

Medicine Wheel Journey:
**An Autobiographical Approach to
Developing an Indigenous-centered Helping Framework**

by

**Delbert Majore
BSW, University of Victoria, 2007**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of**

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Abstract

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Colonization has always and continues as a destructive influence upon Indigenous people and communities. *Medicine Wheel Journey (MWJ)* will be my contribution to the healing from colonization of Indigenous peoples.

The literature and my work in Indigenous mental health counselling has led me to the conclusion that people essentially want to strengthen themselves and this can often be accomplished by finding their voice and sharing their story. I believe in order to support any person in finding their voice, I had to first find my own.

My purpose throughout this research was to identify *MWJ* as the process of establishing an Indigenous-centered helping framework for mental health counselling with Indigenous peoples. My ancestors became a source of inspiration to tell my story. Essentially, *MWJ* has helped move me forward by looking at my past. I can now say confidently that I know my history and culture. I have experienced what Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) describe as a ‘social and political correction’ (p. 298).

This thesis describes a method by which members of Indigenous communities can research, write, and share their life stories in order to arrive at Indigenous-centered helping frameworks. This *MWJ* framework may be applied by Indigenous mental health practitioners as self-care for their own personal development. The main intent of *MWJ* is to support the help and healing of the Indigenous people and communities they serve. *Medicine Wheel Journey* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework has allowed me to say I am Métis and this is my story.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the following. To my wife Mayra and children, Delbert and Camilla for allowing me to be a learner again and for the time away to explore and to *Research of Self from a Sense of Place*. To my late mother Evelyn for making me responsible for Knowledge Keeping. To my brother David for teaching me how to be safe in a dangerous world and that the Creator reminds us that all things are possible. To all the persons who I have had the privilege of serving. Thank you for helping me help others. Lastly, to all my elders, role models, teachers and ancestors, thank you for being my guides and for providing Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing.

Glossary of Terms

MWJ or *Medicine Wheel Journey* – is the term for my Indigenous-centered helping framework.

ICN or Indigenous Communal Narrative – is the term from Sellers (2007) that sets forth protocol for sharing Indigenous stories. I use ICN or Indigenous Communal Narrative for my 11 ICN Evaluative Measures of my *MWJ* or Medicine Wheel Journey.

Ways of Being or Knowing – there is 20 Self-identified Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing. Each of these 20 terms will *italicized* to recognize their role in my new language related to Ways of Being and Knowing. They include the *self, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, family, role models, mentors, teachers, learners, community, location, work, time, resources, nation, ancestors, oppressors, allies and children.*

EMT's or *Elders, Mentors & Teachers* – are the people who supported my learning throughout this research and writing.

Elders, Mentors & Teachers Consultations

Throughout the research, I involved the guidance of *elders*¹, *mentors* and *teachers* (EMT's) in supporting my self-reflection which makes up this *work*. I developed an EMT Consultation Protocol that defined what EMT Consultations involved, when discussions occurred and how our student-EMT advisory relationships evolved. EMT Consultations occurred after periods of research, writing, analysis, interpretation and evaluation. I was able to stay Indigenous-centered by being able to visit with my EMT's. My experience of being with my EMT's allowed me to sustain my *Métisness*, which encompasses my personal and cultural sense of identity.

My criteria for selection of an EMT was wisdom and at least on this earth for a half-century. I believe my EMT's need to have the experience that comes with having lived a longer life than me. They included my Aunt Sis, Heather, Calvin, Al, Stewart, Marlene, Riley, Guy, Chris, Georgina, Bill, Ian, Ted and Mervin.

Elders

I met Métis *elders* at a regularly held luncheon by our Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) office. I kept phone contact with *elders* in Saskatchewan and Alberta and met *elders* along the way at *family* and *community* gatherings. The privilege of being supported by my *elders* brought special meaning to my *work*.

Mentors

I had many *mentors*, they were Marlene, Riley, Madeline, Georgina and Eileen. They provided me with 'listening ears.' I visited with my *mentors* from our Métis

¹ *Italics* is used throughout this document to represent the Indigenous significance of terms identified such as *elders*, the *20 Ways of Being and Knowing* and *Medicine Wheel Journey*. These terms will be explained later in this thesis.

community. I would drop-in and they would be there to just allow me to be Métis. Essentially, as Métis we can gather together and not feel the colonization that a Métis feels in this country, as we are then decolonizing together.

Teachers

My main *teachers* have been Chris, Bill and Ian. They are my *work* colleagues who learned of my *work* and allowed me to *work* through with them the Indigenous and western concepts addressed in my research and writing.

EMT's Special Mention

I feel that Calvin and Heather had such encompassing roles for me. They were *elders, mentors* and *teachers* to me. They both provided much cultural and historical direction. Calvin provided much needed phone support. Heather has been my constant social networking e-supporter. I have learned a lot from her ideas and writing. They are *teachers* and wish to be like them some day.

Introduction

‘Stories are all that we have’ are the words of Indigenous scholar, Thomas King (2003). *Medicine Wheel Journey (MWJ)* is my story. Through this thesis, I explored my life story using 20 Ways of Being and Knowing. Autobiographical research is the foundation from which I examined *MWJ*. From applying research questions to myself, there emerged principles and themes that have structured my life story into a helping framework, also called *MWJ*. The *elders* have told us to go within ourselves and know ourselves. All research is personal and political and *MWJ* as a helping framework was created to help me as a person and social worker first. How can we ask others to change if we as helpers do not make the necessary changes first? Dr. Stephanie Sellers’ (2007) book, *Indigenous Communal Narrative (ICN)* is the analytical method I used to explore *MWJ*. Sellers is a self-identified member of Native ancestry, and in her handbook she offers a critical discussion of the Western use of autobiography with Indigenous persons and communities and provides an Indigenous method of telling stories. My belief is ICN is an Indigenous research methodology that is needed as a guide in holding Indigenous writers accountable to our communities. ICN is the ‘story of telling my story’. We need such Indigenous academic protocols that require students and academics to follow Indigenous community expectations of how research and writing should be conducted. We need tools such as ICN by which we can suggest to our communities just what stories should enter into the oral tradition of our communities. The Indigenous understanding of interrelatedness tells me that by helping and healing myself, I can help and heal others. Indigenous mental health involves healing the Indigenous practitioner. I and other Indigenous helpers have become more healthy and strong through *MWJ*. My hope is *MWJ* continues to contribute to Indigenous *community* and *mental* health settings.

This thesis begins with an explanation of the research. I present my research question, followed by a discussion of my methodology and theoretical influences. This will be followed by the literature review of Indigenous-centered², helping frameworks and autobiographies. Next, will be my Autobiographical Research: Sharing of *Medicine Wheel Journey* and a discussion of Gathering Primary & Secondary Source Information. In this section, I explain the experience of researching life story. With this information, I address the 20 Research Guiding Questions and Principles resulting in *Medicine Wheel Journey*. The Research Guiding Questions and Principles were the result of self-reflecting upon *MWJ*, and my past experiences with *elders*, *mentors* and *teachers*.

The thesis will then move into analysis of *Medicine Wheel Journey* using Indigenous Communal Narrative Evaluation Measures. I have identified 11 Indigenous Communal Narrative evaluation measures. The measures will be explained briefly early in the thesis then used in examination of my research in this section. This section is ‘my ‘story about telling my story’. This evaluation section is a validation piece that reminds me that this *work* was more than just about my life, it was more than that. This research and writing is about how all Indigenous people and others for that matter can have a helping framework that is supported by Indigenous evaluation. My life story will assist in my current *work* in Indigenous *mental* health. I am sure others will find value in applying it to their area of helping. The thesis will conclude with Clinical Considerations of MWJ for Indigenous *Mental* Health Practice: Advantages, Limitations & Practice, followed by references, supporting appendices, and suggested further reading.

² Indigenous-centered is a term that resonated with me as a graduate student at University of Victoria. It means that Indigenous people can view themselves and the world from the center, as insiders who are sustained by histories and cultures, and not as outsiders looking at the world from the margins of society.

Research Question

How can *Medicine Wheel Journey* inform an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people? This research question was explored over a period of about three years, a few countries and two continents. I persisted with making use of autobiography³ or life story in an academic sense. I knew my self-identified Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing would form the basis of my life story that I named *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Therefore, my life story was constructed and is an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people meaning, that Métis and other Indigenous peoples all have a story they can learn and tell and by doing so, they experience an Indigenous-centered and decolonizing methodology. Our *elders* who teach ceremony like vision quests and sweat lodge tell us to know ourselves. In addition, as insider knowledge would suggest, I am intimately aware of my personal history related to being the client. I have been the person who has sought help or needed *mental* health care. I have been challenged by the Creator many times to address deeply rooted issues. I profoundly know what it means to experience psychosis, addiction, withdrawal, violence, trauma, oppression and thoughts of suicide. I have experienced in-patient psychiatric wards, treatment centers, counselling sessions, welfare, employment-training programs, social housing and incarceration. All of these experiences will inform my research question as well as my *MWJ*.

This work is not an extensive look into Western notions of *mental* health or even Western ways of social *work* helping methods. *Mental* health helping services is the context that I currently find myself practicing, but the hope for me is that more areas of

³ Use of autobiography as research method is consistent with Sellers' book (2007). *Native American Autobiography Redefined: a Handbook*, as my evaluative measures.

society such as education, training, employment, begin to utilize *MWJ* or other similar helping methods when needed.

Sellers' (2007) *Indigenous Communal Narrative* was the evaluation measure to validate autobiography as a true and just method of researching and writing my life story. I realize that autoethnography appears as the research method in my work. I intentionally decided against using this term or applying this method as it does not describe for me what I have completed here. I am not attempting to explore Métis or Indigenous culture. I am exploring my *self, family, community* and *nation*. Any Indigenous learnings are my own and any perception of teaching from my part is the readers, and not intended by me.

Medicine Wheel Journey as an Indigenous Communal Narrative Explained

Medicine Wheel

A Medicine Wheel is a sacred site of Indigenous people of the plains to gather and practice ceremony. Medicine Wheels were created whereby large stones were placed on the land as such that they resembled a wheel with spokes connected to a hub at the centre of the wheel when looking on from up high. I have come to learn that the sense of sacredness, peace and wellness that was experienced at Medicine Wheel sites is what led to their use as tools in teaching and healing the people.

While sacred Medicine Wheel sites are centuries old, the use of Medicine Wheel as a teaching tool is only a practice carried on just for a few decades now. Visual models of Medicine Wheels vary but most will have a circle or a wheel shape divided by four quadrants. My understanding of the Medicine aspect of the Wheel are the teachings experienced by Indigenous people at the Medicine Wheel sacred sites led to the achievement of health and wellness. Medicine Wheel practitioners present it as a model with four concepts in mind. Two of the main methods of using Medicine Wheels are to

explore the significance of place or people. First are the four geographical directions of north, east, south and west. Second are the four races of man including the red man (the America's Indigenous), the white man (Europe's Indigenous), the yellow man Indigenous (Asians) and the black man (Africa's Indigenous). With my *Medicine Wheel Journey*, I have expanded upon a third main usage of Medicine Wheel that explains a human being as involving four parts: the *physical, mental, emotional* and *spiritual*. This basic teaching led to 20 Ways of Being and Knowing that will be examined later in this thesis.

Medicine Wheel Journey (MWJ)

MWJ is my life story that explores 20 Ways of Being and Knowing that I use as an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people. I believe one of the main lessons I have learned from my *elders* is we need to know ourselves before we can know others. Colonization as a destructive force has shamed my ability to know myself, my history and culture. In researching and writing this thesis, I am reminded of Sellers (2007) who elaborates how colonization has impacted the realm of Indigenous writers/researchers when she says:

Native⁴ peoples are not seen as reliable sources for the history, cosmology, culture, creation and overall ethnic studies of themselves... Even in the current age, Native American scholars are routinely dismissed as being biased researchers and writers when presenting analysis and research in Native American Studies (p. 52).

MWJ as a term originates from the documentary entitled, 'The Gift of Diabetes'

⁴ Native/Native American/Native nations – are terms used by Sellers (2007) and Stewart (2008) which I interpret as Indigenous peoples of North America. Canada's Aboriginal peoples are also among these cultural peoples and nations.

(Paskievich & Whitford, 2005). After viewing this video I knew this term *MWJ* is what I had experienced in my life which is a struggle to decolonize from colonization. The use of autobiography or what I call ‘*Research of Self*’ was inspired by Dr. Jeannine Carriere in 2009. She shared her story with our group of Master of Social Work – *Indigenous Specialization* (MSW-I) students. Her example of overcoming challenges and courage to be what she could be in spite of what she had been through was motivation for me to use my life story as the research that could be used in teaching others how to learn their life stories to strengthen themselves through an Indigenous-centered helping framework.

Since my early recovery from addiction, I have guided my sense of *self* with themes of the *physical, mental, emotional* and *spiritual*. I began forming my *MWJ* with these five themes as my start, but knew there was a lot more for me to share. I am a believer in interrelatedness and interconnectedness from the teachings I have been given. I have seen value in structuring these qualities further in my sense of balance that four gives to us as Indigenous people. Dr. Robina Thomas’ *Uy’skwuluwun: Principles for Indigenous Research* (2009) inspired my *MWJ* helping framework by reminding me of the importance of *self, family, community* and *nation* as Ways of Being. Having decided what the *self* was for me, it was my *work* since 2009 in the MSW-I program that inspired the remaining Ways of Knowing for *community, family* and *nation*. A discussion of these themes follows here.

20 Self-identified Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing⁵

These 20 Ways of Being and Knowing or themes came to my consciousness

⁵ The 20 Self-identified Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing are depicted in Appendix 1 - Model of *Medicine Wheel Journey*: an Indigenous-centered Helping Framework. They are *italicized* herein to recognize their significance as my new language in this thesis. They include: *self, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, family, role models, mentors, teachers, learners, community, location, work, time, resources, nation, ancestors, oppressors, allies & children*.

during a period of self-reflection. I was exploring a graduate-level social *work* exercise about ‘self-conscious traditionalism’ (Waterfall, p.1, 2010). I had asked myself what is my Indigenous-centered social *work* practice? I had for many years used 5 themes of the *self, physical, mental, emotional* and *spiritual*. I realized there was more to what I knew and how I practiced. With balance and interrelatedness in mind, I had arrived at 15 more themes. All 20 will be discussed. They are organized into four Ways of Being, with each Way of Being having four Ways of Knowing (see appendix 1 on pg. 112)

Self: Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spiritual

These five Ways of Being and Knowing are often used as a health theme as *MWJ* is an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people. Therefore, the *self* means ‘*self-in-relation*’ (Graveline, 1998) to everything else, as we are interconnected and interrelated to all things. *Self* as an Indigenous Way of Being is seen as part of the collective and not as individualistic and autonomous in and of itself. *Physical* means in relation to the promotion of health and wellness. *Mental* means the pursuit of knowledge. *Emotional* means pursuit of peace and fulfillment. *Spiritual* means to live a life of harmony and balance with Creator and the *ancestors*. Collectively, these themes inform our development of *self*.

Family: Role Models, Mentors, Teachers & Learners

These five Ways of Being and Knowing have social roles integrated as a *family* as *MWJ* is an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people. Indigenous family includes both biological and social ties. Our surnames often indicate what clan we are a part of and whom we are allied with. Therefore, *role models* mean we live a life whereby others are proud to say they know

us. *Mentors* mean we have a responsibility to ensure others live right. For instance, I have to be aware of people I am helping are relying on me to provide responsible care to them. *Teachers* mean we have a responsibility that others will grow and develop. *Learners* mean we have a responsibility to learn and grow. These themes are the roles that our *family* members fulfill to each other.

Community: Location, Work, Time & Resources

These five Ways of Being and Knowing have a traditional Indigenous economic theme as *MWJ* is an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people. Groups of people have gathered together since *time* immemorial to exchange benefits for their mutual needs. Therefore, *community* means we *work* to ensure there is health and wellness for everybody. *Location* means we make influential contributions because we know who we are. *Work* means that we can achieve and we will survive. *Time* means there is a process to everything we do and we need to value how we use it. *Resources* means *resources* for the benefit of all due to everyone's involvement in their economy and *community*. Collectively, these themes provide me a sense of my *community*.

Nation: Ancestors, Oppressors, Allies & Children

These five Ways of Being and Knowing have a 'nation within a nation' theme as *MWJ* is an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people. I assert nationhood as the reality at the *time* of contact with settler society and prior to effective European control of my Métis Nation homeland. My homeland exists due to *ancestors* and other Métis exercising their way of life over many generations and across much of what is now Canada. The recent Supreme Court case which ruled in favour of the Manitoba Métis introduces Métis Nationhood when the

judges begin their disposition with ‘Canada is a young country with ancient roots.’ (Adam, 2013). The ‘ancient roots’ lead to what is now the Métis Nation, whereby past meets the present. We, the Métis have always have had a culture, a history, a language, a worldview, and many traditions, values and beliefs, inherent in the social, economic and political foundations of a people and *nation*. My *ancestors* never denied their Métis identity or citizenship. Therefore, *nation* means we have a responsibility for leadership and supporting each other. *Ancestors* mean we honour our past and remember where we came from. *Oppressors* mean there are real threats to our existence, both from inside and out. *Allies* mean we respect the *other* and all of us are responsible for Mother Earth. *Children* mean everything and that all we do, we do for them. Even if we do not have our own *children*, we need all be concerned with future generations.

My methodology is guided by these Ways of Being and Knowing. *MWJ* helping framework will sustain my focus and provide me with purpose in conducting the research. There will be several stages that I’ll proceed through. They are the research, reflection/analysis and writing stages. The research stage is my data collection. The 20 Ways of Being and Knowing will guide my information gathering. I will conduct analysis and provide self-reflection on emerging themes related to my *MWJ* Ways of Being and Knowing. My writing will be on-going throughout, even as I am gathering information, analysing and self-reflecting. Chang (2008) illustrates this approach:

...research process is never neatly linear or sequential. Research steps often overlap and mix. For example, even after a research focus is set, it is possible for the focus to be modified and refined while data are being collected; collected data are used to validate the research focus or alter your research direction. Data

analysis begins while data collection is still in progress, and analysis facilitates the collection of more relevant and meaningful data (p. 61-62).

Consequently, the focus of research for my work moved from my earlier contemplation of interviewing others to realizing that I wanted to share what I had experienced and I would research my *self*.

I have established a set of *MWJ* Guiding Principles for each of the *MWJ* Guiding Questions. The Guiding Principles were established under the feminist notion of the ‘personal is political’ (Napikoski, 2013). The principles were my orientation in which I asked the questions of myself and context in which I provided an answer to the questions. The Research Guiding Questions and Principles of *Medicine Wheel Journey* is my research tool (see appendix 3 on pg. 114). These questions and principles form the structured interview of myself. Later, I will present the questions and principles and highlight how Seller’s Indigenous Communal Narrative evaluated my methodology.

Indigenous Communal Narrative (ICN)

ICN is the *work* of Stephanie Sellers from her text: *Native American Autobiography Redefined: a Handbook* (2007). ICN is an Indigenous-centered story. Evaluation measures are an aspect of ICN that ensures a comprehensive and Indigenous-centered story rooted in numerous aspects of Indigenous North America historical and cultural life. Sellers (2007) describes ICN as:

A work qualified as an Indigenous Communal Narrative features a single life testimony of an Indigenous person that simultaneously reveals the culture of that individual’s Native nation. The subject should appear to readers as clearly a part of her or his community, not separated or extracted from it. Notable leaders, historic events, and individuals involved in the subject’s life should be

represented from the Native perspective. The creation story of the subject's life should be presented with Native-focused interpretation and commentary. The work should reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and express them in a legitimizing manner...to ensure a culturally comprehensive finished product (p. 48-49).

The eleven areas of ICN I will use to evaluate my writing on are: Métis Nation Creation Story, Indigenous/Western Historical Review, Writer's Cultural Orientation and Education, Writer's Indigenous Nation Philosophy, Writer's Ontology and Epistemology (What I know and How I know it), Insider Knowledge, Indigenous Academic Network, Academic and Community Review, Indigenous-centered Writing, Métis Nationhood and Oppression. Later, in the analysis of ICN evaluative measures, I will further discuss in detail these eleven areas⁶. Firstly however, the following identifies how I am using the eleven measures of ICN.

My Métis Nation Creation Story grounds this thesis in a philosophical context of an Indigenous worldview. I do not intend it as representative of the Métis Nation as a whole, just my version of how my *ancestors* and I came to be.

The Indigenous/Western Historical Review is the larger story as I see it behind my *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Within this review are the origins of colonization and the resulting responses of decolonization and Indigenous-centeredness from the Settler-Métis relationship.

Writer's Cultural Orientation and Education...I am a Métis with an academic background of undergraduate *work* in Indigenous studies, Indigenous social *work*, Métis

⁶ see appendix 4 on pg. 115 for further description of Sellers' ICN Evaluative Measures.

management studies, Métis youth *work*, and graduate studies in Indigenous social *work*.

The Writer's Indigenous Nation Philosophy...I generally follow my Métis Nation philosophy of being proud of who I am, and that we collectively will again experience self-determination. Métis Nation of Alberta and Métis National Council are two representative organizations that I belong to that are striving to establish and protect our Métis rights in Canada.

Writer's Ontology and Epistemology (What I know and How I know it)...there have been very specific ways knowledge has been transferred to me. I honour my mother Evelyn and other relatives who have provided me with our *family* and *community* history and teachings in the oral tradition. Participation in ceremony and cultural activities had led to a visceral knowing that made me feel Indigenous, just being around other Indigenous people is a natural knowledge transfer. Lastly, due to the emergence since the 1970's of Indigenous academics whose writings and teachings at universities have allowed students such as myself to learn critical inquiry and analysis of issues important to Indigenous peoples and communities.

Insider Knowledge for *MWJ* can be explained as two levels. On the surface, firstly myself as a Métis, from a strong and proud Métis *family*. As an active Métis citizen involved in my Calgary Métis *community* and networking with other Métis communities in Métis Nation. Secondly, my Insider Knowledge regarding *MWJ* was as a service user of *mental* health and helping services. I have been fortunate to receive help from addiction, therapy, residential in-patient, as well as many other types of helping services.

My Indigenous Academic Network is from the learning I have experienced in Indigenous-based post-secondary programs and working with Indigenous people trained

from Indigenous-based university programs. Two of my current *teachers* are considered leading sources of knowledge on Métis history and culture.

In regards to the Academic and Community Review, this thesis supervision is the assurance of academic standards. My *elders, mentors* and *teachers* were consulted throughout as supports from my community.

The measure of Indigenous-centered Writing is this entire exercise. *MWJ* is an example of an Indigenous-centered helping framework. The Ways of Being and Knowing are my notions of Indigenous-centered worldview.

Métis Nationhood is my life story that has focused a lot on *ancestors* who have provided leadership to Métis Nation building. Through politics, the economy, and armed conflict they have expanded and maintained the boundaries that today is part of the Métis Nation homeland.

The last of the eleven evaluative measures of ICN is Oppression. I looked at this area as it affected my life and then my *ancestors*. I was well aware of oppression I experienced as a Métis. I also wondered why my European *ancestors* came to North America and then I learned of the history of oppression in Europe and the World.

Theoretical Influences

If Indigenous people decolonize and center their worldviews through learning of their life story, they are participating in their own change. As an Indigenous social worker, I am allowed to experience change through *MWJ* as a decolonization process. Indigenous-centeredness is decolonization. Originally, *MWJ* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework was my only focus. However, Indigenous-centeredness as decolonization changed me as the helper in becoming and being Indigenous-centered and decolonized. I had to change to have any impact as a helper as colonization has

devastated all Indigenous communities. Believing in Indigenous-centeredness allows me to offer a social and political correction to the realization that colonization will always exist in the world, therefore decolonization efforts will always be necessary (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 298).

I believe that decolonization and Indigenous-centeredness are mutually compatible as theories. I will provide an explanation however, as to their individual contributions to *MWJ* as a helping framework. With colonization as a major destructive force for the Indigenous peoples of Canada, decolonization is the first theory I will explore. The scholars who have inspired me to embrace this theory are Mullaly (2010) as well as Dei & Asgharzadeh (2001). Mullaly inspired me to resist oppression. His work encouraged me to work inside and against the system if it meant responding in social just ways to oppression. Dei & Asgharzadeh's work motivated me to seek social and political justice through my work. Their words have convinced me that decolonization is possible, even inevitable as an Indigenous-centered practitioner.

The recent Idle No More movement has been concerned with how colonization has sought to misappropriate all the *resources* it can steal. The movement had inspired this reader, Bill Prestwich of Dundas, Ontario to state in the Hamilton Spectator:

The prime minister's refusal to agree to the request of Chief Theresa Spence typifies the arrogant imperialism to which the First Nations have been subjected for so long, as a result of the colonization he denies exists. The Idle No More movement Spence has inspired is in large part a reaction against the reckless, irresponsible and destructive environmental policies contained in the dictatorial Bill C-45. As such, the movement doesn't just speak for the First Nations, it doesn't even just speak for mankind. It speaks for all life forms on earth. We have

a federal government devoted to the ideology of the apostles of greed. It believes its role is to be servant to the multinational corporate oligarchy now referred to as the one per cent. As pointed out by author Chris Hedges, their creed is to treat the natural world as just another commodity to be manipulated solely for purposes of the bottom line, without regard to the disastrous consequences. I guess they think when we have destroyed this planet, all we have to do is go out and buy a new one (Hamilton Spectator, 2013).

There has been an Idle No More movement building for several months now. I anticipate increased activism in the times ahead which will demonstrate more people who decide to participate in the political process. The power of social media has strengthened what used to be mostly a ‘word-of-mouth’ Native Rights movement. I for one, honor those *role models* who have been demonstrating their right to protest since the 1960’s and onward.

In addition, many scholars have also led me to Indigenous-centeredness with almost all being Indigenous academics (Alfred, 2005, Barkwell, 2005, Carriere, 2009, Devine, 2004, Graveline, 1998, Hart, 2009, Kovach, 2009, Paskievich & Whitford, 2005, Waters, 2004, Wilson, 2008, Racette, 1985, Sellers, 2007, Thomas, 2009, Waterfall, 2010). The non-Indigenous exception is Lawrence Barkwell who is an honorary Manitoba Métis whose research has allowed me to learn of some Métis *family* stories. I had the privilege of co-writing an article with him (Barkwell & Majore, 2013) due to a meeting in Winnipeg during the research phase of *Research of Self from a Sense of Place*⁷.

⁷ *Research of Self from a Sense of Place* is research and writing that occurs at locations of personal, cultural, spiritual, emotional, mental and historical significance. This research is a type of experiential learning. (This type of research was inspired by Indigenous academics Margaret Kovach and Jeannine Carriere.)

Calvin Racette and Heather Devine's writings deserve special mention for their role in influencing my sense of 'Métis-centeredness' within Indigenous-centered theory. Both scholars as it turns out are ancestrally from my traditional Métis *community* of Lebret, Saskatchewan, and recently discovered they are distantly related to me. Racette has been my *mentor* and my icon of Métis history and culture for many years. We are related through marriage. Heather Devine has also inspired me. We are both Desjarlais descendants and her *work* has provided me another ancestral connection to the Métis Nation. The three of us are considered Qu'Appelle Valley Métis.

Literature Review of Indigenous-centered Helping Frameworks

Medicine Wheel Journey as an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people is inspired by the following literature. This discussion of the literature is two-fold. The first will explore articles that influence *Medicine Wheel Journey's* 20 Ways of Being and Knowing. The second part addresses use of Indigenous-centered autobiography as a helping framework. I see this review as a way of looking at what my research has produced, how my research was influenced and the writing that resulted.

There is a wide array of literary influences upon my methodology. Authors included in this part of the literature review are: Baikie (2009), Baskin (2009), Dei & Asgharzadeh (2001), Deloria (2004), Dobbin (1978), Hart (2009), Kovach (2009), McCabe (2007), Mullaly (2010), Richardson (2006), Stewart (2008, 2009) and Thomas (2009). These writers have impacted upon me and my proposed research. The articles support my identified Ways of Being and Knowing and will be organized into themes of *self, family, community or nation*.

The articles were selected for discussion based on their relevance to my Ways of

Being and Knowing that inform *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Originally, I thought that I could neatly and orderly situate each piece of literature into one of the four Ways of Being, whether *self, family, community* and *nation* and that consequently, the articles would resonate with me when considering one of the four related Ways of Knowing that were attached to each Way of Being. As I reflected upon the literature selected, I realized that all of the author works connect and relate to *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Each writing reflects significant Ways of Being and/or Knowing (see Appendix 1). Not all the articles are Indigenous-centered. However, all the articles are in-alliance, regardless of its orientation of race, culture, ethnicity, and socio-political position to *Medicine Wheel Journey*. The literature review will first address themes explored by these authors. Secondly, I will provide a statement of how this article fits in relation to *Medicine Wheel Journey* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework.

Literature that Relates to Self: Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spiritual

Each of the authors in this section of the review present an article that informs how their Indigenous Ways can support their healing and helping of Indigenous people.

Dr. Robina Thomas' (2009) *Uy'skwuluwun: Principles for Indigenous Research* inspired my *MWJ* framework by reminding me of the *self, family, community* and *nation* as Ways of Being. I had for many years seen my Medicine Wheel as made up of *self, physical, mental, emotional* and *spiritual*. However, I had arrived at a place where there was more to *MWJ* than this limited approach to living life. Thomas' principles involved the Big House of her traditional peoples. Thomas (2009) states:

Flowing from this philosophical orientation, this course is based on the conceptual model of the Four Posts of the Big House which is an Indigenous model that comprises the key attributes of knowing/being in the world. The Four Posts of the

Big House include: a) self, family, community and nation (p. 1).

I identified strongly with the Four Posts of the Big House and borrowed them as my four Ways of Being as part of my *MWJ*.

Kovach (2009) in her chapter: '*Story as Indigenous Methodology*' contained in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* confirmed for me that there is a clear connection in my helping framework between research method and rationale. The sharing of my story represents 'story as an Indigenous methodology.' She addresses the relationship of story as the 'oral tradition' that is in a relationship to knowing and Indigenous research. (Kovach, 2009). This article is the core of the entire text as story fits well with its title. Story is an Indigenous methodology. Each story has unique characteristics. Stories lead to conversations. All stories have a context. Kovach (2009) affirms here my exploring of my sense of *self, physical, mental, emotional* and *spiritual* through life story:

To make visible the holistic, relational meaning requires a reflexive narrative by the researcher. The question undoubtedly arises – how is this different from journalism? With its emphasis on story, is it really research? The response of course, depends upon the respondent and how he or she defines research...If research is about learning, so as to enhance the well-being of the earth's inhabitants, then story is research. It provides insight from observations, experience, interactions, and intuitions that assist in developing a theory about a phenomena (p. 102).

This article fits in relation to my *Medicine Wheel Journey* by sharing how story is research method and methodology. The use of story is exemplified in what my helping framework is. Essentially, I am telling my story to demonstrate my research and application of establishing an Indigenous-centered, helping method. Kovach's article was

an amazing grounding for my literature review.

McCabe's (2007) '*The Healing Path: A Culture and Community-derived Indigenous Therapy Model*' in *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice & Training* represents the potential for *Medicine Wheel Journey* to become: 'theory, research, practice and training' (McCabe, 2007). The question addressed in McCabe's article explores the optimal characteristics of a model of Indigenous *mental* health and wellness for Indigenous practitioner and client care.

This article fits supportively in relation to the *Medicine Wheel Journey*. If I were to compare my Ways of Being and Knowing with McCabe's conditions of Indigenous healing and helping, there would be much alignment. Although, this article was placed within the realm of the *self*, as a Way of Being, it resonated with me as being integrative to most other aspects of the Ways of Being and Knowing.

Stewart's (2008) article, '*Promoting Indigenous Mental Health: Cultural perspectives on healing from Native counsellors in Canada*' in *International Journal of Health Promotion & Education*, like McCabe's really spoke to *Medicine Wheel Journey* as a research, healing and helping methodology. The question Stewart (2008) addressed in the article was 'how do Native counsellors understand the intersection of traditional Indigenous cultural conceptions of *mental* health and contemporary counselling practice?' (p. 50). Her research interest aligned with my interest in seeing *Medicine Wheel Journey* become part of a training model for practitioners and students.

The article fits well in relation to *Medicine Wheel Journey*, in that, it presents ways of working effectively with Indigenous people and communities dealing with *mental* health concerns. Indigenous-centered Ways of Being and Knowing continue be colonized and we need to recognize that we are not past the period of colonization, that

post-colonization purports. We as Indigenous practitioners have to fight for space in the clinics, hospitals, and communities to do the *work* necessary for our people, such as culturally appropriate practice. *Medicine Wheel Journey* also addresses oppression and internal oppression that is present as a result of living in a Western-dominated country and health care system.

These articles from Thomas, Kovach, McCabe and Stewart were a great grounding in settling me into my *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Thomas' article was presented first to recall the origins of my Ways of Being. Kovach's *work* reminded me that I am sharing a story and that story as research methodology and method be recognized. McCabe and Stewart's articles brought in the importance of health starting with the *self*. Both writer's blended their examination of *self* in relation to the other aspects of Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing. They explored my *self* in the context of *family, community* and *nation*.

Literature that Relates to *Family: Role Models, Mentors, Teachers & Learners*

Each of the authors in this section of the review present an article that informs how their Indigenous Ways can support their healing and helping of Indigenous families. Stewart's (2009) article, *Family Counselling as Decolonization: Exploring an Indigenous Social-Constructivist Approach in Clinical Practice in First Peoples Child & Family Review*, is aligned with my use of Indigenous-centered and decolonizing theories. She explores constructivism, which is what my theoretical influences aim to do, which is to honour the ability of Indigenous people and communities to create and *work* with their own realities. Stewart (2009) elaborates upon her *work* with Indigenous families:

Post-modern theory is a reaction to what came before, namely, modernity. Modern philosophy holds that truths exist and that the source of truth is the objectivity of

science and its rigorous method. Post-modern theories, such as constructivism hold that there is no one truth, objectivity is at best, a dubious prospect, and that we are active agents of perspectival knowledge. In the field of professional helping this means a greater sense of agency for the client, and a helper who is not an expert or leader in the session. When considering counselling across cultures, as in the case of working with Indigenous families, agency and power are huge issues at many different inter and intra-personal levels (p. 68).

Thus, Stewart reminds me of the need for helpers to allow clients to self-determine their own Ways of Being and Knowing that will inform their own life stories.

Dobbin's (1978) article, *Métis Struggles of the 20th Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society- 1935-1950, Part 3: 'Political Interference and Internal Divisions'* in *New Breed Magazine*, was especially gratifying for me. In my Ways of Being and Knowing, this written account of my Mushom (Grandfather) Tom. Dobbin's discussion with my Mushom Tom is included as a reminder that as Indigenous helpers we become who we are, due to relationships with *family, community* and *nation*. This article was based partly on a lengthy interview of my Mushom Tom from March, 1978, just four months before his death. It is a source of inspiration for me and adds to the oral tradition of what my mother, Evelyn had shared about him and his life. She recalled how he was a great speaker and leader among people. Moreover, it is an honour to read my Mushom's thoughts and views within Dobbin's article and interview that explains Métis political life at the *time* after the Great Depression and Second World War. The author makes mention of my Mushom's view of the situation at the *time*: 'Thomas Major the legally elected president, had returned from the armed services but was no longer active in Métis affairs. He was afraid that his association with radical organizations might harm the Métis cause'

(p. 13).

In this article, Dobbin (1978) provided a commentary of how colonization interfered on the political aspirations of southern Saskatchewan Métis. Furthermore, he outlined how Métis political leaders were also involved in mainstream political parties. Some were Liberals, while others including my Mushom Tom were supporters of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (now the New Democrat Party or NDP). Focusing on my Mushom, I was proud to learn of his contribution to Métis Nation, mainstream politics, to the Union of the Unemployed and the Communist Party.

My *Medicine Wheel Journey* owes a lot to my Mushom Tom and mother, Evelyn. As a single parent, my mom had the fight in her that my Mushom had in leading others. She stood up for herself and spoke her mind when she had to. Articles like Dobbin's remind me of the legacy inherent in my helping framework, whether it be *family* and *role models* or *nation* and *ancestors*. Although dated, it is a relevant *work* to include as Dobbin's *work* adds to my *Medicine Wheel Journey*.

Baikie's '*Indigenous-Centered Social Work: Theorizing a Social Work Way of Being*' in *Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada* (2009), examines the marginalization of Indigenous social *work* education, profession and practice by Euro-Western social *work*. She suggests we can incorporate Indigenous, Western, and non-Western or Eastern approaches of helping together, in local and globalized ways.

The Medicine Wheel is my Indigenous symbol of helping. As a sacred site, it is a plains peoples phenomenon. Baikie (2009) refers to Medicine Wheels as Indigenous-centered:

From an Indigenous-centered perspective, whether or not a knowledge or skill is authentic is largely irrelevant. What is more important is that a nation is open to

the exchange of ideas and experiences and makes critical and conscious choices about what is locally relevant, culturally consistent and politically empowering... What is useful and pragmatic is more important than what is traditional or authentic. Furthermore, an Indigenous-centered perspective challenges the notion that culture is static and restricted to what was known or practised prior to European colonization. Instead, this orientation incorporates all historical and contemporary experiences, including current innovations emerging from Indigenous social workers practicing in the complexity of their environments (p. 50-51).

This article fits in appropriately in relation to my *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Up until recently, and thanks to articles like Baikie's, I wondered what research method to apply my *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Choosing autobiography, I discovered, served to strengthen me an Indigenous-centered helper. Sometimes value can result from worldviews of the *others* which enhance our sense of Indigenousness.

Baskin's (2009) questions addressed in the article, '*Evolution and Revolution: Healing Approaches with Aboriginal People*' in *Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada* include: 'What do Indigenous and Western approaches to helping Indigenous adults look like? Do Indigenous culture-based healing programs exist or are they combined with Western approaches to social *work*? and, what Indigenous approaches are of benefit to all of humanity and are they showing up in non-Indigenous services? (p. 133-134). Her questions have motivated me to combine autobiography to Ways of Being and Knowing. Baskin's views support an Indigenous-centered helping framework:

An Indigenous approach to social work and being a helper is one that seeks harmony and balance among individuals, the family and community... In using

the teachings that have been given to Indigenous peoples, the worldviews strive to re-balance all aspects of an individual, family, community and society... This is one of the most fundamental teachings and is the basis for learning to work from an Indigenous worldview (p. 137).

This author is a valuable ally to my *Medicine Wheel Journey*. As an Indigenous social work scholar, I am encouraged that I have Baskin's example to follow. My view of how the articles fit into my research method often changed as I engaged further with the articles. Often, the relationship the articles hold to each other allowed me to determine their place in my research.

Stewart, Dobbin, Baikie and Baskin's articles reminded me in some way of how my sense of *family* impacted upon me. Each of these author's were *role models*, *mentors* and *teachers* for me. Dobbin being clearly special for referring to the 'social work' of my Mushom Tom.

Literature that Relates to *Community: Location, Work, Time & Resources*

This section of the review presents an article that informs how Indigenous Ways can support the healing and helping of Indigenous communities.

Richardson's (2006) article, *Métis Identity Creation and Tactical Responses to Oppression and Racism in Varigations*, to me speaks to the sense of *location* in some Métis people who could benefit from this MWJ helping framework:

At the beginning of the study, when I asked Métis people to tell me some of their Métis stories, participants commonly replied that they didn't have any. When they told me the story of their life and their journey towards a greater sense of Métis self, I would then retell the story to them. Participants were commonly astonished that they had "a Métis story" – often a story of not knowing what it means to be

Métis after generations of keeping Métis culture hidden or “underground” and the process of finding their way back home (p. 67).

I am grateful to Richardson for her contribution to the health and wellness of the Métis Nation.

Hart’s (2009) ‘*For Indigenous People, by Indigenous People, with Indigenous People: Towards an Indigenist Research Paradigm*’ in *Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada*, addresses the need to assert Indigenous research paradigms within the world of higher education. He is concerned with how non-Indigenous academics marginalize and oppress attempts by Indigenous students to research using Indigenous paradigms. Hart presents his Indigenous research paradigm and provides explanation of the values and worldview inherent in his methodology. Self-reflection was paramount to his research as it was to my *MWJ*. Hart (2009) states:

It included my previous experiences that I determined to be part of this research. This inclusion reflects the principle that I was to be part of this research and as such, that my life experiences were part of and have likely shaped the research. It fits within the previously outlined Indigenous research paradigm, which requires the total involvement of the researcher with their environment (p. 163).

This article fits appropriately in relation to *Medicine Wheel Journey*. Hart’s (2002) strong commentary mirrors my own stance. I have admired his writings ever since I read, ‘*Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping*’. In this text, Hart (2002) personally locates with honesty and courage, which is what our communities need us to do:

Helpers following an Aboriginal approach recognize that they are role models of positive growth and well-being. Thus, helpers begin the helping process by

addressing themselves. They prepare themselves to help others by establishing and maintaining an awareness of their own emotional, mental, spiritual and physical well-being...They also see their own wellness in relation to the wellness of their own families, communities and nations...Their contribution to the wellness of their community or to the development of their nation is done in a way which maintains their support of their own families' well-being (p. 105).

Hart is an author who I consider an ally to my helping framework. Hart's article reminds me of our responsibility to give back to our communities. I believe we are only as strong as the people around us. As we practice accountability to others, we can in turn hold others accountable to our communities. The authors, Richardson and Hart have informed my sense of identity as an Indigenous helper in helping Indigenous peoples and communities.

Literature that Relates to *Nation: Ancestors, Oppressors, Allies & Children*

Each of the authors in this section of the review present an article that informs how their Indigenous Ways can support their healing and helping of Indigenous nations. Mostly, articles of this part of the review are placed within *nation* as a Way of Being. Each of these writers offer an Indigenous philosophy that contributes to all aspects of my Ways of Being and Knowing. I have intentionally sought out articles that inspired my thinking around how to begin, continue and maintain my sense of learning an Indigenous-centered, helping framework.

Deloria's (2004) article, '*Philosophy and the Tribal Peoples*' in *American Indian Thought*, contains many questions I share through engaging in research and writing. His questions as mine relate to: how will Indigenous philosophers come to find a place in the Western academy? How will they not be able to assimilate to find their voice? Will the

academy ‘allow’ Indigenous thinkers and writers into ‘their’ domain in order to acculturate them? Deloria’s article reminds me that outsiders will apply Western critique and Indigenous people will apply a traditional Indigenous critique to engage me in discussions of how my helping framework works as I intend it to *work*. I have to be able to explain, ‘how is it that I know what I know? We owe this not only to others, but to ourselves and people coming after us. Deloria (2004) speaks to the importance of *children* raised to be part of the collectives of Indigenous Nations:

Beginning even before birth, people prayed for the unborn child in an effort to establish a family context into which she/he would be born. The pregnant mother visualized the heroic people that she knew, hoping that her thoughts would help the baby develop while yet in the womb. Through the family, clan, and society there was never a time an individual Indian was not a part of the cooperative activities of others. It was believed that people are the sum total of their relationships (p. 10).

Consequently, the importance of the *nation* and *children* were upheld by ensuring all individuals related to the entire network of people.

In the article, ‘*The Power of Social Theory: The Anti-colonial Discursive Framework*’ in the *Journal of Educational Thought*, Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) address the need to ‘problematize’ ways of knowing that do not support anti-colonization efforts of the marginalized and subordinated. The authors describe their position best: the relevance of a theory should be seen in how it allows us to understand the complexity of human society and to offer a social and political corrective – that is, the power of theories and ideas to bring about change and transformation in social life’ (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 300). My hope is for my *Medicine Wheel Journey* to count among such

discourse.

My *Medicine Wheel Journey* has been impacted by just a few outsiders to my sense of Indigeniety. However, I realized that with Dei and Asgharzadeh, Indigeniety includes people the world over. The commonality is how have all of us responded to colonialism and what can we do together in the future? My model suggests the need for *allies* in addressing *oppressors*. Dei and Asgharzadeh have been among my most influential sources of decolonizing thought. I see my helping framework as they see theirs, a discursive framework which is adaptive and flexible, open to the discourse of decolonization.

Hart's (2009) '*Anti-colonial Indigenous Social Work*' in *Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada* addresses the fact that colonialism still exists and is still destroying Indigenous people. Hart sets out to remind us of how we have a tradition of natural helpers who were effective at caring for others in the *community*. He adds that Indigenous-centered social *work* is also a decolonizing social *work*. Hart (2009) has stated the way forward that supports my sense of Indigenous-centered helping:

Colonialism continues to exist, occasionally transforming shape like the tricksters in our traditional stories. We need to continually reflect on our practice to see how it represents the characteristics and goals of Indigenism and anti-colonialism. To me, this means as Indigenous helpers who happen to be social workers, we need to walk forward with at least two commitments in mind. First, we must acknowledge the existence of, and work against, colonial oppression. Second, we need to work from our hearts while reaching for our peoples' dreams and visions, where our hearts are firmly rooted in our peoples, traditions and cultures, and our dreams include peace for our peoples (p. 41).

Hart's (2009) article as does his previous one (2002), sits well in alignment to my *Medicine Wheel Journey*. I appreciate his frustration with encountering a person who claimed that colonization was a thing of the past. I have witnessed other helpers who are part of privileged societies ask 'why are Indigenous people continuing with blaming residential schools?' This legacy actively lasted for over a century. We should not blame the victims and we need to allow for at least a hundred years of healing. We do not tell cancer victims to just get on with it. My framework seeks to expose and address *oppressors* and their oppression. I seek to provide a framework of what to do in response to cultural genocide.

Mullaly's (2010) '*Unpacking Our Knapsacks of Invisible Privilege: What Can We Do?*' in *Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege* speaks to the responsibility of all of us to address oppression and understand how privilege works to perpetuate oppression upon others. I choose this article deliberately to become motivated with the future after being engrossed in the problem of colonization throughout this examination. Mullaly offers ways to assert responses towards privilege and oppression, which the latter two for me are the products of colonization. One of the Mullaly's (2010) decolonization methods that I have practiced recently with Idle No More movement is: 'Make noise and be seen. Every system of privilege and oppression depends on silence. Rather than collude in it, we should show up, stand up, speak out, sign petitions, write letters, volunteer' (p. 316). Mullaly's article in relation to my *Medicine Wheel Journey* reminds me that as an Indigenous person, I certainly have seen oppression. I see the need in my model to confront internalized oppression and our own privilege as well.

All these authors' *work* have supported my view of *nation* as a Way of Being. Collectively, the articles within the literature review speak to what I think is relevant to

my research question of how can *Medicine Wheel Journey* inform an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people? Moving forward, I am strengthened in my Ways of Being and Knowing.

Literature Review of Indigenous-centered Autobiographies

Sellers (2007) believes the written word of non-Indigenous writers whose intention was to colonize Indigenous people, can now be reversed by Indigenous writers:

What was used to disperse and destroy culture must now be used to gather and grow that culture: return it to wholeness on the page and therefore in the minds of the people. This goal can be achieved by allowing Native culture to be expressed via, within, and through the written word and create a shape for those words that is undeniably Indigenous (p. vii).

All these authors have impacted me with their written or spoken word. I am privileged to know or have met some of them, and at least heard them speak in public. I will discuss the following scholars and their books as part of this part of the literature review. Authors included in this part of the literature review are: Adams (1975), Campbell (1973), Daniels (2002), Hart (2002), Wilson (2008), Kovach (2009), Carriere (2010) and Devine (2004, 2010).

Howard Adams' *Prison of Grass* (1975) is one of the original writings of decolonization and Indigenous-centered practice in the Métis Nation and Canada. He exposed and framed colonization for many Métis people and leaders that I admired, one being the late Jim Sinclair, who succeeded him as president of the Association of Métis & Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan. Adams (1975) stated:

Since I am a Métis, I have developed the historical discussion as much as possible from a native viewpoint. I hope that this interpretation will unmask both the

white-supremacist and white liberal that the natives were warring savages without any government, who craved white civilization. Three hundred years of white supremacy, imperialism, colonization, and capitalism are discussed in terms of their effect on the native people and their nation. Racism and colonization are analysed as both subjective and objective conditions in order to show how imperialism operates to conquer and colonize Indians and Métis, while seizing their land and resources at the same time (p. x-xi).

However, Adam's writing was essentially about providing a way to decolonization and Indigenous-centeredness. In my early days (1988) of Métis political activism, he was known as a *role model*, *mentor*, and *teacher* to many. Adam (1975) states:

In the struggle for liberation, the native people are asked to put their confidence in the good intentions of the colonizers. While it is true that certain decolonization is taking place, it is false to pretend that it is the result of the changing nature of man and of the state. The optimism that prevails today for liberation is not based on the fact that capitalism is becoming more humane or that colonialism is becoming more just. It is simply that the advanced liberal corporate state is able to co-opt native nationalism and revolutionary consciousness...The Indians and Métis are now concerned with giving a native dimension to their lives and actions because identity helps in the struggle against colonialism. This struggle for liberation is a long and arduous one, yet it is for this reason that it must be fought without respite and without compromise. We have to do this by working at all levels of the liberation struggle...The racism and colonialism of capitalism will always hold us captive in misery, violence, and exploitation. It is time that we recognized our own power and faced the fact that our solutions lie within ourselves.

Revolution can be made only by those who are in a state of revolution (p. 215-216).

Adams' legacy continues today in the world of Métis politics. In Saskatchewan, leaders that I am acquainted with are striving to become recognized as the representative politicians for their communities.

Maria Campbell's *Half Breed* (1973) is the first significant Métis women's writing of our *time*. She shares a message of anti-oppression that involves Indigenous people and their *allies* uniting together to provide resistance to a common foe. Today's neo-conservatives through the federal government have led to the common movement of Idle No More. Campbell (1973) said:

The blanket that our leaders almost threw away suddenly started to feel warm again, and they wrapped it tightly around them. Those of us who saw what was happening and spoke out against it were phased out and branded as communists...I believe one day, very soon, people will set aside their differences and come together as one. Maybe not because we love one another, but because we will need each other to survive. Then together we will fight our common enemies. Change will come because this time we won't give up. There is growing evidence of that today (p. 183-184).

I once met Maria Campbell through a very important *mentor*, Gillis Lavalley. They were both with Métis Nation – Saskatchewan. She was the first Métis writer I ever met and it was an awesome feeling. I felt then as I do now that authors like Campbell have a significant contribution to society and she stood as a *role model* for me, as a Métis, a fighter and a writer.

Harry Daniels in the *Foreword* to '*Who are Canada's Aboriginal Peoples?*'?

(Chartrand, 2002), shares his own account of negotiating the term Métis into the *Canadian Constitution of 1982*. I am proud to say I learned from him in Métis meetings and workshops. Here is Daniel's version (Chartrand, 2002) of dealing with Canada's federal and provincial leaders of the *time*:

Chretien immediately approached me, and upon hearing my proposal for a change, asked if I would go to London to support patriation if the proposal were accepted. I agreed, provided "Métis" was included. Minutes later, Chretien announced he had negotiated as far as possible and could not support my proposal. I should allow my assistant's notes to describe my reaction at this point: 'HWD' (Harry W. Daniels) was angry and frustrated, with clenched fist he replied, 'Then I mobilize my people, that's the only thing we'll accept (p. 12).

The mainstream political powers relented and Métis were included as Aboriginal rights-holders in the new Canadian Constitution of 1982.

Michael Anthony Hart's '*Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping*' (2002) is at my core of understanding myself as an Indigenous helper, mostly because I need more Indigenous male *role models* like him to learn from. Hart (2002) describes here his commitment to Indigenous-centered helping:

My experiences here show me the limitless abilities of Aboriginal people when given the opportunity to develop, implement and deliver programs that follow the direction and desires of the people we serve. These experiences have shaped me, particularly in my role as a social worker, and I have come to hold certain beliefs very strongly. I believe all people have abilities, some of which are more pronounced than others. Many Aboriginal peoples refer to these as gifts. I believe we are to seek out these gifts and try to understand how they are to be used.

Indeed, this belief is demonstrated in our peoples' practices of fasts, vision quests and the deep contemplation experienced in many ceremonies. I believe we are to use our gifts for the betterment, wellness and self-determination, not only of ourselves, but also of our families, communities and nations (p. 19).

It is my hope that *MWJ* as an Indigenous-centered helping method can help those people we serve to identify their gifts as well as compliment those people who are using their gifts to thrive in spite of colonization.

Shawn Wilson's '*Research is Ceremony*' (2008) was his story of placing himself into research as ceremony. He took scientific research terms and plainly explained them which resonated for me the idea that I do know and can relate to this 'research language'. In regards to epistemology, Wilson (2008) simply states: '(epistemology)...includes entire systems of knowledge and relationships...they include environmental and *spiritual* relationships, and relationships with ideas. Indigenous epistemology is our culture, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities, and our places in the cosmos' (p. 74). Wilson shared his own story that involved his *family* and *community*. I see from his *work* how our personhood affects and is affected by our research.

Maggie Kovach's *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (2009) proved to be one of my motivators to revisit my roots in Saskatchewan and travel to places for the first *time*, like I did with going to Hungary. I refer to this as *Research of Self from a Sense of Place*. My further research into *ancestors* revealed places of birth, burial and places of *ancestors* and how they lived their lives. I have explored *family* names, events, and histories of places and have journeyed throughout the Métis Nation Homeland in Canada and the northern United States, and Hungary. Kovach (2009) explains here her experience:

By being in Saskatchewan, I was able to consider not just Indigenous ways of knowing but my own Nehiyaw and Saulteaux heritage, and I spent time with each of my two families. I began learning Plains Cree. I crossed over from being a younger Auntie to a kokum (because as my sister says, that is what I am now). I made bannock and pickles. I attended traditional ceremonies and community fundraisers for school trips. I made road trips from Regina to Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria where I had conversations with Indigenous scholars and researchers, simultaneously rekindling old friendships and making new ones. I developed a research framework based on a tribal epistemology or Nehiyaw Kiskeyihtamowin. The list goes on. When I left Victoria, I was focusing so intently on how the sacred comes into research that I almost missed how the sacred is our research (p. 182-183).

Kovach's reference to the 'sacred is our research' reaffirms my knowledge of my *ancestors*. I feel a sacred responsibility to *be with them and pray with them*. I believe in visiting the places where they lived and died, and try to bring forward the past to the present.

Jeannine Carriere's *Aski Awasis/Children of the Earth: First Peoples Speaking on Adoption* (2010) is my example of a *role model* that I can identify with.

In order to write about connectedness, I had to experience it myself and come to truly understand what it means to me as an adoptee. These days, I feel pretty lucky, which is what my birth siblings, who were not adopted, have always told me. I know now that my rebellion, my addictions and other painful experiences were not really about me being unlovable, nor did they occur because my adoptive parents did not love me. My search for myself led me to some dangerous

places, but now I have come full circle. I know who I am and where I come from.

And that, my friends, is the strength of connectedness (p. 15-16).

Her courage of journeying through issues is what I have experienced in this research and writing. Carriere motivated me that I too had a story worth telling and that as a Métis, I have an ability to research and write.

Heather Devine's *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660 – 1900* (2004) has been a valuable chronicle of my Desjarlais *family* lineage. Devine (2004) reminds me that examination of *ancestors* is an Indigenous-centered and decolonizing exercise:

Despite the negative impact of many government policies on aboriginal families and communities, the tools needed for reformulating ethnic identity and revitalizing communities exists. Today thousands of people of mixed ancestry are using the vast accumulation of corporate, government, and religious records to document their origins and reclaim their Native heritage. In archives and libraries, at genealogical workshops and family reunions, on Internet newsgroups, and at aboriginal festivals and conferences, they exchange their family histories, meet their distant cousins, and discuss their shared experience of being Metis-in-diaspora (p. 209).

Also, Devine's *Being & Becoming Métis: A Personal Reflection in Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories* (2010), has been a direct source of commentary for autobiographical research and writing. Devine (2010) spoke to the experience of engaging in life writing which affirmed some of my concerns with sharing my life story with others:

This reflection has been much more difficult, personally, than I could have

anticipated. On the one hand, it is difficult to articulate what is essentially my private experience and that of my immediate family and package it for public scrutiny. I feel vulnerable in such a situation. On the other hand, from an academic perspective, I have always had a problem with the uncritical acceptance of autobiographical sources to understand the experiences of a group of people (p. 181).

Devine's reasoning here is also my basis for describing my 20 Ways of Being and Knowing as 'self-identified Indigenous' as opposed to 'Indigenous' Ways of Being and Knowing, which could be construed as the 'Indigenous Truth'. The self-identified Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing are my story of Métis Nation as I believe it to be and I am in no way meaning to be a representative of Métis Nation entirely.

Dr. Heather Devine is my *role model, mentor and teacher*. This excerpt of Devine (2010) for me, characterizes her and her *work*:

This is the case for the Canadian Métis, who have spent most of the past few decades reasserting their long submerged collective and individual identities. The Canadian Métis are unique among North American peoples of mixed peoples of mixed race. Unlike our métis relations elsewhere, we were able to develop a distinct and separate ethnic identity on the North American continent, despite the assimilative pressures of both our Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parent cultures. The process of "reclaiming, reconnecting, and reordering" one's Métis identity remains poorly understood, largely because we have had to depend on the willingness of individual Métis to take on the task of articulating this process of ethnogenesis in a manner accessible to academics and members of the public (p. 183).

Many of these authors did not write intentional autobiographies. However, they all shared parts of themselves and at least parts of their stories, demonstrating what Indigenous-centeredness and decolonization is for them. Their voices motivated me to tell my story.

Autobiographical Research: Sharing of *Medicine Wheel Journey*

First a discussion of research terminology, methods and methodology is necessary to clarify my research. Secondly, I will present my autobiographical research results.

Through use of autobiography, I became interested in learning what Indigenous-centered academics have written autobiographically. *MWJ* will be an addition to this field of study. Our communities need to also have written works to encourage Indigenous-centeredness, like the oral tradition of sharing of story.

Originally, I believed that each of my research questions would produce relatively even amounts of information from me, however I realized that my interest concentrated on *family: role models, mentors, teachers and learners* and *nation: ancestors, oppressors, allies and children*.

Furthermore, autobiographical approach is a form of memoir that expands on themes from one's life (Chang, 2008). Essentially, it is my belief that if I come to know and tell my life story of my *MWJ*, I can teach this process of knowledge seeking to people I am helping. The idea being that knowing one's own history and culture or knowing their 'story' is an Indigenous-centered way of improving and maintaining *mental* health. My *elders* have always shared with me our history and culture. This knowledge transfer kept us strong and connected as young people. This conditioning of hearing elder's stories allowed us to live properly and be who we were meant to be. We became prepared to be Métis in this world.

In demonstrating the theory and methodological framework behind each of my

Research Guiding Questions, I will present each of the twenty questions for my self-interview, followed by a corresponding Research Guiding Principle. Examining the research questions and principles will be the first step of my research. The steps to conducting the research will follow a process that involves my *MWJ* approach to autobiography. My research process is described in Appendix 2 – Steps in the Research Process. A presentation of the research findings follows here.

Gathering Primary & Secondary Source Information

My information gathering categories will collectively be called primary sources. Primary sources of research included my memories, personal experiences and self-reflections. These sources are my interpretation of *self*, my past, my issues and my accomplishments. This research method is called autobiography. My use of autobiography was structured into a narrative that followed the 20 Self-identified Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing. These themes were formed during a period of self-reflection in 2010, known as ‘self-conscious traditionalism’ (Waterfall, 2010). I formulated the Guiding Questions and Principles as a method to research and write *Medicine Wheel Journey: an Indigenous-centered helping framework*.

My information-gathering was organized by the 20 categories of my Ways of Being and Knowing, and by the 20 Guiding Questions and Principles. Most of my information related to *self, mental, emotional, family, role models, mentors, teachers, learners, community, location, work, nation, ancestors*, and oppression. The other categories were not significant during the *time* I spent researching. However, the category of *spiritual*, I realized I would explore in a personal way and in the oral tradition rather than write about it at great length here. Other categories like *resources, allies* and *children* deserve a focus of research that I realized were areas I would give less attention

toward, as I felt they needed more recognition than this research effort. The remaining two categories of *physical* and *time*, also proved to be areas that while not entirely ignored, needed to be left for another research endeavour. These were categories I researched and wrote about least. However, they remain as integral Ways of Being and Knowing for *MWJ* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework.

These information-gathering parameters created context for what was shared. I did not want *MWJ* to be a platform for listing accomplishments or disclosing my unresolved issues. However, *MWJ* may still appear to be such a platform to some. I will elaborate upon the research experience using short-hand notes that are single-spaced. The notes will be then be followed by commentary. The notes are my memories and the commentary that follows are my thoughts about the memories.

Primary Sources related to Guiding Questions and Principles

Self: born premature, cerebral palsy, abused and ridiculed, called 'cripple'...

The memory of my mom telling me about my birth was a shaming experience for me. I believe the words she shared were her sarcastic way to avoid looking at the past. Despite having *physical* limitations, I did my best in everything I tried. My condition led me to use my mind over my hands. All my brothers did not have such *physical* limits and worked in areas related to industry. I came through the abuse and ridicule as someone who lashes out at the first signs of disrespect which can be a protective mechanism, as well, can also be a shortcoming in getting along well with others.

Family: tough, our Mom doing the work alone, lack of stability, abuse/violence, ingrained in the colonizer's culture, still gave love/caring/support, Dad and estrangement, abuse, violence, neglect, addiction, crime, forgiveness/discovery of a proud Szekely culture...

Mom said that her decision to not marry was her choice. Perhaps, but I believe

social determinants dictate the roads available to us until *resources* are added in to allow for better routes to quality of life. She was a fighter though, able to get through the violence of Dad and whatever life threw at her. She was always there for me and still is. I learned that fathers have a huge impact on sons, and my Dad's influence was he taught me what not to do. He was not an example to follow in leading the good life. I did have good experiences with him. I am reminded of how people are neither all good or all bad. People, even Dads, are just what they are.

Community: Métis, urban Aboriginal, Canadian, Hungarian/Szekely...

I can have many aspects to my sense of *community*. I am not just one truth, I am many truths. However, the strongest sense of *community* I have comes from my Métisness. I believe it to be my 'blood memory,' (Pember, 2010) a concept that implies that we are who we are because of knowing our past due to memories that come through our inner-being. My pride in *community* is supported by the relationships I have with others in my *community*.

I am from crime, poverty...

My past neighbourhood of Regina, Saskatchewan was described by MacLean's magazine as 'Canada's Worst Neighbourhood' (Gatehouse, 2007). There is good and bad wherever you go, and 'home is what you make it.' The recognition that times were tough there, could not be argued. It was frustrating, when too much attention was given by the mainstream to the wrong issues, such as crime in the community and whereas inadequate resources should have been the real basis of the story. Even though I moved away to Calgary in 2001, I moved back to Regina in 2007-2008. I remember thinking, 'we know it can be bad, but not the worst neighbourhood, is it?'

I belong to Métis community, from Hungarian Szekely heritage...

I am genetically and racially connected to numerous origins of people. I identify with the history and culture of the Métis, Cree, Ojibwa, Scottish, Irish, and French. Europe's Indigenous people that I descend from are the Norsemen/Vikings, Celts, Picts Szekelys and the Huns.

Nation: Research of Self from a Sense of Place...

I have resided in Calgary and Regina for most of my life and had lived in the traditional Métis *community* of Qu'Appelle Valley. My sense of *self* is rooted in the prairies. I have researched and wrote in Calgary, Cypress Hills, Regina, and Qu'Appelle Valley, Winnipeg, Montreal, New York state and Hungary. My future plans to research and write involve many places. In the years ahead, I plan to further experience a large part of Western, Central, Eastern Canada including northern Ontario, the St. Lawrence River Valley, parts of the northern U.S., namely the states of North Dakota and east to the Great Lakes region. Lastly, my research and writing experience will include parts of Europe, namely Scotland, Ireland, England, Belgium, France and Romania. These countries are in my future plans as a way to honour my *ancestors*.

Secondary Sources related to Guiding Questions and Principles

Secondary sources of research included documents and correspondence related to school, *work*, and accomplishments, articles and books, both print and internet, and a collection of personal photos. Many of the secondary information sources also described my story of *self, family, community* and *nation*.

Much of my social and political life is portrayed in photos and documents contained in my personal portfolio. I am grateful to have compiled this *work* I refer to as my *Medicine Wheel Journey: Album of Reflection* (Majore, 2009). The focus of this thesis being *MWJ* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework came from this album.

I met relatives online through my passion to learn who my *family* is, really who my *self* really is. I discovered a historic ancestral connection to Hungary from as early as 5th century A.D. These were the Szekely people descendant from the Huns and Turkic peoples of Asia. Part of the learning significance for me was the genealogy information that explained the cultural context of *ancestors*. This realization motivated me to take a long look into European and world history. I for one, as a Métis, had not really considered history as being significant to my life and I was ignorant to my history as a person. I became proud of all the history and culture I was interrelated to. My sense of a shared history grew and I identified with other Canadians and Europeans, even to some extent, Americans and Asians. The theoretical origins of my *ancestors* have spanned most of the globe.

Regarding family photos: these ancestors are my role models who were leaders of their community, and defended the nation, built community, examples of hard work and building resources...

I am grateful to have these photos. They are a link to a proud legacy of culture and history. A look into the eyes of these men and women inspires me to learn of them and share about the times in which they lived. Much of *MWJ* has become about them. We as a members of a *family*, *community* and *nation* owe much to our *ancestors*.

My documents and correspondence related to school: bursaries, assignments and essays...

The Royal Canadian Legion awarded me two bursaries as an undergraduate. As a grandchild of my Mushom Tom who served in WWII and other merit criteria, I was fortunate to receive their support. My high school counsellor deserves the credit for helping with this and gaining entrance to university.

The Alberta Human Services' Non-Status Indian & Métis Bursary allowed me to

pay for tuition and books for part of my undergraduate social *work* courses and all of my graduate social *work* courses. I had often realized that my main barrier to further education was a lack of finances, and this bursary enabled me to participate in post-secondary education.

My school assignments and essays...

In grade 7, I interviewed my Mom and wrote the story called ‘*My Family.*’ The story included my Mushom Tom. I learned he harvested ice and built roads. We had Métis foods and we enjoyed a social and *family* life.

Secondly, during this social *work* graduate learning, I completed my *MWJ* portfolio called Album of Reflection, which led me to establish this thesis. As a result, I have informed my *work* in Aboriginal *mental* health with Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing. My social *work* practice is already strengthened in helping clients. I have been privileged to see the growth of cultural confidence and pride in people I have served, whereby they shared stories of how their families and communities have transferred Indigenous knowledge to them. I recall of how people’s faces have glowed and their postures straightened, as they shared their own Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing.

Also, I have completed many university assignments on the Métis. I have related Métis issues to politics and rights. I now realize that these principles of our society arise from Métis culture and history. We do not have anything if we do not have a culture and a history. I now have a realization of the importance of Supreme Court Harvesting Rights cases. I sat among the many *elders* in Calgary Court in the winter of 2013 where a panel of judges heard arguments to the question of whether or not Métis had lived in southern Alberta prior to ‘effective European control’ which has been determined as 1874, the year the North West Mounted Police were established here. The Métis Nation asserts we were

already here. My Great Grandmother, Marie Desjarlais was born at Cypress Hills, Alberta in 1873. The judges have reserved their decision which will likely be released sometime this year.

Regarding my work...

I have experience in almost every area of social *work*, whether Métis, Aboriginal, addictions, youth, *family, community*, government & non-government, *community*-based, child welfare, justice, education, training & employment, health, *mental* health, *family* violence, women's shelters, foster care, and fundraising. I have a passion where I *work* now. We have nothing else, if not for our health. Currently, I am serving the longest now in any job I ever had. The program I *work* for has been the most resourced and meaningful and I hope to remain for many years to come.

My accomplishments have been a source of pride. I have realized that social *work* is a 'quiet revolution' where I am just able to build Métis and Aboriginal cultural capacity with some individuals and groups. It is a 'marathon not a sprint' so I have begun to slow down and pace myself to make a career of this *work*.

My reference letters have been impactful to my acceptance into school and meaningful employment. I have had the experience of having every one of my many letters endorsed by my previous employers spanning almost twenty years. The references were the key for my current employer in recognizing the experience I bring to my role.

My social and cultural life...

I have been involved in numerous Métis and Aboriginal *community* events for many years. I have been 'raised in the culture.' I can say that I 'always knew I was Métis.' Unfortunately many can't say that because of colonization. *MWJ* is an attempt to

correct this social injustice which is part of *Canada's War on Indigenous Peoples*⁸. I have been able to address colonization by sharing the *MWJ* story in counselling sessions, at agency presentations, and at *community* gatherings.

Through internet and social networking...

I found new relatives and friends to collaborate with in building my knowledge of *family*, culture and history, both Métis and Hungarian. Having a strong online *community* is a key to the future of Indigenous-centered, decolonizing practice.

The genealogy websites I have been able to find have been very informative in confirming the oral history I have learned. I have met Grant Clan *family* members when I travelled to Montana in 2005. They are descendants of Johnny Grant of Fort Edmonton and Montana fame. From this *family*, Peter Grant shared with me his experience as part of legal team which won *Delgamuukw vs. the Queen* in 1998, which determined First Nation interests to be paramount over Canadian Constitutional interests in cases where traditional lands have been unceded to the Crown. In 2012, the Grant Clan of Canada had been recognized by the Grant Clan Chieftain of Scotland.

Also in 2007, through online networking I met 3rd cousins from Rocky Boy's Reservation. I travelled to Montana in 2007, and met them and their families. We are all Major/Majore descendants from Lebret. My mom always shared with me that they were living there and I finally was able to visit them. My Great Aunt Agnes Pelletier is a symbol of unification to my American cousins as she is directly descended from their *family* line but also married to my mom's Pelletier side, which is a common occurrence to be related in two or more ways to the same relative.

Furthermore, I met through online networking Beth Long and Lazslo Rudolf in

⁸ My assertion that colonization is *War* for the purpose of the colonizer to destroy the colonized.

Hungary who are world authorities in Hungarian Szekely heritage. I learned of my Dad's history and culture. I determined my Szekely heritage dates back to the earliest origins of Hungarian society.

From these genealogical sources, I have placed ancestral names involved in social and political life in a variety of contexts. I will start with the earliest known story. Benjamin Lyons, a 7th Great Grandfather was involved in the French and Indian War in Canada, which was part of the worldwide Seven Years War (1754 – 1763). Lyons was a merchant for the British Army. I am not aware of his European origins, but he is likely English, as he served with the Hudson Bay Company. Lyons was among the first Jewish fur traders (Dunn, 2000). He was part of Fort Michilimackinac, later called Mackinac in 1760. Between he and his son, my 6th Great Grandfather, Robert Lyons, served the fur trade at Fort Albany, Osnaburgh House, Brandon House and Fort Gibraltar, of which the last *location* I was able to visit at Winnipeg this past spring. I mention this visit because the Fort was supposed to be closed at the time I was there, but I believe the Creator was working that day when the big main gate was open for me to walk through and see some of this ancestral place.

My 6th Great Grandfather was John Kipling Sr. The Kipling *family* came from England. He was a Factor at Gloucester House. John Sr. is viewed as the patriarch of the North American Kipling descendants.

John Sr.'s daughter Margaret married Robert Lyons son, John Lyons. John, the latter, was my 5th Great Grandfather and was at Brandon House of the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) in 1816. He was asked to confront the North West Company (NWC) during the Pemmican Wars (Still, 2012). This is where my *family* history entangles whereby my Métis ancestor, Lyons avoids dealing with the following ancestor, Cuthbert

Grant Jr. who led the NWC's Métis involved with the fur trade company conflicts.

Cuthbert Grant Sr. was my 4th Great Grandfather who was a partner in the NWC. His son, Cuthbert Jr. was my 3rd Great Grandfather and is recognized the first leader of the Métis Nation. He was involved in the fur trade companies' Pemmican War of 1812 – 1814, which involved the Battle of Seven Oaks. Grant Jr. was important to the Red River settlement and their concern with the Sioux Wars (MacLeod & Morton, 1974).

The McGillis *family* came from Scotland and were an original part of the 13 British colonies, one of which is now New York state. I visited Johnstown, N.Y. which was their *community* until they relocated to Glengarry near Cornwall, Ontario. My 5th Great Grandfather was Sgt. Donald Ban Mor McGillis who was a United Empire Loyalist who came to Canada during the American Revolution. My *ancestors* from this *family* were soldiers in Scotland and were part of Canada's first militias, which later defended Canada in the War of 1812 (McDonald, 2012).

Jean Jacques De Gerlais/Desjarlais was one of the original Belgians who came to Canada as a soldier in the late 1600's. He was involved in the Iroquois Wars in the late 17th century. He settled at Riviere du Loup. His Desjarlais descendants settled into the fur trade and buffalo hunt at Baie St. Paul district at Red River. The Desjarlais' of this area were 'Freemen' who participated in the 'Freemen's War' that led to the Sayer Trial of 1849. The outcome essentially allowed for Métis 'free traders' who could trade without HBC dictating the economy (Devine, 2004). My Great Grandmother, Marie Desjarlais married my Great Grandfather Alfred Major.

The Pelletier *family* was known to arrive in New France, Canada in 1636. Nicholas Pelletier was my 9th Great Grandfather. His son, my 8th Great Grandfather, Francois Pelletier Antaya was an early fur trader of the mid-17th century. The *family*

became part of the XY fur trade company and eventually settled in the late 1700's in North Dakota, at Assumption Mission near Pembina. My 5th Great Grandfather, Antoine Pelletier of the NWC becomes settled there and marries Marguerite, a Saulteaux-Assiniboine woman. Baie Ste Paul at Red River is also a Pelletier place of settlement. By the 1860's, the Pelletier *family* settles in and around the Qu'Appelle Valley of southern Saskatchewan. My Great Uncle Mike who could jig on a bread board if he had to and did many times, served Canada during WWII. His sister, Agnes (Baba) Pelletier married my Mushom Tom Majore at Lebret, Saskatchewan, which is my traditional Métis *community*. My Ross and Delorme families are examined in detail in my discussion of *ancestors*.

I am grateful that some books and magazine articles are available that demonstrate the history of some of my *ancestors*. They include McLeod and Morton's, 'Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of Red River (1974), Dobbin's, 'Métis Struggles of the 20th Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society - 1935-1950, Part 3: 'Political Interference and Internal Divisions' in New Breed Magazine (1978), Lebret Historical Committee's, 'Mission to Lebret: 1865 – 1989' (1989), Devine's 'The People that Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660 – 1900' (2004), and MacKinnon's 'The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman', 1861 – 1960 (2012).

The 20 Research Guiding Questions and Principles resulting in *Medicine Wheel Journey*

My research also involved the application of the 20 Research Guiding Questions and Principles. The responses to these questions were provided when also considering my main research question of how can *Medicine Wheel Journey* inform an Indigenous-

centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people? This section will demonstrate how Indigenous-centered autobiography, namely applying research questions to myself, enabled me to accomplish two significant outcomes of this research. Firstly, I learned and shared my life story known as *MWJ*. Secondly, I will provide a clear explanation of how my mental health was strengthened as a result of *MWJ*. What follows is the ‘core’ of my *MWJ*. I have created the following 20 Guiding corresponding Principles that I then answer. As well, I was wondering if someone wanted to embark on their own *MWJ*, would these guiding questions and principles be the way to begin?

Specifically, I believe two groups will benefit from the research. The first group will be Indigenous-centered helpers in better knowing themselves in helping others. The second group are people we serve who have a desire to increase their knowledge of themselves as they respond to their *mental* health concerns. This is a process of becoming Indigenous-centered.

This study into my life story made me realize my complexity of culture, ethnicity and race. I soon understood however that oppression and internal oppression as a force almost destroyed me. My *ancestors* experienced Canada’s colonization from both the *oppressor* and the oppressed. I learned that the military heritage in my *family* goes back centuries. My surname of Majore is derived from ancestor known as ‘the Major’ who served in the army of 18th century, New France. However, I also came to learn that my *ancestors* experienced some level of privilege. Privilege as understood to mean a ‘life standing’ or a source of power.

The main theoretical influence underlying my research is an Indigenous-centered and decolonizing worldview. Therefore, all my Ways of Being and Knowing are situated

in such theoretical contexts. The questions and principles are stated, then followed by my response.

Self: Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spiritual

Question: Who is my *self*?

Principle: Self-realization - to better know my *self* and my story so as to better support others to know themselves and their stories.

MWJ has been a process of coming of age, personally and professionally. I have come to know myself and through this *MWJ* have helped myself and can now have a way to know and help others. People want to tell their stories. My two most significant healing experiences have been to travel to areas that my *ancestors* had lived, eastern Europe, eastern Canada, and New York state. I offered tobacco to Creator for the gift of learning about them. I had felt the Grandfathers presence at Batoche and it was an amazing feeling of spirituality overcoming my soul. I believe I reclaimed them and honoured their memory in my story. Learning is healing.

Indigenous-centeredness and decolonization means being free to be me. I feel I am more Métis now than I have ever been. Meaning, I have developed a deeper understanding of what it means to be Métis. *MWJ* explored my *whiteness* for me, it was ‘looking at the *Other* in myself’. I never saw myself as white or even part white for most all my life. The concept of white privilege was perhaps something that I benefitted from by having a white father. But, if I am considering how the issues balance out, my father did not have the impact of really benefitting me, with all his issues of addiction, crime and violence. His influence was at best neutral, but honestly was more a destructive impact.

My first sense of who I was or ‘who was my *self*?’ occurred about age 8 or 9. A

teacher asked what was I culturally. I remember telling him that I was French and Cree. The *time* was the late seventies when the word Métis was not used as widely as it is today. However, I essentially said I was Métis to this *teacher*.

As a young Métis, I also learned of the 1885 Northwest Resistance. It was called a rebellion in our textbook. The topic for some reason fascinated me. Perhaps, it was such an exciting topic because I knew my people were involved in Canadian history. I was drawn toward conflict and war like some *children* are and I can only think that perhaps because I seen so much danger, violence and conflict within my *family* and neighbourhood by this *time*. I had street and school yard fights as young as 7 years old.

In spite of the chaos, I was very interested in learning of many topics at this *time* of my life. I started going to the library at age 9, as well as reading encyclopaedias at home. It was to my excitement I found the learning guide to the social studies text book that my *teacher* was using to present the 1885 Resistance. I remember how enthralled he was in explaining to us how the Canadian militia were firing ‘nine pounders’ upon the Métis. I don’t know if he knew I was a Métis, or if he knew and didn’t care. I believe looking back that it was one of my first times that I learned being Métis was not safe.

Through this thesis *work*, I am more accepting of all of my cultural origins, whether Métis, Hungarian Szekely, Cree, Ojibwa, Salteaux, French, English, Scottish, Irish, Belgian and how I now choose to identify as a Métis. Going to Hungary and exploring it’s history and culture also made me feel even stronger as a person and a Métis. My research trip through Canada also strengthened my Métis *self*.

Question: What is my story of the *physical*?

Principle: Self-preservation - *physical* means in relation to the promotion of health and wellness.

Society will often judge us by how we physically appear to others. Our *physical self* is at the core of our being. If we don't have our health and wellness, we have nothing else. This is the reason we allocate government budgets primarily on our healthcare. I believe societies rise and fall based on how they manage health and social spending.

I have been challenged many times by *physical* health conditions. They include: premature birth, Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), weight and inactive lifestyle. My premature birth led to much pain emotionally and mentally. Other *children* would ridicule me for being physically challenged. I learned as an adult that I actually have a form of cerebral palsy due to my premature birth. I have never identified as having special needs but as I get older I see no need to be ashamed of something I had no control over.

In 2002, I acquired GBS. It is a nervous system disorder, that almost took my life. I believe I started to see how precious life is and how if I want a life, I have valuable *time* to use wisely or waste away. This near death experience spurred me to return to school and be something more than what I was. Since 2003, I have studied on and off to complete one, and now almost two degrees, thanks to the Creator. If the decision to work at this research was without Creators' place in my life as an Indigenous-centered person, I do not believe I would be writing these words now.

My last *physical* challenge is weight and inactive lifestyle. I just feel stuck in a desk or at my study table, and don't have much interest for exercise or activity. Writing this life story is a huge investment emotionally and mentally and as a result, drains me of my *physical* energy. Fortunately, I have experienced recent weight loss through being conscious of nutrition.

Question: What is my story of the *mental*?

Principle: Integration – *mental* means the pursuit of knowledge, and that knowledge is power.

From birth, we are conditioned to pursue knowledge, for reasons from survival to success. My experience in school and with employment has been all about competitiveness. Perhaps, we have been preparing for this *time* in our world history, called the ‘information age’. Obtaining knowledge of social *work* methods has led me to a better career. This world grants those with the most and best education, the most recognizable careers. This process of study has been difficult. The process of coming to know what we know and how we know it, is an arduous task.

Mental for me, also means *mental* health. My recovery from addiction started for me as a youth. As a result of this research, I now see my recovery, not just free from substances, but as a recovery from colonization or a process of Indigenous-centeredness and decolonization. I believe *mental* health conditions can result from colonization and oppression. I have had the experience of many issues over my life. I have realized that focusing on the problems is not meaningful unless we also see what responses are being taken as acts of decolonization. My determination to live in recovery, to sustain my spousal partnership, to parent my *children*, to build a home and career, and finally live as Indigenous-centered as possible is my response. This is my *MWJ*. I see the *work* of Indigenous-centeredness as being that which is making peace with one’s *self*, becoming integrated and self-accepting. Meanwhile, I see decolonization as an active ‘push-back’ against the covert influences and overt forces of colonization.

‘*Research into Self*’ has been traumatic for me. I have discovered real threats and violence that were experienced by *ancestors* over the centuries. Essentially, Europe was an on-going state of war since the 18th century that spread over to the Americas. In many

ways, present-day colonization upon Indigenous people is a form of such destruction. I now call this experience as *Canada's War on Indigenous People*⁹. The infamous Métis hater and first prime minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald was referred to in Humphreys' (2008) *Great Canadian Battles: Heroism and Courage through the Years*:

However, with Riel's obstruction impeding progress, the mood became increasingly hostile. Macdonald was soon calling for the 'impulsive half-breeds' to be 'kept down by a strong hand, until they are swamped by an influx of settlers (p. 142-143).

Canada, once known as British North America has fought the French, the Americans and now Canada's Indigenous people. Such military warfare is no longer occurring. However, there are harms to Indigenous people in Canada which include imperialism and oppression. Government legislation and private corporation's economic interests serve themselves at the destructive expense of Indigenous people and communities. Resistance in the form of the Idle No More movement has recently begun to respond to *Canada's War on Indigenous People*. Indigenous people are networking, educating and mobilizing themselves to respond to these continued colonizing schemes.

Question: What is my story of the *emotional*?

Principle: Acceptance - *emotional* means the pursuit of peace and fulfillment.

'Acceptance is the answer to all my problems' (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2011) has been a key guiding phrase for me over the years. Acceptance of colonization doesn't mean accepting defeat. It means for me that colonization will always be and therefore I accept that decolonization and Indigenous-centeredness is how I need to live to find healing.

⁹ My term for recognizing and naming the experience related to the Colonization of Indigenous People in Canada.

In exploring the role of emotions, I have asked myself how can they be experienced to enhance and not to destroy life? Anger, sadness and fear are some of the feelings that have dominated my life, and still do. I believe there is usefulness in any emotion. Emotions will lead us to who we are.

Survivor's guilt is a phenomena that may arise in people who come to realize that they lived through a traumatic experience that others have not, and are now left to wonder why me? Questions like, 'what are the reasons I made it while others have not?' Carrying guilt or shame does not allow me to be Indigenous-centered. The releasing of shame and the experience of pride came for me as a result of this research. I wrote of my Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing. Even framing my worldview as Indigenous for me was difficult, as I do not ever want to inadvertently silence another Indigenous person from telling their story. Therefore, I will always need to remember I explored and learned my story so I could help others to explore and learn their story.

Question: What is my story of the *spiritual*?

Principle: Belief - *spiritual* means to live a life of harmony and balance with Creator and the *ancestors*.

I believe my spirituality was inherited and learned. My ancestry is Métis and Hungarian Szekely. For me, these cultures were born out of survival of various ethnic groups becoming interdependent on each other. Métis spirituality for me includes a sense of freedom and everlasting life. In my Métis ancestry there are roots in Catholicism, Protestantism and the Jewish faith. Spiritually, I am a person who aligns as Indigenous-centered, believing in Creator, the Grandmothers and Grandfathers. The Infinity symbol on the Métis flag reminds us of a connection to *time* immemorial and a *nation* that will stand the annals of *time*. The influence of Roman Catholicism has been great from both

my paternal and maternal sides. This religion has influenced my European heritage for about one thousand years. However, my understanding of Szekely spirituality is that it includes core beliefs in Mother Earth. The Szekely flag has the Sun and Moon as identity symbols. Both cultures have national anthems that proclaim resistance to threats to their existence. The Métis Nation origins date back to mid-18th century, Canada. While the Szekely Nation origins date back to the 5th century from what is now Romania (Wikipedia: History of the Szekely People, 2011).

There are many Métis leaders or movements of the past that for me, acted as my spirit guides. I'll discuss them in order of lesser to greater importance. They include Louis Riel and my mother, Evelyn Majore.

Evelyn Majore was a respected elder in her Métis *community*. She was called upon to pray at gatherings. She supported persons with disabilities of which she was a disabled diabetic. She would make and sell food to her *community* and take the *time* to visit the many people who came to visit her.

Louis Riel's life was vital to my entering recovery from addiction relapse in 1996. Recovery involved developing routines that led to my abstinence from substances and healing towards a better life. One routine I had developed was walking from my Mother's home in Regina's North Central to various parks in or around the downtown. Along this walk there stood a statue of Louis Riel, which mentioned that he was found guilty of treason on July 29, 1885 and convicted by hanging on November 16, 1885. I would rest at that spot while admiring my hero. I was proud that I was born July 29th, and started recovery on November 16th. I have been in recovery for 17 years.

I realized that I descend from a long line of leaders and social workers who provided for their Métis *community*. Healing and helping is part of our way of life. It is

imperative that I practice my sense of spirituality. I draw upon a variety of sources that nourishes my eclectic beliefs. One aspect of anyone's spirituality should be not to tear down anyone else's beliefs to build up your own.

Family: Role Models, Mentors, Teachers & Learners

I realized that *family* is an immensely significant part of who I am, as much of my story was focused on these specific questions and principles.

Question: Who is my *family*?

Principle: Interrelatedness - our *family* is one of the powerful influences on ourselves and our identities. Everything is connected to everything else.

The old saying 'we can choose our friends, but we can't choose our *family*' is only somewhat true. While, genetics determines who our 'blood relatives' are, we have a choice of which people are to be in our *family*. As well, others will choose if we are in their *family*. Meaning, through mutual care and concern, two or more people can determine significant relationships with each other. My *family* is made up of *role models, mentors* and *teachers*.

Question: What is my story of *role models*?

Principle: Responsibility – we are responsible to each other.

Role models mean we live a life whereby others are proud to say they know us and they are the people we have looked up to. It is very important for me to share at length the *role models* from my life. I will identify the *role models* in my life by name who are public figures or are deceased, whereas, I will assign titles from world of *work* such as an occupation or trade to those persons who I do not want to reveal their identity (Citizen Media Law Project, 2011). My *role models* are many and I begin with my greatest *role model* ever.

Evelyn Majore was my mother and was from Lebret. She provided for our needs in every area necessary. She defined what hard *work* was to be for me. She provided an example of how to build and maintain relationships. Her value of learning allowed me to become the Knowledge Keeper (Wilson, 2008) of our *family* and history. She passed away in 2006 at the age of 65.

John Max Sentes was my father and was from Regina. Although, with all his problems, he did spend *time* with us, enjoying simple, yet enjoyable activities. He was involved with us, such as playing cards, watching TV, going camping, and visiting relatives. I name these activities as a way of remembering what my role as a father is. Mostly though, he taught me what not to do. I try to just do the opposite of what he did which was living on the edge of danger and disaster, raging against the world, consuming alcohol and drugs to feed his addiction. However, I believe he did the best he could with what he had. My Dad died in 2007 at the age of 73.

Thomas Majore was from Lebret. He was known as Mushom Tom, Mushom meaning Grandfather in Cree. As a child, I always thought he was just a drunk, that is all I seen him be. I learned through others that Mushom was a hard working, intelligent, leader of a man who cared a lot about others. My Mushom Tommy Majore was a past president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, a past president of Union of the Unemployed, a Communist Party of Canada member, an enlisted soldier of WW II. His purpose was to strive for a better life for Métis people and for the fishing, hunting and gathering rights for unemployed people. Mushom Tom was also a Cooperative Commonwealth Federation organizer, the predecessor to the New Democrat Party that exists today. Mushom Tom died in 1978 at the age of 69.

Bernie Lyons was referred to as the ‘father of Narcotics Anonymous’ (N.A.) in

Regina. He was never comfortable with the recognition he received for his work. He is the man responsible for showing me that recovery from addiction was possible. He found opportunities for me as a young man of 19 to give voice to my journey. He was a father figure to me. When he died, he was only about 60. The large number of people at his funeral was a testament to his tireless *work* of ‘carrying the message to those who still suffered’ (Narcotics Anonymous, 1986).

Nurse lives in Regina. He was like an older brother to me. He spent almost every day with me during my early journey. We went to A.A. and N.A. meetings on regular basis. Nurse believed in me when I did not believe in myself. I can confidently say because of these two recovery programs I am here today. My involvement in them led me to a stronger connection with my Métis community.

Manager was a Métis leader in the Métis political movement in Saskatchewan. He introduced me to Métis Nation organizations and politics in 1988. I was 20 years old. I was asked to participate in a Métis organization that arose from the Métis rights movement. This has been an important development for Métis people in that we again took control of ourselves and did not allow others to represent our affairs.

Priest lives in Regina and manages an addiction recovery program. She was the first person who gave me an opportunity to *work* in social *work*. I had been given the responsibility of Night Counsellor. I was young, at 20 years old, but my confidence grew as my experience grew. I began to believe in myself.

Wayne McKenzie lives in Regina. He was a master strategist in social and political activism. He modeled how to public speak and motivate others. He is someone I strive to emulate. He is currently involved in Métis employment and training.

Maurice Blondeau was from Lebret. He passed away in 2008 at the age of 75. He

embodied the Métis Warrior that has battled many times on the Canadian prairies and defended Canada during international conflicts. Maurice and many other relatives of mine served Canada's military during times of war and peace. He was an example of those Indigenous men and women who in the 50's began to establish our Aboriginal rights for a better quality of life. Maurice was recognized as being a significant leader of the National Association of Friendship Centres.

Harry Daniels was from Regina Beach. He passed away in 2004 at the age of 63. He has now emerged as a Métis cultural icon, compared to Louis Riel, for his *work* in ensuring Métis recognition into the Canadian Constitution of 1982. He played an important role in my life demonstrating Métis political manoeuvring to achieve *resources* for our *community*. Currently, a court case he helped establish in the late 90's is being deliberated that will determine if Métis should have same or similar Aboriginal rights as First Nations and Inuit.

Doctor lives in Calgary. She is a relative of my cousin. She is in her 70's. She provided me an example of how to care for someone with love as a service to humanity. She visited me in the hospital when I was battling the effects of a nervous system disorder. Doctor as a religious woman lives her faith. Her care for me during my recovery from life threatening illness was one of my inspirations to return to health. I thank Creator for her, as I am able to live and write about her.

Lastly, the Boss is the most important woman in my life today. She is from a country that was devastated by civil war for more than 11 years. She and I have known each other for 12 years. She works at supporting clients involved with the law. She has proved to be a fighter for clients dealing with child welfare and family violence issues. I have learned a lot from her and the *work* she does.

Question: What is my story of *mentors*?

Principle: Growth – ‘we can only keep what we have by giving it away’ (Narcotics Anonymous, 1986, p. 1)

Mentors mean we have a responsibility to ensure others live right. My *mentors* have been numerous as well. My relationships with them have provided me with wisdom and guidance. They are discussed chronologically as per their influence on my life.

Stu Herman was from Regina. He died when he was in his 60’s and I felt his loss immensely. He was my counsellor in recovering from addictions. Stu hired me later as an addiction counsellor. I received great coaching and training from him to become a good counsellor. I identify him as one of my main sources of inspiration to become a professional helper. Stu’s death in the mid-nineties was a great loss for me. He knew my parents and was like a father to me.

Rod McLean was from Regina and he passed away in his early 60’s. He was a co-worker and counsellor of mine at the National Native Alcohol & Drug Abuse Program. Rod once said to me, ‘that the two most important things in life were *time* and money’. I learned that one’s ability to find and manage these *resources* were the key to life success.

The Coach lives in Regina. He is a counsellor for a recovery program. He was my main source of support in finding the courage to travel and move away from my hometown. We were once co-workers at an addiction recovery treatment centre and he supported my role as acting Program Manager. This was my first real test of leadership and for his help, I will always be grateful.

The Executive lives in Calgary. He is a Vice-President of Sales & Marketing at an international laboratory testing company. He had spent *time* reaffirming my goals and plans and teaching me about financial planning. He formed part of our leadership group

with our investment club. He is a classy individual who I strive to emulate myself after.

The Goldsmith lives in Calgary. Although retired now, he had a long and successful business career. He is a Métis *elder* to me. He is very wise in many areas of life. I have enjoyed his guidance which for me has been reaffirming.

The Actor lives in Calgary. She was my colleague at my *work* with Aboriginal Mental Health. She is wise beyond her years. I am honoured that she recognizes the work I do in her home territory. I am seen by her as a Métis historian. While I still appreciate her claim, I believe I need to do more *work* to earn such a reputation. I am motivated to be a better researcher and writer of Indigenous culture and history as a result. The *work* I did with her and our program is the most enjoyable I have ever experienced.

This last *role model* is my most important. The Major lives in Regina and is the one sibling I am closest to. My brother protected me from the risks of becoming lost to the world of crime. He discouraged 'bad' behaviours and encouraged good behaviours, much like a father. He was the most significant male to me growing up, and still is. He is on his own healing journey. He is my hero and my greatest ally. The Major is the type of person you want on your side.

Question: What is my story of *teachers*?

Principle: Development – we can become the person we were meant to be. *Teachers* mean we have a responsibility to others so that will be helped to grow and develop. I have been fortunate to have been exposed to many great *teachers*, mostly through *work* and school. Again, they will be presented due to their significance to my *MWJ*.

The School Teacher lives in Calgary. He is my colleague. He is a great *teacher*. I see how great he is at group *work*. I look forward to learning from him in the years ahead. He is a champion of resisting and overcoming personal challenges since

childhood. He is an awesome individual, father and social worker.

Blue Collar Man is one of my siblings. He taught me about hard *work*, materialism and accountability. He said, ‘if you can’t afford to pay cash, you can’t afford to have it’. He was model of consistency of earning a living and providing for his *family*. Regarding accountability, he supported me at meetings with *mental* health staff, where once he asked, ‘do you want to be in hospital for the rest of your life?’ It was the hard question that I needed to hear. He shared that quitting drinking meant still having fun without drinking, something he had been doing for years.

The Guidance Counsellor lives in Regina. She was my main influence in high school. She taught me to believe in others when perhaps they did not believe in themselves. She took me step-by-step through the process and registered me for university. She applied on my behalf for scholarships, of which I received two awards, and assisted me with an application to student loans. She believed I could be a leader and put me in situations to succeed.

The Social Worker lives in Regina. He was my first social *work* professor. He taught me to be courageous in the face of racism, after a fellow student expressed racism in the classroom. He believed we have to confront racism as it happens and be responsible in intervening when racism is evident.

Dr. Yosef Kly passed away in 2011. He was my Human Justice professor. I learned much about human rights and social justice from him. Yosef once referred to his personal experiences with civil rights leaders Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Yosef’s involvement in defending civil rights was a way to practice his ideals. He is why that one day I would like to become an university professor.

The Farmer lives in Ottawa. He was one of the best teachers I ever had. He taught

me how to be a great manager through instruction in courses involving organizational behaviour, human *resources*, and economics.

The Elder lives in Regina. I consider him as a great ‘life’ *teacher*. He is my main Métis *role model*, *mentor* and *teacher*. He is truly my male confidant and I look to him as a member of my *family*.

Dr. Jeannine Carriere is my committee supervisor. She reminded me of myself as a Métis who has also faced this world. I needed her lived example of what she had been through that she is a fighter who could bring me through the ordeal of higher learning.

Dr. Robina Thomas is my committee member. She has provided me with a sense of gratitude over how we become to be through *self*, *family*, *community* and *nation*. As a *teacher* who is traditionally from the area of our university and because of her teachings about this, I am provided a relationship to a *Sense of Place*.

Dr. Cathy Richardson was my *teacher* during my UVIC’s MSW-I program. I learned about ‘Métisness’ from her. The value of her *work* in how we as a Métis people seek to be in our own ‘third space’ to just be who we are. When I am feeling unsafe in socio-political spaces, I have thought of her teaching to become Indigenous-centered.

Question: What is my story of *learners*?

Principle: Recognition – what do we know and how do we know it.

Learners mean we have a responsibility to learn and grow. *Learners* are what all of us are. I attempt to act as a *role model*, *mentor* and *teacher* to those most vulnerable. I believe it was Gandhi who said that our societies are judged by how we treat our most vulnerable citizens.

For too many years, I used to tell people that if I could afford it I would go back to university to complete my social *work* degree. I had been accepted for school at the

University of Victoria (UVIC). The issue for me had become not if I could afford to study, but if I could afford not to study. I was recognizing younger people making greater impacts in the workplace due to the education they achieved. I realized I could do what they were being allowed to do, which was not available to me because of my limited education. I am proud of my BSW-Indigenous specialization, as I had first begun *work* on my degree in 1988 and finally after studying off and on, completed it in 2006.

This part of my journey has been quite the experience. My *MWJ* thesis research and writing has been my most satisfying learning experience of my life. I can say I know who I am. I can also be comfortable with not knowing, as I have faith in finding the answers to my questions about *self* and the world. Being awarded the Métis & Non-Status Indian Bursary from Alberta Human Services has allowed me the ability to concentrate on studies, even though I had *family* and *work* responsibilities.

Admittedly, my sense of *learner* needs to be nurtured by a sense of *community*. I plan to teach at a college again. But, I believe that with our Métis *community* there needs to be opportunities for people to gather to share and discuss Métis history and culture. Outsiders, namely every day, average people, not part of our *community* are beginning to ask who are we? We as Métis have been challenged by the Canadian courts to be active citizens in our communities. Learning about our own history and culture will demonstrate just how vital we are as a *community*.

Community: Location, Work, Time & Resources

Question: What is my *community*?

Principle: Support – if we believe that everything in our world is interrelated, we need to give support to receive support back. *Community* is what we make *community* to be.

Community represents our history and culture. The authors Cathy Richardson and Dana

Lynn Seaborn (2009) in *Beyond Audacity and Aplomb: Understanding the Métis in Social Work Practice in Wicihitowin: Aboriginal Social Work in Canada* really explains the idea of ‘third space’ as Métis-centeredness:

...the notion of creating a “third space,” where Métis-ness, Métis community and Métis knowledge can be shared. In this space, history can be retold from a Métis perspective; a Métis-centred analysis can be honed ...Métis cultural tactics for how to be well become central to cultural activity, and belonging is implicit (p. 126).

After working long into my career, I see my *community* as made up of the social determinants of health. I ask myself where do I place myself within these determinants of identity and *resources*? What benefits or disadvantages me and therefore my health? In my *community*, what *work* is being done and what *work* remains? How are we using our *time*? Are we investing *time* and effort into what is most beneficial to all in the *community*? Lastly, what *resources* are available for us? How can we best use what we have? What are our plans to renew *resources* as future needs arise? Clearly, I have a lot of *work* to do with my sense of *community*. I have numerous questions, and not a lot of answers.

Sometimes, in the past, I have doubted myself. I wonder what life would have been like had I been raised as anything else but a Métis? I contemplate what life would have been like if I had the socio-economic and political privilege of many white Canadians? I realize quickly though that this was how it was supposed to be. Strong Métis women like my mom had to fight for the right to be a mother to her *children*. My research into my life story revealed that my mom was one of a long line of determined Métis women who led their families and communities, and certainly didn’t receive the

recognition they deserved.

Question: What is my story of *location*?

Principle: Opportunity – finding a place in the world where we matter.

We make influential contributions because we know who we are. All of the *MWJ* Ways of Being and Knowing relate to each other. A significant amount of my research focused on learning my *location*. *Location* means we need to consider the questions of: who am I, where am I in this world and how do I get along in it? I addressed these questions by learning who my *family* is and what history did I come from. I chose the Medicine Wheel as the basis of my story.

Medicine Wheel is meant to be symbolic of my life journey. I first learned of the Medicine Wheel as a young adolescent. Later, as a young adult working as a helper, I had seen the Medicine Wheel used as a helping tool by *elders* and cultural helpers. I was never comfortable using this tool until recently as I believed medicine or tools representing medicine should only be used by *elders*. I thank the late Brion Whitford and his *Medicine Wheel Journey* for giving me the courage to name my life story as he did.

There are numerous perspectives to what Medicine Wheels are and how they may have impacted Indigenous peoples and communities. In 2009, I first saw a video documentary called ‘The Gift of Diabetes’ (Paskievich, & Whitford, 2005). The focus of this documentary was on one of its producers named Brion Whitford. He referred to his recovery from alcoholism and diabetes as his ‘Medicine Wheel Journey’ and I have borrowed his term as my own. Sadly, Brion Whitford died unexpectedly in 2006, a year after the release of his documentary. My *MWJ* started in pre-birth (Richardson, *A Three Dimensional View of Lifespan Development: The Six Directions* 2009) and reached a recovery phase in 1986, which continues today. I am grateful to have

been able to research, write, *work* and experience using my *MWJ*.

I believe strongly that the main tool we bring with us to heal and help others is ourselves. Our 'personhood' needs to be shared with others for connections to occur or be maintained. My personal identity includes primarily an influence from my maternal side, as my mother raised me as a Métis. However more recently, I have begun the process of understanding my paternal side. My father's side were Hungarian Szekely settlers who have Indigenous-origins to eastern Europe, which was characterized by social and political upheaval. They came to Canada early in the 20th century to find an opportunity to continue their traditional farming life.

As a Métis, my ancestral origins are from the historic Red River Métis settlement. But also include the St. Lawrence river valley, the Great Lakes region, North Dakota, U.S.A. and the Cypress Hills of Saskatchewan and Alberta. I was born in Regina, but I am from the traditional Métis *community* of Lebret, Saskatchewan of the Qu'Appelle Valley. I have been privileged with learning Indigenous knowledge from my *family*, *community* and *nation*. I offer only what I have been told in the oral tradition, learned from my participation in ceremony and experienced in relationship with Knowledge Keepers (Wilson, 2001). My Indigenous knowledge is both informal from *community* and formal academic in origins. I see the world through my own Indigenous social, political, economic and *spiritual* lenses. I do not claim to represent a 'pan-Indigenousness.' I humbly offer *MWJ* as one way to consider becoming an Indigenous-centered, writer, researcher and helper for Indigenous peoples, families, communities and nations.

Currently, I live and *work* in Calgary as a *mental* health worker in the Aboriginal Mental Health program of Alberta Health Services. When I think of my reason for being

there, I think of the need and responsibility to ‘Indigenize the Clinic’. Myself and colleagues have begun to integrate Indigenous-centered discussions and ways of helping into our *work* with Indigenous people and communities. We share our self-reflective thoughts to be transparent to one another. We allow ourselves to reveal our personhood.

My personhood includes my own gratitude over experiencing personal healing from the Creator. I call this period of my life my recovery phase which began at 18 years of age, and now 27 years later I am still on my *MWJ*. As an Indigenous helper, I am seeking to center my social *work* practice. My *MWJ* helping framework will be how I center my social *work* practice.

I have been involved in healing and helping for many years and have learned that traditional ways do *work* with Indigenous people. I believe my *MWJ* will be an addition to our traditions. The centering of Indigenous Ways are essential for survival from colonization which remains as an active and destructive force in Canada and around the world. My Ways of Being and Knowing clearly resonate with me as ways to live and assist others.

Question: What is my story of *work*?

Principle: Achievement – through *work* we can achieve and we will survive.

I was encouraged by my parents to get ready for the world of *work*. My Dad would take my brother and I to his worksites, likely because there was not a baby-sitter available, but also because I believe my Dad thought that *children* should see what *work* was like, so they could eventually start working themselves. As I became an older child my mom taught us about her *work* in the restaurant business. We learned all the jobs in a dining establishment as we became responsible enough to learn and do them. We moved a few times in southern Saskatchewan in the eighties, as my mom attempted to stake

her claim as a restaurant entrepreneur.

My first real paid job outside the *family* businesses was in the food industry. I was fourteen and making pizzas part-*time* and going to high school. The experience of making my own money gave me a sense of power. I could buy things for myself and do what I wanted. Unfortunately, I did not value *work* and money as the resource that I could have.

Going to university led to more meaningful *work* related to my career. My first social *work* positions came as a result of social *work* practicum placements in 1989 and 1990. However, university was just a method to learn skills. Our Métis culture expects us to *work*. For the Métis, *work* is about our way of life. When Indigenous people are not working that is not traditional. There are historical injustices of colonization that have taken our economies away from us and put us into a dependency state. A *role model* of mine, Wayne McKenzie has taught me that people who don't have jobs are referred as demonstrating when they are on-strike or are in the unemployment lines, while Indigenous people who don't have jobs are viewed as protesting and are therefore assumed to be in the welfare lines. This dependency then leads to Indigenous people being the clients, the recipients, the accused, the inmates, ultimately the statistics. This is one of the main reasons that I did not want to research no other Indigenous person but myself. All the information was within me and I did not want this study to be research of others as our communities have become weary of the lack of meaningful results from participating in research. I believe the answers I had within me could be of use to someone else in their *work* with others. MWJ is an example of how they can find answers.

Question: What is my story of *time*?

Principle: Value – what we put *time* into is what we value. *Time* means there is a process to everything we do and we need to value how we use it.

The story behind *time* as one of my Ways of Knowing is from the late Rod McLean. He once said to me that the two most important things in life are *time* and money, and once we learn how to manage them, we will know success.

As a parent, social worker and student, I know how valuable my limited *time* is to me. I learned from John Bradshaw, a long-*time* speaker on *family* healing that *children* feel more loved with the more *time* spent by their parents and other caregivers with them.

Time is a value, an activity, and a resource that I have invested into my life. I have spent what seems like a lifetime working in Métis communities. I believe I have made a contribution to my Métis Nation. I believe my MSW education has benefitted my practice and especially my personhood. I put an immense amount of *time* into my research. I have connected my life across *time*, place, race, ethnicity, culture, history, socio-economic and political orientations.

Question: What is my story of *resources*?

Principle: Equity – the gathering of *resources* for need and not want. *Resources* means proper allocation for the benefit of all due to everyone's involvement.

The competition for *resources* has been at the core of all the world's wars. Our Canadian government has always staged their *Canadian War against Indigenous peoples*. Our federal government has significant power and control over our resources, which provides them with social, economic and political advantages.. This socioeconomic and political position has lead to privilege. Privilege is understood to mean a 'life standing' or a source of power. Privilege allowed from my *ancestors* all the way to myself to survive,

and at times thrive. I am still reserved over the notion of privilege and how I may have inherited it or even may exercise it today. My Ways of Being and Knowing allow for these issues to be self-reflected upon. I have placed privilege within *resources*. Privilege is social, economic and political power that can support communities. I believe now, as a result of research that ‘knowledge is power.’ Knowing my history and culture is the greatest resource I have.

Nation: Ancestors, Oppressors, Allies & Children

Question: What *nation* do I live in?

Principle: Belonging – wanting to be a part of a greater whole. *Nation* means we have a responsibility for leadership and supporting each other. Seller’s ICN asks Indigenous-centered writers to learn and share their creation story. This is the Métis Nation creation story as I have learned it. It is my story about how my ancestors and I came to be. The Métis Nation creation story I know comes from my experience learning my culture and history through *elders, role models, mentors* and *teachers*. We have origins to Mother Earth. We arose from the northern lands of what was once called Turtle Island and is now referred to as North America.

The Métis lived beside their White fathers and Native mothers. Over time, Métis communities grew alongside the rivers and lakes of this Turtle Island. Swift flowing rivers, dense forests and large mountain ranges surrounded and protected the first Métis people of Turtle Island.

Métis people lived in ways that allowed them to take care of themselves and Mother Earth. Métis people believed that humans, plants, animals, air and water were related to each other. They knew they came from Mother Earth so they carefully looked after the land, air and water, and themselves. This is what is meant to be Métis. Our

personal and cultural identity is interrelated to the land, to our people and all living things. Our right to be Métis comes from within and not from some other influence outside ourselves.

People from the other side of the rivers, forests and mountains wanted to travel to where the Métis lived but could not do so easily. Mother Earth made travelling to the Métis communities very difficult. Mother Earth wanted the Métis to live in peace, to grow and be happy. Mother Earth had rivers that were too dangerous to ride a boat on. Mother Earth had forests that had so many trees that people could not ride their wagons through. And Mother Earth had mountains so big that people could not travel over them.

These first Métis people of Turtle Island became *elders* who had many children and grandchildren. Many Métis were living here in peace and happiness. The people from the other side of the rivers, forests and mountains had been planning for a long time to find a way to ride the rivers, travel through forests and hike over the mountains. Eventually, they arrived at the Métis communities and the Métis called them the settlers because they wanted to live with the Métis. At the beginning, they wanted peace and happiness just like the Métis. The settlers liked their new homes and invited other settlers to join them at the Métis communities.

Soon thereafter, the settlers claimed the land as their land and that the Métis should find new lands. Mother Earth was upset with the settlers because the land was supposed to be shared by everyone. The Métis became upset too. They prayed to Mother Earth on what to do about the problems with the settlers. They were told by Mother Earth to talk to the settlers and work things out as they always have. The settlers and the Métis could not come to an agreement. The settlers and the Métis had a huge battle whereby many Métis and settlers passed away to the spirit world because their physical selves had

died. Mother Earth was sad as this was not the way to create peace and happiness. These conflicts were how Métis and settlers had tried to solve problems for many years. Métis communities learned of these battles and how settlers would keep on coming to live with the Métis. However, many Métis communities came together and became the Métis Nation. Many Métis have passed away to the spirit world defending peace and happiness for themselves and others ever since.

Today, there are many Métis throughout Turtle Island. The area of which we live is now called Canada. In every part of this land lives a Métis person, living and working, striving for peace and happiness. The Métis Nation created a way of life and many stories just like this one. The Métis Nation creation story is shared with others to remember how to live in peace and happiness, to care for yourselves and Mother Earth. Consequently, *nation* is also a significant part of who I am. Much of my story became focused on these specific questions and principles related to *nation*.

Although I have many cultural influences, I am a Métis first. Jacqueline Peterson a non-Indigenous author was very influential to me. Peterson's 'Many Roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes region, 1680 - 1815 in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* is likely the first written *work* of Métis ethno-genesis. Her assertion of the origins of the Métis *Nation* has encouraged me to embrace my new sense of Métis *Nation* ancestry to the *time* of 18th century New France and British North America. Peterson (1985) writes:

One of the beginning points – and there were several regional populations which converged at Red River after 1815 to become Métis – occurred during the eighteenth century a thousand miles to the east in the Great Lakes region. Here in the heart of the North American fur-trade arena, in response to the desire of

diverse Algonquian-, Iroquoian-, and Siouan-speaking tribes and successive waves of French, British and American traders to forge a commercial alliance, a new society came into being. At first it was a tiny society, Always, it was a society in flux, connecting and continually forced to absorb disparate cultural and ethnic representatives whose mutual interest in the traffic in furs and metal utensils and weapons barely masked their ethnocentric antagonisms. Yet, it was also a society whose members – if not self-consciously Métis before 1815 – were a people in the process of becoming. We know because their distinctiveness was fully apparent to outsiders, if not to themselves (p. 38-39).

Fortunately, Métis scholars have emerged to carry on the *work of allies* like Peterson. I currently am able to seek out the writings of several Métis authors almost all of which teach as well.

Question: What is my story of *ancestors*?

Principle: Honour – to show respect to ourselves, our communities and our history.

Ancestors mean we honour our past and remember where we came from. *Ancestors* mean that we respect our *elders* for they are our living *ancestors*.

My *ancestors* inspired me to *work* through this *MWJ* research phase of my thesis. I have been fortunate to read about many of them on internet sources, in print articles and amazingly enough published works. My ancestral families that I have explored are firstly, on the Métis side: Major/Majore, Grant, Desjarlais, Pelletier, Ross, St. Denis, Kipling, Lyons, McGillis, MacDonald, Desmarais and Delorme, and then secondly from my Hungarian Szekely side: Sentes/Szentes and Kaytor. I have embraced a few printed sources including MacLeod and Morton's 'Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of Red River' (1974), Devine's 'The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal

Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660 – 1900’ (2004) and MacKinnon’s ‘The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861 – 1960’ (2012). There is one however, that stands out and it is Ens ‘Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century’ (1996). The author alludes to a few *ancestors* who lived as neighbours in an area of Red River called St. Francois Xavier (italicized wording in brackets is my own):

Grant’s house, [*3rd Great Grandfather*] which was located of the north bank of the Assiniboine River some 27 kilometres from the forks, became the centre of the settlement. To the east lay Angus McGillis’ lot [*4th Great Grandfather*]. McGillis was a Catholic and a French-speaking Scot from Canada who had married a Métis and decided to ‘go free’ and stay in the West after leaving the employ of the North-West company. He was the father of Marie McGillis, Cuthbert Grant’s wife [*3rd Great Grandmother*].... To the west were the lots reserved for the Catholic mission, and beyond that lived Urbain Delorme [*3rd Great Grandfather*], one of the pre-eminent plains hunters (p. 21).

It amazes me that Ens’ book tells some of my Métis *family* story. My Mushom Tom is a Grant and McGillis descendant and my Grandma is a Delorme descendant.

Genealogy and *family* websites have been also significant. I have learned of many of my ancestral families. There is a pride in knowing that besides being connected to Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island since *time* immemorial, there is a sense of pride in being among the descendants of the first Europeans to Turtle Island. I think this idea is important as other Canadian *allies* with western European origins also seek to engage in history to integrate their European histories in their own identities. Just like colonization has been here since contact, decolonization been active as a resistance to colonization. I

have learned that decolonization and Indigenous-centeredness is my inheritance from my *ancestors*.

I take pride with sharing a *family* legacy with decolonizing-fighters of oppression. Métis resistance fighters, Donald and John Ross and Joseph Delorme fought alongside Gabriel Dumont who was the Métis military commander of the 1885 Resistance.

Donald Ross, my 4th great uncle died at Batoche. He was on the Provisional Council. John Ross also a 4th great uncle was also a member of the 1885 Provisional Council and managed the cattle for food provisions during the Resistance (Barkwell, 2005).

The Delorme *family* in my lineage participated significantly in both Resistances of 1869-70 and 1885. Joseph Delorme my 4th great uncle served the court martial of Thomas Scott at the Red River Resistance of 1869-70. He was wounded and captured at Batoche. Furthermore, Norbert Delorme also my 4th great uncle was on the Provisional Council of the 1885 Northwest Resistance, where his St. Laurent home served as the Métis headquarters. He led the Métis at the Battle of Cut Knife Hill (Barkwell, 2005).

I used to travel to Batoche on an annual basis from the late 80's to about 2000. I was unaware of my *family* tie to Batoche. However, my sense of *self*, *community* and *nation* have always aligned to the 'Saskatchewan capital' of the Métis. This year I enjoyed the experience of visiting Batoche with my wife and *children* for the first *time*.

My Research of Self from a Sense of Place took me to Hungary, and the now present-day Szekely ancestral *community* of Tolna County in April, 2012. I was able to achieve peace of mind that my paternal side had a proud history and culture as well. Furthermore, this past spring, I was able to travel to parts of western Canada, New York state and Montreal for *Research of Self from a Sense of Place*.

Question: What is my story of *oppressors*?

Principle: Justice – as derived from ordinary people who have access to legitimate forms of power and control. *Oppressors* mean there are real threats to our existence, both from inside and outside our communities.

Oppression and history of the world go hand in hand. The world has been at war since the beginning. My research into my story led me to explore the histories of Canada, Europe and the world. Before this research had begun, I had no idea that my ancestral and cultural history was involved in and influenced by such significant impacts of war.

The wars throughout history represented the extreme form of oppression through colonization. Canada is no exception. I refuse to allow myself not to specifically name what the experience for Indigenous people in Canada has been. We call it the residential schools, the Indian Act or other government oppression. I now am convinced due to my research that I have to call it what it was and what it is: *Canada's War on Indigenous Peoples*. The Métis Resistances of 1869-70 and 1885, and Oka of 1990 are but a few instances of actual violent combat where the Indigenous people of Canada have suffered from violence perpetrated by Canada's military. Contemporary forms of Canada's War on Indigenous Peoples are interwoven into Canada's Anglo-Saxon worldview which inform government policy and capitalist markets. The colonizers from Europe have waged war for centuries on each other all over the world and in Canada. English and French Canadian savagery destroyed the Métis aspirations since the days of the Fur Trade company wars and up until the constitutional crises of the 1990's. Government policy has been the main instrument of *Canada's War on Indigenous Peoples*. Legislation since Canada's initial formation until this day have subjected Indigenous and regular Canadians to the risks of the government's exploitation of land

and *resources*.

A story from my mother, Evelyn reminds me of Canada's genocide policy. In the Indigenous experience of Canada's 'divide and conquer' approach, she would offer to me her thoughts of Métis survival. She shared how she was relieved that she was Métis and how she was therefore allowed to go wherever or live wherever she wanted. She knew this was not the experience of First Nations when she was a child because they could not leave the reserve without permission. Finally, the pass system that forced First Nation persons to seek permission to leave their reserve was phased out in the 1930's.

However, *Canada's War on Indigenous Peoples* is founded on the old saying of 'he who owns the gold, makes the rules'. My sense of this term comes from notions of how the pursuit and security of money will make one rule the world. The accumulation of wealth has been accumulation of power. Currently, the neoconservatives of the federal government and corporate Canada have passed legislation that will continue the destruction of Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. The response from the Indigenous people and their *allies* has been the Idle No More movement.

Admittedly, the Métis Nation was born as a result of socioeconomic and political trade relations between Indigenous and European nations. However, once the Fur Trade was no longer profitable for Europe, the Métis and other Indigenous peoples were beginning to lose *Canada's War on Indigenous Peoples*.

I have encountered many racists which led to violence in my younger days on the streets. My family was denied opportunities and access to *resources* because we were Métis, which resulted in poverty for us. While it is likely I 'passed' as a white due to my *physical* appearance, I still could not fool myself. Being Métis never felt safe, therefore I never really felt okay with who I was.

I know when my view of the world started to change. Beginning with recovery from addiction and leading to my involvement in Métis Nation politics was my start into Indigenous-centeredness. My *MWJ* work on myself became possible when recovery and culture became significant in my life.

As a Métis, we need to be concerned to not become the *oppressor*. The vulnerable in our communities need to be protected from oppression from within as well. One of my *role models* would be questioned on why Indigenous people cannot get along with each other, and his prompt reply was why is it the Ukrainians and Irish can't get along, they are all white? The moral within there is race in and of itself will not unite people. Indigenous people from different Indigenous communities can unite as *allies* to each other as is currently being seen with the Idle No More movement.

Question: What is my story of *allies*?

Principle: Relationship-building – seeking mutual care and concern for the benefit of all and honouring difference. *Allies* mean we respect the *other* and all of us are responsible for Mother Earth.

My *MWJ* has not occurred in isolation and certainly not just with my own people. Others have supported me as *allies* in bettering my life and furthering my causes. I have learned that I can make a contribution to my *allies*, as my *ancestors* did. The Indigenous people of this land helped build Canada as much as anyone even though Canada has not returned the favour. This must be the realization of the *oppressor's* guilt, that which they deny. They then become even more oppressive in an attempt to rid themselves of the guilt that they are trying not to experience. For example, I just in the last few years was asked at a public forum I presented at, when would Aboriginal people be a part of the mainstream and not be concerned with any recognition from government or society? I

realized later that this person was trying to make their issue into being our issue. It was a question that I was not prepared for and could not answer. I know now how I would answer and that is I would answer with a question of what benefit would there be for us to lose our culture and identity? Currently, the destructive effects of colonization has the Métis Nation in a precarious position whereby many Métis have decided to assimilate and do not desire to be involved in Métis communities.

Saul's (2009) book called 'A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada' is an example of an ally attempting to remind English and French Canada that Indigenous peoples are their true founding fathers, not they themselves as the 'two founding fathers'. Saul (2009) states:

At the heart of coming to terms with the Aboriginal nature of Canada is what Jeanette Armstrong calls "Indigenization: People reconciling themselves into the Indigenous landscape". What does she mean? That we must try to think of this place in another way. We must step away from the conquering, owning ways of thought and move toward seeing ourselves as part of the place and thus to *the other* by widening the circle. Each place has a truth about it. Through reconciliation you find out what it is (p. 103).

The process of becoming and being an ally takes *time* and effort to develop and maintain. Authenticity and transparency on both sides of any alliance is needed for long-term relationships to grow and become beneficial.

Amongst ourselves as Indigenous people, there also needs to be *allies* to each other. There are various regions of Métis peoples characterized by unique socioeconomic, political, religious, lingual, geographical and historical differences. I am a Qu'Appelle Valley Métis and I am part of their story as a traditional Métis *community*. Whereas,

there are Métis from Alberta's Métis Settlements that have their unique story. Certainly, there is enough commonalities to form a Métis Nation, however it takes Métis individuals to know their personal ancestral history. By following the Indigenous protocol of introducing myself with sharing my *family* names and the name of my traditional Métis *community* has allowed to form new friendships and discover relatives I did not know of. *Allies* together will ensure peace for the world. After working with people for 25 years, I have concluded there is good and bad in everybody, however to greater or lesser degrees.

Again the movement, Idle No More is an example of *allies* supporting one another. The Oka crisis of 1990 was my first experience of standing up to support a cause I believed in. The recent years of Conservative federal government policy that has continued *Canada's War on Indigenous People* has forced the average Indigenous and non-Indigenous person to demonstrate through blockades and public gatherings. This has become and will become perhaps Canada's most significant political crisis for many years. Idle No More is Indigenous Nations of Canada's response to *Canada's War on Indigenous People*.

Question: What is my story of *children*?

Principle: Visioning – what do we want to become. *Children* mean everything and that all we do, we do for them. Even if we do not have our own *children*, we need all be concerned with future generations.

I feel my mother, Evelyn's story she shared with me is important to tell here. I call it the 'Fence Story.' I do not remember why she told me this story, but I was always wanting to know about her life at Lebret. She shared one *time* as a child that herself and her Métis friends and the kids from the Indian residential school would often play or visit

together. She remembers the enjoyment in these times, even though they did so on each side of the fence. The 'Fence' did not stop them from being who they were!

It has often said that *children* are our future. However, I learned we have to look to our past to help them. They need to learn our history and our stories. In order to move forward into the future, our *children* have to know their past. My future will include doing more *work* with *children*, youth and families. My hope is people will gain a greater interest in history and culture and find meaning in stories to help them in their everyday lives.

In discussing *children* as my last Way of Knowing, it is paramount to recognize women as the true leaders of Indigenous communities. I am here today researching and writing because of a wonderful woman, my mother Evelyn Majore. I am able to put *time* into this endeavour also because of the Boss. She who has provided me with much in my life. The Guidance Counsellor also a woman who put me on some of my first steps in this *MWJ*. She set me up into attending university and believing in me and that which I could become.

Consequently, while my Research Guiding Questions and Principles on their own do tell my *Medicine Wheel Journey*, it is Seller's Indigenous Communal Narrative as my method of analysis that situates *MWJ* within an evaluative context.

Analysis of 11 Indigenous Communal Narrative Evaluation Measures on *MWJ*

It is imperative that Indigenous-centered, writers, researchers and helpers emerge to serve Indigenous people and communities, in the field of Indigenous *mental* health. Furthermore, they must be supported by Indigenous-centered helping frameworks. Therefore, Sellers' Indigenous Communal Narrative (ICN) evaluative methodology is the basis of analysis of my research. It should be understood at the outset that Seller's *work*

sees autobiography as including an interviewer/writer producing an autobiography of another person. My *Medicine Wheel Journey* consists of my role as the interviewer/writer of myself, as the subject. In this dual role, as an Indigenous researcher /writer and research participant, I have accurately produced a *work* of myself as an Indigenous person from an Indigenous *community*. I have taken her evaluation and applied it to myself as an Indigenous researcher and writer. Consequently, parts of Seller's *work* are not applicable, and will be excluded from this analysis. However, much of her *work* I believe applies to Indigenous scholars. ICN can be used to make Indigenous writers accountable to our communities.

I have identified eleven areas of ICN to evaluate my writing on *MWJ*. The areas are: *Métis Nation Creation Story*, *Indigenous/Western Historical Review*, *Writer's Cultural Orientation and Education*, *Writer's Indigenous Nation Philosophy*, *Writer's Ontology and Epistemology* (What I know and How I know it), *Insider Knowledge*, *Indigenous Academic Network*, *Academic and Community Review*, *Indigenous-centered Writing*, *Métis Nationhood* and *Oppression*.

Most importantly for my autobiographical research and writing, Sellers' ICN has been the way in which I contextualized *MWJ*. Meaning, I needed to tell 'my story of telling my story'. I believe what she had applied to the *work* of non-Indigenous writers would be applied to my *work*. Initially, my thoughts were to complete the research and then, and only then, I could write the analysis using ICN. This *MWJ* itself as my life story did not have an absolute order, nor does life, therefore neither did this research. Sellers' evaluative criteria was always in the 'back of my mind'. I had to admit to myself that I knew ICN was there and it was well aligned to my *MWJ*. Therefore, as I researched myself, her analysis was present. My concern was to always ask myself if I am inducing

bias into my research outcomes. Meaning, was I accurate with my memory of my life experiences. I did not want to portray myself any better or worse than the way life was really like for me. Then I realized that ICN in my way of working is meant to encourage me to write my life story in this way. The 20 Ways of Being and Knowing is complimented by ICN. Again, Indigenous research methodology being not linear and sequential, where action happens and then this outcome is produced, but the opposite occurring whereby the outcome is apparent and we learn the story behind how the outcome came to be, and how actions influenced the story.

Seller's ICN methodology absolutely enhanced my 20 Ways of Being and Knowing. ICN is a narrative that tells of a person's life within the context of their Indigenous-centered *community* life (Sellers, 2007). *MWJ* is my story, but it's Ways of Being and Knowing originate from the context of *community*. Sellers' ICN is a rare and valuable Indigenous methodology to evaluate my research and writing. Appendix 4 details Seller's explanation of Indigenous Communal Narrative.

Métis Nation Creation Story

Seller's (2007) asks for our creation story. She offers that:

The nation's creation story should be included in the text, along with Native analysis of it. Creation stories define human social structures that include far more than religious beliefs. Notions of gender, and social and personal power based in gender, are often revealed in the events of a nation's creation myth...Clan structures, beliefs about human and other being relationships, ideas about relationship with the earth, and all governing structures stem from creation stories as well. Their inclusion in the Indigenous Communal Narrative is imperative if writers wish to transmit adequate cultural knowledge to their readers (p. 40-43).

ICN asks that I share ‘the creation story of my traditional *community*’ (Sellers, 2007, p. 48-49). My *Métis Nation Creation Story* is my own and I offered as part of the discussion on *nation*. This creation story is what I have learned in the oral traditional and academic way, to the best of my ability.

Moreover, our ICN asks for my understanding of our ‘social, economic, cosmologic, and political structures of the subject’s nation.’ Socially we are interdependent and seek to live collectively amongst our relations and our communities. Economically, we started out with Europe’s sense of free market capitalism, but I believe have integrated the environment into our economic decision making. Cosmologically, I believe our sense of ourselves and all other living things are interrelated and interconnected. For instance, my *MWJ* is based on Medicine Wheel sacred sites whereby I will be able to provide a helping framework by bringing these sacred places to the sites of people who I serve. In my context, we will be ‘Indigenizing the Clinic’ or integrating Indigenous-centered practice in helping Indigenous peoples and communities. Lastly, Métis political life is as advanced and capable as any society on this earth. We have chosen our leaders as needed, whereby everyone’s voice is heard and the will of our people prevails. Our traditional Buffalo Hunts formed our early governing structure. Now we resemble the union movement consisting of ‘locals’ to organize our *community* involvement. Our Métis flag is the oldest flag still being used in Canada. We have a vast history of politicizing our concerns and would compare us as such to any people. My examination into Canadian and world history has affirmed this belief.

Indigenous/Western Historical Review

The Métis are the result of many cultures forming unions. In this regard, Sellers (2007) states:

The work of Indigenous Communal Narrative must include accurate portrayals of Native and colonial contact, and be grounded in Native experience of that contact. A chronology of historic events pertinent to the Native person's nation, and simultaneous events outside the nation that effect them, should be included (p. 40-41).

To enhance my MWJ, I will provide appendix 6 which represents a brief *Indigenous/Western Historical Review* from a Métis perspective. The themes of colonization, decolonization and Indigenous-centeredness will expressed in the events identified.

Writer's Cultural Orientation and Education

ICN suggests 'a *work* qualified as an Indigenous Communal Narrative features a single life testimony of an Indigenous person that simultaneously reveals the culture of that individual's Native nation (Sellers, 2007, p. 48). Sellers (2007) explains further:

The cultural background and education of the interviewer and writer must be known. Is he or she Native American, and if so, from what nation? Is the writer culturally identified? How is that demonstrated? Is it the same nation as her or his subject? Does the writer have scholarship in Native American studies: either self-directed, through the subject's own nation via Native story keepers/historians, or from an institution of higher learning? With whom did the writer study? (p. 40).

As I first meet people, I identify myself in the customary way which is to say who I am, what my traditional Métis *community* is, where I was born, where I grew up, and sharing the names of associated *family* lines. Furthermore, I was recently pleased when I received my Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) citizenship card. On the card it states: 'The Bearer of this card is recognized as Métis, one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within s.35 of

the Constitution Act of 1982 and shall uphold the laws of the Métis Nation of Alberta’.

As Métis, we know where we have been, we know who we are and where we’re going.

Almost my entire higher education journey has focused on Indigenous worldview, in colleges and universities. I have been instructed by many Indigenous academics from my post-secondary studies. I have visited and been with my *elders, mentors and teachers*. They have supported me in this research and writing. Sellers (2007) suggests to:

‘(provide) brief biographic information of leaders and persons important to the individual is important to ensure a culturally comprehensive finished product’ (p. 49). My Ways of Being and Knowing related to *family, role models, mentors, teachers, learners, nation and ancestors* allowed for my examination of my leaders and other people significant to me. I have been blessed by living among and knowing so many significant people that make up my culture.

Writer’s Indigenous Nation Philosophy

The author asks ‘Does the nonfiction work...reflect the cultural philosophy of the subject’s Native nation (Sellers, 2007, p. 41). My Métis cultural philosophy is rooted in oral tradition and academic literature. My *elders, role models, mentors and teachers* have shared with me and prepared me to live and be a Métis in this world.

Also, Sellers (2007) believes ‘The work should reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and express them in a legitimizing manner’ (p. 49). The *MWJ 20 Ways of Being and Knowing* have been examined herein with the Research Guiding Questions and Principles. I have practiced and lived by them for many years just as my *ancestors* did, and plan to do so for many more, the Creator willing.

Writer’s Ontology and Epistemology (What I know and How I know it)

Can she or he speak, write, and/or comprehend the subject’s Native language?

(Sellers, 2007, p. 40). Unfortunately, Michif as our Métis language is becoming distinct. I do comprehend a few words and phrases. We have been influenced significantly by the English language due to our *ancestors*. My belief is loss of language has and will change our culture, but we will survive. There is still ‘Métis speak’ to our English words, meaning I can talk to another Métis in the Métis way, and only the other Métis and I understand each other. Our protocol of customary introduction is significant here though, as I need to know what kind of Métis they are. It means we have different ‘dialects’ so to speak. For example, differences in urban and rural, socio-political or economic status, or spirituality are factors which influence my ‘Métis English.’ Certainly, English allows Métis to communicate to each other, but our use of English changes given the situation we are in, whether among Métis only or if outsiders are present.

ICN asks ‘the work should reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and express them in a legitimizing manner (Sellers, 2007, p. 49). I believe the 20 Ways of Being and Knowing demonstrated in my *MWJ* helping framework is this standard. *MWJ* is a structured narrative to reflect who I am, what I know and how I live. My *MWJ* makes me interrelated and interconnected to my world.

Insider Knowledge

ICN suggests that ‘the subject should appear to readers as clearly a part of her or his *community*, not separated or extracted from it (Sellers, 2007, p. 48). I was raised always knowing I was Métis. Back when Métis was first explained to me, I was to tell people I was French and Cree. I was exposed to *community* gatherings at our Regina Friendship Centre. I was gifted with a traditional vest by a friend of my parents for my ‘natural pow wow dancing steps.’ Most importantly, what made me Métis was my understanding of myself, knowing my *location* within my Métis *community*. I have been

seriously involved socially and politically in Métis Nation life since I was 20. It all started with a call from one of my *role models*. He said, 'hey, we have to go vote!' The *time* was 1988 and we decided to become a Métis-specific organization and leave the non-Status Indians to their own organization, as our goals were becoming different in significant ways, or so it seemed at the *time*. The Daniels' case is currently awaiting an Federal Court of Appeal hearing that will impact whether Métis should be treated as Indians in legislation. The Métis are seeking to be included as a Federal government responsibility. The recent Supreme Court ruling decided in favour of the Manitoba Métis which recognized that the Canadian government owes a measure of reconciliation for lands not allotted to Métis *children* of 1870's Manitoba.

I have been a board member on many Métis organizations, including serving as President of Youth – Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. This position led me to experience conferences and training throughout Canada and one cultural exchange to China in 1993. Currently, I represent our Métis Nation of Alberta region and Alberta Health Services zone in matters related to Métis education, history and culture.

I am most proud of my contribution to the legal and public record of what Métis is. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples allowed a forum in Regina in 1992 for which I was appointed to participate by the late Indigenous leader Jim Sinclair. My comments there have been included in the Powley appeal (Ontario Superior Court of Justice, (2000), Mattes (1998), and Bourassa (2011).

I'll say I'm Métis or other young people that I know that are Métis have been confronted with the same question: 'Oh, I didn't think you were Métis. You don't look it.' You know, it's not a biological issue. It's a cultural, historical issue and it's a way of life issue; and it's not what you look like on the outside, it's how you

carry yourself around on the inside that is important, both in your mind and your soul and your heart (Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

However, being Métis alone does not allow me insider knowledge. It has to be earned. Through spending *time* with *elders* and *teachers*, who have practiced the oral tradition of sharing their culture and history have I been privileged. Furthermore, by studying Indigenous-specific academic scholars have allowed me to say with determination that I have *Insider Knowledge*.

Indigenous Academic Network

The autobiographer must consult...writers, and scholars for their guidance...what do other Native literary scholars have to say about it (the work)? (Sellers, 2007, p. 40). Academic institutions that I have attended have allowed me the privilege of learning from Indigenous insiders. They have obtained the credentials I seek to obtain. They have practiced social *work* or other disciplines in their own communities such as I have. They have lived lives I have lived or want to live. These writers and scholars have been instrumental in my professional development. I have gained the confidence that comes with Indigenous-centered research, critical inquiry and socio-economic and political analysis. I have begun building my own Indigenous academic network.

Academic and Community Review

ICN asks ‘that notable leaders, historic events, and individuals involved in my life be represented from the Native perspective’ (Sellers, 2007, p. 48). Seller’s further suggests: ‘The autobiographer must consult Native American *elders*, story keepers, writers, and scholars for their guidance. What does the subject’s Native nation say about the *work* and what do other Native literary scholars have to say about it?’ (Sellers, 2007, p. 40).

My UVIC supervisory committee have reviewed this research and writing over a period of about three years. I have consulted my EMT's on a regular basis throughout the thesis *work*. Significant leaders have been recognized in my *role models, mentors* and *teachers* discussion and historical events are presented in the appendix. My use of autobiography limits the amount of academic and *community* review I have consulted during the actual thesis research and writing as my academic and *community* involvement has been my *work* prior to this thesis research and writing.

Indigenous-centered Writing

Again, Seller's points are considered under this measure. She states: 'Notable leaders, historic events, and individuals involved in the subject's life should be represented from the Native perspective' (Sellers, 2007, p. 48). Furthermore, she adds: 'The work should reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and express them in a legitimizing manner (Sellers, 2007, p. 49).

I have written in Indigenous-centered ways since 2009 with the training experienced in MSW-Indigenous specialization, however, I have not authored a published written *work* myself. Perhaps, this thesis will be my basis for future literary *work*. I have been a consultant to a publishing company that has produced two children's books about the Métis culture. As an example of my Indigenous-centered approach, my main criticism as a reviewer of these texts was their idea that Métis were Francophone. We spoke French sure, but also many other languages, but mostly we had our own Métis culture rooted in the plains of Turtle Island.

Métis Nationhood

Again, I present Sellers (2007) point here:

ICN suggests that 'the writer must understand the complex social, economic,

cosmologic, and political structures of the subject's nation and must reflect that understanding...A lengthy discussion disclosing the relationship among clans, clan membership, clan roles, and so on is imperative because Native clan systems are key to the functions of their nations. How councils were and are determined and their functions in the nation, as well as the existence of speakers and their protocols, is also important. The ways leaders were chosen and their length of office is essential as well. What this information brings to the Indigenous Communal Narrative is a legitimization of Native nations and cultures (p. 42-43).

The Métis Nation has been building since the *time* before contact with European settlers. I believe the idea and spirit of a Métis Nation came first and people and their communities followed. A people are identified by many cultural characteristics and there are many we Métis are proud of. We have a traditional language, stories, kinship, governance, economy, food, art, clothing, and transportation.

Michif is the traditional language that combines French nouns with Cree and Saulteaux verbs. We have stories of our origins, beliefs, values, legends and culture. We have the honouring of *elders* and respect for all of our relations. Our traditional leadership based on the Laws of the Hunt. We have a history of political activity. Our traditional economy based on the stewardship of Mother Earth. We believe food is provided by the land, like pemmican. Our art represented through songs, poems, stories, and visual objects of plays, painting, sculpture and crafts. The Métis sash indicated what *community* you were from. Our Red River cart was our transportation throughout the Métis Nation homeland.

Oppression

I as a then young, male son of a single-parent mother knew the oppression of this

world upon an Indigenous women living at or below the poverty line. Later, my mother would become disabled at mid-life which made her more vulnerable to oppression.

Sellers (2007) reminds me:

the writer must also strive for these gender-specific goals if authenticity is to be obtained. They are conditions for the work whether for a female or male Native American subject. The writer must be fully aware of the severe biases held in western culture against women and how these biases might color the writer's work (p. 43).

MWJ is focused on my male existence. However, one aspect of female influence upon me is leadership. Women are the leaders in our Métis communities. They have not received the recognition they deserve. My mom and auntie are just two of the many fighters that were my *role models* growing up. Both women were parents but also entrepreneurs. My mom operated many restaurants in southern Saskatchewan which allowed her to fulfill her dream of being her own boss. Doris Jeanne MacKinnon's book; 'The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861 – 1960' is about my 'cousin'. I prefer to call Marie Rose my 3rd great aunt, as her mom was the sister of my 3rd great grandmother and her father was the brother of my 3rd great grandfather. She was the leading widow woman rancher, never mind Métis woman, in the Pincher Creek area of early 20th century southern Alberta. I have had and do have women in my life that exemplify the old Indigenous proverb that states, 'a Nation is not conquered until the hearts of its' women lay on the ground. Then it is done, no matter how brave it's warriors or how strong their weapons' (Power Source, 2013).

Having Sellers' Indigenous Communal Narrative evaluation measures certainly provided a context of *community* and *nation* that supported my sense of autobiography. I

believe ICN has provided a reaffirmation of my Self-identified Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing. I believe *Medicine Wheel Journey* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework can be considered an Indigenous Communal Narrative.

Clinical Considerations of *MWJ* for Indigenous Mental Health Practice: Advantages, Limitations & Practice

Advantages

I believe there are many advantages to *Medicine Wheel Journey* as my Indigenous *mental* health framework. *MWJ* is comprehensive and adaptable to a wide range of situations. The four Ways of Being and sixteen Ways of Knowing can be interrelated and interconnected to arrive at new and challenging ways to view issues and responses of people and communities. I have taken two or more themes of *MWJ* and had self-reflections and discussions with others which demonstrated the value of considering two or more issues in the context of all being vital to wellness. For instance, I have seen how an exploration into *nation*, *ancestors*, and *allies* has strengthened my *self* and *mental*, and consequently I have become a better *learner* and *role model* for my *children*.

I as an Indigenous person needed to experience the development and realization of my own voice through the learning and sharing of my life story. Through the process of researching and writing the various aspects of this thesis, I have become more fully integrated with wellness and unashamed of my past. For instance, I have shed the labels or stigma of past childhood issues by sharing what I experienced. I have realized now what a small part of me that those memories represented for me. I was the one still beating myself up over this and no one else. Furthermore, my adulthood transgressions have been revealed now and were always something I took responsibility for and never

hid from any inquiries about them. I understand now with writing this work what an ‘open book’ is.

The example I offer to Indigenous people seeking *mental* health services will be the possibility that they literally will become authors of their life story. They can rewrite the past and share a story of survival. They can write of the present and actively create ideas to respond to current challenges. Consequently, now having recognized their life story, they can identify opportunities, initiate action and maintain their growth through on-going reflection. Other areas of therapy such as narrative or art therapy have similar strategies to healing. These helping methods may have clients write, create, and express themselves in artistic or dramatic ways, such as art or play therapy (Majore, *Medicine Wheel Journey: Stones of Self, Family, Community & Nation in Relationship to Methodologies as my Personal Framework of Knowing and Researching*, 2009).

The *MWJ* as a research method asserted my story as one way that autobiographical and Indigenous-centered practitioners can look at their stories and share what they want others to know. My research method was actually inspired by how my *elders* helped me over my *time*. They have modeled for me my *MWJ*. This was not a self-serving research exercise, but actually, a self-actualizing exercise. Certainly, I have greatly benefitted personally and professionally from having done this *work*. I am grounded in Indigenous-centered practice that is encouraging people that I serve. I can say I have explored and researched in some respects the lands of my ancestors that covers a significant part of the world. However, any recognition of myself is also recognition to my *family, community* and *nation*. Due to interrelatedness and interconnectedness, my self-improvement is an advantage to others. Through this research, I believe the field of Indigenous social *work* will benefit by having an Indigenous-centered helping framework

by which Indigenous practitioners can support their clients in learning and sharing their life stories with the goal of greater health and wellness. I have self-reflected upon, discussed, and applied this research method in an academically formal way covering the last three years and am now confident that *MWJ* can be tested by practitioners in a formal, autobiographical format.

Limitations

There are several limitations in making use of autobiography as an Indigenous-centered helping framework. One major limitation is that our Indigenous *community* of writers, researchers and helpers would have to potentially consider what place my Indigenous-centered helping framework may have with their own ways of looking at the world. This *work* will only help those willing to apply it to themselves first, then onto others, with consent. I would as a practitioner be concerned that people wanting to explore their Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing are willing to learn through reading and experiencing information-gathering. A helper will need to support people of all literacy levels so the client is finding meaning in the counselling discussions and information-gathering exercises. The other concern would be to find and recognize other supports besides the help provided by the practitioner to ensure the client is caring for themselves through their journey. Numerous areas can be examined with *MWJ*, the client will determine what they want to *work* on. Ethically, the helper should contain the client discussions and *work* to their own scope of practice, those areas that the helper is competent in helping others. Indigenous people who are lacking cultural supports, whether *elders*, Knowledge Keepers or helpers who are connected to cultural supports of ceremony and *community* activities would be the people who could benefit from *MWJ*.

People need to see the value of knowing their story and sharing it, for the benefit

of themselves and others. Those Indigenous helpers who may consider *MWJ* to support their clients would have to realize personal *location* is vital to the help they are to provide. My story is my story. Every person will have their own story. The *MWJ* is only one tool to assist in knowing oneself and helping others know themselves better.

After completing the research, I have realized the minimum of experiences related to *work*, *time* and *resources*. The literature suggests much, however I believe as I continue in the future to practice *MWJ* I need to develop further in this area. I plan to explore *work* and believe that Marx's 'The Communist Manifesto' is a good start. When I further examine *time*, I will revisit Waters' text, 'American Indian Thought' and regarding *resources*, I will review the many *community* economic development sources available. I am motivated to help build my *community* with these Ways of Being and Knowing. We all need to be healthy to *work* and to give of our *time*, so as all can benefit from the *resources* available. These all in turn, provide us with a healthy life.

A word of caution for all this are considering embarking on learning this Indigenous-centered helping framework is that it takes time and effort. A person should be comfortable with learning through reading information about topics important to their journeys. Also, learning this helping framework means meeting new people and asking them questions to assist with their learning. Lastly, having trust in the helper who is supporting them along the journey is key. The helper will see you better at times than you can see yourself. A good helper has your best interests in mind.

Other limits may be bias, selectivity, memory and interpretation. Regarding all of these limits, it is the practitioner that fulfills all the roles in the research. The practitioner is the researcher and the research participant. The practitioner decides what answers to provide to their own questions. They alone are responsible to validate accuracy of their

own responses. Practitioners should have measures in place to address the limitations as mentioned. A Clinical Supervisor and a Cultural Knowledge Keeper should be accessed during the practitioners' process of research and writing.

Practice

One of the main assumptions of *MWJ* helping framework is the need for a person to acquire knowledge in the 20 Ways of Being and Knowing. I see the model primarily for urban-based, mixed-Aboriginal people who have not been able to be 'raised culturally,' in an Indigenous-context. Although, due to colonization many of Canada's Aboriginal people would benefit from the type of focus that *MWJ* encourages. The Indigenous-centered helper will facilitate learning toward Indigenous-centred history and culture.

There are those Indigenous people grounded in specific traditional and cultural ways, may not accept *MWJ's* Ways of Being and Knowing. That is expected, as there is much diversity to what we as Indigenous people believe and know about our worlds. We are not all the same. There are many different Indigenous language groups in Canada that contain knowledge keepers that know and teach their own cultures and histories. Previous to *MWJ* thesis research, I did not have a structured method to learn and share my story and I know others did not as well. My *MWJ* seeks to help those that want to know themselves as they have not been able to understand what that is for them.

However, I give acknowledgement to Indigenous people of the world as I believe all people are Indigenous to some place in this world. Therefore, it is my hope that *MWJ* can have some applicability to all practitioners and clients. I believe *MWJ* helping framework will underscore the value of providing structure to life histories, so people can better know themselves, their histories, and their cultures.

My *MWJ* Ways of Being are primarily fixed variables or ‘cornerstones’, whereas my Ways of Knowing can be variable or determined by my ‘client as the storyteller.’ It is important in the helping process that a structured narrative be the result, whereby the client learns their story, where they ‘embody’ or ‘own’ their story, they own themselves - *Otipemisewak*¹⁰.

I foresee *MWJ* as a clinical application to Indigenous individuals, whether youth or adults, and groups, including families, and communities. At the very least, as a helping framework that encourages use of structuring your life story, it is another tool among others that are available to help people and communities. I envision when applying the framework in helping, an individual or group may use it on-going for life as a life skill. I have used *MWJ* in a structured manner for about four years now. I currently have developed the *MWJ Stones Exercise* that engages people in assessment, treatment, aftercare and follow-up. Medicine Wheel is the original continuum of care model.

I have seen my change and growth, as have others. For instance, my personal and work life is centered in *MWJ*. I consider my Ways of Being and Knowing in times that I am troubled with personal relationships. I ask myself where does this issue fit in the circle? What does Medicine Wheel provide me in this situation? My practice is integrated into this Indigenous-centered helping framework, whether in individual or groups sessions, presentations or community networking. The list goes on into many other areas of helping including screening, assessment, intervention, counselling, aftercare, follow-up, relapse prevention and cultural resiliency, *family* counselling, *community work* and cultural safety. I am confident of *MWJ*'s universal applicability or appeal. There is a growing trend for people all over the world to learn of their Indigenousness and also for

¹⁰ *Otipemisewak* – a Cree or Michif (Métis) word meaning ‘people who own themselves, the free people.’

cross-cultural learning.

In the spring of 2013, we held an ‘Ancestral Walk’ in Regina as part of my *Research of Self from a Sense of Place*. We visited and shared, we remembered our *ancestors* and history, and we enjoyed the activity of experiencing our culture together. We strengthened ourselves, our families, communities and nations. I am planning for this to be an annual event to be held in Indigenous communities across Canada every spring.

Conclusion

I assert this to be my *Medicine Wheel Journey*. In such a way, I do not mean to represent any other Indigenous person or *community* with my Ways of Being and Knowing. In responding to the research question of: How can my *Medicine Wheel Journey* inform an Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people? Essentially, I am the Indigenous-centered helping framework. It is within me and not outside myself on a printed diagram. *MWJ* is an example of an Indigenous-centered, helping framework of how to find the story of yourself, your culture, and your history, so as to experience recovery from the devastation of colonization and its accompanying destructive effects. Whether it’s the practitioner or the person being helped, *MWJ* will be applied by the person to themselves. They will identify interrelated Ways of Being and Knowing and explore the meaning these themes will have for them. My 20 themes were mine whereas the number and identity of other’s Ways of Being and Knowing will be what they determine them to be. Certainly, my hope is for my Ways of Being and Knowing to be an example for others to guide others. *MWJ* is one way in which *mental* health practitioners can support Indigenous people in learning of themselves to strengthen their *mental* health.

I believe my use of autobiography and ICN has allowed me to be an Indigenous-

centered, writer, researcher and helper. I hope that Indigenous people and communities see value in my *MWJ* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework. I am excited about continuing upon my *Medicine Wheel Journey* that allows me to practice Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing. What we are able to know, is enhanced by what we are told orally by our *elders* and other *role models, mentors* and *teachers*. *MWJ* will enhance the Indigenous social *work* discourse. Indigenous writers, researchers and helpers can rely upon a common model of understanding issues, challenges and hopefully a better understanding of themselves. I have developed a relationship to my *MWJ*. The outcome of *MWJ work* is apparent in my life over the last few years. I guide my daily life and helping practice by reflecting on *MWJ* Ways of Being and Knowing. For instance, mentally, I have a breadth and depth of knowledge of many ideas related to history and culture. I have become competent in discussing Métis, Canadian and European history. Regarding, *role models, mentors* and *teachers*, I know who I can rely upon for support and how to be supportive to others. Furthermore, I have deepened my understanding of *location*. A significant aspect to how I locate is my worldview. I have become integrated into *MWJ*. As a self-reflective exercise, locating oneself has allowed me to reclaim my past, ground me in my present and enable my future. Finally, my examination into ancestry strengthened my sense of Métis-ness. I have learned of our Métis Nation and am now recognized by my community as a leading resource on matters of Métis history and culture. These are some of the significant ways that this research and writing has impacted upon my development as an Indigenous-centered, helping practitioner.

Therefore, I am an example of living what *MWJ* is about, if others that I help are willing to learn and live their Indigenous-centered stories. I have been able to already help people in these ways in my *work* and that is a privilege that is a significant

responsibility. I am grateful for *MWJ* motivating me to research and write from a *sense of place*. I experienced people and places for the first time in Canada and Europe due to *MWJ*. This is how *Medicine Wheel Journey* informed my Indigenous-centered helping framework in *mental* health services for Indigenous people.

I used to see this framework as being just mine alone, but I give credit to the many *ancestors, elders, role models, mentors, teachers, learners, and allies* that have been a part of the process. It is with gratitude that I offer *Medicine Wheel Journey* as an Indigenous-centered helping framework. After all, Sharing of Story is who we are (King, 2003, Kovach, 2009).

Epilogue

The process of writing has been a difficult undertaking. I had a period of self-doubt over the value this *work* would have to the contribution to the Indigenous *mental* health field. I would reflect upon the gains I experienced personally and culturally during the research and writing to motivate me to *work* harder, ‘to put myself out there’. The fact of the matter is regardless how this *work* unfolded I had already become Indigenous-centered ‘along the way’. My *work* with Indigenous peoples in *mental* health settings had become infused with *MWJ* helping framework. But still, academia was asking me to put my research results to paper. My Indigenous *community* through my *Elder, Mentor & Teacher* Consultations and my sense of *MWJ* led the way for me. I believed now they expected this thesis from me and what a privilege it has been.

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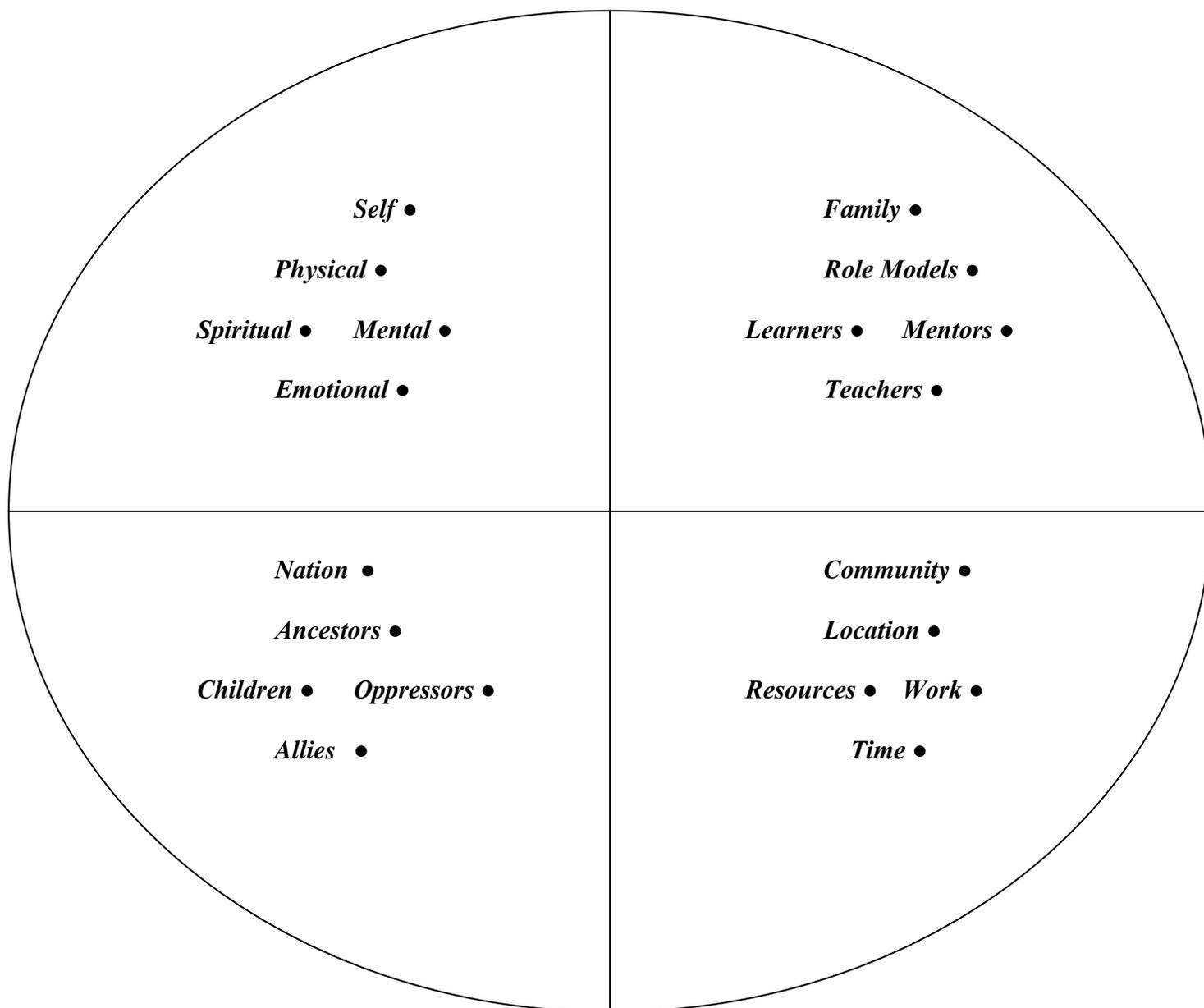
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Appendix 1 - Model of *Medicine Wheel Journey*: an Indigenous-centered Helping Framework

Appendix 2 – Stages of Research Process

1. Establish Elder, Mentor & Teacher Consult (EMT's) Protocol
2. EMT's Consult
3. Examining the Research Guiding Questions and Principles
4. EMT's Consult
5. Conduct Literature Review
6. Gathering primary information; sources to include: collection of personal photos, documents/correspondence related to school, work, social and political life, family tree, articles, personal experiences, memories and self-reflections related to Guiding Principles & Questions
7. EMT's Consult
8. Organizing information
9. Analysis of information
10. EMT's Consult
11. Gathering secondary information; sources to include: literature review and written works related to Guiding Principles & Questions
12. Organizing information
13. Analysis of information
14. EMT's Consult
15. Produce and submit written and revised drafts of Thesis
16. EMT's Consult
17. Provide completed Thesis and Oral Examination
18. Honouring Ceremony – gathering of EMT's, family, friends and colleagues

Appendix 3 - Research Guiding Questions and Principles of MWJ

Self: Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spiritual

- Question: Who is my *self*? Principle: self-realization
 Question: What is my story of the *physical*? Principle: self-preservation
 Question: What is my story of the *mental*? Principle: integration
 Question: What is my story of the *emotional*? Principle: acceptance
 Question: What is my story of the *spiritual*? Principle: belief

Family: Role Models, Mentors, Teachers & Learners

- Question: Who is my *family*? Principle: interrelatedness
 Question: What is my story of *role models*? Principle: responsibility
 Question: What is my story of *mentors*? Principle: growth
 Question: What is my story of *teachers*? Principle: development
 Question: What is my story of *learners*? Principle: recognition

Community: Location, Work, Time & Resources

- Question: What is my *community*? Principle: support
 Question: What is my story of *location*? Principle: opportunity
 Question: What is my story of *work*? Principle: achievement
 Question: What is my story of *time*? Principle: value
 Question: What is my story of *resources*? Principle: equity

Nation: Ancestors, Oppressors, Allies & Children

- Question: What *nation* do I live in? Principle: belonging
 Question: What is my story of *ancestors*? Principle: honour
 Question: What is my story of *oppressors*? Principle: justice
 Question: What is my story of *allies*? Principle: relationship-building
 Question: What is my story of *children*? Principle: visioning

Appendix 4 – Evaluation Measures of Seller’s ICN

Sellers’ states:

‘The cultural background and education of the interviewer and writer must be known. Is he or she Native American, and if so, from what nation? Is the writer culturally identified? How is that demonstrated? Is it the same nation as her or his subject? Does the writer have scholarship in Native American studies: either self-directed, through the subject’s own nation via Native story keepers/historians, or from an institution of higher learning? With whom did the writer study? Can she or he speak, write, and/or comprehend the subject’s Native language? The autobiographer must consult Native American elders, story keepers, writers, and scholars for their guidance. What does the subject’s Native nation say about the work and what do other Native literary scholars have to say about it?...Does the nonfiction work...reflect the cultural philosophy of the subject’s Native nation...The work of Indigenous Communal Narrative must include accurate portrayals of Native and colonial contact, and be grounded in Native experience of that contact. A chronology of historic events pertinent to the Native person’s nation, and simultaneous events outside the nation that effect them, should be included. This might best appear in an appendix showing dates in [Canadian] history that include: key [Canadian] and European political policies affecting the Native nation; laws passed that dictated Native removal from ancestral lands onto reservations; treaties signed and broken; lifespan and titles of key Native leaders during the subject’s life; and the dates of primary non-Native officials, whose policies affected the Native nation, and who held office. What such a chronology would do is place the Native subject of the book within the events of the local and world communities around her or him, and thus offers readers an important perspective of happenings that affect and are relevant to the subject’s life...The nation’s creation story should be included in the text, along with Native analysis of it. Creation stories define human social structures that include far more than religious beliefs. Notions of gender, and social and personal power based in gender, are often revealed in the events of a nation’s creation myth. Further, a people’s way of conceptualizing life and all the systems of life can be found in their origins stories. Therefore, this story and all the related origin stories should be included in an Indigenous Communal Narrative, so readers can witness how the subject’s life unfolded within her or his nation’s system of knowing. The story might be explicitly stated in an appendix...Clan structures, beliefs about human and other being relationships, ideas about relationship with the earth, and all governing structures stem from creation stories as well. Their inclusion in the Indigenous Communal Narrative is imperative if writers wish to transmit adequate cultural knowledge to their readers. The writer must understand the complex social, economic, cosmologic, and political structures of the subject’s nation and must reflect that understanding...A lengthy discussion

disclosing the relationship among clans, clan membership, clan roles, and so on is imperative because Native clan systems are key to the functions of their nations. How councils were and are determined and their functions in the nation, as well as the existence of speakers and their protocols, is also important. The ways leaders were chosen and their length of office is essential as well. What this information brings to the Indigenous Communal Narrative is a legitimization of Native nations and cultures... the writer must also strive for these gender-specific goals if authenticity is to be obtained. They are conditions for the work whether for a female or male Native American subject. The writer must be fully aware of the severe biases held in western culture against women and how these biases might color the writer's work...The writer needs to have full possession of the social, political, economic, and cosmologic structures of the interviewee's nation in relation to gender (Sellers, 2007, p. 40-43)

Sellers' further states her ICN:

'A work qualified as an Indigenous Communal Narrative features a single life testimony of an Indigenous person that simultaneously reveals the culture of that individual's Native nation. The subject should appear to readers as clearly a part of her or his community, not separated or extracted from it. Notable leaders, historic events, and individuals involved in the subject's life should be represented from the Native perspective. The creation story of the subject's life should be presented with Native-focused interpretation and commentary. The work should reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and express them in a legitimizing manner. The voices of non-human entities should be presented in the work as well, for they too are part of the subject's community. Inclusion of a glossary of terms explaining words and phrases used in the subject's language is important, just as a chronology of relevant historical events and brief biographic information of leaders and persons important to the individual is important to ensure a culturally comprehensive finished product' (Sellers, 2007, p. 48-49).

Appendix 5 – Indigenous/Western Historical Review

Sellers' (2006) ICN suggests a review of history, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. I provide a brief summary. She states:

‘This might best appear in an appendix showing dates in [Canadian] history that include: key [Canadian] and European political policies affecting the Native nation; laws passed that dictated Native removal from ancestral lands onto reservations; treaties signed and broken; lifespan and titles of key Native leaders during the subject’s life; and the dates of primary non-Native officials, whose policies affected the Native nation, and who held office. What such a chronology would do is place the Native subject of the book within the events of the local and world communities around her or him, and thus offers readers an important perspective of happenings that affect and are relevant to the subject’s life (Sellers, 2007, p. 42).

Brief Indigenous/Western Historical Review from my Métis perspective.

Pre-contact

Turtle Island (existing Indigenous Nations throughout North, Central and South America)
Construction of Empire in Europe

Contact and Colonization

Industrial Revolution

Royal Proclamation 1760 (Rupert's Land)

‘French & Indian War of the Seven Years War’ (Britain & France)

British North America Act 1763

American Revolution 1776-83 (United Empire Loyalists – UEL)

Post-contact, continued Colonization and Decolonization.

Fur Trade

Children of the Fur Trade – 1790's, Cuthbert Grant Jr. – b. 1793

War of 1812

Buffalo Hunt

Lord Selkirk – 1812, Pemmican Proclamation, Pemmican War - 1814, Seven Oaks – 1816,

HBC-NWC Merger – 1821

Upper/Lower Canada Rebellion – 1837

Sayer Trial & Métis Free Trade – 1849

Canadian Constitution 1867 and Canada's War on Indigenous Peoples (CWIP) – involves the Indian Act, Residential & Church-run Day Schools, Manitoba Land Survey

Provisional Government, Red River Resistance 1869-70, Louis Riel & Delorme ancestor

Manitoba Act 1870 – Métis Scrip Land Speculation Scandal

Métis Diaspora – 1860-70's

Church Missions – Lebreton – 1865

Métis Land Petitions

Canadian Pacific Railway – CPR, Canada – from Coast to Coast to Coast
Northwest Resistance, Riel & Gabriel Dumont, my Delorme & Ross ancestors – 1885
Industrial Age & Agriculture
Métis WW1 Veterans - 1918
Rebirth of Métis societies – 1930's, Mushom Tom, Aunty Irene & the Halfbreeds of Saskatchewan, Métis Society of Saskatchewan
Métis WW2 Veterans – 1945, the Majore, Pelletier & Blondeau families
Métis Farm Colonies
Métis Urbanization – from the Road Allowances to Inner-cities
Roots of Métis Nationalism in the Civil Rights Movement – 1960's, Aunty Julia & cousins Rose & Maurice
The Adams Era of Métis Radicalism – 1970's
The Sinclair Era of more Métis Radicalism – 1980's
Métis Nation & the Canadian State – towards the Canadian Constitution of 1982
Métis National Council - 1983
Métis Rights Unfulfilled – 1990's
Métis Legal Recognition, Powley – 2000's
The Métis Future, Daniels & MMF Case, Métis Nation Constitution – 2010's to present

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