organization with little connection to the frontline staff and youth. At SNA and iHuman, I met with key frontline managers and executive directors in person or over the phone before my fieldwork began, which helped recruit youth and staff for the peacemaking circles and interviews. As a result of the busy nature of non-profit work, my geographic location in Edmonton, and staff turnover at Ndinawe, the organization was left without a Youth Resource Centre manager during the planning phase of my fieldwork. I was limited to my connection with Ndinawe's Executive Director, Tammy Christensen, before my arrival. Therefore during my participant observation at Ndinawe, I spent

much more time at the onset building relationships with Indigenous youth and frontline staff to gain some trust and recruit youth and staff to participate in the circles and interviews.

Too often, researchers parachute into urban and rural Indigenous communities, collect data, and leave never to be heard from again (Wilson, 2008, 15). This research approach stands in opposition to research that stands with a community. Indigenous scholars such as Smith (2012) and Porsanger (2004) suggest that, "reporting back is one of the most important imperatives of [I]ndigenous research" (p. 109). Without it, Indigenous communities become resentful of researchers (Wilson, 2008). This became all too clear to me in the staff peacemaking circle at Ndinawe. Sierra, an *Anishinaabe* frontline worker unapologetically announced that she was sceptical of white researchers because too many of us continue to parachute into her community in Winnipeg's North End. She braces me for what she is about to say, "Alright, I'm going to hit you with some truth here, honey…Are you ready for it?" I replied, "I'm ready," and she continued:

> Okay, so a lot of people during the summertime always come here to the North End [of Winnipeg] and they're doing research…So many people [researchers] in a two-month period come in and they research us and they put us under these little microscopes…And sometimes yes, it does get tiring and sometimes it's like we don't see no end process. So I would really love to see an end process.
>
> When I was growing up – you'd see…groups of them and they're not even from this community, and they're like coming from Saint Vital or the University of Manitoba and they fucking study us…they act like shit.
>
> And it's like you know what, I just want to live! I don't want to be researched…There should be some guidelines…But this [your research] is good...but I'm just trying to let you know how I see it from my own eyes…But it's straight up…we're put under a microscope all the time, because we're poor and…there's never no end results. So I would really love to see an end result. (Sierra, frontline worker, Ndinawe)

Sierra is right. Her concerns are symptomatic of the dominant and hierarchical research process, which has historically harmed some Indigenous communities. She signals to the need for more

reciprocity and accountability from researchers. As a qualitative researcher, I shared her concerns. This was the first time I had to account for that directly. In response, I explained to her and the rest of the staff in the circle, I felt a visceral tension navigating my position as a white researcher and outsider to her community specifically. I shared that while I am an outsider at Ndinawe, I am not an outsider to this field and to working with Indigenous youth. I explained that I care about these relationships and I remain open to learning how to ensure my research can yield positive relationships with the community. Sierra's critique and my experience at Ndinawe, confirmed to me that as a researcher, I need to stand with Indigenous youth and communities and that the tension will always sit uncomfortably with me as I continue to work in this field. .

I took Sierra's critique seriously. I promised to return to Winnipeg and to all the organizations in the fall of 2016 to present my research findings. I approached all of the executive directors at each of the organizations with this idea and they welcomed the opportunity. In the draft and editing phase of my dissertation, I maintained contact with the executive directors and some of the youth and staff (where possible) at the organizations and updated them about my writing progress. After my fieldwork, I volunteered at iHuman and accepted a small contract as their Communications and Media Coordinator. In October 2016, while my dissertation was not complete I returned, as promised, to the organizations. In Edmonton, I met with the executive directors to provide an update on my progress. As a result of my continued community work, I saw many Indigenous youth and frontline staff from iHuman and YOUCAN weekly. I updated them, as much as I could, throughout the writing process.

I returned to Winnipeg in October 2016. I presented my initial findings at SNA's weekly staff meeting and met with executive directors separately. In the staff meeting, one of the six staff I interviewed was present, which in effect extended the dissemination of my research

findings to new staff. In Winnipeg, I tried to connect with youth but to no avail. According to the staff, most no longer attended the organizations. I did not have their updated contacts and my time in the city was very limited. I made sure to connect with Sierra, who no longer works at Ndinawe. We met for coffee so I could show her how she contributed directly to this research. She was excited and wanted a copy of my dissertation. I assured her upon completion, I would return again and host public peacemaking circles to share my findings and provide her with a copy of my dissertation.

From April to September 2017, I returned to all of the organizations for a final time. While I tried to connect with as many participants as I could, it was difficult to report back to all Indigenous youth and frontline staff directly. Many youth no longer participated at the organizations for reasons that could include staff changes, scheduling conflicts, and continued life crises. Some youth may have moved to different neighhourhoods or cities. I remained connected with some staff who no longer work at the organizations but I could not find others. My final presentations in the form of public peacemaking circles at the SNA, iHuman, and Ndinawe included a total of 11 youth who were not part of the original research. I did not present to YOUCAN youth because at the time no youth programs were in session. I presented to 22 new staff, three staff involved in this research, and one community member. YOUCAN and iHuman's executive directors were present in my final peacemaking circles and I met with SNA's executive director separately. Scheduling conflicts at this time made it impossible to meet with Ndinawe's executive director but I was able to report back to her at a youth homeless conference in Ottawa in February 2018. I briefly connected with Sierra at a community meeting during my time in Winnipeg. Again, I committed to providing her a copy of my dissertation once it was complete. I met Jay and Stephanie, who no longer work at the organizations, for coffee to share

my findings with them (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). Following the successful completion of my PhD and submission to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Alberta, I will provide a copy of this dissertation to the organizations' executive directors and to any youth and staff involved in this research.

Standing with Indigenous young people, staff, and youth organizations takes more time and requires creativity. Prioritizing my reciprocity and accountability to Indigenous youth and frontline staff extended beyond my expectations and allowed me to engage new youth and frontline workers at the organizations. At Ndinawe's final peacemaking circle presentation, the youth were particularly shocked to learn the frontline staff lacked their own self-care. Following my final presentation, these young people organized a staff appreciation event. Across all the organizations, frontline workers noted they were grateful that I returned to share my research findings and that it confirmed the value of their work.

Multi-Pronged Critical Ethnography

Critical Ethnography Overview

Youth studies historically rely on ethnography, participant observation and interviews as key research modalities (Allan, 2012). I conducted a critical ethnography from February 2015 to June 2015 at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN. It included two-week participant observations at each organization (Allan, 2012; McKechnie, 2012), eight, approximately two-hour peacemaking circles (one with Indigenous youth and one with frontline staff at each organization) (Baskin, 2005; Boyes-Watson, 2006, 2005; Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, 2011; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002; Laramee, 2013; Lavallée, 2009; Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014; Pranis, 2005, 2001; Pranis et al., 2010; Pranis et al. 2003; Rothe et al., 2009; Wilson, 2008), follow up one-hour semi-structured interviews with 12 Indigenous youth, 16 frontline

staff, and four executive directors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, 2008; Feldman et al., 2003; Roulston, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). After my initial fieldwork, I added photography of the organizational spaces and Indigenous youth's rhythm and poetry (rap) in another effort to help better contextualize youth's lives in and out of the organizations.

Classic ethnographies are "the study of people in naturally occurring settings" to capture ordinary activities and their meaning, simultaneously incorporating participants' voices (Heath et al., 2009, p. 99; Golombek, 2006). According to critical ethnographers Madison (2012) and Thomas (1993), critical ethnography differs from its traditional form because of its "ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain" [emphasis in original] (Madison, 2012, p. 5; Thomas, 1993). This ethical responsibility is grounded in "a compelling sense of duty and commitment based on principles of human freedom and well-being" and "compassion for the suffering of living beings" (Madison, 2012, p. 5; Thomas, 1993). Critical ethnography is also committed to the "art and craft of fieldwork" that relies on empirical methods, particularly participant observation and interviewing, as a way to encounter the social conditions that act as the starting point of the inquiry (Madison, 2012). In what follows, I explain the various methods in my multi-pronged methodology including: peacemaking circles, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, rhythm and poetry (rap), and photography.

Peacemaking Circles

In order to gather more direct and in-depth knowledge from youth and staff about their experiences at the organizations, I facilitated eight, approximately two-hour peacemaking circles with 19 Indigenous youth and 21 frontline staff. I lead one separate youth and staff peacemaking circle at each organization followed by semi-structured interviews with 12 Indigenous youth, 16

frontline staff, and four executive directors. I chose to use peacemaking circles as a primary method for two distinct reasons. First, I am a trained peacemaking circle keeper and have been practicing circles with young people in Toronto and Edmonton for over 10 years. Second, I was aware of some the cultural meanings and relevance of circles for the Cree and *Anishinaabeg* people therefore it seemed to be a culturally relevant method. In this section, I explain my use of peacemaking circles as a culturally specific dialogical research method that is distinct from focus groups. I provide an overview of the research practice and semi-structured interviews, and discuss the significance of circles for Indigenous youth and staff as culturally meaningful and created the opportunity to build relationships with peers.

Dialogical methods, such as focus groups, are central to qualitative research and youth scholarship (Choak, 2012; Heath et al., 2009; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011; Ryan et al., 2014; Smith, 1995). Since the 1980s, sociologists have used focus groups as participatory and democratic research methods (Ryan et al., 2014). Focus groups are characterized as a "collective conversation" of six to eight participants that elicits evidence about individual and collective opinions and experiences (Ryan et al., 2014, p. 329; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). It aims to achieve "richer, thicker, and more complex levels of understanding" of peoples' experiences (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011, p. 546). A focus group can be a beneficial research method because it can gather multiple and contradictory views about a topic in a short period of time, generate rich descriptions, and "include perspectives of marginalized and other stakeholders" (Ryan et al., 2014, p. 330; Choak, 2012). It can also decentre the role of the researcher and their power by democratizing the research process and encouraging participants to take more ownership over it (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011, p. 560).

The political and radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970/1993, 1974/2013), participatory action researchers (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Conrad et al., 2015; Fine, 2006), and feminist scholars (Madriz, 2000, 1997) push the boundaries of traditional focus groups in qualitative research. In Freire's (1974/2013) *Education for Critical Consciousness* "culture circles" replace traditional school-based, hierarchical learning with active and participatory group dialogue. In these circles, Freire (1974/2013) conceptualizes dialogue as a horizontal relationship between people that elicits collective reflection and action (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). Freire (1974/2013) states that culture circles begin with the conviction that human beings "engage in relations with the world – that through acts of creation and re-creation, man makes cultural reality and thereby adds to the natural world, which he did not make" (p. 41). Freire's (1970/1993, 1974/2013) emphasis and elaboration of the power of dialogic inquiry in circles and the circle participants as they generate meaningful knowledge. Both focus groups and "culture circles" (Freire, 1970/1993, 1974/2013) employ democratic approaches to dialogue in research to increase collective participation and knowledge production.

Focus groups and culture circles, however, are not specific to Indigenous communities in Canada. Peacemaking circles as a form of sharing circles differ from traditional focus groups and Friere's (1970/1993, 1974/2013) culture circles because they are 1) derived from talking or sharing circles used by many Indigenous communities in Canada, 2) held significance for Indigenous youth and staff because of the embedded with cultural knowledge in the practice, and 3) used a talking piece to help equalize power relationships between the researcher, Indigenous youth, and staff. I distinguish peacemaking circles apart from focus groups because to conflate the two would attempt to fit circles into a Western construct when there is a need to privilege the embedded Indigenous worldviews that emphasize the relationships within the circles.

Some Indigenous communities across the world historically and contemporarily use talking and sharing circle ceremonies for meetings and social gatherings, in the sweat lodge, for smudging and pipe ceremonies, and to feast, celebrate and pray (Hart, 2002). Generally, there are three kinds of circles: talking circles, sharing circles, and healing circles. For some Indigenous communities, circles place relationships between people and each other, the land and environment and Indigenous spirituality symbolically at the centre (Wilson, 2008). Postcolonial Indigenous research suggests one can decolonize conventional interviews by using talking circles (Chilisa, 2002, p. 23). Some Indigenous scholars have used talking and sharing circles as a research method and as a pedagogical practice (Baskin, 2005; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002; Laramee, 2013; Lavallée, 2009; Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014; Rothe et al., 2009; Wilson, 2008), but few have written about them as a distinct methodologically (Baskin, 2005; Hart 2002; Wilson, 2008). For example, Pidgeon, Archibald, and Hawkey's (2014) investigation of culturally relevant supports for Indigenous graduate students in British Columbia notes the use of sharing circles with 35 students as a research method but does not address specific protocol, practices or outcomes of these circles. I draw extensively on Hart (2002) and Baskin (2005) to provide comprehensive overviews of Indigenous worldviews in circles and its process later in this section.

Previous research on peacemaking circles with marginalized young people is limited to their use by teachers and practitioners in schools and at non-profit organizations, such as Roca Inc. (hereafter Roca) in Boston (Boyes-Watson, 2008, 2006, 2005, 2002; Pranis, 2001). Unlike Friere's (1970/1993, 1974/2013) culture circles that seem to adopt a more free flowing approach to dialogue, peacemaking circles were a one-time event that used a semi-structured format that includes: an opening ceremony, the introduction of the talking piece, group guideline building,

the topic for discussion and dialogue, and a closing circle (Boyes-Watson, 2005; Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, 2011) (see more below). Similar to focus groups and culture circles, peacemaking circles create an opportunity to democratize dialogue in small groups with the use of a talking piece.

Overview of Peacemaking Circles in the Research Process

Peacemaking circles are a type of talking or sharing circle in which, "all parts of the circle are equal; no part can claim superiority over, or even exist without, the rest of the circle" (Wilson, 2008, p. 70; Chilisa, 2012). During peacemaking circles all participants sit on chairs with no barriers in the centre (tables, desks, or any other objects) (Figure 1.1). Sitting in a circle is more than simply rearranging the furniture. Shifting the physical space changes how people relate to each other. Participants look each other in the eye and everyone in the circle is considered an equal participant (Boyes-Watson, 2005; Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014).

The role of the circle keeper and talking piece. In practice, peacemaking circles operate with a designated person known as the "circle keeper." Similar in Indigenous talking or sharing circles, the circle keeper is responsible for "holding the space", planning and guiding the circle process, arranging the physical space and establishing trust in a safe environment for all participants (Boyes-Watson, 2005, p. 199; Hart, 2002, p. 72). I was the circle keeper for all the circles in this research. I used a talking-piece to facilitate the

Figure 1.1: Peacemaking circle set up, Spence Neighbourhood Association

circle dialogue (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2011). At the beginning of each circle, I explained that it is passed from person to person around the circle to symbolically weave "a connecting thread among the members of the circle" (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2011, p. 33). The talking piece is imbued with one general rule: the person with the talking piece speaks and everyone else listens. By passing the talking piece around the circle it gives participants the opportunity to speak, hold their turn in silence, or pass. There is no requirement to speak and a person may hold the talking piece for as long as they desire (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2011). Such a practice alters how dialogue occurs by slowing it down and aiming to respect all views by listening deeply to the perspectives of others (Pranis, 2001). In the peacemaking circles I conducted, we passed the talking piece to the left in the same tradition of the Cree and *Anishinaabeg* people to mirror universal patterns such as the movement of the sun.

The talking piece can be a "powerful equalizer" because it promotes self-regulation and self-awareness. In practice, "participants must wait to speak, listen without responding immediately, and delay their own need to speak" (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, p. 23). The talking piece encourages people to respond to one another and build dialogue by extending the conversation. Once the talking piece left my hands, so too did my control of the conversation and my right to speak. I did not interrupt or probe for clarity during each round of questions though I would have if someone did not follow the group guidelines set out at the beginning (see more below).[19] I stayed present with the conversation and took notes as the dialogue unfolded. When the talking piece returned to me, I typically summarized the main points the youth or staff contributed to the circle. From this point, I would either ask another related question or continue to pass the talking piece around the circle again to encourage the flow of conversation. By using

[19] A "round" denotes the movement of the talking piece from the circle keeper, around the entire circle, back to the circle keeper.

the talking piece, I could only ask a few questions and then left the dialogue open to the youth and staff to address the complexities and contradictions of their experiences. Admittedly, a limit of my approach to conducting sharing circles following Boyes-Watson (2008, 2006, 2005, 2002) and Boyes-Watson and Pranis' (2014, 2011) format meant these circles were far more structured than my understanding of traditional Indigenous talking and sharing circles. Moreover, my ability to summarize and ask further questions may have reinforced my position as the researcher and unequal power dynamics.

The talking piece can be any object selected by the group or the circle keeper (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014). According to Cree scholar, Michael Hart (2006), an eagle feather and a rock are sacred symbols to use in a circle. Holding an eagle feather can be a form of prayer and a rock symbolizes destruction or construction (Hart, 2002, p. 99-100). For six of the eight circles, I used a rock adorned with a symbol for love, which I obtained at the 2015 Edmonton Conference of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. During my introduction of the talking piece at the beginning of the circles, I explained that I chose this particular stone to situate the historical context of colonialism in Canada and to speak to the history of the lands and the resiliency of Indigenous communities in each territory. All of the circles began with a land acknowledgement of Treaty 1 (Winnipeg) or Treaty 6 (Edmonton) territories and the specific Indigenous communities from these respective places as well as acknowledgement of sharing circles as an Indigenous practice.

Prior to the staff and youth circle at iHuman, Jasmine, *Anishinaabe kwe* frontline manager, suggested we begin with a smudge ceremony. Such practices helped create an environment of openness to and a respect for Indigenous traditions in this research. According to Hart (2002), most sharing circles start in this way:

> Smudging is seen as a spiritual act, which works to take out the negative energy in the room, in the participants, and in the process. Smudge is made out of scared medicines, such as sweetgrass, cedar, sage and/or tobacco, and is burned, with the smoke being used to cleanse oneself (Hart, 2002, p. 77).

I offered protocol to Will, a Cree frontline worker, before the smudge and at the end he presented me with his eagle feather to use as the talking piece. He said that when one takes the eagle feather they should endeavour to act with honesty and that "you can almost tell, right way, the person is being dishonest, because part of the eagle feather will separate." During our follow up interview, Will elaborated on the significance of the eagle feather for many Indigenous communities:

> I've always been told that the highest honour, amongst the many, many, many nations, from Turtle Island, that the highest significance of honour was to earn an eagle feather, because the fact the eagle was the most majestic being of this earth. It flew high above in the sky, to watch over all of Turtle Island, all of the earth […].

Indigenous youth and frontline staff circle format. Youth and staff circles generally lasted between one and a half to two hours (Appendix G: Youth Peacemaking Circle Dialogue Plan, Appendix H: Frontline Staff Peacemaking Circle Dialogue Plan). At the beginning of each circle, I introduced myself, the research topic, and the peacemaking circle process and talking piece. I began by passing the talking piece around and asking the youth and staff to introduce themselves. From this point, I led a 'guidelines and values round' to collectively establish the circle expectations with youth and staff. Circle guidelines and values are critical at the beginning of a circle. It includes participants in the process of creating a supportive environment and "lays the foundation of the circle space in values" (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, p. 31). I asked youth and staff to write down their answers to the following questions on a sheet of paper: 1) What do you need from the circle in order to participate at your best, and, 2) What is one value about yourself that you will offer to the circle. Once all participants were finished writing their

answers, we passed the talking piece around and shared our answers. After each person spoke, they put their values on the floor in the centre of the circle to act as a reminder of our collective agreement to each other.

Circle guidelines challenged young people to articulate their needs and to be vulnerable from the onset. Engaging circle participants in this kind of dialogue allowed people to show part of their best self to the group (Boyes-Watson and Pranis 2014, p. 27). For the youth, concepts of respect, listening and confidentiality were reoccurring needs for all across the organizations. Other youth needs included: cooperation, love, attention, understanding, no disruptions, silence, participation, confidentiality, jokes, honesty, and guidance. Boyes-Watson and Pranis (2014) suggest most people typically identify "honesty, respect, openness, caring, courage, patience, and humility as the basis for the process" (p. 27). The second question in the guideline round of the circle purposefully asked youth to showcase a positive characteristic about themselves. They offered the following to the group: respect, helpful, myself and love, smiles, patience, open-mindedness, artistic, knowledge, listening, honesty, likes talking to people, understanding, kindness, and lesbian. These characteristics symbolize parts of how youth see themselves and the strengths they offer to circle dialogues and to relationships with others.

Hart (2002) contends an opening prayer typically begin Indigenous sharing circles. After the guidelines, we moved into what Boyes-Watson and Pranis (2014, 2011) call an "opening ceremony," which sets the tone for the circle and marks its official beginning. An opening ceremony encourages participants to be present in the circle (Boyes-Watson and Pranis 2014, p. 29). For each youth and staff circle, I read the poem, "Turning to one another" by Margaret Wheatley because it highlights the importance of community, relationships, dialogue and openness with each other (Appendix G & H Youth and Frontline Staff Peacemaking Circle

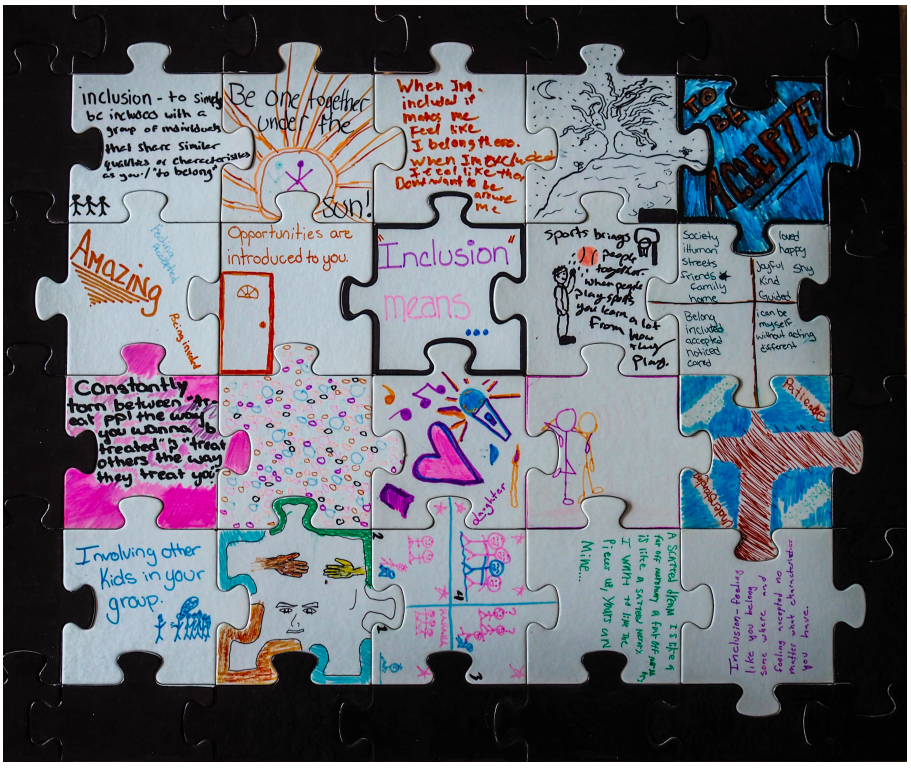

Figure 1.2: Completed youth puzzle piece activity

Dialogue Plans).[20] Once the opening ceremony was complete, we moved into the research questions. At the end of each circle, I led a closing ceremony to mark the end of the circle and to acknowledge the efforts of the youth and staff (Boyes-Watson and Pranis 2014, 2011). The closing circle aimed to affirm the interconnectedness of those present, convey a sense of hope, and prepare participants to return to their daily lives (Boyes-Watson and Pranis, 2014). The closing ceremony allowed youth and staff to offer final reflection and their feelings about the circle process. It also gave me the opportunity to check in with each participant and to extend my gratitude.

Visual art: Youth puzzle piece activity. Art allows young people to creatively engage in meaning-making and knowledge presentation (Conrad & Campbell, 2008; Conrad & Kendal, 2010; Conrad et al., 2014; de Roeper & Savelsberg, 2009; Hickey-Moody, 2013). Young people can contribute to research in a variety of ways by using art as a method of communication and to tell their stories (Hickey-Moody, 2013). It also contrasts interviews and focus groups that privilege the spoken word. Art allows some marginalized young people who may not

[20] Due to time constraints at iHuman, I did not read the poem as the opening ceremony.

"necessarily concede to or appreciate the dominance of the written word" to contribute to dialogue and build on their strengths as artists (Conrad & Campbell, 2008, p. 252).

I developed a 15-minute arts-based activity, called the "youth puzzle activity," for the youth peacemaking circles (Appendix G: Youth Peacemaking Circle Dialogue Plan). The collaborative puzzle symbolically represents the connection and contributions of the 19 Indigenous youth in this study (Figure 1.2). The youth were informed that their creative contributions would be put together at the end of this research. After the opening ceremony, each youth was given a puzzle piece and instructed to produce a visual representation of what inclusion means to them. It was a creative way for youth to generate their initial ideas about their definitions and experiences of inclusion at the organizations and to become more comfortable in the circle with their peers. Heath et al. (2009) suggests focus groups in youth research should include people who already know each other. However, because of the nature of this research and the realities of street-involved life, not all of the young people in the circles were familiar with each other before the circles. For some, it was their first time meeting, while others knew each other well or were related. The art activity acted as an icebreaker so youth could become familiar with an unfamiliar group and researcher (Heath et al., 2009). It helped create a welcoming and supportive environment so youth could feel more comfortable expressing themselves (Heath et al., 2009).

Each puzzle piece creatively reflects the youth's specific experiences at the organizations and how they understood inclusion (Figure 1.2). It gave youth the freedom to draw, write, and share anything about their experiences and how they understood the question. At the end of the activity, it gave each youth something tangible to talk about in the circle and provided me with a broad overview of their experiences before asking questions. Based on what each group said, I

tailored the circle questions about the organization, its practices and their participation to follow themes from the art activity. The puzzle activity worked well to get Indigenous youth to think creatively about their experiences at the organization, allowed some of them to become more comfortable sharing in the circle, and helped develop positive relationships with me during that time. I supported and encouraged them throughout the activity because I could see some felt uneasy or shy among their peers. The puzzle pieces remain localized in the peacemaking circles and in this section of the chapter. I did not return to them again. In the future, however, it may be beneficial to return to the puzzle pieces in the interviews to elaborate and critically analyze their content in more depth.

Peacemaking Circle Outcomes

Embedded Indigenous cultural meanings.

> In our [Cree] tradition when people sit in a circle, it also provides them [with] comfortability. They feel like no one's better than anyone, because it's a circle. That's why we sit in a circle. It's one of our ceremonial practices. And yeah it's just they are really valuable and people can take a lot from them…if they're willing to.
> – Trey, *nêhiyawak*, 18, iHuman Youth Society

Trey and many Indigenous youth and frontline staff felt comfortable in the circle because of their ability to build deeper and more equitable relationships. To be in circles with some Indigenous youth and frontline staff also meant I was *in* relationship, and part of the circle, with them. Peacemaking circles can establish trust and unity as their foundation (Boyes-Watson, 2005). I was careful not to appropriate the practice as my own because I was clear about the history of the practice and open working with Indigenous youth and staff to include significant cultural practices in each circle. Though I had some knowledge of Indigenous symbolism and cultural meanings of circles, Indigenous staff shared more about their cultural significance. For example, the cultural meaningfulness of the eagle feather, *nêhiyawak* and *Anishinaabe* tobacco

protocol, and smudging transformed these circles by embedding Indigenous worldviews in its practice.

Many Indigenous staff, regardless of my adherence to the peacemaking circle practice, understood these circles as talking or sharing circles. In Winnipeg, Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, highlights the symbolic nature of circles for Indigenous communities and his experience in this research:[21]

> I'm just really glad that we can have this circle. It really means a lot to me to have a sharing circle. And the circle represents a lot of things to me. It really represents the work that is 'us' in a nutshell. We are a circle and we keep adding to our circle. And the more work that we do, the more youth that we effect, the more families that we affect and, hopefully, in a positive way.
>
> To me, this circle also represents ceremony. Because that's a lot of how the ceremonies run is based on circle theory. I feel really good energy when I'm in a circle, especially when it's with family.

Jay makes links to Indigenous circle theory when he discusses the energy of the circle. He points out how the quality of conversation and connections in circles make him feel good and connected to himself, the other staff, and his culture:

> I just wanted to share a little bit about one of the Elders I worked with. She talks about the energy that moves around circles…she talks about how it moves around the whole circle as a group but that it also moves...that energy is also inside yourself, and moves around, and that energy also moves in between all of us. And so, just being aware of the positive energy that all of us have here, and that we put that positive energy into the work that we do [with youth]. It makes me feel really happy, and really driven, to continue doing this work, and continue working with everybody here […]

From a Cree worldview, circles stem from medicine wheel teachings, which include "wholeness, balance, relationship between all parts, harmony, growth, healing, and the primary goal of *mino-pimatistiwin*" [emphasis in original] (Hart, 2002, p. 101).[22] For some Indigenous communities

[21] The spelling of *Nêhinaw* is different than the spelling I used for Trey because of the different Cree dialects between both territories.
[22] *Mino-pimatistiwin* is a Cree word that best translates to mean "growth towards the good-life" (Hart, 2002, p. 101).

circles symbolically represent "unity, interdependence, and harmony among all beings in the universe" and an alternative way to relate to one another (Regnier 1995, p. 315 in Hart, 2002, p. 62).

> The circle is found throughout Indigenous societies and their architecture and how they make governmental decisions. The circle is like a foundational platform. What you put on there, it would be your canvas if you will. I guess I have to back up and talk about what other values, other foundations of the Indigenous worldview. It's egalitarian, it's relational, it's a structure that supports an inclusion, a wholeness." (Lewis Cardinal, in Wilson, 2008, p. 92).

For some Indigenous communities, circles emphasize interdependent relationships between members' thoughts, feelings, and experiences, all of which are shared and validated by listening to one another (Hart, 2002, p. 103). Hart (2002) contends that circle participants can experience emotional validation and healing in circles. Indigenous talking, sharing and healing circles create opportunities "for people to share their views and experiences with one another" (Hart, 2002, p. 61). A topic is metaphorically placed in the middle of the circle and "from [that] place, the topic is seen from all vantage points of the circle surrounding it" (Hart, 2002, p. 90). Putting an idea in a circle, or wheel indicates each aspect is interrelated and one blends into the next. Circles are a shared experience, which can culminate into respectful consensus and community knowledge (Hart, 2002, p. 90).

Sierra, the *Anishinaabe* frontline staff who problematized researchers in Winnipeg's North End earlier in this chapter, explained how she understood my choice to use circles meant I had some knowledge of proper cultural protocols such as bringing food and Indigenous cultural significance with the talking piece:

> I see that you have the grandfather rock and I see that you brought food and drinks and so I know that you have done your research…research not just about the organization but about protocol, culture…I appreciate you being genuine and learning that. This is a sacred circle.

Demonstrating prior knowledge of Indigenous communities and cultures and communicating an openness to learn is paramount when doing research with Indigenous peoples, especially as a white researcher. It challenges the hierarchical approaches to research and signalled my commitment to participants to relate differently and to learn *with* them.

Peacemaking, talking, and sharing circles hold much promise for future sociological research if researchers are trained and experienced in the practice and consult with specific communities to ensure they are appropriate and meaningful. By doing this, researchers can help ensure cultural histories and philosophies are not appropriated. In future, I would work with Elders and Knowledge Keepers and reduce the structure of the circles to allow more openness.

Being in relationships: Youth perspectives. Building relationships in a peacemaking circle can create a relational environment. Most of the young people, except those at SNA, had participated in talking or sharing circles before this research. Most Indigenous youth expressed gratitude and appreciation for the circle, the participation of peers, and the chance to build better connections with each other. Tyler, Brooklyn and Ben described the circle as an opportunity to share the knowledge and feelings inside of them. Tyler said, "I like it. I felt like I got some things off my chest." Brooklyn explained the circle was useful to her because she could voice her opinion and ease some anxiety she felt in preparation for the circle:

> I think this was helpful. Got some things off my mind anyways. I don't know…this is all I've been thinking about is this meeting…I was thinking I wonder who's going to be there, like I wonder if I should change. [I] like [that] we got pizza out of it and 20 bucks and a bus ticket.

For Ben, the circle was an opportunity to hear from his peers about their experiences at Ndinawe:

> I think it was really, really helpful and finding out what people thought about this place and it's really helpful for like to make this place better and to understand more people - what more peoples' thoughts were of this community.

Peacemaking circles permitted Indigenous young people to speak and be heard. Boyes-Watson and Pranis' (2014, 2011) and Boyes-Watson (2008) suggest peacemaking circles promote "a sense of belonging and help young people become aware of their own purpose and value to others" (p. 91). Belonging means being accepted and valued. It means being seen and appreciated. Belonging also carries with it responsibility and obligation — accepting and valuing others who belong to the group. For Indigenous youth who are not afforded a sense of belonging and welcome in cold cities, peacemaking circles are one way to explicitly acknowledge their value in the research process.

Indigenous youth highlighted key themes of being in relationships with one another and opening up to their peers as the primary outcomes of their participation. While we only conducted one-time circles, for some youth it resulted in feelings of welcome and belonging. Cain, a relative newcomer to YOUCAN said though he participated in circles in the Verto program, the research circle gave him another chance to open up and express his feelings:

> This is probably the most I've expressed myself since I've been here. Usually in my group I just make jokes all the time, laughing and stuff. Not really being serious. We're serious sometimes but I don't know, I couldn't express myself pretty well. A few months ago I went through rehab and they taught me how to do that in circles like this. I've gotten better ever since I got into rehab so I express my feelings a little bit better. It feels good to get that out of you if you're holding that in.

Circles encouraged young people to make meaningful contribution to this research, meet new people, reconnect with old friends and the opportunity to develop deeper connections with those in the circle. During the final round of the circle, Cain expressed gratitude to his peers for their knowledge and their willingness to listen to him:

> I kinda feel good being here and being able to express myself. One thing I gotta say is there's a lot of knowledge in the circle. I can feel a good vibe here. I just gotta say that I respect the fact that everybody was listening and didn't disrupt anybody and we all had our chance to talk. That's cool.

He calls attention to the role of listening in circles, which made him feel heard in the process. A few days after the circle, he stopped me in the hallway at YOUCAN to say that he appreciated the circle because he heard his peer's experiences and met some new people. He ended our brief conversation by saying, "It's not often you get to open up." For Indigenous young men, such as Cain, who live on the streets or are involved in gangs, a circle may be one of the only times he felt safe enough to share his feelings. For other youth, speaking in circles may be scary for the same reason.

Other Indigenous youth echoed Cain as they emphasized the relationships between peers at the core of their experience in the circles. Andrea, a 25 year-old Indigenous woman at iHuman, said in her closing remarks, that she felt good about the circle because she established better relationships with her peers:

> I respect the circle. You get to hear everybody's little part of what they put into it and like it's always nice to learn about something that you never knew before…you know when you just [see] them as this human being but once they open their mouth and they share that's them sharing a little bit of their life and I have respect for that because that's just showing that they have respect for you to share with you and trust you. I think the sharing in the circle brings a lot of gifts for everybody.

Andrea does not explicitly articulate what she meant by "gifts" but infers it to mean trust, respect and sharing.

To my knowledge, the circles were the first time the majority of the Indigenous young people met. They created a share relational experience by being in the circle together. Brad's participation in youth circle was also part of his first experience at YOUCAN. He explained the difficulty he experienced to share in a group of strangers. However, by the end of the process made him feel connected to the other youth in the circle:

> Today is my first day here [in YOUCAN building] and I'm looking at all of you. It's kinda awkward for me to actually express where I'm coming from. Even though it's my first time meeting you. You share a connection with all of us. We're all here for

different reasons but we're all here as a group.

Circles can be awkward as people start off uneasy and when there are not already established meaningful connections. However, as the circle process progresses some youth found support and comfort. Dean, another YOUCAN youth shared for him participating in the circle was enjoyable because he was able to:

> […] say my peace on the situations. I wanted to be part of kinda expressing what I wanted to express. I don't often express myself that much. It was just good to express myself.

Dean does not often express himself in public. Prior to the circle, he only knew a few of the other youth. However, being in the circle gave him some confidence to express himself:

> [It] doesn't really matter. I shouldn't be embarrassed about what I think or my thoughts and expressing them. It was actually pretty easy…I actually enjoy that about myself now. I feel like back then I wouldn't say anything, I'd just keep quiet. I think it's shown that I've grown as a person.

The youth in the circles participated to various degrees. Some took each opportunity with the talking piece to speak while others would simply pass. Regardless of their verbal participation, each youth received the talking piece and would decide for themselves if they wanted to contribute.

In the SNA youth circle, Dakota said multiple times he did not have answers to the questions or did not want to comment. In response to one of the questions, he said, "I don't really want to explain." At the end of the circle, I asked Dakota if he would be interested in a follow up interview. I could tell he had more to say and that he did not feel comfortable divulging to the group. He agreed. During our interview, we returned to circle questions and he opened up about his past gang membership. It was not clear until my interview with Rebecca, another youth at SNA, that Dakota may have limited his participation because of her presence. Rebecca asked me during our interview, "Do you remember that, Dakota?":

> Yeah, I used to know him. And when we seen each other again [in the circle]...I didn't say anything and when he said do we know each other, I was just like nope just so he knows it. I don't know him anymore. I don't want to know him.
>
> We have bad experiences together. Because his family is IP [Indian Posse gang] and I was MC [Mad Cows gang]. Yeah, we fought twice. The first time he won, the second time I won.

She explained how she felt to see Dakota in the circle:

> And when we see each other it's quite awkward. But I didn't want to care. I'm in Spence I don't have to really worry about that.

Pre-existing negative relationships between these young people may have affected the entire circle dynamic. Unfortunately, it was only during this interview that this information emerged. I was unable to ask Dakota about his relationship with Rebecca. This example shows the limits of my use of peacemaking circles and the good comments offered by some youth at the end. It is possible that other youth left the circles feelings unwelcomed and disconnected.

Being in relationships: Staff perspectives. Peacemaking circles gave staff the chance to sit together, build their relationships and reflect on their work without distractions. All staff circles were held before or after regular work hours to ensure they could fulfill their regular employment duties. Dedicated staff time without email, cell phones, and the presence of young people in the building (for the most part) gave staff uninterrupted time to re-energize. Many noted their appreciation for the time to take stock of their successes, air frustrations and realize the common struggles in their daily realities to meet the needs of Indigenous youth at the organizations. Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, said that his participation is a valuable way to energize the staff:

> It [the circle] feels really good, and I'm glad to see that you're doing this work. It's really important too, and it's easy to get caught up, [in] our own little microscopic or tunnel vision focus here, on what we're doing. But I'm glad that you brought up that it really is a wider focus, and the work that's being done here will, hopefully, shed some light on that too.

The circle gave him time to reflect on his youth work practice. He highlights the contributions researchers can make to help non-profits understand the broader nature of their work and the challenges in that practice. Siobhan, a frontline worker at YOUCAN, suggested that because the circles focused on responding to the needs of Indigenous youth that it gave her time to think critically about how she interacts with this population:

> It was cool to see other people's perspectives about stuff and you asked questions that I don't really think about all necessarily everyday. It's not like when I work with youth I'm like "You are Aboriginal – how best can I serve you" or "how does my agency or how does our work here reflect on services." It was thought provoking!

Staff across all the organizations generally agreed that the circles were beneficial and they would take more time to talk openly about their work and to reflect on their youth work practices. For Cynthia, a frontline worker at Ndinawe, the circle was beneficial because it reminded her about the meaning of the work: "I think it's a need. If anything, I kind of wish that all of the staff could have been here for this…" I suggest all organizations implement staff reflection circles as a way to encourage the connection of their daily practice to the systemic challenges and barriers young people face, and to the nature of non-profit work. By doing so, it may help reduce staff burn out and improve staff self-care (I return to this again in chapter 5).

Staff valued the dedicated time to be in relationship with coworkers in the circles. All of the staff voiced the need for closer relationships with their colleagues. For example, Diana, a frontline worker at iHuman, said these relationships may be better cultivated if include understanding colleagues beyond work roles and duties:

> It would be great if we could do this more often. [If] it was like staff like small group style and I think that's really important. So if we get an opportunity to understand each other in a way that isn't under like a work situation.

Other staff at different organizations echoed the value of stepping back from their work to reflect

and find solutions that might increase their success. Sandy, a frontline worker at YOUCAN, maintained that the circle was a valuable experience because it strengthened the relationships between staff:

> It creates a community of togetherness when you're sharing, sharing your thoughts and your feelings and your opinions and it feels like a really safe space to do that. So that's what was good about it for me.

Freddy, a frontline worker at Ndinawe, echoed Sandy's sentiment above:

> You know, I've known Cynthia for quite some time now, but me and Sierra have never really had that opportunity to sit down and chill and learn about each other…I'm appreciative of it. I mean, now we kind of understand each other's insights – it's building our relationship. That's going to help us work more effectively, I feel. Yeah, I'm appreciative that I was able to be a part of the [circle] process.

Staff work together to support Indigenous youth at the organizations. They rarely have the time and opportunity to reflect on their practice work and build relationships with each other. For many staff, they would much rather engage in a circle than participate in an organizational "team building" activity. For the staff the value of the circles rests in its ability to build better connections and understandings of their practice together. Third party facilitated circles could be helpful to organizations to guide the staff through reflexive dialogue without the presence of executive directors or senior managers.

As part of their daily practice, iHuman, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN staff use circles for their weekly or monthly staff meetings. The staff at SNA had never previously participated in a circle as a group. In a follow up interview with Crystal, a frontline manager, she explained how many staff were excited about the circles and how they could be relevant to her team:

> It seems like the staff circle was so long ago but I feel like that was like such a good space to be in. I feel like everyone – that that wasn't just my feeling. I felt like everybody really felt like that… It's really huge to step back from the day-to-day stuff and think about that [youth work] even more in a big picture kind of way…I feel sad for the people who didn't get to participate in that.

Later in our discussion, she continued that many staff in the circle stated they would appreciate a kind of "self-care circle" to celebrate successes and air grievances more frequently:

> A lot of staff expressed their interests in having a self-care circle, where we can all sit…I think it will be challenging to keep that from being, like a space of complaining…I don't think that would be positive for everybody, and just putting all those complaints in the middle of a space is probably not going to be the most successful form of self-care. But if we can do more of thinking big picture and thinking about all the positive impacts, and things like that, then I think that that…it could be helpful.

Following the staff circle at SNA, I sent Crystal a self-care circle plan to use as a guide to implement circles in their weekly staff meetings. When I returned to SNA in October 2016 to update the staff about the progress of my research, I learned that they implemented a check-in circle as part of their weekly staff meeting to reflect positively on their work.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the peacemaking circles, I conducted one-hour, semi-structured interviews with 12 youth, 16 staff, and four executive directors as a way to build on and extend the dialogue from the circles (Appendix D and E for Youth and Staff Interview Guides). Interviews allow researchers to better understand how people understand their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, 2008; Feldman et al., 2003; Roulston, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews are a dominant method used in youth scholarship, homelessness research, and program assessment research (Anucha, 2005; Baum & Burnes, 1993; Choak, 2012; Coates & Mckenzie-Mohr, 2010; Dimitriadis, 2008; Heath et al., 2009; Karabanow, 2004; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Robinson, 2010; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2008; Smith et al., 2005; Wingert et al., 2005). Interviews value individual experiences and they allow researchers to hear from youth themselves (Choak, 2012). Semi-structured interviews are the most common form of interview in youth research. While there is a defined topic, the open-ended questions create opportunities for researchers to ask

questions to clarify and elaborate on their answers and keep the dialogue open to unexpected information, contradictions and complexities of participant's experiences (Choak, 2012; Dimitriadis, 2008).

Indigenous youth and staff either self-selected or I asked specific people to participate in interviews depending on their level of participation in the circles. I interviewed 12 of the 19 self-identified Indigenous youth in the circles, 10 frontline youth workers and managers from the circles, six frontline workers that were not in the circles, and four executive directors. I conducted interviews after the circles because I already established a relationship with the majority of the participants. This format also allowed me to further develop the thematic content from the circles and explore new areas of their experiences at the organizations. During the interviews, I narrowed and adapted the questions based on the specific outcomes from each circle to flow naturally from the end of the previous dialogue. I interviewed each organization's executive director about the organizational histories, philosophies, and approaches they employ to meet Indigenous young people's needs in their youth work practices. By doing so, I could contrast management responses with frontline worker and youth experiences. Executive directors did not participate in the circles because I anticipated their presence would alter the staff's openness.

Originally, I planned to limit staff interviews to those who participated in the peacemaking circles to maintain consistency. Once my fieldwork began, three main challenges emerged. First, scheduling conflicts made it difficult for some staff, especially those who work in youth outreach positions, to participate in the circles. Second, many staff were eager to participate. Third, after the first youth circle and interviews at YOUCAN, it was clear I needed to understand the mutuality of the relationships between youth and their primary frontline worker.

If a youth identified a worker who was not in the original staff circle, I approached the staff to ask for their participation and conducted one-on-one interviews with them about their relationship with a specific youth.

Participant Observation

In addition to circles and semi-structured interviews, I also employed a number of other research methods to help to round out the analysis and fill in gaps left by the circle process and interviews. In what follows, I discuss my use of participant observation, rhythm and poetry (rap) and photography.

Upon my arrival at each organization, I met frontline staff in their weekly or monthly staff meetings to introduce myself, provide an overview of my research and answer questions, and begin recruitment for peacemaking circles and interviews. Some frontline staff referred Indigenous youth to the peacemaking circles. As part of this process, I conducted a two-week participant observation at each organization (Allan, 2012; McKechnie, 2012). During that time, I took part in the daily activities at the organizations and took fieldnotes. I witnessed how Indigenous youths' needs are responded to and the relationships they have with frontline workers. I use these observations to juxtapose the information youth and staff reported in the peacemaking circles and interviews. I observed staff and youth interactions in, and out of, the formal programs, attended community meetings with executive directors and other community organizers, Indigenous ceremonies such as a traditional Cree feast in honour of an iHuman youth who had passed away in the care of Child Family Services, grassroots events such as Edmonton's CypherwildYEG and Winnipeg's Meet me at the Bell Tower, a Blanket Dance to raise funds for the families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and Aboriginal Day celebrations in Winnipeg. My participant observations allowed me to build relationships with

youth and staff while participating in some programming. I also obtained more information about their daily youth work practices, the contexts of the cities and the experiences of Indigenous youth outside of the organizations.

Rhythm and Poetry (Rap)

Since the 1970s, arts-based research has used various art forms to represent the social phenomenon under investigation (Barone, 2012; Leavy 2009). Arts-based research methods are primarily used in identity research because it can give subjugated voices power and promotes dialogue (Leavy, 2009, p. 13). In qualitative research, arts-based practices lend to inductive research because it can evoke multiple meanings beyond language (Leavy, 2009, p. 14). Art is creative way to hear young people's voices beyond their verbal participation – through their participation, art, words and silence. Throughout this thesis I include rhythm and poetry (rap) by Symplicity (Adrian Shirt), NSM-1 (Dylan McCarthy-Daniels), and Ronin (Donovan Waskahat). These young men were not part of the youth who were recruited for the peacemaking circles or semi-structured interviews (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). I met these young men through my fieldwork, employment with iHuman and YOUCAN, and participation in Edmonton's hip hop community. I approached these young men specifically because I knew they had rap that could lend to the themes of this research. Each of them was paid 50 dollars for their contributions and they verbally consented to the use their real emcee, first, and last names in this research. This arts-based method exemplifies Indigenous youth's experiences in cold cities in their own words and in meaningful ways. These emcees did not create their raps specifically for this research. I hope this helped protect their emotional safety because they did not have to recount past traumas. In future research, I would consider using

rhythm and poetry (rap) as a method in my original fieldwork and would include rap by Indigenous women and two-spirited peoples specifically.

Previous research contends hip hop is a youth-originated research method because many youth, and particularly Indigenous youth, already participate in hip hop culture (Buffam, 2011, 2006; de Roeper & Savelsberg, 2009; Gorlewski & Porfilio, 2012; Lashua, 2006; Lashua & Fox, 2007; Lashua & Kelly 2008; Snell & Söderman, 2014). My experience working with Indigenous young people in Edmonton at YOUCAN, iHuman, and CypherwildYEG echoes Buffam (2006, 2011), Lashua (2006), Lashua and Kelly (2008), and MacDonald's (2016) Edmonton-based research. These authors suggest that Indigenous youth use hip hop as an artistic storytelling platform to ascribe meaning to their lives and understand who they are as Indigenous people. Hip hop can be a healthy outlet for youth to safely share their stories, feelings and emotions. It can give Indigenous youth a creative platform to use their voice and negotiate their identities as Indigenous people (Buffam, 2006, 2011; Ignace, 2011; Lashua, 2006; Lashua and Kelly 2008). While youth have historically used hip hop in their daily lives and as Indigenous youth blend hip hop with traditional cultural practices (Smith Lefebvre & Ibrahim, 2016), it is also gaining momentum across youth work and social work practices in North America as a therapeutic response because it can promote positive mental health, agency and creativity (Allen, 2005; Hadley & Yancey, 2012; Raphael & Deepak, 2011).

Photography

Photography is more prominent in anthropological rather than sociological research (Collier, 1967). Becker (1974) was the first to argue for a visual sociology and its under-use in sociological research (Berg, 2012; Bolton et al., 2001; Collier, 1967; Harper, 2003; Keegan, 2012). Visual methods are increasingly incorporated into ethnographic research and their

production and analysis become part of ethnographic knowledge (Allan, 2012). In research, photography cannot claim objective truth but rather puts images into dialogue with various other methods and analysis (Harper, 2003). I am a self-taught photographer. As part of this critical ethnography, I included photos of the four organizations to increase the visual representation of the organizational spaces to "compliment the spoken word" of youth and staff for the reader (Keegan, 2012, p. 620). My use of photography is limited to lending to the descriptions of the organizations when they also hold possibilities to advance thematic analyses and can also be a site of analysis as well.

Research Limits

There are three main research limits of this study. First, the relatively small number of Indigenous youth and staff who participated in this research make these findings very specific and not generalizable. Second, my limited knowledge of Indigenous worldviews, teachings, and circle practices create a tension in the use of peacemaking circles as a practice with Indigenous youth and staff. Importantly, due to the fact that many Indigenous youth in this research did not identify culturally as Indigenous, the symbolism, meanings, and worldviews in the circles may remain unknown. Moreover, I question my position as a white researcher using this practice and what impacts it could have on teaching Indigenous youth about cultural practices in this way. Third, the time I spent at each organization was limited to two weeks. Ideally, I could have spent much more time at each one to gain more participation and in-depth data from youth and staff.

Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined my methodological approach to stand with Indigenous youth and frontline staff at the four youth organizations. As a white researcher standing with Indigenous communities means building meaningful relationships that extend ethically beyond

the confines of research. It became apparent throughout my fieldwork that my methodology is also informed by an "ethic of care" which centralizes being in relationships with Indigenous youth and frontline staff, creating meaningful spaces and opportunities for youth to be heard in scholarship and a respect for youth and staff's Indigeneity (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Tronto, 2010, 1993). My methodological approach uses multiple research methods to hear the voices of Indigenous youth in their participation at the organizations, art (visual art and rhythm and poetry) and verbal contributions made during the peacemaking circles and interviews.

Peacemaking circles proved to be the most rewarding and culturally meaningful method. Peacemaking circles included me as a part of the circle, helped to equalize power dynamics with the talking piece, and encouraged participants to be in relationships differently. Circles require the researcher to be open to the unknown and to the possibility of being taken to new places. Peacemaking circle dialogue with Indigenous youth and frontline staff completely altered this research and myself in meaningful ways. They yielded many unintentional topics such as staff self-care (chapter 5).

Peacemaking circles hold much promise for sociological and qualitative research with Indigenous youth and communities. Admittedly, circles take more time and opens research up to the unknown. To me, this is where the excitement of research lies. Circles are done *with* Indigenous youth and communities. Conducting peacemaking circles requires specific training to appropriately ground circles in the history and symbolism of Indigenous sharing circles. It requires knowledge of these practices and experiences in them. Sitting in circle with the youth and staff communicated that I was willing to learn, give up control, and be in relationship with them in new ways – to stand with them (TallBear, 2014). More research could be done to more

fully investigate the cultural meanings of these relationships, expand their relevance to building peer relationships and understanding of circles as a culturally meaningful method. Future research with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers within specific communities is critical to honour the ceremony and keep the risk of appropriation of this method at the forefront of research practice.

Chapter 2 – "It's Hard to be Yourself in a World of Colonization": Understanding Youth Indigeneity in Cold Cities

There ain't no saviour taking pain to go or maybe so,
See I'm just sayin' that there's more than racism for *nêhiyawaks*.
And I lay it low cos' no one likes what I be saying.
But I mean something must define me other than assimilation,
Or a "broken language," and a people lost, confused with a culture and virginity
Because we grow and then we lose it,
While abuses it's this very common thing,
It's a scary song to sing,
We're bearing wrongs for coloured skin,
I'm a "son of sin,"
For living life that's handed down to me
And they say we're alcoholics but its society that's drowning me.
Ironically, I never drank within my life.
I spent years out on the streets and I worked hard to get it right
Now living on my own, got a job and learn tradition,
My stereos a different type they'd think I'm living.
I'm just a modern Native through deceitful complications
It's hard to be yourself in a world of colonization
Cause never will I be beautiful, but only be more than that [sic]
- Donovan Waskahat, *nêhiyawak*, 21, Ronin, Edmonton[23]

Donovan admits in his rap above, "it's hard to be yourself in a world of colonization." He confronts the historical and contemporary traumas of racism and assimilation endured by Indigenous peoples in Canada when he says, "And they say we're alcoholics but its society that's drowning me." Here, Donovan refers to the multiple ways Indigenous young people have been negatively affected by colonialism, the introduction of alcohol and residential schools, the legacy of which continue today in these cold cities. He simultaneously challenges negative stereotypes of Indigenous people and longs for a way out of colonial (mis)representations to more accurately understand his Indigeneity. He makes this clear when he says, "there's more than racism for *nêhiyawak*s…something must define me other than assimilation…a 'broken' language…a people

[23] Donovan's rap is not part of the youth who were recruited for the peacemaking circles or semi-structured interviews. The art productions were publically available and then made available to me by Donovan Waskahat, Dylan McCarthy-Daniels, and Adrian Shirt for the purpose of this research. See Appendix A: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation.

lost" (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). Poverty, intergenerational trauma, substance use and dependence, mental health issues, homelessness, jail, gangs and the child welfare system too often characterize their lives in scholarship (Baskin, 2016, 2013, 2011, 2007; Barron, 2011; Comack, 2012; Comack, et al. 2013; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Navia, 2015; White et al., 2011). In this chapter, I situate young people's Indigeneity as the first element of creating a "warm place" for Indigenous youth at youth organizations (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). To better meet their needs, I suggest that by centralizing an understanding of a youth's Indigeneity, their identity as an Indigenous person, practitioners and scholars may better understand how they see themselves and what they need culturally and spiritually, if anything at all. I analyze the distinct ways Indigenous youth reject or reclaim their Indigeneity and the difficulties of doing so because of their family trauma, experiences of racism and the limited colonial understandings of Indigenous people and cultures.

Indigeneity is complex and, for some, too often painful to reconcile in a colonial world that sought to eliminate their voices, stories and cultures from this land (Cannon & Sunseri, 2011; Coulthard, 2014; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Canada's Indian Act (1876) has long since "legislated, marginalized, and pathologized" Indigeneity and enacted the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples through state violence and practices such as residential schools (Donald & Krahn, 2014, p. 114; Alfred & Corntassel, 2011; Baskin, 2016, 2013, 2011, 2007; Lawrence, 2011, 2004; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Colonialism in Canada and the continued daily experiences of racism in cold cities continues to effect Indigenous youths' knowledge about who they are as Indigenous peoples (Tistle, 2017).

Belanger et al.'s (2003) research with 20 Indigenous youth in Winnipeg suggests racism prevents them from claiming a positive Indigenous identity. Indigenous young people in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) echo a resounding message: their cultures are at the core of their identities and connecting with their cultures helps them heal from the impacts of colonialism and racism (Belanger et al., 2003). There is relatively little research on how Indigenous youth understand their Indigeneity (Belanger et al., 2003; Fast, 2014; Sabiston, 2013). As more and more Indigenous young people grow up in cities (Belanger et al., 2003), there is an increasing need to consider *how* urban Indigenous youth understand and reconcile or reject their Indigeneity. This chapter adds to this scholarship by demonstrates the complexities of these experiences and how youth organizations in Edmonton and Winnipeg can respond to Indigenous youth's cultural and spiritual needs.

Midway through the first youth peacemaking circle at YOUCAN, Nicole asks, "Can we talk about being Aboriginal?" As the circle keeper, I turned the question back to the young people in the circle and they agreed. Nicole's question firmly placed Indigeneity into the centre of the peacemaking circle and subsequently made me place it at the forefront of this research. For Nicole, and many youth, their Indigeneity is part of who they are, and creates challenges as they navigate cold cities, meet their needs, and struggle to develop a positive sense of self. In subsequent youth circles, because of the often sensitive and painful experiences Indigenous youth endure, I asked them to self-identify as Indigenous and to share as much, or as little, as they felt comfortable about their Indigeneity. Admittedly, the amount of data I was able to gather is limited due to how I asked youth to self-identify their Indigeneity, the subsequent dialogue that did or did not follow in the circles, and the depth of data I could collect in semi-structured interviews with some youth. However, the 19 Indigenous youth described the tensions present

between racial and cultural understandings of Indigeneity that lead them to either claim and reject their identity. This chapter analyzes how histories of colonialism, contemporary racism and assimilation have influenced Indigenous young peoples' definitions of themselves as Indigenous.

This research comes at an important historical time of Indigenous cultural renewal. Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) and Canada's ratification of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) in 2016 (Fontaine, 2016, May 10) much political, public, and institutional dialogue now centres on the reconciliation of Canada's colonial past. "Reconciliation" is not a romantic notion or a panacea. Rather, it is controversial and complex. Indigenous young people sit at the centre of reconciliation efforts. For centuries, Indigenous people have played vital roles in Indigenous cultural protection and revival and Indigenous-led movements and environmental protection efforts. Contemporary examples include Idle no More (2012) (Coulthard 2014; Palmater, 2015) and the Standing Rock water protectors (2016) (Rosenmann, 2016). According to some *Anishinaabe* Elders and Knowledge Keepers this time in history is known as the "Seventh Fire," based on the prophesy of the same name (Knowles, 2016; Simpson, 2008):

> [It] clocks the history of our time on this land, from how we received our earliest teachings, through the arrival of the "light-skinned race," through the loss of our ways. According to many of our teachers, we are now living in the time of the seventh fire, a time when there will be "a rebirth of the Anishinaabe nations and a re-kindling of the sacred fire." The eighth fire is an extension of the prophecies, a suggestion and a wish that now is the time for the Indigenous people and the settler communities to work together to achieve justice, to live together in a good way (Yvette Nolan, Algonquin, in Knowles, 2016, p. 403; Simpson, 2008).

Nicole's initial question and the responses of the Indigenous young people in this chapter all point to the cultural revival in the Seventh Fire as they are actively challenging negative stereotypes and attempting to reclaim their identities in complex and profound ways. All the

youth raised questions about their own understanding of their Indigeneity. The majority noted they are in the process of learning about their cultures and a few already reclaim their Indigeneity in ways that go beyond colonial categorizations of Indigenous people and cultures.

Indigeneity is highly political, complex and controversial (Alfred & Corntassel, 2011; Donald & Krahn, 2014; Lawrence, 2011, 2004; Palmater, 2011). There is no universal agreement on what constitutes one's Indigeneity (Lawrence 2011, 2004). Alfred and Corntassel (2011) suggest that broadly, "*Being Indigenous* means thinking, speaking, and acting with the conscious intent of regenerating one's Indigeneity" [emphasis in original] (p. 144). Definitions of Indigeneity are legally codified in law under the Indian Act (1876) and are heavily regulated to eliminate Indigenous peoples (Baskin, 2016; Lawrence, 2011, 2004; Palmater, 2011). Historically, it has been non-Indigenous (specifically white) researchers who attempted to make sense of these identities (Lawrence, 2004). I do not intend, nor is it my place, to make definite claims in this chapter about who *is* or *is not,* Indigenous. My intent is to carefully and critically examine the ways in which these 19 Indigenous youth conceptualize their Indigeneity. I place it at the centre of this research in an attempt to also put it at the centre of youth work scholarship and organizational responses to this vulnerable population.

Youth scholarship across fields of psychology, cultural studies and sociology has long since focused on youth identity and how they answer the question: "Who am I?" (Conrad et al., 2014; Erikson, 1968; Furlong, 2013; Hall, 1997, 1996; Hall, 1904). Rarely does this scholarship investigate and honour Indigenous youth identity (Belanger et al., 2003; Sabiston, 2013; White et al., 2011). Instead, scholars generally focus on Indigenous youths' experiences in homelessness, child welfare and in the criminal justice system (Comack, 2012; Comack et al., 2013; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Navia, 2015; Patrick, 2014; White et al., 2011). This previous scholarship is

vital to understanding their lives. Yet, at the same time, this scholarship risks implying that Indigenous youth are solely "damaged" by violence, pain, and trauma or "in need of fixing" (Donald & Krahn, 2014, p. 114). In contrast to and building on this previous scholarship, the youth in this research point to some positive experiences as well as their engagement in healing and reclaiming their cultural identities.

Previous research contributes theoretical understandings of Indigeneity but focuses almost exclusively on adults (Alfred & Corntassel, 2011; Berry, 1999; Chilisa, 2012; Donald & Krahn, 2014; Lawrence, 2011, 2004; Wilson, 2008). By bringing together youth and Indigenous scholarship in new ways this chapter attends to how Indigenous youth understand themselves in cold cities. Like Belanger et al.'s (2003) research with 20 Indigenous youth in Winnipeg, I focus on the interconnection between self-perception, community identities, and external influences (i.e. legislation). Indigenous young peoples' stories of self-perception, like those in Belanger et al. (2003), highlight their agency and the reasons why they choose to accept or reject their Indigeneity. I draw on Indigenous scholars such as Lawrence (2011, 2006, 2004) to contend that Indigenous youth employ both racialized identities based on physical appearance and/or blood-quantum embedded in the Indian Act (1876). Indigenous youth in this research, similar to youth in Belanger et al. (2003), typically equate their cultural identity with their participation in traditional ceremonies such as smudging, dance and pow wows.

In contrast to Belanger et al. (2003), the Indigenous youth in this research move between racial and cultural understandings of their identities simultaneously across three main areas. First, Ryan, a young man at YOUCAN, described his difficult relationship with his Indigeneity because of Canada's colonial past and his contemporary experiences of racism. Ryan makes clear that there is a shift happening among his peers to reclaim their Indigeneity. He renders

them as a painful and complex process, which includes his familial trauma, his knowledge of colonialism, and his experiences of racism in school. He rejects his identity as a way to reject colonialism and racism. Second, 16 youth described their Indigeneity by using colonial language that reduces it to a racial category under the Indian Act (1876). This group of youth, however, recognize the missing and essential cultural knowledge of their identities and indicate that they are in the process of learning their traditions and reclamation of their cultural identities. The racialized conceptions of Indigeneity codified in the Indian Act (1876) continue to influence *how* Indigenous youth understand themselves and how they are treated in public city spaces. Third, Trey and Tyler, two young men from Edmonton, identified themselves as *nêhiyawak*, as we will see, as a way to further reclaim their *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree language), worldviews, and their Indigeneity as a cultural identity first and beyond the colonial categories that have been imposed on them.

Importantly, young people's identities are not solely based on culture or race, but intersect with gender and sexuality in integral ways (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; White et al., 2011). These intersections warrant attention with youth's Indigeneity but are outside of the scope of this thesis. Indigenous youth in this research did not speak directly to these intersections nor did they specifically address any legislation or the Indian Act (1876) or their official status. Future research with Indigenous youth may include an intersectional analysis and consider how government legislation may sway their understanding of their Indigeneities. While this research is not generalizable, it provides new insight into young people's understandings of their Indigeneity.

"Can we talk about being Aboriginal?": Youth Perspectives on their Indigeneity

"I know I am but I don't want to express it": Rejecting Indigeneity to Refuse Experiences of Colonialism and Racism

For Ryan, a young person at YOUCAN, understanding his Indigeneity is a tenuous process filled with internalized and daily experiences of racism in cold cities. While most of the youth claimed an Indigenous identity to some degree and spoke about the difficulty of doing so, Ryan was the only young person to vehemently reject his Indigeneity. In this section, I analyze his complex account, which is fraught with tensions and traumas associated with experiences of colonialism, residential schools and contemporary racism in schools. Ryan's painful experiences are steeped in anger at the colonial system, his family and himself. His account points to the lasting "trauma trails" laid down by colonialism, which form "layers of traumatic impacts down generations" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 50, in Comack et al. 2013, 37; Thistle, 2017). Ryan offers a counter-narrative to the majority of the youth I interviewed. His story demonstrates the need to understand the continued effect of colonialism and trauma Indigenous young people endure in their daily lives and respond to their cultural and spiritual needs with care. A careful approach considers how to educate staff about the realities and ongoing traumas experienced by Indigenous youth specifically and the need for organizations to positively reflect Indigenous cultures and attend to their spiritual and cultural needs.

Ryan is a kind-hearted and talented artist. He is a tall, dark-skinned young man with long black hair. At the time of this research, I knew Ryan from his participation in the Step Up and Step In program at YOUCAN. Our longstanding relationship may have been why he was willing to share more with me about his perspectives of his Indigeneity. He originally found his way to YOUCAN and the Step Up and Step In program after reconnecting with his youth worker, Wren,

at his high school. The two previously met at a youth shelter in the city. Early in the YOUCAN youth circle, Ryan shared some of the pain he sees as connected to his identity as an Indigenous man:

> I don't really like being Aboriginal. I wish I wasn't. My family excluded me from them. I hate them for that. I consider myself *not* Aboriginal. It's my decision [emphasis added].

In this moment, Ryan rejects his Indigeneity. It seems he does so as a result of the rejection he endured from part of his family. Blame and anger permeate his steadfast position. Later in the circle he explained how he does not want to express his Indigeneity because he was taught to hide it:

> I don't really like to express myself as a Native, Indigenous, or whatever. That's the only thing I don't want to express is that. I know I am but I don't want to express it. It's my family's fault for doing that. Now they want me to do it more because they are finally doing it. But I refuse because they made it clear when I was a kid "don't express it." It stuck with me. Some days I'll do it. It's very rarely that I will do that. I wish people would respect it more. I wish they didn't bring it up and say, "Express it more." I refuse.

Ryan's active and intentional withdrawal from his cultural identity points to his family's previous rejection that was engrained during their experiences in residential schools. His family's return to their cultural identities could sway Ryan to do the same. He took his rejection one step further in our interview when he said he considers that part of him dead:

> I think I died off being an Aboriginal. I'm way off! Way, way past it. I just lost interest in it. I see other people trying to survive.

Ryan's claim that he "died off being Aboriginal" and that he "just lost interest in it" does not connect the loss of his culture to the effects of Canada's colonialism or residential schools outright. In cold cities, it appears daily experiences of racism pressures some young people, such as Ryan, to assimilate to mainstream society and reject their Indigeneity. It seems rejecting his Indigeneity may help Ryan feel a sense of control over his identity and his life. Lawrence (2004)

contends hiding one's Indigeneity is a kind of "defense mechanism" some Indigenous peoples use as a way to escape oppression by sacrificing cultural knowledge (Lawrence, 2004, p. 124). Historical assimilation, demonization and criminalization of Indigeneity and cultures codified in law and practiced in the residential school system taught Indigenous children to fear, hide and reject their identity (Lawrence, 2004; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Forceful attempts to eliminate Indigenous people and cultures continue to make Indigenous people feel inferior (Lawrence, 2011, 2004; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Ryan's story brings out the lasting effects of the residential school system in new generations of youth. It seems claiming his Indigeneity as a cultural identity is too difficult. Doing so would mean he would have to confront his traumas and feelings of inferiority. Without proper supports, these attempts could be fatal.

As our interview progressed, Ryan's rejection of his Indigeneity was not only linked to his family, but he then firmly grounded in his knowledge of colonialism and his experiences of racism in school and the city:

> I don't know. Like I said, me, and I'll say it to everyone. I'm not very into my culture. I'll say it firmly again. I don't wanna. I really don't wanna. I like how people are liking it [Indigenous cultures]. They know they're Aboriginal and they wanna embrace it. But me, not so much.
>
> Daena – And you said [in the circle] that's mostly because of your family?
>
> Ryan – My family and really seeing what's happening. I don't care. I really don't care if it [Indigenous culture] fades away to be honest, ever since what happened in the past. I'm surprised it hasn't fully faded away.
>
> Daena – What do you mean?
>
> Ryan – When settlers came in and fucked everything up. I'm surprised that it's slowly holding on but not as much. There's a lot of cultures that came and went, like the Aztecs for instance. They were wiped out fast. I'm surprised that Aboriginal [peoples in Canada] haven't wiped out as fast as them […].

Ryan simultaneously connects his family history with Canada's colonial context and recognizes how it drastically altered Indigenous peoples' lives and cultures in Canada.

Even though he recognizes that Indigenous people and cultures have survived and the contemporary cultural resurgence, Ryan infers reconciling these experiences are too painful. These historic experiences are compounded by the continued marginalization of Indigenous youth in cold cities. As a child in a Catholic school, Ryan said his peers and teachers mistreated him:

> That's the reason why I don't like [being] Aboriginal. They are treated horrible. I saw it too when I was growing up. I was in a Catholic School. That's all I got was mistreated by everyone. Teachers, only one teacher liked me…Other than that everyone hated me.

Ryan's ability to articulate, "That's the reason why I don't like [being] Aboriginal. They are treated horrible", implies his rejection of his Indigeneity is in fact a rejection of his mistreatment and discrimination as an Indigenous person. He equates being Indigenous with horrible treatment. As our interview continued, Ryan recounted more of his traumatic experiences in schools and admits his anger extends beyond individual teachers to the Catholic Church for its role in Canada's cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). He said,

> That's why I don't like Catholicism or whatever it's called. What they did in the past is unforgiving. It is unforgiving. It's not. I like it though that how society they know they fucked up and they know they did a lot of bad things, but they're trying to cover it up. But there's proof that they did a lot of bad stuff…It's impossible to [say] "Oh you're doing good!" and you're like "Yeah right? Sure you're doing good now, but you're hiding the fact that you've done a lot of dark stuff."

Ryan resents how "society", referring to both the Canada government and the Catholic Church, endeavours to hide its role in Canada's colonial history and cannot see a way to reconcile such a violent past.

Ryan's choice to identify, or not, as an Indigenous person "can also be influenced by factors such as physical appearance or social, economic, or political forces" (Belanger et al., 2003, p. 20). I asked Ryan how he felt when others impose a racialized conception of Indigeneity on him because of his height, brown skin and long black hair:

> They think I'm Aboriginal, right? And I know I am…I don't want to say the real truth because a lot of people will backlash right, that's why I don't want to face [admitting the cultural rejection]. So I just pretend I like it. One day I really have to say I don't like it. I really don't want to be a part of it anymore because my family was a part of it. It's dying pretty bad. It's trying to come back but it's slowly kinda fading away.

I asked Ryan if he thought he could help to challenge negative stereotypes about Indigenous people through his positive involvement in the community at YOUCAN and through his art. Ryan postulated about how he might help the general public think differently about Indigenous people and cultures:

> […] I guess in a way I hope I helped them a little bit. Like "oh! I'm Aboriginal" even though I don't want to be called that, right? Or be approached as it. But at the same time, that's the reason why I kinda stay silent about those questions because I don't know. A lot of people still, it's really hard to say. It's like "Oh Aboriginal, ugh! Homeless, drinker, causing a ruckus, being arrested" stuff like that.
>
> As for me, I don't drink at all, refuses to drink alcohol in general ok maybe I'll have one then that is enough. Sure I did drugs but then I stopped. I stayed in school but it's kinda hard to say that because a lot of people expect that "He's gonna be homeless when he gets old. He's not gonna keep a job. He's not gonna do shit. He's gonna be scum of society. He's gonna pretend he's gonna get all high and mighty just to come back." But showing this though, at the same time, is like in a way it brings hope for them, right? Saying "Oh! He's an Aboriginal. We expected him to do all those things that I just said." I guess in a way we can trust them. Maybe not rely on them but welcome them […]

He acknowledges the negative stereotypes, which are readily attached to an Indigenous person such as homelessness, drug abuse, his own personal experience in homelessness and drug use and the daily experiences of racism for Indigenous peoples. He fears the potential consequences and marginalization of outwardly rejecting his Indigeneity. Ryan reaffirms what Belanger et al.

(2003) found in their study with Indigenous youth in Winnipeg: negative experiences and racist stereotypes act as barriers that prevent young people from developing a positive understanding of their culture and self-image.

The internalized inferiority within Indigenous communities assaults a sense of personal and community dignity. It is one of the most powerful weapons of the colonizer and its 'conquest' of the New World (Chalifoux & Johnson 2003 in Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009, p. 162). Indigenous youth are "repeatedly inundated with the message that the way they are is simply not good enough and they must become a different kind of person" (Donald & Krahn, 2014, p. 123). Ryan explained that his views of Indigenous peoples and cultures are attached to the overrepresentation of Indigenous communities in the homeless population and the constant discrimination he faced in school and in the community:

> They are everywhere. Homeless. It's kinda depressing to look at. They get mistreated big time. That's the reason why I don't wanna go back. That's the reason why I choose not to be an Aboriginal anymore. Because all those things I said and feeling it at a young age. That's the reason. Mistreating in the Catholic school, being picked on, being called names because you're Aboriginal, being homeless…doing drugs and all that. I don't want to be an Aboriginal anymore because there's a lot of bad things that go with it. There's good things. But there's a lot of bad things. You get name called. They are the punching bag of everything. They get blamed of everything. They get shunned upon. They are the first ones to get arrested. They are basically a punching bag. I don't like that. That's pretty much the reason why.

Some Indigenous people describe their unwillingness to connect with their cultures because of these stereotypes and decide to reject or hide their Indigeneity in an attempt to 'fit in' (Lawrence, 2006). Other Indigenous young people, such as Brooklyn, also explained, "When I was younger, I thought being Aboriginal was bad because everyone [in school] used to tease me and be racist about it." Internalized negative stereotypes of Indigenous people as "addicts" and "homeless" shape young people's understanding of themselves and their cultures by ascribing negative circumstances brought about by historical and contemporary colonialism to Indigenous cultures.

Dakota, a 16-year-old Cree man from Winnipeg, opened up about his experiences living in the inner city, his membership and exit from a gang, fatherhood and his relationship with his youth worker (Jay, *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA). As a young father, he attributed his recent positive decisions in his life to his relationship with his son and Jay. Both people helped him realize he was *not* the negative stereotypes that others imposed on him. In our interview, Dakota equated living in poverty to a cultural experience as an Indigenous person in the city. Like Ryan, he rejects these negative experiences, which therefore results in the rejection of his culture. In our interview, Dakota told me about his family history of residential school involvement and their displacement from his traditional territory. He explained his feelings of cultural disconnection in the city:

> I was born in Winnipeg and my grandma she was on a reserve and she went to a residential school. I guess my mom grew up in the city too, in Winnipeg. My mom grew up the city and my grandma and grandpa; they lived on a reserve. That's why they're so connected to their culture…I don't really know anything about my culture. I've been in the city all my life.

Dakota points to the difficulty many young Indigenous people face as they navigate their lives between two seemingly different worlds: the city and the reserve. Dakota suggests traditional Indigenous culture lives outside of the city. Lawrence (2006) contends some Indigenous people wrestle with notions of 'living off the land.' He maintained that living on reserves creates a stronger sense of Indigenous cultural identity because the majority of the people share a cultural heritage. By contrast, the atomisation and disconnection from traditional lands associated with living in the city tends to alienate Indigenous people from their cultures and themselves (Howard & Proulx, 2011; Lawrence, 2004). Dakota explained the reasons why he remained disconnected from his culture:

> Well, at first I didn't really want to be connected to my culture. I grew up around a lot of white kids I guess. They don't act the way my family acts. Like, I would go to

> their house and they have a game, a phone, and stuff like that. And when they go to my house, it's just like basic cable, no game, no phone, no nothing, just kind of living in poverty.

Indigenous young people, such as Dakota, often "gauge their own sense of self-worth with other available reference groups which, in this case, is majority non-Aboriginal [white] society" (Belanger et al., 2003, p. 4). This comparison can sometimes lead young people to leave their cultural community for a more valued social placement (Belanger et al., 2003). Dakota's involvement at SNA and his relationship with Jay helped him decide to reconnect with his culture by attending sweat ceremonies and having a positive Indigenous male role model in his life. Additionally when Dakota was returned back to his family from Child and Family Services he started to learn more, "cause my grandma is so connected to it…and ever since I've been home a lot more I learned that she smudges our house…and she like speaks in Cree […]." Belanger et al. (2003) notes that grandparents are important contacts for cultural teachings. Dakota highlights how Indigenous young people need connections with their families and Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and, in this case, staff at youth organizations who can help (re)connect youth with their cultural traditions (if they so choose).

Ryan, Dakota, and Brooklyn point to the difficulties of claiming an Indigenous identity in a society that devalues their existence. Ryan's rejection of his cultural identity is less of a rejection of his Indigeneity than it is of the negative consequences and marginalized realities in the city. For Ryan accepting his Indigeneity would mean having to accept the colonial history and racism he continues to face. Dakota reveals claiming an Indigenous identity is fraught with tensions of being considered 'too Indigenous' in the city, and 'not Indigenous enough' on reserves.

Indigenous Youth Reclaiming their Indigeneity

Sixteen of the 19 Indigenous youth in this research introduced themselves in the peacemaking circles by using short and direct colonial terms such as "Aboriginal", "First Nations", or "Métis." In this section, I analyze how doing so relies on categories of Indigeneity tied to blood-quantum and physical characteristics. These youth are beginning to reclaim Indigeneity in an active and complex process intertwined with racial and cultural understandings of their identities. The majority of Indigenous youth identified a lack of knowledge about family lineage and their cultural identity as the main challenge that prevents them from fully claiming their Indigeneity.

The Indian Act makes it difficult for Indigenous peoples to claim status (Baskin, 2016; Lawrence, 2011, 2004; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). The Indian Act divides Indigeneity into three main categories: "First Nations," "Métis," and "Inuit." These broad concepts afford, and at times, deny, legal rights and status to Indigenous people (Lawrence, 2011, 2004). These state-sanctioned identities confine Indigeneity to legal and political definitions rather than as cultural identities specific to each Nation (Alfred & Corntassel, 2011, p. 140). Importantly, none of the youth spoke directly about their Indian Status, non-status, or any particular government documents to which they may be subject (Bourassa et al., 2004).

Similar to Indigenous youth in Belanger et al. (2003), the young people in this study used concepts associated with a common ancestry, such as "Aboriginal," "First Nations," or "Métis" rather than identifying themselves with a specific Nation which points to the history of colonialism that has wiped away these cultural affiliations. The majority of the youth introduced themselves quickly in the following ways:

I'm Andrea. I'm Aboriginal.

I'm Nikki…and I'm First Nation.

I'm Sonia, I'm Métis, and I'm from Regina.

I'm Mathew…I'm Métis, from here.

I'm full-blooded Aboriginal, Cree. (Dean)

The majority of the Indigenous young people used broad colonial terms perhaps to expedite the introductions but still signify who they are and how they understand themselves. Dean is the only youth to infer a blood-quantum understanding of his Indigeneity when he qualifies himself as, "full-blooded Aboriginal" with a Cree cultural affiliation. Many Indigenous peoples embrace government labels of "Aboriginal", "First Nations", "Métis," and "Inuit" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2011, p. 140). Alfred and Corntassel (2011) suggest the acceptance of these terms is an assault on Indigenous identities because they are "purely a state construction that is instrumental in the state's attempt to gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system and body politic […]" (p. 140). It seems plausible that some Indigenous young people, who may not have definable historical, or kinship links to specific cultures or Nations, can only draw on a pan-Indigenous identity in an attempt to understand their identity and gain social acceptance and legitimacy as an Indigenous person (Belanger et al., 2003; Howard & Proulx, 2011). These broad conceptions may be the outcomes of Canada's colonial legacy.

Some Indigenous young people recounted their parents and grandparents' lineage as inherently interconnected with their identities. Derrick and Brad made the difficulties of naming oneself as Indigenous clear:

> Derrick - My dad is full Aboriginal. My mom is Métis. So I don't really know which one I am but I'm probably Métis.
>
> Brad - All I know is that my mother is simply Aboriginal. I don't know what [I am]. Some people are Cree…but growing up I was never in tune with the culture. I never really bothered to get involved with it. Never really knew about it. But now it's like,

> with the culture itself, the people that are in tune with the culture. I'm slowly learning more and more. Whether it's going simply to a pow wow or learning about the roots and the history of the people. It's something that I'm slowly learning.

Their tentative understandings signal the presence of insecurity about how to describe their Indigeneity. Derrick's reliance on his familial lineage refers to blood quantum requirements within colonial categories when he says, "My dad is full Aboriginal" and points to his insecurities about how he is to define himself when he says, "So I don't really know which one I am but I'm probably Métis." The majority of the youth try to fit into the reductionist categories set out in the Indian Act (Lawrence 2011, 2004).

Most youth claimed a racialized notion of their Indigeneity when they referred to their familial lineage and the presence of Indigenous blood. The majority could not claim a cultural identity but, like Brad states above, they are in the process of learning about their traditions, practices, and histories as best they can with the information they have available to them. Other youth, such as Cain and Sadie, seem to have more specific knowledge about their family lineage and cultural affiliations:

> Cain - My dad is Métis and my mom is German. I think Indigenous is the people who come from this land that were here first. My grandma spoke full Cree. I never got to meet her. She died before I was born.
>
> Sadie - My grandmother is half Cree and French. So we're Métis.

Similar to Brad, Cain and Sadie qualify their limited knowledge about cultural practices, but admit they were eager to learn more. Whether a youth can trace their Indigeneity from their mother or father's side, a grandmother or grandfather, putting their identity into concrete terms was challenging, especially for mixed-race or, as Lawrence (2004) calls them, "mixed blood" Indigenous young people. Angela, a Métis and Vietnamese woman, articulates how the

complexities of her identities cannot be reconciled. Therefore to navigate her daily life she does not emphasize her cultural backgrounds:

> I'm Métis on my mom's side…Not my kokum, but my great kokum. I don't even know how to say it, she's from there and my dad is full-up, straight-up Vietnamese so that's most of me but I don't know that part of me. I know some kind of like culture but not much. I don't really focus too much on my ethnicity. I feel like I'm very divided as well…it's different to be a mixed person. You know what I mean, like you're not like exactly, like you're not just full Treaty or you're not just Métis or you're mixed with something else.

Angela speaks to the difficulty of having to identify oneself into a sentence or a category. All of the youth in this section pointed to the need for more dialogue about their understandings of who they are. In Winnipeg Brooklyn and Kiley, two 16-year-old Indigenous women introduced themselves with clarity about their cultural and territorial affiliations:

> Kiley: My name's Kiley. I was born in Winnipeg, but I've lived in Alberta and Saskatchewan and I lived in Chicago before. Yeah, and I'm Ojibwe. Oh, and I got a little bit of Irish in me.
>
> Brooklyn: I'm from Norway House. I am full Cree. And I don't know what else I'm supposed to say. I'm full Cree and lived in Winnipeg my whole life.

Unlike many of the other youth in this research, Brooklyn and Kiley's introductions also place them in specific locations. This form of an introduction mirrors traditional Indigenous greetings, which build relationship and rapport by placing a person in context with their relations through mutual friends or family, knowledge, locations, or events (Chilisa, 2012, p. 113; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous youth in this section identified themselves along familial bloodlines. Lawrence (2004) explains cultural identity bonds of language, band, territory, or clan may no longer apply in urban contexts, therefore "family becomes all the more important for grounding a person as Aboriginal" (p. xv). The young peoples' lack of cultural knowledge as well as their racialized understandings of Indigeneity based on physical characteristics emerged as the main challenges that prevent them from claiming their Indigeneity.

The challenges of claiming First Nations and Métis identities.

I didn't realize how many people didn't know very much culturally cause when I sat down I was like "Holy crap! I feel so out of place!" because I don't look Native at all. Most of the time people tell me when I say "Oh yeah! I'm Native", they are like "Oh really? You don't look like it." I'm like "Yeah, I know." I just feel like I shouldn't be saying that I am because I don't look it enough. I find it interesting that a lot of people don't know things culturally. So I don't feel out of place. – Sadie, 19, Métis, YOUCAN Youth Services

In the youth circle, Sadie explained how she feels some relief knowing other young people who are *more visibly* Indigenous are also in the process of learning about their cultural identities. Young people's claim to an Indigenous identity is partially tied to his or her physical appearance and a sense of belonging to their cultures. Sadie's comment above, infers that in order to claim an Indigenous identity, a person has to appear to be Indigenous. Her point helps make distinctions between Indigeneity as a racial identity based on physical characteristics and blood quantum and a cultural identity based on belonging to an Indigenous community and knowledge of cultural traditions and ceremonies.

One's physical appearance affects how a person understands their Indigeneity and how others understand them (Lawrence 2004). Lawrence (2004) suggests the focus on Indigenous appearance is one of the ways Indigenous communities remain divided and helps maintain a colonial society. Debates about who is a "real Indian" divides Indigenous peoples and reduces cultural identities to racial categories through a reliance on "purity' of blood" (Lawrence, 2004, p. 228-9). No descriptors based on appearance, status, or a reserve background, are the "ultimate signifiers of a Native identity" (Lawrence, 2004, p. 228). These descriptors, however, remain imperative because:

> Appearance *does* make a difference to Indianness. Having status *has* shaped the realities of status Indians in ways that are highly distinctive. Being reserve-based *has* provided for a stronger collective identity for band members than is typically the case for urban Indians [emphasis in original] (Lawrence, 2011, p. 98).

Colonial constructions of Indigeneity reinforce racialized identities over cultural ones. In an effort to address what Lawrence (2004) calls the "colonial obsession with appearance," she suggests urban Indigenous communities may "attempt to uncouple Indianness from looking Indian, to ignore colonial divisions among Native people and assert that anybody of Native heritage is a Native person, regardless of appearance" (p. 229).

Three white-passing Indigenous youth in the circle explained that they feared questions about their Indigeneity because they felt ill equipped to fully answer. Dawkins (2012) contends that "passing", which is an abbreviation for "racial passing", is "being accepted or representing oneself successfully as, a member of a different" racial group – typically a person of colour as white (p. 1). Depending on the context, Indigenous peoples who can pass as white have the choice to accept or deny their Indigeneity (Lawrence, 2004). Moreover their choice is inherently tied to how their bodies are read by others. These choices and experiences are difficult as in many ways each can erase or emphasize irreconcilable parts of one's identity. Passing can make it less challenging to live in cities and secure an apartment, navigate government bureaucracies or apply for a job (Lawrence, 2004). On the contrary, young people like Ryan who look Indigenous because of the colour of their skin, will and do, continue to face overt racism.

Racialized understandings of Indigeneity affect people's feelings of belonging to an Indigenous community (Lawrence, 2004). Cain described himself as "kind of light skinned." His childhood experience mirrors the "in-between" experience Dakota describes in the first section of this chapter: if one does not fit into the racial stereotypes it results in difficulties of claiming Indigeneity. Cain explained that as a child he was simultaneously "too Native" to hang out with the white kids, but "not Native enough" to join the other Indigenous youth:

> Growing up I didn't know who I was. I had a white mom and a Native dad. My dad would be like "You're lucky you got white skin. You should be proud of that." I'd go

> hang out with my white friends and they would be like "Oh look at this kid – he talks like a Native." And then you'd hang out with your Native friends and it's like "Yo, this kid's a honky." So like screw the fricken Indigenous, Aboriginal, we're all human. We all here and we just gotta come together.

These difficulties made Cain want to abandon his Indigeneity outright because he could not easily fit into one identity over another. By doing so, he is pushed to erase his Indigeneity completely.

Nicole, a 19-year-old *Mi'kmaq* and Ojibwe woman, recounts how she understands her identity quite succinctly: "My father is Ojibwe and my mother is *Mi'kmaq* and that's from the East coast." Near the end of the youth circle, she recounted more about her experience growing up and how she understands her Indigeneity:

> So I grew up in the country. There were rednecks or white people. I always knew that we were different because we were Native and they were white. That's the difference right, down home [East Coast]. I come here [Edmonton] and my father's ashamed to be Native. I also have that confusion like "Who the hell am I? Am I Native or am I a white person?"
>
> Because it's winter and I look white. I can get away with things. [Canadian] society accepts me for who I am because I look like them.
>
> But then again these days where I wish I could be dancing, where I could be Native. I'm sober and I'm going on with life. "All natives are bad" but you don't want to be too loud, being too loud makes society think twice again.

Nicole's confusion is the product of growing up with a father who was "ashamed to be Native", perhaps because of his experiences in residential schools or intergenerational trauma, in a society that devalues Indigenous peoples and cultures. Nicole's lighter skin tone sometimes affords her the *ability* to "fit into" Canadian culture. She infers she can "get away with things" when she appears to be white i.e. avoiding catcalls on the street or being able to navigate public spaces without intervention by the police. Her decisions about how she navigates the world comes with a longing to "be Native" in the city and a desire to claim more of her cultural identity in her

everyday life through dancing or participating in ceremonies. At the end of the circle, Nicole actively challenged negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples by asserting her sobriety and healthy lifestyle. She is keenly aware the general public is negative perception of Indigenous peoples. She is, therefore, careful not to be "too loud" because it will inevitably draw negative attention to her by the police or men in public.

Most of the Indigenous young people in this study adopt understandings of their Indigenous identities by drawing on racialized conceptions. Physical appearance and familial lineage matter to how these Indigenous young people understand their identities. The young people in this section highlighted the need for more cultural connections and understandings of who they are outside of colonial categories that reduce their Indigeneity to racialized categories. In the next section, Tyler and Trey point to the potential results of opportunities to learn about their cultural identities, Indigenous knowledges, ceremony and traditions in and out of the organizations. These young men reclaim and redefine their Indigeneity as a cultural identity *first* as *nêhiyawak.*

"I identify myself as *nêhiyawak*": Towards Decolonization and Redefinition of Indigenous Cultural Identities

> You start to feel like you're redefining yourself, you feel like you're sculpting yourself into a person that you lost. - Trey, *nêhiyawak*, 18, iHuman Youth Society

When Trey started to learn the meaning of the Cree word, *nêhiyawak*, it gave him the language to define himself outside of the confines of colonial language, laws, and culture. Trey and Tyler challenge the contemporary government categorization of Indigenous peoples by placing their cultural identities as *nêhiyawak* in front of colonial categorizations. In the youth peacemaking circle, Trey began with a traditional Cree greeting:

> Tansi, my name is Trey. I'm 18 and I've been coming here for four years and I identify myself as *nêhiyawak*. A lot of people say it's a "Cree man" or a "Cree person" but "*nêhiyawak*" means "people of the sacred number four" a lot of the teachings elsewhere like the Ojibwe they say "grandfathers" but [to] us [its] the sacred people, people of the sacred number four, all four directions, all four seasons…the four elements of your body: emotional, spiritual, physical, mental, all that stuff, that's why I call myself "*nêhiyawak*." Tapwe. I'm Métis.

Following Trey, Tyler took the eagle feather and said "I identify myself as *nêhiyawak*, as well. I'm probably Métis but we probably all are." He laughed. At the end of their introductions both young men still make claims to colonial categories, perhaps for my benefit, but by doing so they purposefully make them secondary to how they understand themselves. Trey and Tyler are examples of the ways some urban Indigenous communities are "continually engaging in ways of subverting or actively resisting" colonial conceptions of Indigeneity (Lawrence, 2004, p. 228).

In a follow-up interview, Trey explained how his journey led him to understanding himself as *nêhiyawak*: "It took a long time to find out why I am the way that I am." Before he knew some of the *nêhiyawak* language embedded with its worldviews, he always felt as though a piece of him was missing: "There was much more to who I am than what people called me [Aboriginal, Indigenous]…It comes from really wanting to find out who we are." Colonial identities and the negative stereotypes about Indigenous people leave young people, such as Trey, with little hope and a lack of language to more fully understand himself. Learning the word *nêhiyawak* restored Trey's hope in himself and his community:

> It really felt like that's who I am. It's not just "I'm a First Nations guy from [nearby reserve]" – People stay in that mind state – You're just an Indigenous person based on where the *moniyaw* [any white man] have put you during colonization. This is where your settlement was and you're from there. You might as well say you're from a camp…everyone knows we travelled with our livestock and our ways of life, we travelled with them.

Calling himself *nêhiyawak* aligns him with the traditional ways of his people. It helps him feel grounded in a world that continues to marginalize him. In lieu of being told who he is, or what it

means to be Indigenous by outsiders or a colonial system, the Cree language, the word *nêhiyawak*, and cultural teachings gave Trey the words to capture who he is.

For Trey, attending ceremonies (round dances and pow wows) with his family, cultural experiences at iHuman, and relationships with two specific Elders and Knowledge Keepers were key in him adopting his cultural identity. He remembers how he asked Don, a Cree Knowledge Keeper in the city, for traditional knowledge and teachings. Don taught him that he could connect with his Indigeneity in a different way by simultaneously reconnecting to a Cree worldview, community, and the land. Learning some *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree language) helped Trey reconnect to Indigenous worldviews and teachings that are lost in the English translation. At fifteen, he attended a round dance where he listened to an Elder share what it means to be *nêhiyawak*. On his way back to the city, Trey made a conscious decision to call himself "*nêhiyawak*." He turned to his friend in the car and said, "Curtis, I'm not Cree. I'm *nêhiyawak*." This decision increased Trey's strength and pride in himself and his culture. It changed the way he saw himself as an Indigenous man. He explained that it helped him find a place of *Kiyam* (Let it be) where "things don't affect you in a negative way." In our discussion, he likened his reclamation to the metaphor of being like a rock in a river – steadfast and strong – as the current and debris pass by and smooth out its surface.

Trey and Tyler make bold and informed statements about their Indigeneities as they adopt "political subjectivities that are not legitimated by the liberal nation-state system" (Coleman et al., 2012, p. XXIII). Indigenous communities have been displaced, "unwillingly uprooted" and "either forcibly removed from their ancestral lands or have had the authority of their experience on the land denied and the ground itself redefined beneath their feet" (Coleman et al., 2012, p. XIV). Reclaiming one's self as *nêhiyawak* is an act of resistance of the colonial

categories imposed on Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government. Trey and Tyler create new ways, based on centuries-old knowledge, to understand their identities through their language. According to Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred, legal approaches to self-determination only redistribute authority and accept assimilation (Alfred, 2011; Sabiston, 2013). This is not to infer that I believe legal approaches are not necessary for Indigenous peoples. Rather, Trey and Tyler are examples of what Alfred (2009) calls "Indigenous agency." Indigenous agency is not focused on recuperating or resolving the colonial problem, but rather is focused on transcending what it means to be Indigenous (p. 151).

> Any politics of decolonization and resistance must therefore embrace the ways of life of Indigenous ancestry, such as remembering ceremony, returning to homelands, regaining language and adopting values of strong family and community, connection to land, storytelling, and spirituality (Sabiston, 2013, p. 10).

For Alfred and Corntassel (2011), decolonization begins when individuals transcend colonialism:

> Indigenous pathways of authentic action and freedom struggle start with people transcending colonialism on an individual basis – a strength that soon reverberates outward from the self to family, clan, community, and into all of the broader relationships that form Indigenous existence (p. 143).

By reclaiming their language, Indigenous youth such Trey and Tyler begin to move beyond colonial conceptions and ways of being. "Language is power" and "our people must recover ways of knowing and relating from outside the mental and ideational framework of colonialism by regenerating themselves in a conceptual universe formed through Indigenous languages" (Alfred & Corntassel 2011, p. 144). By refusing to ascribe to colonial acts or rulings, Indigenous peoples belong more firmly to the place in which they live (Donald & Krahn, 2014). For these young *nêhiyawak*, reclaiming their language and connecting with their lands and ancestors, fundamentally and positively alters how they understand themselves as Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

As the first element of creating "warm places" through relational approaches of care with Indigenous youth, youth organizations have the opportunity to attend to *how*, if, and *to what extent* Indigenous youth understand their Indigeneity. In this chapter, I analyzed the three main self-perceptions of Indigenous youth in Edmonton and Winnipeg. First, Ryan's rejection his Indigeneity links to familial and historical trauma of colonialism and residential schools. His rejection, however, is one of the negative stereotypes and contemporary and historical racism he endured as a potential self-preservation strategy against future harm. Ryan, Brooklyn, and Dakota point to how their realities in cold cities, living in poverty and witnessing homelessness and mistreatment of Indigenous people, influences their understandings of Indigenous cultures and drives them further away from adopting these identities.

Second, 16 Indigenous youth use colonial categories to define themselves as well as understandings of their familial lineage and history. These youth highlight a lack of connection to their cultural communities and tensions between their racialized and cultural identities. Lastly, Trey and Tyler are examples of how Indigenous youth make cultural connections and redefine their Indigeneity specific to their land, ceremonies, and language. These young men decolonize their Indigeneity by reclaiming *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree language) and knowledges to understand their Indigeneity positively. This chapter analyzes the complexities Indigenous youth navigate as they decide to reject or claim Indigeneity in a city that perpetually excludes them. By doing so, we can begin to address how to best respond to the spiritual and cultural needs of Indigenous youth. I return to this topic in chapter 4 when I focus on the specific program offerings and how each organization currently responds to youth's Indigeneity in practice.

Chapter 3 – When Space Becomes Place: Caring Places *with* Indigenous Youth

Figure 3.1: "Welcome home" by unknown author, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre

> It's pretty much like a second home…when you have nowhere to go. You come here. They support you. – Dakota, Cree man, 16, Spence Neighbourhood Association

Some Indigenous young people, such as Dakota who is quoted above and the unknown author of the words "Welcome home" on Ndinawe's front door (Figure 3.1), conceptualize the youth organizations as "home." Indigenous youth and staff's use the terms "home", "community", or "family", suggests there is something markedly different and positive about the quality of their experiences at these organizations. As I cautioned in the introduction of this thesis, the use of terms like "home" when working with Indigenous youth specifically may reify their meanings grounded in white, middle-class homes and ignores the limitations of the organizational responses. Using the term "home" can create unrealistic expectations of the organizations by the youth and the staff. However, their use of the term suggests a positive relationship to the space as a place of belonging where they can "let go of, and come into, themselves in new ways" (Robinson, 2002, p. 37). Indigenous youth's experiences at these organizations starkly contrast their negative experiences on the street, at school, and, at times, in

their families. In response to youth's ongoing physical and spiritual homelessness, iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN intentionally welcome them into their spaces and staff encourage youth to develop a strong sense of belonging. I assess the socio-spatial meaning of youth organizations and the call for organizations to create a "home" for young people in youth homelessness scholarship (Klodawsky et al., 2006; Patrick 2014; Robinson, 2002; Watson 1988). My analysis examines each organization's physical spaces and the role of physical space in a relational youth work practice. I attend to the specific spatial qualities of the organizations, the meaningful places youth identify within them, and the limits of these spaces. This chapter demonstrates the positive meanings these places have for youth and *how* youth organizations create caring places of welcome and belonging with Indigenous youth through art and aesthetic design. Some organizations take this a step further by positively reflecting Indigenous cultures, which show Indigenous youth that they are welcome, belong and cared for.

I begin with a theoretical analysis of the role of physical space for homeless youth and its relationship to an "ethic of care" (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Tronto, 2010, 1993). Youth homelessness scholars generally call for a need to create a "home" for homeless youth (Klodawsky et al., 2006; Patrick 2014; Watson 1988). Few scholars, however, posit the meaning or characteristics of "home" for homeless Indigenous youth or consider the limits of this concept in context (Kidd & Evans, 2011; Robinson, 2002). I draw on Hirsch's (2005) four-year study of six Boys and Girls Clubs in the United States with marginalized youth. Hirsch's (2005) concept of "home-place" provides a theoretical basis to understand how "physical spaces" are transformed into "meaningful places" when young people ascribe positive meaning to the organizations. Hirsch (2005) comes closest to theorizing the role of space in youth work practice but falls short of putting it into a theory of care. In order to build

an understanding of a relational youth work practice, I turn to geographies of care scholars (Barnes, 2012; Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Conradson, 2003, 2003a; Milligan, 2000). I suggest there is a need for increased attention by staff to the role of the physical spaces in their youth work practices. This holds the potential to create a belonging *with* and *for* Indigenous youth.

Following my theoretical articulation of space in an ethic of care, I provide brief overviews of YOUCAN, SNA and Ndinawe's physical spaces. I then move into a discussion of how youth and staff described their sense of ownership in the spaces and how the youth and their Indigeneity are reflected (or not) in the aesthetic design (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). From this point, I highlight the most meaningful spaces, per the Indigenous youth and frontline staff, inside each organization, including: Ndinawe's culture room, the kitchen at all the organizations, YOUCAN's circle room, and SNA's outdoor spaces. I purposefully leave a discussion of iHuman until the latter half of this chapter as a case study. At the time of my original fieldwork, iHuman was preparing to move from a derelict building to a new home in June 2015. My research captures the excitement and trepidation surrounding the move to the new location as a permanent place of care, welcome, and belonging for Indigenous youth in Edmonton's inner city.

How Care for Indigenous Youth Takes Place

To date, scholars have typically focused their attention on the spatial exclusion of Indigenous and homeless youth in cities and their relegation to marginalized spaces such as the prison or the street (Barron, 2011; Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2012; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; White et al. 2011). Frontline staff echoed the scholarly concern about the need for increased attention to these realities. Kris, an iHuman frontline worker, elaborated about how many Indigenous young people are excluded from spaces such as schools, other community

organizations, public libraries, shopping centres and the city transit system:

> So many of our kids really, they feel like they don't belong anywhere, everywhere they go they're told, "No, you can't be here." So just creating a place of acceptance and just saying "Yeah, you belong here. You can be here. You can express yourself. You can be who you are."

The youth organizations are among the few free spaces in Edmonton and Winnipeg where Indigenous youth can legitimately be without fear of the police and violence. Some staffs' understanding of organizational responses to the needs of Indigenous youth included a need for space. Jasmine, *Anishinaabe kwe* frontline manager,at iHuman, poignantly integrates Indigeneity to this analysis as she connected the need to accept Indigenous youth in spaces directly with histories of colonialism and their unique experiences of rejection and spiritual homelessness (Christensen, 2016; Memmott & Chambers, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017):

> [I]t's having that space and being acknowledged that that's okay and that's safe and you are fully welcome to be who you are. Because we've [Indigenous peoples] been told forever and ever that it's not okay.

She points to the realities of social exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous youth and their need to "be who you are" as Indigenous and youthful people. Many youth organizations positively value youth's Indigeneity and youthfulness. Very little scholarly attention has been paid to the spatial qualities of youth organizations who work with homeless Indigenous youth, the strategies that staff employ to create caring and meaningful places *for* and *with* Indigenous youth, and the limits of doing so. The Indigenous youth and frontline staff all noted the physical qualities of the organization as an essential part of their experiences and youth work practice.

Despite a lack of direct attention to the spatiality of youth-serving organizations, some youth homelessness scholars contend homeless youth need social spaces that are "family-like" where they can develop feelings of belonging (Karabanow, 2004; Klodawsky, 2006). These

scholars advocate for youth homelessness responses, particularly shelter-based ones that go beyond a mere physical space, lodging, or shelter to create a home *with* and *for* these young people (Klodawsky, et al. 2006; Patrick, 2014; Watson, 1988). However, the concept of "home" and what that means to young people, especially Indigenous youth, is under-theorized. In Kidd and Evan's (2011) qualitative study with 208 homeless youth in Toronto and New York, the concept of "home" operates on a continuum as a state of mind at one end and a physical structure at the other. Though Kidd and Evans (2011) begin to analyze the concept "home" for homeless youth living on the street, youth homelessness scholars in Canada have not thoroughly studied the meaning of "home" as it relates to youth work practices with Indigenous youth. Similar to youth in Kidd and Evan's study, some Indigenous youth in this study conceptualized these organizations as a "home" or "second home" as a way to point to the meaningfulness of the organizations and their spatial qualities.

Drawing on the concept of an "ethic of care," Klodawsky et al. (2006) identified the socio-spatial importance of social services for homeless youth in Ottawa in a remarkably unique way. To them, agencies become meaningful places where homeless youth can meet their emotional and physical needs (Klodawsky et al., 2006). Karabanow and Naylor's (2013) research with 128 homeless youth in Canadian cities aligns with Klodawsky et al. (2006) as they conclude that youth service organizations are places where homeless youth feel cared for and safe. Youth serving organizations can create environments in which homeless young people can foster their abilities to regain and redevelop a sense of self, address their personal dilemmas, and confront the reasons for their street-involvement (Naylor & Karabanow, 2013). This scholarship provides this chapter its starting point. I build on this research to develop the socio-spatial meaning of youth organizations and consider the need for organizations to create a "home." My

theoretical analysis of physical spaces of the organizations through an ethic of care is necessary to situate physical spaces into a relational care practice that will now effectively meet the needs of Indigenous youth in cold cities.

Hirsch's (2005) large-scale, four-year study of six Boys and Girls Clubs in the US lends to my research with Indigenous youth because it highlights the importance of "space" and its relational qualities for young people. While the youth Hirsch (2005) studied were younger, and not necessarily Indigenous or living in homelessness like those in this research, Boys and Girls Clubs similarly try to meet the needs of impoverished young people through development models using recreation, academic support, and educational after school programs in inner-city neighbourhoods. These organizations and their development-based approaches mirror those of iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN.

Hirsch's (2005) analysis contends the concept of "place" plays a significant role in psychology, geography, and urban planning research. The individual meanings of important places can influence young people's identity and self-esteem. Therefore, physical spaces also need to be studied in their own right (Hirsch, 2005). Hirsch (2005) maintains that 'physical spaces' are transformed into 'meaningful places' when they are ascribed with personal meaning. For the youth at the Boys and Girls Clubs, the organizations are a "home-place" (Hirsch (2005). "Home-place" differentiates youth organizations from one's familial home or a young person's place of residence. It is a space that provides young people with opportunities for self-regulation, identity maintenance, development, and empowerment. Home-places make youth feel good and are places where they can be themselves here they have continuity, important relationships with staff and peers, and perhaps most importantly, they reflect the young people's cultural values (Hirsch, 2005). Young people experience Boys and Girls Clubs as a "home-place" when "it is

congruent with the individual's culture, values, preferences, and needs" and gives them opportunities to "resist negative cultural stereotypes or oppression experienced within larger society" (Hirsch, 2005, p. 43). Hirsch's (2005) concept of "home-place" offers much needed conceptual understanding of the spatial component inherent in response to youth homelessness. It highlights the role of these places to facilitate connection, help young people develop their identities and create a sense of belonging.

Similar to the youth in Hirsch's (2005) study, Indigenous youth in this research conceptualize the youth organizations as meaningful places. For some, the organizations could be a "home-place." However, the concept of "home" remains contentious and is without a universally agreed upon definition (Mallet, 2004). In this research several reasons exist for caution in employing these terms. First, these concepts run the risk of reifying white, middle class, heterosexual understandings of the concepts that may, regardless of a youth's relationship with their families, further demonize Indigenous families. If these terms are used by youth organizations and staff, they need to be qualified with attention to the histories and contemporary realities of colonialism, which continue to affect Indigenous families and remove Indigenous children from *their* homes. Organizations may also want to consider Indigenous worldviews and the conception of "home" or the "family" which are markedly different than Western notions. Youth organizations working with Indigenous youth may benefit from consulting with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to learn about Indigenous concepts of "home." Second, use of terms such as "home" and "family" at the organizations can create unrealistic expectations from Indigenous youth and staff. Youth organizations and staff have limits that include the hours of operation, staff caseloads, and available resources. Perhaps most importantly, encouraging Indigenous youth to create a sense of "home" at the organizations may have detrimental effects

for Indigenous youth when they have to "age out" (i.e. 25 years of age at iHuman, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN) of the organization when this happens, they no longer fall inside the age limits of the organizations mandates. Some youth may end up feeling like they are being kicked out of the home, family, or community. I return to the concept of "family" and "community" in chapter 5 when discussing Indigenous youth's relationships with frontline workers.

Indigenous youth need meaningful places of care. Many Indigenous youth in this study conveyed, in a multitude of ways, their experience of care at these organizations and how it is connected to their relationship with the physical space. By positing "care" as a overarching analytical framework to understand Indigenous youths' experiences and organizational responses, we can move away from the language of "home," or even Hirsch's (2005) concept of "home-place," to explore the relational quality of the physical spaces, its inherent role to meet the needs of Indigenous youth, the strategies to create caring spaces with Indigenous youth and the spatial limits of the organizations. An ethic of care and geography of care scholars privilege the relational quality of space. This lends to a more complete understanding of care in this context (Barnes, 2012; Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Conradson, 2003, 2003a; Cox, 2010; Fisher & Tronto 1990; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Milligan, 2000; Tronto, 2010, 1993).

Tronto (1993) includes the environment as an essential part of an ethic of care. Since then, an entire field of scholarship known as the "geography of care" now centralizes the socio-spatial relationships and the vital connections between space and place to understand individual and collective well-being (Barnes, 2012). Space is relational, malleable and necessary to understand the social relationships located within a particular time and place (Barnes, 2012). Research done by geography of care scholars typically focuses on health care and welfare research with the elderly in their own homes and hospitals (Barnes, 2012; Conradson, 2003,

2003a; Milligan, 2000), migrant care work in families (Cox, 2010), and neighbourhoods and public spaces (Barnes, 2012; Conradson, 2003, 2003a). Through an analysis of elderly homes, public, neighbourhood spaces, and work places, Barnes (2012) concludes that the physical space is one aspect of a relational experience and practice of care. My research posits an analogous stance to advance the geography of care literature in the youth work field with Indigenous youth in Canada.

My research captures the meanings of the organizational spaces for Indigenous youth, the strategies used to create caring spaces and the specific qualities of care communicated when the organizations' physical spaces positively reflect young people's youthfulness and Indigeneity. Space is central to youth work with Indigenous youth in two ways. First, organizations need a physical space to do their work. Space has a functional quality and acts as a container for the programs and relationships at the organizations. Second, in an effort to make them places of care and as a result of limited resources available to youth organizations to build their own spaces, staff employ creative ways to foster meaningful relationships between Indigenous youth and the spaces. Organizational spaces are containers for program and services. They also communicate symbolic messages to Indigenous youth about their identities, which can help develop a sense of belonging to that place. In the following section, I provide overviews of the SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN's physical spaces and then I move into a discussion of the meaningful spaces for Indigenous youth inside these organizations.

Spatial Overviews of SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN

Spence Neighbourhood Association at the MERC. SNA's youth programs operate at the Magnus Elias Recreation Centre (MERC), a city-owned building whose spatial design mirrors that of a traditional school with long hallways, individual rooms, locked doors and

Figure 3.2: Inside 'The MERC', main entrance

security cameras (Figure 3.2). After school, the MERC is full of children who are part of the SNA Building Belonging program and city programming. The older youth begin to arrive after the Building Belonging program concludes. Youth can play basketball in the gym or partake in SNA's youth drop-in program. To the left of the main doors is the main office and a long hallway that leads past a TV room, kitchen, and gym (Figure 3.3). Straight ahead of the main entrance is a locked staircase, which leads up to the second floor staff offices and the multipurpose room.

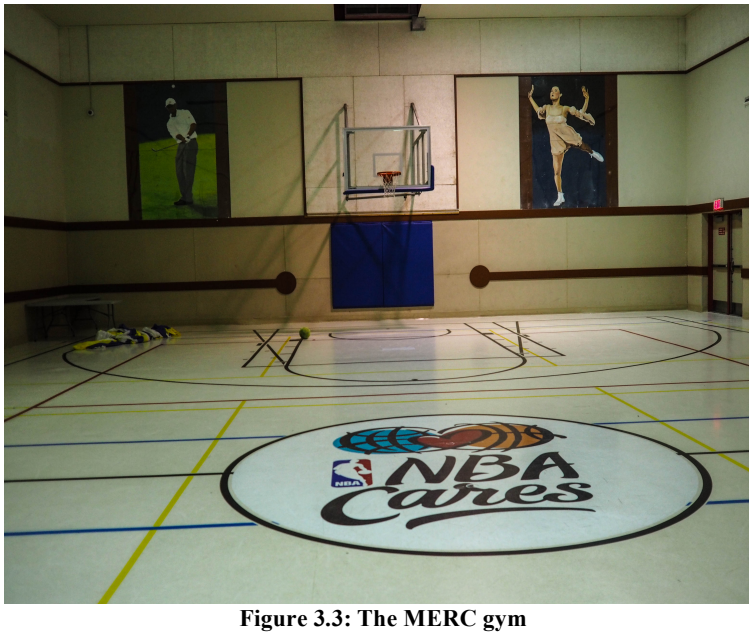

Figure 3.3: The MERC gym

Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre. Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre is adorned with a large Indigenous art mural on its west side (Figure 3.4) and a basketball court on its east that includes a large mural of a Jackson Beardy painting, who is an *Anishinaabe* artist of the Indian Group of Seven on the Indigenous Family Centre. The mural was originally painted by students from R.B. Russell Vocational High School (Fontaine 2016, 26 Jul) (Figure 3.5). I spent ample time courtside during my time at Ndinawe talking with Indigenous young people and staff as they smoked, played basketball and hung out. My final day at the organization is symbolic of the overall feeling at Ndinawe in and out of the organization. As I conducted my final interview with a staff member in one of offices, I could hear the drum outside and the voice of an Indigenous man singing. After the interview was finished, I made my way outside. A young man was

Figure 3.3: Ndinawe's west outdoor mural

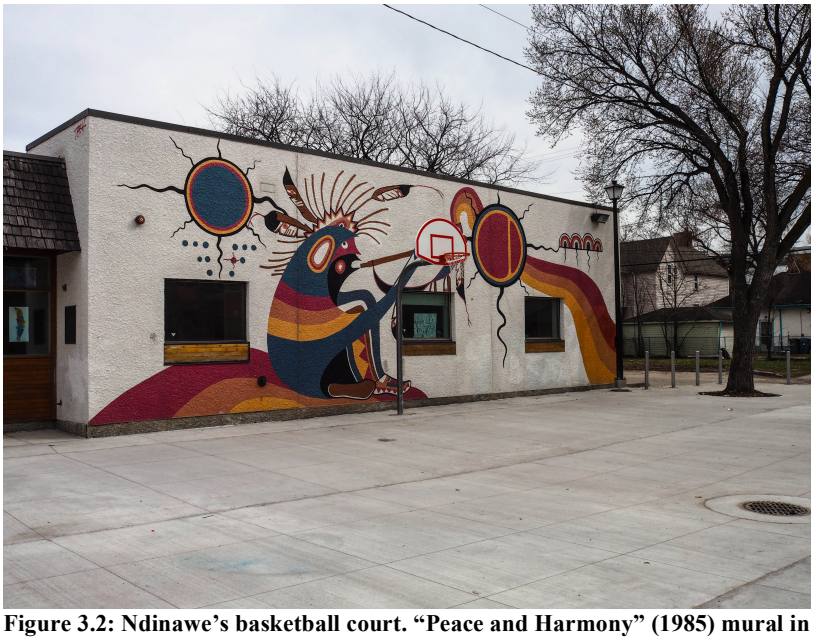

Figure 3.2: Ndinawe's basketball court. "Peace and Harmony" (1985) mural in honour of Jackson Beardy on the Indigenous Family Centre. Originally painted by students from R.B. Russell Vocational High School (Fontaine 2016, 26 Jul).

drumming as a few younger children from the neighbourhood sat around the drum watching and listening to him. I stood around the drum too. A few other community members from the neighbourhood arrived and some shared songs and laughter as they passed by. Ndinawe is an integral part of to the North End community. Inside Ndinawe, Indigenous cultures are represented in the physical space of the building and in the murals created by Indigenous youth and the staff.

Figure 3.6: Ndinawe's common area

Through the Youth Resource Centre's main doors you see the front office window, main counter and youth resource board. To the left of the main entry are the culture room and a narrow hallway to the administration offices. Since my original fieldwork, Ndinawe added a library and youth hangout space at the end of this hallway. It too is adorned with Indigenous art. I did not include a photo of this new space because at the time of my visit, medicines were hanging to dry along the walls. To the


Figure 3.7: Ndinawe's art room

right of the main entry is Ndinawe's large open-concept space, which is regularly full of youth (Figure 3.6). The Youth Resource Centre is a busy and often chaotic place. In the main common area, youth can play ping-pong, lounge on the couches, watch TV, chat with each other, or use the two computers. Leading out of the main area is the kitchen and art room (Figure 3.7). I spent much of my time at Ndinawe in the common area playing ping-pong with a relative newcomer youth at the centre. I also spent time in the art room. Ndinawe youth and Art City staff prepared a bear sculpture for an upcoming parade. As I engaged in art with the youth they recounted some stories of their experiences at Ndinawe and out in the community. One young man, Blaine held up his shirt to show me a recent scar from being stabbed in the neighbourhood for his bike. Stories of violence were all too common. Inside Ndinawe, much like the other organizations, Indigenous young people can let their guards down, rest and otherwise enjoy themselves.

YOUCAN Youth Services. YOUCAN leases the west wing of Westmount Junior High School. Formerly, this space was the auto body shop class and culinary arts areas that were closed due to low student enrollment. YOUCAN moved into the building in 2005. It was renovated to better meet their program needs, and provided staff offices and youth training spaces. YOUCAN's programs have waxed and waned over the last twelve years and so too has the space. Renovations increased office and program space that accommodated program

Figure 3.8: YOUCAN's youth garden

expansion and new staff. YOUCAN's front doors are tucked into an alcove between the main school building and the west wing. When you arrive at YOUCAN, the Youth Garden, an art installation created by the Step Up and Step In community stream, greets you (Figure 3.8. I return to the garden in chapter 4). Currently, YOUCAN occupies four distinct spaces in the west wing: 1) a main office that includes the welcome desk, manager and executive director offices, a training room, computer lab (Figure 3.9), 2) the kitchen, 3) the Verto staff offices (employment program), and 4) the Step Up and Step In (in school and community program) and Relentless Youth Worker program (outreach worker) spaces. Left of the front office is YOUCAN's large kitchen, complete with a long row of four rectangular tables, two large fridges, stoves, and everything you need to make a meal together. Upon leaving the kitchen you can turn left and walk down a short hallway to the locked back offices for the Step Up and Step In staff and Relentless outreach worker spaces.

Figure 3.9: YOUCAN's main office

Meaningful Spaces for Indigenous Youth within Organizations

In the section that follows, I explore the spatial significance of areas inside SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN for Indigenous youth. Their words point to Ndinawe's culture room, YOUCAN and SNA's kitchens and YOUCAN's circle room as significant. Throughout this discussion I also highlight the intentional spatial design by staff. At SNA, youth suggest the

MERC is a safe place and identified the kitchen as one of the only meaningful spaces. I contend that this may be related to two factors: 1) the MERC mirrors a traditional school and as a result of SNA's partnership with the City of Winnipeg; 2) the staff have little control over the spatial aesthetic. At the end of this section, I turn to the murals sponsored by SNA in collaboration with local artists and youth as examples of how SNA has helped change the neighbourhood aesthetic to one that is more youth friendly.

Ndinawe's Indigenous Culture Room

Ndinawe's Indigenous culture room is an open space for Indigenous young people and staff. It is considered a sacred space where drums and medicines (sage, sweetgrass and others) are readily available. The culture room encourages Indigenous young people already connected with their cultures to continue growing in this way and it allows others to be exposed to Indigenous art, medicines, drums and to meet with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Tammy, Ndinawe's Executive Director, explained that for those youth who are not directly connected with their cultures, the culture room can be a place where they might start to explore:

> Quite often what will happen and you'll have kids kind of hanging around and the next [drumming] session they're hanging around and now they're standing in the room. So they take their time…nothing here is ever [mandatory]; everything is voluntary.

Tammy continued that the culture room is imperative because "there is a need for kids to feel their identity is a good thing":

> The majority of our staff come from an Indigenous background because then the kids can self-identify and they can feel connected. They have a shared history. There's a sense of belonging for them and that's really important. We want our kids to feel they belong here and that speaks to the way that the centre is set up and the decorations and everything else.

Ndinawe upholds and honours Indigenous cultures in the spatial design to create what Tammy described as, "a positive sense of what it means to be an Indigenous person." The culture room

Figure 3.10: Ndinawe's Indigenous culture room art

helps create an environment where Indigenous young people can be inspired to take the lead and connect with their cultures. During my time at Ndinawe, I saw this manifest daily. One particular moment stands out. On one of my final days at the Youth Resource Centre, a young Indigenous woman, Cassie, confided in me that she felt depressed and sad because one of her close friends committed suicide that week. I listened. At the end of her story, I asked if she thought a smudge would help her. She did. I encouraged her to speak to a staff member. Moments later a junior staff lit the smudge for her and the rest of youth and staff at the centre.

To positively reflect cultural teachings and Indigenous communities Ndinawe youth and staff intentionally adorned all four walls in the culture room with Indigenous art (Figure 3.10). The youth and staff painted the animals on the wall to represent the Seven Grandfather Teachings. These teachings are part of scared stories of the *Potawatomi* and *Anishinaabe* people, which details the responsibilities of human beings to "act with wisdom, respect, honesty, humility, bravery, and truth toward each other and all creation" (Verbos & Humphries, 2014, p. 1). Brooklyn along with other youth at Ndinawe were invited to paint a mural in the culture room and create the organization's mosaic sign on the front of the building:

> We're like "Yeah, we like it, we'll help you paint it"…Yeah, after that it just turned out beautiful. The sign that's up in front of Ndinawe, we helped make that too because they wanted the youth to make a sign. So we made that sign.

Brooklyn suggests how staff inviting youth to participate can yield meaningful results. This art encourages Indigenous youth to learn about their cultures, ask questions and see their cultures positively reflected in social spaces and back to them. The art also promotes a sense of Indigenous pride because it challenges the negative stereotypes young people internalize about their cultures. In our interview, Tammy pointed to the walls in the culture room as she describes how art helps youth create a sense of ownership in the space and can bolster their respect for it:

> So the wall, it's about them creating ownership. So quite often, a lot of the murals and artwork they've participated in it. So this purple craziness was [done when] we were doing some clean up and they didn't like the wall…[A youth] was like, "Oh we're just going to paint it black." I was like "okay." Well, I was in the art room unloading a bunch of supplies and I came up and all of a sudden the whole wall was purple. I was like, "Oh, okay!" To me, it's important for them to have say.

Opportunities for Indigenous young people "to have a say," as Tammy suggested, allows them to use their voice and participate in making a space into a meaningful place. It may also extend feelings of connection to the staff and their peers. Jodi, a frontline staff at Ndinawe insisted that these opportunities allow youth to put their personal mark on the space:

> We're painting all the walls this summer and we're going to let the kids choose what they want to put on the walls. And we're going to let them put it on the wall. So I think it makes them more like a homey feeling, like they put that there and it's almost like "I left my mark in this centre."

Almost all of Ndinawe's walls are painted with Indigenous art from various Nations made *with* and *by* Indigenous youth. Indigenous young people, like Brooklyn, confirm that art gives the opportunity to contribute to the space and it makes a difference to how she feels about it and herself.

The Kitchen

At SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN, kitchens are meaningful places for youth and staff (Figure 3.11 and 3.12). First, Indigenous young people need these organizations to meet their

basic need for food. Providing food and healthy meals are essential to youth programming. Youth organizations typically use donated food from local food banks or businesses. Too often, the food quality lacks nutritional value and organizational financial constraints make it so that organizations cannot afford to buy food. Kitchen facilities allow staff and youth to cook together. Staff often get creative with recipes and encourage Indigenous youth to learn food preparation, learn new skills, and develop relationships. Many Indigenous youth at all these organizations note how the kitchen is a place of connection. Nicole asks rhetorically in our circle, "Who doesn't like to go into the kitchen and catch up about their day? That's where everyone comes together." Wren, a frontline worker at YOUCAN, echoed Nicole about the centrality of the kitchen to develop connections in programming:

Figure 3.11: YOUCAN's kitchen

Figure 3.12: SNA's kitchen

> Having access to a kitchen is really, really good for the kids, especially to sit down and eat there. It's a really communal feeling to have like 15 kids sit

> down with staff…and eat together it's where so much happens between people. Sometimes there's kids meeting each other who are struggling with the same issue but they don't know each other and they establish that connection. They have that kinship. The staff get to talk to them about things that are not work related in a sense. You just hang out and eat and connect through that.

During my fieldwork at Ndinawe I returned to SNA to reconnect and say hello. I spent some time in the kitchen as youth and staff made a meal. Similar to how Wren and Nicole explain at YOUCAN, SNA's workers spoke to young men in the kitchen about their day, the school basketball games, SNA sports program, and their relationships with young women. For many youth organizations, the kitchen serves as a primary gathering place. Young people find their way to the kitchen to debrief about their day, chat informally with peers and staff, and eat together before the formal programs begin.

YOUCAN's Circle Room

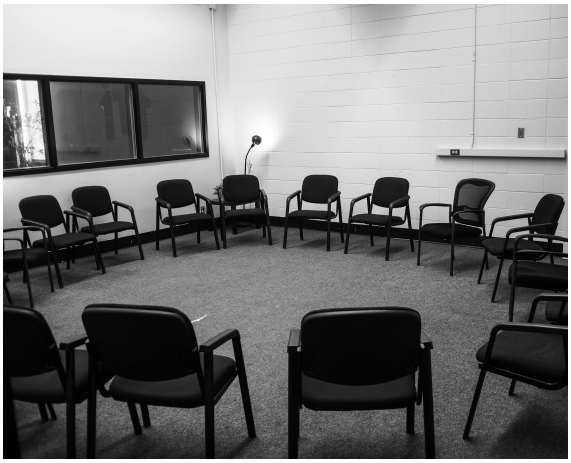

Figure 3.13 and 3.14: YOUCAN's circle room

YOUCAN's circle room is a dedicated place for peacemaking circles (Figure 3.13 and 3.14). Indigenous youth and staff identify it as one of the most important rooms in the building. At the time of my fieldwork, the walls of the circle room were decorated with youth art projects, group guidelines and goals set by the youth and YOUCAN memorabilia from previous youth

projects.[24] The Verto and Step Up and Step In programs use the circle room daily for group check-ins and checkouts, conflict mediation and large group discussions. YOUCAN staff practice their commitment to building relationships and listening to young people's voices in the circle room.

In the YOUCAN youth circle, Dean identified it as a meaningful place because it is peaceful: "You see the circle room, all the posters on the wall. Youth finger prints and the goals on them that they write together. It just seems peaceful and everything." He highlights how the circle room reflects YOUCAN youth and the contributions they have made to the organization. Nicole likened the circle room to the kitchen as a place of connection:

> We have our circle room. That's where we come say hello and goodbye. Even if we had a busy today, saying goodbye brings us back and we're kinda like on relax mode and we're like "phew! We did a lot of work. Look at what we did."…Cause it's important to ask if they've had a busy task to do and if you're like "ok! We're ready to go back out into the world again"

Dean and Nicole point to the calming nature of the circle room and its ability to help set the tone for the programs. Wren elaborated that, like Ndinawe's culture room, YOUCAN's circle room positively reflects Indigenous cultures: "We use circles that incorporate First Nations culture. We have a circle room and explaining that to a kid. If they identify with their culture, that's really good for them." The inclusion of circles and the circle room are opportunities for staff to engage in dialogue with Indigenous youth about their cultures. During my time at YOUCAN, the use of circles and the circle room in the way Wren describes may have been limited to specific staff and is not part of an agency wide practice or all staff knowledge. None of the Indigenous youth highlighted the meaningfulness of the circle room as reflective of Indigenous cultures perhaps

[24] The pictures in Figure 3.13 and 3.14 of the circle room were taken after my initial fieldwork. Since then the circle room has been painted and the staff installed the mountain mural featured in Figure 3.13.

due to their lack of cultural knowledge and the inconsistency with staff to discuss it with them. Rather, most saw the circle room as a place for connection where youth and staff come together and reflect on their time at the organization and in programs.

SNA's Outdoor Spaces

SNA youth spoke positively about the MERC as a safe place. The only meaningful space youth identified was the kitchen. I suspect that the perceived lack of meaningfulness inside the MERC is because the City of Winnipeg staff prevent SNA from changing the aesthetic inside the building. Inside the MERC, there is little evidence of young people's existence beyond their physical presence. These limitations, however, have not stopped SNA staff from including Indigenous youth in the creation of the MERC as a meaningful place.

Figure 3.15: "Opening Doors" ceramic tile mural by Dimitry Melman with Spence Neighbourhood Association *Youth* WITH ART collaboration.

Public art program (Winnipeg Arts Council), collection of City of Winnipeg, in collaboration with Spence Neighbourhood Association.

In an effort to work within their limitations, SNA staff work diligently to positively reflect youth in the neighbourhood and often included them in the process. SNA's categorization as a Neighbourhood Association gives them the ability to transform public spaces. Staff took to altering the MERC's outdoor space with youth through an extensive community garden program, a new basketball court, increased lighting, and outdoor murals on the south side of the MERC, other neighbourhood businesses

and SNA's small shed in the alley. Over the years, SNA staff engaged young people in their programs to lead community safety audits and write funding proposals. For example, youth wrote successful grants for better lighting in the MERC playground and for a new basketball court. The youth also wrote a successful grant application for the MERC mosaic project, chose the artist, and helped create the mural design that is now on the south side of MERC (Figure 3.15). SNA has also worked collaboratively with Indigenous artist Cash Akoza on various projects including the Indigenous art on their shed (Figure 3.16 and 3.17) and on the "Where the wild things are" mural on a local business in the neighbourhood (Figure 3.18). SNA's work with, Indigenous artist Cash Askoza art on their shed adds essential Indigenous representation in the neighbourhood public spaces. More research may be done along with these projects to investigate how organizations can reflect youthfulness and Indigeneity on their buildings and in their neighbourhoods, and the experiences of youth in the art making process.

Figure 3.16: Spence Neighbourhood Association shed (front). Mural by Cash Akoza in collaboration with Spence Neighbourhood Association

Figure 3.17: Spence Neighbourhood Association shed (North and East side). Mural by Cash Akoza in collaboration with Spence Neighbourhood Association

Figure 3.18: Where the wild things are. Mural by Cash Akoza with Spence Neighbourhood Association youth

The Role of Art in Creating Meaningful Places *with* Indigenous Youth

Indigenous youth at YOUCAN, SNA and Ndinawe describe these agencies as meaningful places. The spatial qualities of the organizations bring out the spatial relationship necessary to create warm places with Indigenous youth. These spaces play a role in the connections between staff and Indigenous youth and reflect their youthfulness and Indigeneity. I return to the importance of interpersonal relationships in chapter 5. In this section, I discuss the role of art in spatial transformation. Art *in* and *out* of the agencies figures prominently in youth and staff understandings of meaningful organizational places. Physical spaces are meaningful when Indigenous young people are engaged in the organizations spatial design through art. For many youth, this engagement lends to their ability to see themselves, their peers, and their cultures positively reflected in the space.

At YOUCAN, youth art in the circle room, training room, kitchen and main hallways reflect young people's creativity, goals and their program learnings and contributions. While YOUCAN's space cannot be modified or painted, over the years staff have slowly increased the amount of art in this space. For example, two graffiti'ed boards, "Step Up and Step In" gifted to YOUCAN by Nova (an Indigenous youth graffiti artist) and "YOUCAN Youth Garden" commissioned piece by AJA Louden (Edmonton artist) (Figure 3.19), and the youth art hallway (Figure 3.20), serve as a reminder of the youth garden project, youth-led projects and the successes and creativity of young people at the organization. No Indigenous youth at YOUCAN or SNA spoke about any specific attention, or a lack thereof, to their Indigenieties in the physical space of the organizations. Both organizations could benefit by following Ndinawe's lead by reflecting Indigenous cultures positively in and out of the organization's space with murals that include Indigenous art from many cultural traditions (Figure 3.21).

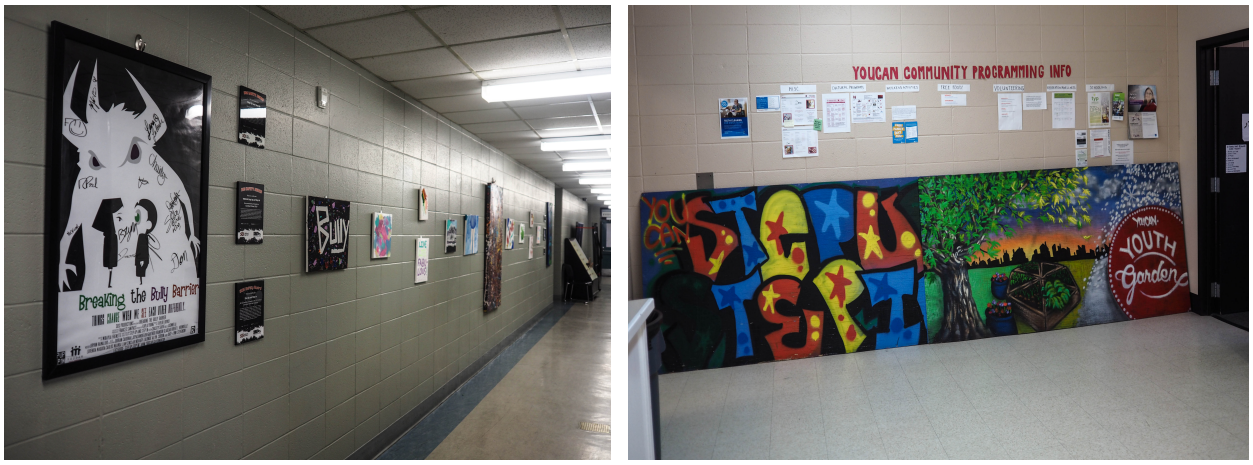

Figure 3.19: Community programming board in YOUCAN kitchen. "Step Up and Step In" by Nova (youth graffiti artist) and "YOUCAN Youth Garden" by AJA Louden (Edmonton artist)

Figure 3.20: Step Up and Step In, youth art wall.

All frontline workers and executive directors expressed their desires to make the organizations as welcoming and safe for Indigenous young people as possible. The role of art and the aesthetic design results in two essential practices: 1) it allows the organizations to positively reflect Indigenous young people's youthfulness and Indigeneity, 2) it creates opportunities for Indigenous youth to work together to contribute to the space and make it their own. Art may seem completely cosmetic. However, youthful art practices such as graffiti and large murals at all of the organizations put youth at the helm. It allows them to use their voices and talents to positively to meaningfully contribute to the organization. This approach to art-making aligns with the history of graffiti

Figure 3.21: Ndinawe's main administrative hallway

as a generally undervalued art form (Asante, 2008). Despite its perceived lack of commercial value, it is nevertheless instrumental in creating *and* changing cultures and honouring Indigenous youth.

Organizational Spatial Limits

The role of art also highlights the organizational constraints. Because the organizations do not own their buildings, SNA and YOUCAN cannot permanently alter their physical spaces. These limitations require creative responses to engage Indigenous youth to make organizations more caring places. Gardens and visual art are alternative ways to transform spaces with youth. Art is a relatively inexpensive way to improve the spatial aesthetic and creates relational spaces *for* and *with* Indigenous young people. While my analysis promoted the need for relational spaces, some staff noted the agency's physical spaces also needs to be functional and efficient for programs.

YOUCAN staff had serious concerns about the building's functionality. This reflects wider non-profit trends where these groups generally lack adequate space. It also attends to the difficulty of owning a space when short-term project funding is the norm. An organization's space can directly benefit or hinder the program offerings and staff capacities. Over the last 10 years, due in part to increased project-based funding, YOUCAN and its space have changed as programs are introduced, the organization hires more staff, programs lose funding, staff are laid off and leave. As such, the agency's space is in a constant state of flux. At the time of this research, YOUCAN was at its maximum capacity. It boasted approximately 25 staff and the Verto program was set to expand. This made the front office spaces very crowded and often chaotic. Staff from various programs would juggle room spaces and different groups of youth

simultaneously. Stephanie, one of YOUCAN's Verto program workers, explained how the spatial limitations influenced her ability to run the program effectively:

> I know nobody likes to hear about it around here [but] it's horrible! It's total shit for what we're trying to do. It's something we can't even talk about cause it always is this "Oh! Don't talk about that! We're so happy!" We're so happy to have the space but it doesn't work for what we're trying to do. It's a huge limitation…. I think as much as we try to ignore that, [it] still also plays into the way that we try to create this atmosphere and work through it but it's stress and all that stuff. I think we roll with the punches and we work within the limits because we have to.

She makes important points about the functionality of the physical space for how the program currently operates. Perhaps in the past, YOUCAN's two main program spaces would have been sufficient, however as the organization expanded, it quickly outgrew the current space. As they negotiate and navigate these barriers, spatial limitations add to frontline worker stress and to their employment duties. Across all of the organizations, many staff noted tension about not having enough space, sharing space with other organizations and maintaining the spaces to benefit the youth. Stephanie's point is not only applicable to YOUCAN, but rather, calls attention to problems with project-based funding. In the current fiscal climate there is little guarantee of renewed or continuous funding. This reality makes it almost impossible for small nonprofits to secure a permanent space. Youth organizations, such as YOUCAN, expand and contract their programs alongside funding opportunities, which can result in a lack of adequate space to adequately deliver programs and the inability to accommodate any influx of young people.

In what follows, I conduct an analysis of iHuman's space and its significance as a caring place for Indigenous youth in Edmonton's inner city. During my fieldwork, iHuman was preparing to move into a brand new space. I demonstrate how youth and staff conceptualized "the old building" and their trepidation and excitement for the move. The juxtaposition between

the "old" and "new" spaces sheds light on how Indigenous youth and frontline staff created caring place and how the new building began as a space not yet infused with meaning for Indigenous youth. This example demonstrates the relational quality of iHuman's physical space for Indigenous youth, the organization's history and the challenges of moving into a new space.

Building a Permanent Warm Place: iHuman and Indigenous Youth in the Inner City

Figure 3.22: iHuman Studio

I'm kind of scared moving to the new place because we're so close in this building, everything is so close and you go up one set of stairs and you see everybody else, the staff, come back down, and play a bit of music…It's going to be different. – Angela, Métis and Vietnamese woman, 22, iHuman Youth Society

In 2015, iHuman youth and staff prepared for their final move from their derelict, city-donated 9,000 square foot building (Figure 3.22) to a brand new, fully customized, 22,000 square foot permanent space (Figure 3.23).[25] My research investigates the meaning of the "studio", and the excitement and trepidation of the move. Angela describes above, how she fears the changes to come at the organization and infers the change of space may affect the culture and feelings of

[25] I did not take photos inside the original site of my fieldwork as photography was added in the later phase of my research and iHuman had already moved into their new space.

closeness among the staff and youth. She highlights the relationship between the space and the social relationships at iHuman. iHuman has a unique situation from the other organizations. Its positive public reputation in the city along with ongoing city development in their neighbourhood helped garner a successful public fundraising campaign for a new building. The fundraising campaign brought together various contractors who donated supplies and labour to renovate the building. In August 2015, with the support of over 193 private and public donors, iHuman moved two short blocks (350 meters) north of the studio (Figure 3.23).

After I completed my original fieldwork, I volunteered to help iHuman move. Over the last two and a half years, I witnessed the immediate and ongoing challenges staff and young people face when transforming their new space into a meaningful place. The new space continues to be marked paradoxically with mixed feelings of joy and mourning for what once was. Change is difficult. For some Indigenous youth who have been routinely cast out, made to feel unworthy and marginalized in the city, perhaps change is even more difficult. As I have mentioned already, there are so few places where they feel safe and welcome. The majority of the Indigenous youth I spoke with from iHuman no longer participate at the organization for various reasons including the move, subsequent staff changes and aging out of the organization. My general sense is some

Figure 3.23: iHuman's "New Building"

youth did not feel comfortable in the new space, others felt like the new building was too "institutional" (read: cold and unwelcoming) and a few took the move as a healthy opportunity to explore other opportunities. This section is limited to the experience of Indigenous youth and staff prior to the move. My own observations since suggests that the move significantly increased iHuman's program functionality and space to meet the needs of Indigenous youth in the city and it remains in a transitional state as the new and remaining young people and staff work to make the new building a meaningful place.

iHuman's history as an inner city youth organization is inherently tied to space, or lack thereof, in the downtown core. Over the last 22 years, iHuman grew from a small grassroots collective run by its two founding artists Sandra Bromley and Wallis Kendall, into a fully operational nonprofit organization with over 20 staff, 22,000 square feet of custom built space and a budget in excess of $1.4 million. When I asked Catherine, iHuman's Executive Director, about the history of iHuman's physical buildings, she said that similar to many Indigenous youth who attend iHuman, they have been homeless, lived in unstable housing, and lived in fear of being evicted:

> It's part of our story. iHuman has always occupied these very trashy, crappy places. We've been kicked out of places. We've been homeless. We've been broken into. We've been vandalized.

Without a permanent space, as a result of ongoing downtown revitalization and limited funding, iHuman remained at the mercy of shifting city politics, which favour the business community and downtown real estate development. They were forced to relocate multiple times. Sandra Bromley, one of iHuman's co-founders and current Chair of iHuman's Board of Directors advances this understanding when she described the organization's history, the spatial challenges and the desperate need for a permanent space to adequately engage Indigenous youth living *on*

and *off* the streets:

> In 13 years we had to move five times. We always were living in either free spaces or very, very cheap spaces and as Edmonton started booming with the real estate boom, we'd always be moved on…One of the struggles that always set us back was having to move…the demands on a small non-profit are immense. I thought iHuman wouldn't exist if we had to do it again. But we had more and more kids coming to us and more and more kids in need" (Csorba 2016, Oct 24).

Among its five moves, iHuman went from a basement near the CN Tower (downtown Edmonton), into homelessness, into a former 'biker' bar known as *The Camelot*, and then into temporary residence in the old *XXX Centrefold* peep show building, a run-down, 9,000 square foot, city-owned space in the heart of the Boyle Street inner city neighbourhood (Figure 3.24). The move from *The Camelot* came as a surprise when the building was sold and subsequently torn down to make room for a high-rise development. The high-rise never came to fruition and the lot remains empty to this day. At the time, iHuman was given one month to vacate. Catherine explained that with little choice, "it was either accept the peep show building or be homeless indefinitely." Over the years, as iHuman youth and staff settled into its new space and made it their own, it became known as the "iHuman Studio."

Figure 3.24: Centrefold, 25 Cent Peeps
iHuman's Old Building, photo taken from Google Maps.

Jasmine, *Anishinaabe kwe* frontline manager, remembers when iHuman moved into the peep show building. She said it felt like the message from the City of Edmonton was: "Here's your building and this is all you've got, because this is all you're worth…It was literally a dive. It

was disgusting." She highlights how the location in the inner city and its history as a peep show conveyed negative messages to iHuman youth about their value. The space symbolized a lack of care from the City even if the intention may have been the opposite. Saturated with these negative meanings Jasmine said the space made iHuman youth and staff feel as though, "you're never really in *your* space, like it's never really *your* place" [emphasis added]. The move may have prevented some youth and staff from ascribing too much meaning to the space. Over the years, because of the staff and youth who fill the space, it became a caring place for Indigenous youth in the inner city.

Like many small nonprofits, iHuman staff and youth made the best out of their spatial situation by using art to transform the space into a meaningful place. iHuman's old building is one of the only places downtown where Indigenous youth feel a sense of belonging. In fact, it is among the few youth organizations in the downtown core. It may not have been the cleanest place or most conductive for their youth work, but Andrea, an iHuman youth shared how iHuman is a dependable place where she goes to better her life:

> It's a reliable place to come to. Especially during week if you need to get things done or even if you don't have to do nothing, like just come here and there's always like something they can put you to work if you ask them to and there's always solutions for anything you have to do in your life that you can get done here. It's not exactly the cleanest place, but like everybody tries to help out in some way to try to keep it clean. The [new] building will be better.

Andrea highlights the value of physical spaces where Indigenous youth feel welcome and can meet their needs. Despite its derelict physical condition, iHuman became what Catherine referred to as a "sacred space" that she defines as:

> It's a refuge from the barriers and the violence and all of those other things that they face that have them be in high-risk situations. iHuman is that island they can come to and therefore, in that sense, it's sacred…[The] youth understand that as [part of] the iHuman culture, that if you see this space as a refuge, others see it as a refuge and how you respect the space is a reflection of how others will respect the space. I've

> heard youth say and describe to me that there have been some beefs…[and] the youth have said, "You don't bring that to iHuman. You keep that outside of iHuman this is sacred or safe area."

Catherine speaks to the harsh realities Indigenous youth face in cold cities. These youth need places, or an "island" or "sacred space" as she puts it, to escape their daily realities and work towards a better life and realize their potential. This is not to suggest that there are no issues of violence or conflict at iHuman (or at any of the organizations), but rather, that there is a general understanding among the youth that iHuman aims to be a positive place for all who attend.

Through the front doors at the Studio, you were met with a plethora of youth, their children, frontline staff and volunteers who were all crammed into the small main floor. Graffiti, fashion projects, paintings and art installations covered all of the available wall space throughout the building. On the main floor, there were four multi-use rooms used as staff offices and the LiNKS Mental Health Clinic counseling offices. At the back of the building there was a small fashion studio packed to the brim with fabrics, sewing supplies and youth projects. To the right of the fashion studio was a small and relatively unusable kitchen and bathroom. It was tight quarters with lots of activity. It was a creative space and the close quarters made iHuman feel simultaneously chaotic and welcoming.

As young people would walk through the front doors a choir of their peers and staff greeted them with hellos, hugs, fist bumps and smiles. From the main doors you could walk to the right, upstairs to the outreach workers offices, two program spaces for Woven Journey (young mothers program) and Moving the Mountain (alternative education program), the executive director and administration offices and another unusable kitchen and bathroom. The main staircase led downstairs to iHuman's basement, known as the "dungeon." This was a dark space filled with unauthorized graffiti and the music studio. The music studio was complete with

a recording booth, five individual recording and beat-making rooms, and an open area often used for dance practice, Friday emcee cyphers, or youth hip hop shows.

During the staff peacemaking circle in the dungeon, many hoped that the move would decrease the logistical tension and increase program function, efficiency and practicality because the new space is tailored to meet each program's specific needs. All of the iHuman staff prepared themselves for the move. They were aware that the new stability of their permanent building would mean they would have to work diligently to make the youth feel at "home", welcome, and to create a sense of belonging to the brand new space. Catherine explained that the new building would shift the organization's credibility and increase status of iHuman's programs and their youth work practice:

> The new building ups the credibility factor, which for some youth that might be really hard to adjust too. It might even be for some staff to adjust too. We've been used to grungy, grimy situations and we've had to be creative. We've had to be innovative. All the things that we are, in some way, have been tied to the spaces that we've occupied.

She continued that the youth and staff were excited about their new home but anticipated an organizational cultural shift from one where youth felt comfortable in a derelict space to a brand new place, to which they may not feel entitled:

> Now, we're entering this zone of new, clean, a place for everything, storage, heat, water, flushing toilets, no grunge on the floor, you know, no needles, no used condoms [in the alley], and in some way, I'm kind of like "How is this going to impact the culture of the youth?" And the culture of us as an organization and as a team because it could be like the jet fuel that makes the kids go "Wow, the community thinks I'm worth this? They're right, I am." And they start to do things that are mind blowing.

Jasmine agreed with Catherine's optimism and caution about the move: "I think that there's going to be a massive shift in the way that they [youth] perceive themselves and perceive their place within this community in going into that building." The staff were keenly aware of the

potential for the youth to mourn the loss of the old building and its memories, and to feel unworthy of the new space. Catherine elaborated that in youth work with Indigenous youth, sometimes "you give [a youth] an opportunity and the weight of that opportunity starts to crush them." As such, there was a need for staff to pay close attention to the effects of the transition once the novelty of the new space wore off. Another concern was that some young people might start to feel alienated because as Catherine put it: "I'm not worth this, I'm too dirty or too smelly, I don't belong here."

During my interviews with iHuman youth, I asked them how they felt about the move. Many expressed an array of emotions from excitement and joy, fear and the beginnings of loss and mourning. Tyler shared that for him, as long as the staff remained the same they would adapt successfully. He was happy to be "finally in our own place." Andrea said that she was excited for the move because: "I don't know of any other youth organization that has like the opportunity to like really create their own space." For Trey, the move was bittersweet because of the meaningfulness of the Studio, particularly the dungeon:

> Downstairs [The Dungeon] is where a lot of like life changing moments happened, especially when it comes to music. This is where I did my first [song]…Certain things I'll miss, but as long as I know that the same things will be there [in the new building] and it's just like it's for the best for iHuman. I'm so glad we're going to be away from like this little area [of Boyle Street], this little boxed-in area where just feels stuck and it feels good for change.

Trey's attention to the dungeon as a meaningful place highlights how Indigenous youth actively engage in meaning-making and contribute to creating warm places. He also pointed out the attachment of the place with meaningful milestones and moments at iHuman. Trey suggested that the new building may increase his feelings of safety in the neighbourhood as well as provide more refuge from the harsh realities of the downtown core.

I asked all of the Indigenous young people at iHuman: "If you could take one thing from

the old building and transplant it into the new, what would it be?" Many said they would take the art on the walls. Like the youth and staff at the other organizations, art is central to iHuman's youth work practice with Indigenous youth. Most young people, however, spoke about their desire to ensure the feeling of the organization remained the same and that the sense of "being a family" is transplanted to the new building. Nikki responded that she would take "the happiness" and "the same energy, the same things that are happening, just a little bit different, better organized." Trey referred to iHuman as his home and that means, "you just feel accepted, you feel loved":

> I mean iHuman with the same people with the same programs you know, as long as that's still happening I'll feel like it's a home. You know as long as it's iHuman, it's home.

Angela had strong feelings about the move and feared the size of the new building would affect the energy and closeness of the youth and staff:

> I'm kind of scared moving to the new place because we're so close in this building, everything is so close and you go up one stair and you see everybody else, the staff, come back down and play a bit of music…It's going to be different. I mean I like this space because you're used to this place. But new building is going to open up new doors. I'm really grateful for it. But at the same time, new buildings comes with the risk of institutionalizing programs [and] what makes iHuman really authentic is that we are not very institutionalized.

Angela equates the shift toward what she calls "institutionalization" that suggests qualities of a sterile space and the possibly of increased formal approaches that may deter the city's most marginalized youth from attending iHuman. I asked Catherine to respond to Angela's fear. She mentioned that iHuman would remain true to its core values, provide programs and services and continue to build the organization *with* youth. In response to Angela's concern about the potential that iHuman would become "institutionalized," Catherine explained:

> To me, institutionalized would be – you have sterile white walls and you get buzzed into the building, you get escorted around. To me, that's institutional but to establish

> some rules or order so that people can move freely in a building and be engaged in the way they want to be engaged, of their choice, to me that's not institutional. That's allowing people to have free will and the choice to see where they're going.

Since iHuman's move, there have been many 'pains and gains.' The most obvious gain is the excitement and the deep appreciation many of the youth and staff feel for the new building, as well as the improved physical capabilities to meet the needs of Indigenous youth in the downtown core. That Indigenous young people understand the greater meaning of the organization and programming is the most notable change. The new building was a blank canvass for youth to ascribe meaning and create a place for them to feel welcomed.

iHuman's move came with remarkable pains, which are only now are beginning to subside. Some Indigenous youth did not make the transition. Some young people left after the move and then returned, others are only now returning. The move was compounded by staff turnover. The physical closeness between the staff and youth shifted after the move because of sheer size of the building and the influx of new youth and staff. The physical separation of iHuman's programs into specific spaces has changed the relationships in the building. Some young people and staff can go for long periods of time or the entire day without seeing staff and youth in other programs.

Limited staff in each area contributes to the division. To keep the youth safe and supervised, staff remain in their respective spaces during program times. For example, the music, fashion and textile, and visual arts studios only have one staff each. Currently, the Fashion and Textile and Art Coordinators are building collaborative projects to work together and engage youth in their respective studios, on the main floor, and outside the organization. iHuman would benefit from increased funding for each program to hire additional staff for each program. In an effort to address the feelings of disconnection in their new space and to consider alternative ways

to build a sense of community, iHuman continues to creatively address their new challenges. The organization now holds a monthly "family meeting" – a sharing circle with all youth, staff, and iHuman alumni to deal with conflict, provide a way for staff to hear Indigenous youth's voices, check-in, and share ideas, news, updates and build relationships between youth, staff and the space. iHuman is also creating a youth council to increase youth's agency, build relationships, and develop youth-led programs and opportunities. In what follows, I provide a spatial overview of iHuman's new building.

Inside iHuman's New Building

Through iHuman's frontdoors, you enter into the youth kitchen, which serves as an open gathering place. Frontline staff, known as "Program Navigators", and volunteers greet and register young people for programs and triage their basic needs. The welcome area is complete with a kitchen often full of food bank and local business donations, daily locker use, full laundry facilities, a shower and two bathrooms (Figure 3.25). The physical demarcation between all of the spaces, such as the welcome space on the main floor and the art studios upstairs, has separated the youth who are more street entrenched (downstairs) from those who are perhaps more stable in their housing, substance use, dependence and mental health (upstairs). Even though youth who are new to iHuman are introduced to the program options and opportunities by

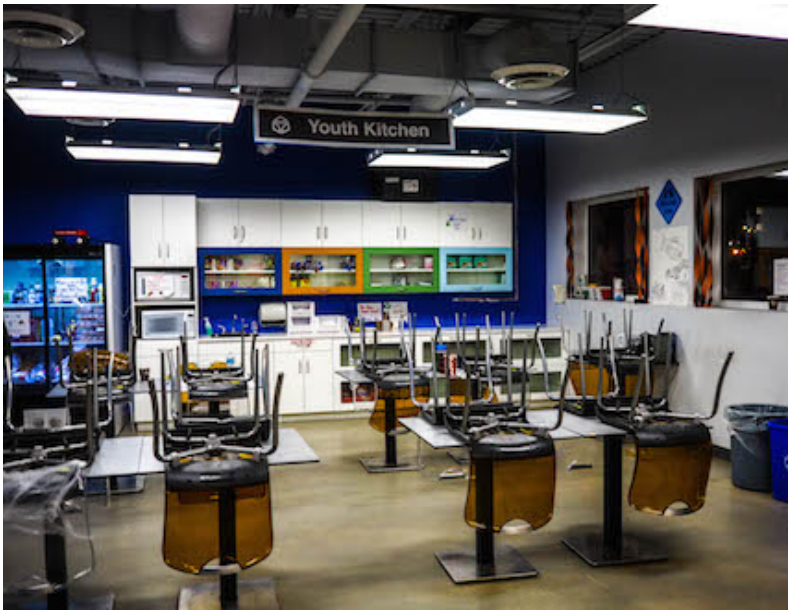

Figure 3.25: iHuman's youth kitchen

the Program Navigators after a more formal intake process, it takes some time for them to feel comfortable venturing up to the second floor. In recognition of this gap, the staff are making concerted efforts to invite new youth upstairs, bring art programming downstairs, and ensure the main area does not operate as a drop-in shelter. As iHuman youth and staff have settled into the new building, the main floor feels more meaningful as youth artwork now adorns the main kitchen and the hallways.

Attached, but now separate from the main welcome space, is the Caring Centre which includes the LiNKS Mental Health Clinic. It is complete with individual counseling rooms, a main area (Figure 3.26) and the Caring Team (addictions, outreach and social workers) office space. iHuman partners with the Boyle McCauley Health Centre to provide basic health care by a nurse and nurse practitioner. Young people can access medical care such as STI testing, pregnancy tests, or help with general health concerns on site or to make referrals to outside resources, if necessary.

Figure 3.26: iHuman's LiNKS Mental Health Clinic

From the main welcome area, you continue down the main hallway to the Ceremonial Room. This place is dedicated to Indigenous ceremonial practices where young people have access to medicines (sage and sweetgrass) to smudge or to drum. The Ceremonial Room is similar to Ndinawe's culture room. In October 2016, one of iHuman's young people was struck

by a car while crossing the street and hospitalized in serious condition. I happened to be at the organization on that day and on my way out I stopped to chat with a group of youth outside. One of the hospitalized youth's relatives, Jacob, commented that he and his peers felt very sad and scared for the fate of their friend and family member. I suggested that they might smudge to pray for him. They agreed and invited me to join them in the ceremonial room. The youth lit the smudge. We stood together in a circle and prayed for him. At the end Jacob thanked me for suggesting the group do this smudge together for his cousin. In moments like this, in deep pain and sorrow, young people need the most support. Nudging them in a positive direction to address their feelings, and to connect with their cultures and each other, not only yields positive personal results but also builds supportive relationships between youth, their peers, and staff. Ceremonial or culture rooms for Indigenous youth allow them to meet their own needs at the organizations.

Figure 3.27: iHuman's Family Room

Beside the Ceremonial Room are the Warrior Rooms. These are home to the iSucceed program. iSucceed supports Indigenous young people in their efforts to find employment or return to school. At the end of the hallway is the Family Room, which is dedicated to supporting young parents. It is complete with toys, cribs, change tables and a fully functional kitchen (Figure 3.27). During Woven Journey, the young mothers program held on Thursday nights, the

room is full of young people learning to parent their children in positive ways. Many iHuman youth are related and have nieces, nephews, and godchildren in the family program. The Family Room gives these young people a place to get parenting support, introduce their children to others, and build supportive relationships with other young parents. The family program supports young parents struggling to care for their children and to reclaim their children from child welfare. The Family Room staff celebrate the reunifications of parents with their children through Indigenous ceremonies.

iHuman is now a fully accessible space complete with an elevator to the second floor. When you arrive on the second floor, you find the administration offices and boardroom meeting space. At the end of the main hall is the Visual Arts Studio, complete with a properly ventilated indoor Graffiti Room (Figure 3.28 and 3.29).

Figure 3.28: iHuman's Visual Arts Studio

Figure 3.29: iHuman's Graffiti Studio

Across the hall from the Visual Art Studio is the future theatre space that is still under construction. The youth have begun installing large art pieces. The south hallway on the second floor leads to the Fashion and Textile Studio (Figure 3.30), and state of the art Music Recording

Studio (Figure 3.31).

Figure 3.30: iHuman's Fashion and Textile Studio

Figure 3.31: iHuman's Music Recording Studio

iHuman's history of successfully creating a caring space for Indigenous youth in the inner city chronicles the challenges nonprofits face to secure a space of their own. In one sense, the old

iHuman building originally conveyed messages to Indigenous youth that they were unworthy of a warm place. This was created despite the spatial limits, through meaningful collaboration between the youth and staff. iHuman's new building highlights the process it takes to create a meaningful place with Indigenous youth. The organization's expansion to its permanent place disrupted the organizational culture. Two and a half years later, the challenges continue and the ongoing difficulties of creating a safe and meaningful place for Indigenous youth resound regardless of the physical space. iHuman is now presented with new challenges but the youth and staff continue to respond creatively to meet their needs and make the new building a meaningful place.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed how caring places are created relationally with Indigenous youth through creative practices and opportunities such as art. Youth organizations need Indigenous youth to help transform their spaces into meaningful places. While some Indigenous youth refer to the organizations as "home" and youth homelessness scholars call for agencies to create a "home" *with* and *for* young people (Kidd & Evans, 2011; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Patrick, 2014; Watson, 1988), the ambiguity and romanticization of the term obfuscates *how* meaningful spaces are created. Youth organizations are meaningful places for some Indigenous young people living *on* and *off* Edmonton and Winnipeg's streets. By drawing on ethic of care (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Tronto, 2010, 1993) and geography of care literature (Barnes, 2012; Conradson, 2003, 2003a; Cox, 2010; Milligan, 2000) I analyzed how youth organizations are relational, artistic, malleable spaces, which can be transformed into caring environments *with* Indigenous youth.

My analysis revealed the meaningful places inside SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN (i.e.

the kitchen, circle room, and outdoor spaces). Physical spaces in youth serving organizations operate on three levels: 1) functionally and for program efficiency, 2) as the container for the connections between Indigenous youth, their peers, and frontline staff, 3) as a canvass that can reflect the youthfulness and Indigeneities of the youth population using collaborative art. I highlighted how the spatial limits of organizations might prevent them from making major modifications, the difficulty of securing permanent space, the challenges of occupying free or partnered space that constrain the possibilities to make the organization more relational and meet their organizational needs. Art proves to be a powerful and inexpensive way to alter these spaces and include youth in the creation of a meaningful place. Rather than continue to use the language of "home" to describe youth organizations, I suggest organizations consider using the language of relational care practice as an artful practice with Indigenous youth in cold cities.

Chapter 4 – "It Really Shows You Care": Caring Opportunities *For* and *With* Indigenous Youth

iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN provide Indigenous youth with an array of opportunities to develop their skills and meet their needs in meaningful and creative ways. In this chapter, I outline the organizational opportunities, programs and resources as the third element of creating warm places with Indigenous youth. Opportunities, programs and resources are the main sources of organizational funding. This overarching program analysis highlights the youth work approaches at each organization and the experiences of Indigenous youth (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation).

In the first section of this chapter, I analyze the main program approaches across the organizations. Many organizations use drop-in models as the dominant program framework. An overarching drop-in "structural approach" means that programs at iHuman and Ndinawe are open for youth to attend any time during their hours of operation. Drop-ins allow Indigenous youth living in homelessness on and off the streets the flexibility to choose when and if they want to attend the organizations. This model is important to the daily survival of Indigenous youth as many experience crises and need access to programs and workers immediately. There are, however, resource limitations to drop-in style organizations such as staff availability. Organizations also run drop-in programs during specific hours such as YOUCAN's Step Up and Step In program, Ndinawe's and SNA's 24-hour drop-in and iHuman's LiNKS Mental Health Clinic. Each organization offers employment programs, outreach workers and art and artistic development. I suggest these programs attempt to predominantly meet Indigenous youths' mental and physical needs and reflect the broader government and other funding priorities. While the program specifics differ across organizations, each program attempts to meet the needs of

Indigenous youth using developmental models, which encourage youth to be involved, build on existing skills, learn new skills and gain self-confidence.

Based on my attempt to centralize the Indigeneity of youth in this research, the second half of this chapter investigates how the organizations respond, something I refer to as a "response-ability," to Indigenous youths' spiritual needs and "spiritual homelessness" (Christensen, 2016; Memmott & Chambers, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017). By doing so, I consider the existing cultural responses at the youth organizations and how best to meet the specific spiritual needs of Indigenous youth. I begin with an examination of the role of Indigenous cultures at the organizational level and in the daily youth-program opportunities. I place each organization on a continuum to highlight their varied approaches to working with Indigenous youth specifically.

Youth-Organizations Main Programs

Previous research suggests inadequate employment, education and housing significantly contribute to Indigenous youth homelessness (Brown et al., 2007; Miller et al., 2004; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Patrick, 2014). At the individual level, the reasons why Indigenous people decide to leave home are complex and intertwined with institutional failings, histories of colonialism and child welfare involvement (Baskin, 2013, 2007; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009). Importantly, a youth's *choice* to leave home is often constrained by the options available to them and is frequently outside of their control (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009). Barriers to leaving the streets mirror the challenges that led them there in the first place including a lack of income, social supports, inadequate housing and education (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009). Street-involvement is cyclical in the absence of effective short- and long-term supports (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009).

Most youth homelessness literature is not specific to the needs of Indigenous youth (Berman et al., 2009, Baskin, 2013, 2007; Brown et al., 2007; Patrick, 2014). Existing research on Indigenous youth and homelessness typically focuses on youth's negative experiences on the street or in gangs, their child welfare involvement and criminal justice interaction (Baskin, 2013, 2007; Barron, 2011; Comack, 2012; Comack et al., 2013; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Navia, 2015; White et al., 2011). Higher likelihoods of extreme poverty, child-welfare involvement and the ongoing consequences of colonialism mean that Indigenous youth are at a disproportionate risk of homelessness (Baskin, 2007). The result is Indigenous youth become overrepresented in shelter and non-shelter based youth-serving organizations in urban centres.

Karabanow (2004) suggests responses to the needs of the homeless youth population must be youth-driven, flexible and varied. Typically, the main responses to youth homelessness in Canada include: emergency shelters, medium- and long-term supportive housing, drop-in centres, outreach services, health clinics, alternative schools and job training programs (Karabanow, 2004; Patrick, 2014). To date, the distinct short-term and long-term needs of Indigenous youth in Edmonton and Winnipeg or their positive experiences at youth organizations has remained understudied (Minaker & Hogeveen 2009; Patrick, 2014). As urban Indigenous youth populations grow, and as access to stable housing, employment, and social supports continues to decline (Baskin 2007; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009), there is an increasing expectation from governments that youth-serving organizations should respond to these needs often without any funding increase. In order to understand best practices and the dominant program models for Indigenous youth, it is necessary to investigate their experiences and unique needs. In the following section, I draw on the experiences of Indigenous youth and frontline staff from data collected in peacemaking circles and interviews to describe the main employment,

support and educational program opportunities at the organizations and their limits (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation).

Drop-in Style Organizational Structure

Each organization offers "drop-in" programs and opportunities for Indigenous youth. The term "drop-in" refers to either: the overall organizational structure or specific youth programs. iHuman and Ndinawe's Youth Resource Centre operate with an overarching "drop-in style structure." iHuman's caring (outreach workers, LiNKS Mental Health Clinic, family program), creativity (visual art, music, and fashion and textile studios), and authenticity (iSucceed) programs are generally available between 11 am and 6 pm on weekdays. iHuman provides an array of programming that goes beyond typical "drop-in centre" responses that are restricted to basic needs. The organization is not conceptualized as a "drop-in centre" per se, but uses a drop-in style-structure because it reduces barriers to services for Indigenous youth. Ndinawe's Youth Resource Centre operates more as a traditional "drop-in centre" where Indigenous youth can hang out, watch TV, and access resources from housing to employment daily from 11 am to 11 pm (Monday to Thursday). Ndinawe increased its capabilities with their 24-hour program, which operates from Friday at 11 am to 8 am on Mondays.

A drop-in style organizational structure works well for Indigenous youth living in homelessness due to the potentially chaotic nature of their lives and their need for immediate responses to daily crises. A drop-in structure reduces barriers to service access for Indigenous youth because they do not have to register for programs prior to arrival. Instead youth register once to gain access to all the programs and resources. Drop-in structure can provide flexible, dynamic and unstructured options to engage Indigenous young people in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, art, recreation and sport, health care, youth-project development,

resume writing, computer use and outreach support. However, limited hours of operation, finite resources and staff availability, circumscribes the drop-in structure.

iHuman and Ndinawe's organizational structure is particularly helpful for Indigenous youth who need free places to stay during the day without fear of being policed out. In both cities, there are relatively few public spaces that welcome Indigenous youth living in homelessness. iHuman and Ndinawe's organizational structure acts as a quasi "day program" option for Indigenous youth that allows them to connect to services, programs, and opportunities.

> Day programming is an important part of the emergency response to homeless youth. It is often where young people make first contact with the sector. It can be a place where young people meet others, obtain food and other material resources, rest and escape bad weather. It is a place where young people can engage adults and get help and support. These are all important resources for young people, especially those who are absolutely homeless (Gaetz, 2014, p. 68).

Gaetz (2014) suggests day programs "should engage youth through activities and practices that help them move forward with their goals" (p. 68). Ndinawe and iHuman use their drop-in structure to welcome Indigenous youth, make initial contact to help determine their needs and connect them with resources at the organization and beyond.

In 2014, Indigenous youth and frontline staff identified a need for iHuman to attend specifically to young people's complex mental health issues. These experiences can be exacerbated for Indigenous youth because of social marginalization, living in homelessness, poverty and by "living in a society that continually devalues them" (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009, p. 161; Patrick, 2014). Indigenous youth living in homelessness often experience acute mental health issues such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder and high numbers of suicide (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Patrick, 2014).

Aligned with iHuman's overall drop-in structure, the LiNKS Mental Health Clinic was born from the youth themselves with the goal of lessening mental health stigma and filling the

gaps among their peers left by the health care system. Youth ambassadors, iHuman staff and professional psychologists and student interns work in the clinic. Scholars generally agree that mental health issues are a major concern for Canada's youth homeless population and adequate responses are a major challenge (Gaetz, 2014; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009). Karabanow (2004) suggests that homeless youth face barriers to health care access that include lack of identification, excessive wait times, requirements to book appointments in advance, fear of the need for parental consent and the mistrust of adults. As a drop-in style program, the LiNKS Mental Health Clinic revolutionizes how Indigenous young people access mental health care. It offers onsite and more immediate care. It reduces financial barriers and increases youth's agency for their health:

> They can access their files on request, decide to commit to appointments with counsellors or choose our drop-in option, and connect with anyone during both times of crisis and joy – there are always multiple examples of both. Youth often use their natural artistic talents to tell their personal stories of triumph, heroism and resiliency coupled with sadness, doubt and loneliness (iHuman Youth Society, 2017b).

Unlike the traditional health care system, young people's agency is at the forefront. Indigenous youth decide how they want to access the service. LiNKS encourages a cultural shift to more readily respond to mental health issues. It may be beneficial to consider implementing a similar style program in Winnipeg based on Ptukha's (2015) research with homeless youth in Winnipeg where youth recommended the need for mental health supports onsite at youth organizations.

Youth Drop-in Programs

All of the organizations offer drop-in youth programs weekly. In contrast to the overall organizational drop-in structures, youth drop in *programs* occur at specific times during the hours of operation. For example, SNA's youth drop-in program runs from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm on weekdays. Similar to the overall organizational structure, drop-in programs adopt an open and

flexible format. However, they typically adopt a semi-structured format to engage Indigenous youth in specific activities during the program hours. In the section that follows, I discuss YOUCAN's Step Up and Step In community stream program as well as Ndinawe and SNA's 24/7 drop-in programs as examples of youth drop-in programs.

YOUCAN's Step Up and Step In, community stream program. Step Up and Step In (SUSI) is a unique grassroots initiative, which started primarily by Indigenous youth and Mandy Halabi (the former SUSI manager). The impetus for the program came when a group of Indigenous youth identified the need for more safe spaces for young people in the community and the group's desire to develop positive opportunities for their peers. SUSI community stream was born as a weekly drop-in program on Wednesday nights between 5 pm and 7 pm. The first cohort of SUSI participants included Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth between 12 to 24 years of age who were living in extreme poverty, homelessness, and struggled with serious addictions and mental health issues. Like most grassroots initiatives and much non-profit programming, prior to 2013, the SUSI community stream operated with little to no funding. Two full-time SUSI staff worked in schools and coordinated the community stream program in addition to their regular responsibilities. Over the years, SUSI program objectives morphed based on changing funding requirements. At the time of this research, SUSI ran on Tuesday and Wednesday nights. This diverse, and ever-changing, group of young people also shifted with YOUCAN's organizational focus to work more specifically with young people in schools and those youth who are ready to gain full-time employment.

SUSI uses a semi-structured, youth-led format to engage young people in project-based learning. This is unique to drop-in programming. SUSI youth developed their own initiatives and participated in recreational activities such as sports, cooking, arts-based workshops and

volunteering in the community. Over the years, SUSI youth planned many "for youth, by youth" events including a city-wide "You(th) Got Talent!" music festival, annual International Youth Day events and YOUCAN's annual youth Christmas party. SUSI also created an on-site youth community garden and produced a 10-minute animated short film entitled "Breaking the Bully Barrier" in partnership with Pixel Blue College (Figure 4.1).

At SUSI, staff encourage young people to take ownership of the program and generate their own ideas, set and realize project goals and take leadership among their peers. Importantly, SUSI is not a fully youth-led program as the staff support and guide project development. Too often, youth-led projects are touted as *completely* youth driven, which negates staff influence and support required to complete large projects. As a result of SUSI's operation as a two-hour weekly drop-in, program staff would plan and prepare for the group so that when the youth arrived they had specific and accomplishable goals for their time together. SUSI's innovative youth-led projects garnered much attention from local media and won community awards and accolades. This exposure challenges negative stereotypes about Indigenous youth and highlights their resiliency and leadership in the community.

Figure 4.1: Breaking the Bully Barrier: Things change when we see each other differently by SUSI youth in partnership with Pixel Blue College.

YOUCAN's youth garden project was one such opportunity (Figure 4.2). Gardens, and being in nature more generally, can build a sense of community, connectedness to the natural world and improve Indigenous youth's well-being (Trull, 2008). A focus on gardening and nutrition is lacking in youth homelessness research (Danchner & Tarasuck, 2013). Previous research with homeless youth in Toronto suggests that

their daily food intake does not provide them with sufficient energy for the day, put them at greater risk for infections and illness, increased complications in pregnancy and aggravates existing health conditions (Danchner & Tarasuk, 2013). Homeless youth typically do not make enough money, for example by panhandling, to buy nutritious food. Therefore, they youth rely on fast and pre-packaged foods (Danchner & Tarasuk, 2013). Ptukha' (2015) research with homeless youth in Winnipeg also notes some youth use food banks and there is a need for more accessible food as well as life skills such as cooking and meal planning among this population.

Figure 4.2: YOUCAN's youth garden, 2015

At youth organizations, food is imperative. It is generally understood by youth workers that if there is no food, young people will not attend programs. Providing food is one way to meet youth's basic needs and acts as a program incentive. Limited funding support for food, as I discussed in chapter 3, forces organizations to rely on cheap food or local food bank donations. This economic limit makes it almost impossible for staff to provide youth with healthy meals. These barriers also limit food choices and keeps young people disconnected from food production and sustainability. In an effort to remedy some of these concerns, between 2013-2015 SUSI designed, built, installed, planted and harvested YOUCAN's youth garden. On a relatively small budget, and with tremendous community and business support, the garden expanded from

two small beds to an entire 50 foot by 50-foot outdoor space at Westmount Junior High School. The garden is now an art installation project complete with a peacemaking circle space, picnic tables, eight gardens full of vegetables and herbs (lettuce, kale, spinach, potatoes, carrots, beets, herbs, zucchini, and cucumbers), a greenhouse, a rock spiral garden and a medicine wheel inspired garden bed. Much of the art and garden beds were assembled using recycled materials retrieved by SUSI youth and staff and painted to their liking. For example, wooden picnic tables were purchased and subsequently designed and painted.

In 2014, YOUCAN's youth garden was voted "Best Community Garden" by Sustainable Food Edmonton, a local non-profit organization. At the awards ceremony, the Step Up and Step In youth were the only young people present at Edmonton's City Hall. They demonstrated to the broader Edmonton community what a diverse group of youth, many of them Indigenous, can accomplish together. The awards ceremony was an opportunity for these youth to be positively recognized for their contributions to the community. Ryan explained his involvement with the garden gave him a sense of purpose:

> The garden was interesting. Everyone depended on me a lot. I was there all the time…it was beneficial that I was there.
>
> You also welcomed me to actually help because…I kinda do know how to garden and I've built stuff a bit. You guys really actually welcomed me into actually help…I was there almost all the time building and helping…It brought a lot of people together and we made a lot of friendships too. A lot of creativity…[with the] designs of how the people wanted to shape the garden and do their art around it. [The youth could] feel free to do whatever…Coming [to SUSI] and knowing they are gonna do something awesome. Making sure they can do something instead of sitting at home or doing nothing.

Ryan makes important points here about the garden project and the meaningfulness of staff welcoming him into a project in a way that allowed him to use and develop his skills. The garden

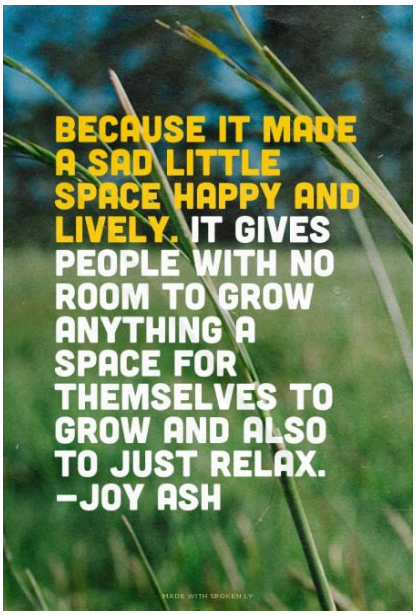

Figure 4.3: Joy's response to the question "Why is the garden awesome?"

also gave some young people and staff reasons to collaborate and develop interpersonal relationships in the process.

For Joy, an Indigenous youth at YOUCAN, the garden is special "because it made a sad little place happy and lively. It gives people with no room to grow anything a space for themselves to grow and also to just relax" (Figure 4.3).[26] The garden taught Indigenous young people about food production, sustainability, and composting. It gave youth opportunities to grow and take healthy food home for their families and gave the organization access to healthy food for programs. Creatively changing a space and transforming it from empty to full of life made some Indigenous youth feel accomplished. It made the garden a meaningful place because the youth designed, developed and maintained it for themselves and their peers.

Ndinawe and SNA's 24/7 safe space. In Winnipeg's North and West End neighbourhoods, Ndinawe and SNA established a 24-hour safe space drop-in program. Following Winnipeg's Plan to End Youth Homelessness (2014), both organizations try to meet the needs of Indigenous young people at times when they may be most vulnerable to violence: after regular business hours and on the weekends. When I first arrived at Ndinawe in June 2015, the Youth Resource Centre was running its 24-hour safe space program on the weekends. The staff were preparing to run the program 24/7 during the summer months. Jodi, one of Ndinawe's frontline staff elaborated on the program's purpose as an emergency based response:

> The 24/7 is designed for emergency-based [responses to youth]. So we see a lot of youth that have aged out of [Child and Family Services] so they are 18 to 24 and are homeless. We see intoxicated youth that aren't able to go home because they are

[26] This quote was taken from public promotional material for YOUCAN's Youth Garden.

> intoxicated. We see the younger ones who their parents are drinking or they are in an unsafe situation. So they are coming here. It's kind of giving the youth another option opposed to being trapped in those unhealthy situations.

Following in Ndinawe's footsteps and with their guidance, SNA launched a media campaign to raise awareness about the need for a 24-hour safe space in the West End. Throughout the staff and youth circles and my interviews at SNA, the need for 24-hour drop-in was noted as a significant gap in programming options. This finding echoes Ptukha's (2015) research with homeless youth in the city. Rebecca shared her perspective on the need for more safe spaces in the West End:

> Because sometimes during the morning if you need someone to talk to, or say if like your parent or somebody is drunk then you can just come here. Or like if you're just hanging around at night and it's better to be safe here with staff than be on the streets.

In February 2016, the Manitoba government announced funding for SNA's 24-hour pilot program. Similar to Ndinawe, the safe space focuses on increased safety for younger people (12 to 14 years of age) and extends services to those who fall outside of the age requirements for SNA youth drop-in, 18 to 24 year olds. In the summer of 2016, SNA began its 24-hour program on weekends and holidays. In its first 280 hours of operation, the West End 24 Hour program attracted 550 youth (CBC News, 2016, Aug 19). To date, SNA and Ndinawe continue to run the safe space programs with limited funding and reduced operation.

The drop-in style program structures emphasize how these small youth organizations might respond to the ongoing and emerging needs of Indigenous youth in their communities. First, the prevalence of drop-in structures and programs call attention to the need for safe and open access to programming for Indigenous youth and to more youth-friendly public spaces in the cities. More specifically, the drop-in organizational structure and the 24-hour program highlight a need for more safe and stable housing for Indigenous youth *and* their families.

Indigenous youth in both cities need access to free and welcoming spaces during the day and after school hours. The 24-hour program responds to the need for organizational supports on weekends and after hours. iHuman's LiNKS program suggests more specific attention is required to address the mental health needs of Indigenous youth, the negative stigma about mental health issues, and histories of colonialism and trauma specific to Indigenous youth. Finally, YOUCAN's garden project highlights the need for healthy food options and food sustainability education for Indigenous youth in these cities.

Employment Programs

Employment programs and skills development are crucial for Indigenous youth living in, or at risk of, homelessness. Young people often leave home with little or no experience that would allow them to live and work independently (Gaetz, 2014). To address these challenges, each organization has various ways Indigenous youth can access employment skills development. SNA, Ndinawe and iHuman have dedicated employment staff and programs to help Indigenous youth write resumes, job search and prepare for interviews. Generally these programs only have one or two staff. At SNA the job placement program, "First Jobs for Youth" connects youth with summer job opportunities:

> [It] offers part-time employment/training opportunities for local youth, ages 16-18 every summer within SNA's programming. Youth may work in the Building Belonging program (children ages 6-12); Sports; Environment and Open Spaces; or Front Desk work at the Community Office on Ellice Ave. After graduating in August, Youth receive Fall/Winter work placements with local employers, such as the University of Winnipeg, The WRENCH, and other businesses and agencies (Spence Neighbourhood Association, 2017b).

Both SNA and Ndinawe hire their own "green teams", staffed by young people to garden and landscape the neighbourhoods and community gardens during the summer months. Rebecca shared how she felt when she was offered her first job at SNA:

> My eyes went big and she offered me a job. She's like "well why not? I'm giving you a chance." And then as I was like, "Are you for real!"…Am I like, "Am I smiling?"…that's when I finally realized something about myself…what I realized about myself was I had potential and I need to use it. And the only way through life is getting your job experience and your education. There's no other way in life actually, unless you want to hustle [sell drugs]…I don't want that. I want to get my education. I want to become a paramedic. I want to see what I can do from there. And I want to go far in my life.

First Jobs for Youth supports Indigenous youth, like Rebecca, to find jobs, increase their skills, and, perhaps most importantly realize their potential. This moment gave Rebecca the confidence she needed to set her life goals of becoming a paramedic. All she needed was staff to believe in her.

YOUCAN's main organizational focus is youth employment skills development. The Verto program, for example, is a five-month program. Young people are hired full-time, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, to learn life and job skills and participate in a two-month job placement. Over the years and with various funding platforms, Verto has grown from a twelve-week to a twenty-week program. Sandy, a Verto staff, explained more about the program goals:

> We offer life skills and employment readiness prep for youth that are experiencing barriers to employment, barriers to healthy to living, barriers to relationships and that kinda thing. We work with them…to build a positive relationship with them, teach them how to deal with conflict in their lives and in the workplace, get them to develop healthy communication and relationship building skills and then scoot them off to the workforce to do a work experience [one month job placement] and then hopefully they gained enough with us so they can maintain sustainable employment for a time in their lives, get some career planning, and a little more direction focus in their lives.

Sadie, a 19 year old Métis youth, shared that the Verto program helped her develop her work experience and boost her confidence to look for and obtain employment:

> Paying you to train you with work experience that totally made everything better. It totally helped me. I never liked talking on the phone to anybody before that. I had to call so many people [to secure a job placement]. And Tina [Verto staff] was right, you'll get to the point that you call so many people and it won't even matter. It's like that now.

The downfall to structured programs such as Verto for some Indigenous youth is that the program design is similar to the formal education system (classroom work) and requires a longer-term commitment to the program (20 weeks). These requirements may prevent some young parents, and youth who are homeless, highly criminalized, or have complex mental health needs from participating because they cannot fulfill the program attendance requirement.

YOUCAN and SNA's employment programs help Indigenous young people who are often discriminated against, realize their potential. According to Minaker and Hogeveen (2009), "post-secondary education is essential to improving the economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal youth" and it may be one way to "combat historic social and economic exclusion and their silence as decision-makers that affect them" (p. 156). Providing young people with paid opportunities to gain skills is essential for them to pay their rent, buy groceries and help support their families. Youth organizations need to include education with employment programs. Otherwise, they risk ghettoizing Indigenous youth in low-paying and low-skilled jobs.

Outreach Workers: First Responders, Emotional Supports and Institutional Navigators

Outreach worker programs at all the organizations provided youth with an advocate and served as a bridge into the youth organization and other community resources. Indigenous youth require one-on-one support to make changes in their lives, navigate institutions like the criminal justice system, respond to crises and celebrate successes. They work diligently to build one-on-one relationships within a specific caseload. These can range in numbers from five to twenty youth. Relationship building is a key component to outreach workers roles. Relationships with youth may be slow and challenging to develop because young people are not obligated to work with outreach workers (Gaetz, 2014). Interactions and relationships between Indigenous youth and outreach workers tend to be youth-directed. Siobhan, one of YOUCAN's outreach workers,

claimed that by building close one-on-one relationships, outreach workers can encourage youth to make their own decisions and help youth achieve their goals:

> The kids do whatever they feel like. My job is more one-on-one with my kids so one of my kids, she's Métis. She wanted to take violin lessons. So I was like, ok!

For some Indigenous young people who may not have parental or other adult support, outreach workers can fulfill these important relationship roles. At SNA, Dakota characterized his relationship with Jay as a "good friendship":

> I have a really very… a really good friendship with [Jay, my worker]. He's supported me a lot and he encouraged me to go back to school. He's trying to help me get a job and stuff and trying to get me connecting with my culture more.

Through their work, outreach workers may become the primary support for Indigenous youth. As such, they often provide informal counseling as a way through which to assist youth and develop interpersonal relationships. In some cases, outreach workers act as first responders to youth in crises. For staff, outreach work is particularly difficult because of the number of youth on their caseload. It can be extremely taxing as workers build more involved professional relationships with young. They are often among the first people a youth will call when they need mental, emotional, physical and spiritual support. By ensuring the ratio of staff to Indigenous youth living in these conditions remains low, Indigenous youth's needs may be better met and may give staff more some reprieve from the relationships.

Listening to youth, advocating for them and encouraging them how to advocate for themselves are the outreach worker's primary roles. Siobhan explained why listening and advocating for youth is imperative to her outreach work:

> So I think a lot of the kids have a really hard time communicating what some of their issues are in terms of going through right now or in their addiction and the way they're placed. But they don't want to talk to their [social] workers, so it's my role to kind of like listen to them. And sometimes I'll ask the kid like do you want me to speak on your behalf, like they'll be together in the same room, maybe on the phone,

but do you want me to communicate or translate that message for you.

Many young people in this research made specific distinctions between youth workers at the organizations and social workers. To them, social workers are attached to bureaucratic institutions, like child welfare. By contrast, as a result of the relationship-based approaches youth worker take, many youth do not consider youth workers at the organizations in the same category as social workers (chapter 5). These workers go into the community to connect the city's most marginalized young people to their respective organizations and other essential programming and services in the cities (i.e. housing and social assistance) (Gaetz, 2014). Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, explained youth outreach workers bridge the organization's inner world with the greater community:

> I feel that part of outreach is connecting with some of the youth who aren't coming here [to SNA], and maybe just trying to get them to come and interact with other youth who they might not otherwise interact with on their own, so just connecting them to a variety of resources and outlets and people and support networks.

Outreach workers have extensive knowledge of services, programs, and opportunities around the city (Gaetz, 2014). Indigenous youth who participate in outreach programs typically have the greatest needs and they typically live in absolute homelessness, are often involved with the criminal justice system, gangs, or child welfare, are young parents, struggle with serious mental health and substance abuse issues and lack familial support. Outreach workers will drive young people to doctor's appointment, connect them to activities, advocate for their access to government funding and supports such as the Alberta Insurance for the Severely Handicapped. They develop expertise as systems navigators to guide Indigenous youth through institutions such as the criminal justice or education system.

Art and Artistic Development

SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN include art opportunities into their programming, but

typically contract those services out to other arts-based organizations. iHuman, on the other hand, is an arts-based organization. Art is a powerful engagement tool that encourages homeless young people to participate in programs. It also serves as an outlet that helps youth cope with trauma, stress and daily life challenges (Mutere et al., 2014). Research suggests art can have positive impacts on youth's social and emotional well-being (Ennis & Tonkin, 2017). It can allow them to tell their own stories and contributes to increased self-confidence and self-esteem. Art can help generate spaces of well-being with young people and can facilitate caring relationships between youth and staff (Ennis & Tonkin, 2017; Paget, 2014). For Indigenous communities where traditional arts were historically banned and destroyed, art is inherently tied to the well-being of Indigenous communities, the reclamation of Indigeneity and holds promises of healing between cultures (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2012).

Indigenous young people I spoke with at the organizations note that art is an essential component to their engagement at these youth organizations. Derrick explained how YOUCAN's drop-in music night gives him the opportunity to express himself artistically as he learns how to play guitar and "jams" with the staff on Tuesday nights: "For that, I am grateful. That's one of the main reasons I come here." Unfortunately, the music program no longer exists because the staff with those musical abilities left the organization. At Ndinawe, art is a huge draw for Indigenous young people. Brooklyn put it plainly, "[I] come here because there's art." Ndinawe has a dedicated art room and regularly scheduled weekly programming run by a local art organization (Art City). SNA also partners with Art City and hosts art programming regularly. Art City's programming at Ndinawe includes pottery, sculpting, painting and other art workshops. Tammy, Ndinawe's Executive Director, explained how a dedicated art space is beneficial for frontline workers because it gives them different methods to respond to youth in

Figure 4.4: Eagle painting, Ndinawe culture room

crisis:

> We had one young woman who came in. She was highly stressed, very emotional, very angry and we were able to take her in the art room and just said "let her rip." She made the most beautiful painting. She was throwing paint at the thing but it was a good way for her to release in a positive, healthy manner what was bottled up inside of her.

Angel, one of Ndinawe's frontline workers, suggested that the art program is "the most important and the biggest program we have here" because she can:

> Go in the art room with one or two youth and we'll paint or they will show me how to make headdresses out of beads. And during the time that we're doing those activities they open up. And it's more building trust, painting that one picture with them. And me doing that with them I get to know a lot about them, like their personal life. And that's where I can build my strong relationships with them.

Art allows young people and staff to work together and to build relationships while engaging in an activity (chapter 5).

In addition to using art as an individual tool for dealing with feelings and emotions, it can also be a powerful way to engage in dialogue about the collective and historical trauma of Indigenous people. Tammy commented at Ndinawe, staff use art as a teaching tool:

> We've used art as teaching. So you see our turtle and our eagle [on the wall] (Figure 4.4). There's a beautiful piece in the hallway going up to the school about residential school. So it's a really good way to engage kids, again, in safe way of those conversations. You're not going to sit five kids down and lecture style anything, right? But get art or have an elder doing moccasins, a whole lot of conversation can happen, a whole lot of questions can get asked and it sparks something.

Art can be a safe and creative education tool in youth work. As young people engage in art, they

can have informal conversations with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and staff. Art can make learning more engaging, less formal and still yield positive individual and interactional results.

From its organizational mission, across all programs, and into the daily youth work practice, art is embedded in all iHuman does to meet youth's needs. The majority of staff are artists and many local artists volunteer to run poetry, emceeing, photography, videography and Bboy/Bgirl (dance) workshops. iHuman, and the youth who attend the agency, are also part of Edmonton's Hip Hop community. Hip hop remains a way for Indigenous youth in Edmonton to negotiate their identities, to talk back to systemic oppression and to have their voice heard through the four elements of hip hop: emceeing, graffiti, bboy/bgirl (dance) and DJ'ing **(**Buffam, 2011, 2006; Gorlewski & Porfilio, 2012; Lashua, 2006; Lashua & Fox, 2007; Lashua & Kelly, 2008; Wang, 2010). iHuman's Executive Director, Catherine, echoes Tammy when she explained art is a successful youth engagement tool: "Art is what we use as our engagement tool…it's needed to stabilize people." iHuman's youth work practice centralizes art as a way to help Indigenous young people heal from trauma and negotiate their identities. Trey shared that for him opportunities to write and record music or participate in traditional drumming and singing, "those things are a big part of my life. I feel like it helped define me as a person." Artistic expression creates a sense of openness for youth and does not require them to muzzle their message.

Klodawsky et al. (2006) suggest there is a need for community-based responses to homelessness that move away from narrowly defined services to include programs and services that can meet young people's vocational and emotional needs. iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN's main programs show how these organizations attempt to meet youth's multiple needs in flexible, varied and creative ways. iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN's drop in,

outreach, employment and arts-based programs attend primarily to Indigenous youth's physical and mental health needs. These organizations provide a mix of crisis intervention responses through their outreach programs, which try to move Indigenous youth away from the street by connecting them to employment and mental health resources. Each organization generally provides short-term support with limited resources to an increasing population of Indigenous youth in the cities.

A Continuum of Response-Ability to Indigenous Youth's Spiritual Needs

This research argues that to successfully work with Indigenous young people using individual development models, there is a need to consider their Indigeneity, the contemporary issues facing this population, and Canada's history of colonialism as inherently tied to Indigenous young people's identities and how they navigate the city. When young people are given opportunities to positively understand their Indigeneity and can give them strength their Indigeneity is valued as part of the larger organizational structure (Belanger et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2005). Indigenous cultural opportunities are part of a broader response to Indigenous youths' "spiritual homelessness" at the youth organizations (Christensen, 2016; Memmott & Chambers, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017). For the remainder of this chapter, I provide an overview of "culturally appropriate" and meaningful opportunities for Indigenous youth (Patrick, 2014). I connect this to how staff across the organizations understood the histories of colonialism, residential schools and contemporary realities of racism in their work. I then move into a discussion about the organizational and structural supports for Indigenous-focused responses through the programs, resources and opportunities. These responses at the organizations in this research operate along a spectrum which begins with YOUCAN's approach to cultures as opportunity outside of the organization, SNA's commitment

to Indigenous cultures and working with Indigenous organizations in the city, iHuman's organizational alignment with Indigenous cultures and Ndinawe's integration of Cree and *Anishinaabe* worldviews as essential to the organizational structure and everyday youth work practices with Indigenous youth.

Culturally appropriate responses to Indigenous youth's spiritual needs help "create a social environment that observes and respects cultural beliefs and practices of the individual receiving services" (Trudeau, 2008, p. 682, in Patrick, 2014, p. 58). The goal is to make services "accessible, relevant, and effective" (Patrick, 2014, p. 56). Many scholars advocate for increasing culturally appropriate services to best respond to the needs of Indigenous youth people in Canada to foster resiliency and well-being (Patrick, 2014; Wexler, 2009). A positive cultural identity can provide Indigenous youth with coping skills through hardships and higher levels of psychological health (Wexler, 2009). If we recognize the reality of Canada' past and contemporary colonialism outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), we may be able to move beyond "culturally appropriate" for individuals as an individualized response towards "culturally meaningful" responses for Indigenous youth that respects who youth are as Indigenous peoples and create opportunities in ways they deem meaningful.

Much research on cultural relevance and appropriateness lies in the health care services field (Adelson, 2005; Benoit et al., 2003; Bourassa et al., 2004; DeVerteuil & Wilson, 2010; Kurtz et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2005; MacMillan et al., 1996; Patrick, 2014). The need for culturally appropriate services should be extended to other services beyond health care (Patrick, 2014). DeVerteuil and Wilson (2010) suggest health care professional responses often include the incorporation of Indigenous languages, healers, healing practices, Elders and the recognition that colonialism continues to negatively affect Indigenous people's health and lives (Patrick,

2014). The role and design of culturally appropriate services varies considerably in the literature because these responses consider heterogeneous Indigenous experiences or worldviews. Patrick (2014) reminds us about this heterogeneity and takes it a step further by suggesting these responses must emerge distinctly from Indigenous communities themselves and the unique knowledges in each respective territory. I continue with this line of inquiry to consider how YOUCAN, SNA, iHuman and Ndinwe specifically respond to the cultural and spiritual needs of Indigenous youth.

Regardless of where an organization falls on the spectrum of responses to these needs in this chapter, the staff and executive directors all generally agreed on two points. First, Indigenous youth are negatively affected by colonialism often characterized as a past event linked to residential schools and contemporary poverty. Second, youth organizations have the opportunity to provide Indigenous youth with connections with their cultures, if they choose. An essential part of culturally-focused youth work practice is the acknowledgment and respect for Indigenous cultures, histories and the needs of Indigenous young people within context. Steve, a Verto staff at YOUCAN, put it best when he insisted the agency is welcoming to all groups but acknowledges how Indigenous youth face unique challenges because of their distinct histories and contemporary realities:

> We have a lot of Indigenous young people at YOUCAN. That means just generally providing a space where all voices and cultural backgrounds and diversity is celebrated, and everyone is included, but that also means having an understanding of the unique challenges that Indigenous youth might face, due to the history on this land, with historical relationship with Indigenous people on this land, and how intergenerational effects have been felt…Also Indigenous youth face structural racism and negative perceptions about them, and pressures and expectations that other youth might not experience. So having an understanding and paying attention to see how easy they're forming their identities and negotiating with those challenges.

Recognizing Indigenous history in Canada plays an important role for staff to better understand

youth's realities in context and can help make their participation at the organizations more meaningful. Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, asserted that including Indigenous cultural knowledge and ceremonies at the organization and connecting youth with Indigenous cultures outside the organization is invaluable because it can connect them back to who they are:

> It's very important to them. That's a very useful tool for connecting them back to their roots, and for some they're not open to that, and to force that on them isn't practical either, when they aren't ready for it.

He qualifies these opportunities when he says a youth can decide for themselves if they are ready to participate and reconnect with their culture. At all of the organizations, no youth is ever *required* to participate in a program or opportunity to learn and participate in Indigenous cultural practices.

As young people (re)form their identities as Indigenous peoples, staff may consider how youth are negatively affected by colonialism, residential schools and histories of trauma as well as positively impacted by the strengths of Indigenous people and cultures. When considering how to include culturally appropriate programs, services, and opportunities, two important questions emerge: Who will lead these opportunities and teach and share cultural knowledges and ceremonies? And, are those Indigenous youth who are offered the culturally-focused opportunities, programs, or resources ready and willing to receive them? The answer to the first question is working with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders who can ensure Indigenous communities, peoples and knowledges are respected and not appropriated. The answer to the second question will depend on the specific youth. Organizations consider how best to provide access to culturally relevant opportunities for youth who are ready. Responses to the spiritual and cultural needs of Indigenous youth cannot be blanketed in a way that homogenizes Indigenous

youth. Staff cannot assume youth do not already have cultural connections or a desire for cultural knowledge and community connections.

YOUCAN Youth Services: Indigenous Cultures as Opportunities

YOUCAN's response to the spiritual needs of Indigenous youth adopts what I call a "culture as opportunity" approach. Staff connect Indigenous youth to their cultural communities and practices outside of the agency, if the youth request it. While YOUCAN serves an overrepresented number of Indigenous youth, it was not created specifically to work with this population. As such, Indigenous cultural connections become an appendage to their youth work practice. It puts the onus on Indigenous youth to ask for cultural opportunities and connections. YOUCAN's "culture as opportunity" approach puts young people's agency at the forefront of organizational decisions *not* to connect with Indigenous cultures or communities unless it is youth initiated. This "add culture and stir" response to the spiritual needs of Indigenous young people negates building relationships with Indigenous communities and may risk not meeting these young people's needs and perpetuating negative understandings of Indigenous cultures.

The gap in YOUCAN's attention to youth's Indigeneity is understood at the organization. Kyle, YOUCAN's Executive Director, acknowledge the organization's need to consider how to better include Indigenous cultural knowledges and practices with guidance from Elders and other Knowledge Keepers in the community:

> All youth are welcome here, so…including [Indigenous youth] means every program is open to that population. I think that we should work harder at bringing cultural pieces in. I think we lack that as an organization…all of our staff is open to them and that we do our best to work with them like we work with any other young person and if they have cultural needs, all of our youth workers know that there's access to it…So we'll find it.

Kyle is right. Without an organizational commitment to Indigenous youth specifically, the staff explained that adding culturally appropriate opportunities as an addendum to their regular duties

has not resulted positively. As such, this research reveals the importance of Indigenous focused supports as part of the respective program and the organizational mandates. When Indigenous cultural opportunities are not a part of the overarching organizational response, these opportunities become one-off events such as Indigenous art making workshops, participating at pow wows and sweat ceremonies, learning about the Moose Hide Campaign (2016) to encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous men to stand up against violence against women and children and attending the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Conference.

The lack of organizational support and a general lack of knowledge about Indigenous cultures prevents many YOUCAN workers from meeting the youth's spiritual needs. Stephanie, a non-Indigenous frontline worker in the Verto program, admitted her lack of knowledge about Indigenous communities and cultural opportunities outside of the agency makes it difficult to meet the needs of Indigenous young people (if they request it):

> We do end up working with a lot of Indigenous youth and we check the box on the different forms that we have. That's my experience at other agencies as well. I think we're missing a lot with that. We check the box and then we don't do anything about it. We don't have, not that we need to offer specific programs but that is definitely a gap that we have…I think a lot of youth want that [cultural] connection but they don't know where to go or how to maneuver through that and I think often we [staff] don't really know either. We can usually point them in the right direction but we don't have a lot of those connections.

YOUCAN staff recognizes the need for culturally appropriate responses for Indigenous youth but internally do not possess knowledge to connect young people to cultural opportunities outside of the organization. Without partnerships or direct relationships with Indigenous communities, staff and young people, rely on Indigenous workers with cultural connections at the organization to meet those needs.

As an organization, YOUCAN primarily relies on Indigenous staff who are connected with their respective cultures to impart cultural knowledge and lead culturally appropriate

opportunities. By doing so, it places more responsibility onto Indigenous staff and does not necessarily compensate them for that specifically. For non-Indigenous staff, the responsibility defaults on them to learn about Indigenous cultures outside of the organization and on unpaid time. Wren, a non-Indigenous frontline worker, shared how he studies Indigenous cultures and engages Indigenous youth to learn about their cultures in his daily practice:

> When I started working with the Aboriginal population in Edmonton, I had to start doing research and reading Wikipedia sites and Band office websites and going to ceremonies and all those things and also learning a lot from the youth I was working with in order to learn about First Nations cultures.

Wren makes two important points here. First, he asserts many young people already have some cultural knowledge. By talking to young people about their identities, staff can create opportunities to learn with them. Second, without organizational supports the response-ability for spiritual and cultural connection rests on the shoulders of youth workers who are already over worked and underpaid. When individual staff leave the agency, so too does the cultural knowledge and specific attention to Indigenous youth and their histories. The result may be that Indigenous youth do not receive spiritual and cultural supports they need. As well, when new staff arrive, they will have to learn and establish their own connections with Indigenous communities. This analysis suggests that YOUCAN consider the following: 1) increase staff training about Indigenous cultures, the histories of residential schools and intergenerational trauma, 2) develop staff knowledge about Indigenous cultural resources in the city as well as traditional teachings, cultural and historical knowledge from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, 3) establish partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations.

Without specific attention to the history of colonialism in Canada or the specific spiritual and cultural needs of Indigenous youth, some YOUCAN staff, such as Alex, rely on a humanist approach to working with Indigenous young people:

> […] My way to connect with anybody is not to say "Hey! You're Indigenous. So I must recognize your Indigenous; your background." And go that way. But to actually say "Hey! You're a human being. I'm gonna recognize what we have in common as human beings and go from there. If you wanna work on personal development and stuff like that. Recognize that everybody needs personal development. Every human being struggles with stuff.

Recognizing Indigenous young people's humanity is indeed essential to working with a historically dehumanized and marginalized population. However, without specific recognition of Indigenous cultures and histories, it neglects a large part of who these young people are, their experiences, and humanity as Indigenous people. Alex's statement above affirms an individualized approach to meeting Indigenous youth's needs and suggests their cultural identity is an aspect of personal development from a Western perspective. This approach may risk pathologizing the loss of Indigenous cultures when their cultural identity has been systematically taken from them (Donald & Krahn, 2014).

According to YOUCAN staff, they only respond to the spiritual and cultural needs if a youth identifies such a need. For Sandy, a non-Indigenous frontline worker, the notion that Indigenous youth require different responses than other youth did not sit well with her:

> There is the expectation that because they are Aboriginal they need to have an Aboriginal focused support system, which is in my opinion, garbage.
>
> I don't think that we need to be treating Indigenous youth any different than we need to be treating any other race, or any other kind of youth, unless they request it. If they want to get in touch with an Elder, awesome! You want to get in touch with your culture, awesome! We can easily facilitate that. We are sort of at a disadvantage because we don't have a real deep-seeded connection in the community […].
>
> What is really difficult for me is the expectation that because a youth is Aboriginal that they must inherently be doing our program differently or we are targeting them differently in some way because of the support systems. We don't actively do that which I think is why we are successful. Nobody comes here to be supported as an Aboriginal. They come here because we support them where they are at.

By considering "where they are at," a popular turn of phrase in youth work circles, which means workers meet and help youth from where they are in their lives, frontline workers also consider where youth have been. This is especially true for some Indigenous youth as their Indigeneity and social circumstances are persistently shaped by colonialism, histories of residential schools and ongoing experiences of racism. Sandy acknowledges two contradictory points above: first, that "we can easily facilitate that" [cultural connections]; and second that "we don't have a real deep-seeded connections in the community." Without these connections, meeting the spiritual and cultural needs of Indigenous youth is impossible. Sandy recounted a story of a Verto youth and his father during one of the program intake processes:

> [The father] said "You guys don't do any smudging or have Elders come in, do you?" I said "No we don't really do that." He's like "Good! Cause my kid doesn't want to have any exposure to that whatsoever!"
>
> I don't know if that was coming from him or coming from the youth.
>
> There are some that are actively disconnecting from their culture if you want to call it that because of negative experience or whatever reason. What I'd like to see more of in our experiences with youth is an understanding from the community that just because the youth is Indigenous doesn't necessarily mean you need to be using Indigenous practices to work with them but being more aware of what their needs are and supporting them in that way. I think we're really good at doing that.

Sandy challenges the growing call for and need to offer culturally appropriate resources as essential for Indigenous youth (Donald & Krahn, 2014). She also points to the need for an understanding that not all Indigenous youth want those connections. However, at organizations such as iHuman and Ndinawe, which includes culturally relevant and meaningful opportunities daily, there is never a requirement for any youth to participate. Instead, cultural opportunities at an organization can make them more accessible, encourage them to explore their identities safely and engage in dialogue with staff about their Indigeneity rather than ignoring it completely. YOUCAN's approach to "culture as opportunity" seems to preface its rationale on a respect for

'individual choice,' which negates an organizational responsibility to take into account for, and learn about, the specific life circumstances and challenges Indigenous youth face in these cities. YOUCAN may consider a formal program and staff engagement strategy to account for the specific spiritual and cultural needs of Indigenous youth in order to negate potential and unintended harm of obfuscating Indigenous culture and history in their youth work practice. In October 2018, YOUCAN began to increase staff training and developed an organizational framework to support Indigenous youth specifically.

Spence Neighbourhood Association: Organizational Commitment to Indigenous Cultures and Opportunities

SNA operates with an organizational commitment to the needs of Indigenous youth by acknowledging Treaty relationships. In this way, they were following Winnipeg's North End Neechi Principles (The Canadian CED Network, 2018) (Appendix I: Neechi Principles), which includes fostering "Aboriginal pride" and working with Indigenous communities to ensure community control, engagement, and direction remains in their hands (Spence Neighbourhood Association, 2017a). To meet these ends, SNA partners with large Indigenous organizations in the city, such as Ma Ma Wi Chi Itata Centre, Ka Ni Kanichihk and Ndinawe, to support the cultural and spiritual needs of Indigenous youth in their neighbourhood.

SNA's daily youth practice at the MERC relies on Indigenous frontline staff who are connected with their culture for cultural programming. Their challenge may also be how to sustain this programming when Indigenous staff leave. For Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, his cultural connections and his family in the neighbourhood, lends to his ability to connect youth to Indigenous cultures. He creates culturally relevant opportunities for all youth at the MERC, such as a ribbon-skirt making workshop and spends many of his

weekends with youth in ceremony. Indigenous staff whose cultures are central to their identities engage young people to learn about cultural teachings and knowledges. Hiring healthy Indigenous staff who are connected with their cultures is essential to supporting marginalized and traumatized Indigenous youth. These young people benefit from seeing Indigenous staff in these positions and by having positive role models. For some Indigenous youth, it is often these relationships that lead them to choose to learn more about their cultures (chapter 5). SNA is unique in its youth population. As the neighbourhood changes, there are now high populations of Indigenous and newcomer youth in the drop-in and sports programs. During my fieldwork, SNA staff revealed there are tensions between these groups, but that there are also plenty of opportunities for learning. Sharing and bridging cultures may be one way to create relationships and understanding between both youth populations.

iHuman Youth Society: Aligning the Organizational Foundation with Indigenous Worldviews and as Opportunity

iHuman is a non-Indigenous organization, meaning that while it was born from, and works primarily with Indigenous and homeless youth in the inner city, it does not operate from Indigenous worldviews. Rather, since its inception, iHuman's organizational approach has met the cultural and spiritual needs of Indigenous youth informally by aligning with Indigenous worldviews from Treaty 6 territory. In 2016, iHuman launched its *Indigenous Policy Framework* to more structurally align with Indigenous worldviews (specifically Cree) and to holistically attend to the histories and needs of Indigenous young people (iHuman Youth Society, 2017a). Jasmine, an *Anishinaabe kwe* frontline manager and once an iHuman youth, formalized this once unwritten approach in an effort to ensure it remained at the core of iHuman's future

organizational development and structure. Jasmine explained that the *Indigenous Policy Framework* sets out the organizational commitment in the following ways:

> I think that really means that we're incorporating values that are aligned with — like whether iHuman knows it or not, it's more explicit now that I've done an *Indigenous Policy Framework* and to really break down what's been happening over the years. But it really aligns with [Indigenous] core values, so the concept of Medicine Wheel, wholeness, like of the different aspect so personhood and how you can't really be a whole person if you don't deal with those things [colonial violence, histories of residential schools]. We can't attempt to help and say we're helping a whole person if we don't look at all those things or help the different aspects of a person.

The *Indigenous Policy Framework* is a living document, which means it can be changed and added to over time to meet the emerging needs of Indigenous youth at the organization. The goal of the framework is to ensure that iHuman strives to create an inclusive, respectful, culturally-informed environment with youth and commits to building Indigenous community connections and practicing appropriate protocol with Elders and Knowledge Keepers (iHuman Youth Society, 2017a). It states that: "Introducing and respecting Indigenous cultures at iHuman is paramount to allowing youth to see themselves and their culture reflected positively and provide opportunities to reclaim their Indigeneity" (iHuman Youth Society, 2017a). Through the acknowledgement of traditional territory, as well as the diversity of the youth who attend the organization, iHuman's *Indigenous Policy Framework* grounds a specific understanding of the lives of Indigenous youth in the context of colonialism, residential schools, poverty, and overrepresentation in child welfare and prisons. Since the release and ratification of the policy by iHuman's Board of Directors, the organization hired an Authenticity Program Director tasked with ensuring iHuman stays this course by including Indigenous knowledges and ceremony as a part of its daily operation.

iHuman's "Trust Compass", its guiding anti-oppressive organizational framework, is dedicated to the healing and empowerment of young people by addressing their emotional,

spiritual, mental and physical needs. Aligned with the Medicine Wheel teachings, iHuman is inclusive of peoples from all backgrounds, genders, or sexualities. With reference to staff training and hiring, the Policy Framework states:

> Knowledge of the complexities of political and historical implications on Indigenous youth is necessary for staff to remain informed. Coinciding with an Indigenous worldview, staff training can take many forms including informal approaches such as attendance of community events, powwows, round dances, ceremonies, artistic endeavours, and by talking with and sharing in experiences with the youth. Organized training is also available through internal activities such as cultural safety training or other workshops as offered throughout the city.
>
> Indigenous staff members have invaluable experience and knowledge to share with their colleagues and the youth. Their presence contributes to learning and discussion during daily practice. As such, iHuman is committed to employing Indigenous staff members and volunteers (iHuman Youth Society, 2017a).

iHuman's *Indigenous Policy Framework* highlights the necessity for staff training and a commitment to hiring Indigenous staff and volunteers. iHuman is in the beginning stages of addressing and implementing responses to the recommendations set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). To appropriately address the history of residential schools and the specific needs of Indigenous youth at the organization staff have recently collected information in written form and through youth meetings. iHuman is also developing a Youth Council to ensure the voices of Indigenous youth are heard and their needs are met.

Since moving into the new building and formally implementing their Indigenous Policy Framework, Indigenous cultures and opportunities have become an increasing part of the everyday youth work practice. iHuman works with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. For example, the ceremonial room is open to young people at any time to smudge. iHuman youth also share the opportunities to connect positively with their Indigeneity. In addition to the role of his family and Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the community, Trey shared how iHuman staff supported him in learning more about his Cree culture:

> Yeah iHuman has helped me with that. [Thanks to] people like Jasmine [and] Will now we're really getting involved, we're really starting to try to get that ball going so we can help people, because we're starting up like more involvement in the ceremony, like the Sweats and Sundances and stuff like that. Learning different teachings for the drum and bring it back here and start a Youth Council Committee…We have that for the new building and we're going to start bringing more of the culture and more of the stuff that's more centreed with this community and this territory on Treaty 6. So that the kids here have it, because we're like…It's just so modern to a point where especially after the 100 years, you know the Dark Ages that just of our people facing all these different obstacles. You know we got to try to bounce back from that, so…and it's hard to access the culture after all that stuff. So even though [Reserve First Nation community] is right there, the reservations over here, reservations over there, a lot of people aren't like extremely rooted to where they're actually from, just as long as we still have the same traditions here to help people. You know that would be dope and we're trying to get that ball going but it's far from that, you know and I still have that access here. Like Woven Journey, they help the women, they teach them a lot about the respect and stuff like that and their strength and how powerful you are as a woman, they have that upstairs. They teach girls that, girls need to know that, because girls are stronger than men, man! In some cases, I believe.
>
> After the whole thing [of] intergenerational trauma, a lot of it takes focus on the fact that all of us don't even feel like we know who we are, because the lack of culture and the lack of heritage and the lack of roots. A lot of people face mental health issues and face like depression and anxiety and all the things that really just go through the line. And when you connect with the culture again and you start smudging and you start practicing, you start to feel like you're redefining yourself, you feel like you're sculpting yourself into a person that you lost, you know. So yeah that's why I find it important.

Trey points to the role Indigenous staff played in helping him individually. At the same time he is acutely aware of iHuman's organizational commitments to create Indigenous culturally-meaningful approaches. He also highlights the complexities of many Indigenous young people's lives. Organizations, such as iHuman and Indigenous staff help youth root themselves back into their cultures at their own pace and in ways that work for them.

Histories of colonialism and residential schools have damaged Indigenous communities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). At iHuman, organizational opportunities encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people and staff to teach, learn and share their

cultures together. Tyler explained that his peers and the staff inspired him to learn more about his culture:

> Being around a bunch of other Natives…like, my brother, Trey…I wasn't as quick as him to jump on learning my culture again. I know my culture but I'm not connected to it like he is. You know, he's singing, he knows all the protocol, [the] respectful ways to do it and this and that. I don't even know as much as he does. I grew up knowing just bits and parts of stuff that I learned from school that…in the rez and my family. Yeah, just being around him and around a bunch of other people. Like, even the workers like Jasmine taking me to round dances and sweats. Being connected with nature and learning… I'm still learning but feel everybody learns still.

By being in close proximity and relationships with other Indigenous people, participating in ceremonies, and learning from Indigenous staff, some young people develop a willingness to learn about and reconnect with their culture. For some youth, such as Andrea, a youth who struggles with FASD, learning about her culture helps her navigate daily challenges. She often connects with her culture through sweat ceremonies and prayer:

> I think it has a big part to play in the stuff I do because sweats and stuff like that it helps me to get connected with myself again if I lose focus of what I'm doing, you know. Because I tend to, because me, I have FASD, right, so me and my focus on things is not very good. I lose focus really easily…So, but with culture and stuff it helps me to stay connected to that, it grounds me. Because, I pray and stuff and then I cry when I need to cry and…you know? Basically, it just plays a really big part in my life and just knowing myself that I'm more than just a human. I'm a spirit too. So, I have to take care of myself inside because that's where my spirit is.

Nikki shared that for her, connecting with her culture offers her hope:

> Because going to sweats and stuff and learning about my culture, it makes me believe more. Every time like I don't know when I'm having like the worst day or the worst week or if I'm like really sad and emotional, I'll go to a sweat and talk about my problems and then the next day after the sweat I'm feeling better and I'm feeling more calm and more secured and more cared for. It makes me realize a lot and I don't know…it just makes me feel like someone's actually listening to me.

Because their cultures are valued, iHuman allows young people to explore aspects of their cultures safely.. Connecting with their Indigeneity means that young people feel more connected with themselves. They begin to understand their lives in context and they can see evidence of

how their Indigeneity is welcomed and fostered at the individual and organizational level.

Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad: Indigenous Worldviews as the Organizational Foundation and its Everyday Practice

Ndinawe is an Indigenous organization, which means its organizational mandate, values and practices target the needs of Indigenous youth and follow Cree and *Anishinaabeg* worldviews and teachings. The organization hires almost exclusively Indigenous staff.[27] Indigenous cultures are embedded in the everyday youth work practices. It is commonplace, but is not imposed on Indigenous young people. Emma, one of Ndinawe's frontline managers, explained how Ndinawe integrates Cree and *Anishinaabeg* worldviews by using an Indigenous value-based and relational model in their youth work practice:

> I guess probably the biggest value in how you deliver service to youth and community is to always focus on building the relationships and helping our young people identify their strengths and their gifts. We have a lot of kids that come in here that identity is a huge missing piece for them due to the instability of their lives or the trauma they may have experienced as a small child. When you think about some of our kids that are displaced. I think about this 14-year-old youth that has been in 67 [child welfare] placements. What that does to their self-worth, their identity? When you're in 67 placements that are not culturally appropriate or relevant to the healing that needs to happen, that healing continues to just be stomped on or their value and self-worth is destroyed.
>
> It's Indigenous knowledge that's being transferred by our elders and by our people. The best way that I describe it is that, you know, this is the way that we as a community would address concerns or things that our people were struggling with […].
>
> The value-based model is an approach where there's learning and teaching to everything that you're doing with the young people you're working with. Rules are something that our youth don't understand and our youth will not engage in because a rule just tells you, "you can't do something" and there's no teaching behind it. Where a value, it's a teachable moment. You're teaching them…what those personal consequences are to some of those decisions or the dangers of what some things could happen that's attached to what that value might be.

[27] As an Indigenous organization, it remains open to non-Indigenous youth and staff.

> We focus on those seven sacred teachings and the Medicine Wheel teachings and everything that we do to help our young people create balance to see what's missing in their lives, whether it's physical needs or spiritual needs or mental needs or emotional needs. It's about identifying their gifts and strengths and what more they need in their life to be able to have that balance to be able to move forward.

Indigenous knowledges, ways of being, ceremony (sweats, smudging) and sharing and drum circles are part of the organization's daily operation. This involves multiple elements from the spatial aesthetics (chapter 3), to the programming opportunities, to the availability of cultural practices and to the teachings from Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The result is Indigenous youth at Ndinawe do not have to seek connection to their cultures elsewhere. The daily practice of smudging or drumming makes it normal and allows youth to access to cultural knowledges and ceremonies in ways that they feel comfortable. Daily Indigenous cultural practices help normalize and de-stigmatize Indigenous cultures through constant and open dialogue and the contextualization of the lives of Indigenous youth in a colonial world.

In the youth circle at Ndinawe, Brooklyn shared that for her, participating in ceremony is important "Because it's part of my blood." As the youth circle continued, she explained that Ndinawe gives her the opportunity to learn more about herself:

> That's important to me because it's part of me and start learning about myself 'til a few years ago. And I knew nothing about myself. I thought being Native was bad. It's not that bad…I've learned a lot about my background here and just being in the north side. There's a lot of Natives here.

Kiley also suggested participating at the agency is important because it could help the youth change the negative perception of Indigenous people outside of the organization:

> You know when Stephen Harper was trying to take away our Treaty rights and he always says stuff like Native people — the Aboriginal people just don't want to go to school and they don't want to work and they don't want to do this and do that, and then I think coming to Ndinawe will change that and I think we just need to like prove him wrong because like coming here, I don't know, it's kind of like when you come here … I don't know, you're just surrounded by a bunch of positive people and you just like do — like when you're here you're not getting into trouble.

Indigenous young people, like Kiley and Brooklyn, learn to challenge internalized ideas about their cultures when the organizational culture provides opportunities for them to connect positively to their Indigeneity. Shai, who was a youth at Ndinawe and is now an Indigenous frontline worker, made the point that as a youth he learned about his culture and that helped him develop a more positive sense of self:

> Out of all the different relationships that are out there, the most important relationship to have is the relationship with yourself. So knowing about who you are and where you come from and being proud of all those things, right…Out of all the programming and stuff I've been [in] throughout the years, when I learned about who I was and all those things that's [what] helped me out tremendously so I could understand why things were happening in my family and in my community and be proud of who I was and learn those things and being able to share that with other youth.

Histories of colonialism, residential schools and the sixties scoop make it important for organizations to consider how they might include opportunities to encourage young people to learn about Indigenous cultures and history to positively change how they see themselves. For some youth, connecting with Indigenous knowledges and ceremony profoundly helps to reshape their understanding of who they are as Indigenous people.

Overall, Indigenous youth at iHuman and Ndinawe presented themselves as being more culturally-rooted. These youth spoke more directly about what it meant for them to have Indigenous worldviews, practices, and ceremonies inside the organization as part of the everyday practice. It is clear from this analysis, organizations that emerged directly from the specific needs of Indigenous youth (iHuman, SNA, and Ndinawe), best align with, or incorporate, Indigenous cultures as part of the organizational foundation as well as their daily youth work practice. These youth-serving organizations best respond to the spiritual needs of Indigenous youth because these responses are embedded in the organizational mandates and everyday youth work

practices. The result is that their youth work practices reflect Indigenous cultures and communities positively and encourages young people to learn more about who they are.

Ndinawe and iHuman's approaches to their youth work challenge the deficit model of understanding Indigenous youths' spiritual and cultural needs. It, at the same time, acknowledges their deep-rooted belongingness with collective memories and traditions (Donald & Krahn, 2014). Scholars such as Donald and Krahn (2014) and St. Denis (2004) suggest that increasing "culturally appropriate responses" in education and curriculum may in fact encourage cultural fundamentalism, which upholds an "authentic cultural Aboriginal identity" that is unattainable for many Indigenous people (St. Denis, 2004, p. 37). In effect, Indigenous youth may be held responsible for losing their languages and cultures and minimizes the historic and ongoing systemic racism and discrimination (Donald & Krahn, 2014). Rather than starting from a deficit-model, there is a need to acknowledge Indigenous knowledges and concepts, such as the Cree concept *Nēhīyaw wēyasiwewina*, that understands Indigenous youth as "real people" instead of youth in need of fixing (Donald & Krahn, 2014). *Nēhīyaw wēyasiwewina* may act as a starting point of possibility that "Indigenous youth are already enmeshed in sacred ecological networks of relations and stories that can support them as they grow" (Donald & Krahn, 2014, p. 124).

Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I analyzed the main programs at the organizations drop in style structures and programs, employment programs, outreach work and arts and artistic development. Each organization adapted their program development in direct response to the immediate needs of the young people in their communities with some attention to more long-term solutions to Indigenous youth homelessness. It is clear that the program responses highlight the ongoing needs of Indigenous youth in these cities. It is also clear that these young people also

require more attention such as education, employment training, free public space access, mental health services and long-term youth housing supports. Importantly, more research may be untaken on each of these main issues and program responses. Youth work practices need to be contextualized within broader social issues, as well as, the specific needs of Indigenous young people. Nevertheless, it is imperative to point out that program options are inherently tied to project-based funding opportunities and successful grant applications that can limit services and organizational resources.

Local and provincial governments may lend to the work of these organizations by implementing long-term, barrier free, and sustainable supports for Indigenous youth. This would also require funds to better document and evaluate the qualitative outcomes of their youth work along with quantitative program statistics. Patrick (2014) suggests organizations that attempt to holistically support Indigenous youth people's self-sufficiency, employment *and* emotional and spiritual needs are the most promising responses to youth homelessness. Patrick's (2014) assertion and Indigenous youth's understandings of themselves as Indigenous peoples I discussed in chapter 2 requires an investigation of the current responses to Indigenous youth's spiritual needs and limitations at each organization. In chapter 5, I suggest Indigenous youth's emotional needs are met at the organizations, in part, through their interpersonal relationships with frontline workers.

In the second half of this chapter, I analyzed the specific organizational response-abilities to the spiritual and cultural needs of Indigenous youth. The organizations fall on a spectrum from YOUCAN's "culture as opportunity" approach, to Ndinawe's "Indigenous worldviews as the organizational foundation." Based on this research it seems that organizations best responses to the needs of Indigenous youths' "spiritual homelessness" occur when the organizational structure

and management support the need for these responses as well as the "culturally appropriate" services, programs and opportunities at youth organizations (Christensen, 2016; Memmott & Chambers, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017; Trudeau, 2008). By doing so, young people can connect with their cultures and identities safely and better understand who they are in the social context that goes beyond individual pathology (Donald & Krahn, 2014). The choice to connect to their cultures can only be made the youth themselves. For some youth, the pain and trauma of claiming an Indigenous identity requires well-matched staff knowledge and an organizational commitment to understand historical and familial traumas.

Chapter 5 – "Relationships are life and death. It really is because [without them] I think I would have been dead a long time ago": Caring Relationships between Indigenous Youth and Frontline Staff

> When I'm having a bad day I have peoples' numbers that are their personal numbers…I got to wake up Monday to talk to some people here. Relationships are life and death. It really is, because [without them] I think I would have been dead a long time ago.
> - Angela, Métis and Vietnamese, 22, iHuman Youth Society

Contrary to expressing trivial, overstated or romantic understanding about the value of connecting with young people in youth work practices, Angela describes her relationships with frontline workers as vital to her survival in the cold city. In plain terms she declares, without these relationships: "I think I would have been dead a long time ago." In this chapter, caring interpersonal relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline workers are the heart of "warm places" created at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation). Previous scholars agree that interpersonal relationships are paramount to youth development and are the foundation to youth work, child and youth care, and social work practices.[28] However, the voices and experiences of Indigenous young people living in homelessness are largely absent in this research (Kidd et al., 2007; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Patrick, 2014). Caring relationships are necessary to uncover Indigenous young people's needs while attending to the limitations of these interactions. In this chapter, I outline the main characteristics of these relationships. I do so by expanding on Schmidt's (2002) qualities of respect, optimism and trust in youth work practices. My research qualifies the meaning of caring relationships with Indigenous youth and addresses their organizational and

[28] Andersen-Butcher et al., 2004; Beam et al., 2002; Bellefeuille et al., 2017; Blancet-Cohen & Salazar, 2009; Bilson, 2007; Chablani & Spinney, 2011; Davidson et al., 2011; Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Gharabaghi, 2008; Hirsch, 2005; Jones & Perkins, 2006; Laursen & Birmingham, 2003; Lee et al., 2009; Lemma, 2010; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2010; McLeod, 2010; Murphy et al., 2013; Neff & Harter, 2003; Rodd & Stewart, 2009; Ruch et al., 2010; Smyth, 2017; Smyth & Eaton-Erikson, 2009; Spencer et al., 2004; Winter, 2009; Young, 2006.

personal limits in youth work practices. The interpersonal relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline workers are paradoxical. On the one hand, youth and staff uphold these relationships as unlimited and paramount to Indigenous youth's survival. On the other, the lack of organizational resources and individual staff capacities for care means that these relationships are limited. Given this paradox, an ethic of care in youth work practice can advance the understanding of how caring relationships lend to making Indigenous youth feel cared for, welcomed and a sense of belonging at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN.

Similar to the relationships Indigenous youth develop with the physical spaces of the organizations and to the opportunities, programs and resources, interpersonal relationships with staff at these organizations are not a panacea to the barriers Indigenous youth face. If we treat organizations as the only solution, it risks completely transfering responsibility for the needs of Indigenous youth onto already resource-poor communities. Building relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline staff is difficult. The dynamics of these relationships are fraught with conflict and are slow to develop, if they develop at all. They are also limited by high staff turnover, age-limits to participation and high youth worker caseloads.

Smyth (2017) and Smyth and Eaton-Erickson's (2009) notable social work research on "high risk" youth in Edmonton – defined as those involved in drugs, alcohol, gangs, and homelessness – in the child welfare system suggests that it is necessary to "develop significant relationships, to connect youth with appropriate services, and to connect with the community in a meaningful way" (Smyth and Eaton-Erickson, 2009, p. 122; Smyth, 2017). Building relationships with this population can demonstrate the social worker's commitment to working *with* youth (Smyth, 2017; Smyth & Eaton-Erickson, 2009). These relationships are often fraught with challenges because of young people's mistrust of the child welfare, health care, education,

criminal justice system, and their histories of trauma, abuse and continued lack of support (Smyth & Eaton-Erickson, 2009). Presumably many of youth who are labeled "high risk" in the child welfare system may identify as Indigenous, however these scholars do not focus specifically on this population. By attributing the problems and barriers to building relationships with youth to individuals themselves and without addressing Indigenous youth specifically, Smyth and Eaton-Erickson (2009) and Smyth (2017) run the risk of pathologizing Indigenous youth and ignoring the myriad of systemic barriers to meet their needs.

In an effort to fill the gap in research by focusing specifically on relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline staff, this chapter moves beyond the undefined and romanticized language of the "community" or "family" I outlined in the introduction. Caring relationships with staff help meet youth's emotional needs for connection and support. From the Indigenous youth perspective, without these bonds, they would not attend the organizations as frequently. When the voices of staff are aligned with the youth, workers agreed that interpersonal relationships are at the heart of their youth work practice. In this chapter, I draw extensively on Hirsch's (2005) and Ruttan et al.'s (2010) research which similarly advocates for relationship-based practices with marginalized youth. Hirsch's (2005) four-year study with marginalized young people at six Boys and Girls Clubs in the US suggests that it is staff and peer relationships, which transform organizations into a "home." When this happens, young people feel cared about, come to staff with their problems and develop positive relationships with each other. Ruttan et al.'s (2010) qualitative research with Indigenous homeless young women in Alberta also suggests youth's concept of "home" was relationship-centred rather than place-based. This study adds to homelessness scholarship by advancing an understanding of the

qualities of relationship-based practice in non-shelter based, youth-serving organizations in Edmonton and Winnipeg.

Like previous youth work and social work scholars, I contend these relationships are co-created, mutual and reciprocal (Brendtro et al., 2002; Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Young, 2006). Interpersonal relationships with staff are the heart of youth work practice (Young 2006). I follow the research trajectory of scholars such as Brendtro et al. (2002), Garfat and Fulcher (2012), and Young (2006) to reveal the foundational characteristics of the caring relationships between Indigenous youth and staff at these four organizations. I posit that the quality of the relationships are grounded in an "ethic of care" to meet youth's needs (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Tronto, 2010, 1993). I expand on Schmidt's (2002) characteristics of respect, optimism and trust with the experiences of Indigenous youth and staff to expound the final component of a caring relationship-based youth work practice.

First, to Indigenous youth, respect means treating them as human beings, responding to their care needs without judgment, acknowledging their presence in and out of the organization and appreciating the voluntary nature of their participation in these relationships. The concept of "respect" is an overarching umbrella term Indigenous youth use to describe caring relationships with staff. Young people's resounding call for respect is reflective of their negative experiences in cold cities and histories of being dehumanized. Second, optimism and humour are the main characteristics of these caring relationships. Many youth note the jolts of positive energy, "good vibes" and optimism they receive at the organizations and from frontline workers. These qualities remind youth of the possibility for change in their lives. Third, I discuss the concept of "trust" and how it is built through honesty and reciprocal relationships with youth. To build trust, staff ethically open themselves up in relationships and listen to youth. In the final part of this

chapter, I discuss the major barriers of caring relationships with Indigenous youth and staff. I suggest these limits be at the forefront of how youth-serving organizations develop their relational youth work practices. This research highlights the paradox of these relationships in the hope of demonstrating their value, the specific qualities of the relationships, as well as, their limits.

Caring Relationships in Practice: Respect, Optimism and Humour, and Trust

> The relationship piece I think is so interesting cause it blows my mind all the time of how fast it happens. There is no magic, 'how to.' It would be amazing! We would all be millionaires if we could tell you how to build a relationship. - Stephanie, Verto staff, YOUCAN Youth Services

Stephanie points out that there is no 'how-to guide' or "magic strategy' to be in caring relationships with Indigenous youth. Instead, she described these relationships as 'magical' because a connection between a youth and staff can sometimes seem instantaneous:

> Alex said it the other day: "This is where the magic happens." A kid comes in and almost immediately the connection is made and they feel supported. They feel non-judged. They feel connected and they feel like they belong somewhere.

For some Indigenous young people, it may only take hours for them to feel a sense of belonging, for others it takes years or it may not happen at all. Importantly my research is designed to contextualize the positive relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline workers. Overall, Indigenous youth and frontline staff at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN described their interactions as *being in* relationships. *Being in* relationships is different from *having a relationship* because the former are "deep and profound…which impacts both the young person and the helper" (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012, p. 9-10). Youth workers must be "attentive to the mutuality of relationships" by recognizing that both parties create and are influenced by it (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012, p. 10). A relational youth work practice focuses on the "co-created space between us" (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012, p. 7). It requires the frontline staff to pay careful

attention to the relationships and consider such questions as: "Is it safe? Is it a learning space?" (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012, p. 7). Frontline staff have a responsibility to respond to the needs of Indigenous youth. One way they can do this is by being in caring relationships.

Frontline workers use everyday life events to intentionally build connections and help Indigenous young people make changes in their lives and meet their needs (Garfat & Fulcher 2012). To outsiders, it may simply appear as though Indigenous youth and frontline workers simply hang out, go for coffee or chat in the hallways of the youth organization (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012). However, these moments are required to build relationships with staff so Indigenous youth can open up about their needs. For some Indigenous youth, a staff member can become a significant person in that young person's life and their relationship can extend beyond the confines of the organization, the job requirements and the program goals. All staff noted that without caring relationships, the program goals could not be met. The quality of these relationships often goes unreported in organizational statistics. Alex, a Verto staff member at YOUCAN, explained that these relationships cannot be adequately captured quantitatively because they exist in moments *in between* program goals:

> […] I'll throw out there is what I call "down time" not "official time." We record all these professional things [for data collection] like "I did this for this person. I took them to court. I did this" but what is not recorded often is the conversation that you're gonna have to the courthouse or just going for a walk with people.
>
> This morning I walked a bunch of guys over to buy smokes and our conversation was about hunting. I related my hunting stories with their hunting stories. There was far more connection that happened in that moment than there ever was in any classroom that I've ever run. That's more powerful and probably sometimes learning from what they do.

These unrecorded moments that Alex describes are the glue that can keep Indigenous young people in programs and at youth organizations. Perhaps relationships can only be captured qualitatively through observation and the staff and youth's stories of their experiences of

emotional support and care at these youth organizations.

Relationships are at the heart of youth work practice but their qualities need to be known in order to better understand their meaningfulness to Indigenous youth. Schmidt (2002) distills the qualities of these caring relationships into three main values: respect, optimism and trust. These qualities allow workers to adopt "an encouraging stance in helping [youth work] relationships. Without these positive ingredients, [the] direction and purpose [of youth work practice] might become less than helpful and uncaring" (Schmidt, 2002, p. 61). In what follows, I expand on these characteristics of caring relationships that underlie the stories youth and staff recount about their experiences to expose their complex meanings (Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation) (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005; Fusco, 2012; Green et al., 2013; Kidd et al., 2007; Krueger, 2012, 2007; Smyth, 2017).

Caring Relationships are Respectful of Indigenous Young People

Many Indigenous young people make a resounding request for respect. Research with homeless youth by Kidd et al. (2007) and Stewart et al. (2010) suggests that young people need to be unconditionally valued, cared for and treated "like human beings." Respect can be a powerful intervention when working with street-involved youth because they are constantly devalued, marginalized and excluded in urban centres (Kidd et al. 2007). For Indigenous youth, the call for respect is a direct response to their daily negative experiences on the street and to the failures of government institutions to meet their needs. It also points to the history of Indigenous people in Canada, who have been devalued and had their personhood dehumanized (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

Indigenous youth are all too familiar with these realities. Some youth pointed out a stark contrast between how frontline staff respond to their needs in markedly different ways than other

organization's staff or government social workers. Trey commented on this distinction and highlighted the more egalitarian power relationships and leadership frontline workers display at iHuman:

> A lot of different people in positions of authority when it comes to youth, they find that it's more of a sense of control rather than leadership. A lot of people within that position they'd rather be a boss than a leader. It's a tough time to build a relationship and have that trust for people who have that position until I came here, you know that's the only way it differs.

Trey explains that iHuman staff begin by building relationships from a different starting point than a traditional authoritative hierarchy typically adopted by government social workers. This social work starting point, according to Trey, does not yield trust. In fact, treating Indigenous youth paternalistically may have some damaging effects. Andrea noted one of the consequences of instrumental relationships like this is that some young people feel like a file number rather than a human being:

> [I] like how they [frontline workers at iHuman] approach things and how actually committed they are to working with the client and getting to know the client as a person instead of just as a file number or just a file. And basically spending time with them and you can just feel the vibes with some people, the ones that are actually in it to like actually help. And then you could feel the vibes when it's like somebody that's in it for, you know, just because it's a job. *I like building relationships with the workers* [emphasis added].

To Andrea, frontline workers prove they care for youth and commit to being *with* youth and gaining their trust. She also makes her agency and the reciprocity in these relationships known when she says, "I like building relationships with the workers." Andrea's use of the word "client" to describe young people mirrors social work language and is not the language typically adopted by iHuman staff. Andrea suggested that building caring relationships with young people can let staff become interwoven in the daily fabric of their lives: "They're a part of your life…that's how you trust them…because they really get involved with their youth. That's

inspirational to me because I seen it […]."

Respect is the foundation of meaningful and caring relationships with Indigenous youth at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN. The concept of "respect" is not easily defined, but it is a central theme in youth scholarship.[29] Angela described an understanding of "respect" this way:

> Respect [is] to look at a human being. You look at a human being…you don't have to like stare at me, but when I fucking come into the room, I expect eye contact, just as I will give you eye contact. If you look like you're trying to look away from me, that's so disrespectful, a simple handshake…that goes a long way.
>
> A human being deserves water and food and shelter and love and clothes. That's what we need and the respect. We're there for each other…that's what human beings deserve. Human beings deserve to be acknowledged and appreciated and given opportunity. iHuman has given me so many opportunities, some of them went up and down and up and down, but they don't give up [on me].

Her clarity on the concept is intertwined with some essential ingredients such as the acknowledgement of her presence, her basic needs for food, water, shelter, and clothing, and her needs for love, connection, support and opportunities. In her appeal for respect, Angela announces unequivocally that Indigenous youth are *worthy of* having their needs met. To respect Indigenous youth means frontline workers have the opportunity to *see* them as human beings and then respond to their needs accordingly and to the best of their ability. Angela makes this clear when she says, "Respect [is] to look at a human being…when I fucking come into the room, I expect eye contact, just as I will give you eye contact." The physical acknowledgment of her existence and humanity as an Indigenous person requires a different kind of relationship with frontline workers. In caring relationships, Indigenous youth can no longer be the "other" because they are a part of the relationship and become known in the process. It requires them to be *seen*

[29] See: Barron, 2011; Barry, 2005; Bilson, 2007; Hart, 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Hogeveen, 2006; Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2012; Howe & Covell, 2005; Karabanow, 2004; Kidd et al., 2007; Klodawsky et al., 2006; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Sampson & Themelis, 2009; Schissel, 2006.

and *treated* as human beings in a society that continues to deny many Indigenous peoples these basic human rights. For example, as of August 2017, 98 Indigenous communities (excluding those in British Columbia and Saskatoon) were without access to clean water (Government of Canada, 2017).

For Trey, respect for youth at iHuman means: "it's about the youth. That is respect." He suggests some youth feel respected when staff and organizations centralize young people's agency and their response-ability to meet their needs. To other Indigenous youth, like Tyler, respect means: "Let them [youth] make their own decisions, their own choices. Treat somebody as human. Be humane…I'm trying to say, [be] polite, you know, talk to them nicely. No judging." Laursen and Birmingham's (2003) research on the protective role of caring relationships with adults echoes Trey and Tyler. Respect must enable youth to develop power and agency in their lives (Laursen & Birmingham 2003). Unlike previous scholars, Tyler advances the concept of respect from a Cree worldview that practices respect for others as hospitality:

> When I think about [respect] I think of [our] traditional ways. I don't know if it's natural for everybody but, for me, it's always like…when…you invite somebody over to your house, a friend or whatever, or somebody you haven't seen in a long time, you give them the best. You let them sleep in a comfortable bed, make them breakfast, [and you] make them feel at home.
>
> Traditionally…you gave them the best meat, food, give them a good place to sleep, you know, [you] treated them like family. That's what I think about when treating somebody as human. Now it's a whole different world. Yeah. It's a whole different time. And [we] can't…offer that all the time because not everybody has a home to offer…I don't know, [to] make people feel comfortable is, basically, all you can do.

Tyler's house metaphor mirrors how many Indigenous young people and staff conceptualized the organizations as their family, community or home. It signals the inherent quality of welcome and a sense of belonging required to work with Indigenous youth at these agencies.

Angela, Trey, and Tyler's calls for respect aligns with Minaker and Hogeveen's (2009) concept of "social justice for youth" that posits marginalized young people be respected (p. 270). Respect to these scholars means to acknowledge young people, especially the marginalized, as authorized knowers, active participants, and invaluable human beings (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009).[30] If we put place respect as the foundational characteristic of youth work practices with Indigenous youth, it then requires staff to acknowledge youth know and understand their needs. It also values youth's perceptions, beliefs and self-knowledge (Laursen & Birmingham, 2003; Schmidt, 2002; Young, 2006). The concept of "respect" as the starting point to work building caring relationships with Indigenous youth may help limit the propensity to pathologize them. It better situates their lives within the social context. It does so by attending to the histories of colonialism and their ongoing social realities that leave their needs perpetually unmet.

Schmidt (2002) suggests that when frontline workers respect young people, they communicate the caring quality of that relationship. It requires an understanding of who Indigenous youth are and where they are in terms of "their development or in their particular circumstance for which they are seeking help" (Schmidt, 2002, p. 58; Young, 2006). Respect as an overarching concept includes acceptance. For Kiley, respect is inherently tied to acceptance. She said that Ndinawe staff: "accept you for who you are. They accept you for whatever way you are." Youth need unconditional acceptance (Schmidt, 2002; Young, 2006). Carl Rogers suggests, "we cannot truly care for, or care about, other people until we accept them in their totality" (Schmidt, 2002, p. 59). In youth work practice, this does not mean that frontline staff agree with everything Indigenous youth may say or do, however, it does mean that staff listen and remain open to what they have to say (Schmidt, 2002; Young, 2006).

[30] Minaker & Hogeveen (2009) follow Snider (2006) to assert, "authorized knowers" are "key individuals and groups granted the status of 'expert', whose claims are heard and taken seriously and subsequently acted upon" (p. 293).

Angela, Trey, and Tyler connect respect to feelings of acceptance, non-judgment and welcome. Non-judgment centres "primarily around allowing [youth] to make mistakes, relapse, [or] not follow[ing] through" (Kidd et al., 2007, p. 19). For Beam et al. (2002) non-judgment is a characteristic of peer-like relationships with adults who support young people. For example, Tyler clarified that iHuman staff also adopt non-judgmental attitudes:

> They're very understanding. They don't judge. They don't tell you what you do. They tell you your options. Yeah, they're not judgmental or anything. They're here to help. We know that whenever you need help they'll help you.

Many young people across organizations agreed that "non-judgment" is a core aspect of what it means to be respected. Staff learn to suspend judgments that can lend to an openness in the relationship and make youth feel as though they can confide in them. From the perspective of Indigenous youth, it is imperative for staff, especially those who are not Indigenous and have not lived in homelessness or poverty, to refrain from judgment and instead provide alternative responses when youth explain their struggles. Individual judgment can negate the social context in which Indigenous youth live and their limited accessibility to other options. As part of a non-judgmental approach, Shai, a frontline worker at Ndinawe, emphasized the importance of non-authoritative relationships:

> You gotta have those relationships! If you don't have a relationship with the youth, they're not gonna open up. They're not gonna be comfortable. Part of the way of building those relationships is being yourself, being friendly, not bossing [the youth] around: "Do this. You can't do this. You can't do that." Cause if you're telling a youth "You can't do this. You can't do that" chances are it's the opposite for them. They're gonna challenge that.
>
> [It's about] pretty much meeting them half way. Also having some humility and also understanding too. If you're working with a certain group, you have to have someone to relate to that because if they don't understand and don't relate to those things. Youth will pick that up right away and shut that door.

Caring relationships require that frontline workers be humble and continually reflect on the

importance of the youth's agency in their lives and the circumstances in which they live. Youth workers act as guides as youth navigate their lives. Dean, a 20-year-old Cree man at YOUCAN, speaks to the results of the respectful and non-judgmental relationship with the Verto staff. He suggested these relationships are positive because the staff understand, to various degrees, the nature of his life and his struggles upon release from jail into an open custody facility:

> They are pretty easy going. If you're not ready, they will let you go at your own pace. They try to push you but not if you can't do it. With the whole job searching in Verto, they wanted all the people to get a job before the program ended but if you felt like you couldn't do it at the time they would back off and try to keep you on track to get a job. They don't really push [you] to do something you don't want to do.

Staff accepted that Dean would progress through the program at his own pace based on his circumstances. This relational approach to youth work requires frontline staff to be flexible and not dictate what a young person should *or* should not do. These kinds of relationships do not mean there is no accountability. Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, said that respectful relationships between Indigenous youth and staff involve accountability and reciprocity by both parties:

> I think it's being flexible but also holding them accountable too, for not showing up or for saying, "Yeah, I'll be there," and then not coming. It's a relationship for us to work together in Outreach [program]. For me as a worker and for them as youth…And so I [also] understand that they have other things in their life that they often need to take care of and sometimes Outreach takes a back seat to those.

He highlights frontline worker's responsibility to manage the program goals, plan time with each youth on their caseload, be flexible and take into account youth's other responsibilities. Brett builds on Jay's notion of accountability in these relationships, particularly in outreach programs, because staff work one-on-one with youth with the goal to empower their sense of agency in their lives:

> It's super important that both sides are accountable for whatever decision's being made…So being accountable for whatever it is that you're going to say that you're

> going to do for the kid…But it's up to the kid, honestly it's up to the youth, doesn't matter what age…So they've got to be accountable but they also have to realize like what's happening and whatever choice is being made they've got to make that decision to say "Hey! I need to actually pick myself up and I can't really rely on someone else." Like we pave the path but they complete [decide] where it goes.

Accepting youth means workers also need to be accountable for their actions (Schmidt, 2002). In this section, I examined how the concept of "respect" for Indigenous youth encompasses an array of qualities, i.e. non-judgment, value for youth's agency and identity as Indigenous people, reciprocity and accountability. These are the starting points required to build caring relationships. In the next sections, I expand the main components of respect to include staff acknowledgement of Indigenous youth in and out of the organizations and the appreciation of the voluntary nature of these relationships.

Respect includes acknowledging Indigenous youth *in* and *out* of the organization.

I feel cared for and watched over and people ask me how my day was and how everything was and it makes me feel like a lot more better about myself when people ask me.
- Nikki, First Nations woman, 16, iHuman Youth Society

Nikki feels cared for when staff ask her about her day. Acknowledging youth helps communicate to them that they are cared for. At all of the organizations, I watched Indigenous young people enter the buildings and staff warmly greet them. Diana, a frontline staff member at iHuman, said she makes concerted attempts to welcome young people by "just making an effort to say hello to everybody, introducing myself, and trying to find out really a bit more of their story." Diana's recognition of youth goes beyond their physical presence. She stated her greetings recognize the commonality between individuals and how can youth reflect a part of her:

> [The relationship is] exponentially open when you see somebody who reflects a portion of yourself that you don't have to see very often. And for me, like what allows me to do this work, doing this practice is just like education for myself. It's just like I centre them so I feel so horrified by the things that happen in this society,

> on this land, and I just like ask why, like where are they coming from, what is their history, what are their roots, where is my own history also.

These relationships are interpersonal but they also act as a microcosm that reflects the histories of colonization of Indigenous people in Canada. She highlights this point when she says: "I feel so horrified by the things that happen in this society, on this land." Being in relationships with Indigenous youth includes a history of the land and colonization. For Diana, the acknowledgment of this history, youth's ability to reflect parts of her, opens the relationship and encourages her to change in the process.

Seemingly small gestures, like a simple "how are you?" go a long way towards making Indigenous young people feel welcome and cared for by staff. The mistrust and dehumanization Indigenous youth face on the street makes the initial welcome ever more imperative to the positive daily experiences at the agencies. In effect, frontline staff function as the organization's hosts who are charged with the response-ability to make youth feel welcome. Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, explained that in this daily practice he tries to acknowledge as many youth as possible:

> Sometimes I don't remember all the names of all the kids, sometimes I forget their names. I'm just like, "Hey, dude. How's it going? How's your day? Cool, man. Glad you're here, nice to see you," just kind of being inviting [towards the youth].

Sometimes the initial answers to the greetings may yield negative responses. Youth workers often brace themselves for any answer because in some instances a "hello" could be met with a "fuck you" or a disclosure about suicidal thoughts, rape, drug and alcohol relapse, or about being kicked out of a foster home and sleeping on the street. These possibilities are part of the realities for Indigenous youth living on the streets in cold cities. In most instances, staff initiate building a respectful relationship with youth. Tyler noted that the initial interaction is tentative as youth and staff become comfortable with each other:

> The workers will just get comfortable at first, which means when they introduce themselves. I think it's when you're ready, when you want to accept it that you go up to them ask them [for help].

Tyler suggests the need for an established relationship before youth will ask for help. His point challenges the notion that youth walk into the organization and immediate use services. In reality, some youth may attend an organization for months without accessing services. They will explore the space, learn about the services and decide if they feel comfortable. Staff acknowledgment extends an invitation to Indigenous youth to open up and confide in them about their needs. Caring relationships take time and some never come to fruition.

Some Indigenous youth noted how they want staff to acknowledge them outside of the organizations. This point expands the reach of caring relationships beyond the confines of the organization. While Edmonton and Winnipeg are relatively large geographic cities, some Indigenous youth and frontline workers, however, find themselves living in close proximity. Many live in the same neighbourhoods or engage in the same community activities i.e. Indigenous ceremonies like round dances, or events such as CypherwildYEG, a weekly hip hop movement in Edmonton's downtown core. The majority of the staff at iHuman, SNA, and Ndinawe live close to the agency. This means that staff may see youth at the grocery store or on the street.

Some staff reported changing their routines to avoid places where youth are known to be during their personal time. This avoidance acts as a protective measure and way for staff to practice self-care (see more in the latter part of this chapter). Sierra, a frontline staff at Ndinawe shared that one afternoon, she pulled up to her house and saw a youth from Ndinawe on the sidewalk:

> I had to leave. I had to dip out. They're like "Hi, Sierra", and I couldn't get out of my car. I was like "Oh, shit! I have to go."

For many youth workers, like Sierra, seeing youth on the street is stressful because of the level of responsibility they feel to supporting them and the difficulty associated with disconnecting from those relationships. During my interview with Jay, a longtime resident in Spence neighbourhood and the North End, he commented on how he responds when he sees SNA youth in the neighbourhoods:

> I think just giving them the time of day whenever you see them, just saying, "Hey, how is it going?" you know, being nice…I'm usually walking around the neighbourhood [The North End]. My parents live in the neighbourhood, my brother lived in the neighbourhood and I take classes there. So I think walking around I see often those kids walking around too and just, "Hey, How's it going, man?" just being friendly and not looking all mean, and tired, and worn out all the time.
>
> Just being a friendly face because…everywhere you go now, seeing youth in the neighbourhood, [the youth] still associate you to Spence. If your personality is friendly and inviting then, your personality is going to reflect your workplace. And if you're happy to see them then they're more likely to be happy to come to Spence.

Jay makes two integral points. First, geographic proximity to the organization can result in the inability for staff to rest, which may affect their personal self-care. Second, youth workers become a kind of organizational ambassador even during their unpaid hours. This may mean staff end up working without pay because of the nature of these relationships. While staff acknowledgment of youth outside the organization is essential to many young people, some staff create alternative routines to ensure they also have time to take care of themselves.

Respect requires an appreciation for the voluntary nature of caring relationships. Relationships with Indigenous youth are voluntary. Youth court mandates relatively few young people, for example, to attend programing at one of these organizations. Staff must respect the voluntary nature of youth's participation (Young, 2006). Siobhan, one of YOUCAN's outreach workers, insisted that the voluntary quality of these relationships plays a key role in developing caring relationships. She is quick to tell youth she is not a social worker because of the

distinction required to build trust with many youth, in response some youth ask her, "why do you do this?" and she responds:

> I'm just a helpful person! I'm not here to tell you what to do or where to live. I'm here to support you in the choices that you're making because you need an advocate…
>
> I think having that voluntary piece means no one is obligated to be on your caseload…I've always found that when it's mandated…in the past [a youth's] probation officer said "You have to have a youth worker" – they don't care. They didn't ask for it. It's nothing.

Siobhan poignantly states that mandating youth work relationships is inherently flawed because it ignores a youth's agency to choose. Too often, Indigenous youth *are* appointed social workers in the child welfare system, court workers, lawyers, counselors, or youth workers, which leaves them with very little choice in the decision. However, the voluntary nature of the staff relationships at these agencies means Indigenous young people and staff are free to find those individuals they connect with more deeply, if they so choose. At all the organizations, youth are encouraged to build relationships with any of the staff, if they are not assigned a specific outreach worker. In the outreach teams, youth typically are assigned to one staff but have the option to change workers if the relationship is not working well. Admittedly, the outreach teams have between three and six workers. The options and availability for a new worker is limited, as the number of youth has to be spread evenly across the teams.

There are several limits to the voluntariness of these relationships. Frontline youth workers are required to be in relationships with youth as part of their formal employment duties. *With whom* they build deeper caring relationships may be voluntary but sometimes workers do not build those connections. Admittedly, frontline workers cannot build caring connections with all youth. The voluntary participation of Indigenous youth at the organizations also comes into question when we consider it in the social context and the limited resources available for youth

in each city. For those youth who live in homelessness and poverty, these organizations are among the few that provide resources to this specific population. Therefore, if young people do not attend these organizations and develop relationships with staff, it might mean their needs will go unmet. Their unmet needs for shelter, food and clothing can result in dire consequences. The voluntary nature of these relationships may also put the onus on youth for the relationships that could neglect staff's role to engage them and may also cluster many youth to a few workers.

The voluntary nature of these relationships also highlights issues of power and the youth workers roles as gatekeepers to services. The nature of Indigenous young people's lives requires them to be in these relationships with staff to get access services and supports necessary for their survival. Staff reflexivity may consider *how* and *if* they favour young people they have deeper connections with over others. Regardless of the quality of staff relationships with youth, no young person is more or less deserving of care.

Caring Relationships are Optimistic and Infused with Humour

Caring relationships with frontline workers are positive to some Indigenous youth when they are optimistic and infused with humour. Youth workers typically "hang in" during the difficult times, and "hang out" to support young people and share moments of joy, happiness and positivity (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012). During their time at the youth organization and in their relationships with workers, Indigenous youth can talk about their struggles, have fun and connect positively with others. Positive and encouraging relationships create opportunities for Indigenous young people to connect, celebrate, cry, get angry and be supported in ways they do not necessarily receive elsewhere.

Upon their arrival at the organizations, many Indigenous young people will "do the rounds" by making their way around the organization to say hello and exchange daps

(handshakes), fist-bumps, hugs and smiles with staff and their peers. At iHuman, when a youth entered the front door, you hear youth and staff scream: "Yo! Hey! What's up!" Andrea stated how she feels when she comes into iHuman:

> It feels really good. Even if you're having a shitty-ass day, you can come here and you'll hear the most random jokes or, people just say the most random shit…you kind of forget about the day and whatever…Or you can come here and talk it out with somebody, take somebody aside and there's always somebody there to hear what you have to say. Or even if you're really proud of something you really did and then you share it with people. And then they're like, "Oh, my God," like, "Yay!" It's just encouraging.

Andrea makes clear that agencies like iHuman give youth a reprieve and space to escape their daily realities. Robinson (2002) suggests youth organizations can be a "'time out' space and place in which young people can develop relations with other young people as well as staff […]" (p. 37). For many youth, support from positive staff gives them the opportunity to play and be childlike. These positive experiences are not afforded to those who have experienced trauma, abuse and violence in their homes and on the streets.

Lemma's (2010) research with young people suggests humour can be a less formal interactional style that allows young people to open up to frontline staff. In caring relationships at these organizations, staff positivity and humour was particularly important. Many youth come to the organizations to fill up on positivity so they can continue to survive in the cold cities. Some youth workers assert humour is an essential ingredient to successful and positive relationship building. Kris, a frontline staff at iHuman, shared that in his youth work practice, "I try to do a combination of like I use humour, 'cause to me that is authentic, I like to make people laugh. I like to look at the lighter side of things." Alex, a Verto staff at YOUCAN, also stated that humour can act as the beginning of a welcoming relationship:

> The other huge thing is whenever we're dealing with some tense stuff, adding a bit of humour to some things, or be able to lighten the mood…lends itself to creating a

more welcoming relationship.

Frontline workers intentionally try to make their relationships with young people as positive as possible. By doing so, staff can engage Indigenous young people to participate in the programs in constructive ways.

Schmidt (2002) suggests workers should take a generally "optimistic view of the human condition and the potential of people to work together" (p. 56-57). Staff need to believe that all youth have the potential to achieve their goals and make change in their lives (Schmidt, 2002). Lemma's (2010) research with traumatized young people and their access to mental health supports suggests that optimistic relationships with key workers can help youth maintain hope and inspire personal change. For the last three years, Dean and Mathew have worked together at YOUCAN. Dean's serious involvement in gangs led him to a lengthy jail sentence. Inside, he met Mathew, an outreach worker at the time, who supported him through that time, as he transitioned into an open custody facility, and back to school. Mathew characterized his relationship with Dean as hopeful:

> I've given him hope. And helped him understand that no matter where he's come from or the things that he's been involved with, there's the opportunity at the end of the day, if he decides to choose to take it…When I seen him last, we worked on looking at education programs at [a university in Edmonton] and stuff. He's matured to a point where I'm not saying he will never make mistakes again, but he can never say that he doesn't have the tools to move forward into a successful life. And basically, he always did have the tools. They were just a little bit dull. I've helped him sharpen those tools.

When youth's lives get increasingly difficult, youth workers remind them about the possibilities for change. Staff optimism that is grounded in reality may also be tempered with an understanding of the lack of resources available to aid Indigenous youth in overcoming systemic barriers and meet their goals (Schmidt, 2002). Indigenous youth, like Dean, have been told by teachers, social workers and the police that they are incapable, worthless, and without the

potential to achieve their goals. Optimistic relationships with staff like Mathew are infused with humour to help fuel Indigenous youth's self-confidence and provide them some reprieve from the cold of the cities.

Caring Relationships Build Trust Through Honesty

Rebecca, a 16-year-old Cree woman at SNA, noted that the relationships with staff are simple: "They're straight up. They're honest. They're truthful. You get respect." This "straight up" nature helps some Indigenous youth know if workers are being "real," meaning honest and authentic. According to Indigenous young people, trust is earned through honesty. Building trust with Indigenous youth living on and off the streets of Edmonton and Winnipeg is difficult because this population's previous experiences with social workers and government officials who have historically tried to "help" them, but have ended up hurting them instead. Mistrust of outsiders continues in Indigenous communities that are the result of intergenerational traumas of residential schools and ongoing fear of government interventions (Baskin, 2016, 2015). Indigenous young people's histories of trauma, abuse and survival on the streets and in their families often leave little reason for them to trust adults. Their experiences with previous workers have shown them that they should not trust too deeply. Brad, a 19-year-old Aboriginal man at YOUCAN, suggested that he trusts his outreach worker not because he has deep knowledge of her personally, but because she does her job well and she has kept her word to date:

> Right off the bat, when I met her I was in trouble but she brought that sense of comfort…when I expressed what I needed to her, she was there to help me out. That builds the trust. In this life trust has to be earned. Knowing somebody in that short of time and giving her my trust. I think that shows a lot. I think that's what makes your programs more different, how do I word this? You put yourselves out there so much that youth come to you when they need help.

Shortly after our peacemaking circle, Brad's worker was fired for unknown reasons. It is unclear

how this may have affected him and if he left the program. Trusting relationships take time, particularly with those young people who have been hurt in the past, have been taken from their families, have experienced death and tragic loss, or have worked with numerous workers who then leave organizations in short order to pursue new opportunities.

For some Indigenous youth, trust can begin to develop in a few days, but for others it is never fully developed. Brooklyn, a 16-year-old Cree woman at Ndinawe, described that it is difficult for her to trust workers because she recently, she lost a friend to suicide:

> I'm scared to get close to somebody because of a lot of the things that has happened like, for example, my friend [Sean], I was really close with him…He helped me out with everything…He was always there. He was here Ndinawe every day, see his face every day, [and] get to talk to him every day. After [he committed suicide], [there] is nobody going to be there that I can talk to like that here.

The fear of sudden loss is a very real concern for young people. Death and suicide are part of the daily realities of Indigenous youth living on and off the streets and their experiences at the organizations. Young people recognize these realities which makes trust feel dangerous because it comes with the possibility of being hurt. Staff need to have a lot of time and patience to build trust in relationships (Smyth, 2017). Sierra, a frontline worked at Ndinawe, explained that time and patience are limited resources in youth work:

> I think the most challenges that I face would have to be time and patience, because it does take time to build that relationship and if you don't have that time, then you're fucked. Then you're going to keep on butting heads. It's like Freddy said – it took him like four months to build some of these relationships.

Time to build these kinds of relationships are not always possible because of organizational constraints and youth's high needs. Some staff engage with upwards of 20 youth at a time. This reality depletes their capacities and the time they have to build deep trusting relationships. Time is inherently limited by the program constraints as well as funding goals that typically do not provide months for these relationships to develop. The result is staff may become targets of a

youth's anger and frustration. The trust built in these relationships can be broken because of these realities.

Staff work diligently to prove to young people that they are trustworthy through honesty. Sandy, a Verto staff at YOUCAN, noted the need for staff to recognize the vulnerability that comes with building these kinds of relationships:

> Being honest with the youth. Being genuine with them. Being authentic with them…we make sure it's a non-threatening environment. So you know, you be careful about your tone of voice, you be careful about your eye contact, you be careful about knowing that you are putting them in a vulnerable space and allowing them to feel safe in that space because lots of them have been put in vulnerable positions before and that's when they've been hurt.

Sandy highlights the vital qualities of mutuality and intentionally in building caring relationships. In order to develop trust through honesty some frontline workers avoiding prescribing what youth *should* do. Instead, staff are honest about the potential consequences of what youth may choose to do in their lives. Will, a Cree man and iSucceed staff at iHuman, put it bluntly:

> A lot of the kids know I'm real and I will tell them stuff straight. I won't sugar coat nothing. Like I tell everybody, "I'm not Willy Wonka, and I don't sugar coat fuck all." So why would I want to baby them, coddle them, when the streets are real. They'll eat you up, chew you up, and spit you out.

Indigenous young people develop a sense of ownership over their own lives and feel valued when workers treat them with honesty, even if it is as harsh as Will suggests above. Honest relationships help Indigenous youth trust staff and accept their invitation to be in caring relationships.

Scholars agree that trust is essential to caring relationships with young people (Brendtro et al., 2002; Hirsch, 2005; Schmidt, 2002; Smyth, 2017; Stewart et al. 2010; Young, 2006).

> In caring relationships, trust is built by the way in which [frontline workers] behave as well as how clients perceive the help they are given. Thus, trust is a two-way

> proposition. Moreover, it does not develop simply because we expect it. We must demonstrate consistently and dependably to our clients and patients that we are trustworthy professionals and volunteers. This means they must perceive us as being genuine with the care we give them. It also means that they trust us to act responsibly, perform our services competently, and follow through on our promises and commitments (Schmidt, 2002, p. 46).

Frontline workers extend trust to Indigenous young people first (Brendtro et al., 2002). The relationship must be symbiotic to build trust (Schmidt, 2002). Kidd et al.'s (2007), research with homeless youth explains workers must tailor their work to the degree of trust present in the relationship:

> Trust was described as something that usually takes a long time to develop, given the past betrayals and dangerous environments of many youth, and is prerequisite to honesty with the worker—allowing for better work, for the youth to be more open and "drop their shield", and the setting of realistic goals in which the youth is invested (p. 19-20).

Brendtro et al. (2002) claims that trust is earned in stages, which they refer to as: casing, limit-testing and predictability. Casing occurs in the initial encounter with workers in which youth are uncertain and need to "check out" the worker. Once workers have been sufficiently checked, young people try out the relationships by pushing boundaries to test the worker's reactions. Once the relationships are cased and tested, youth and workers can develop a secure and predictable relationship (Brendtro et al., 2002). In the next section, I expand the concept of "trust" to include staff reciprocity and listening in these relationships.

Trust is reciprocal: Frontline workers are honest about themselves. Trusting relationships are reciprocal and honest. For Indigenous young people, honesty is directly related to the staff's ability to be themselves in these relationships and share their experiences with youth. In these kinds of relationships, frontline workers demonstrate professional vulnerability that reciprocates what they ask from young people (Krueger, 2007; Murphy & Ord, 2013; Ruche y al. 2010). Green et al.'s (2013) research confirms, "young people especially valued reciprocity

in the relationship; that is, having the opportunity to 'get to know the workers'" (p. 432). For example, at all the organizations, staff shared their passions and some of their struggles with youth. Frontline workers maintain the direction of the relationship towards helping the youth to ensure the relationship does not become focused on the worker. It is a fine and delicate balance to navigate these dynamics. Staff may consider the power relationships that exist between Indigenous youth and staff as well as their professional duties. In part, the vulnerability between youth and staff is the catalyst for authentic relationships in which youth can also reciprocate care.

Frontline worker vulnerability may create tension for staff in these relationships because it seems to challenge mainstream ideals of what constitutes professionalism. Helping professionals, such as health care and social workers, are generally cautioned against getting too close and overstepping professional boundaries (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005). In youth work, Fusco (2012) suggests it is good practice for workers to "give themselves" by openning up about who they are with the young people (p. 34). Therefore the expectation for staff to reciprocate openness is contrasted by professionalism ideals, which can make it difficult for staff to know where to draw the line. Freddy, a frontline worker at Ndinawe, explained how he experiences this tension:

> People they tell us 'Oh, don't share your life story with these kids,' but if you share a little bit of what's going on for you that allows them to reach out and open up about themselves.

Andrea confirms what Freddy suggests above. In her experience, when the staff share their experiences it encourages Andrea to do the same. She said:

> They [the staff] share their experiences because everybody has their own experiences, so they show their own experiences. They tell us whatever they share. If you share something with them then they'll share something with you… You have to be willing to just get out of your comfort zone basically, they help you to be comfortable, get comfortable. Like, they're not going to force you to do anything you don't want to do. They, basically, are here to…lean on when you can't lean on

> anything else because you're out there and you're out on the streets and you're hungry and you don't have nothing.

Health scholars, Bergum and Dossetor (2005), agree candidness and bringing one's humanity into a relationship are positive traits for relational engagement with others. Jacquelyn, a Youth programs staff at SNA, shared in her practice she ethically blurs the boundary between youth and staff:

> It's been really important to me to let [the youth] learn about me and to let them into my life, and to take down that boundary. For example, a lot of the youth have met my dad, who's a really important person to me, and who has shaped who I am, and/or just seeing where I go to school, taking one of the youth to one of my classes…and letting them know who I am as well.

All of the frontline workers generally extend their relationships with Indigenous young people beyond the confines of traditional professional roles and give youth insight into their life, thoughts, and feelings to build trust. Whether it is the staff's opinion about a movie, or sharing their own history of trauma, reciprocal relationships need frontline workers to be sincere about their identities and experiences to build trust with Indigenous youth.

Staff honesty and vulnerability permits Indigenous young people to understand when a worker may be having a bad day. Sierra said, "These kids keep you real. They just call you out on your shit." Freddy explained that even if he thinks he is not showing signs, youth know when he is experiencing some difficulty in his life:

> The kids know [if] something's bugging me – you can't hide anything from these kids, man. I remember like I was kind of a little slow the other day and one of the kids came up to me and said "What's bugging you today?" I didn't think I was showing it like physically, but I guess I was and the kid was able to see right through me.

In moments like this, Indigenous young people can reciprocate some care for staff by lending their support and listening to youth workers. Frontline staff at all the organizations attempt to mirror the kind of vulnerability and trust they want from Indigenous youth. When youth workers

invite Indigenous youth into caring relationships, they must also be willing to do the same. Reciprocity and vulnerability can deepen caring relationships with Indigenous youth to ethically meet the young person's needs.

Dialogue and listening fosters trust with Indigenous youth. Youth work scholars conclude that the most powerful way to care is *to listen* (Bilson, 2007; Krueger, 2007; Spencer et al., 2004). Listening involves vulnerability and openness from both participants. In this openness is where trust and respect reside (Spencer et al., 2004). Krueger (2007) suggests that in youth work, listening allows, "the worker to gain a thorough understanding of [youth's] needs and how best to work with them" (p. 4). The concept of "listening" figures prominently in caring relationships with youth. Dean, who I introduced earlier in this chapter, suggested that he knows Mathew cares about him because he can be open and feels heard:

> [The relationship with Mathew] makes me feel like I can bring up something. That I can talk to them about stuff. It just makes me feel like I can speak what I need to be said. It just makes it easier because you know that they will listen to you when you want to say something.

Youth workers agreed listening communicates care in these relationships. Alex, a frontline worker at YOUCAN, claimed listening to youth lends to building a sense of belonging:

> Sitting down and actually listening to people and trying to understand them and their background is huge piece in terms in feeling like you've been heard and you belong somewhere.

Indigenous young people need staff to listen as their voices often go unheard. The connection that can result also challenge young peoples' experiences in the criminal justice system, in child welfare, and in schools where adults often adopt a top-down approaches that silence youth in relationships.

Listening is vital because it helps enable the speaker to discover what they need to say (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005). In relationships with Indigenous youth, frontline workers are

typically the listeners. Relationships are possible when they are dialogical (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005).

> Dialogical conversation involves give and take, back and forth, being strong and being vulnerable, listening to stories of pain and staying in pain, and confronting death and staying with the dying (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005, p. 128).

Relationships require both parties to reveal one's self to others and to be able to accept others' revelations (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005, p. 129). For Bergum and Dossetor (2005), these revelations are not opportunities to talk about oneself. Listeners have a responsibility to "prune the desire to talk too much" (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005, p. 131). Rather, revelations open the possibilities of a deeper understanding of the other person in a conversation (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005, p. 129). In conversations the listener is as important as the speaker. Listening includes more than simply hearing the youth's words. Bergum and Dossetor (2005) suggest it also requires:

> Hearing the question behind the question, the fear behind the bravado, the insecurity behind the strength, and, perhaps most significantly, the courage behind the timidity (p. 130-1).

Listening is part of an active process of building relationships and responding to the needs of Indigenous youth. Jay, an *Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw* outreach worker at SNA, added a component of complexity to understand listening in the context of youth work practices. He pointed out it is often not what Indigenous youth *say* verbally, but is what they *do not say* that is most important. It is up to workers to delve into the meanings of youth's verbal and non-verbal communication (Ruch et al. 2010). Jay explained that staff need to pay close attention to how youth might communicate in other ways:

> Listening to what they're not telling us. Listening to the way their bodies are speaking to us, too, when they're around, and just trying to be as non-judgmental as we can.

Staff open themselves up to hearing the messages that Indigenous young people share in a variety of ways, including in their body language and in their art. Listening to Indigenous young people upholds young people's agency, voice, and their knowledge about their own lives (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009). To hear the voices of Indigenous youth, organizations adopt a variety of platforms in programs and in their interpersonal relationships such as talking, sharing or peacemaking circles at iHuman, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN or youth councils at iHuman, SNA, and Ndinawe.

By listening to youth, staff help create opportunities to hear about their dangerous and violent situations and take action in response. Linda, a Youth program staff at SNA stated, "It's one thing to ask questions, but it's another thing to actually follow-up with them." Linda infers that the "follow-up" is the response to what you say both in the moment of the dialogue as well as other necessary responses. During the iHuman staff peacemaking circle, Jasmine, *Anishinaabe kwe* frontline manager, shared that she recently took Dawn, an iHuman youth, to her friend's wake on a nearby reserve. Dawn's friend committed suicide earlier that month. In these moments of support, Jasmine described she encourages young people to open up and is fully aware that it will increase the demands on her time and energy:

> You don't want to hear about a kid committing suicide. You don't want to hear [it]. Because in a lot of capacities in this field that means that you have to put in more work, because you have to give that [youth] more attention and that kid needs love which, in a lot of ways in this field, is not an acceptable practice with young people.

Creating a platform for youth to speak and be heard often results in difficult conversations, uncovers pain, and opens opportunities to build deep emotional connections. Jasmine described this as "love." Professional boundaries, according to Jasmine, can hinder workers from responding with care, respect and reciprocity:

> A lot of agencies there's rules around hugging and how to do all that kind of stuff, so

> expressions of love are limited especially within this Western dynamic. So [the youth] was just like talking and I was looking at her…it's so simple. I was just like this kid just wants to be treated like a human being, she doesn't want me to be fake or phony and I don't need to sugar-coat this situation because it's sad, it's really sad. And she's grieving and she needs me to listen to her and if she wants to talk about the dark parts of her life, let's go there.

Opportunities for workers to care emerge when young people are listened to and when frontline workers extend empathy towards them. It requires staff to wade through youth's pain and trauma and avoid the tendency for staff to want to "fix" and "save" young people. Being with Indigenous youth in caring relationships during these times are most meaningful to them.

Until this point, this chapter has explored the meanings of respect, optimism and humour and trust in caring relationships with Indigenous youth. Caring relationships are necessary to Indigenous youths' survival in cold cities and to help to meet their need for connection. Throughout this analysis, I pointed out various organizational and staff limits. In what follows, I highlight four main limitations of these caring relationships: conflict and boundaries, frontline worker self-care, high staff turnover, and youth leaving the organization because of the organizational age limits, their transient lifestyles, or their sudden death.

The Limits of Caring Relationships between Indigenous Youth and Frontline Staff

Conflict and Boundaries

Caring relationships with Indigenous youth require healthy boundaries and the recognition that conflict arises between frontline staff and Indigenous youth as new relationships form. Few scholars address boundaries and conflict in these relationships, perhaps because it is understood negatively rather than as an essential part of healthy relationship formations (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004; Smyth, 2017). Conflict and boundary setting is a part of building relationships (Smyth, 2017). At the youth organizations, staff generally agreed that conflict was necessary if it could be dealt with in a positive manner. However, many workers felt ill equipped

to manage their own conflict with youth.

Personal boundaries are a key component of caring and respectful relationships. Kiley, a 16-year-old Ojibwe woman at Ndinawe, explained that it is important for frontline workers to recognize her personal boundaries:

> I think Sierra already knows my boundaries. Because I kind of have like a short temper. She really just knows how to talk to me. But I guess me and Sierra kind of grew up the same way, like not well off…I think she knows just how to react to situations in a good way, and she knows when to walk away, and she knows when to give you space.

In addition, frontline workers also confirmed the importance of knowing youths' boundaries as well as setting their own. Carly, an outreach worker at SNA, stated that she recognizes the inherent challenges of doing so: "I think that setting boundaries with the kids can be really challenging, but it's also completely necessary." Overall, frontline workers spoke more about the youth's limits, than their own. Most workers are keen to establish what they referred to as "good" and "healthy" boundaries with youth to help them identify and assert their own boundaries.

As Indigenous youth and staff build relationships, conflict arises when youth test the boundaries of the relationship. This kind of behaviour is called "limit-testing" when young people try out interactions with workers (Brendtro et al. 2002, p. 79). Brett, a frontline Registered Social Worker at iHuman, commented that as youth get more confortable with workers, they increasingly challenge them as part of establishing boundaries and trust:

> They would call my phone and they would say "Brett, I need you to pick me up." I'm like "I can't do this." "I need you to buy me food too, I'm really hungry." I'm like "No, I can't do this." And then they're like "Oh, you're really useless." And then it got to the point where I knew they were just trying to take advantage of the situation and for me to set that boundary and say "You know what, I can't do this." So it's a matter of saying "no" when I have to say "no" and when I know I don't have the capacity to help them.

Setting and testing boundaries, as Brett suggests, can result from a lack of resources available to young people that meet their needs. Staff may end up spending their own money to, for example, buy youth food. This example points to a greater organizational need for resources to support Indigenous youth such as safe transit to appointments and their basic need for food.

Brett's example infers how he manages his time effectively meet as many of the needs of the youth on his caseload as possible and inevitably says "no" to many of their requests due to personal and organizational limits. As a result, staff are often on the receiving end of young people's negative reactions when their needs go unmet. For example, as Brett explained above, some youth will then call him "really useless." Some staff, though few and far between, have experienced more intense verbal and physical assaults by youth. While workers learn not to take these comments personally, the limits of these relationships often remain at the individual level rather than connect to greater lack of organizational resources in these relationships.

Many Indigenous youth reported that they have never experienced conflict at the organization or with a worker. Admittedly, some young people may have not felt comfortable disclosing conflict in circles with their peers or in the interviews with me. A few youth noted that potential conflict could break the trust in a relationship with staff. In contrast to the youth perspectives, many frontline staff explained conflict is common and necessary, if dealt with positively, to strengthen relationships with young people. For some workers, conflict can increase respect and trust if dealt with successfully. Wren, an outreach worker at YOUCAN, described conflict with Indigenous young people as an opportunity to build perspective between both parties:

> I can't say it's always good to have conflict, but it's good to have some conflict in a relationship especially with these youth since they will not see things from the same perspective than what I would see things. I don't mean that a youth worker should create conflict in any way, but having something where you disagree with your

> youth, that's not something that's bad. That can be extremely positive. If you disagree with something, it's because you see something [differently].

Wren qualified the kind of conflict that can result from disagreements from conflict that can result in violence or harm to others. At iHuman, Jasmine, *Anishinaabe kwe* frontline manager, explained conflict can be part of a healthy relationship:

> I think it's a really healthy part of a relationship, but I think a lot of people shy away from that, like they don't want to necessarily explore that or work through that. I think [there's] apprehension and people maybe just don't have enough practice skills to be able to do that comfortably.

The opportunity in conflict lies in *how* conflict is dealt with. Rather than conceptualizing it as inherently 'positive' or 'negative,' conflict can help establish boundaries and encourage staff and youth to open up about their feelings and emotions. For Indigenous youth, conflict may be a way to protect themselves from relational connections with staff.

Throughout my fieldwork, Indigenous youth and frontline staff identified two main forms of conflict: direct and indirect. Direct conflict is when both parties know there is a conflict and it addressed it in some way. Indirect conflict occurs when only one party is aware of it and it is rarely dealt with directly. Indirect conflict is far more common. Many frontline workers admit that they experience indirect conflict with Indigenous youth on a daily basis and they do not address it. Some staff fear that the youth will understand the conflict as a judgment and stop working with them. Others admit there is little time to deal with conflict appropriately and they are not trained to so. At YOUCAN, an organization founded on teaching youth conflict mediation, Sandy explained how often she experience conflict with young people:

> Almost everyday! But we don't talk about it in terms of conflict resolution. In terms of, this kid is exhibiting these annoying behaviours, and it's creating conflict but we never use that terminology. It's really interesting because we deliberately teach it. Conflict resolution is part of our curriculum, but we don't actively use those techniques in our debrief sessions or when we engage with this particular youth. It's sometimes we don't practice what we preach but we expect them to.

She continued with a specific example of a conflict she experienced with a youth:

> Like we've got a really difficult kid right now, and I wanna strangle him everyday because he's really annoying. But I'm not going to! But we don't talk about that as a conflict, but it is! He's using behaviours that piss me, and every other person on the team off. But we don't say, "Hey! We've got a conflict! This is a conflicting values thing, or a needs thing! How are we gonna address that."
>
> In the moment, it's "You're annoying! If you don't wanna be here then go home!" So I think sometimes maybe that's a shortcoming is we are all on the conflict bandwagon but I don't know how much we actually use it when we're developing relationships with each other and the youth.

Sandy suggests that instead of overtly addressing conflict, workers adopt their own strategies for coping such as complaining to their colleagues or significant others. Sandy admitted that staff are far better at managing conflict between youth when she elaborated on YOUCAN's organizational response:

> We would throw them in a circle right away! Time for a conflict resolution circle! These two youth aren't getting along. We've done that! Let's have a circle but we don't do that…Maybe they have, not since I've been here.

The uncomfortable nature of conflict between workers and youth is complicated by power dynamics that may result in a relationship breakdown, turning youth away or banning them from the agency. Staff attempt to deal with their anger, annoyances and interpersonal issues with youth on their own in an effort to maintain trust within these relationships. This approach, however, seems contradictory to how youth and staff understand trust and its inherent tie to honesty.

Frontline staff and youth require more guidance, support and training to appropriately deal with interpersonal conflict. Organizations could benefit from implementing a conflict management strategy in which Indigenous youth and staff can voice their concerns to frontline managers, directors or the executive director. Since my original fieldwork, SNA implemented a

conflict mediation strategy for their youth programs. More research could be done to investigate how conflict is addressed and these qualitative experiences.

Youth Worker's Self Care

> [Relationships with Indigenous youth are] not something you clock in to and clock out from. You need to be that person all the time and in a way, you're getting paid to be yourself. You're honestly just never off the clock. - Crystal, frontline manager, Spence Neighbourhood Association

Crystal describes how the emphasis on relationship building in youth work practice creates a constant expectations for staff to be themselves and to connect with youth in meaningful ways. In turn, these expectations can make staff feel as though it is impossible to disconnect from these relationships. Frontline staff spoke about the pressure they felt from the organizational culture and specific managers to be in relationships with Indigenous youth twenty-four-hours-a-day. Many staff noted that they answer calls from youth, attend the organizations and meet youth during their off time. Throughout my research, it became clear from the first peacemaking circle at YOUCAN that the organizational and youth work field's emphasis on relationship-based practice places unrealistic expectations on staff. All frontline staff admitted that they lack good personal self-care. Some admitted they turn to drugs and alcohol to cope. Therefore, organizational supports are required to stay healthy in this field. Few resources are available for physical and mental health care at the organizations. Previous research on non-profit work in Canada confirms working with marginalized populations is difficult and demands that staff work long hours for low pay and endure exposure to violence and disease (Baines, 2004; Holness et al., 2004; Kosny & Eakin, 2008). Many frontline workers expressed the thought of having to 'leave work at work' made them feel uneasy and anxious because of the sense of responsibility they develop towards youth. The everyday realities for Indigenous youth, the employment duties that mandate being in meaningful relationships and the

sense of responsibility for youth, have profound emotional, physical, mental and spiritual effects on staff.

For many staff, the organizational ethos defines what it means to be a 'good worker.' It is someone who treats their work as 'more than a job' (Smyth, 2017) in an effort to give, what Karabanow (1999) describes, as the 'gift of self' to the youth. While all the staff note their passions for working with youth, this kind of organizational culture expects staff to work overtime without pay, be emotionally and physically available to youth and to never forget "workers are 'there to serve the kids'" (Karabanow, 1999, p. 346). Without taking into account the organizational and personal limits of these relationships, these expectations contribute to a social service field-wide problem with institutional care. Staff self-care does not usually happen in these contexts (Tronto, 2010).

Self-care in youth work is paramount but under-researched. The lack of self-care can drastically alter worker's health and affect the nature of their relationships with Indigenous young people. Brett, a Registered Social Worker at iHuman pointed out the tension he feels that is inherent to the notion of self-care in this field:

> [Self-care] is one of the hardest things to do. I've had this conversation with other colleagues here and also with close friends of mine; they say, "If you can't look after yourself, how can you be any use to those you work with?"

The self-care tension has two essential components that operate in direct opposition: staff either take care of oneself *or* take care of others. The 'either or' conception individualizes self-care and makes it another task on the already long list of staff responsibilities. Brett admitted, like all of the youth workers, the reason for taking care of oneself *is* to take care of others. It is never to take care of one's self *for yourself*. Many workers identified feeling selfishness or a sense of

failure when they recognize their need to take care of themselves. Stephanie, a Verto staff at YOUCAN, commented on the difficulties she faces in an effort to take good care of herself:

> We're human. Whether it's our own mental health, leave your work at work; it's so easy to say all that stuff. It's crap! You can't leave work at work. It's all part of you. So that's hard to deal with and that's a limit too and being able to process the stuff we hear everyday cause it's crazy shit that we always hear. We need to deal with it. Sometimes we're really good at that and sometimes we're really not good at that. Having the supports whether it's from smaller team or the larger organization is really important to help move through some of those barriers and struggles.

Stephanie infers that her inability to detach herself from relationships with Indigenous young people and her sense of responsibility to her colleagues prevents her from taking care of herself. She continued:

> Often we don't put ourselves first cause we put other people first…. [S]omething I'm working on is forcing myself to take care of myself. I'd way rather take care of somebody else but I need to go to the doctor! I need to go to the dentist. [I] actually [have to] force myself to do those things because I feel like I don't have the time. I'm gonna let my team down. All of these things. I've been sick for a month now.
>
> I'm not very useful when I'm sick so I have to force myself because I'd rather put it off. So sometimes we have to force those things and usually it's for ourselves because we're so accepting and understanding of others and not always for ourselves. I think we do have a lot of pressure on us that we need to step up in a lot of different ways not only do our job, but then support other people to do their job, and then donate to [the organization], and then help out volunteering, and then donate something else, and get all of our friends and family to donate.

The expectation to leave relationships 'at work' stems from historical youth work and social work practices imposed by the professionalization of care work (Smyth, 2017). Stephanie highlights the administrative and organizational demands present in her day-to-day duties detract her from relationships with young people and add to her stress. Some frontline staff admitted that they turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with work stress and the effects of witnessing the realities of Indigenous youth.

Staff struggles for good self-care point to a plethora of organizational gaps. First, more research may be done on the gendered nature and expectations of care at the organizations. Second, while all of the executive directors tout the importance of staff self-care, it seems as though most staff generally feel a lack of support from leadership. This may be indicative of two main issues: 1) a lack of available health resources and benefits, and 2) limited numbers of staff who are available to attend to, and be in relationships with youth in the way that the job requires. My research suggests staff interpersonal relationships with Indigenous youth require more attention organizationally, individually and in scholarship. More attention to staff self-care may help curb the high staff turnover I discuss in the next section.

Frontline Staff Turnover

High turn over rates in frontline workers impose limits on the relationships between Indigenous youth and staff. When workers leave their positions it can be as devastating as a death or loss that may require bereavement (Ruch et al., 2010). Since my original fieldwork in 2015, 25 of the 27 frontline staff left their positions across all four organizations. In Canada, high staff turnover is common in nonprofit organizations (HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector, 2013). High staff turnover rates calls attention to staff self-care. It also highlights that, while there is an emphasis on relationships with youth, they are relatively short-lived. Additionally, there is a significant focus on being in relationships at the onset of youth's engagement at the agencies, but the attention to these relationships dissipates when staff leave. None of the organizations have a staff exit strategy to help transition Indigenous youth to new staff or for them to be able to end relationships positively.

I asked Nicole, a 19-year-old *Mi'kmaq* and Ojibwe woman at YOUCAN, how she felt when Becky, her main worker at YOUCAN, left the organization a few months earlier. She

noted unequivocally that she could easily find Becky, if she wanted to, at her new place of employment:

> I mean people gotta move on sometime. It's hard but you know that's ok. I can go find Becky somewhere's at her new workplace. I've found old workers at their new workplace.

Nicole was not exaggerating. When I left my position at YOUCAN to start my fieldwork and then took on a new role at iHuman, Nicole followed me. It is clear through this example that relationships do not necessarily end when youth workers leave organizations. Youth often follow workers to their new place of employment and with social media youth find it easy to stay in contact. Many staff use social media to communicate with young people for work through a specific work profile (Smyth, 2017). When workers leave they simply add youth to their personal accounts or youth do the same. Importantly, organizations may consider how to implement social media policies to address potential harm in these situations.

During my time at iHuman, Jasmine, *Anishinaabe kwe* frontline manager, decided to leave her position. She was the only one, to my knowledge, who methodically planned *when* and *how* she would prepare the youth and slowly transition out of the organization. She developed her own exit strategy to show Indigenous youth that relationships can change positively. Jasmine gave the youth two months notice of her departure. She also made sure to tell as many youth as she could about it face-to-face. During her final week, Jasmine held a feast and ceremony for the youth. Despite her best efforts, she experienced a lot of anger from some youth because they were hurt that she was leaving. Others stopped coming to the organization completely once Jasmine left. The negative experiences some youth have when staff leave points to the need for organizational staff exit strategies. This may help curb the potential fallout from these relationships, help Indigenous youth better deal with the changing nature of these relationships

and prepare them to leave the organization as well. More research could be done on the relationship between staff self-care and staff turnover at these organizations, and how staff departures may affect Indigenous youth and the organizational culture in youth work.

Youth Leaving Organizations: Aging out, Transient Lifestyles, and Death

In addition to the staff, Indigenous youth also leave organizations. Organizational mandates, which define "youth" limits their engagement those individuals between 12-24 years and youth's transient lifestyles, can take youth away from the organizations suddenly. These realities limit the relationships between Indigenous youth and staff. Some youth only attend a few times while other youth remain at the organizations for years. The organizational mandates and funding restrictions require Indigenous youth to "age out" of most youth organizations at 25. Aging out from agencies mirrors similar concerns in the child welfare system when young people still need supports but as a result of their age they no longer have access (Nichols, 2013; Smyth, 2017).

Aging out is difficult particularly for youth who build caring relationships with staff and have developed a sense of welcome and belonging at an organization as their "community," "family," or "home." While some Indigenous youth do not build significant relationships at the organizations, others grow up in them. Similar to the lack of staff exit strategies, youth aging-out is not met with the same amount of concern as establishing relationships at the onset of youth's involvement at the organization. Many Indigenous youth age out with little preparation for their departure. Catherine, iHuman's Executive Director, explained the challenges of building a "family" with young people:

> [Family]'s an ideal. It might be a little distorted, there's some down side to I think probably any youth serving agency that starts to have that energy about it and that sense that "Oh it's a family" because then…youth will have trouble leaving that. You become attached to that, you don't see that it's a stepping-stone. They become

> rooted. And that's why having youth age out – is becoming more a concern [that] they do that in a healthy way, they know that it's coming, there's other things in the community that we can connect them too.

Without proper preparation and encouragement some Indigenous youth may not leave organizations and "the family" positively. In 2017, Mamutse (2017) conducted research on how iHuman youth experienced aging out. Understandably, many Indigenous youth feel resentment, hurt, and abandoned by the organization and the staff (Mamutse, 2017). Many youth in this research explained that they were unaware of this requirement and felt ill prepared to meet their continuing needs without iHuman's support (Mamutse, 2017). iHuman is now the process of implementing a transition program to help youth age out with more supports. More research may be done to investigate how Indigenous youth exit organizations, where they go next to meet their needs in order to more fully support their transition out of the agency. In both cities, there seems to be a need for new organizations to fill gaps in services with those who age out but are still in need of programs and supports.

Youth leave the organizations more frequently than staff. Some youth choose to leave while others die during their time at the organizations. Part of the harsh realities of youth work with Indigenous young people is that some youth do not make it to their 25th birthday. Some reasons for this include suicide, murder and illness, while others may end up serving long-term jail sentences. All of these situations are significant losses that require attention for the staff and other youth who remain. During my fieldwork, an iHuman youth and Will passed away suddenly, a staff at Ndinawe committed suicide, and several young people also took their own lives. Staff and youth need to be supported, especially when a youth or staff dies unexpectedly. Future research could consider how organizations can bets staff and Indigenous youth through their grief.

Conclusion

Steeped in Canada's history of colonialism that has dehumanized Indigenous peoples and left the needs of Indigenous youth unmet, Indigenous youth and frontline staff identify the need for respect and a call to "treat us like human beings." Caring relationships are respectful relationships. Care for Indigenous youth is practiced in interpersonal relationships with frontline staff. Caring relationships are the fourth and final element of creating "warm places" with Indigenous youth at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN. In this chapter, I analyzed the nuances of the elusive qualities of respect, optimism and humour, and trust through honesty in caring relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline workers at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe and YOUCAN.

To respect Indigenous young people is to acknowledge them as human beings and to respond to their needs. Respect is the overarching value in these relationships that communicates care for Indigenous youth. I expanded the notion of respect to include acceptance, non-judgment, acknowledgement both in and out of the organizations and an appreciation the voluntary nature of these relationships. The voluntariness of these relationships is relative in this context as there are few resources for Indigenous youth in these cities. Without these relationships, Indigenous youth's needs would continue to be unmet. Caring relationships at youth-serving organizations are imbued with power dynamics that require attention organizationally and in scholarship. While staff and Indigenous youth spoke about their relationships as more egalitarian than those they have in other institutions like child welfare, power dynamics and gendered relationships that may be addressed in caring relationships to ensure Indigenous youth are safe and continue to get access to the programs, resources and opportunities that are offered at the organizations.

Optimism and humour figure prominently in the positive experiences of Indigenous

youth and staff at these agencies. Many Indigenous youth noted that organizations and staff provide them with jolts of positive energy and "good vibes" that fill them up so they can return to the cold city. Last, Indigenous youth and frontline workers build trust through honest relationships at the organizations. This is particularly difficult for Indigenous youth, especially those with a history of violence and trauma, a fear of losing relationships and a mistrust of institutional workers who were unable to meet their needs in the past. Trust requires frontline workers to be honest about who they are and engage in the dialogue and listen to Indigenous youth. Caring relationships with Indigenous youth are mutual and reciprocal. They allow Indigenous youth agency in the relationships and the opportunity to care about the frontline staff in return. Being in caring relationships with Indigenous youth allows them to be seen, valued and to participate in the co-creation of warm places and to know they are deserving of care.

Caring relationships at youth-serving organizations are not a panacea. Rather they are inherently limited by organizational and personal capacities. I explained the four main limitations of these relationships that emerged from my research: conflict and boundaries, staff self care, high staff turn over, youth leaving organizations due to their transient lifestyles or death. These limits help caution against the romanticization of these relationships and keep them firmly planted in context. By doing so, I would advocate for increased resources to these non-profits so they can continue to build caring relationships with Indigenous youth. Indigenous youth and frontline staff paint relatively positive understandings of caring relationships but this research also reveals the tensions that arise in relationships through conflict and boundary setting. Staff admit they require increased support and training in order to practice their own boundary formations and resolve conflict with Indigenous youth positively. Organizations may consider developing a conflict resolution strategy for staff and Indigenous youth specifically to

ensure young people can voice their concerns and help curb the potential for them to leave organizations if there is conflict.

Frontline staff across all of these organizations suggested self-care is the *most important* and *most neglected* aspect of their job. Many staff struggle to take good care of themselves and feel unsupported by the organizational culture and managers. Organizational management may consider how to foster a culture of self-care among workers. This research also points to the need for government funders to allocate funds to organizations in order to better resource staff with increased benefits. High staff turnover at these organizations may be linked to a lack of self-care and to the difficulties associated with this field such as limited pay and long work hours. Since my fieldwork, 25 of the 27 staff left their positions for reasons that remain mostly unknown. Youth work with Indigenous on frontline staff requires more attention in scholarship and at the organizations so staff can be better supported. Staff self-care and high staff turnover challenges the emphasis on relationships with youth highlighted by staff and Indigenous youth. It suggests there are many difficulties and a lack of resources to build sustainable caring relationships because of the demands of the job and the organizational limits. Like frontline staff, Indigenous youth also leave organizations and the relationships when they have to "age out" or when they move away or unfortunately pass away suddenly. It is unclear but worthy of future research to consider the reasons why Indigenous youth leave and where they get support, if at all. Moreover, scholars may also consider the effects on the frontline staff and Indigenous youth who remain at the organizations when youth and staff leave or pass away. In both cities, organizations need an "age out" process to support youth who still require programs and resources and also highlights the opportunity for new organizations may develop to fill these gaps.

Conclusion - Warm places in Cold Cities: A Relational Youth Work Practice With Indigenous Youth

[First Verse – Simplicity]
Now the heart of the city so cold it's frozen shut with all that inner hate and shit
My family been fucking dying and people are stressing me about relationships?
But the days we live in and mind state
I'm able to differentiate the men from immortals no medicine portion could better the source of the defending yourself from lyrical torture, […]
I'm opposite of those talking shit
I was taught to lie and taught to give my soul with every bar I spit
Showing common sense while I'm walking this path of mine,
Respecting cultures as I practice mine,
giving back the mind and eyes to staying humble and keeping satisfied.

[Hook – 3Knox]
I've been drowning, taken by these city lights
I've been dreaming, sure that I am gonna fly
These concrete walls can't hold me.

[Second Verse – NMS-1]
This place will eat you alive when the nightfall comes, They ride on the side I'm from
No time to hide when death rolls by, nobody's surviving this outcome.
How come they hate on a Native like me? These streets done ate every Native like me,
but still they wait on their knees with a silver plate for the coming of another like me.
This life gonna take everyone you love, this world's gonna break whoever you was,
Empty bottles on my conscience show where I just couldn't keep up,
but I got my eyes on my life and I'm focused now, Kohkom be damned if they hold me down,
"This world's for the strong" oh boy you wrong, hold your breath, Ima show you now:
Years of assimilation ain't amounted to peace,
how many Gestapo clowns can you count on these streets?
Our familia trees felled by the mounted police,
but when they took the Bears' claws they ain't account for the teeth.
Of course the strong lead but look out for the weak.
When the Sun's dipping down you'd better watch what you speak.
What you want around here? Don't you come around here,
as long as the ghosts of our people still run around here.
- Adrian Shirt, *nêhiyawak,* 21, Symplicity and Dylan McCarthy-Daniels, *nêhiyawak,* 21, NMS1, City Walls (2016) with Enoch Attey (3Knox).

Similar to Dylan's rap "Looking for Peace" in the introduction, Adrian's life in *City Walls* is marked by death and violence, which leaves him feeling unworthy, frustrated, desperate and defeated. He says that these experiences leave "the heart of the city so cold it's frozen shut

with all that inner hate and shit." Adrian use of the metaphor of the cold city suggests that his heart, like the heart of the city, is closed. As youth navigate their lives in these cold cities, they feel the brunt of the cold and ask questions, like Dylan does in the second verse, "How come they hate on a Native like me? These streets done ate every Native like me." Adrian and Dylan centralize histories of colonialism as part of their everyday existence in the city. Dylan puts it bluntly when he says: "years of assimilation ain't amounted to peace… our familia trees felled by the mounted police… but when they took the Bears' claws they ain't account for the teeth. Of course the strong lead but look out for the weak."

In Edmonton and Winnipeg many Indigenous youth are shackled by "complex racialized and spatially concentrated poverty" (Silver, 2016, 2015, 2006). Indigenous youth's lives and the choices they make are set within the broader history of Canada's colonial history and the continuing effects of residential schools, high rates of child welfare involvement, social exclusion, isolation, violence, loneliness, over-policing, poverty and a lack of access to housing and other necessary supports (Baskin, 2013, 2007; Blackstock 2011, Blackstock et al., 2004; Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; Brown et al., 2007; Hogeveen & Minaker, 2016; MacLaurin & Worthington, 2012; Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009; Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Alberta, 2016; Patrick, 2014; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013; Worthington & MacLaurin, 2013). These realities are not the result of personal failings (Silver, 2006), but are symptomatic of systemic marginalization and trauma. This leaves Indigenous youth with unmet physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs.

Yet, City Walls' chorus, like the lives of Indigenous youth, is realistic and hopeful. It highlights the stark realities of Indigenous youth in these cold cities. In an effort to escape the cold of the cities and the significant challenges Indigenous youth living *on* and *off* the streets

face, some young people find temporary reprieve and warmth at iHuman, Spence Neighbourhood Association, Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad and YOUCAN Youth Services. These organizations help many Indigenous youth achieve their dreams, recognize their gifts, develop their skills and set them up to meet their potential. In cold cities, youth organizations are not panaceas. Funding cuts and limited project-based funding dampen their efforts to meet the needs of this population (Anheier, 2009; Curtis, 2005; Hall & Banting, 2000; Hall & Reed, 1998; Lohmann, 1988; McBride, 2005; Scott, 2003; Shields & Evans, 1998; Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

Indigenous young people beg to be *seen* differently in research, at organizations and in their respective cities. These calls point to the need for a different kind of relationships *with* Indigenous youth. We need to listen to them, respect their Indigeneity and youthfulness, and value their knowledge and agency. By centring the voices of Indigenous youth methodologically, this research captures the meaning of an ethic of care in this context and the limits to meet the needs of Indigenous youth in these cities. These agencies do not exist in a vacuum. With limited resource funding, finite staff capabilities and the serious and increasing needs of Indigenous youth in these cities, iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN struggle to creatively meet the needs of Indigenous *with* care. This thesis explored how the organizational youth work practices and daily realities create "warm places" through a relational youth work practice with Indigenous youth at a time of cultural renewal. Warm places are comprised of four relational and interconnected elements: 1) an understanding of, and attention to, young people's Indigeneity and their youthfulness, 2) a physical space is transformed into meaningful places with Indigenous youth, 3) opportunities, programs, and resources that help them to meet their needs, and 4) respectful, optimistic, and trusting interpersonal relationships with staff. Youth work with Indigenous youth, steeped in relational philosophies and practices, is imperative to their survival.

I suggest equating all of these aspects of youth work practices with Indigenous youth equally. By doing so, it culminates into a relational youth work practice that creates temporary places of reprieve from the cold of the city, welcomes Indigenous youth and creates a sense of belonging. Indigenous youth's experiences at the organizations operate in direct contrast to their experience living on and off the streets in Edmonton and Winnipeg.

Like previous youth work scholarship by Young (2006) suggests, Indigenous youth and frontline staff confirm how interpersonal relationships are at the heart of successful youth work practices. This qualitative research, however, extends the meanings of "relationships" in this context to highlight the need for additional forms of interaction when working with Indigenous youth. First, young peoples' Indigeneity and youthfulness make them a distinct population who have experienced the effects of colonialism and trauma. By centralizing youth's Indigeneity, youth organizations and staff may consider how their unique experience affect how they understand their identities and their specific needs. Second, the organizations' physical spaces are transformed into meaningful places for Indigenous youth when they contribute to the aesthetic design through art and when the organization positively reflects their youthful Indigeneity. Third, the opportunities, programs, and resources at the organizations support Indigenous youth by directly meeting their mental and physical needs for food, shelter, education and employment support, outreach services, and creativity. Fourth, caring relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline staff are built through respect, optimism, humour and trust. Art figured prominently as a way to build relationships, honour Indigenous cultures and young people's youthfulness, and engage them creatively in the process of co-creating creating caring places.

This thesis adds to the rather limited literature on how Indigenous youth living in homelessness, poverty, and spiritual homelessness meet their needs in Edmonton and Winnipeg. It also fills gaps in youth homelessness scholarship by bringing youth identity scholarship, youth homelessness programs and youth work scholarship together with Indigeneity scholarship and methodologies. By doing so, I have revealed the multiple and layered relationships and responses offered at iHuman, SNA, Ndinawe, and YOUCAN, and their meaningfulness for Indigenous youth and to youth work practices more broadly.

By changing our research and caring relationships with Indigenous youth, we can *see* them differently. By seeing them differently, we can move beyond helping them *survive* in cold cities. Instead, by co-creating warm places that value their voices and identities as young Indigenous people we can fashion warmer cities and a warmer world *with* them.

Final Research Suggestions

Academic Research

1. Qualitative researchers might consider building on TallBear's (2014) research to "stand with" Indigenous youth and conduct research as a "relationship-building process," and an "opportunity for conversation and sharing knowledge, not simply data gathering" (TallBear, 2014, p. 2).
2. Opportunities exist for qualitative researcher to creatively engage Indigenous youths' voices in multiple ways including, but not limited to their physical participation and artist contributions (i.e. visual art, rhythm and poetry)
3. Areas of future scholarship may include the following:
    a. The cultural meanings of sharing circles and the possibilities they hold to build relationships between Indigenous youth, staff, their peers, and the researcher.
    b. Chapter 3 highlights the role of art with Indigenous youth to transform spaces into meaningful places. Future research may focus on the experiences of Indigenous youth in the process of creating art and the importance of positively reflecting their Indigeneity and youthfulness in organizational and public spaces.
    c. The spiritual needs and responses to Indigenous youth at youth-serving organizations.
    d. Extend chapter 5's analysis of the characteristics of respect, optimism, humour, and trust in relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline staff.

Youth Organizations and Frontline Staff

1. SNA and Ndinawe provide important responses to the needs of Indigenous youth through their 24-hour safe space for youth. Other cities and organizations may consider this model as another option to meet youth's immediate needs, especially in the winter months...
2. There is room in both cities for new organizations to emerge and fill the gap in resources and work with "aged-out" Indigenous youth in the community.

Indigenous youth opportunities, programs, and supports.

1. Increased staff training on the histories and lasting effects of colonialism and residential schools could enhance a complex and contextualized understanding of Indigeneity and the barriers Indigenous youth face to claim their Indigeneity. This suggestion aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation's (2015) call to action 1.3 that calls for governments to reduce the number of Indigenous youth in care by training social workers about the histories and impacts of residential schools (p. 140).
    a. Intentionally encouraging staff learning as part of the everyday dialogue and practices may also lend to increased knowledge sharing among peers and with youth.
2. Opportunities to build staff knowledge and youth engagement for Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous youth to learn more about Indigenous cultures, ceremonies, and practices from Elders and Knowledge Keepers may be beneficial.
3. Organizational staff may consider *how* and *if* they impose an Indigenous identity onto young people and consider the potential harms and risks of doing so.
4. Organizations could benefit from hiring Indigenous role models for Indigenous youth.
5. Centralizing the cultural and spiritual needs of Indigenous youth at organizations may include partnerships with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the community.
6. Cultural supports, connections, and knowledge that rest on individual staff may further increase the workload of individual Indigenous staff without proper compensation.
7. Non-arts based organizations may consider partnering with arts groups who could deliver consistent art programming for Indigenous youth.
8. Onsite counseling for Indigenous youth may include healing opportunities with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers and through art. This suggestion aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation call to action 22, that calls for change to "the Canadian health-care system 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" (p.163).

Meaningful places at the organizations.

1. Including Indigenous youth in the spatial aesthetic of the organizations through art may have beneficial outcomes for the sense of welcome and belonging. Murals at organizations could evolve with the population of Indigenous young people.
2. Youth organizations may consider opportunities to transform outdoor spaces as another way to share Indigenous young peoples' talents and voices through public art (visual art and gardening).
3. Following Ndinawe's example, youth organizations working with Indigenous youth may

positively reflect their Indigeneity in spaces *in* and *out* of the youth organizations.
4. Youth serving organizations may consider adopting the term "warm places" and "a relational care practice" to describe their work with Indigenous youth. Creating a "home" for Indigenous youth at these organizations risks romanticize notions of belonging, care, and welcome, while exacerbating the difficulties and limitations of doing so.
5. If the concept of "home" is to be used in youth work with Indigenous youth, youth organizations may consider developing an understanding of the term with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Interpersonal relationships between Indigenous youth and frontline staff.

1. There is room at the organizations to develop a transition program to help Indigenous youth successfully age-out of the organizations with supports.
2. Organizations may consider how to support staff self-care to support their well-being both in and out of the organizations.
3. Organizations may consider how to develop internal communicate strategies to convey the limits of the relationships with Indigenous young people at the onset of their arrival and throughout their engagement at the organizations.
4. There is the opportunity for organizations to develop conflict resolution strategies for staff and Indigenous youth conflict.

Governments

Local governments.

1. Following the creative leads of youth organizations in this research, City councils may prioritize positive representations of Indigenous peoples and cultures in public spaces through public art, architectural design, or media campaigns. Increased and positive representation of Indigenous cultures may challenge young people and the general public's negative stereotypes about Indigenous cultures. Art holds potential to reflect the histories and cultural teachings of Indigenous communities in these cities. Importantly, City's may consider working with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and with Indigenous youth.
2. Indigenous youth may be included in the development of city spaces to ensure their interests are well served and reflected in city spaces.

Provincial and Federal governments.

1. Ryan, Brooklyn, and Dakota's stories point to the need for increased education of teachers and school administrators on the effects of colonialism and residential schools with attention to the racism Indigenous young people experience from teachers and their peers. This suggestion aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation (2015) call to action 63 that calls for kindergarten to grade twelve curriculum development on the histories and legacy of residential schools, Indigenous histories, and teacher-training.
2. Government may consider increased funding for youth-serving organizations for the following:
    a. Hearing the voices of Indigenous youth through qualitative research methods.
    b. Supporting long-term programming for youth organizations to ensure stable and good quality organizational spaces for Indigenous youth.

c. Targeting specific monies for youth organizations operating costs to secure and maintain permanent spaces.
d. Continuing to fund organizations to deliver their core programming and provide sufficient funding to extend programs that serve Indigenous youth.
e. Funding organizations to hire more frontline staff to lower the caseloads and increase frontline worker health and wellness.
f. Project funding to include monies for healthy food for Indigenous youth.
g. Program funding for organizations to work with Indigenous knowledge Keepers and Elders to meet the cultural and spiritual needs of Indigenous youth. This recommendation aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) call to action 14.3-4 for the Federal government to fund Indigenous language and cultural revitalization and preservation by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders.

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Appendix A: Youth Recruitment Handbill

Front:

Back:

Who?

Indigenous young people (15-24 years of age) with experiences with the criminal justice system or child welfare

Why?

Have your experiences and stories heard.

Where?

NAME OF ORGANIZATION AND ADDRESS HERE

When?

DATE AND TIME HERE

How?

Text Daena to get your name on the list @ 7806675424.

Snacks will be served and those who attend will be given a $20 gift card and a bus ticket.

Appendix B: Youth - Assent/Consent Form

Date: _____

Project title: **Speak and Be Heard: Indigenous Young Peoples' Voices in Two Prairie Cities**
Researcher: Daena Crosby, PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta.

What is a research study?
A research study is a way to find out new information about something. You do not need to be in this research study if you do not want to.

Why are you being asked to be part of this research study?
You are being asked to take part in this research study because you participate at (**organization's name here**). I am trying to learn more about young people's experiences of inclusion and what it means to you. There are 4 youth and 4 frontline workers in this study from your organization.

If you join the study what will happen to you?
I want to tell you about some things that will happen to you if you are in this study:

- Depending on your preference you may participate for 2 *or* 3 hours (2 hours for peacemaking circle – 1 hour individual interview).
- You will participate in a two-hour peacemaking and a one-hour interview (interviews only apply to those who select to participate). If you decide to participate in the interview, your mother, father, or other support person can be with you during the interview.
- I will ask you to sit in a group and individually to talk to me about your experiences at your organization.

Will any part of the study hurt?
You may feel scared or experience some anxiety about sharing your experiences and story with me and among your peers in a peacemaking circle or the interview. If you feel any discomfort after a question, please let me know so we can talk about it. You can "pass" on questions that make you feel this way.

Will the study help others?
This study might find out things that will help other young people who might need from nonprofit organizations.

Do your parents/guardian have to know about your participation in this study?
If you are 18 (and under) this study was explained to your parents and they said that we could ask you if you want to be in it. You can talk this over with them before you decide. If you are over the age of 16 your parents do not need to know about your participation in this study but I encourage you to share that with them.

Who will see the information collected about you?

- The information collected about you during this study will be kept safely locked. Nobody will have access to it but the researcher.
- The study information about you will not be given to your parents, teachers or youth worker. The researcher will not tell your friends or anyone else.

Do you have to be in the study?

- You <u>do not</u> have to be in the study. No one will be upset if you do not want to do this study. If you do not want to be in this study, you just have to tell us. It is up to you.
- You can also take more time to think about being in the study and also talk some more with your parents about being in the study.

What if you have any questions?

- You can ask any questions that you may have about the study. If you have a question later that you did not think of now, either you can call or have your parents call Daena at 780.667.5424 or email dcrosby@ualberta.ca

Other information about the study:

- You can change your mind and stop being part of it at any time. All you have to do is tell the person in charge. It is okay. The researchers and your parents will not be upset.
- You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Confidentiality
Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of peacemaking circles prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. All participants are asked to respect the privacy of other and not repeat what is said in the circle to anyone else.

____I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the peacemaking circle.
If you cannot agree to the above stipulation please see the researcher(s) as you may be ineligible to participate in this study.

□ Yes, I will be in this research study in the peacemaking circle
□ Yes, I will be in this research study in the peacemaking circle and interview
□ No, I do not want to do this.

_____	_____	_____
Youth's name	Youth's signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Person obtaining Assent (if youth is under 18)	Signature	Date

Appendix C: Staff – Informed Consent Form

Date: _____

Name of study: Speak and Be Heard: Indigenous Young Peoples' Voices in Two Prairie Cities

Researcher(s): Daena Crosby, PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta.

Purpose of the research: To investigate how youth organizations include young people's voices in spaces, relationships and youth engagement programs and strategies.

What you will be asked to do in the research: Participate in one two-hour peacemaking circle and one hour-long interview.

Risks and discomforts: Participation in this study may result in minimal risks or discomforts. If you feel any discomfort during the interview, please communicate that with Daena so they can be addressed. If you do not feel as though the risks or discomforts were adequately addressed, the interview will stop immediately.

Benefits of the research and benefits to you: Your participation in this study will allow your voice about your work experiences to be heard and contribute to academic research, social policy and future directions for this field.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is voluntary. You are not required to participate in this research and you may choose to stop participating at any time. A decision to withdraw will not impact your work at **[organization's name here]**, the nature of your relationship with the researcher, or any future relationship with the University of Alberta. In the event you withdraw from the study, your interview recording, informed consent form and any transcribed data will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: All information you provide for this study will be held in confidence. Your name will not appear on any report or publication of this research. Personal confidentiality will be upheld to the fullest extent possible by law. Your consent to participate recognizes that the organization's name **[org. name here] will/will not** appear and will be discussed in writing. When you agree to participate in this study, you are also agreeing to allowing your interview to be recorded using a digital device. Your interview will be transcribed and then will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room. Only the researcher will have access to this information and the digital recording will be deleted. After two years, the transcripts will be destroyed.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of peacemaking circles prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. All participants are asked to respect the privacy of other and not repeat what is said in the circle to anyone else.

____I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the peacemaking circle.

If you cannot agree to the above stipulation please see the researcher(s) as you may be ineligible to participate in this study.

□ Yes, I will be in this research study in the peacemaking circle □ No, I do not want to do this.
□ Yes, I will be in this research study in the peacemaking circle and interview

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Bryan Hogeveen (Daena Crosby's supervisor) either by telephone at (780) 492-2977 or by e-mail (bryan.hogeveen@ualberta.ca), or Daena Crosby by email (dcrosby@ualberta.ca). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the Vice-President (Research); University of Alberta's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I_____, consent to participate in an interview on the topic of the inclusion of young people in nonprofit organizations with Daena Crosby, PhD Candidate at the University of Alberta. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature:_____ **Date:**_____
Participant

Signature:_____ **Date:**_____
Principal Investigator

Appendix D: Interview Guide – Young people

Inclusion:

- What does "being included" mean to you?
  - What makes/cultivates inclusion at this organization?
  - Why is "being included" important to you?
- Do you feel like you belong here?
  - What makes you feel that way?
- Tell us about a time where you felt left out.
- How do you know when you're included somewhere?
- How do your experiences out in the world differ from your experiences here?

Relationships:

- What do you need/want from good/positive relationships with people?
- Name a person with whom you have a good relationship here. Tell us about that relationship.
  - What make the relationship great?
  - Probe here for relationships with staff and peers.
- What are the challenges/barriers to building relationships with people here, or outside of this organization?
- How do you use to overcome the challenges/barriers?
- What does it mean to have a "mutual relationship" with the staff or other young people here?

Meaningful Engagement Opportunities:

- What opportunities, services, or programs does this organization offer you?
  - How does participating here make you feel?
- What role does the staff play in making you feel that way here?
- Does the staff have similar life experiences as you do?
- What do you need in programming/services/supports?
  - What does success mean to you in terms of participating in programs/services etc. here?
- What services, opportunities, programs are missing at this organization?
- How does the staff know if the programs are working/not working for you here?

Space:

- Describe the vibe/energy at this organization.
- What does it mean to "create a safe space for young people"?
- What does a "safe space" mean to you?
  - What does that feel like?
  - What does that look like?
- What is important for adults to know when they are trying to create a space for young people in (name of city here)?
- Do you play a role in creating the space at this organization?

Voice:

- How do you know your own voice?
- In what ways do you/can you share your voice here?
- How do you know the staff are listening and hear your voice?
- What topics do the staff ask you to speak on?
- Do you feel as though your voice is valued here? Why?
- In what ways are you able to use/find your voice at this organization?
- Why do you think providing the opportunity for young people to speak and be heard is important?

Other aspects of inclusion:

- Are there other things that help you feel included? If so, what are they?
- How could the staff or this organization make you feel more included?

Appendix E: Interview Guide – Frontline Workers

Inclusion:

- What does "including young people" mean to you?
    - What makes/cultivates inclusion of young people here?
    - Why is inclusion important to you?
- How does your organization define "youth" or "young people"?
    - Probe for philosophical understanding of youth here.
- What are the challenges to including young people at your organizations (in programs, in the building)?
    - Get at the institutional/personal tensions that arise in doing this work – how do the job descriptions/reporting requirements help/hinder doing this work?
- How do the experiences that young people out in the world differ from the experiences they have with your organization?
    - What are the signs that demonstrate that youth feel included here?

Relationships:

- What do youth need/want in relationships with youth workers?
    - How do you know this to be true?
- What do you need/want from a relationship with young people here?
- How important are the relationships you have with staff and other young people here?
- What is the process by which you begin to build relationships with young people?
- What are the challenges/barriers to doing this work?
- What creative strategies do you use to overcome the challenges/barriers?
- What does it mean to have a "mutual relationship" to you?

Meaningful Engagement Opportunities:

- What does it mean to "meaningfully engage" young people?
- What creative approaches do you use/does your organization use to engage young people?
- What role does staff play in meaningful engagement?
    - What personal/professional characteristics do you/the staff have that lend to including young people?
- What role do you play in meaningful engagement opportunities?
- Does the staff have similar life experiences as the youth who attend your programs?
    - Does this help/hinder your work?
    - What does that add/take away from building relationships with youth?
- What do youth need in programming/services/supports?
    - What does successful youth engagement look like?
    - How do you know your programs, services, resources, processes are working?
- What is your personal and organizational approach to working with youth?
- What services/resources/supports does your organization provide to young people?
    - Why has your organization chosen to offer these?
- What gaps exist in your services/resources/supports?

Space:

- Describe the vibe at this organization.
- How does your organization create safe spaces for young people?
- What does it mean to "create a safe space for young people" to you?
    - What does a safe space look like?
    - What does it feel like?
- How importance is the physical space of your building to you?
    - Why is it important to the work you do with youth?
- What makes coming to this organization different from your experiences in other places?
- Why did you choose to work with this organization over others?
- In what ways does your organization intentionally create space for/with youth?

Voice:

- What does including "youth voices" mean to you/your organization?
- Please tell me about the processes your organizations use to allow young people to find and use their voice?
- Often finding and using one's voice is not only a verbal experience, how does your organization use creative approaches to help young people find and use their voices?

Other aspects of inclusion:

- Are there other things that help youthe feel included here? If so, what are they?
- How else could the staff or this organization better include young people?

Appendix F: Indigenous Youth and Staff Research Participation

Indigenous Youth in Peacemaking Circles and Interviews

Organization	Name*	Main Identifiers**	Peacemaking Circle	Interview
iHuman Youth Society	Total youth participation: 5			
	Angela	Métis and Vietnamese woman, 22 yrs.	X	X
	Trey	*Nêhiyawak* man, 18 yrs.	X	X
	Tyler	*Nêhiyawak* man, 25 yrs	X	X
	Andrea	Aboriginal woman, 25 yrs.	X	X
	Nikki	First Nations woman, 16 yrs.	X	X
Spence Neighbourhood Association	Total youth participation: 4			
	Rebecca	Cree woman, 16 yrs.	X	X
	Sonia	Métis woman, 16 yrs.	X	
	Jamal	Indigenous man, 13 yrs.	X	
	Dakota	Cree man, 16 yrs.	X	X
Ndinawewaaganag Endaawaad, Youth Resource Centre	Total youth participation: 3			
	Kiley	Ojibwe woman, 16 yrs.	X	X
	Brooklyn	Cree woman, 16 yrs.	X	X
	Ben	Métis man, 16 yrs.	X	
YOUCAN Youth Services	Total youth participation: 7			
	Nicole	*Mi'kmaq* and Ojibwe woman, 19 yrs.	X	X
	Sadie	Métis woman, 19 yrs.	X	
	Dean	Cree man, 20 yrs.	X	X
	Ryan	19 yrs.	X	X
	Derrick	Métis man, 16 yrs.	X	
	Brad	Aboriginal man, 19 yrs.	X	
	Cain	Métis and German man, 18 yrs.	X	
Total			19	12

*All names have been changed to ensure youth confidentiality.
**Indigenous identifiers listed here are based on how young people identified themselves.

Staff Participation in Peacemaking Circles and Interviews

Organization	Name*	Main identifiers	Peacemaking Circle	Interview
iHuman Youth Society	Total staff participation: 8			
	Brett	Non-Indigenous, man, registered social worker	X	X
	Diana	Non-Indigenous, woman, frontline staff	X	
	Jasmine	*Anishinaabe kwe*, Registered Social Worker, frontline manager	X	X
	Will	Cree, man, iSucceed Program, frontline staff	X	X
	Kris	Non-Indigenous, man, frontline staff	X	
	Megan	Non-Indigenous, woman, frontline staff		X
	Nick	Non-Indigenous, man, frontline staff		X
	Catherine Broomfield	Non-Indigenous, woman, Executive Director		X
Spence Neighbourhood Association	Total staff participation: 7			
	Jesse	Non-Indigenous, man, Youth programs, frontline staff	X	
	Jacqueline	Non-Indigenous, woman, Youth programs, frontline staff	X	
	Linda	Non-Indigenous, woman, Youth programs, frontline staff	X	
	Crystal	Non-Indigenous, woman, frontline manager	X	X
	Carly	Non-Indigenous, woman, outreach worker, frontline staff	X	
	Jay	*Anishinaabe* and *Nêhinaw*, man, outreach worker, frontline staff	X	X
	Jamil Mahmood	Non-Indigenous, man, executive director		X
Ndinawewaa ganag Endaawaad, Youth Resource Centre	Total staff participation: 8			
	Cynthia	Indigenous, woman, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, frontline staff	X	X
	Freddy	Indigenous, woman, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, frontline staff	X	
	Sierra	Anishinaabe, woman, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, frontline staff	X	

	Jodi	Indigenous, woman, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, frontline staff		X
	Shai	Indigenous, man, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, frontline staff		X
	Emma	Indigenous, woman, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, frontline manager		X
	Angel	Indigenous, woman, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, frontline staff		X
	Tammy Christensen	Indigenous, woman, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, executive director		X
YOUCAN Youth Services	Total staff participation: 9			
	Alex	Non-Indigenous, man, Verto Program, frontline staff	X	
	Siobhan	Non-Indigenous, woman, outreach worker, frontline staff	X	X
	Sandy	Non-Indigenous, woman, Verto programs, frontline staff	X	X
	Stephanie	Non-Indigenous, woman, Verto program, frontline staff	X	
	Wren	Non-Indigenous, man, outreach worker, frontline staff	X	X
	Eric	Non-Indigenous, man, Step Up and Step In, frontline staff	X	
	Steve	Non-Indigenous, man, Verto Program, frontline staff	X	
	Mathew	Indigenous, man, outreach, frontline manager		X
	Kyle Dubé	Non-Indigenous, man, executive director		X
Total			21 staff	10 circle staff 6 other staff 4 executive directors

*All names, except the Executive Directors, have been changed to ensure staff and youth confidentiality

Indigenous Youth Rhythm and Poetry Contributions**

Name	Main identifiers
Adrian Shirt	*Nêhiyawak,* 21 yrs., Emcee name: Symplicity, iHuman Youth Society, Edmonton
Donovan Waskahat	*Nêhiyawak*, 21 yrs., Emcee name: Ronin, iHuman Youth Society, Edmonton
Dylan McCarthy-Daniels	*Nêhiyawak,* 21 yrs., Emcee name: NMS-1, iHuman Youth Society, Edmonton

**** These young men were not involved in the peacemaking circles or interviews. Their art was publically available and they provided me with consent to use their real names, identifiers, and lyrics for research purposes.

Appendix G: Youth Peacemaking Circle Dialogue Plan

Purpose:
The purpose of this circle is to engage Indigenous young people in a dialogue about the four aspects of inclusion identified in this project: youth voices, relationships, physical spaces, and meaningful engagement opportunities.

Materials required:
- Talking piece
- 9 chairs (five to eight youth, 1 circle keeper)
- Individual interview sign up sheet
- Art supplies (paper, pens, crayons, paint, canvass, magazines)

Circle introduction: (5 minutes)
- Thank everyone for attending - Topic of the circle conversation today is: inclusion
- Using a circle dialogue to facilitate conversation because it is a different way of relating to each other.
- Circles use a talking piece to generate conversation. Talking piece:
    - Talking piece regulates the dialogue
    - It is passed from one person to another around the circle
    - Only the person holding the talking piece may speak
    - The talking piece allows the holder to speak without interruption so the listeners can focus on listening.
    - The holder may take as long as s/he wants and pass if s/he so chooses
    - Every participant in the circle has equal opportunity to speak and it carries the implicit assumption that every participant has something valuable to offer the group. (information taken from Boyes-Watson and Pranis 2011, 2014).
    - Edmonton – identify Treaty 6 land, Winnipeg – Treaty 1 land.
- Confidentiality in the circle

Introduction circle: (10 minutes)
- Go around the circle – everyone introduce themselves and what is going good for you today?

Cirlcle Guidelines: (15 minutes)
- What do you need from the circle in order to participate at your best?
- What is one value you offer to the circle?

Opening ceremony: (5 minutes)

There is no power greater than a community
Discovering what it cares about.
Ask “What’s possible” not “What’s wrong?”
Keep asking.
Notice what you care about.
Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.
Talk to people you know.
Talk to people you don't know.
Be intrigued by the differences you hear.
Expect to be surprised.
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.
Invite everybody who cares to work on what's possible.
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.
Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.
Real listening always brings people closer together.
Trust that meaningful conversations can change the world.
Rely on human goodness.
Stay together. By: Margaret Wheatley

Art Activity (30 minutes)
Youth will be asked to produce a visual representation (painting or written work on canvass) to show what inclusion means to them.

- Other probing words will be: belonging, kinship, attachment, and acceptance.
- Other probing questions will be: How does being included make you feel? How does being excluded make you feel? Where are you included/excluded?

Once the youth have completed their art, we will go around the circle and share our creations with the group.

Youth will also be encouraged to share other works of art to include in the dissertation.

Questions: (45 minutes)

Inclusion:

- What does "being included," mean to you?
  - What makes/cultivates inclusion at this organization?
  - Why is "being included" important to you?
- Do you feel like you belong here?
  - What makes you feel that way?
- Tell us about a time where you felt left out.
- How do you know when you're included somewhere?
- How do your experiences out in the world differ from your experiences here?

Relationships:

- What do you need/want from good/positive relationships with people?
- Name a person with whom you have a good relationship here. Tell us about that relationship.
  - What make the relationship great?
  - Probe here for relationships with staff and peers.
- What are the challenges/barriers to building relationships with people here, or outside of this organization?
- How do you use to overcome the challenges/barriers?

- What does it mean to have a "mutual relationship" with the staff or other young people here?

Meaningful Engagement Opportunities:

- What opportunities, services, or programs does this organization offer you?
    - How does participating here make you feel?
- What role does the staff play in making you feel that way here?
- Does the staff have similar life experiences as you do?
- What do you need in programming/services/supports?
    - What does success mean to you in terms of participating in programs/services etc. here?
- What services, opportunities, programs are missing at this organization?
- How does the staff know if the programs are working/not working for you here?

Space:

- Describe the vibe/energy at this organization.
- What does it mean to "create a safe space for young people"?
- What does a "safe space" mean to you?
    - What does that feel like?
    - What does that look like?
- What is important for adults to know when they are trying to create a space for young people in (name of city here)?
- Do you play a role in creating the space at this organization?

Voice:

- How do you know your own voice?
- In what ways do you/can you share your voice here?
- How do you know the staff are listening and hear your voice?
- What topics do the staff ask you to speak on?
- Do you feel as though your voice is valued here? Why?
- In what ways are you able to use/find your voice at this organization?
- Why do you think providing the opportunity for young people to speak and be heard is important?

Other aspects of inclusion:

- Are there other things that help you feel included? If so, what are they?
- How could the staff or this organization make you feel more included?

Closing circle: (5 minutes)

- Tell us one word that describes how you felt about today's circle.

Thank everyone for coming and participating. (5 minutes)

- Ask them to sign up for individual interviews (have sign up sheet ready)
- Ask the youth if they'd like to submit other artwork, pictures, poems, raps, etc. that relates to any of the discussions we've had today.

Appendix H: Frontline Staff Peacemaking Circle Dialogue Plan

Purpose:
The purpose of this circle is to engage five to eight frontline staff in a dialogue about the four aspects of youth inclusion: relationships, space, meaningful engagement opportunities, and youth voices.

Materials required:
- Talking piece
- 9 chairs (five to eight staff, 1 circle keeper)
- Individual interview sign up sheet

Circle introduction: (10 minutes)
- Thank everyone for attending - Topic of the circle conversation today is: inclusion
- Using a circle dialogue to facilitate conversation because it is a different way of relating to each other.
- Circle dialogues use a talking piece to generate conversation. Talking piece:
    - Talking piece regulates the dialogue
    - It is passed from one person to another around the circle
    - Only the person holding the talking piece may speak
    - The talking piece allows the holder to speak without interruption so the listeners can focus on listening.
    - The holder may take as long as s/he wants and pass if s/he so chooses
    - Every participant in the circle has equal opportunity to speak and it carries the implicit assumption that every participant has something valuable to offer the group. (information taken from Boyes-Watson and Pranis 2011).
    - Edmonton acknowledge Treaty 6 territory – Winnipeg acknowledge Treaty 1.
- Review confidentiality in the circle

Introduction circle: (10 minutes)
Go around the circle – everyone introduce themselves and what is going good for you today?

Cirlcle Guidelines: (15 minutes)
What do you need from the circle in order to participate at your best?
What is one value you offer to the circle?

Opening ceremony: (5 minutes)

There is no power greater than a community
Discovering what it cares about.
Ask “What’s possible” not “What’s wrong?”
Keep asking.
Notice what you care about.
Assume that many others share your dreams.
Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.
Talk to people you know.
Talk to people you don’t know.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.
Expect to be surprised.
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.
Invite everybody who cares to work on what's possible.
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.
Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.
Real listening always brings people closer together.
Trust that meaningful conversations can change the world.
Rely on human goodness.
Stay together. By: Margaret Wheatley

Questions: (1 hour 15 minutes)

Inclusion:

- What does "including young people" mean to you?
    - What makes/cultivates inclusion of young people here?
    - Why is inclusion important to you?
- How does your organization define "youth" or "young people"?
    - Probe for philosophical understanding of youth here.
- What are the challenges to including young people at your organizations (in programs, in the building)?
    - Get at the institutional/personal tensions that arise in doing this work – how do the job descriptions/reporting requirements help/hinder doing this work?
- How do the experiences that young people out in the world differ from the experiences they have with your organization?
    - What are the signs that demonstrate that youth feel included here?

Relationships:

- What do youth need/want in relationships with youth workers?
    - How do you know this to be true?
- What do you need/want from a relationship with young people here?
- How important are the relationships you have with staff and other young people here?
- What is the process by which you begin to build relationships with young people?
- What are the challenges/barriers to doing this work?
- What creative strategies do you use to overcome the challenges/barriers?
- What does it mean to have a "mutual relationship" to you?

Meaningful Engagement Opportunities:

- What does it mean to "meaningfully engage" young people?
- What creative approaches do you use/does your organization use to engage young people?
- What role does staff play in meaningful engagement?
    - What personal/professional characteristics do you/the staff have that lend to including young people?
- What role do you play in meaningful engagement opportunities?

- Does the staff have similar life experiences as the youth who attend your programs?
    - Does this help/hinder your work?
    - What does that add/take away from building relationships with youth?
- What do youth need in programming/services/supports?
    - What does successful youth engagement look like?
    - How do you know your programs, services, resources, processes are working?
- What is your personal and organizational approach to working with youth?
- What services/resources/supports does your organization provide to young people?
    - Why has your organization chosen to offer these?
- What gaps exist in your services/resources/supports?

Space:

- Describe the vibe at this organization.
- How does your organization create safe spaces for young people?
- What does it mean to "create a safe space for young people" to you?
    - What does a safe space look like?
    - What does it feel like?
- How importance is the physical space of your building to you?
    - Why is it important to the work you do with youth?
- What makes coming to this organization different from your experiences in other places?
- Why did you choose to work with this organization over others?
- In what ways does your organization intentionally create space for/with youth?

Voice:

- What does including "youth voices" mean to you/your organization?
- Please tell me about the processes your organizations use to allow young people to find and use their voice?
- Often finding and using one's voice is not only a verbal experience, how does your organization use creative approaches to help young people find and use their voices?

Other aspects of inclusion:

- Are there other things that help youthe feel included here? If so, what are they?
- How else could the staff or this organization better include young people?

Closing circle: (15 minutes)

- What is one thing someone said in the circle today that stood out to you?
- Tell us one word that describes how you felt about today's circle.

Thank everyone for coming and participating.

Ask participants to sign up for individual interviews (have sign up sheet ready)

Appendix I: Neechi Principles

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CED) GUIDING PRINCIPLES
(Courtesy of Neechi Foods Worker Co-op) (The Canadian CED Network, 2018)

1. USE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS AND SERVICES ♦ purchase of goods and services produced locally ♦ circulation of income within the local community; less income drain ♦ stronger economic linkages within the local community ♦ less dependency on outside markets ♦ greater community self-reliance ♦ restoration of balance in the local economy

2. PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR LOCAL USE ♦ creation of goods and services for use in the local community ♦ circulation of income within the local community; less income drain ♦ stronger economic links within the local community ♦ less dependency on outside markets ♦ greater community self-reliance

3. LOCAL RE-INVESTMENT OF PROFITS ♦ use of profits to expand local economic activity ♦ stop profit drain ♦ investment that increases community self-reliance and co-operation

4. LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT OF LOCAL RESIDENTS ♦ long-term jobs in areas with chronic unemployment or underemployment ♦ reduced dependency on welfare and food banks ♦ opportunities to live more socially productive lives ♦ personal and community self-esteem ♦ more wages and salaries spent in the local community

5. LOCAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT ♦ training of local residents ♦ training geared to community development ♦ higher labour productivity ♦ greater employability in communities with high unemployment ♦ greater productive capability of economically depressed areas

6. LOCAL DECISION-MAKING ♦ local ownership and control ♦ co-operative ownership and control ♦ grassroots involvement ♦ community self-determination ♦ people working together to meet community needs

7. PUBLIC HEALTH ♦ physical and mental health of community residents ♦ healthier families ♦ more effective schooling ♦ more productive workforce

8. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ♦ healthy, safe, attractive neighbourhoods ♦ ecological sensitivity

9. NEIGHBOURHOOD STABILITY ♦ dependable housing ♦ long-term residency ♦ base for long-term community development

10. HUMAN DIGNITY ♦ self-respect ♦ community spirit ♦ gender equality ♦ respect for seniors and children ♦ Aboriginal pride ♦ social dignity regardless of psychological differences, ethnic background, colour, creed or sexual orientation

11. SUPPORT FOR OTHER CED INITIATIVES ♦ mutually supportive trade among organizations with similar community development goals